On the edge of gender agreement systems

The particular case of feminine nouns designating animals of both natural genders in South-West Slavonic, Romance, and beyond.

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Žabe i lisice nisu prijatelj....

Content

Content

- – The linguistic gender

- – What is Agreement?

- – Corbett's theory on the linguistic gender

- – Hybrid nouns

- – Particular cases

  - – Predicate hierarchy

  - – Nouns as targets

- – The case of the feminine nouns designating animals of both natural genders in the languages in question

- – Methodology

- – Data

- – Conclusion

- – Outlook

The linguistic gender

The linguistic gender

Most influential definition formulated by Aikhenvald:

• *Natural gender, or N-gender. This is what was until recently simply called "sex"–male versus female. A female is able to bear children, a male is not. N-gender entails anatomical and hormonal differences, linked to concomitant physiological and psychological traits.*

• *Social gender, or S-gender. This reflects the social implications of being a man or a woman (or perhaps something in between). In Simone de Beauvoir's adage, "One is not born a woman but becomes a woman" (1949: 267). In many traditional societies of New Guinea, social manhood is achieved, and defined, through male initiation (see, e.g., Schieffelin 1977: 121—28; Silverman 2001); social womanhood used to be achieved through female initiation (see, e.g., Roscoe 1995). S-gender relates to contrasting social roles of the sexes, and how these are embodied in cultural practices and public ritualized behavior, including gender etiquette (in the spirit of Parker 1988), traditional knowledge, and social stereotypes.*

• *Linguistic gender, or L-gender. This is the original sense of the term "gender." Nouns are divided into classes associated with different morphological marking. The class that includes most words referring to females is called "feminine"; similarly for males and "masculine." Gender classes are typically defined by their male and female members, but may extend beyond these. The ways in which animals, birds, insects, plants, and natural phenomena (such as thunder and wind) are assigned to genders may reflect roles in legend and reveal folk taxonomies (see Aikhenvald 2000, 2004, 2006; Dixon 1982; Corbett 1991)." (Aikhenvald 2012, p. 33)*

Corbett and the canonical typology

Corbett and the canonical typology

- Founder of the canonical typology (one of the first multivariate typologies formulated on the basis of a pre-modern linguistic concept)

- First analyses of *Agreement* in the late 80s (the book *Gender* 1991)

- Applied on the gender systems of slavic (most of all Russian) as well as other languages of the world

- The books *Number* (2000), *Agreement* (2006), and *Features* (2012) further expand the canonical typology

- The most frequently used typology for the description and analysis of morpho-syntax in the Slavic and Romance languages

What is agreement?

What is agreement?

Corbetts definition of agreement is based on Steele's theories:

"The term agreement commonly refers to some systematic covariance between a semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another." (Steele 1978, p. 610)

New terms introduced:

"controller: is present, has overt expression of features, and is consistent in the agreement it takes, its part of speech is not relevant (this is vacuous criterion in (14)-(17))

Target: has bound expression of agreement, obligatory marking, doubling the marking of the noun, marking as regular, alliterative productive; the target has a single controller and its part of speech is not relevant

Domain: agreement is asymmetric (the gender of the adjective depends on that of the noun), local, and the domain is one of multiple domains

features: lexical (in one instance), matching values, not offering any choice in values

conditions: no conditions" (Corbett 2006, p. 9)

What is agreement?

The three main principles according to Corbett:

"Principle I: Canonical agreement is redundant rather than informative

Principle II: Canonical agreement is syntactically simple

Principle III: The closer the expression of agreement is to canonical (i.e. affixal) inflectional morphology, the more canonical it is as agreement."
(Corbett 2006, p. 27)

Class 1/2:						
Mwanaume mkubwa alianguka.				*Wanaume wakubwa walianguka.*		
mwanaume	**m**-kubwa	**a**-li-anguk(a)	↔	**wa**naume	**wa**-kubwa	**wa**-li-anguk(a)
(CL1)man	**CL1**-big	**CL1**-PST-fall		**(CL2)**men	**CL2**-big	**CL2**-PST-fall
"man"	"big"	"s/he-fell"		"men"	"big"	"they-fell"
"The big man fell."				"The big men fell."		

Class 7/8:						
Kitabu kikubwa kilianguka.				*Vitabu vikubwa vilianguka.*		
kitabu	**ki**-kubwa	**ki**-li-anguk(a)	↔	**vi**tabu	**vi**-kubwa	**vi**-li-anguk(a)
(CL7)book	**CL7**-big	**CL7**-PST-fall		**(CL8)**books	**CL8**-big	**CL8**-PST-fall
"book"	"big"	"it-fell"		"books"	"big"	"they-fell"
"The big book fell."				"The big books fell."		

What is agreement?

According to Corbett *gender* is an inherent *feature* of nouns and causes agreement:

"Gender is an inherent feature of the noun. It is found on the target, say the adjective, as a consequence of its presence in the noun: […]. Gender is a lexical feature for nouns in that, like the morphological features discussed earlier, its value has to be available to the lexicon. And as with other lexical features, gender is available for agreement. It may therefore be considered the canonical agreement feature (§ 1.4): it is clearly a feature of the controller, it may or may not be explicable in semantic terms (for a given controller), and hence the realization of the value for gender on the target is the canonical instance of the need for syntactic rule of agreement." (Corbett 2006, p. 126)

What is agreement?

Gender as a semantic feature:

"Gender assignment may depend on two sorts of information: the meaning of the noun and its form […]. In what I shall call strict semantic systems the meaning of a noun is sufficient to determine its gender, for all or almost all the nouns. This type is found in Dravidian languages like Kannada […]. In Kannada nouns denoting male humans are masculine, those denoting female humans are feminine. There are also deities, demons and heavenly bodies in these genders. All remaining nouns, including those denoting infants and animals, are neuter." (Corbett 2006, p. 126-127)

What is agreement?

Gender as a morphological and phonological phenomenon:

"In some other languages, however, assignment by semantic rules would leave many nouns unassigned. […]. Here we find additional rules for assigning nouns to genders according to their form. There is a significant asymmetry: languages may base their assignment system on semantic rules, or on semantic and formal rules, but not just on formal rules. Formal assignment rules may in turn access to two types of information: phonological and morphological. There may be combinations of such rules." (Corbett 2006, p. 128)

"Morphological systems are connected to the semantic systems of the previous chapter in two ways. First, they always have a semantic core. There is no purely morphological system; the morphological rules assign the nouns in the semantic residue to genders, that is, they are required where semantic rules fail. And second, they may also overlap with semantic rules." (Corbett 1991, p. 34)

Hybrid nouns

Hybride Nomen

Corbett introduces nouns which do not follow merely one criterium (semantic vs. morphological/phonological) but change due to context.

"These are nouns which neither simply take the agreements of one consistent agreement pattern nor belong to two or more genders. The agreement form to be used depends in part on the type of target involved. English 'boat nouns' meet this definition. Another good example is the German word Mädchen 'girl'. Mädchen can take agreements exactly as a neuter noun. It may also take the feminine personal pronoun sie, but not the other agreements of the consistent agreement pattern associated with feminine nouns." (Corbett 1991, p. 183)

Hybrid nouns in the Slavic and Romance languages

Same animals in various languages

- Fox: lisica (< *lisica) vs. VULPEM/ RAPUM + OSUM

- Frog: žaba (< *žaba) vs. RANAM/ BROSCAM

- Stork: roda (< *roda) vs. CICONIAM

Semantische vs. syntaktische Kongruenz

Combination of the *Predicate Hierarchy* formulated by Bernard Comrie and *Agreement Hierarchy* by Greville Corbett (tendency towards semantic agreement)
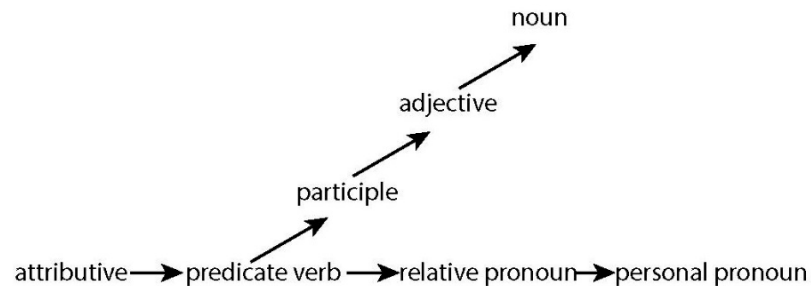
(Corbett 2006, p. 233)

Methodology

Methodology

- Interviews with native speakers of South Slavic languages:

    - Croatian and Serbian

    - (Bulgarian)

- Interviews with native speakers of Romance languages

    - Daco-Romanian, Castillian, Catalan, Galician, Italian, Portuguese, Sursilvan, Vallader

- Speakers were shown sentences in English (in order to avoid interferences) and asked to translate into their native languages

Methodology

- Sentences with different *Targets* and *Controllers*:

In general, foxes and frogs are natural enemies
as they live in the same habitat.
In general, turtles and foxes are not natural enemies
as you have not seen them together
Comp: Anna and Victoria are natural enemies
as they don't like each other at all.
Female teachers and female professors are natural enemies
as they don't like each other at all
These foxes and these frogs are natural enemies.
as they don't like each other at all.
Comp: These female teachers and female doctors are natural enemies.
as they don't like each other at all
In general, foxes are very shy.
That's why you don't see them.
In general, frogs are very small.
That's why you don't find them.
In general, storks are very aggressive.
That's why we don't like them
Comp: In general, Anna and Victoria are very shy

Methodology

- Sentences with different *Targets* and *Controllers*:

| |
|---|
| Female frogs and male frogs are very small |
| Female frogs and male frogs are very small |
| that's why you don't see them |
| Female frogs and male foxes are natural enemies |
| Female frogs and male foxes are natural enemies |
| Male frogs and female foxes are natural enemies |
| Male frogs and female foxes are natural enemies |
| Female cats and female dogs are natural enemies. |
| They are very aggressive. |
| They are very aggressive. |
| Female dogs and female sheeps are natural enemies. |
| That's why they can't be friends |
| That's why they can't be friends |
| Foxes and cows are natural enemies. |
| You never see them together |
| Cows and frogs are natural enemies. |
| You never see them together |

Data

Data

- In both language families a clear tendency towards the masculine

X. Gender resolution of non-canonical targets with conjoined hybrid nouns designating animals of both natural genders as controller

I. Gender resolution of non-canonical targets with hybrid nouns designating animals of both natural genders
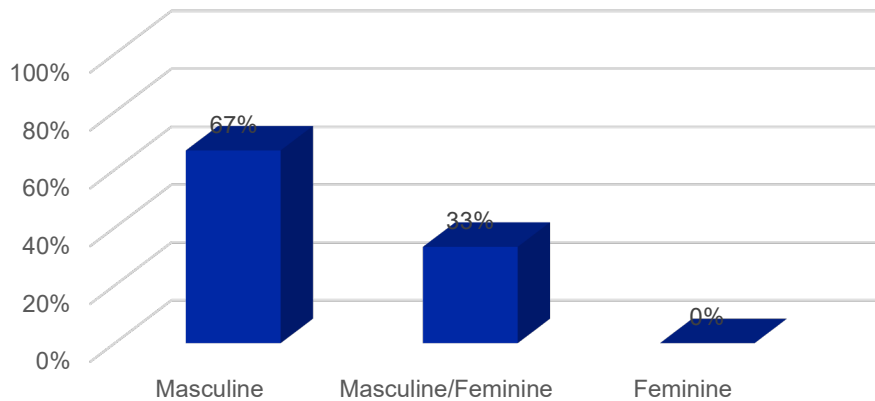
SL

(1) *Lisic-e*   *i*   *žab-e*   *su*   *prijatelj-i.*
     Fox(F)-NOM.PL and   frog(F)-NOM.PL be.3PL.PRS   friend(M)-NOM.PL
     'Foxes and frogs are friends.' (Croatian, own data)
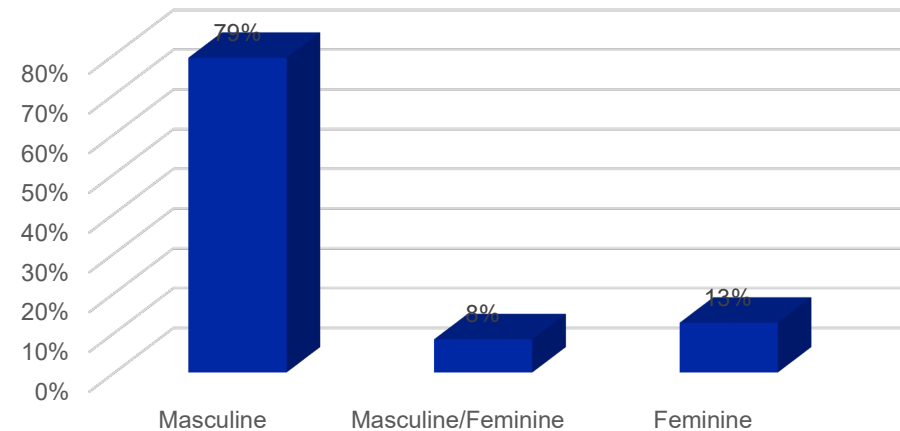
RO

Data

- But diverging tendencies with demonstrative pronouns

Croatian

(1) Ov-e   lisic-e   i   ov-e   žab-e   su   prijatelj-i/prijateljic-e

This-F.PL   fox(F)- PL   and   this-F.PL frog(F)-PL   are   friend(M)-PL/friend(F)-PL
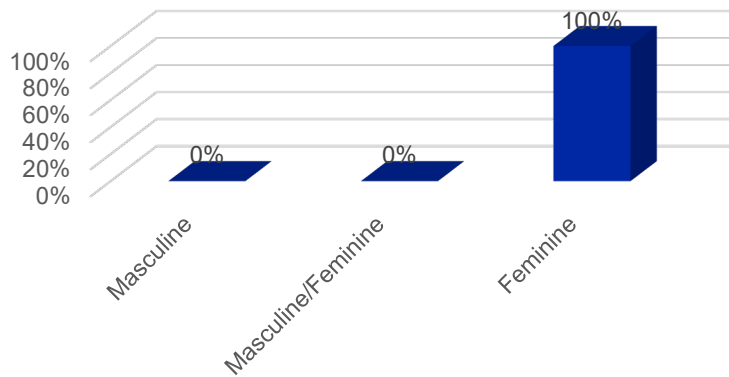
'These foxes and these frogs are friends.'

- Still a parallelism with certain Romance languages

Data

- In both language families a clear tendency towards the feminine (except Sursilvan)

XII. Gender resolution of non-canonical targets with feminine nouns designating women (names/job denominations)

III. Gender resolution of non-canonical targets with feminine nouns designating women (names/job denominations)

SL

RO
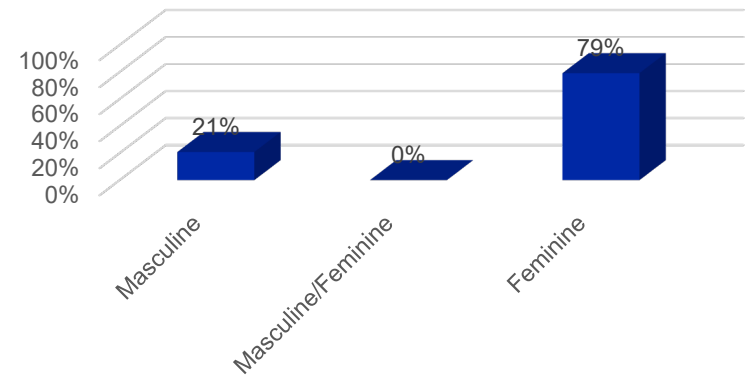
(3) *Ana   i   Viktorija   su   prijateljic-e.*
Ana   and   Viktorija   be.3PL.PRS   friend(F)-NOM.PL
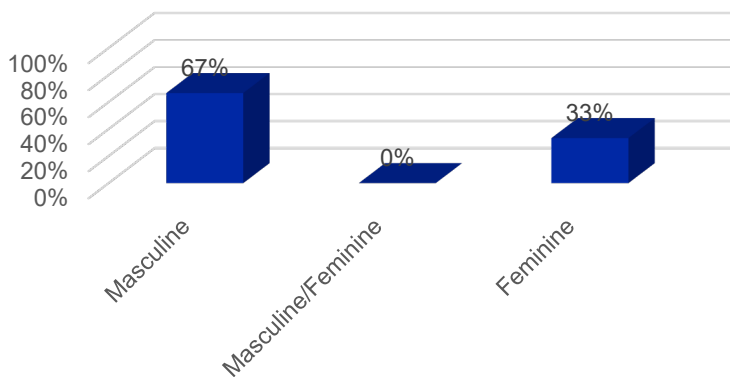'Ana and Viktorija are friends.' (Croatian, own data)

Data

- No clear trends when hybrid nouns are not in conjunction:

XIII. Gender of non-canonical targets with not-conjoined hybrid nouns designating animals of both natural genders

IV. Gender of non-canonical targets with not-conjoined hybrid nouns designating animals of both natural genders

SL (4)

Rod-e	su	prijatelji	ot žab-a.
Stork(F)-NOM.PL	be.3PL.PRS	friend(F)-NOM.PL	of frog(F)-GEN.SG

'Storks are friends of frogs.' (Croatian, own data)
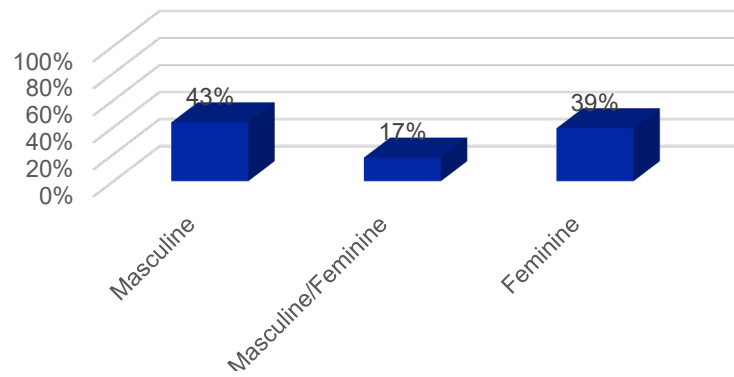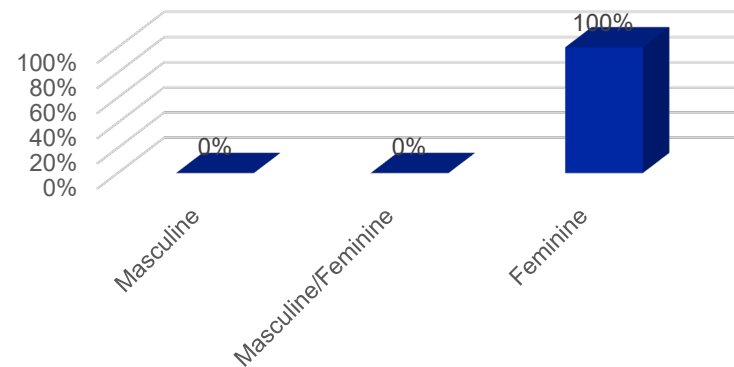
RO

Data

- Clear trend towards feminine with «canonic targets» even with feminine hybrid nouns:

XIV. Gender resolution of canonical targets with hybrid controllers designating animals of both natural genders

(5) *Lisic-e   su   jako   stidljiv-e.*
Fox(F)-NOM.PL   be.3SG.PRS   very   aggressive-F.NOM.SG
'Foxes are very aggressive.' (Croatian, own data)

Data

- Semantic and syntactic agreement are often in direct competition:

Croatian
(1) Ov-a   lisic-a   je   muškog roda.   Ona   je   jako   agresivn-a
    This- F.SG   fox-F.SG is   of.male gender. She   is   very   aggressive-F.SG
    'This fox is male. It is very aggressive.'

Other languages

Other languages - Bulgarian

- Other trends in Bulgarian:

	Bulgarian					
(1)	Лисиц-и-те	и	жаб-и-те	не	са	приятел-и.
	Fox(F)-PL-DEF	and	frog(F)-PL-DEF	not	are	friend(M)-PL
	'Foxes and frogs are not friends.'

(2)	Ана	и	Мария	не	са	приятелк-и.
	Ana	and	Maria	not	are	friend(F)-PL
	'Ana and Maria are not friends.'

(3)	Крав-и-те	и	котк-и-те	не	са	приятел-и.
	Cows(F)-PL-DEF	and	cat(F)-PL-DEF	not	are	friend(M)-PL
	'Cows and cats are not friends.'

(4)	Професорк-и-те	и	учителк-и-те	не	са	приятелк-и
	Professor(F)- PL-DEF	and	teacher(F)-PL-DEF	not	are	friend(F)-PL
	'Female professors and female teachers are not friends.'

Other languages - German

- Parallelism between German and Bulgarian

German
(1) Kühe   und   Rüdinnen   sind   Freund-e/*Freundin-nen
    Cows   and   bitches   are   friend(M)-PL/ friend(F)-PL
    'Cows and bitches are friends.'

German
(1) Katzen   und   Mäuse   sind   Freunde-e/*Freund-innen
    Cats   and   mice   are   friend(M)-PL/ friend(F)-PL
    'Cats and mice are friends.'

- Other phenomena in varieties of German

German (Schröter, Linke, Bubenhofer, 360)
(1) Ich   als   Linguist-Ø
    I(F)   as   linguist(M)-SG
    'I as linguist…'

German
(1) Anna   und   Maria   sind   Freund-e/Freundin-nen
    Anna   and   Maria   are   friend(M)-PL/ friend(F)-PL
    'Anna and Maria are friends'

Other languages – Albanian (Geg)

- Parellisms between Albanian and the South-West Slavic and the Romance languages:

Albanian

(1) Dhelpr-a   dhe   bretkos-a   janë   shok-ë
    fox(F)-PL.DEF   and   frog(F)- PL.DEF are   friend(M)-PL.DEF
    'Foxes and frogs are friends'

(2) Melita   dhe   Margarita   janë   shoq-e
    Melita   and   Margarita   are   friend(F)-PL.DEF
    'Melita and Margarita are friends.'

(3) Doktor-eshja   dhe   mesus-ja   janë   shoq-e
    Doctor-(F).SG.DEF   and   teachers-F.SG are   friend(F)-PL.DEF
    'Female doctors and female teachers are friends.'

(4) Lop-a   dhe   mac-a   janë   shoq-e
    cow(F)-SG.DEF   and   cat(F)-SG.DEF are   friend(F)-PL.DEF
    'Cows and female cats are friends.'

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Parallelism between the two language families

- Many of the phenomena observable in the Romance and Slavic languages challenge Corbett's terminology

- Factors that play a major role:

    - [±human]

    - [±female only]

    - Non-canonical targets

    - Hybrids in "conjoined" NP

Outlook

Outlook

- Analysis of hybrid nouns in other languages. Can we observe similar trends?

- More data from the Romance and Slavic languages in question.

- Are there other factors playing a major role?

Thank you for attention!

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