

## THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO BE GENDERED

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Traditionally, grammatical GENDER is viewed as a classificatory feature inherent to nouns. It plays an important role in indicating agreement relations between distinct elements of an utterance (Hockett 1968, Corbett 1991, among others). For example, a determiner or an adjective associated with a noun has to agree in GENDER with the noun. In this paper, we show that GENDER is a heterogeneous phenomenon. We shall argue that it is necessary to dissociate the semantic content of GENDER from its morpho-phonological form. We conclude that GENDER as a feature may or may not be inherent; and even when it is inherent, its expressions are not comparable across languages. Thus, in the first part of the paper we argue that GENDER cannot be treated as a unified phenomenon. In the second part of the paper, we show that GENDER cannot always be reduced to agreement. In many languages, a given noun can be associated with more than one GENDER (Bruce 1984; Gerdts, to appear; Lecarme 2002; Leiss 2000, among others). The switch in GENDER has semantic effects. We argue that the semantic effect of GENDER-switching is syntactically conditioned. Specifically, *fixed* GENDER is hosted in the semi-functional head little *n* (henceforth *n*), while *flexible* GENDER is associated with nominal Aspect (cf. Rijkoff 1991).<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Heterogeneity of GENDER Expressions

The goal of this section is to argue that GENDER is a heterogeneous phenomenon. Specifically, we exemplify the semantic diversity of GENDER in 1.1 and its morpho-phonological diversity in 1.2. In 1.3, we conclude with a prediction: if GENDER can be conditioned in different ways across languages, we may expect that we also find heterogeneous GENDER within a language. This prediction is borne out in the form of *flexible* GENDER, attested in a variety of languages.

#### 1.1 Semantic Heterogeneity of GENDER Expressions

In this section we briefly look at the semantic content of GENDER.

A survey of GENDER in numerous languages has been done by Corbett 1991. Corbett's goal has been to explore GENDER assignment and agreement patterns

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<sup>1</sup> For the view that the use of GENDER goes beyond agreement relations, see also Unterbeck et al. 2000.

across languages. The focus has been on agreement dependencies as expressed by GENDER. While we appreciate the generalizations based on similarities in function, the focus of this section is the semantic diversity of GENDER expressions and the implications it may have on the use of GENDER as an abstract feature<sup>2</sup>.

A survey of a handful of languages shows that what is labeled GENDER semantically encompasses a wide range of possibilities as summarized in the table below.

**Table 1.**

| Semantics of GENDER<br>A sample of content           | Language                    | Source  |
|--|-----------------------------|---|
| masculine, feminine,<br>common                       | Russian, Dutch              | Wade & Gillespie 2011;<br>Donaldson 2008            |
| masculine, feminine, neuter                          | German                      | Donaldson 2007                                      |
| multi-partition based on<br>nominal classes          | Bantu                       | Déchaine, Girard,<br>Mudzingwa, &<br>Wiltschko 2012 |
| uter, neuter   | Swedish                     | Hinchliffe & Philip<br>2003                         |
| animate, inanimate                                   | Blackfoot, Sinhala,<br>Cree | Frantz 2009; Dileep<br>2010; Wolfart 1973           |
| socially-prominent, non-<br>prominent, part-or-whole | Teop                        | Mosel & Spriggs, 1999 <sup>3</sup>                  |
| human, unspecified human,<br>female, plant           | Yimas                       | Foley 1991  |
| shape, mass, dimension                               | Khasi, Alamblak             | Rabel 1961, 1977;<br>Bruce 1984                     |

One can see that languages from the same language family, e.g. German and Dutch (both Germanic) may have a different partition in GENDER: one has common and the other has neuter while feminine and masculine occur in both. Swedish (also Germanic) has none of the aforementioned GENDERS. Conversely, languages that are from different language families may have the same partition, e.g., Sinhala (Indo-European) and Blackfoot (Algonquian) share sensitivity to animacy.

In some of the featured languages, partition into different GENDERS is based on the natural gender of animate entities (humans and animals) which is then grammaticalized and arbitrarily applied to classify inanimate entities. E.g., the grammatical GENDER of German animate entities mostly coincides with their actual gender, while the grammatical GENDER of inanimate entities is arbitrary (there is nothing inherently masculine about German *Tisch* ‘table’, yet it belongs to the masculine GENDER).

Yet in other languages featured in the table above, partition into different GENDERS is based on semantic criteria that have nothing to do with

<sup>2</sup> See section 1.3 for more discussion on the implications.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Mosel shared Teop data and a grammar sketch manuscript, p.c.

natural gender, such as discourse prominence and social status (Teop) or dimension (Khasi, Alambalak) and the like.

This is enough to show that while the category GENDER as an abstract feature is inherent to nouns, its content varies cross-linguistically. Next, we will look at the relation between the content and the form of the category GENDER.

## 1.2 Morpho-phonological Heterogeneity of GENDER Expressions

In this section we briefly look at the formal expression of GENDER.

Abstract features such as GENDER may or may not be overtly marked across languages. For example, the German noun *Tisch* ‘table’ has no indication of GENDER class, and the GENDER manifests itself in the choice of masculine determiner *der*. In contrast, nominal inflection may be an indicator of GENDER in languages like Spanish, where the final *-a* in a noun like *casa* ‘house’ signals feminine GENDER. However, even a brief survey of languages that mark GENDER overtly indicates that there is no one-to-one correspondence between GENDER and its formal expression either cross-linguistically or within a language. Consider the table below.

**Table 2.**

| Formal expression of GENDER.<br>A sample of rules         | Exceptions? | Language   | Source           |
|---|-------------|------------|------------------|
| -a,-ê = feminine<br>-as, -ys, -is= masculine              | yes         | Lithuanian | Ambrazas<br>1997 |
| -a=feminine<br>-o=masculine<br>-C= masculine or feminine  | yes         | Spanish    | Rocca 1989       |
| bisyllabic noun ending in an<br>unstressed /e/ =feminine  | yes         | Norwegian  | Enger 2009       |
| masculine = penultimate accent<br>feminine = final accent | ?           | Somali     | Lecarme<br>2002  |
| /p, k, m, n, ŋ, nt, r, l/ = class V                       | no          | Yimas      | Foley 1991       |

At the top of the table, we see Lithuanian (Baltic) and Spanish (Romance). The two languages are similar in that the expression of GENDER is inflectional. On the one hand, Lithuanian has more than one inflection to indicate feminine and masculine GENDER respectively. On the other hand, neither set of inflections is without exceptions. Similarly, in Spanish, either GENDER can be found in nouns that end in a consonant. Thus, in either language there is no one-to-one correspondence between the form of inflection and the abstract feature it encodes. This is enough to argue that the feature GENDER may be divorced from the form that encodes it.

Next, in Norwegian (Germanic) and Somali (Cushitic) we see how prosodic means such as stress may be used to encode differences in GENDER. However, stress in itself is not a dedicated means for GENDER either. To express the relevant contrast, stress conspires with either a particular sound (/e/) or a particular position (penultimate versus final). We take this to mean that if GENDER may be expressed by a conspiracy of means at the morphology-phonology interface then it does not have a dedicated form either.

At the bottom of the table there is an example of the only rule that does not have any exceptions. Nouns are classified as class V of a Papuan language Yimas (Lower Sepik family) if they end in the particular consonants. This GENDER class constitutes ~50 % of all nouns in Yimas (Foley 1991). However, there are nine more noun classes in Yimas. Except for class V, the other nouns are classified based on criteria different from class V, namely semantic, featured in table 1, section 1.2. Thus, there is a split in the expression of Yimas GENDER: some nouns are classified based on phonological criteria, while other nouns are classified based on semantic criteria. We take this as further evidence for the divorce between the feature GENDER and its form.

### 1.3 Interim Conclusions. A Prediction

So far in this section we have seen that (i) the semantic content of GENDER may vary (1.1); (ii) the form of GENDER may be divorced from its content (1.2). I.e., the content and form of GENDER exhibit flexibility. If this is the case across languages, we may expect to also find instances of flexible GENDER within a given language. In what follows we show that this is indeed the case.

## 2. GENDER beyond Agreement

In this section, we first discuss data illustrating the common assumption that the GENDER of a noun is always inherent and therefore fixed (2.1). Then we show data involving flexible GENDER. This challenges the assumption that GENDER is an intrinsic feature of nouns and presents us with an analytical challenge (2.2).

### 2.1 Background: fixed GENDER languages

In many languages, GENDER marking is inherent to nouns and cannot be switched. For example, in German, the GENDER inherent to a noun manifests itself in the form of agreement on the preceding determiner. Only a determiner marked for the same GENDER as the noun can precede the noun; a GENDER mismatch between the determiner and the noun results in ungrammaticality as in (1)-(2):

- |     |    |   |    |  |
|-----|----|---|----|--|
| (1) | a. | der  Anwalt<br>det.m lawyer<br>'the lawyer (m)' | b. | *die  Anwalt<br>det.f lawyer<br>intended: 'the lawyer (f)' |
| (2) | a. | der  Freund<br>det.m friend<br>'the friend (m)' | b. | *die  Freund<br>det.f friend<br>intended: 'the friend (f)' |

A switch in GENDER is possible through an overt change. The change may be implemented through a derivational morpheme, e.g. *-in*:

- |     |    |   |    |  |
|-----|----|---|----|--|
| (3) | a. | die  Anwält- <b>in</b><br>det.f layer-f<br>'lawyer (f)' | b. | die  Freund- <b>in</b><br>det.f friend-fem<br>'friend (f)' |
|-----|----|---|----|--|

The change in GENDER may also manifest itself morpho-phonologically, e.g., in the quality of sounds:

- |     |    |   |    |   |
|-----|----|---|----|---|
| (4) | a. | das <b>Huhn</b><br>det.n chicken<br>'the chicken (n)' | b. | der <b>Hahn</b><br>det.m rooster<br>'the rooster (m)' |
|-----|----|---|----|---|

Thus, a switch in GENDER without explicit morphological marking is not attested in German. We call this *fixed* GENDER.

## 2.2 Problem: *Flexible* GENDER

There are GENDER systems which allow for GENDER switching without morphological marking. We call this *flexible* GENDER. In this section we introduce the phenomenon of *flexible* GENDER. Our goal is twofold. One the one hand, we explore in some detail two cases of *flexible* GENDER in 2.2.1. One the other hand, we also seek to generalize over the cases of *flexible* GENDER described in the existing literature 2.2.2. The research questions that fall out from this study are introduced in 2.3.

### 2.2.1 The cases of *flexible* GENDER in Alambak and Lithuanian

There exist languages that allow for *flexible* GENDER. For example, Alambak (East Sepik) uses the suffixes *-t* and *-r* to mark sex-based gender differences in animate nouns:

- |     |    |  |    |  |                  |
|-----|----|--|----|--|------------------|
| (5) | a. | yima- <b>t</b><br>person-f<br>'person (f)' | b. | yima- <b>r</b><br>person-m<br>'person (m)' | Bruce 1984:96-98 |
|-----|----|--|----|--|------------------|

For inanimate nouns, *-t* is used for short, squat and wide things as in (6a-b); *-r* is used for tall, long and slender things as in (6c-d):

- |     |    |   |    |  |                  |
|-----|----|---|----|--|------------------|
| (5) | a. | kuñ- <b>t</b><br>house-f<br>'house (f)'           | b. | mēgra- <b>t</b><br>camp-f<br>'camp (f)'                            | Bruce 1984:96-98 |
|     | c. | yoh- <b>r</b><br>string.bag-m<br>'string bag (m)' | d. | darhi - <b>toa-r</b><br>black.palm-leaf-m<br>'black palm leaf (m)' |                  |

However, in contrast to German, a switch in GENDER can occur. GENDER suffixes may be used for evaluative purposes, to convey a speaker's perspective. If a thing that is usually perceived as short, squat and wide does not fit the properties assigned to the feminine GENDER, and rather fits the properties of the masculine GENDER, then GENDER marking is switched. For example, if a house or a drum is long rather than short, the masculine rather than the feminine suffix is used:

- (7) a. kuñ-t  
house-f  
'house (f)'
- b. kuñ-r  
house-m  
'an unusually long house (m)'
- c. nērwi-t  
drum-fem  
'drum (f)'
- d. nērwi-r  
drum-masc  
'an unusually long drum (m)'
- Bruce 1984:96-98

In this case, the use of GENDER is *flexible* and it has a well-defined language specific semantic effect.

One could argue that in Alablank, the use of GENDER for inanimate nouns is semantically driven and therefore is not comparable to the grammatically arbitrary GENDER of German (as discussed in the previous section). However, examples of GENDER switch based on speaker perspective are also found in languages where GENDER assignment is arbitrary. One such language is Lithuanian. In what follows, we first show that most Lithuanian nouns are arbitrarily associated with *fixed* GENDER. Then we will show that two sets of nouns allow for semantically conditioned *flexible* GENDER.

In Lithuanian (Baltic), nominal GENDER manifests itself in agreement with modifiers, where the inflection of the adjective has to agree with the GENDER inherent to nouns.<sup>4</sup> The grammatical GENDER of animate nouns is based on natural gender, and it cannot be violated, as the contrast between (8) versus (9) indicates:

- (8) a. sen-as vyr-as  
old-m man-m  
'old man (m)'
- b. sen-a bob-a  
old-f hag-f  
'old hag (f)'
- (9) a. \*sen-a vyr-a  
old-f man-f  
intended: 'old man (f)'
- b. \*sen-as bob-as  
old-m hag-m  
intended: 'old hag (m)'

GENDER assignment for inanimate Lithuanian nouns is arbitrary, and yet it cannot be violated, either. For example, there is nothing in either 'closet' or 'table' that makes them either feminine or masculine respectively. Each noun is associated with exactly one GENDER, as shown in (10) versus (11):

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<sup>4</sup> Lithuanian GENDER also manifests itself in the inflection of nouns. However, some nominal inflection is associated with more than one GENDER and therefore is not a reliable diagnostic for the value of GENDER. For example, the suffix *-is* may be associated with both masculine and feminine nouns. In such cases the preceding adjective is the sole diagnostic for the GENDER of the noun.

- (i) a. juod-as dant-is  
black-m tooth-m  
'black tooth (m)'
- b. juod-a nakt-is  
black-f night-f  
'black night (f)'

Thus, the inflectional characteristics of the modifier are the most reliable for tracking GENDER.

- (10) a. sen-**a** spint-**a**  
old-f closet-f  
'old closet (f)'
- b. sen-**as** stal-**as**  
old-m table-m  
'old table (m)'
- (11) a. \*sen-**as** spint-**as**  
old-m closet-m  
intended: 'old closet (m)'
- b. \*sen-**a** stal-**a**  
old-f table-f  
intended: 'old table (f)'

Thus, examples (8) through (11) show that GENDER assignment in Lithuanian nouns is *fixed*, in the normal course of events. And yet there are at least two sets of data where *a flexible* use of GENDER is attested, with semantic effects.

The first data set contains nouns that can be of either GENDER. The particular value of GENDER is conditioned by the discourse context. Crucially, this behavior is restricted to numerous nouns that (i) denote animate entities and (ii) convey a pejorative view of the speaker (Ambrazas 1997; see Laigonaite 1961 for a wealth of examples). For example, in (12a-b), we see that the noun denoting 'gawker' can be either male or female, as the modifying adjective can be marked for either GENDER.

- (12) a. sen-**a** vèpl-**a**  
old-f. gawker-f  
'old gawker (f)'
- b. sen-**as** vèpl-**a**  
old-m table-f  
'old gawker (m)'

Note that the morphological inflection of *vèpla* 'gawker' remains the same, *-a*. Morphologically, in all other nouns, this inflection is an indicator of feminine GENDER (Ambrazas 1997, Laigonaite 1961). However, for this restricted set of pejorative nouns, either feminine or masculine GENDER is allowed as indicated by the adjectival agreement in the examples above. We take this to be further evidence that even in languages with inherently *fixed* GENDER, *flexible* GENDER is possible. In other words, fixed and flexible GENDER may co-occur. As we see in (8)-(12), the same exponent, namely inflection *-a*, may be used for both *fixed* and *flexible* GENDER.

The second instance of GENDER switching is attested with nominalizations.

Lithuanian has dozens of nominalizers, most of which are associated with one inherent GENDER (either feminine or masculine). Just as with underived nouns, in most cases, GENDER switching is not allowed with nominalized nouns.

For example, the nominalizer *-ykl-* derives location nouns from eventive verbs. The derived nouns are of feminine GENDER, and a switch in GENDER is ungrammatical:

- (13) a. nauj-a valg-**ykl**-a  
 new-f eat-nomz-f  
 ‘new eatery (f)’
- b. \*nauj-as valg-**ykl**-as  
 new-m eat-nomz-m  
 intended: ‘new eatery (m)’

In contrast, the nominalizer, *-um-*, allows for GENDER switching. This nominalizer is very productive (Keinys 1999); it derives abstract nouns from adjectives denoting properties. The derived nouns are of masculine GENDER:

- (14) a. aukšt-as tall-m ‘tall (m)’      b. aukšt-a tall-f ‘tall (f)’      c. aukšt-**um**-as tall-nomz-m ‘tallness (m)’
- (15) a. aštr-us sharp-m ‘sharp (m)’      b. aštr-i sharp-f ‘sharp (f)’      c. aštr-**um**-as sharp-nomz-m ‘sharpness (m)’

With this nominalizer GENDER switching is possible and derives a location noun.

- (16) a. aukšt-**um**-as tall-nomz-m ‘tallness (m)’      b. aukšt-**um**-a tall-nomz-f ‘a high place (f)’
- (17) a. aštr-**um**-as sharp-nomz-m ‘sharpness’      b. aštr-**um**-a sharp-nomz-f ‘a sharp place (f)’

Thus, a switch in GENDER is also possible in derived nouns. In this case, in addition to deriving nouns with the nominalizer *-um-*, one can further derive new nouns by the switch in GENDER<sup>5</sup>.

We have now looked at the instances of *flexible* GENDER in Alambak (East Sepik) and Lithuanian (Baltic), languages unrelated either structurally or genetically. We have shown, in some detail, that regardless of whether *fixed* GENDER inherent to nouns is based on natural gender, conditioned semantically or assigned arbitrarily, *flexible* GENDER can be found. The question we address in the following section is as follows: are these instances of *flexible* GENDER a linguistic curiosity or are similar instances of *flexible* GENDER found cross-linguistically?

### 2.2.2 Generalizing over the Cases of *Flexible* GENDER

In this section, we first show that *flexible* GENDER is attested in a range of languages. Then we generalize over the patterns that we see emerge.

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<sup>5</sup> One could argue that this is an instance of *two* unrelated homophonous nominalizers. However, Ambrazas (2000:21-23) states that historically this is *one* nominalizer rather than two.



In the course of the review of data on GENDER available in the literature, we found numerous instances of *flexible* GENDER. For reasons of space, it is not possible to discuss the particulars of each language as we did with Alamblak and Lithuanian in the previous section. Therefore the observed generalizations are condensed into the table below. The first column describes the effect of *flexible* GENDER. The second column of the table identifies the language(s) and the language family, in alphabetical order. The third column provides the source of reference.

**Table 3.**

| Effect of <i>flexible</i> GENDER                     | Language  | Sources of reference                                       |
|--|---|--|
| evaluative shift: unusual                            | Alamblak (East Sepik);<br>Halkomelem (Salish)                             | Bruce 1984; Gerdtts to appear                              |
| evaluative shift: cultural novelty                   | Blackfoot (Algonquian)  | Armoskaite 2011;<br>Frantz & Russell 1995; fieldwork notes |
| evaluative: pejorative                               | Lithuanian (Baltic)   | Ambrasas 1997;<br>Laigonaite 1961                          |
| referentiality shift: change in discourse prominence | Plains Cree (Algonquian);<br>Teop (Austronesian);<br>Yimas (Lower Sepik); | Muehlbauer 2008<br>Mosel & Spriggs 2000, p.c.; Foley 1991  |
| number shift: count, mass, collective                | Old High German (Germanic)  | Leiss 2000   |
| number shift: singular, plural                       | Somali (Germanic)   | Lecarme 2002   |
| number shift: singulativization                      | Ojibwe (Algonquian);<br>Norwegian (Germanic)                              | Mathieu to appear,   |
| class shift: type- token                             | Teop (Austronesian)   | Mosel & Spriggs 2000, p.c.                                 |
| class shift: whole to atomic                         | Khasi (Khmer)   | Rabel 1961, 1977   |
| class shift: abstract to concrete                    | Lithuanian (Baltic)   | Ambrasas 2000<br>Armoskaite to appear                      |

The table shows that *flexible* GENDER is attested in a variety of unrelated languages. We take this to mean that *flexible* GENDER is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a common grammatical means to attain a shift in meaning. We acknowledge that the effect of *flexible* GENDER is language particular (evaluation, number, referentiality, etc.) and that it has to be explored further to ascertain the limits of variation. However, for the purposes of this paper, we focus on the similarities rather than the differences. Namely, all these languages undergo a switch in GENDER, which makes *flexible* GENDER a shared unifying characteristic. Assuming that semantic meaning is tied to syntactic structure, i.e., assuming a universal syntactic spine, the question then is: Where is *flexible* GENDER?

### 3. Proposal: *Flexible* GENDER is Nominal Aspect

In this section we propose a syntactic structure for *flexible* GENDER. We argue that it is an instance of nominal Aspect. In 3.1 we briefly review the basic background assumptions on Aspect. In 3.2 we flesh out our proposal: we identify *flexible* GENDER as grammatical nominal Aspect. In 3.3 we explain why our proposal captures the data better than other approaches.

#### 3.1 Assumptions on Aspect

Traditionally, Aspect is considered a verbal category. Two kinds of Aspect are distinguished: Inner Aspect (also known as lexical Aspect), and Outer Aspect (also known as grammatical Aspect (Rothstein 2004, Smith 1997, Verkuyl 1996, among many others)). Schematically, the two Aspects can be represented layered, as in Figure 1:

**Figure 1.**

Verbal Aspect  
 [IP[I[AspP<sub>OUTER</sub>[Asp[vP[v[AspP<sub>INNER</sub> [Asp[√v]]]]]]]]]]

Lexical aspect (also known as Aktionsart) concerns itself with the inherent structure of an event, pertaining to the lexical meaning of a particular verb. Specifically, verbs are classified into four subclasses of lexical Aspect: activities (*run*), accomplishments (*climb a mountain*), achievements (*blink*) and states (*sleep*). Grammatical Aspect concerns itself with how an event is viewed: as terminated (perfective) or ongoing (imperfective). For example, an activity verb like *run*, can be in the imperfective aspect (progressive in English) as in *John is running* or in the perfective aspect as in *John has run*. Grammatical Aspect has also been called viewpoint aspect because it has to do with a speaker's perspective of an event, and not with the inherent properties of an event (Smith 1997). Thus, while each predicate may be of one particular subtype of lexical Aspect, the same predicate may be of either – perfective or imperfective – grammatical Aspect.

Given the well-known parallel between nominal and verbal extended projections (Abney 1987 inter alia) we might expect that a similar distinction between Inner and Outer aspect is also found in the nominal domain. It has already been suggested that nouns can be classified based on nominal Inner aspect (also known as Seinsart (Rijkhoff 1991; Wiltschko, 2012)). *Seinsart* splits nouns into: abstract nouns, mass nouns, collective nouns, and individual nouns, as condensed into the table 4 below.

**Table 4.** Properties of Nominal Inner Aspect

|                |                    |                  |
|----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| SPACE          | structure unmarked | structure marked |
| shape unmarked | conceptual         | mass             |
| shape marked   | individual         | collective       |

In what follows, we explain how the contrast between the fixed versus flexible GENDER fits into nominal Aspect. Specifically, we expand on Rijkhoff's

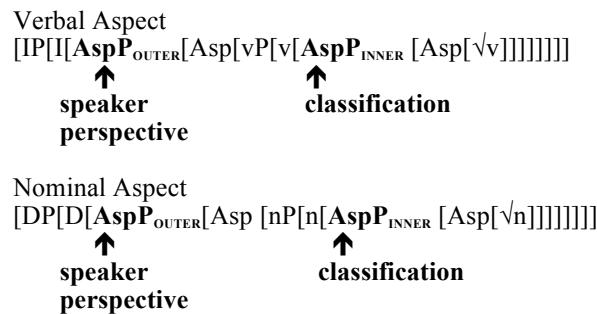
(1991) and Wiltschko's (2012) analysis arguing that there is also nominal Outer Aspect.

### 3.2 Identifying *Flexible* GENDER as Outer Nominal Aspect

We argue that *fixed* GENDER and *flexible* GENDER are the nominal equivalent to lexical and grammatical Aspect, respectively. Fixed GENDER corresponds to Seinsart, which splits nouns into inherent classes just like Aktionsart splits verbs into event classes. The focus here is on *flexible* GENDER which we analyse as an instance of nominal Outer Aspect.

The striking characteristic of *flexible* GENDER is the relevance of the speaker's perspective: a shift in GENDER indicates that the speaker views the individual denoted by the noun as unusual compared to other instances of individuals of its kind. *Flexible* GENDER is a grammatized expression of deviation from the norm.<sup>6</sup> The norm is in the eye of the beholder, i.e., the speaker. It introduces the frame of reference for evaluation. This is akin to grammatical Aspect in the verbal domain, where the interpretation of an event as terminated or not terminated depends on speaker perspective and is not inherent to the lexical meaning of the verb. Therefore we suggest that syntactically *flexible* GENDER is a manifestation of grammatical Aspect. Thus we now have parallel aspectual structures in the verbal and the nominal domain. The parallels between nominal and verbal Aspect are highlighted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.**



In sum, the analysis we propose allows us to understand not only the heterogeneity of GENDER but also why the same grammatical category, namely GENDER, can have two distinct manifestations, both within and across languages: it can instantiate both Inner and Outer Aspect.

We argue that *the difference in meaning correlates with the difference in structure*. Thus, we place the *fixed* GENDER in the position of lexical, inner Aspect, while *flexible* GENDER is located in the position of grammatical, outer Aspect. The same exponent is placed into a different syntactic position to instantiate a different grammatical category.

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<sup>6</sup> What in particular is considered as a violation of the norm may be language specific, e.g., behavior, shape, reference, size, and so on. The content and the boundaries of the norm versus the deviation from the norm remain to be explored in further detail.

### 3.3 Alternative Approaches

Although there is a great amount of new literature on the syntax and semantics of GENDER, little has been said on the instances of *flexible* GENDER which is our focus here. The discussion usually revolves around the issue of whether GENDER is conditioned lexically or syntactically.

The lexicalist view holds that GENDER is an inherent classificatory feature (Hockett 1958, etc). Instances of *flexible* GENDER are simply not addressed.

The syntactic view holds that GENDER is assigned. There is considerable difference in opinion on how GENDER assignment works. Ritter (1991) started the discussion on the syntactic locus of GENDER in different languages. She proposed two distinct syntactic positions for GENDER: GENDER may be on the noun, or it may be associated with the functional category Number within the nominal projection. Hower, her focus was on the cases of *fixed* GENDER.

Picallo (1991, 2008) posits a separate projection for GENDER. Thus, GENDER is elevated to a status of a functional head. Again, the cases of *flexible* GENDER are not considered.

Mathieu (to appear) proposes that a switch in GENDER in Ojibwe can be reduced to an instance of singulativization. I.e., a change in GENDER is tied to a change in Number. However, the instances of *flexible* GENDER remain outside his system.

Kramer (2009, 2011; cf. Armoskaite 2011) argues for a distinction between interpretable GENDER features versus uninterpretable GENDER features. However, Amharic data she analyzes does not include instances of *flexible* GENDER.

### 4. Conclusions. Further Questions

We have shown that expressions of GENDER are heterogeneous in meaning and form (1.1-1.2). We have concluded that content may be divorced from the formal expression and therefore we have predicted flexibility in GENDER (1.3). The prediction is borne out: we have compared instances of *fixed* GENDER to instances of *flexible* GENDER. We proposed that the difference in GENDER is conditioned syntactically, and argued for the nominal Outer Aspect as the manifestation of *flexible* GENDER. This is just the beginning as much remains to be done to explicitly show how the nominal Outer Aspect works, and what effect it has on the rest of grammar of a particular language. The immediate data questions to be addressed are: what is the relation of nominal Outer Aspect with number and evaluative means of a particular grammar? The larger theoretical question is: if nominal Outer Aspect is universal, how is it expressed in genderless languages?

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