Gender distinctions and classifiers in Austronesian languages

Victoria Chen and Maria Polinsky

Contents

1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of gender distinctions and classifier systems in Austronesian languages. The Austronesian family encompasses over 1,200 languages (Ethnologue) spoken across Maritime Southeast Asia and the Pacific, stretching from Madagascar in the west to Polynesia in the east. This island-based family traces its origins to Taiwan and subsumes a higher-order branch known as Malayo-Polynesian (MP), which comprises all Austronesian languages spoken outside Taiwan.[1] MP languages are traditionally divided into two groups: Western Malayo-Polynesian (WMP) and Central-Eastern Malayo-Polynesian (CEMP). WMP languages are distributed across the Philippines, western Indonesia, Borneo, and Sulawesi, as well as the Malay Peninsula and coastal areas of Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia. CEMP languages are spoken in Lesser Sunda, Maluku Islands, the coasts of Halmahera, and throughout Oceania (Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia). An interested reader should consult Blust (2013, 2019) for a comprehensive overview of the classification and subgrouping of Austronesian languages; see also Smith (2017) for a recent refinement of the internal classification of MP languages.

Although gender is not a prominent feature within the Austronesian family (Himmelmann 2005; Schapper 2010; Blust 2013; Levin & Polinsky 2019), several types of gender distinctions are found in a small number of geographically diverse languages; the geographical diversity suggests that these distinctions are secondary developments. Notably, the reported distinctions manifest several typologically unusual types, including (i) gender distinction registered only in second person, (ii) gender distinction only in third person plural, and (iii) non-sex-based gender distinctions. In addition, a handful of Austronesian languages have developed contact-induced grammatical gender distinctions following recent contact with Spanish and Portuguese. Representative cases of this type are summarised section 2.

The second focus of this chapter is classifier systems in Austronesian languages. The use of classifiers is a well-known feature of Oceanic languages – a subgroup of CEMP. Section 3 discusses differences between gender and classifier systems and presents the main instances of classifiers in Oceanic languages.

Austronesian languages are predominantly agglutinative. Given the size of the family, any generalizations concerning the whole family are bound to remain rather shallow. Nevertheless, a number of features can be viewed as characteristic of Austronesian: the relevance of stems in word-formation and inflection, the predominance of prefixes over suffixes, productive infixation, extensive reduplication, head-initial orders, articulated voice systems, and articulated systems of possession marking. For a general overview of the morphosyntax of Austronesian languages, see Blust (2013), Levin & Polinsky (2019), and Chen, Polinsky, and Potsdam (to appear).

2 Gender distinctions in Austronesian langauges

Three types of gender distinction are found within the Austronesian family: gender-based lexical difference (2.1), pronominal gender distinctions (2.2.1), and gender agreement on demon-

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[1]For more details about Malayo-Polynesian languages' linguistic position within the Austronesian family and their relationship with Austronesian languages spoken in Taiwan, see Chen et al. (2022) for a recent re-examination.

stratives, numerals, and/or adjectives (2.2.2). Based on existing literature, all three are found primarily in western Austronesian languages (i.e., Austronesian languages outside the Oceanic subgroup). Below we provide an overview of reported cases of the three types. Finally, we provide an overview of recently arising gender distinctions in AN due to contact with Spanish and Portuguese (2.2.3).

2.1 Gender-based speech differences

Due to ongoing language endangerment and limited documentation, it is difficult to estimate the exact extent of gender-based speech differences in Austronesian languages. To date, two reported cases are the Atayal (ISO 639-3 tay) language of interior northern Taiwan and Cham (ISO 639-3 cja) of coastal Vietnam. In both languages, there is a substantial number of lexical items whose forms differ depending on whether the speaker is male or female. In other words, the attested lexical differences are geared to the biological gender of the speaker.

Atayal. Li (1980, 1982) report a system of pervasive lexical differences between men's and women's speech in two dialects of Atayal, Mayrinax/Matu'uwal and Paʔkualiʔ. Although the Atayal people are patrilineal, the basic forms in both dialects are female, and male forms are derived from them.

Women's forms generally preserve the typical Austronesian CVCVC structure. Men's forms manifest a wide range of additional morphological derivations, including (i) extra affixation (suffixation or infixation), (ii) intervocalic consonant deletion, (iii) epenthesis of /a/ or /i/, (iv) replacement of the final consonant or syllable, or (v) replacement of an initial or medial consonant. Some examples of these types are given in (1). See Li (1980) for other attested patterns and morphological distinctions that are hard to classify.

(1) Representative morphological derivations of Mayrinax men's forms (Li 1980: 1047–51)

	Women	Men	Morphological derivation	Gloss
1	kahuy	kahu-niq	replacing final C with the suffix *-niq*	'tree'
2	hapuy	hapu-niq		'fire'
3	paysan	pisan-iq	deletion of first V with suffixation of -iq	'taboo'
4	mitutul	mtutul-iq		'get up'
5	mataq	mat-il-uq	infixation of *-il-*	'raw'
6	ɣuquh	ɣuq-il-uh		'banana'
7	qaxaʔ	qax-in-uʔ	infixation of -in-	'beads'
8	qasuɣ	qas-in-uɣ		'animal'
9	ta-thawk-an	ta-thaw-na-k-an	infixation of -na- before final C	'stool'
10	s-um-ayuɣ	s-um-ayu-na-ɣ		'take over, follow'
11	raɣum	raum	deletion of medial /ɣ/	'needle'
12	qaɣum	qaum		'anteater'
13	ca-caqis	ca-caʔing	suffixation of -Cing	'thread'
14	kucu'	kuhing		'head louse'
15	luhung	luh-i-ung	insertion of /i/ before final V	'mortar'
16	takis	tak-i-is		'knife'
17	ma-qilup	ma-qila-a-p	insertion of /a/ before final V	'sleep'
18	q-um-asuɣ	q-um-asw-a-ɣ		'divide'
19	t-um-inun	t-um-inuq	replacement of final C with *-q* or *-x*	'weave'
20	man caqruɣ	man caʔrux		'stand'

These gender-based lexical differences are documented in considerable detail: 107 of the approximately 1,500 lexical items recorded show gender-differentiated variants, most of which

are derived from the same root. These items are not limited to a particular type of part of speech, but cover both nouns and verbs (including stative/adjectival verbs). As Blust (2013) summarizes, 72 out of the 107 of the male forms were derived by adding a suffix, 25 were derived by adding an infix, 30 by deleting/substituting a consonant in the stem and a small number (less than 10) are suppletive forms. These differences are better preserved in the speech of older speakers. Younger speakers tend not to know the differences and consequently mix up the male and female forms. Speakers' views towards the two forms of speech vary. A female consultant considers women's speech "gentle" and men's speech "rude". Older speakers, be they female or male, are familiar with both types (Li 1980, 1982).

Notably, men's speech forms in these two dialects generally correspond more closely to the cognate forms in other Atayal dialects with no gender-differentiated speech. Consider some examples of the correspondences in (2), which demonstrates gender-based lexical differences between Mayrinax and the uniform cognate form in the Skikun dialect of Atayal. Anticipated but unattested female speech forms appear in parentheses.

(2)

	Women (Mayrinax)	Men (Mayrinax)	Skikun	Proto-Austronesian
1	kahuy	kahuniq	qhuniq	*kaSiw 'wood, tree'
2	hapuy	hupuniq	puniq	*Sapuy 'fire'
3	raʔan	raniq	ryaniq	*zalan 'path, road'
4	mataq	matiluq	mteluq	*mataq 'raw'
5	kucuʔ	kuhing	kuhing	*kuCu 'head louse'

The origins of Mayrinax's men's speech remain unclear. One hypothesis is that it originated as a secret language used by initiated males (Li 1983). This would account for the fact that the innovative forms of many lexical items are, or were, originally the exclusive prerogative of male speakers. A reservation raised by the same author is that the morphological derivation of male forms is highly complex and irregular, while the derivation of most secret languages tends to be rule-governed. Blust (2013), however, notes that some documented secret languages, such as Prokem, show several patterns of word derivation that are not fully regular, thus weakening Li's critique. Due to ongoing endangerment of Mayrinax and Paʔkualiʔ, it is unclear whether this system of gender-differentiated speech can be further studied.

Cham. To the best of our knowledge, Cham is currently the only other documented Austronesian language known to exhibit gender-based lexical differences. Blood (1961) reports that these differences primarily appear as phonological variations in Cham, although they may also extend to the level of different lexical items. The phonological distinctions between male and female speech often stem from disparities in access to the traditional Indian-based Cham script, which traditionally has been more available to men rather than women. Consequently, men's speech may incorporate conservative features resulting from the influence of literary pronunciations.

It is worth noting that not all male speakers exhibit these characteristics. This, as Blood notes, suggests that women's speech is simply the unmarked, gender-neutral register, while men's speech deviates from this norm. It is presumed that this deviant style is associated with prestige, leading Blood to consider it as the fundamental form of speech, and regard the basic style as marked. Unlike the case of Mayrinax Atayal, there is no evidence to suggest that these "gender-based" speech differences (which could be more accurately described as education-based) have ever served the purpose of concealing message content.

2.2 Grammatical gender distinctions

Although most Austronesian languages have no grammatical gender, recent work has reported at least four types in a small number of Austronesian languages: (i) masculine/feminine, (ii) human/non-human, (iii) animate/inanimate (known also as non-neuter/neuter), and (iv) non-binary distinctions of various types. Among the four, non-sex-based pronominal gender distinctions (instances of (ii) and (iii)) are fairly common in AN, rendering the family unusual to the generalization that most gender contrasts on personal pronouns are sex-based (Siewierska 2013).

The reported cases of grammatical gender are distributed in seven geographically non-adjacent regions: southeastern Borneo, west Sumatra, Lombok, Palau, New Guinea and surrounding islands, and Loyalty Islands (New Caledonia), as well as the Marshall Islands. With regard to subgrouping affiliation, these languages fall under several distinct Malayo-Polynesian subgroups: Western Indonesian (Sasak, Muller-Schwaner Punan, Minangkabau), Palau (Palau), Eastern Malayo-Polynesian (Biak, Dusner, Windesi-Wandamen), and Oceanic (Kilivila, Dehu, Kaulong, Marshallese).

The discussion below is divided into three subsections: gender-marking on noun classes (2.2.1), pronominal gender distinctions (2.2.2), and grammatical gender distinctions beyond pronominal-marking (2.2.3). The discussion of pronominal gender distinction is organised by person (second vs. third) and number (singular, plural, or both). Finally, a summary of contact-induced gender distinctions arising from AN's recent contact with Romance languages is presented in 2.2.4.

2.2.1 Pronominal gender distinctions

Most Austronesian languages employ no pronominal gender distinctions. This is reflected in the pronominal paradigm of Proto-Austronesian and Proto-Malayo-Polynesian (3), where no gender distinction is reconstructed in either proto language (Blust 2013: 314).

(3)

	Proto-Austronesian	Proto-Malayo-Polynesian
1SG	*i-aku	*i-aku
2SG	*i-Su, i-kaSu	*i-kahu
3SG	*si-ia	*si-ia
1PL (INCL)	*i-(k)ita	*i-(k)ita
1PL (EXCL)	*i-(k)ami	*i-(k)ami
2PL	*i-kamu	*i-kamu, ihu
3PL	*si-ida	*si-ida

Nevertheless, some Malayo-Polynesian languages possess pronominal gender distinctions of various types, including (i) gender distinctions registered only in second person (2.2.1.1), (ii) distinctions in both third singular and plural (2.2.1.2), (iii) distinctions only in third singular (2.2.1.3), and (iv) distinctions only in third plural (2.2.1.4).

2.2.1.1 Pronominal gender distinctions only in second person

Pronominal gender oppositions are characteristic of the third rather than the first or second person (Siewierska 2013); only 1.6% of the languages with pronominal gender distinctions

reported in WALS display gender distinctions exclusively in the first or second person to the exclusion of the third person.

Two western Austronesian languages, Sasak (ISO 639-3 sas) and Minangkabau (ISO 639-3), are examples of this rare type. Both employ pronominal gender distinctions only in the second person. Notably, although geographically not adjacent, both belong to the Western Indonesian subgroup of MP.

Sasak (Lombok, west Indonesia). In the Ngenó-Ngene dialect of Sasak, the low register second person distinguishes male and female addressee as *ante* (male), and *kamu* (female) (Austin 2000). The male form *ante* is a lexical innovation, whereas the female form *kamu* is a reflex of PAN *kamu 'second person singular' (Blust 2013). The same two-way distinction is found in Ngenó-Ngene's pronominal clitic forms: *mèq* (male) and *bi* (female) (Austin 2010:5).

Minangkabau (west Indonesia). Minangkabau, an Austronesian language of West Sumatra, Indonesia, exhibits a similar distinction in second person: *waang/ang* 'second person masculine familiar' vs. *engkau/kau* 'second person feminine familiar' (Crouch 2009:87; Steinhauer 2010:315). Nusantara (2012) reports an even more elaborate four-way system (4). It is unclear whether the difference is dialectal.

(4)   Second-person singular pronouns in Minangkabau

Masculine		Feminine	
familiar or younger	old or unfamiliar	familiar or younger	older or unfamiliar
wa'an	*uda*	*kau*	*uni*

Since gender distinctions in both languages are portmanteau with politeness features, it is likely that such distinctions in the second person is a by-product of the emergence of register system common in Indonesian-type languages. Whether or not a similar distinction exists in under-documented languages and dialects of the area awaits future investigation.

2.2.1.2   Pronominal gender distinctions in third person

Pronominal gender distinctions in third person are found in several distinct regions within AN: southeastern Borneo, western New Guinea, West New Britain, Loyalty Islands, Palau, and the Marshal Islands. In line with Siewierska's (2013) generalization mentioned above, none of these languages exhibit gender distinctions in first or second person. Among these languages, Drehu (ISO 639-3 dhv) is the only language with gender distinctions in both third singular and plural. Drehu is indigenous to the Lifou Island (part of the Loyalty Islands), New Caledonia. It possesses a three-way number distinction in the third person (singular vs. dual vs. plural), along with five genders in the singular, two in the dual, and three in the plural (Tryon 1967: 72). The forms of gendered pronouns are presented in (5).

(5) Drehu third-person pronouns

Singular	aŋeič (familiar)
	xapo (distinctive)
	ñæn (father of son)
	eð (animal)
	eal̥o, ñiḍo (woman, respectful)
Dual	ñiḍo
	lueð (animals)
Plural	aŋat
	ñuden
	ite eð (animals)

According to Corbett (2013), a gender system with five or more distinctions – such as that shown in Drehu's third singular paradigm – is typologically rare, constituting only 21.4% of all languages with gender distinctions. That the same number of distinction is not attested in Drehu's dual and the plural follows consistently from Greenberg's Universals 37 and 45:

(6) a. Universal 37: A language never has more gender categories in nonsingular numbers than in the singular.

 b. Universal 45: If there are any gender distinctions in the plural of the pronoun, there are some gender distinctions in the singular also.

Several morphological strategies shown in the paradigm also deserve a note. One is the homophony between the respectful singular form for women and the dual human form, which maybe a side effect of politeness; a singular referent is represented as a non-singular. The second is the derivation of the dual and the plural form for animal based on the singular form *eð*. Finally, the dual and the plural contrast can be viewed as a human vs. non-human distinction. However, determining whether this distinction holds depends on how inanimate nouns are addressed. This information is lacking from Tryon's description.

2.2.1.3   Pronominal gender distinction only in third singular

Gender commonly interacts with number. Among the 54 languages included in a recent survey by Bjorkman et al. (2022), only 17 languages (31%) mark gender exclusively in singular. Four groups of Austronesian languages are reported with gender distinctions in third person singular: the Muller-Schwaner Punan languages of southeastern Borneo, two languages of New Guinea: Kilivila (Trobriand Islands) and Windesi Wandamen (Bird's Head), and Kaulong (New Britain), which is commonly classified as an Austronesian language. None of these languages is included in Bjorkman et al.'s (2022) survey. The distinctions reported include (i) a three-way distinction of masculine/feminine/inanimate, (ii) animate/inanimate, and (iii) masculine/feminine.

Muller-Schwaner Punan languages (southeastern Borneo). A three-grade pronominal gender system is attested in several groups of nomadic Punan in the Muller-Schwaner Mountains of southeast Borneo (Sellato 1981). Depending on the gender of the speaker, different pronominal forms are used; however, the distinction only occurs in the singular. The pronominal paradigm of four Muller-Schwaner Punan languages is presented in (7).

(7)

		Seputan	Kereho	Nanga Ira'	Aoheng
Male speaker	he	*ana*	*ana*	*ana*	*ana*
	she	*isɔ*	*sɔ*	*sɔʔ*	*hɔ*
	it	*hɔ*	*hɔ*	*hɔ*	*hɔ*
Female speaker	he	*isɔ*	*sɔ*	*sɔʔ*	*hɔ*
	she	*isɔ*	*sɔ*	*sɔʔ*	*hɔ*
	it	*hɔ*	*hɔ*	*hɔ*	*hɔ*

As (7) shows, Seputan, Kerebo, and Nanga Ira' all display both a masculine/feminine and an animate/inanimate patterning in their pronominal system. Although both male and female speakers of three languages consistently distinguish animate (*he/she*) from inanimate (*it*), only male speakers distinguish male pronominal referents from female ones. These systems are thus sensitive to the sex of the speaker, or to relative sex. This system, as Blust (2013) notes, is similar to the sibling terminologies of many Austronesian languages, although a parameter of relative sex in sibling terminology is almost always symmetrical (i.e., works for both male and female speakers). In Aoheng, we find the contrast between the masculine and non-masculine (subsuming the feminine and the inanimate), which may be a result of morphological syncretism.

Kilivila, Windesi Wandamen, and Kaulong (New Guinea and offshore islands). A handful of Austronesian languages spoken in western New Guinea possess gender distinctions. Kilivila, spoken in the Trobriand Islands of Papua New Guinea, exhibits a masculine/feminine distinction in third person singular: *mtona/mtovena* 'he' vs. *minana/minavena* 'she' (Senft 1986:46–47). An animate/inanimate distinction is reported in the Windesi dialect of Wandamen (also known as Wamesa) (Anceaux 1961:155; Gasser 2014:249–250). Notably, this distribution is only transparent in the object position: the third-person singular pronoun *andi* may be used in either subject or object position; when present in the object position, it implies a human antecedent, whereas the pronoun *i* can only appear in object position and may denote any level of animacy, encompassing all three of 'he/she/it' (Gasser 2014:249–250). This is commonly considered to be due to contact with Papuan languages (Blust 2013:320).[2] The Kaulong language spoken in New Britain also distinguishes gender in the third singular pronouns, which is a likely by-product of long-term contact with Papuan languages spoken in New Britain: Anem, Baining, Kol, Pele-Ata, Sulka, and Taulil (Blust 2013:699).

2.2.1.4 Pronominal gender distinction only in third plural

According to Bjorkman et al. (2022), very few languages (4% of the languages surveyed) mark gender only in the plural. Besides the two languages noted in their study – Marshallese and

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[2]The genetic affiliation of Kaulong remains a topic of debate due to conflicting views. Kaulong is traditionally classified as AN for two main reasons: first, the existence of a few Austronesian basic vocabulary in its lexicon. For instance, *mara* (for 'eye' *susu* for 'breast', as well as its 1st person plural inclusive form. However, it is worth noting that apart from these instances, the pronoun system and the majority of basic vocabulary in Kaulong do not resemble Austronesian. Only a small number of other essential words can be identified as Austronesian. Since borrowed words are less likely to be found in basic vocabulary compared to non-basic vocabulary, proponents of classifying these languages as Austronesian argue that the presence of clearly Austronesian forms in fundamental vocabulary, coupled with the absence of a definitive link to an undisputed Papuan language, supports their position (Blust 2013:699).

Palauan – a handful of understudied Austronesian languages of western New Guinea also mark gender only in third-person plural: four Aru languages (Biak, Dusner, Nuaulu, and Windesi-Wandamen). These languages thus constitute rare exceptions to Greenberg's Universal 45 (8b), although they have not been widely discussed in the typological literature.

Not only are these languages exceptional to this generalization, but they also manifest two types of non-sex-based gender distinctions that are typologically rare: human vs. non-human and neuter (inanimate) vs. non-neuter (animate). According to WALS (Corbett 2013), such non-sex based distinctions are uncommon and consist of 25% of all languages with grammatical gender distinctions.

(a) The human vs. non-human distinction. Two geographically distinct languages, Palauan (ISO 639-3 pau) and Marshallese (ISO 639-3 mah), possess a similar type of pronominal gender distinction that distinguishes between human and non-human in third plural. Although both are spoken in Oceania, the two languages belong to distinct subgroups of the Austronesian family and are geographically distant.

Palauan. Palauan displays a human/non-human distinction in two possessive pronominal suffixes, *-el* and *-ir*. The latter refer only to human plural possessors, and *-el* must be used where the plural possessor is non-human. Therefore, the suffix *-el* can refer not only to 'his', 'her', or 'its', but also 'their' if the possessors are animals or things (Josephs 2019:61). Therefore, Palauan is distinct from languages like English in using the same possessor ending *-el* regardless of whether the third person singular possessor is male ('his') or female ('her'), or designates an animal or thing ('its'). This distinction between human and non-human is important. The pronouns *ng* and *ţe* are the only pronouns available in the language to make reference to some third party. While the majority of speakers can use *ţe* only to refer to two or more human beings, *ng* has a much wider range of use, since it can refer not only to anything singular (whether human beings, animals, or living or non-living things) but also to plural things, as long as they are not human. For this reason, *ng* can be translated as 'he', 'she', or 'it' when singular and as 'they' when non-human plural (Josephs 2019:46).

Marshallese. Marshallese exhibits human v.s non-human distinction in third person plural: the third-person objective pronouns may only be used for humans (8a); nonhuman objects are indicated by the object marker *-i* (8b).

(8) a. E-ar   deṇōt   er.
        3S.AGR-T.PAST slap.TRANS 3PL.OBJ
        'He slapped them (human).'

     b. E-ar   deṇōt-i.
        3S.AGR-T.PAST slap.TRANS-OBJ
        'He slapped them (nonhuman).' (Willson 2008: 19)

Marshallese also displays gender agreement on determiners and demonstratives that shows a human/non-human contrast with third-person plural nouns. See 2.2.3 for details.

(b) The neuter vs. non-neuter distinction. Many Austronesian languages spoken in New Guinea and surrounding islands possess a two-way gender distinction between neuter (inanimate) vs. non-neuter (animate), a feature commonly considered to be a product of contact with

gender-rich Papuan languages (Blust 2013; Schapper 2015).[3] Several representative languages are introduced below.

Biak (Schouten Islands, western New Guinea). Biak (ISO 639-3: bhw) possesses gender distinctions between animates and inanimates in third person plural but not third singular, as in (9) (Steinhauer 1985:470). Apostrophes in the table indicate stressed vowels.

(9)

	Singular	Dual	Trial	Plural
1 exclusive	ai'a	nu	n?o	
1 inclusive	–	?u	?o	
2	'au	mu	m?o	
3 animate	i	su	s?o	si
3 inanimate				na

This neuter/non-neuter distinction in third plural is also shown in alienable possessive pronouns, as well as verbal agreement prefixes and demonstratives. See 2.2.3 for a discussion of Biak's gender-marking beyond pronominal-marking. A similar neuter vs. non-neuter distinction is found in a number of Austronesian languages spoken in New Guinea and surrounding islands, including three languages of western New Guinea: Dusner (ISO 639-3: dsn) (Dalrymple and Mofu 2012), Windesi-Wandamen (ISO 639-3: wad) (Gasser 2015), and Nuaulu (ISO 639-3: nxl) of the Seram Island (Bolton 1990). As Schapper (2015: 2) notes, these can all be considered instances of a broader areal pattern in which a neuter gender distinction is made in the third person. A neuter vs. non-neuter distinction is also attested in several Muller-Schwaner Punan languages of southeastern Borneo, although that distinction may possibly be a result of morphological syncretism. See section 2.2.2.3 for details.

2.2.2 Grammatical gender distinctions beyond pronominal-marking

The neuter gender system in eastern Indonesia. Many Austronesian languages of West Papua that exhibit a neuter (inanimate) vs. non-neuter (animate) gender distinction (2.2.2.4; Schapper 2010) employ grammatical gender-marking beyond pronouns. Importantly, although the neuter/non-neuter distinction can often be semantic-based (animacy), gender in these languages is a grammatical category. In Biak, animate agreement is taken by many nouns with inanimate referents such as alcoholic drinks, metals and items made from them, and vegetable or animal products which are small in size and typically occur in quantities (Van den Heuvel 2006: 101–102).

The Aru languages of Western New Guinea (east Indonesia) possess an elaborate grammatical gender system of this type (Schapper 2015). These languages display grammatical gender distinctions not only in verbal agreement, but also on numerals and demonstratives. Although the two-way animate/inanimate distinction has a strong semantic basis (namely, in most cases it is sufficient to know the meaning of a noun in order to determine its gender), the distinction in all three Aru languages includes entities that lack discernable semantic animacy in the animate gender, and a variation is observed among the three languages regarding the classification of nouns that lack real-world animacy.

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[3]However, to the best of our knowledge, sex-based gender distinctions are way more common in Papuan langauges than a neuter/non-neuter contrast (Corbett 2013). It is likely, though, that direct structural levelling is not the only possible outcome of contact-induced change.

In the Aru language Ujir (ISO 639-3: udj), for example, subject verb agreement shows an ANIMATE-INANIMATE gender distinction between the ANIMATE plural agreement =*si* (10a) and the INANIMATE plural form =*di* (10b):

(10) Ujir

    a. Tamata bangi=**si**.
       person big=**3PL.ANIMATE**
       'The people are big.'

    b. Juma bangi=**di**.
       house big=**3PL.INANIMATE**
       'The houses are big.' (Schapper 2015:5–6)

This distinction is grammatical and not semantic: a number of nouns with inanimate referents are classified as animate, including common material goods used in the home and garden, such as 'plate', 'axe', 'pot' and 'spoon', as well as natural force, such as 'wave' (11a) (Schapper 2015: 7). Note the animate-marking *si* on the numeral 'three' that modifies the ANIMATE noun *mareen* 'wave'. Consider also (11b), where the determiner 'that' is shown in the inanimate form when modifying the INANIMATE compound word 'fruit'.

(11)   a. Mareen lati=**si** da-ma.
       wave three=**ANIMATE** 3PL-come
       'There came three waves.' (Schapper 2015:9)

    b. Kay fu~fuay **el** a-mina ba?
       tree RED-fruit **THAT.INANIMATE** 3SG-stay where
       'Where is the fruit?' (Schapper 2015:9)

In eastern Indonesia languages with neuter gender, the grammatical gender distinction is often marked beyond pronouns and appears on numerals, determiners/demonstratives, and/or verbs, and different languages vary in the domains in which neuter gender agreement is shown. See (12) for a comprehensive summary provided in Schapper (2010).[4]

(12)

	Personal pronouns		Possessive pronouns		Demonstrative pronouns	Number		
	Free	bound	AL.	INAL.		SG	DU	PL
Biak	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓
Roon	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Windesi	✓	✓					N/A	✓
Waropen					✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
Matbat	✓					✓	N/A	
Ma'ya	✓					✓	N/A	
Alune	✓	✓	✓			✓	N/A	✓
Nuaulu		✓	✓	✓		✓	N/A	✓
Larike		✓		✓		✓		✓
Paulohi	✓	✓				✓	N/A	✓
Dobel		(✓)			✓	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kola					✓	✓	N/A	✓
Selaru		✓				N/A	N/A	N/A

---

[4]Biak, Roon, Windesi-Wandamen, and Waropen are Austronesian languages in the region of Cenderwasih Bay. Matbat and Ma'ya are Austronesian languages in the Raja Ampat Islands. Alune, Nuaulu, Larike, and Paulohi are Austronesian languages in the region of central Maluku. Dobel and Kola (Aru islands) and Selaru (Tanimbar islands) are Austronesian languages in the southern Maluku and Timor region.

The distribution of Austronesian languages of eastern Indonesia that display neuter gender is illustrated below.

(13)   Distribution of Austronesian languages with neuter gender marking
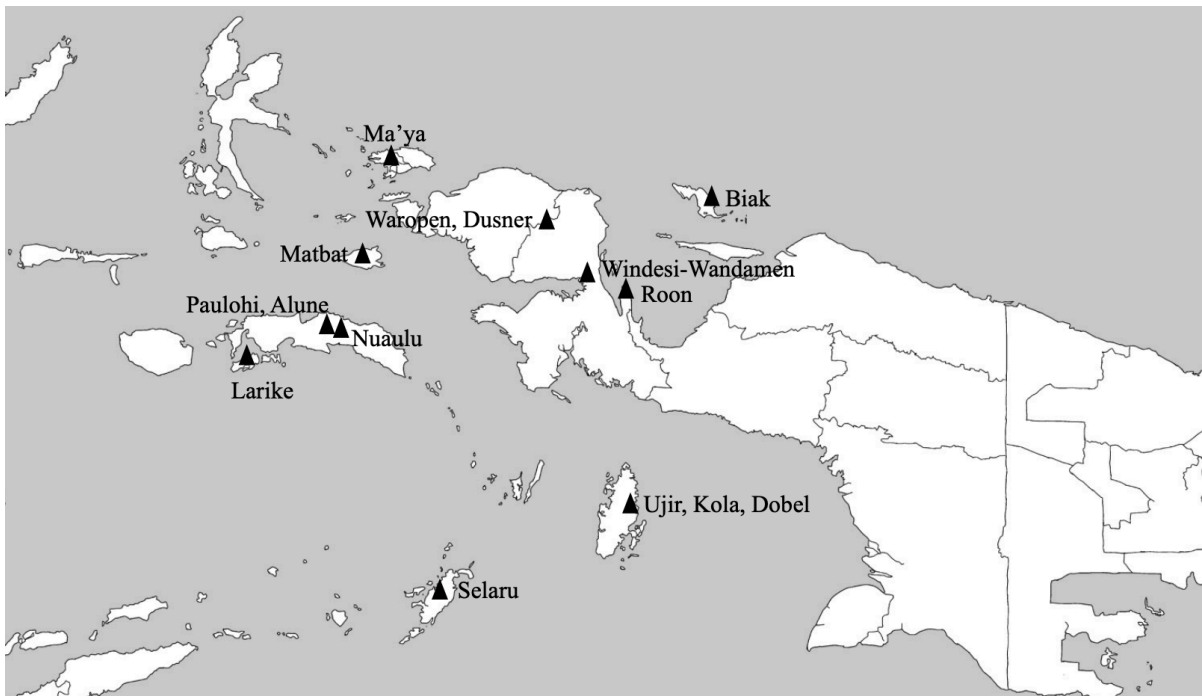
Marshallese. Marshallese (Micronesian) also displays gender agreement on determiners and demonstratives. Different from the neuter gender system, however, gender agreement in Marshallese manifests a two-way human/non-human contrast. Importantly, the distinction is only shown in third-person plural and not singular, contra Greenberg's Universal 37 (6a). For example, the singular definite determiner is *eo* (14a), while the plural definite determiners for non-humans and humans are *ko* and *ro* respectively (14b). For details of its neuter gender system, see Bender (1968) and Willson (2008).

(14)   a.   Ewi   { pinjẹl / ḷaddik } **eo**?
              where.is { pencil / boy   } **the.S**
              'Where is the pencil/boy?'

       b.   Erki   pinjẹl **ko**?
              where.are.nh pencil **the.PL.NH**
              'Where are the pencils?'

       c.   Erri   ḷaddik **ro**?
              where.are.h boy   **the.PL.H**
              'Where are the boys?' (Willson 2008:16)

2.2.3   Contact-induced gender borrowing

Recent work has shown that gender distinctions may be the outcome of language contact, pushing the existing gender systems to recede, disappear, or alternatively to be reshaped (see, e.g., Stolz 2008, 2012, 2019; Hajek and Williams-van Klinken 2019). The late 15th and 16th centuries witnessed the arrival of the Spanish and Portuguese in the Pacific, sparking extensive

linguistic interaction between the Romance languages of the explorers and various Austronesian languages in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. This contact occurred notably in regions such as the Philippines, Timor-Leste (also known as East Timor), and parts of eastern Indonesia and Micronesia, where Spanish and Portuguese colonial influence left a lasting impact. Several documented cases of contact include Chamorro, Tagalog, and Tetun Dili, as well as different varieties of Malay/Indonesian, which feature gender-differentiated suffixes borrowed from Sanskrit and gender-speific pronouns *bicu* 'he' and *bica* 'she' alongside the gender-neutral native third-person pronoun (Monteiro 1975; Steinhauer 2010). Consider, for example, the Tetun Dili example (15), where the vowel /a/ in 'person' *ema* (the Tetun equivalent of Portuguese *pessoa* 'person', which is feminine and is frequently used in formal registers when identifying numbers of participants) encourages a feminine interpretation given the clear phonological association between that particular vowel and feminine gender in the Portuguese gender system (Hajek and Williams-van Klinken 2019:78).

(15) Peter Coleman, <u>ema</u> <u>Australiana</u>, uluk hanesan vise-prezidente ...
      Peter Coleman person <u>Australian.**FEM**</u> formerly like vice-president
      'Peter Coleman, an Australian, used to be vice-president [of a large company]...'

The influence of Romance languages on certain Austronesian languages in terms of gender marking has its roots in extensive lexical borrowing. In Portuguese and Spanish, gender distinctions (masculine vs. feminine) are an important component of grammar; nouns are specified for gender irrespective of semantic content, and adjectives must agree in gender with their respective head nouns. Stolz (2012) and Hajek and Williams-van Klinken (2019) offer a comprehensive overview of Romance influence on the gender system of Austronesian languages, and we reproduce an important generalization put forward by Hajek and Williams-van Klinken in (16):

(16) Implicational scales for contact-induced gender marking and agreement (Hajek and Williams-van Klinken 2019:85–86)

a. Contact-induced gender phenomena are very sensitive to lectal type, occurring much more in the acrolect than the mesolect, and more in the mesolect than in the basilect.

b. Contact-induced gender phenomena occur almost exclusively in loans from the gendered language, spreading very little to native vocabulary. This includes grammatical gender agreement.

c. Gender agreement is expected in borrowed fixed phrases.

d. Gendered pairs of human-related lexemes follow a particular scale:
   kin > common professions > other professions.

e. Adjectives which semantically distinguish essential male and female human traits such as attractiveness are more likely to show regular gender-marking than other human-related adjectives.
   'handsome/pretty/goodlooking' > other adjectives describing humans.

f. (Gender) agreement follows a predictable scale in terms of word order and syntactic structure:
   attributive adjective in non-native position > attributive adjective in native position

> attributive adjective in native position but separated from it by other words > predicative adjective.

2.3 Interim conclusion

Although the majority of Austronesian languages exhibit no grammatical gender, several typologically rare types of gender distinction are attested in a small number of languages of the family, including (i) pronominal genders only in second person and (ii) pronominal genders only in third plural but not third singular, as well as (iii) gender-marking on numerals, determiners/demonstratives, and verbs. The table below summarizes the types of gender distinctions attested in the Austronesian family.

(17)   Types of gender distinction attested in AN

	Locus of gender distinction	Language(s)	Type of gender distinction
1	Gender-based speech differences	Atayal, Cham	male/female
2	Pronominal gender only in second person	Sasak, Minangkabau	masculine/feminine
3	Pronominal gender in both third singular and plural	Dehu	elaborate non-binary distinctions in both singular and plural
4	Pronominal gender only in third singular	Muller-Schwaner Punan languages, Kilivila, Windesi Wandamen. Kaulong	male/female/non-human, male/non-male, masculine/feminine, human/non-human
5	Pronominal gender only in third plural	Marshallese, Palauan, Biak, Busner, Nuaulu, etc.	Neuter/non-neuter, Human/non-human
6	Grammatical gender beyound pronominal-marking	Biak, Roon, Windesi, Kola, Ujir, Paulohi, Nuaulu, Alune, Ma'ya, Larike, Marshallese, etc.	Neuter/non-neuter, Human/non-human
7	Contact-induced gender borrowing	Chamorro, Tagalog, Malay/ Indonesian, Tutun Dili	masculine/feminine

3   Classifiers in Austronesian languages

3.1   Introductory remarks

A classifier (CLF) is a functional element that co-occurs with a noun in certain grammatical contexts and reflects some conceptual division of entities into several categories. Classifiers differ from genders (also referred to as noun classes) in that they do not reflect the grammatical properties of a given noun, the way gender does, but rather, reflect properties of referents, which may vary depending on a context. For example, the word denoting floor covering may occur with different classifiers depending on whether a rug is laid out flat or rolled, or whether it is rectangular or round. In a gender context, the word for rug has to be of a fixed gender, regardless of the visible properties of its referent. Thus, classifiers, unlike genders, are not lexically predetermined.

Further differences between genders and classifiers have to do with agreement and, probably less importantly, the number of distinctions. Gender on the noun must be matched in agreement on associated constituents (verbs, adjectives), and in fact, that's the core defining

property of gender; as stated by Hockett, '[g]enders are classes of nouns reflected in the behavior of associated words' (1958: 231; see also Corbett 1991). Classifiers on the other hand, do not participate in agreement.

The number of genders in a given language is typically quite small, as found in familiar Indo-European languages, where two or three genders are typically recognized. (Bantu languages, with their rich noun class distinctions, seem to be a counterexample to this observation.) The inventory of classifiers is much richer, and we will offer some examples below.

The literature on classifiers is quite extensive, and its survey is beyond the points of this chapter. For our purposes, it is important to distinguish sortal classifiers (also known as numeral classifiers, counter words, measure words, and sometimes quantifiers), that is, classifiers that accompany a noun in numeral phrases, and classifiers whose primary function is to index properties of the nouns referent; in what follows, we will refer to them as relational classifiers.[5] Both types of classifiers serve to atomize the referent of the associated noun, but in different ways. Sortal classifiers are sensitive to the features [collective] or [distributive]; accordingly, they select nouns that carry such features. To put it differently, they index the composition of a set denoted by a given noun. Relational classifiers typically index shape, size (e.g., diminution, augmentations), or purposefulness, primarily in relation to ingestion (edible, drinkable items). Both types are found in Austronesian languages.

3.2 Geographical distribution

Let us start with simple distributional facts, based on the literature on Austronesian languages. In his chapter on nominal classification, Gil (2013) distinguishes between optional and obligatory nominal classifiers. For example, in Minangkabau, according to Gil, classifiers are optional, which suggests that they may actually be sortal nouns, akin to the English *head* (as in *head of cabbage*), piece, etc. Further still, in Minangkabau, classifiers are limited to the sortal type and never occur as anaphoric pronounsa function that is quite common in obligatory-classifier languages.

(18) Minangkabau

    a. sa-urang padusi
        one-CLF woman
        'a woman/one woman'

    b. duo ikue anjiang
        two CLF dog
        'two dogs'

    c. tigo batang pituluik
        three CLF   pencil
        'three pencils' (Gil 2013)

---

[5]Unfortunately, the terminology associated with classifiers in general is quite varied and involved (e.g., Craig 1986; Aikhenvald 2003); as Blust (2013: 292) aptly put it, we have to deal with "an exasperating variety of names in the literature". It does not help that genders are also referred to as 'noun classes' outside Indo-European languages . Commitment to particular terminology may sometimes obscure the actual analysis of the corresponding expression. It is our goal to keep the discussion as neutral as possible, also by focusing on the features of classifiers.

In addition to Minangkabau, Gil (2013) lists the following Austronesian languages as having optional classifiers: Balinese (ISO 639-3 ban), Karo Batak (ISO 639-3 btx), Begak-Ida'an (ISO 639-3 dbj), Biatah (ISO 639-3 bth), Indonesian (ISO 639-3 ind), Javanese (ISO 639-3 jav), Baram Kayan (ISO 639-3 xay), Uma Lung Kenyah (ISO 639-3 ulu), Komering (ISO 639-3 kge), Lun Dayeh (ISO 639-3 lnd), Makassar (ISO 639-3 mak), Mandar (ISO 639-3 mdr), Melanau (ISO 639-3 mel), Minangkabau (ISO 639-3 min), Narom (ISO 639-3 nrm), Pileni (ISO 639-3 piv), Sama (ISO 639-3 slm), Samoan (ISO 639-3 smo), Tongan (ISO 639-3 ton), Toqabaqita (ISO 639-3 mlu), Tukang Besi (ISO 639-3 khc), Tuvaluan (ISO 639-3 tvl), and Yapese (ISO 639-3 yap). The majority of these languages to the western branches of the Austronesian family. (We will return to the three Polynesian languages on Gil's list, Samoan, Tongan, and Tuvaluan, below.)

Chuukese (ISO 639-3 chk), Kambera (ISO 639-3 xbr), Kei (ISO 639-3 kei), Keo (ISO 639-3 xxk), Ketapang (ISO 639-3), Kilivila (ISO 639-3 kij), Kiribati (ISO 639-3 gil), Kosraean (ISO 639-3 kos), Kualan (ISO 639-3), Larike (ISO 639-3 alo), Loniu (ISO 639-3 los), Mokilese (ISO 639-3 mkj), Nauru (ISO 639-3 nau), Nelemwa (ISO 639-3 nee), Pohnapean (ISO 639-3 pon), Sawu (ISO 639-3 hvn), Semendang (ISO 639-3 sdq), Simeulue (ISO 639-3 smr), Taba (ISO 639-3 mky), and Ulithian (ISO 639-3 uli) all represent the type of obligatory-classifier languages. Of these, the classifier system of Kilivila, a west Melanesian language spoken in Papua New Guinea, has been described in most detail, starting with the pioneering work by Bronislaw Malinowski and followed by seminal work by Gunter Senft (1986, 1996, 2000, 2008, 2019). Heres a small fragment of the rich classifier system of Kilivila showing how the word *yena* fish can occur with different sortal classifiers:

(19)   Kilivila

    a. na-tala   yena
        CLF.ANIMAL-one fish
        'one fish'

    b. kevala-lima   yena
        CLF.BATCH.DRYING-five fish
        'five batches of smoked fish'

    c. oyla-lima   yena
        CLF.STRING-five fish
        'five strings with stringed on fish'

    d. pwasa-lima   pwasa-tala   yena
        CLF.ROTTEN-five CLF.ROTTEN-one fish
        'six rotten fish' (Senft 1996: 231)

3.3   Classifier types in Austronesian

As indicated above, classifiers can be limited to co-occurrence with numerals (sortal classifiers) or have a distribution where they can index the properties or use of the noun's referent (relational classifiers), and finally indicate a specific relationship between the possessor and the possession. Although it is impossible to vouch for all the relevant languages of the family, it appears that all the classifiers in Austronesian are used either as sortal (in combination with

a numeral or a plural determiner) or as possessive ones. In this section we will discuss sortal classifiers. Section 3.4 will present possessive classifiers.

Starting on the western side of the family, traditional forms of Malay had a rich inventory of classifiers. Citing Maxwell (1907:70ff) and Winstedt (1927:129ff), Blust (2013: 294) lists the following classifiers that were common in colloquial peninsular Malay during the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century: *bataŋ* (trees, poles, spears, teeth), *bəntok* (rings); *bidaŋ* (widths of cloth, matting, sails, ricefields); *biji* (eyes, eggs, small stones, coconuts, caskets, chairs, fruits, fingers, bullets, tombstones); *bilah* (daggers, knives, needles); *buah* (fruits, countries, islands, lakes, ships, houses); *butir* (coconuts, grain, jewels, cannons); *charek* (scraps of paper and linen); *ekor* (animals, birds, insects, and contemptuously of men); *həlai/ʔlai* (hair, leaves, cloth, paper); *kaki* (insects, umbrellas, long-stemmed flowers); *kampoh* (pieces of fish, roe); *kayu* (cloth); *kəpiŋ* (blocks of timber, metal, and bunches of bread, meat, cake); *kuntum* (flowers); *laboh* (hanging objects: curtains, necklace, etc.); *oraŋ* (persons); *patah* (words); *pəraŋgu* (sets of betel-boxes, buttons); *pintu* (houses); *taŋga* (houses); *potoŋ* (slices of meat and bread); *puchok* (guns, letters, needles); *rawan* (nets); *utas* (nets); *taŋkai* (flowers); *urat* (thread). Most of these classifiers come from nouns denoting the corresponding referent, for example, *oraŋ* means 'person', and *kuntum* is 'flower'.

Several observations can be offered with respect to this array of classifiers. First, some classifiers cover a wide range of objects, and it may not be entirely clear what the underlying property unifying these objects may have been. Next, one and the same object can be classified using different function word, consider *taŋga* and *pintu* as classifiers for dwelling. As Blust notes, they "almost certainly correlated with different types of dwellings, the first with traditional country houses raised on piles (hence entered by ladders), and the second with urban dwellings built directly upon the ground" (Blust 2013: 294). These characteristics could have contributed to the opacity of some classifiers, and indeed, the number and use of sortal classifiers in Standard Malay (and Standard Indonesian for that matter) have been greatly reduced.

Sortal classifiers are common in Micronesian languages (except for contemporary Marshallese), where talking about a definitive number of entities always requires a classifier. Only in those instances can a classifier be absent if a numeral is used for counting in a series (one, two, three)what Bender and Beller (2006) call "abstract counting". Otherwise, number words are bimorphemic, consisting of a numerative prefix as the first component and a classifier as the second. For example, in Chuukese,

(20)   Chuukese

    a.   e-ew   núú
        one-CLF.GENERAL coconut
        'a coconut fruit'

    b.   e-fóc   núú
        one-CLF.CYLINDRCAL coconut
        'a coconut palm'

    c.   e-wo   núú
        one-CLF.LOG coconut
        'a coconut log' (Dyen 1965:para.104)

Polynesian languages also have classifiers; their occurrence is more common or maybe better described in western Polynesian. Recall that Gil characterizes Tongan (ISO 639-3 ton), Samoan (ISO 639-3 smo), and Tuvaluan (ISO 639-3 tvl) as optional-classifier languages. Heres what may be the reason for that characterization: Polynesian languages use only numeral classifiers and these classifiers are typically restricted to certain objects, in other words, they do not appear with all nouns. In that sense, they are different from model classifier languages such as Mandarin. However, in the context where classifiers are expected, they are obligatory, not optional. For example, there are a variety of classificatory markers in Tongan, and some have been treated as number markers by some researchers. Each of these contains plurality as part of its meaning but encodes more than simple plurality. Such markers can also encode diminutivity, humanness, abundance or scarcity, and distributivity. *Fanga* is used to indicate plurality with NPs denoting animals and with inanimate objects preceded by *kit'i* 'small', and to indicate both plurality and affection NPs denoting kinship terms. *Kau* is the classifier normally used to indicate plurality of NPs with human referents. It can also be used to personify the referent of an otherwise underspecified or inanimate noun. *Fanga*, *kau*, and several other classificatory quantifiers can co-occur with the regular plural marker *ngaahi*, but cannot co-occur with each other. We can conclude that Polynesian classifiers bundle the features associated with sorting and property-indexing classification.

By virtue of their co-occurrence with numerals, sortal classifiers are connected to counting systems of individual languages. In some languages, a numeral and a classifier can also appear as a single unit, consider the Minangkabau example in (18a) and all the Chuukese examples in (20) above. Austronesian counting systems are generally decimal, but intriguing complications occur; for details, see Blust (2013: 278–292); Bender & Beller (2006) and references therein.

As attested to by the examples presented here, Austronesian classifiers typically index shape (consider (20b, c) above), function, or ingestible qualities (consider (19)), in particular edible and drinkable items. Notably, a classifier cannot be used to atomize the referent of the noun from which it is derived, so sequences of two identical words where one is a classifier and the other is the classified noun are impossible (such sequences are attested in other classifier languages, for example, in Mayan).

Finally, a typologically rare classifier system reported in Teop (ISO 639-3 tio) deserves a note. Teop is an Austronesian language indigenous to northern Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. Teop has no pronominal gender distinctions, nor does it have gender agreement, but it marks class distinctions in the form of the so-called basic article, which in the singular is *e*, *a* or *o*. Nominals marked by these articles are hence termed the e-class, the a-class and the o-class, respectively (Mosel 2007).[6]

(21)   Concepts reflected in the Teop noun classes

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[6]Mosel (2007) charavterizes these distinctions as gender, but we contend that they should be analyzed as classifiers. As in some other Austronesian languages, the class distinction appears only in a subset of structures, namely, in the determiner phrase. The distinctions do not get reflected in agreement. One could argue that three classes is too small a number for a classifier system, but some other Austronesian languages also manifest impoverished classifier systems.

e-class	a-class	o-class
proper names of persons		
people who have a particular social status	human beings other than those of the e-class	
pets	all vertebrates; invertebrates with legs	invertebrates without legs
	fruits; food	plants; parts of plants other than fruit
	utensils other than those of the o-class	things made from plant materials
	landmarks	amorphous masses, fire, light

As (21) shows, class distinctions are not sex-based: while common nouns such as *otei* 'man' and *moon* 'woman' combine with the article *a*, kinship terms combine with the article *e* irrespective of their sex. However, the classification of nominals has a semantic basis and is highly predictable (*e ta* 'piece of' is probably an exception). While the e-class and the o-class can be defined in terms of semantic features, the a-class is the default class. It contains nominals denoting all kinds of human beings other than relatives and people of a particular socially important status, as well as nominals denoting all sorts of tools and utensils apart from those made of plant material. Some examples are presented in (22).

(22) Classifier marking in Teop

e-class		a-class		o-class	
e Kakato	male name				
e Sovavi	female name				
e tama-naa	my father	a otei	the man		
e sina-naa	my mother	a moon	the woman		
e beera	the chief	a beikoo	the child		
e guu	pig	a iana	the fish	o demdem	the snail
				o kurita	the octopus
				o overe	the coconut-palm
		a overe	the coconut	o paka	the leaf
				o hoi	the basket
		a kepaa	the clay pot	o kasuana	the sand
		a kasuana	the beach	o suraa	the fire
e ta	the piece of				

Not only do these articles indicate the noun class, but they also distinguish number (singular vs. plural). The plural basic article is o for e- and a-class nominals and a for o-class nominals. See Mosel (2007) for details.

More examples can be drawn from other Austronesian languages, but the emerging picture is clear; many classifiers are historically related to nouns. The use of classifiers seems to be on decline in those languages that become widely spoken (as in the case of Standard Malay and Indonesian) and in minoritized, endangered languages (as in the case of Chuukese).

3.4 Possessive classification
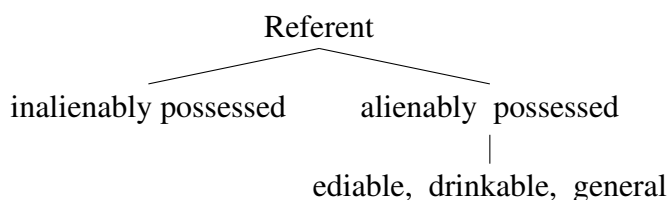
A special type of classificatory relations is found in what can be called "possessive classifiers" or "genitive classifiers". Grinevald (2000: 66) subsumes under this label all classifiers that are used in possessive constructions. She uses the term 'genitive classifiers' to identify classifiers that other researchers label as 'possessed, possessor, possessive, relational', and 'attributive'.

She defines possessive classifiers as follows:

> It is usually bound to the mark of the possessor while semantically classifying the possessed. This classifier system selects a limited set of nouns of the language for classification: they are nouns that appear to have high cultural significance and constitute a class akin to the 'alienable' nouns, to be determined for each language. (Grinevald 2000: 66)

Austronesian possessive classifiers index two main properties of a given referent: alienability and intended use or purpose. The distinction between alienable/inalienable possession[7] is absent from Austronesian languages of Taiwan, the Philippines and western Indonesia but is regularly encoded in Oceanic languages. Within alienable possession, there is further classification of referents on the basis of their function or intended use. Typical distinctions here include [edible], [drinkable], and [general]. Thus, the Oceanic system of possessive classification may be represented as follows:

(23) The Oceanic system of possessive classification

```
                        Referent
               _____/        _____
              /                          \
    inalienably possessed        alienably  possessed
                                          |
                              ediable,  drinkable,  general
```

Although the alienable/inalienable distinction is extremely common in Oceanic languages, the membership of each class varies cross-linguistically and may also vary across speakers or change over time. To illustrate, body parts are typically classified as inalienable, but the classification of body fluids varies across languages (Lichtenberk 1983; 1985). Likewise, children, boats, and houses may be classified as inalienable in some languages, and as alienable, in others.

Inalienable possession is typically expressed by a possessive pronominal affix on the possessed noun, consider the following examples from Fijian:[8]

(24) a. me-na   waqona
        CLF.DRINK-3SG.POSS kava
        'his kava'

     b. me-irau   vivili
        CLF.DRINK-1DUAL.EXCL shellfish
        'our shellfish'

     c. 'e-mu   drega
        CLF.EDIBLE-2SG gum
        'your chewing gum'

---

[7]Sometimes this distinction is referred to as direct/indirect possession (Lichtenberk 1985; Blust 2013: 488–493).
[8]Glosses added to the original citation.

d. 'e-irau   dalo
    CLF.EDIBLE-1DUAL.EXCL taro
    'our taro' (Dixon 1988: 136)

The encoding of alienable possession is more involved; the possessive marker is affixed to a possessive relation marker that precedes the possession. Consider the following examples from Boumaa Fijian, where *me-* marks items that are sucked, drunk or licked, and *'e-* marks nouns whose referent is eaten, chewed or smoked.

Beyond Lichtenberk's comprehensive account of possession, we are not aware of detailed analysis of alienable possessive relation markers in Oceanic languages. Based on the terminology used by different researchers, they view such markers differently and there is no consensus. The following summary by Blust (2013: 492) presents a good overview of the state of the field:

> In the literature these relation markers go by a variety of names. For Fijian Milner (1967) called the set of possessive relationships a 'gender' system, with separate marking for neutral, edible, drinkable, and familiar 'gender'. Schutz (1985:446) refers to the entire system as one of possession, calling forms such as *no-na, ke-na*, and *me-na* attribute possessors, and with regard to the Wayan language of western Fiji Pawley and Sayaba (2003) refer to these elements as 'prenominal particles or possessive markers. For most languages of Micronesia these preposed elements have been called possessive classifiers, a term that was first proposed by Lichtenberk (1985), who drew attention to parallels between them and the typologically better-known numeral classifiers found in many language families.

In his description of Boumaa Fijian, Dixon (1988: Ch. 12) reiterates the view that alienability and intended use in Fijian are expressed by classifiers, even though their small inventory may be surprising. As is common with classifiers, but not with genders, one and the same noun can occur with different classifiers.

3.5   The syntax of classifier constructions

Syntactic analysis of classifiers is a matter of lively debate in theoretical linguistics. Classifiers are analyzed either as functional heads selecting an NP (e.g., Cheng and Sybesma 1999; Watanabe 2006; Jiang et al. 2022) or as modifiers of an XP (Saito et al. 2008). It appears that both options may be needed for a descriptively adequate account of classifiers (Jenks 2011). Assuming the analysis of classifiers as functional heads, some researchers suggest that such classifiers spell out the number projection in the noun phrase (e.g., Watanabe 2006 on Japanese). However, that may not be sufficient to account for all the functions of classifiers, so it is more common to represent the category number in the noun phrase structure, without directly associating it with the classifier head. A common structure is such that number is spelled out in the specifier of classifier phrase, which takes an NP as its complement:

(25)   ClfP
         /   \
        #   Clf
              /   \
           Clf   NP

(26)   #P
        ╱╲
       #   ClfP
            ╱╲
          Clf   NP

It is worth noting that most of the syntactic work on classifier constructions is based on Chinese, Japanese, and Thai. A detailed syntactic analysis of Austronesian classifier systems is still awaiting its turn.

4   Conclusions

This chapter has presented an overview of gender encoding and classifier systems in the Austronesian language family. Although gender is not a prominent feature of Austronesian languages, a small number of languages in the family display typologically uncommon distinctions including gender-based lexical choices (Atayal and Cham); pronominal gender expressed only in second person, as well as gender encoding in third person plural but not third singular. In addition, a neuter/non-neuter (animate vs. inanimate) grammatical gender distinction is found in eastern Indonesian languages, with a considerable amount of variation attested across languages. These results show that despite the general rarity of gender-related distinctions in Austronesian, some languages of the family have developed gender marking on independent grounds. This chapter has also presented a short overview of classifier constructions in Austronesian. the range and content of classifiers in Austronesian languages vary to a significant degree, but the crucial contrasts have to do with salient properties of the referents, their function, and their status with respect to possession. Research on genders and classifiers sometimes points to classifier systems as precursors to grammatical gender (e.g., Corbett 1991; Aikhenvald 2000; Gerdts 2013), but no such connection is observed in Austronesian languages, which suggests that there is no direct causal relationship between classifiers and the development of grammatical gender. In closing, the overview of gender and classifier marking in Austronesian has highlighted the degree of linguistic diversity within the family as the largest of the world by geographical distribution.

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