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# The lexical and discourse functions of grammatical gender in Marathi

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**Abstract:** We provide a functional analysis of the grammatical gender system of Marathi (Indo-Aryan) in Western India. The majority of the new Indo-Aryan languages typically classifies each noun of the lexicon according to biological gender as masculine and feminine. Only a few Indo-Aryan languages such as Marathi diverge in terms of agreement pattern by categorizing nouns as masculine, feminine, and neuter. Yet gender in Marathi has not been extensively described in terms of functions. We thus use apply functional typology to analyze grammatical gender in Marathi and provide detailed examples of its lexical and discourse functions.

**Keywords:** grammatical gender, Marathi, functions

## 1 Introduction

Humans commonly categorize things and experiences that they encounter according to certain inherent properties that those concepts have in common (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 187). Such processes are mirrored in languages via nominal classification systems, i.e. nouns of the lexicon are assigned to different categories based on specific features. By way of illustration, the two most prominent nominal classification systems observed in languages of the world are grammatical gender and numeral classifiers (Aikhenvald 2000). Grammatical gender (also known as noun classes) refers to a system where nouns conventionally belong to one of a small number of groups which determine patterns of agreement and cross-reference (Corbett 1991: 146). For instance, French (Indo-European) possesses a two-gender system that assigns every noun of the lexicon to either masculine or feminine. As shown in (1), the masculine and feminine genders in French are reflected via the grammatical agreement of gender on articles, adjectives, and verbs. In (1a), the noun *camion* ‘truck’ is masculine. Thus, the indefinite article *un* ‘one’, the adjective *grand* ‘big’, and the verb *arrive*

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‘arrive’ are all marked with the masculine form. The opposite feminine agreement is found in (1b), which has the feminine noun *voiture* ‘car’ as subject.

(1) Grammatical gender in French

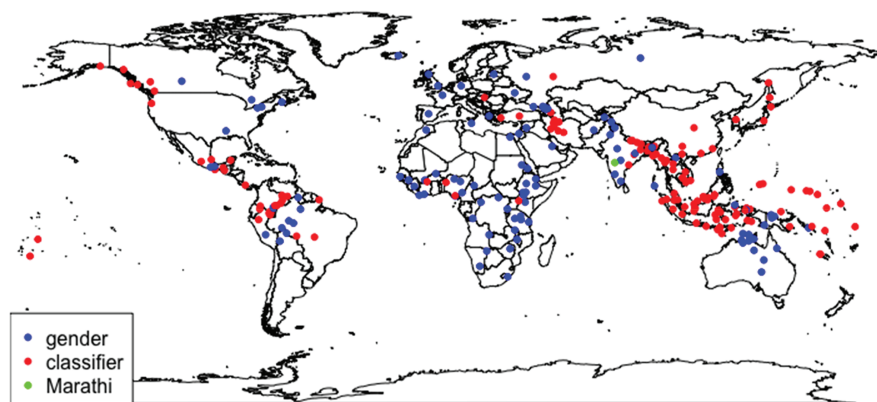
- a. *un grand camion est arrivé*  
 one.M big.SG.M truck.SG.M be.PRS arrive.PST.SG.M  
 ‘A big truck has arrived.’
- b. *une grande voiture est arrivée*  
 one.F big.SG.F car.SG.F be.PRS arrive.PST.SG.F  
 ‘A big car has arrived.’

Nonetheless, not all languages in the world possess grammatical gender systems, e.g. Mandarin Chinese is a “genderless” language in terms of grammar. By way of illustration in (2), both clauses display a similar syntactic structure to (1). However, grammatical agreement is not present in Mandarin Chinese, i.e. the articles, adjectives, and verbs do not vary depending on the gender of the noun. Languages such as Mandarin Chinese instead apply a system of classifiers to categorize nouns that are determined by shape and other inherent properties of the referents. The most common parameters include round-shaped, long-shaped, among others (Kemmerer 2017). For instance in both (2a) and (2b), the nouns ‘truck’ and ‘car’ are preceded by a numeral classifier, which highlights that the following noun belongs to the semantic category of vehicles.

(2) Absence of grammatical gender in Mandarin Chinese

- a. *yi4 tai2 da4 ka3che1 dao4 le0*  
 one CLF.VEHICLE big truck arrive PRF  
 ‘A big truck has arrived.’
- b. *yi4 tai2 da4 che1 dao4 le0*  
 one CLF.VEHICLE big car arrive PRF  
 ‘A big car has arrived.’

In terms of spatial distribution, as demonstrated in Figure 1, grammatical gender languages (blue) are mostly found in Europe and Africa. On the other hand, classifier languages (red) are concentrated in South and South-East Asia, while sporadic distribution of both systems is attested in the Americas (Corbett 2013). One of the main contributions of this paper is to provide novel data on Marathi (green), which is located close to the meeting point between Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic, Indo-European, and Sino-Tibetan languages. The last two language families are respectively typical exemplars of grammatical gender and classifier languages, whereas Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic languages represent



**Figure 1:** Spatial distribution of nominal classification systems in languages of the world (Corbett 2013; Gil 2013).

a mixed picture. Thus, typologically rare and complex structures result from the effect of language contact in this region (Aikhenvald 2000; Kiryu 2009; Masica 1993), and investigating the status of Marathi provides additional data to the discussion of nominal classification in terms of canonical and functional typology (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013; Fedden and Corbett 2017).

Marathi belongs to the Indo-Aryan Southern subgroup and is mainly spoken within the state of Maharashtra in India, which is the second largest state within the Indian Union in terms of population (112,374,333) according to the Census of India of 2011. The Marathi language is ranked within the top five major languages in India with regard to speaker population. Moreover, as shown in Figure 1, Marathi is located at the crossroads of the Indo-Aryan language group to the North, the Dravidian to the South, and a smaller group of Munda languages to the East. This status has resulted in “many unique and interesting characteristics” (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 2). For example, Marathi and its sister language Konkani have both developed alveolar affricates, which is not a typical Indic feature. Nonetheless, recent available grammars are scarce and mostly focus on syntactic analysis (Apte 1962; Gupte 1975; Joshi 1993; Nayudu 2008; Wali 1989) and overall description of the language (Dhongde 1985; Dhongde and Wali 2009; Wali 2006). While these previous studies are without a doubt extremely valuable linguistically, they do not include a grammatical gender-oriented description of Marathi. This paper thus aims to enhance the available knowledge of the Marathi language in terms of grammatical gender, and serve as a basis for cross-linguistic analyses investigating language variation and contact.

Moreover, the gender system of Marathi has not been described in terms of functions. Thus, we adopt the framework of functional typology (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013). In such an approach, the typical functions of grammatical gender are divided into lexical and discourse functions. Lexical functions relate to expansion of the lexicon, differentiating referents, individuation, and ascribing properties. On the other hand, discourse functions include reference identification, reference management, and re-presentation. We propose to analyze whether these functions are fulfilled by grammatical gender in Marathi, and to provide additional data on the language, which may be used as references for future linguistic studies, e.g. in pragmatics.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the grammatical gender system in Marathi. Section 3 explains how lexical and discourse functions are fulfilled via grammatical gender in Marathi. In Section 4, we discuss the implications of our observations in terms of functions. Finally, we conclude the paper in Section 5. The Marathi examples shown in the following sections have been produced in informal collaboration with native Marathi speakers from Western Maharashtra and the Mumbai Metropolitan Region.

## 2 Grammatical gender in Marathi

Nouns are obligatorily classified as masculine, feminine, or neuter in Marathi (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 40). Within Indo-Aryan, this three-gender categorization is only found in the Indo-Aryan Southern subgroup and a few other languages such as Gujarati and Sinhala, as most Indo-Aryan languages have a masculine/feminine-based grammatical gender system (Masica 1993: 220). As mentioned in Section 1, the definition of grammatical gender we apply here refers to grammatical agreement (Corbett 1991). To be more precise, the differentiation of referent solely within lexical items is not sufficient to count as grammatical gender. For instance in Marathi, the existence of pairs such as *kutrā* ‘dog (male)’ and *kutrī* ‘dog (female)’ by itself solely indicates lexical gender, i.e. the use of different lexical items to distinguish the biological gender of the referent is not a necessary condition of grammatical gender. Grammatical gender requires typically a stable grammatical agreement between the controller (i.e. the noun) and other elements in the clause. The domain of agreement is generally considered asymmetric and local, e.g. if there is grammatical gender agreement between the noun and the adjective, the gender marking of the adjective solely depends on the noun and not vice versa. Moreover, the agreement is consistently found within the boundaries of

a specific syntactic phrase, e.g. the noun phrase (Corbett and Fedden 2016: 499). By way of illustration in (3), the three sentences display a similar structure. Nevertheless, the form of the demonstrative, the adjective, and the verb varies according to the masculine (3a), feminine (3b), or neuter (3c) gender of the noun which is being referred to. For instance in (3a), the masculine gender of the noun *mitra* ‘friend (male)’ is reflected through grammatical agreement on the first person possessive pronoun *mājha* (1.POSS.M), the adjective *barā* (good.SG.M) and the verb *distā* (look.PRS.M).

(3) Gender agreement on the verb with present tense in Marathi<sup>1</sup>

- a. *mājha mitra barā disto.*  
 POSS.1SG.M friend.SG.M good.SG.M look.PRS.3SG.M  
 ‘My friend (male) looks good.’
- b. *mājhi maitrīn barī diste*  
 POSS.1SG.F friend.SG.F good.SG.F look.PRS.3SG.F  
 ‘My friend (female) looks good.’
- c. *mājha ghar bara dista*  
 POSS.1SG.N house.SG.N good.SG.N look.PRS.3SG.N  
 ‘My house looks good.’

The presence of gender agreement on the verb may vary between different tenses. As demonstrated in (4), sentences in (3) could be changed to the past perfective tense without affecting the presence of gender agreement on the verb, cf. (4a) with masculine agreement, (4b) with feminine, and (4c) with neuter. The structure in (4a) is similar with (3a), the only difference being the past tense marked on the verb. Nonetheless, the verb ‘look’ in (4a) is still marked with masculine agreement, i.e. *dislā* (look.PST.3SG.M). This pattern of agreement in both present and past tense is found across most subgroups of the Indo-Aryan language family, e.g. Bhojpuri (Bihari), Hindi-Urdu (Central), Nepali (Northern), Kashmiri (Northwestern)<sup>2</sup> (Acharya 1991: 149; Koul 2003: 1014–1019; Verma 2003: 580–582).

<sup>1</sup> The final vowel of possessive pronouns, adjectives and verbs in the neuter singular can be transliterated in different ways. In this article, it is transliterated following colloquial pronunciation as *-a*. The same applies to the plural ending of many neuter nouns, and to the ergative postposition, which is transliterated as *-na*.

<sup>2</sup> As a side note, Konkani shows gender in the past tense but does not show gender in the present tense.

## (4) Gender agreement on the verb with past tense in Marathi

- a. *mājhā mitra barā dislā.*  
 POSS.1SG.M friend.SG.M good.SG.M look.PST.3SG.M  
 ‘My friend (male) looked good.’
- b. *mājhī maitrīṇ barī dislī*  
 POSS.1SG.F friend.SG.F good.SG.F look.PST.3SG.F  
 ‘My friend (female) looked good.’
- c. *mājha ghar bara disla*  
 POSS.1SG.N house.SG.N good.SG.N look.PST.3SG.N  
 ‘My house looked good.’

However, gender agreement is not marked on the future tense in Marathi. This phenomenon is not rare among Indo-Aryan languages. For example, some Northwestern Indo-Aryan languages such as Kashmiri and Dameli mark gender on the present and the past tense but do not mark gender on the future tense, while other languages such as Hindi-Urdu, Bhojpuri, Gujarati, and Kalasha, mark gender on the future tense (Masica 1993; Verma 2003: 580–582; Bashir 2014: 927–929; Cardona and Suthar 2003: 745–749). As shown in (5), the sentences of (3) are replicated with a change to the future tense. We may observe that even though the agreement on the possessive pronouns and the adjectives is still present, the verb do not bear gender agreement with the noun. For instance in (5b), the possessive pronoun *mājhī* (POSS.1SG.F) and the adjective *barī* (good.SG.F) are both marked for feminine. Nonetheless, the verb *disel* (look. FUT.3SG) does not show gender agreement with the feminine subject *maitrīṇ* ‘friend’; likewise in (5a) and (5c) for subjects with masculine and neuter gender.

## (5) Lack of gender agreement on the verb with future tense in Marathi

- a. *mājhā mitra barā disel*  
 POSS.1SG.M friend.SG.M good.SG.M look.FUT.3SG  
 ‘My friend (male) will look good.’
- b. *mājhī maitrīṇ barī disel*  
 POSS.1SG.F friend.SG.F good.SG.F look.FUT.3SG  
 ‘My friend (female) will look good.’
- c. *mājha ghar bara disel*  
 POSS.1SG.N house.SG.N good.SG.N look.FUT.3SG  
 ‘My house will look good.’

Other minor exceptions in terms of gender agreement also occur for Marathi. For instance, the copula verb *as-* ‘be’ does not show gender agreement in the present tense. As shown in (6), the copula ‘be’ in the third person singular of the

present tense is always realized as *āhe* (be.PRS.3SG). Even though the subject may be masculine (6a), feminine (6b), or neuter (6c), the copula does not show gender agreement. On the other hand, other elements of the clause such as adjectives still agree with the subject in terms of gender, cf. *choṭā* (small.SG.M), *choṭī* (small.SG.F), and *choṭa* (small.SG.N). However, *as-* does display gender agreement in the past tense like other common verbs, cf. *hotā* (be.PAST.3SG.M), *hotī* (be.PAST.3SG.F), and *hota* (be.PAST.3SG.N). Furthermore, the copula verb *‘be’* has an alternative conjugation, which shows gender agreement in the present tense, i.e. *asto*, *aste*, *asta*. This form is used when the subject is referred to in the general sense, e.g. for a statement about a regularly recurring phenomenon: *ikaḍe jevaṇ tikaḥṭ asta* (here food.N hot is.PRS.3SG.N) ‘here the food is usually hot’.

(6) Lack of gender agreement on copula verbs with present tense in Marathi

- a. *to khūp choṭā āhe.*  
 3SG.M very small.SG.M be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘He is very small.’
- b. *tī khūp choṭī āhe.*  
 3SG.F very small.SG.F be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘She is very small.’
- c. *te khūp choṭa āhe.*  
 3SG.N very small.SG.N be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘It is very small.’

Likewise, several adjectives are invariable in Marathi, especially those ending in consonants. By way of illustration, the adjective *choṭā* ‘small’ in (5) may be replaced by its synonym *lahān*, which would not be marked by gender, e.g. *te khūp lahān āhe* (3SG.N very small be.PRS) ‘It is very small.’ Several common adjectives belong to this group of non-inflected adjectives, as is usually also the case with adjectives borrowed from other languages (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 55). The gender of a noun still agrees with other components of the clause (e.g. verb, possessive pronoun) even if it is preceded by an invariable adjective. This phenomenon is common across gender languages of the Indo-Aryan group (Masica 1993: 250). Thus, we do not consider it to be a lack of grammatical consistency.

Finally, the verb in Marathi generally agrees with the proximal unmarked noun phrase, which is not necessarily the subject (Dhongde and Wali 2009). For instance, while a transitive verb agrees with the gender of the subject in the present tense, agreement with the object is required instead when the past tense is applied. As demonstrated in (7), intransitive verbs consistently agree with



their subject in Marathi. As an example in (7a), the verb ‘break’ is marked as masculine since the subject *ārsā* ‘mirror’ belongs to the masculine grammatical gender.

(7) Gender agreement pattern for intransitive verbs in Marathi

- a. *hā moṭhā ārsā tuṭlā*  
 this.M big.SG.M mirror.SG.M break.PST.3SG.M  
 ‘This big mirror broke.’
- b. *hī moṭhī bāṭlī tuṭlī*  
 this.F big.SG.F bottle.SG.F break.PST.3SG.F  
 ‘This big bottle broke.’
- c. *he moṭha mez tuṭla*  
 this.N big.SG.N table.SG.N break.PST.3SG.N  
 ‘This big table broke.’

This pattern is equally observed with transitive verbs in the present tense. For instance in (8a), the verb ‘break’ agrees with the feminine subject *Lili*. However, in the past tense, transitive verbs agree with the object instead, e.g. in (8b), the subject *Lili* is marked with the ergative case and the verb ‘break’ agrees with the masculine gender of the object ‘mirror’. Moreover, if the object is marked with the dative marker *-lā*, gender agreement is blocked and the verb is marked with neuter gender by default (Butt, 2006). By way of illustration in (8c), the subject *Lili* is feminine, and the object *ārsā* ‘mirror’ is masculine. Nonetheless, the verb ‘break’ is marked with the neuter gender. This phenomenon is also attested in other Indo-Aryan languages of the area such as Hindi-Urdu (Dahl and Stronski 2016: 12).

(8) Gender agreement pattern for transitive verbs in Marathi

- a. *Lili ārsā phoḍte*  
 Lili mirror.SG.M break.PRS.3SG.F  
 ‘Lili breaks the mirror.’
- b. *Lili-na ārsā phodlā*  
 Lili-ERG mirror.SG.M break.PST.3SG.M  
 ‘Lili broke the mirror.’
- c. *Lili-na ārsā-lā phodla*  
 Lili-ERG mirror.SG.M.OBL-DAT break.PST.3SG.N  
 ‘Lili broke the mirror (not something else).’  
 (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 183–184)

Gender agreement on the verb is also partially neutralized by grammatical number, i.e. gender agreement in the present tense is marked on the verb in the singular but not in the plural. However, gender agreement is still marked on the verb in the past tense, on all persons in singular but only in the third person in the plural. In (9), which is in the present tense, the subjects are plural and gender agreement is non-existent on the verb, cf. *distāt* used for masculine (9a), feminine (9b), and neuter (9c) plural nouns. Nevertheless, gender agreement is still marked on the possessive pronouns and the adjectives. For instance in (9b), the possessive pronoun *mājhyā* and the adjective *baryā* are all marked as feminine plural since the subject *maitrīṇī* ‘friends (female)’ is feminine plural. Such phenomenon is also commonly attested in gender languages (Corbett 1991: 190).

(9) Lack of gender agreement in present tense plural

- a. *mājhe mitra bare distāt.*  
POSS.1PL.M friend.PL.M good.PL.M look.PRS.3PL  
‘My friends (male) look good.’
- b. *mājhyā maitrīṇī baryā distāt*  
POSS.1PL.F friend.PL.F good.PL.F look.PRS.3PL  
‘My friends (female) look good.’
- c. *mājhi ghara barī distāt*  
POSS.1PL.N house.PL.N good.PL.N look.PRS.3PL  
‘My houses look good.’

Nonetheless, gender agreement on the verb with plural subjects is still observed in the past tense in the third person. The structure of the sentences in (10) is similar to (9). Yet the verbs do show grammatical gender agreement with the subjects. By way of illustration in (10c), the verb ‘look’ is marked with the neuter plural by concordance with the grammatical gender and grammatical number of the subject *ghara* (house.N.PL) ‘houses’.

(10) Presence of gender agreement in past tense plural

- a. *mājhe mitra bare disle.*  
POSS.1PL.M friend.PL.M good.PL.M look.PST.3PL.M  
‘My friends (male) looked good.’
- b. *mājhyā maitrīṇī baryā dislyā*  
POSS.1PL.F friend.PL.F good.PL.F look.PST.3PL.F  
‘My friends (female) looked good.’
- c. *mājhi ghara barī disli*  
POSS.1PL.N house.PL.N good.PL.N look.PST.3PL.N  
‘My houses looked good.’

In summary, grammatical gender in Marathi complies with the three features of a canonical gender system (Corbett and Fedden 2016; Fedden and Corbett 2017). First, the gender values match agreement classes, i.e. we observe three distinct markings for three different genders without overlap. For instance, the agreement pattern found in (3) displays three different agreement markers for three different genders, cf. *mājhā* (POSS.1SG.M), *mājhī* (POSS.1SG.F), and *mājha* (POSS.1SG.N). Second, the gender of nouns is constant and invariable in Marathi. For instance, the grammatical gender of the noun form *ghar* ‘house’ is consistently neuter and does not vary arbitrarily. Third, “gender can be read unambiguously off the lexical entry of a noun” (Corbett and Fedden 2016: 527). In other words, the gender of a noun is inferred from its grammatical agreement rather than its pure lexical form. As an example, even though the nouns *kutra* ‘dog’ and *mitra* ‘friend’ share the same word-final vowel, their different gender (i.e. neuter and masculine) can be inferred from the agreement pattern with other elements in a clause, cf. (3a) and (3c). Such agreement patterns may be condensed as an overview in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Overview of grammatical gender marking in Marathi.

		Singular	Plural
Verb	Past	+	+ (3rd)
	Present	+	–
	Future	–	–
Adjective	Variable	+	+
	Invariable	–	–
Pronoun	Personal (3rd)	+	+
	Demonstrative	+	+
	Possessive	+	+

Verbs generally mark gender agreement in the past tense and present tense, with the exception of the copula verb *āhe* in the present tense. The target of agreement may vary with regard to transitive verbs, but the agreement itself remains mandatory. Intransitive verbs in Marathi agree with their subjects, but transitive verbs usually agree with their objects instead in the past tense, and their gender agreement may be neutralized in cases of emphasis on the object by means of adding the suffix *-lā* on the object. With regard to adjectives, phonological constraints result in the lack of agreement on consonant-final adjectives, while the other adjectives systematically agree with their subject. Finally, pronouns commonly mark gender (with exception of personal pronouns which only mark gender on the third person), regardless of grammatical number.

### 3 Functions of grammatical gender in Marathi

The functions of gender systems can be broadly divided into two categories: lexical and discourse functions. With regard to lexical functions, gender markers may be used to “expand the referential power of the lexicon either by creating new lexical items or by presenting referents from different perspectives” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 268). For instance, a noun may be assigned different gender depending on which referent it is indicating. In terms of discourse functions, gender systems equally contribute to the organization of discourse as they can be used “to establish and manipulate the status of a referent” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 279). In this section, we provide detailed examples from Marathi for every lexical and discourse function generally attributed to grammatical gender systems. As a clarification, functional typology posits that grammatical gender commonly fulfils such functions. Nevertheless, it does not imply that these lexical and discourse functions are solely fulfilled by grammatical gender. For instance, grammatical gender provides cues for referent tracking along discourse. Nonetheless, other syntactic, semantic, and contextual information are also available to the listener.

#### 3.1 Lexical functions

The first lexical function of gender systems relates to differentiation of referents. Gender “can be used to provide more detailed information about lexical items whose meanings are neutral, or unmarked” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 272)<sup>3</sup>, e.g. in Nepali (Indo-European), which possesses masculine and feminine grammatical gender, a nominal stem may be used with different gender suffixes to indicate the sex of the referent, cf. *keṭo* ‘boy’/ *keṭī* ‘girl’. Likewise for Marathi in Table 2, gender markers may be used on a gender-neutral noun to point out the sex of the referent (Navalkar 2001: 32). For instance, the noun *kutra* ‘dog’ is labelled with the neuter grammatical gender when it refers to dogs in general, e.g. *kutrī cāṅglī astāt* (dog.PL.N nice.PL.N be.PRS.3PL) ‘dogs are nice’. However, it may be assigned masculine or feminine gender if the speaker wishes to specify the

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<sup>3</sup> The framework of functional typology originally distinguished between the lexical functions of “expansion of the lexicon” and “differentiating referents”. We describe the two in the same subsection, as “the distinction between subcategorizing undifferentiated lexical items and creating new lexical items is not always easy to draw” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 273).

**Table 2:** Use of gender in Marathi for differentiating referents.

Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
<i>kuṭrā</i> ‘dog (male)’	<i>kuṭrī</i> ‘dog (female)’	<i>kuṭra</i> ‘dog (general)’
<i>mulgā</i> ‘boy’	<i>mulgī</i> ‘girl’	<i>mūl</i> ‘child’
<i>śikṣak</i> ‘male teacher’	<i>śikṣikā</i> ‘female teacher’	
<i>mītra</i> ‘male friend’	<i>maitrīṇ</i> ‘female friend’	
	<i>keḷ</i> ‘plantain’	<i>keḷ</i> ‘banana’

biological gender of the dog, e.g. *hī kuṭrī suṇḍar āhe* (this.F dog.SG.F beautiful be. PRS.3SG) ‘This dog (female) is beautiful.’<sup>4</sup>

This phenomenon is commonly productive in Marathi, especially with regard to nouns denoting animate referents (e.g. humans and animals). Nevertheless, it may also occur with inanimates. For instance, different gender may be used to distinguish between the plant and its fruit, cf. the word form *keḷ* which refers to ‘plantain’ in the feminine and indicates ‘banana’ in the neuter form. Similar instances are equally attested in other gender languages (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 271), cf. in Italian, *melo* ‘apple tree (masculine)’ and *mela* ‘apple (feminine)’ (Ferrari 2005: 39–40).

In the same way, grammatical gender may also be used to expand the lexicon. This sub-function is very similar to differentiating referents, but applies a derivational process instead, i.e. “Related to the derivational function is the role played by nominal classification in organizing semantically related lexical concepts into sets and using class differentiation as a means of signaling semantic contrasts” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 269). By way of illustration in Marathi, gendered nominalizers can be used to derive nouns from adjectival, verbal, and nominal stems. As an example, the neuter and masculine markers *-paṇ/-paṇā* are productively “used for making nouns from adjectives, nouns, adverbs and postpositions” (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 138), cf. *puḍhārī* ‘which leads’ vs *puḍhārīpaṇ* ‘leadership’. Moreover, gender may also convey information about the size of the referents. As an example in Hindi-Urdu, the masculine gender is associated with larger size, whereas the feminine gender on the same stem conveys a small size, cf. *ḍabbā* ‘box (masculine)’ vs. *ḍabbī* ‘little box (feminine)’ (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 272). Similarly in Marathi, as Navalkar (2001: 34) put it, the masculine ending *-ā* indicates “hugeness or

<sup>4</sup> Historically, the neuter was marked with nasalization, which has been lost in modern standard Marathi, with the consequence that feminine singular and neuter plural may have the same form, as in this case with *kuṭrī* (dog.PL.N) and *kuṭrī* (dog.SG.F).

*clumsiness*”, the feminine *-ī* “softness or delicacy”. Furthermore, feminine suffixes (e.g. *ī*, *ke/ka*, *ḍī*, *ḍe/ḍa*, *rū*, *lī*) are productively used as diminutive forms in Marathi (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 173–174). By way of illustration in Table 3, *ārsā* ‘mirror’ is affiliated to the masculine gender. Nonetheless, its diminutive is obtained by shifting to the feminine gender, i.e. *ārsī* ‘small mirror’.

**Table 3:** Gender and size in Marathi (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 173).

Masculine	Feminine
<i>ārsā</i> ‘mirror’	<i>ārsī</i> ‘small mirror’
<i>wāḍgā</i> ‘big bowl’	<i>wāḍī</i> ‘small bowl’
<i>nāḍā</i> ‘big rope’	<i>nāḍī</i> ‘thin band’
<i>surā</i> ‘knife’	<i>surī</i> ‘small knife’
<i>puḍā</i> ‘packet’	<i>puḍī</i> ‘very small packet’
<i>jharā</i> ‘stream of water’	<i>jhurī</i> ‘small stream of water’

The second lexical function of gender systems concerns individuation. Grammatical gender may interact with grammatical number, which “reflects the intimate relationship between the generalizing principle [by which objects are partitioned into classes] (gender) and the individualizing principle (number), which is characteristic for the entire dimension [of apprehension of the object]” (Contini-Morava 2000; Seiler 1986). In other words, gender markers may be used to differentiate between count and mass referents of a noun. By way of illustration in Swedish (Indo-European), count nouns are generally assigned to the uter (masculine/feminine) gender, whereas mass nouns and abstract nouns are mostly labelled with the neuter gender (Fraurud 2000). For instance, the noun *kaffe* ‘coffee’ is neuter when referring to coffee as a liquid or a variety of beans, i.e. a mass. Nonetheless, it switches to uter if the speaker orders ‘one coffee’, i.e. “a cup of coffee”, which is countable. Such association between the neuter gender and mass nouns is productive in Swedish (Basirat and Tang 2018), German and Dutch (Kraaikamp 2016, 2017), among other languages. The shift of gender depending on the referent of the noun is equally common in languages of the world as conversion frequently occurs between count and mass nouns (Doetjes 2012; Gillon 1999). Similarly in Marathi, mass nouns (uncountable nouns) tend to be associated with the neuter gender. As shown in Table 4, nouns referring to entities such as liquids and chemicals, among others, are generally affiliated to the neuter gender<sup>5</sup>.

5 It is important to highlight that this observation is not supported yet by quantitative data. It is a tendency observed in Marathi which requires thorough classification and quantification of the

**Table 4:** Sample of neuter mass nouns in Marathi.

Liquid	Substance	Abstract
<i>pāñī, jal</i> ‘water’	<i>loh</i> ‘iron’	<i>sañgīt</i> ‘music’
<i>dūdh</i> ‘milk’	<i>pāñī, jal</i> ‘water’	<i>lākūḍ</i> ‘wood’
<i>tāk</i> ‘butter milk’	<i>tel</i> ‘oil’	<i>loh</i> ‘iron’
<i>amṛt</i> ‘nectar’	<i>sona</i> ‘gold’	<i>sukh</i> ‘happiness’
<i>barph</i> ‘snow, ice’	<i>rupa</i> ‘silver’	<i>duḥkh</i> ‘sorrow’

The third lexical function of gender systems is to ascribe properties, i.e. gender “can be used to express information about a speaker’s attitude toward the referent” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 278). In other words, the referent of the noun remains unchanged, but the gender marker on the noun changes to convey positive or negative attitude of the speaker toward the referent. For instance in Modern Hebrew (Semitic), gender reversal may convey affection, e.g. a woman may be referred to with masculine pronouns and verb morphology as a sign of intimacy (Tobin 2001: 188). Likewise in Nepali, gender reversal with children equally conveys affection (Pokharel 2010). In Marathi, the change of gender may also convey the attitude of the speaker toward animates and inanimates. The masculine/feminine forms are used when the sex of the referent is known. However, the neuter signalizes “*indifference* or *contempt*” towards the referent (Navalkar 2001: 35). In (11), a dog may be referred to via the masculine, feminine, or neuter form depending on the attitude of the referent toward the dog. If a dog is referred to in a specific manner that shows closeness between the speaker and the dog, the gender of the dog is more likely to be specified via the masculine or feminine form. In (11a), a speaker may refer to his/her dog by specifying the biological sex of the dog. However, the neuter form *kutra* expresses distance from the referent. In (11b), a speaker may use the neuter form to describe a dog which is passing by, but using the same form on his/her own dog would be unusual as the clause would convey affective distance between the speaker and the dog while they actually share a relation of proximity.

- (11) Use of gender to indicate the speaker’s attitude in Marathi
- a. to      *ghāñerḍā kutrā*  
that.M dirty.SG.M dog.SG.M  
‘that dirty dog’

entire lexicon to be confirmed statistically. Moreover, this is only defined as a tendency rather than an absolute rule: exceptions exist as referents closely associated to salient features of men and women are likely to be associated with the masculine or feminine gender (Kemmerer 2017).

- b. *te kutra suṁdar āhe*  
 that.N dog.SG.N beautiful be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘That dog is beautiful.’

Furthermore, a change of gender may also imply different speech register and indicate casual or standard speech. For instance in (12b), when a group of dogs is being referred to in casual speech, neuter agreement is used. Nonetheless, a speaker may also apply masculine agreement if the clause is uttered in a formal situation (12a).

(12) Use of gender with different registers in Marathi

- a. *te ghāṇṛḍe kutre*  
 that.PL.M dirty.PL.M dog.PL.M  
 ‘those bloody dogs (standard)’  
 b. *tī ghāṇṛḍī kutrī*  
 that.PL.N dirty.PL.N dog.PL.N  
 ‘those bloody dogs (casual)’

Likewise with regard to humans, the neuter gender in Marathi may express indifference/distance of the speaker toward the referent. For instance in (13), a speaker may refer to his/her son or daughter using the grammatical gender which corresponds with the biological gender of the referent, i.e. masculine (13a) and feminine (13b). However, the neuter gender can be used when a negative statement is made about the child (13c). Such contrast is considered as a negative connotation as the speaker is indicating a distance with the referent (i.e. the child) via the neuter gender, even though they share a close and intimate family relation<sup>6</sup>.

(13) Use of gender to convey speakers’ attitude toward human referents in Marathi

- a. *to khūp huśār āhe*  
 3SG.M very intelligent be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘He is very intelligent.’  
 b. *tī khūp huśār āhe*  
 3SG.F very intelligent be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘She is very intelligent.’

<sup>6</sup> However, none of the three genders is excluded from use in abusive language. When referring derogatively to a human being as a dog, e.g. *to sālā kutrā* (that.MASC bloody dog.SG.MASC) ‘that bloody dog’, all three genders can be used. Masculine and neuter are used for men and feminine for women.



- c. *te veḍa āhe.*  
 3SG.N stupid.SG.N be.PRS.3SG  
*te veḍa asa karta.*  
 that.N idiot so do.PRS.3SG.N  
 ‘He/she is stupid. That idiot is acting like that.’

Also inanimates, i.e. nominalizers with different gender, may be used to convey different connotations on the obtained noun. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs and further displayed in Table 5, the suffixes *-paṇ* (N) and *-paṇā* (M) can be used for nominalization, e.g. the adjective *lahān* ‘small’ may be nominalized in two forms: *lahānpaṇ* and *lahānpaṇā*.

**Table 5:** Use of gender to convey attitude toward inanimate referents in Marathi.

Adjective	Masculine noun	Neuter noun
<i>puḍhārī</i> ‘which leads’	<i>puḍhārīpaṇā</i> ‘domination’	<i>puḍhārīpaṇ</i> ‘leadership’
<i>lahān</i> ‘small’	<i>lahānpaṇā</i> ‘pettiness’	<i>lahānpaṇ</i> ‘childhood’
<i>moṭhe</i> ‘big’	<i>moṭhepaṇā</i> ‘arrogance’	<i>moṭhepaṇ</i> ‘largeness’

Often one of the two variants is preferred but in cases when both variants are available for nominalization, the masculine form *-paṇā* often has a crude connotation, while the neuter form *-paṇ* conveys a neutral attitude (Dhongde and Wali 2009: 138). For instance in (14), the neutral suffix *-paṇ* may be combined with the adjectival stem *lahān* ‘small’ to obtain the noun ‘childhood’, which conveys either a neutral (14a) or positive (14b) statement from speakers. However, if the masculine suffix *-paṇā* is chosen instead, the derived noun refers to ‘smallness’ in a crude manner, and is preferred in a negative context (14c).

(14) Different connotations of nominalizers in Marathi

- a. *lahānpaṇ-ī mī Solapur-lā jayco.*  
 childhood.N-LOC 1SG Solapur-to go.1SG.M  
 ‘In my childhood I used to go to Solapur.’
- b. *mājha lahānpaṇ chān hota*  
 POSS.1SG.N childhood.N great be.PST.3SG.N  
 ‘My childhood was great.’
- c. *tyācyā-sāṭhī lahānpaṇā śaram-e-cī*  
 POSS.3SG.M.OBL-for smallness.M shame.F-OBL-GEN.SG.M  
*goṣṭa hoti*  
 thing.SG.F be.PST.3SG.F  
 ‘For him, smallness was a matter of shame.’

In summary, the grammatical gender system of Marathi is consistent with the functional typology of nominal classification and productively fulfils the lexical functions of expansion of the lexicon, differentiation of referents, individuation, and ascription of properties. Such productivity is equally found in the second main type of function which we discuss in the next section: discourse functions.

### 3.2 Discourse functions

Discourse functions are divided into three main categories: reference identification, reference management, and re-presentation. First of all, reference identification relates to the functions of anaphora and deixis. Anaphora is defined as the “corefentiality [*sic!*] with another referring expression in the discourse, e.g. a noun” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 280). For instance, a person which has already been introduced in discourse may be referred to via a pronoun, e.g. in English *John is a student. He speaks German and Italian*. In gender languages, gender grammatical agreement contributes to tracking the referent across discourse. By way of illustration in (15) with Marathi, gender agreement is found on personal pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. This agreement pattern serves as one of the linguistic cues available to the listener for tracing back the main referent mentioned by the speaker. For instance in (15a), the noun *mitra* ‘friend’ is first introduced via its full form. However, it is referred to via the third person masculine pronoun *to*, which also shows gender agreement on the verb *dislā* ‘look.PST.M.SG’ and the adjective *barā* ‘good.M.SG’. The same phenomenon of replacement by a pronoun is equally observed in (15b) and (15c) with the feminine and neutral gender respectively. As a side note, the verbs in (15) are in the past perfective tense, but the same agreement would appear in the present tense, the respective endings being *-to*, *-te*, *ta*.

(15) Anaphora and grammatical gender with the past tense in Marathi

- a. *kāl*            *ek*            *mitra*            *bheṭlā*.  
 yesterday one            friend.SG.M            meet.PAST.3SG.M  
*to*            *barā*            *dislā*.  
 3SG.M            good.SG.M            look.PST.3SG.M  
 ‘Yesterday I met a friend. He looked good.’
- b. *kāl*            *ek*            *maitrīṇ*            *bheṭlī*.  
 yesterday one            friend.SG.F            meet.PST.3SG.F  
*ti*            *barī*            *dislī*.  
 3SG.F            good.SG.F            look.PST.3SG.F  
 ‘Yesterday I met a (female) friend. She looked good.’

- c. *kāl*            *ek*            *kutra*            *bheṭla*.  
 yesterday one            dog.SG.N            meet.PST.3SG.N  
*te*            *bara*            *disla*.  
 3SG.N            good.SG.N            look.PST.3SG.N  
 ‘Yesterday I met a dog. It looked good.’

As mentioned in Section 2, the copula verb *as-* ‘to be’ does not show gender in the present tense. In the third person singular, it is always *āhe*. (However, the same verb has an alternative conjugation used for general occurrences, which is conjugated regularly – *asto*, *aste*, *asta* – and hence shows gender.) Hence, in (16) gender agreement is shown by personal pronouns and adjectives only. However, the copula verb *as-* shows gender in the past tense: *hotā*, *hotī*, *hota*.

(16) Anaphora and grammatical gender with the present tense in Marathi

- a. *Sārikā-lā*    *ek*    *mulgā*    *āhe*.  
 Sarika-DAT one boy.SG.M be.PRS.3SG  
*to*            *khūp* *choṭā*    *āhe*.  
 3SG.M            very small.SG.M be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘Sarika has a boy. He is very small.’
- b. *Sārikā-lā*    *ek*    *mulgī*    *āhe*.  
 Sarika-DAT one girl.SG.F be.PRS.3SG  
*tī*            *khūp* *choṭī*    *āhe*.  
 3SG.F            very small.SG.F be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘Sarika has a girl. She is very small.’
- c. *Sārikā-lā*    *ek*    *mūl*    *āhe*.  
 Sarika-DAT one child.SG.N be.PRS.SG  
*te*            *khūp* *choṭa*    *āhe*.  
 3SG.N            very small.SG.N be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘Sarika has a child. It is very small.’

As additional evidence for the function of gender in referent identification, personal pronouns in Marathi only distinguish gender in the third person. However, gender agreement on the verb is present for all persons in the singular. As demonstrated in (17), the first and second personal pronouns *mī* and *tū* do not mark gender (17a-b), in contrast with the third person pronouns shown in (16). Nonetheless, the gender agreement of the referent is still present on the verb, cf. *jato/jate* and *jatos/jates*. Thus, the overt marking of gender on pronouns is not the main cue for referent tracking, as the forms of pronouns do not systematically indicate the gender of the referent. On the other hand,

grammatical gender agreement is consistent across different persons and is considered as one of the main pieces of information available to listeners for referent tracking.

(17) Lack of gender agreement for first and second person pronouns in Marathi

- a. *mī jāto/jāte*  
 1 go.PRS.1SG.M / go.PRS.1SG.F  
 ‘I go (male subject / female subject).’
- b. *tū jātos/jātes*  
 2 go.PRS.2SG.M / go.PRS.2SG.F  
 ‘You go (male subject / female subject).’

Deixis is defined as the “identification related to the context of participants in the speech situation” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 280; Lyons 1977). For instance, a referent may be identified in the context of discourse through a pointing motion. In such a situation, grammatical gender may help identify a specific referent among all the possible referents in the surrounding context. By way of illustration in (18), a new referent may be introduced in discourse via a personal pronoun, and grammatical gender may provide additional cues for the listener to identify it. As an example in (18a), the listener can deduce via the masculine agreement that the speaker is referring to a man instead of a woman or an object. The same logic applies for feminine and neutral gender in (18b) and (18c).

(18) Deixis and grammatical gender in Marathi

- a. *to veḍā ahe*  
 3SG.M weird.SG.M be.PRS.SG  
 ‘He is weird.’
- b. *tī veḍī ahe*  
 3SG.F weird.SG.F be.PRS.SG  
 ‘She is weird.’
- c. *te veḍa ahe*  
 3SG.N weird.SG.N be.PRS.SG  
 ‘It is weird.’

The second discourse function of grammatical gender involves reference management, i.e. variation in grammatical gender agreement may indicate the salience and/or definiteness of the referent in discourse (Claudi 1985; Lucy 2000; Senft 2000: 26). For instance in Turkana (Nilo-Saharan), gender is marked on the noun depending on the status of the referent in terms of specificity and genericness, i.e. gender is “frequently omitted with names of animals in folktales when

the names are used in their generic sense” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 283; Dimmendaal 1983: 221). As for Marathi, the use of different gender may convey information about the salience of the referent in discourse. By way of illustration in (19), if dogs are referred to generally in the plural, they are more likely to be affiliated with the neuter gender (19a)<sup>7</sup>. However, if dogs are mentioned generically as a singular species, the tendency is to use the masculine default gender in singular (as also observed in Section 3.1)<sup>8</sup>, e.g. if someone is writing an essay about dogs, they would apply the masculine default gender as in (19b). Finally, the feminine gender would be applied if a high level of specificity is required with regard to the biological gender of the dog, i.e. if that information is relevant for discourse, as shown in (19c).

(19) Grammatical gender and prominence in discourse in Marathi

- a. *kuṭrī*      *bujrī*      *astāt*  
 dog.PL.N    timid.PL.N    be.PRS.3PL  
 ‘Dogs are timid.’
- b. *kuṭrā*      *hā*      *māṇas-ā-cā*  
 dog.SG.M    this.M      man-OBL-GEN.SG.M  
*mitra*      *asto*  
 friend.SG.M    be.PRS.M.3SG  
 ‘The dog is a friend of man.’
- c. *kuṭryā*    *kuṭryām-pekśa*    *bujryā*    *astāt*  
 dog.PL.F    dog.PL.M.OBL-than    timid.PL.F    be.PRS.PL  
 ‘Female dogs are more timid than male dogs.’

Moreover, gender agreement on a noun may vary depending on the emphasis involved. As an example in (20) with the past tense, the verbs usually agree with the object, since gender agreement with the subject is blocked by the ergative marker, e.g. in (20a), the verb ‘read’ is marked with the feminine gender by concord with the object ‘notebook’ which is feminine in Marathi. However, if the object ‘notebook’ is emphasized within the discourse, the dative marker *-lā* that it would take would block gender agreement. Thus, the verb would take neuter gender agreement by default. By way of illustration

<sup>7</sup> Note also that as mentioned in Section 2, the speaker uses in (19) the copula verb ‘be’ specific to generic connotation: *astāt/asto*, as opposed to the copula verb *ahe* ‘be’ shown in (18). The generic copula is used in (19a), (19b), and (19c). Thus, gender agreement is once more the salient cue for differentiating between the sub-level of specific vs. generic connotation.

<sup>8</sup> A similar instance can be observed in the masculine noun *māṇus* (human being), which changes to neuter *māṇusa* (humans) in the plural.

in (20b), the object ‘notebook’ is marked with the dative marker to emphasize that the subject read a notebook instead of another book. Hence, the verb ‘read’ does not agree with the subject (masculine) or the object (feminine) and shows neuter agreement.

(20) Grammatical gender agreement and emphasis in Marathi

- a. *tyā-na vahi vācī*  
 3SG.M-ERG notebook.SG.F read.PST.3SG.F  
 ‘He read a/the notebook.’
- b. *tyā-na vahi-lā vācla*  
 3SG.M-ERG notebook.SG.F-DAT read.PST.3SG.N  
 ‘He read a/the *notebook* (as opposed to something else, e.g. a dictionary).’

Finally, the third discourse function of gender systems is re-presentation. This function is similar to the lexical function of ascribing properties. However, it is applied in discourse to indicate a change of attitude in the speaker. By way of illustration, “a noun is first associated with one classification marker, and then is re-categorized ... to indicate a change in perspective on the referent” (Contini-Morava and Kilarski 2013: 287). As an example, in traditional stories in Menominee (Algonquian), nouns usually marked with the inanimate gender may shift to the animate grammatical gender when they are assigned human personalities (Bloomfield, 1962: 28). In the Rolling Skull story (Goddard 2002: 202–203) the inanimate noun *we.nekan* ‘skull’ shifts to animate gender when the skull becomes a rolling skull and starts to sing. Thus, the verb and demonstrative are first marked as inanimate but change to animate gender afterward.

Likewise in Marathi, the use of different grammatical gender on the same nominal stem may convey the subjective opinion of the speaker toward the referent. For instance, as explained in Section 3.1, arbitrary dogs are often referred to via the neuter gender. In (22a), a speaker labels a familiar female street-dog with the neuter gender, even though she is aware of its feminine biological gender. This use of gender shows an intentional display of distance from the dog. However, the speaker switches to the feminine gender when he/she realizes that the dog is wounded and feels pity for her (22b), i.e. the speaker decreases its affective distance from the dog out of affection.

(22) Re-presentation and grammatical gender in Marathi

- a. *te kutra sakāl-pāsūn tithe āhe*  
 that.N dog.SG.N morning-from there be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘That dog has been there since this morning.’

- b. *aga jakhmī āhe tī!*  
 VOC.F wounded.F be.PRS.3SG 3SG.F  
*tī-lā madat kelī pāhije!*  
 3SG.F-DAT help.F do.PRF.F needed  
 ‘Oh...! She is wounded! We must help her!’

Similar examples are found with regard to human-like inanimates. As demonstrated in (23), a doll is first referred to via the neuter gender when the speaker stresses that the doll is just an inanimate object. Nevertheless, the speaker then switches to the feminine gender when he/she positively describes the beauty of the doll.

(23) Re-presentation between humans and inanimates in Marathi

- a. *aga choṭa-sa bāhula-c āhe.*  
 VOC.F small.SG.N-such.N doll.SG.N-just be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘You know, it is just a little doll.’  
 b. *tārī phār barī disat aḥē tī*  
 still too good.SG.F look.PART.3SG be.PRS.3SG 3SG.F  
 ‘But she looks very good.’

As with lexical functions, discourse functions in Marathi are fulfilled by the grammatical gender system. While individuation mostly includes a neuter vs. masculine/feminine distinction, the two other discourse functions (i.e. reference identification and re-presentation) are applicable with the masculine, feminine, and neuter gender. In the following section, we provide a summary of all the lexical and discourse functions listed by functional typology, along with the implications of such findings for linguistic typology and linguistics in general.

## 4 Discussion

Grammatical gender in Marathi was shown to be canonical in Section 2, e.g. gender agreement is obligatory and constant (Corbett and Fedden 2016; Fedden and Corbett 2017). Through a detailed analysis of the lexical and discourse functions of grammatical gender in Marathi, we have demonstrated that the stability of the gender system can equivalently provide various tools to Marathi speakers to expand the referential power of the lexicon and facilitate the process of discourse. As summarized in Table 6, most lexical and discourse functions listed by functional typology are equally attested in Marathi. Grammatical

Table 6: Functions of grammatical gender in Marathi.

Type	Function	Example of grammatical gender in Marathi
Lexical	Expansion of lexicon	– Nominalization, – Differentiation in terms of size
	Differentiation of referents	– Indication of biological sex among animates – Expression of semantic distinction among inanimates
	Individuation	– Tendency to associate mass nouns to the neuter gender
	Ascription of properties	– Expression of the speaker’s distance from animates – Indication of crudeness for abstract concepts
Discourse	Reference identification	– Identification of referents via anaphora and deixis
	Reference management	– Neuter tends to be affiliated with the general sense – Difference of gender marking with regard to emphasis
	Re–presentation	– Indication of changes in the speaker’s perspective during discourse

gender in Marathi may expand the power of the lexicon, e.g. gender markers may be used as diminutives or nominalizers. Moreover, grammatical gender can help differentiate among animate and inanimate referents, e.g. by distinguishing biological sex among animates. Grammatical gender in Marathi also contributes to the function of individuation, as mass nouns tend to be affiliated with the neuter gender. Finally, speakers of Marathi may also apply different grammatical gender on a noun to convey their subjective attitude toward the referent of the noun, e.g. the neuter may be used to indicate distance and/or indifference toward the referent.

With regard to discourse functions, grammatical gender in Marathi is used to identify referents in discourse. For instance, grammatical gender may help track referents and avoid constant repetition of the noun form. Grammatical gender may also indicate the prominence of the referent within discourse, i.e. different gender may convey different degree of distance from the referent and infers the status of the referent in the discourse context. Last but not least, the lexical function of ascribing properties may be applied across discourse and indicate a change of attitude from the speakers toward the referent.

The main contributions of this paper are as follows. First, we have provided a detailed account of the grammatical gender system in Marathi. Second, we have used functional typology and listed language examples for each lexical and discourse function common to grammatical gender systems. We have supported the claimed functional typology by demonstrating that the posited lexical



and discourse functions were indeed attested in Marathi. Thus, we have demonstrated that grammatical gender in Marathi is canonical both in terms of grammaticality and functions. These findings and data are expected to be beneficial for linguistic typology and specifically nominal classification, which may indirectly be applicable to sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, neuroscience, and cognitive studies.

Nevertheless, our study has several limitations. First of all, we have provided sporadic comparison with other languages. It would be interesting to view the position of Marathi with respect to its phylogenetic and geographical neighbors: does grammatical gender in Marathi displays divergence from other Indic languages due to its contact with other language families such as Dravidian? Second, our study only included data from the standard variety of Marathi. It would be interesting to include different varieties (e.g. Nagpuri, Varhadi, or the Marathi of southern Maharashtra) and analyze their similarities and divergence. For instance in (24), speakers from southern Maharashtra tend to modify the agreement pattern and apply the neuter gender to all nouns as well as all persons except themselves. As an example in (24a), a person named Rahul is referred to via the neuter demonstrative pronoun *te* and neuter agreement on the verb ‘go’. Such an agreement pattern would be judged as ungrammatical in Standard Marathi, as the gender agreement on pronouns and verbs is expected to agree with the masculine subject. Likewise in (24b), women in southern Maharashtra may equally refer to themselves in first person masculine.

(24) Generalization of neuter agreement from Marathi speakers

- a. *lekā, te Rāhul kuṭha gela re?*  
 son that.N Rahul where go.PRF.3SG.N INTERJ  
 ‘Hey son, where did that Rahul go?’
- b. *mī ālo, mī gelo*  
 1SG come.PRF.1SG.M 1SG go.PRF.1SG.M  
 ‘I came, I went.’

This variation is speculated to have resulted from the influence of the neighboring Dravidian language Kannada (Aikhenvald 2016: 90; Hock 1991: 503; Kouwenberg 2001: 230). Nevertheless, this hypothesis is not supported yet by systematic observations. Thus, further investigation is required to verify whether such phenomena of gender simplification are attested on a large scale or not within the state of Maharashtra.

Finally, parts of our analysis could also benefit from quantitative data, e.g. the lexical function of individuation relates to the tendency to affiliate mass

nouns to the neuter gender. A statistical analysis of the entire lexicon is necessary to support such a claim.

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined Marathi, a language spoken in a region populated by various language families such as Indo-European and Dravidian, among others. We have used functional typology to analyze grammatical gender in Marathi, and demonstrated that it allows flexibility to fulfil multiple lexical and discourse functions. We have also shown that the grammatical realization and corresponding functions of grammatical gender may vary among typical gender languages. For instance, the agreement paradigm of Marathi slightly differs from its phylogenetic neighbors.

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## Abbreviations

CLF = classifier; DAT = dative; ERG = ergative; F = feminine; FUT = future; GEN = genitive; INTERJ = interjection; LOC = locative; M = masculine; N = neuter; OBL = oblique; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PRED = predicative; PRF = perfective; PRS = present; PST = past; SG = singular; 1PL = first person plural; 1SG = first person singular; 2SG = second person singular; 3PL = third person plural; 3SG = third person singular

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