

Syntactic gender is on Num

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The facts The proposed analysis accounts for two observations about gender in Arabic. First, while animate nouns preserve their natural gender in the plural (1)-(2), all inanimate nouns are feminine in the plural, regardless of the gender of the singular base (3)-(4).

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| <p>(1) muʕallam muʕalm-een teacher.MASC.SG teacher.masc-PL ‘(male) teacher, (male) teachers’</p> | <p>(2) muʕalm-a muʕalm-a-at teacher-FEM.SG teacher-FEM-PL ‘(female) teacher, (female) teachers’</p> |
| <p>(3) babour babour-at boat.MASC.SG boat.MASC-PL ‘boat, boats’</p> | <p>(4) mreya mreya-at mirror.FEM.SG mirror.FEM-PL ‘mirror, mirrors’</p> |

Second, in the collective paradigm, where all nouns are syntactically singular, gender is used to mark number distinctions. Collective nouns are masculine, and the singulative (individual-denoting) is derived by the suffixation of the marker *-a*, making the noun feminine. (5)

- (5) *Collective-singulative pairs*
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| beeḏ - beeḏ-a | ‘eggs, an egg’ |
| tut - tut-a | ‘berries, a berry’ |
| nemmel - nemmel-a | ‘ants, an ant’ |
| luz - luz-a | ‘almonds, an almond’ |

The proposal First, I account for these data by including animacy and class features on *n*. These features are needed for the spellout of gender in the plural, since (1) only animate nouns preserve their gender in the plural (2) the [+collective] class feature signals that gender marking is to be interpreted in terms of number.

Next, I make a distinction between natural, arbitrary, and syntactic genders. While natural and arbitrary genders are features on *n* (Lecarme, 2002; Kihm, 2005; Lowenstamm, 2008; Acquaviva, 2009; Kramer, 2014, 2015; Hammerly, 2018), syntactic gender, I argue, is on Num, given the close correlation between gender and number in the data presented above. The claim that gender is associated with Num was originally proposed by Ritter (1993), based on data from irregular plurals in some Romance languages. My proposal, however, parts from Ritter’s in its treatment of singular nouns. While she considers that only plural nouns are generated under Num, I argue that the latter hosts both singular and plural numbers (Krifka, 1989; Borer, 2005; Mathieu, 2012, 2013, 2014; Harbour, 2011, 2014). Assuming that both the singular and the plural are realized on Num, I extend my analysis cross-linguistically, proposing a unified structure for all languages, including those with no gender switch in the plural.

Finally, I show how syntactic gender is the result of a class-animacy-gender bundle expressed on Num according to morphological mapping rules using various examples from Arabic.

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