



Are genderlects a (South) American feature?

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Introduction to genderlects

Genderlects

Rose (2015:531): “[Genderlects refer] to a formal distinction depending on the **gender of the speech-act participants** and [are] distinct from grammatical gender, which indicates the gender of a referent.”

		♀ speaker	/	♂ speaker	
(1) KARAJÁ (Nuclear Macro Je; Brazil)	‘tree’	<i>kaworo</i>	/	<i>aworo</i>	phonology
(2) MOJEÑO TRINITARIO (Arawakan; Bolivia)	3HUM.SG.MASC	<i>ñi-</i>	/	<i>ma-</i>	morphology
(3) BOLIVIAN GUARANI (Tupian; Bolivia)	‘yes’	<i>éé</i>	/	<i>tà</i>	lexicon

Previous works: an emerging feature



Originally supposed to be rare:

Aikhenvald (2012): **2 languages** in her volume on Amazonian languages

Fleming (2012): **20 languages** worldwide

Dunn (2013): **14 languages** worldwide

But recent studies with more cases:

Rose (2015): **41 South American** languages belonging to 14 different stocks

Rose & Bakker (2016): **102 languages** worldwide

Aikhenvald, A. Y. 2012. *Languages of the Amazon*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dunn, Michael. 2013. Gender determined dialect variation. In Greville Corbett (ed.), *The expression of gender*, 39–68. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Fleming, Luke. 2012. Gender indexicality in the Native Americas: Contributions to the typology of social indexicality. *Language in Society* 41(3), 295–320.

Rose, Françoise. 2015. On male and female speech and more: categorical gender indexicality in indigenous South-American languages. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 81(4), 495–537.

Rose, Françoise, and Peter Bakker. 2016. A typological survey of genderlects. Presented at the *Colloquium of the linguistics department*, U. of Oregon, Eugene, Oct 7.

Previous works: geographic distribution



Most cases seem to be in the **Americas**

- Fleming (2012): 11 in North America, 6 in South America, 3 elsewhere
- Dunn (2013): 3 in North America, 5 in South America, 5 elsewhere
- Rose & Bakker (2016): 50 in South America, 52 elsewhere

Areal hypotheses

- Fleming (2012:297): phenomenon mostly **limited to the Americas**
- Dunn (2013:46): frequent instances in the **Americas**, maybe an areal feature of **Amazonia**?
- Rose (2015:504): phenomenon particularly present in **Amazonia** (especially lowland Bolivia and Upper Xingu) and the **Chaco**

Dunn, Michael. 2013. Gender determined dialect variation. *The expression of gender*, ed. Greville Corbett, pp. 39–68. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Fleming, Luke. 2012. Gender indexicality in the Native Americas: Contributions to the typology of social indexicality. *Language in Society* 41(3), 295–320.

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Previous works: a preliminary typology

- Type I (Haas 1944: 147): **Speaker based** is more frequent (Dunn 2013: 42)
- **Loci of gender indexicality** (Rose 2015: 524-525):

	CROSS-LINGUISTICALLY	WITHIN A LANGUAGE	e.g.
PHONETICS- PHONOLOGY	rare	few items but pervasive in speech	Karajá: <i>k</i> ♀ vs. <i>ø</i> ♂ ~ every 3 words (Fortune & Fortune 1975)
MORPHOLOGY	not frequent	few items but pervasive in speech e.g. gender/person	Trinitario: <i>-ñi</i> ♀ vs. <i>-ma</i> ♂ 3HUM.SG.MASC ~ once per sentence (Rose 2013)
LEXICON	frequent	few items	Siriono: some fauna/flora terms (Schermair 1957) but Garifuna (~50; de Pury 2003) Island Carib (37% ♀ or ♂ exclusively; de Goeje (1939))
DISCOURSE MARKERS	most frequent	moderate number of items but can be pervasive or salient in speech	Abipone: <i>hàà</i> ♀ vs. <i>héé</i> ♂ 'yes' <i>aje</i> ♀ vs. <i>tjo</i> ♂ 'ouch' (Dobrizhoffer 1822: 2:197; Nailic 1966:73)

Methodology: Previous studies



Convenience sample

- ad hoc dataset
- grammar harvesting, questionnaire addressed to specialists and linguistic mailing lists
- no negative data included (no statistics possible)

Bias

- longer descriptive tradition in the Americas (cf. Adam 1879; Haas 1944; Pottier 1972; Kroskirty 1983...)

→ Representativeness of the data?

Adam, Lucien. 1979. Du parler des hommes et du parler des femmes dans la langue caraïbe. In *Mémoires de l'Académie de Stanislas (Nancy)* 4(11), 145–764.

Haas, Mary R. 1944. Men's and women's speech in Koasati. *Language* 20(3), 142–49.

Kroskirty, Paul. 1983. On male and female speech in the Pueblo Southwest. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 49(1), 88–91.

Pottier, Bernard. 1972. Langage des hommes et langage des femmes en cocama (tupi). In Jacqueline Thomas & Lucien Bernot, *Langues et Techniques, Nature et Société*, 1:385–87.

Today: reassessment of previous observations



The aim of our paper is to reassess

- the worldwide frequency of the phenomenon
- (South) American areality
- the preliminary typological observations and the relative frequency of the types

Methodology

Our methodology: sample



Out of Asia (SNSF, U. of Zürich): multidisciplinary project aiming at the exploration of the linguistic diversity and the population history in the Americas

→ **Mapping Linguistic Areas in the Americas**

- 20 feature sets -- among which **genderlect**
- **Sample of 319 languages** (215 families)

genealogically independent, geographically maximally distributed, regardless of typological profile

- 1/3 in North America
 - 1/3 in South America
 - 1/3 in the rest of the world (4 other macro areas, Hammarström & al. 2014)
- } **American bias**

Our methodology: **our** coding

- Only **categorical** genderlect considered
- **Haas types**
 - speaker based
 - addressee based
 - speaker-addressee based (**both**)
 - **mixed**

Tupinamba (South America; Barbosa 1956:374-375)

- men speakers only: **reá** ♂ 'yes' }
- women speakers only: **reí** ♀ 'yes' }
- men to men only: **hē** ♂ > ♂ 'olá, oh!'
(no corresponding women word)

speaker based

both



mixed

Our methodology: **our** coding



- **(inter)subjectivity** (Lyons 1982:102, Traugott 2003)
 - **subjectivity**: linguistic expression of speaker involvement (beliefs and attitudes)
 - **intersubjectivity**: linguistic expression of a speaker's attention to the hearer

- **address terms/vocatives**
e.g. Sir ! (*a sir crossed the street)

Lyons, John. 1982. Deixis and subjectivity: Loquor, ergo sum?" In Robert J. Jarvella and Wolfgang Klein (eds.), *Speech, place, and action: Studies in deixis and related Topics*, 101–24. New York: Wiley.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 2003. From Subjectification to Intersubjectification. In Raymond Hickey (ed.), *Motives for Language Change*, 124–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



Results

Genderlects are definitively not a rarity

- 57 cases / 319 languages: 18%
- Our study confirms that “genderlects” are not two very distinct lects.
 - **phonology**: maximally targets a few phonemes, sometimes phrase-final modification
 - **morphology**: from one to a handful of morphemes
 - **lexicon**:

Lexemes	Languages
1-5	33
6-20	11
>20	1
?	1

Table 1. Ranges of lexemes with genderlects per language

Worldwide distribution

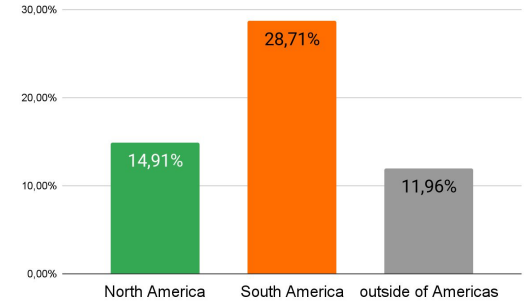
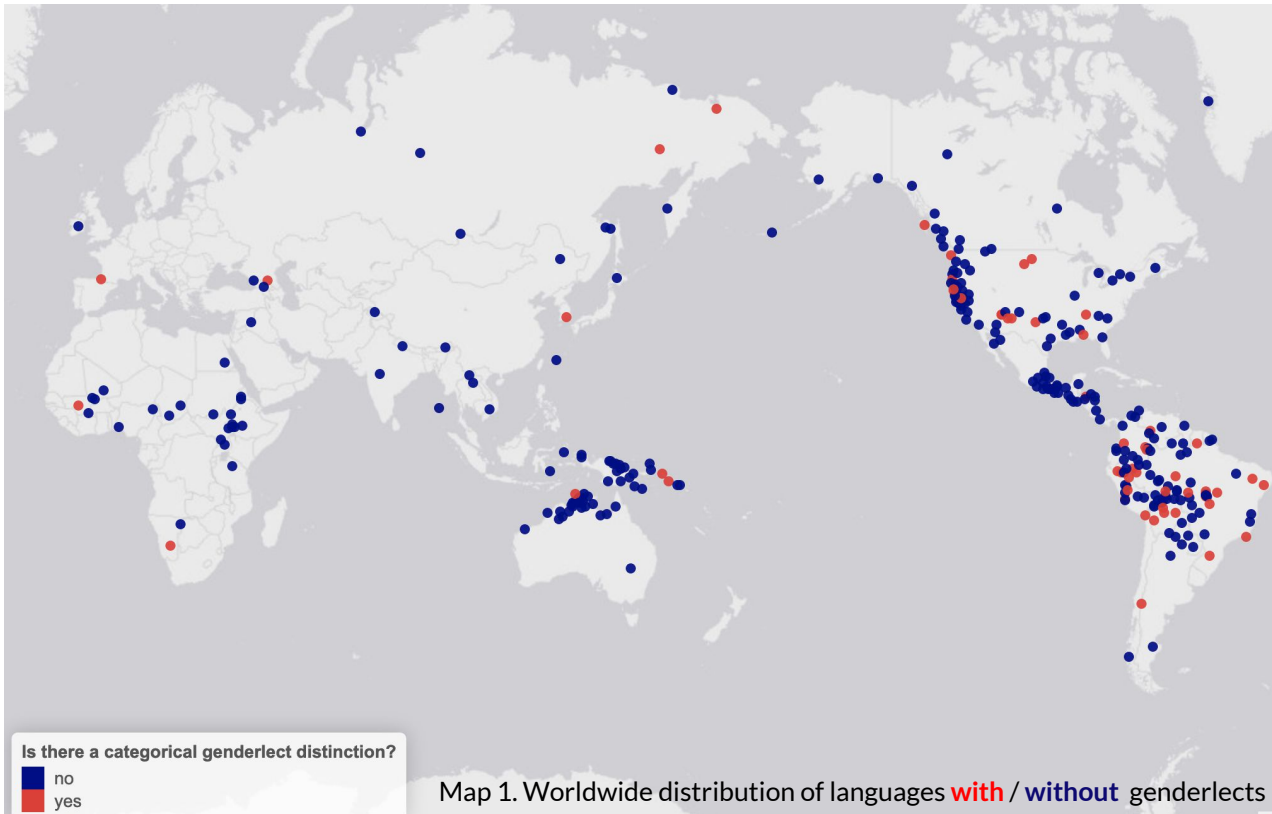


Fig. 1. Proportion of languages with genderlects in **North America**, in **South America**, elsewhere

South America vs North America:

$X^2(1, p < .05)$

South America vs. outside of Americas:

$X^2(1, p < .005)$

Types

- Indexing the gender of the **speaker** is most common

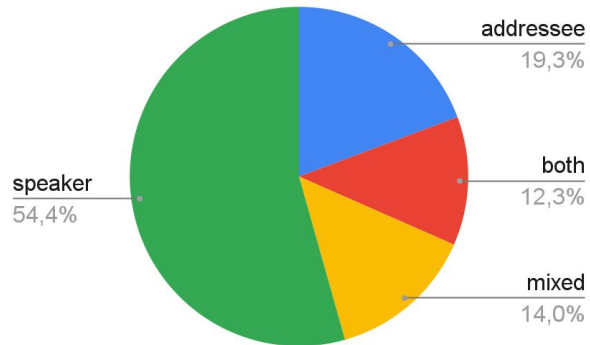


Fig. 2. Distribution of genderlect types based on the **speaker**, the **addressee**, **both speaker/addressee**, **mixed types**

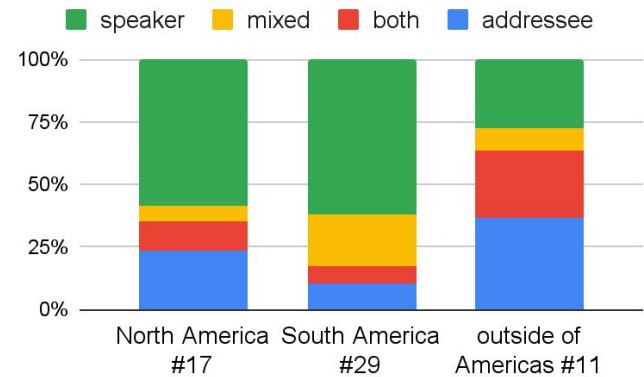


Fig. 3. Proportion of genderlect types based on the **speaker**, the **addressee**, **both speaker/addressee**, **mixed types**

Loci

First wide-scope typological study with three strictly-defined loci

- mostly in **lexicon**
- **17/57** languages with 2 loci
 - primarily lexicon & morphology (**13/17**)
 - no language with 3 loci

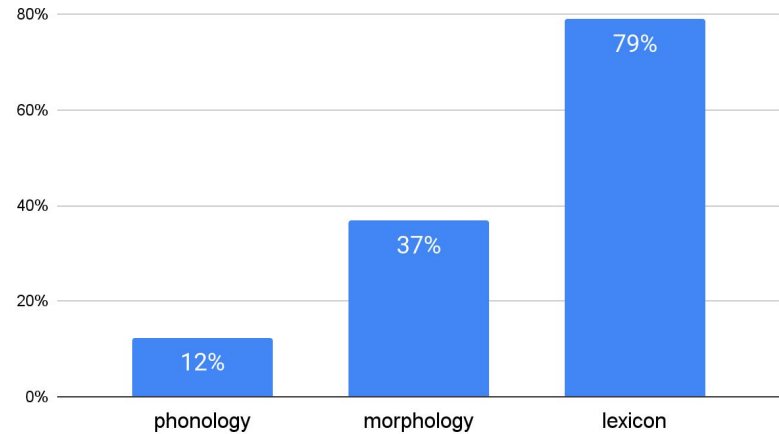


Fig. 4. Distribution of genderlect systems by loci: **phonology, morphology, lexicon**

(Inter)subjectivity

- Morphology: 76% with some (inter)subjectivity
 - sentence type (interrogative, prohibitive...), emphatic particle, 2sg pronoun, narrator's point of view, empathy, vocative suffix
 - Bilua (Papunesia, Obata 2003:61)

ngo-iza
2SG-VOC.SG.F
'you (woman addressee)'

ngo-ila
2SG-VOC.SG.M
'you (man addressee)'

- Lexicon: 93% with some (inter)subjectivity
 - interjections, greetings/routines, phatic particles, address terms, attention-getters, 'yes'
 - Shipibo-Konibo (South America, Valenzuela 2003:182)

jojo
'yes (woman speaking)'

jeje
'yes (man speaking)'

Kazuko, Obata. 2003. *A grammar of Bilua: A Papuan language of the Solomon Islands*. (Pacific Linguistics, 540.) Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University.

Valenzuela, Pilar M. 2003. *Transitivity in Shipibo-Konibo grammar*. University of Oregon. (PhD Diss.)

Discussion on the areal distribution

Why this areal distribution? Inheritance

Inheritance

- our results: 13 isolates, 32 families (7 with several cases)
- "gender dialect systems are diachronically unstable" (Dunn 2013: 63)
- a priori not the most prevalent diffusion mode
 - rarely some cognacy within a family, but no reconstruction in the proto-language
 - Li 1982 on Atayalic dialects (Austronesian, Taiwan),
 - Rose & Chousou-Polydouri 2017 on Tupian (South America)
 - more frequently no cognacy within a family (cf. Jê languages, Rose 2015: 502-503)
 - No cognacy in our sample, i.e. two Pano-Takanan genderlects:
 - Shipibo-Konibo 'yes'
 - Matsés: interjections for displeasure, surprise, pain, complaining

Dunn, Michael. 2013. Gender determined dialect variation. In Greville Corbett (ed.), *The expression of gender*, 39–68. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Li, Paul Jen-Kuei. 1982. Male and female forms of speech in Atayal. *Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica* 53(2), 265–304.

Rose, Françoise. 2015. On male and female speech and more: Categorical gender indexicality in indigenous South-American languages. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 81(4), 495–537.

Rose, Françoise, and Natalia Chousou-Polydouri. 2017. A comparative study of genderlects in the Tupi family. *SSILA*, Austin, TX, Jan 6.

Why this areal distribution? Language change



Independent language change

- statistical genderlects → categorical or categorical → statistical
- some case studies
 - morphology: Alberdi (1995) on Basque
 - phonology: Dunn (2000) on Chukchi; Ribeiro (2012) on Karajá
 - 'yes': Rose & Chousou-Polydouri (2017) on Tupi
- could be enhanced by cultural factors? (more on this later)
 - would explain the areal distribution
 - would explain the non-cognacy of genderlects within a family

Alberdi, Jabier. 1995. The development of the Basque system of terms of address and the allocutive conjugation. In *Towards a History of the Basque Language*, edited by J. I. Hualde, J. A. Lakarra, and R. L. Trask, 279–93. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Dunn, Michael. 2000. Chukchi Women's language: A historical-comparative perspective." *Anthropological Linguistics* 42 (3): 305–28.

Ribeiro, Eduardo. 2012. *A grammar of Karajá*. PhD Dissertation, Chicago University.

Rose, Françoise, and Natalia Chousou-Polydouri. 2017. A comparative study of genderlects in the Tupi family. *SSILA*, Austin, TX, Jan 6.

Why this areal distribution? Contact



Contact-induced emergence of genderlects

- few cases discussed
 - language mixing in Island Carib (Taylor 1956)
 - diffusion of the pattern in the lexicon across families in Pueblo Southwest (Kroskrity 1983)
- (inter)subjective elements facilitating genderlects
 - borrowability of pragmatic items (Matras 2007, Andersen 2014)
 - Hyp: saliency in discourse → higher borrowability?
- diffusion in South America
 - no obvious cognacy in our sample → rather a pattern diffusion?
 - diffusion could be enhanced by cultural factors ?

Andersen, Gisle. 2014. Pragmatic borrowing. *Journal of Pragmatics* 67 (June): 17–33.

Kroskrity, Paul. 1983. On male and female speech in the Pueblo Southwest. *International Journal of American Linguistics* 49(1), 88–91.

Matras, Yaron. 1998. Utterance modifiers and universals of grammatical borrowing. *Linguistics* 36(2), 281–331.

Taylor, Douglas. 1956. On dialectal divergence in Island Carib." *IJAL* 25, 62–68.

Why this areal distribution? Culture

- Amazonian cosmogony: conviviality vs. predation
 - Amerindian perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 1998)
 - Differentiation through the ‘otherness’ (Santos-Granero 2007)
- High number of Amazonian lects/linguistic variants due to the fact that “the negotiation of linguistic boundaries involves the challenge of maintaining one’s own social identity alongside a constant risk of absorption into another sphere” (Epps 2021:5)
 - shamanic varieties
 - variants associated with descent groups and affinal relations
 - pet & hunting registers
 - **genderlects**
- (Inter)subjectivity
 - salient in discourse → culturally significant (=identity tag)
 - **97 %** of South America genderlects with some (inter)subjectivity items vs. **86%** in the rest of the world (not statistically significant)

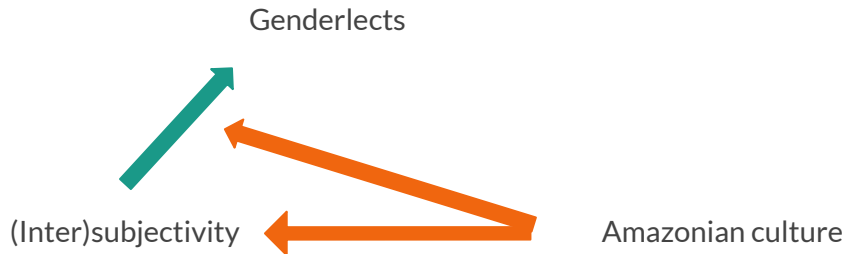
Epps, Patience. 2021. Diversifying multilingualism: Languages and lects in Amazonia. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 25 (4), 901–20.

Santos-Granero, F. 2007. Of fear and friendship: Amazonian sociality beyond kinship and affinity. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.), 13, 1–18.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. 1998. Cosmological deixis and amerindian perspectivism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 4, 469–88.

Conclusions

- Summary on categorical genderlects:
 - not a rarity
 - areal distribution confirmed: South America
 - typological generalizations confirmed: essentially speaker, in the lexicon
 - strong relation with (inter)subjectivity
 - role of culture?
- Limitations:
 - Is it specific to South America or more generally to areas less-impacted by globalization ?



References (Slide 5)



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- and... the audience for your attention!

Address terms



Some address terms index the gender of the addressee → a case of genderlects ?

If address term is also used referentially, it is considered as gender in lexicon.

Ex: Mum! / A mum crossed the street.

If not, it is a good candidate for genderlects.

Ex: Madam! / *A madam crossed the street.

But then, genderlects would virtually be present in all languages ? Addressee indexicality inherent in address terms.

A continuum between address terms/vocatives/attention-getter (Zwicky 1974)