A Comparative Overview of Dutch and Kurdish Grammatical Gender System

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Abstract: Grammatical genders have been addressed in many languages of the world. To present a comparative view, the present article provides a general investigation of Dutch and Kurdish grammatical genders by examining relevant data throughout the Dutch and Kurdish language. Most of the data of the present article focus on the structural management of the grammatical gender systems of the highlighted languages. Finally, the paper attempts to address some conclusions to show a range of closeness and farness among Dutch and Kurdish via similarities and differences between the grammatical gender systems of the stated languages.

Keywords: Grammatical Gender, Agreement, Nouns, Dutch, Kurdish, Izafe, Oblique

1. Introduction

In this paper, the grammatical gender system of the Kurdish and Dutch language has been examined. A comparative overview approach has been used to highlight informative data related to Dutch and Kurdish grammatical genders. The paper gives an evaluation of the literature in the field of Dutch and Kurdish language and their grammatical genders through summaries, classifications, analysis, critiques, and comparisons. The primary purpose of conducting this research is to address an overview of Dutch and Kurdish grammatical genders to identify similarities and dissimilarities between the two languages and to see how close or far the two languages are in terms of grammatical genders. For that reason, this research consists of four sections. Section one is an introduction to the work. Section two involves a literature framework of nouns in general, grammatical gender nouns, and Kurdish and Dutch grammatical gender system. Section three presents similarities and differences of the two languages in terms of grammatical genders. This section is then followed by the final section which is the conclusion.

1.1 Research Questions

The research questions of this paper are as follows:

1. Do Kurdish and Dutch share similar characteristics when it comes to grammatical genders?
2. If yes, what are the similarities, if no, what are the differences between them?

1.2 The Objectives of the Research

The purpose of this research is to introduce, discuss, analyse, and compare the arena of Dutch and Kurdish language when dealing with the process of grammatical genders. The current work also strives to fill up the gap that exists in the literature of the mentioned phenomenon. The last goal of the research is to help other researchers in creating relevant ideas in connection to this topic.

1.3 The Hypotheses

In the light of the above-noted research questions, and so to answer the questions, it could be hypothesized that:

1. Both Kurdish and Dutch share a range of similar features based on their grammatical gender system.
2. Similarities and dissimilarities among Dutch and Kurdish grammatical genders are found in the noun class system of the two languages in conjunction with other aspects of the language such as adjectives, articles, pronouns, proper nouns, and so forth.

1.4 The Significance of the Research

This article is significant for both Dutch and Kurdish institutions that want to pay serious attention to the grammatical gender system of each other's languages. The research is also significant for both researchers and readers that are interested in the main topic since research of this kind is hardly ever conducted. Lastly, the work plays a crucial role in filling up the research gap concerning this study.

2. Literature Review

It is generally agreed among linguists that the grammar of any language is classified into a number of different word classes based on the lexicon of the language. The universal word classification of any language is colloquially known as parts of speech. The major parts of speech of a language usually consist of nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, however, other parts of speech such as pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, and determiners also play an important role. In general, the current section of this article shares an overview of the role and function of nouns while it also specifically concentrates on the grammatical gender system of nouns in the Dutch and Kurdish language.

2.1 What are Nouns?

Grammatical genders and nouns usually have an interrelationship, for that reason, it would be important to look at the functions, roles, characteristics and types of nouns in general. The Cambridge Dictionary of Linguistics describes nouns as both concrete and abstract entities of a given language. Concrete entities could be terms such as (see) or (chair) while abstract entities might be words such as (truth) or (idea) (Miller & Brown, 2013, pp. 214-215). In their book, Cohesion in English, Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 274) have generalized nouns in a small set by describing nouns as 'human nouns', 'place nouns', and 'fact nouns'. Examples of the generalized set of nouns are listed below.

people, person, man, woman, child, boy, girl [human]

creature [non-human animate]

thing, object [inanimate concrete mass]

business, affair, matter [inanimate abstract]

move [action]

place [place]

question, idea [fact]

Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 274) emphasize that the items above are of significant importance because they play a crucial part in daily verbal interactions. Yule (2010, p. 82) points out that nouns are words that refer to people (boy), objects (backpack), creatures (dog), places (school), qualities (roughness), phenomena (earth-quake), and abstract ideas (love). According to Lyons (1981, p. 109), "a noun is the name of any person, place, or thing". Panagioditis (2014, p. 5) explains that, broadly speaking, nouns are concepts that refer to objects, places, and abstract things. In his Radical Construction Grammar: syntactic theory in typological perspective, Croft (2001, p. 63) highlights that nouns denote objects, persons, and places.

On the grounds that nouns are generally concrete or abstract entities that could refer to human or non-human qualities, or locations, facts, ideas, things, and movements, they are distributed in a range of different types.

2.1.1 Types of Nouns

Nouns are classified into the following types.

- Common nouns: common nouns are nouns that are not the name of any specific person, place, or thing. Common nouns could be words like (house), (cat), (girl), (foot), (country) (Aarts, Chalker, & Weiner, 1998, p. 75).
- Proper nouns: proper nouns are names of particular persons, places, or things that usually begin with a capital letter (Nelson, 2020).
- Singular nouns: singular nouns are nouns such as (standstill) or (vicinity) that do not have a plural form and that always have determiners such as (a) or (the) before them (Collins, 2021).

Plural nouns: plural nouns are nouns that show plurality such as (houses) or (cats) (Carnie, 2012, p. 61).

Concrete nouns: concrete nouns are nouns that are divided into proper names e.g. (Philip), (Chomsky), common nouns e.g. (human), (linguist), materials e.g. (ink), (iron), or collective nouns e.g. (family), (cattle) (Bussmann, Kazzazi, & Trauth, 2006, p. 228).

Abstract nouns: abstract nouns denote a state or property which is unseen, untouchable, etc; (truth), (courage), (guilt) (Miller & Brown, 2013, p. 5).

Collective nouns: collective nouns are nouns that point to either a group of people or animals. Collective nouns have singular or plural forms. Examples include (army), (audience), (committee), (family), (herd), (majority), (parliament), (team) (Aarts et al., 1998, p. 70).

Compound nouns: compound nouns are nouns that can be attached to each other. For example, the noun (ape) can be joined with the noun (man) to form the compound noun (ape-man) (Akmajian, Demers, Farmer, & Hrnish, 2010, p. 35).

Countable nouns: countable nouns are nouns that denote an individual entity that can be counted, e.g. (book) – (books), (child) – (children), (car) – (cars) (Miller & Brown, 2013, p. 143).

Uncountable nouns: uncountable nouns are nouns that have no plural form. Uncountable nouns could be the terms: (China), (petrol), (poverty), (rain), (welfare) (Aarts et al., 1998, p. 425).

2.1.2 Some Characteristics of Nouns

The preceding part has revealed some main characteristics of nouns. Firstly, nouns generally refer to animate and inanimate entities. Secondly, a noun could be either singular or plural. Thirdly, singularity and plurality make nouns countable and uncountable. Fourthly, in English, for example, plural nouns take the suffix -s in order to make the noun plural.

2.2 What are Grammatical Gender Nouns?

Gender is a social category that occurs on a daily basis. That is why, gender, is globally present in language and thus it can be used via various means such as through grammatical gender nouns. From a linguistic point of view, in many languages, nouns belong to one of two or more than two genders (Cubelli, Lotto, Paolieri, Girelli, & Job, 2005, p. 42). Irmen, Holt, & Weisbord (2010, p. 133) point out that the gender categories of nouns can be expressed based on the grammatical gender role of nouns, lexical semantics, or gender stereotypes. Misersky, Majid & Snijders (2019, p. 1) argue that nouns indicating people usually tend to refer to male or female gender of the referent. In fact, even morphological affixes may clarify whether the person in question is male or female.

2.3 Gender in the Languages of the World

The linguistic phenomenon, grammatical gender, is one of the most widely used category in the globe, encompassing much of the continents Africa, Europe, North and South America (Aikhenvald, 2016, p. 11). In fact, in map 1 of her book Classifiers: A Typology of Noun Categorization Devices, Aikhenvald shows how grammatical gender is actually present in all the continents of the world (2000, p. 78). By having investigated work others have done including a variety of languages with grammatical gender, Corbett arrives at the conclusion that grammatical gender, in any language, involves matters of sex and sociocultural issues (2013, p. 6). Nevertheless, the current research merely focuses on the linguistic interpretation of gender rather than its biological or sociocultural explanation. According to Heine (1982), as cited by Corbett (1991, p. 2), of 600 African languages two-thirds are gender languages. Moreover, according to Gregersen, the genders reported in Africa varies from two-genders (masculine and feminine) to four or five-genders. In the southern parts of Asia, more than 200 million people use Dravidian

languages. Reddaiah (2014) states that the languages found in the Dravidian language family include four gender patterns as they determine grammatical gender by lexical definition. Spanning Europe and Asia, the Caucasian region is covered by a large number of different languages that make use of grammatical genders. van den Berg (2005) highlights that the majority of East Caucasian languages use the category of gender. It is generally accepted that Europe and a part of Asia are dominated by Indo-European languages as many of these languages show genders. Curzan (2003, p. 11) claims that according to Aristotle's account, it was Protagoras who first produced the terms masculine, feminine, and neuter for Greek nouns in the fifth century BC. Most words that semantically carry female human qualities are referred to a particular gender class called feminine. On the other hand, most terms that semantically cover male human qualities are assigned to a specific gender class called masculine (Corbett, 2013, p. 8). What is interesting is that languages such as German, French, Russian, and Hindi are fully covered by grammatical genders while English contains a limited grammatical gender which only deals with pronouns in terms of gender agreement (Corbett, 2013, p. 4). According to Aikhenvald (2016, p. 7), the French language includes two genders (masculine and feminine) while German has three (masculine, feminine, and neuter). In the French language, the gender of a noun (masculine or feminine) reveals itself in the choice of the singular articles un or une (indefinite) and le or la (definite) (Booij, 2012, p. 108). Now, as feminine mirrors female qualities and masculine male, neuter denotes neither male nor female (Miller & Brown, 2013, p. 187). Generally speaking, personal pronouns (he, she, it) and possessive determiners (her, his, its) play an important role when dealing with the grammatical gender of any language. Aikhenvald (2016, p. 195) states that personal pronouns are the major means for expressing linguistic gender.

Up to here and based on the above explanation about gender in the languages of the world, it is possible to argue that as a whole and from a linguistic perspective, grammatical gender nouns are clearly divided into various types, that is, grammatical gender nouns could be either masculine, feminine, neuter nouns, personal gender pronouns, or possessive determiners.

2.4 Dutch Grammatical Gender

Having shown the role, functions, and characteristics of nouns and grammatical gender nouns, as well as, a quick overview of genders around the globe in the previous section, what follows will be an analysis of the Dutch grammatical gender system. An overview of the Dutch language, articles, adjectives, pronouns, and Dutch derivational suffixes are approached in the current section of this article to clarify the organization of Dutch grammatical genders.

2.4.1 Language Family

The Dutch language belongs to the West Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Dutch is primarily spoken in the Netherlands, Belgium (Flemish) and in a changed form, in South-Africa (Afrikaans) (Mallory & Adams, 1997). According to Hock and Joseph (2019, p. 16), the languages that belong to the Indo-Germanic group such as English, German, Frisian, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Icelandic, Dutch, etc. share a degree of similarity with each other. Though, based on different linguistic levels such as grammar and phonology, the Indo-Germanic languages are divided into three branches, namely, East Germanic (extinct Ghotic), North Germanic (Scandinavian, including Islandic, Faroese, Danish, Norwegian, and Swedish), and West Germanic (German, Yiddish, Frisian, and Dutch).

2.4.2 Dutch Articles

Similar to the other Germanic languages, Dutch is a language that makes use of gender system. Every Dutch noun has grammatical gender. The primary gender division in Dutch is that between common (COM) and neuter gender (NRT) (Hinskens, van Hout, Muysken, & van Wijngaarden, 2021, p. 3). The former is popularly known as masculine and feminine. Neuter gender, on the other hand, is an entity that is neither masculine nor feminine. Now, the mechanism of the usage of gender nouns in Dutch is clearly covered by different rules. van Heugten and Johnson (2011, p. 88) explain that, in Dutch, common gender nouns are preceded by the definite article de (e. g. de bal 'the ball'), while neuter gender nouns are preceded by the definite article het (e. g. het boek 'the book'). According to E. Clark's The lexicon in acquisition, as cited by van Heugten and Johnson (2011, p. 89), definite articles in Dutch have the same meaning and occur in the same syntactic position. Hinskens et al. (2021, p. 77) argue that common and neuter gender together with the number of a noun (either singular or plural), determine the definite determiner that can precede the noun. The definite article de always appears either with a singular noun (de man 'the man') or with a plural noun (de mannen 'the men'). The other definite article het, on the other hand, only appears with a singular noun (het mannetje 'the little man'). The indefinite article een only precedes a singular noun (een man). Oosterhoff (2014, p. 8) points out that roughly 75% of Dutch nouns are de-words and 25% are het-words. Hinskens et al. have listed the Dutch determiners in the table below.

Table 1: Determiners in standard Dutch; forms contrasting in gender bold

gender	definite		indefinite	
	SG	PL	SG	PL
COM	de	de	een	-
NRT	het	de	een	-

Note: Adapted from "Variation and Change in Grammatical Gender Marking, the case of Dutch ethnolects" by Hinskens et al., 2021, Linguistics, (59)1, p. 78, Copyright 2021 by Hinskens et al.

2.4.3 Dutch Adjectives

Apart from definite and indefinite articles, Dutch also marks gender on the attributive adjective, the relative pronoun, the demonstrative and personal pronoun, and the possessive pronoun (Audring, 2013, p. 34). Donaldson (2017, p 417) explains that an attributive adjective is one that appears in front of a noun while it requires an -e ending (schwa) as in (een oud-e man 'an (old) man'). Remember that a predicative adjective does not precede a noun and thus never takes an -e ending, therefore, predicative adjectives do not agree with gender (e. g. de man is erg oud 'the man is (very old)'). The table below illustrates the organization of attributive adjectives in Dutch in combination with nouns.

Table 2: Adjective endings in combination with nouns

	definite	indefinite
SG	de lang**-e** film	een lang**-e** film
	het goed**-e** boek	een goed boek
PL	de lang**-e** films	**-** lang**-e** films
	de goed-**e** boeken	- goed**-e** boeken

Note: Retrieved from Modern Dutch Grammar: A Practical Guide (p. 37) by Oosterhoff, 2014, Routledge. Copyright 2014 by Janneke Oosterhoff

Bear in mind that when the neuter definite article appears in an indefinite context, the adjective will not receive an ending -e as in (een goed boek 'a (good) book'). In addition, adjectives could be used to provide information about gender nouns as well (e. g. de lange man 'the (old) man', een korte man 'a (small) man'). Thus, the nouns in the above table could easily be replaced by Dutch gender nouns.

2.4.4 Dutch Relative Pronouns

Dutch relative pronouns are used to share an introduction of a clause that contains extra information about something or someone (the antecedent), mentioned in the clause that precedes. Neuter singular nouns agree with the relative pronoun dat (e. g. dat is het meisje dat ik pas heb ontmoet 'that is the girl (that) I have just met). The relative pronoun die goes with all other nouns including plural ones (e. g. de man die u gisteren ontmoette heet Bakker 'the man (whom) you met yesterday is called Bakker) (Shetter, 1984, p. 137). In the table below Shetter and Ham (2007) show the regular forms of the relative pronouns in Dutch.

Table 3: Regular forms of Dutch relative pronouns

antecedent ⟶ ↓	SG	PL
COM. gender	die	die
NTR. gender	dat	die

Note: Retrieved from Dutch: An essential grammar (p. 146) by W. Z. Shetter & E. Ham, 2007, Springer Science and Business Media, Copyright 2007 by William Z. Shetter & Esther Ham.

In case when a preposition appears before the relative pronoun of a common gender that refers to a person, the pronoun die is replaced by the pronoun wie (e. g. de man met wie ik in de winkel praatte… 'the man (with whom) I was talking in the store…') (Shetter, 1984, p. 137). According to Donaldson (2017, p. 87), "when a preposition is used with a relative pronoun relating to a thing, whether it be a de or het-word, waar- plus preposition is used", as in (de stoel waarop jij zit is van mij 'the chair (on which) you are sitting is mine'). The Dutch word wat is another type of relative pronoun. Quist and Strik (2015, p. 213) claim that if something unspecific which is not clearly defined (indefinite antecedent) occurs in the initial

position of a sentence then the relative pronoun wat should be used (e. g. alles wat daar ligt is 5 euro 'everything (which is) there is 5 euro'). However, if you point to something in general with no antecedent you use wie for people and wat for things (Quist & Strik, 2015, p. 214). On the other hand, Oosterhoff (2014, p. 26) discusses that in the case of the identification of a person or a thing, the relative pronoun welk should be used with the neuter definite article het, and the pronoun welke must be used with the common definite article de (e. g. welk bier vind je lekkerder, Heineken of Amstel? '(which) beer do you prefer, Heineken or Amstel?', (welke film wil je vanavond zien? '(which) movie do you want to see tonight?').

2.4.5 Dutch Demonstrative Pronouns

Another agreement target that is concerned with the Dutch gender system is the demonstrative pronouns. Johnson (2005) mentions that Dutch words such as deze (this) and dit (this) are demonstrative pronouns. Quist and Strik (2015, p. 17) expand the number of demonstratives by adding die and dat which are both Dutch for (that). The noun that is used determines the form of the demonstrative. Deze (this) and die (that) are used with de-words. Dit (this) and dat (that) are used with het-words. The table below illustrates the relation between Dutch demonstrative pronouns, gender, number, and the close and farness of the demonstratives from the subject.

Table 4: An overview of the usage of demonstrative pronouns

	close distance		far distance	
de-words SG	deze man	this man	die man	that man
PL	deze mannen	these men	die mannen	that men
het-words SG	dit meisje	this girl	dat meisje	that girl
PL	deze meisjes	these girls	die meisjes	those girls

Note: Reproduced from Modern Dutch Grammar: A Practical Guide (p. 25) by J. Oosterhoff, 2014, Routledge, Copyright 2014 by Janneke Oosterhoff.

Donaldson (2017, p. 85) explains that demonstrative pronouns are not preceded by prepositions, instead, they are combined as one word; hier- + a preposition replaces the demonstrative dit as in (stop het hierin 'put it (in this)'). Note that the demonstrative pronouns in the above list go along with grammatical genders (e. g. deze man 'this man', dit/dat meisje 'this/that girl', etc.).

2.4.6 Dutch Personal Pronouns

The issue of personal pronouns is another case in the Dutch gender agreement. Audring (2013, p. 34) states that Dutch personal pronouns show the traditional split in terms of masculine, feminine, and neuter. Donaldson (2017, p. 66) describes that Dutch has two groups of personal pronouns, subject and object pronouns. Shetter and Ham (2007, p. 33) have outlined Dutch personal pronouns which is shared in the list below.

Table 5: Dutch personal pronouns

	SG			PL		
person	stressed	unstressed	English	stressed	unstressed	English
1st	ik	'k	I	wij	we	we
2nd	jij	je	You (informal)	jullie	(je)	You (informal)
	u	-	You (formal)	u (+ verb in singular)	-	You (formal)
3rd	hij	je (after verb)	he	zij	ze	they
	zij	ze	she			
	het	't	it			

Note: Retrieved from Dutch: An essential grammar (p. 33) by W. Z. Shetter & E. Ham, 2007, Springer Science and Business Media, Copyright 2007 by William Z. Shetter & Esther Ham.

It should be borne in mind that the mentioned personal pronouns in the above list are the so-called subject pronouns. Quist and Strik (2015, p. 52) argue that subject personal pronouns are used as the subject of the sentence, in other words, the person or persons to whom the subject pronoun is linked is or are operating the action as in (ik voetbal '(I) play football', hij voetbalt '(he) plays football). Shetter (1984, p. 37) highlights that stressed or emphatic form of Dutch personal pronouns from the above list are formal, thus, regularly used in writing and less in speaking. Contrastingly, the unstressed or non-emphatic personal pronouns are informal because they are usually used in speech and much less in writing. According to De Houwer (1987, p. 65), ze (she) is restricted to female referents while hij, on the other hand, is used most often in reference to male, animate, and non-human entities. Aside from subject personal pronouns, Dutch also contains object personal pronouns. Quist and Strik (2015, pp. 52-53) share that object personal pronouns function as the object of the sentence in that the person or persons to whom the object pronoun is connected is or are not performing the action. Dutch object personal pronouns are words like mij (me), jou (you(informal)), u (you(formal)), hem (him), haar (her), het (it), ons (us), jullie (you (informal)), u (you (formal)), and hen/hun (them).

2.4.7 Dutch Possessive Pronouns

The last aspect that should be mentioned when dealing with personal pronouns and gender are possessive personal pronouns which are used to indicate that something belongs to someone or a group of persons. Quist and Strik (2015, p. 58) have created a list of Dutch possessive pronouns which looks as follows.

Table 6: Dutch possessive pronouns

stressed		unstressed	
SG	mijn	(m'n)	my
	jouw	je	your (informal)
	uw	-	your (formal)
	zijn	(z'n)	his
	haar	(d'r)	her
PL	ons/onze	-	our
	jullie	je	your (informal)
	uw	-	your (formal)
	hun	-	their

Note: Adapted from Dutch Grammar You Really Need to Know: a practical guide (p. 58) by G. Quist & D. Strik, 2015, Hodder Education, Copyright by Gerdi Quist & Dennis Strik.

As illustrated in the above table, there are stressed and unstressed possessive pronouns in Dutch. Oosterhoff (2014, p. 29) argues that the reduced forms commonly appear in speech and literary texts. Therefore, the stressed ones usually occur in formal speech and written texts. Note that possessive pronouns could be used as nouns in construction in which the article relative linked to the noun is attached with the stressed possessive pronoun while the -e ending is added (e. g. het mijne 'mine', het jouwe 'yours', de zijne 'his', de onze 'our's etc.) (2014, p. 29). Donaldson (2017, p. 80) discusses that neuter words that point to female beings (het meisje 'the girl', het wijf 'the woman') receive feminine possessive pronouns (e. g. het meisje heeft haar grootmoeder lekkere dingen gebracht '(the girl) took tasty things to her grandmother'). Possessive pronouns become inflected when they precede singular common gender nouns as in (onze vriend 'our friend'). The Dutch possessive pronoun takes an inflection in very formal settings whether that follows is singular or plural (Hare Majesteit 'Her Majesty', Mijne Heren 'Dear Sirs') (Donaldson, 2017, p. 81).

2.4.8 Derivational Affixes

In Dutch, the attachment of a derivational affix may change the gender of a certain noun. The attachment of a derivational suffix shifts a male noun to a female noun. For example, the noun uitgever is Dutch for a 'male publisher', by adding the derivational suffix -ster the Dutch noun uitgeefster is formed which stands for a 'female publisher'. According to Booij, as cited by Scott (2009, p. 72), Dutch has ten derivational suffixes for marking female sex (-e, -es, -esse, -euse, -ica, -ière, -in, -ix, -rice, and -ster). The following are some examples in line with the mentioned suffixes (e. g. journalist-e 'female journalist', eigenar-es 'female owner', secretar-esse 'female secretary', mass-euse 'masseuse', histor-ica 'female historian', cabaret- ière 'female cafè-owner, leew-in 'lioness', rect-rix 'female rector', ambassad-rice 'female ambassador', beheer-ster 'female administrator').

2.5 The Kurdish Language in General

In this part of the article a general idea about the Kurdish language through its language family and its geographical situation is shared. A short critique on the perspective of non-Kurdish scholars is then followed in conjunction with the Kurdish grammatical gender system which is enriched by analysed samples in terms of gender nouns, the izafe and the oblique case, the vocative case, Kurdish articles and pronouns.

2.5.1 Language Family

Kurdish belongs to the Western Iranian Group of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family (Thackston, 2006). Windfuhr (2009, p. 587) divides Kurdish into three dialects, namely, Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji) spoken by around 20 million speakers in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Lebanon. Central Kurdish (Sorani) is spoken by circa 5 million speakers in Iran and Iraq. And Southern Kurdish spoken by approximately 3 million speakers from Khaneqin in Iraq over to Kirmanshah in Iran and down to north Al-Amara (Iraq) as well as in the Bijar district in Iran. In his article entitled: A Kurdish Grammar, Ernest N. McCarus (1958, p. 105) shares that Kurdish is even spoken in today's Turkmenistan.

2.5.2 The Homeland of the Kurds

Historically seen, the northern and eastern highlands of Mesopotamia is considered as the true home of the Kurds as it is situated in a predominantly mountainous territory. The area that is particularly inhabited by the Kurds became to be known as Kurdistan in the 12th century AD. The name Kurdistan is used by Hamdallah Mustafwi (1281-1339/40 AD) in his cosmographical and geographical work 'Nuzhat al-Qulub', stating that Kurdistan consists of 16 different states. In his 'Seyâhatnâme', the Turkish Ottoman explorer Evliya Çelebi (1611-1682) expanded the borders of Kurdistan stretching from Erzurum (eastern Anatolia in Turkey) to Shahrazur and Ardalan (today's north-eastern Iraq and western Iran). After the First World War, the Kurdish region what is known as Kurdistan was divided by Western hands and added to those countries that arose in Minor Asia such as Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. It is possible to identify Kurdish areas and cities where the Kurds are the majority group. In Turkey, the most famous provinces that are predominantly Kurdish are Van, Ağri, Kars, Erzurum, Sirt, Mardin, Diyarbakir, Malatya, Elazig, Erzincan, Sivas, Maraş and others. As for Iran Kermanshah, Sanandaj, Saqiz, Mahabad, Lahijan, Zanjan, Deylaman, Salmas and others. In Iraq, the provinces and cities that are dominated by Kurds are Erbil, Sulaimaniyah, Duhok, Aqra, Sanjar, Tuz Khurmatu, Kifri, Khanaqin and Kirkuk. The regions that are for the most part inhabited by the Kurds, in Kurdistan, are also inhabited by Turks, Azeris, Assyrians, Armenians, Turkmens, and Arabs who are all minority groups (Rashid & Rashid, 2021, pp. 9-13).

2.5.3 Kurdish from the Perspective of Non-Kurdish Scholars

Different scholars (particularly non-Kurdish ones) who have investigated the Kurdish language believe that the link between the Kurdish dialects is so weak that some of these scholars deal with the dialects as independent or separate languages. It is unfortunate to see how the Kurdish mother-tongue is being torn apart over and over again. It is even more pitiful to see how the largest stateless nation in the world (the Kurds) who meet all the rights for independence, its language is being split by some scholars. However,

linguistically and logically speaking, one cannot deny the fact that there are some differences between the dialects which exists among any other dialects of any other language. It is worth noting that some essential factors have clearly influenced the diversity among Kurdish dialects. Primarily, the lack of an independent state has affected the Kurdish language negatively, in that, the dominant languages in those countries that Kurds live in have tried hard to eliminate the Kurdish language in the hope of being melted in their languages. Another factor may refer to both Sorani and Kurmanji dialect who have attempted to be representatives of the Kurdish language while automatically pushing aside other Kurdish dialects or sub-dialects.

2.6 Kurdish Grammatical Gender

Because of the above-mentioned view on the Kurdish language, Kurdish is a language that deserves to be examined because of the following reasons; first, as a believer in equality, in every sense of the word, the author is of the opinion that all the languages in the world are on equal level because there is no language that is superior or better than another language(s) because each language carries its own uniqueness that earns to be studied, therefore, even Kurdish deserves to be scrutinized. Second, because of being politically, socially, religiously, culturally, economically, and linguistically oppressed, the Kurdish mother-tongue has all the rights to be investigated for the purpose of global awareness. Third, the oppression against the Kurdish nation and language is like a choke the Kurdish language is experiencing, that is why every single study conducted on the Kurdish language helps to prevent the extinction of Kurdish. That said, due to the absence of a standard language and a shortage of sources on the grammatical gender of the dialects other than Northern and Central Kurmanji (Sorani), the author is obliged to concentrate on the two most studied dialects of the Kurdish language which are the Northern and Central Kurmanji (Sorani). What is important to say here is that, in this article, sometimes the author uses Southern Kurdish instead of Central Kurmanji. So, all in all, what follows will be a shift from one dialect to another dialect in terms of grammatical gender, so that, in this way, a general view of the grammatical gender system of the Kurdish language could be put down.

2.6.1 Kurdish Gender Nouns

In his book 'řêzmanî kûrdî', Marif (1979, pp. 171-172) mentions that Kurdish common nouns are nouns that can be used for both males and females such as kotir (dove), mirawî (duck), kew (quail), heło (eagle), berx (lamb), dûjmin (enemy), hawřê (friend), dost (friend), şagird (assistant), bergdûr (tailor), qûtabî (student), hevał (friend), etc. Moreover, some common nouns take a word or a morpheme in order to identify the gender in discussion. The table below lists the masculinity and femininity of some common nouns in Kurdish.

Table 7: An overview of masculine and feminine common nouns

common nouns	masculine	feminine
ker (donkey)	nêreker (a male donkey (jack)	maker (a female donkey (jenny)
kew (quail)	nêrekew (a male quail)	makew (a female quail)
werç (bear)	nêrewerç (male bear)	dełewerç/dêłewerç (female bear)
seg (dog)	gołeseg (male dog)	dełeseg/dêłeseg (female dog)
berx (lamb)	berxe nêr (male lamb)	berxe mê (female lamb)

Note. Adapted from řêzmanî kûrdî (p. 171), by A. H. Marif, 1979, Iraqi Academy Printing House. Copyright 1971 by Awrahmani Haji Marif

The above table shows that the words nêr and goł help to identify masculine nouns while the derivational affixes ma, mê, deł, and dêł assist to identify feminine nouns. Having that said, Kurdish neuter nouns are nouns that are essentially neither masculine nor feminine such as jûr (room), nan (bread), dar (wood), trê (grapes), henar (pomegranates), ser (head), lût (nose), çaw (eye), xiwên (blood), berd (stone), genim (wheat), etc.

Haig (2000, p. 4) points out that the Northern Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish consists of two grammatical genders which are traditionally known as masculine and feminine. Thackston (2006, p. 7) indicates that all nouns in the Northern Kurmanji dialect are either masculine or feminine. Male and female beings are assigned to the grammatical gender class, also, as a rule, the names of cities, towns, and countries are feminine while abstract nouns that end with -î are also feminine. On the other hand, infinitives that are used as nouns are feminine, and nouns ending with a vowel are feminine as well. Words that are borrowed from another language(s) do not necessarily correspond to the gender assignment of the language that the word is borrowed from, for example, the word (kitêb) which is borrowed from Arabic, is feminine in Kurdish but masculine in Arabic. The same rule counts for borrowed words from the Turkish and Persian language.

2.6.2 The Izafe and the Nominal Oblique Case

It is worth noting that the Northern Kurdish dialect often uses a grammatical aspect called the 'izafe' which is a grammatical particle that connects two words while it cannot be inflected as it falls outside the parts of speech category. According to MacKenzie (1954, p. 528), the Northern Kurdish dialect regularly makes use of the 'izafe' which appears in different forms (e. g. a, â, ê, î). In addition to that, the mentioned dialect also uses the nominal oblique case (OBL) which usually ends with an -ê and -î. It is worthwhile noting that gender in the Northern Kurmanji dialect is manifested by the oblique case markers and the izafe particles (Haig, 2000; MacKenzie, 1954). In the table below, Haig (2000, p. 5) shows the formal indications of gender in the Northern Kurmanji dialect.

Table 8: Formal indications of gender in Kurmanji Kurdish

gender	case marking (oblique)		izafe particle	
masculine	vî bajar-î	this town (OBL)	ap-êmin	my uncle
feminine	vê keçik-ê	this girl (OBL)	keç-amin	my daughter

Note: Reproduced from "The Gender System in the Kurdish Language" by G. Haig, 2000, Gender in Kurdistan und der Diaspora, p. 5, Copyright 2000 by Geoffrey Haig.

However, in the Northern Kurmanji dialect, the izafe is sometimes used with unidentified genders, i. e. the noun that the izafe is attached to can take either the masculine or the feminine izafe forms, depending on the context. Underterminate gender nouns could be words like heval (friend), dost (friend), cîran (neighbour), and zarok (child), as in hevala/hevalê min (my friend), dosta/dostê min (my friend), cîrana/cîranê min (my neighbour), zaroka/zarokê min (my child). Thus, the specific form of the izafe that is used identifies whether the noun is masculine or feminine. Interestingly, the same function is applied to the animal world as well (Haig, 2000, p. 8). Furthermore, the Northern Kurmanji izafe (-î) becomes the izafe (-e) in the Sulaimaniyah variety of the Central Kurmanji dialect (Sorani) as in (hemed-î řeš becomes hemed-e řeš 'swarthy Hemed') (MacKenzie, 1954, p. 538).

The nominal oblique case is also an interesting topic when it comes to gender in the Northern Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish. Feminine singular nouns take the unstressed -ê, as in jinê (woman) while all plural nouns take the oblique -an or -yan if it ends with a vowel, as in mirovan (people), jinan (women), gûndîyan (villagers) (Thackston, 2006, p. 8; Windfuhr, 2009, p. 629). In the Central Kurmanji (Sorani) the oblique case appears as -ê as it is attached after feminine nouns (e. g. seyran xoše behar-ê 'picknicking is jolly in the spring', kiçim leber befr û baran-ê nehat 'because of rain and snow my daughter did not come'). The other oblique that exists in the Sorani dialect of Kurdish is the -î which also appears after nouns as it occurs after masculine nouns (e. g. kiçim çû bo šar-î 'my daughter went to the city'). However, apart from the oblique case -ê of the Northern Kurmanji dialect, Marif (1979, p. 183) confirms that, in the highlighted dialect, the oblique case -î only agrees with masculine nouns (e. g. ez çûm nik ehmed-î 'I went to Ahmad'). If the male proper noun Ahmad is replaced by the female proper noun Nesrin, then, the oblique -ê should be used after the proper noun. Marif (1979, p. 172) also adds that in the Mukriyian and Soran districts, as well as in the surroundings of Sulaimaniyah, the oblique -î are added to masculine nouns while the oblique -ê occurs after feminine nouns.

Kim (Kim, 2010, pp. 18-19) shares that in the Central Kurmanji dialect (Sorani) the izafe has the function to construct possessive noun phrases (e. g. qutabîyekan-î qutabxane 'the students of a school') The izafe acts as a linking vowel which can be compared to the English 'of'. The izafe also connects adjectives and nouns (e. g. kiç-î juwan 'beautiful girl') to identify gender. To claim what is being said, Mukriyani (2017, p. 35) points out that the izafe -î is frequently added to attributive nouns in the Southern Kurdish dialect of Kurdish (Sorani) (e. g. hêz-î gel 'power of people').

Terms like dar (wood), aw (water), şerm (shy), jan (pain), xem (sorrow), daristan (forest), zemîn (ground), řaw (hunt), şeř (fight/war), kar (work) etc., are, in the Mukriyani variety of Sorani, feminine nouns. While,

words such as mîr (prince), hewîr (dough), şêr (lion), şan (shoulder), kebab (kebab), şar (city), dê/gûnd (village) etc., are masculine nouns. Marif (1979, pp. 174-175) verifies the agreement between gender nouns and the oblique case markers in the Mukriyan, Soran, and Sulaimaniyah varieties of the Central Kurmanji dialect as it is illustrated below through sentence samples.

Table 9: Oblique markers in conjunction with gender nouns in the Murkiyan variety of Central Kurmanji

gender	
masculine oblique (in Mukriyan)	gutî detanbeme kin sułtan-**î** (he/she said I will take you to the Sultan (OBL)) mirîşkêk çûwe kin kełebab-**î** (a chicken went to a cock (OBL))
feminine oblique (in Murkiyan)	ehmed xan şika û çû bo estenbûł-**ê** (Ahmad khan surrendered and went to Istanbul (OBL))
masculine oblique (in Soran)	çawit wekû çawî mar-**î** (your eyes are like snake (OBL) eyes)
feminine oblique (in Soran)	çît lêbikem le qîyamet-**ê**? (what should I do with you during judgement-day (OBL)?)
Feminine oblique (in Sulaimaniyah)	dişî diş-**ê** be çî deçê? (what does the sister-in-law (OBL) look like?)

2.6.3 The Vocative Case

The vocative case is another issue that appears in the grammatical gender agreement of the Kurdish language. Nebez (1976, pp. 27-28) argues that the vocative -o, which is usually attached after a common noun, plays a crucial role in calling situations for males (e. g. kûř-o 'hey boy!', bab-o 'hey dad!'. While the vocative -ê agrees with female common nouns (e. g. kiç-ê 'hey girl!', mimk-ê 'hey auntie!'). In the Southern Kurdish dialect (Sorani) the vocative -e is one that is regularly used with masculine common nouns (e. g. kûř-e 'hey boy!', řoł-e 'hey honey/sweetie!', mam-e 'hey uncle!', bab-e 'hey dad!'). It is worth mentioning that in both dialects the vocative -ê is merely used for feminine cases (nen-ê 'hey grandmother/grandma!', xûşk-ê 'hey sister!', pûr-ê 'hey auntie!').

2.6.4 Kurdish Articles

Sorani Kurdish contains two types of articles, namely, the definite and the indefinite article. Definite articles are -eke and -e (e. g. kiç-e 'girl', kiç-eke 'the girl'). Nouns that are ending with consonants take the definite article -eke. On the other hand, the indefinite articles are -êk, -ek, and -ê (e. g. kuř-êk 'a boy', kuř-ê 'a boy'). The suffix -an or -akan indicate plurality (e. g. kuř-an 'boys', kuř-akan 'the boys') (Mukriyani, 2017, pp. 28-29). It is worth mentioning that the articles in Sorani fit in the gender system in the sense of agreement. Yet, Ahmed (2018, p. 19) believes that the mentioned articles should not be called articles, rather, they should be seen as equivalent morphemes to English articles because in the Kurdish language the words morpheme or determiner are used instead of article. In addition to that, the above

highlighted articles are enclitics that are attached to the preceding word, therefore they should be considered as morphemes, not as articles.

2.6.5 Kurdish Adjectives

Adjectives play an essential role in the process of Kurdish grammatical gender agreement, in that, Kurdish adjectives appear after gender nouns to modify the noun in a noun phrase or in a sentence (e. g. kûřêkî baş 'good boy', kiçêkî xirap 'bad girl').

2.6.6 Kurdish Personal Pronouns

The Kurdish dialects in discussion use personal pronouns to point to people. Salehi (2018, p. 44) gives an overview of personal pronouns of the Southern Kurdish dialect (Sorani) which is shared below.

Table 10: Pronouns in Sorani

SG		PL	
min	I	ême	we
to	you	êwe	you
ew	he/she	ewan	they

Note: Retrieved from Constraints on Izafa in Sorani Kurdish (p. 44), by A. Salehi, 2018, Copyright 2018 by Ali Salehi.

Mukriyani (2017, pp. 52-54) states that there are two types of personal pronouns in the Northern Kurmanji dialect of Kurdish. The first set consists of personal pronouns based on verbal situations (e. g. ez 'I', tu 'you', ew 'he/she/it', em 'we', hun 'you', ewan 'they'). The second group of personal pronouns are based on possessive situations (e. g. min 'I', te 'you', wî 'he', wê 'she', me 'we', we 'you', wan 'they'). Thackston (2006, p. 15) points out that possessive pronouns, in the Sorani dialect, take unstressed enclitics based on whether the noun is ending with a consonant or a vowel as shown in the list below.

Table 11. Unstressed enclitics added to possessive pronouns in Sorani

after consonants	after vowels
-im – kuř-im (my son)	-man – kuř-man (our son) -m – bra-m (my brother) -man – bra-man (our brother)
-it – kuř-it (your son)	-tan – kuř-tan (your son) PL -t – bra-t (your brother) -tan – bra-tan (your brothers) PL
-î – kuř-î (his/her son)	-yan – kuř-yan (their son) -y - bray (his/her brother) -yan – bray-an (their brothers)

Note. Reprinted from Sorani Kurdish: A Reference Grammar with Selected Readings (p. 15), by Thackston, 2006, Renas Media, Copyright 2006 by Wheeler M. Thackston.

2.6.7 Kurdish Demonstrative Pronouns

According to Zahedi and Mehrazmay (2011, pp. 140-141), demonstrative pronouns agree with gender in the Central Kurmanji dialect (Sorani). A list of Sorani demonstratives is illustrated below paired with some examples.

Table 12: Demonstrative pronouns in Central Kurmanji

demonstratives		examples	
eme	this (SL)	em pîyawe	this man
emane	these (PL)	em pîyawane	these men
ewe	that (SL)	ew jine	that woman
ewane	those (PL)	ew jinane	those women

Note: Reproduced from Definiteness in Sorani Kurdish and English (p. 140), by K. Zahedi & R. Mehrazmay, 2011, Shahid Beheshti University. Copyright 2011 by Keivan Zahedi & Roghayeh Mehrazmay.

Öpengin and Haig (2014, p. 164) state that the demonstratives in Northern Kurmanji include determiners as ev (this), ew (that/those) along with their oblique forms vî/vê (this), wî/wê (that), van (they/these), and wan (they/those). You have to bear in mind that all the noted demonstratives agree with the grammatical genders in the highlighted dialect and that the demonstratives also act as third-person pronouns. The ev and ew could refer to (she or he) in its third-person form whether referring to a person nearby or far away. Additionally, the oblique markers -î and –ê assist to reveal the exact gender (e. g. wî 'he/it/that', wê 'she/it/that', vî 'he/it/this', vê 'she/it/this').

3. Some Similarities and Differences in Dutch and Kurdish Language and Their Grammatical Gender

1. The nouns of both languages are distributed in different noun categories.
2. Apart from the fact that both Dutch and Kurdish belong to the same language family (the Indo-European language family), the noted languages are both gendered languages in terms of grammar. That is to say, both Dutch and Kurdish have masculine, feminine, and neuter gender.
3. Both Dutch and Kurdish articles agree with gender nouns to form noun phrases. Both languages contain definite and indefinite articles. However, Dutch articles only appear before nouns while Kurdish ones occur after nouns.
4. Dutch and Kurdish both link adjectives with gender. In Dutch, adjectives always precede gender nouns while in Kurdish adjectives follow gender nouns. Yet, in both languages adjectives are used to build noun phrases (including gender ones) and provide more information about the noun.
5. Both languages are similar in that Dutch and Kurdish make use of personal pronouns. The personal pronouns of both languages have the function to point to persons. Although, in Kurdish, personal pronouns are strictly based on situations while in Dutch this is not the case. In addition, phonetically

speaking, Dutch contains different forms of personal pronouns based on formal and informal situations while Kurdish is lacking this phenomenon.

6. The languages in discussion share the existence of possessive pronouns in that both languages use possessive pronouns to indicate that something belongs to someone. Though, Dutch possessive pronouns appear before nouns while in Kurdish possessive pronouns follow nouns. Furthermore, in Kurdish, possessive pronouns take the unstressed enclitic to be attached after a noun while in Dutch there is no such case.

7. Derivational affixes are used in both languages to indicate the gender of certain nouns. In Kurdish, derivational suffixes may occur in the initial or final position of a noun to identify the gender of the noun while in Dutch, the suffix only occurs in the final position. On the other hand, Kurdish may also use a word instead of an affix to clarify the gender of a noun while in Dutch there is no such thing.

8. The izafe and nominal oblique case are common aspects in the Kurdish grammatical gender system. The mentioned notions do not exist in the Dutch language.

9. Gender nouns of both languages take plurality.

10. Both Dutch and Kurdish use demonstrative pronouns to refer to gender. In both languages, demonstratives appear before common nouns.

11. Both Dutch and Kurdish are languages that specify the sex of a certain referent.

4. Conclusion

The topics discussed in the present article have examined the grammatical gender system of Dutch and Kurdish language. In an effort to fully engage the reader to his area of study, the author explained and analysed grammatical aspects such as the noun class system since nouns are assigned with gender categories. This is then followed by a general idea about grammatical gender nouns in combination with gender in the languages of the world. Next, the author has tried to share a clear overview of how and why particular nouns agree with particular genders. Dutch and Kurdish articles, pronouns, adjectives, and even derivational affixes are studied to clarify the agreement between the mentioned linguistic aspects and gender in the two languages. The paper comes at the conclusion that based on the data about Dutch and Kurdish grammatical gender system, the mentioned languages share a number of interesting similarities and differences which are all outlined in part three of the paper. For instance, the present work has found out that the languages in question share exact the same grammatical elements such as articles, adjectives, nouns, pronouns, and affixes in their grammatical gender system. The work has also discovered that nouns of different noun classes in Dutch and Kurdish show semantic correlation with sex. Thirdly, despite of their gender, all nouns of both languages are categorized in different classes. Nevertheless, this article has also revealed that grammatical elements like articles, adjectives, nouns, and affixes do not appear in the same positions in the two languages' grammatical gender system. In addition, some grammatical aspects like the Kurdish izafe and the oblique case do not occur in the Dutch grammatical system. Thus, all in all, the study has answered and confirmed the research questions in that Dutch and Kurdish share a range of similarities and dissimilarities when it comes to grammatical genders.

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