Animacy-based Gender

Differentiation in languages with gender categories (see Grammatical Gender) may be based on animacy differentiation. Often nouns denoting animates are distinguished from those denoting inanimates in such systems. This property can be (but is not always) combined with sex-based gender. In Pashai Chalas ‎(1), the target is a copula verb with distinct forms for inanimate and animate agreement.

1. Pashai Chalas [aee(ch)] (Indo-Aryan)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a. | **soːŋ** | suːsiːk | **ɕu** |
|  | ground | dry | be.3.inan.prs |
|  | ‘The ground is dry.’ (AEEch-Val-ED:068) | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| b. | mono | **saːwoːm** | lam | **aːs** |
|  | my | sister | small | be.3.an.fsg.prs |
|  | ‘My sister is small.’ (AEEch-Gen-ED:002) | | | |

Animacy-based differentiation of nouns is present in a smaller number of the sample languages.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature value | # of varieties displaying it | % |
| Present | 11 | 19 |
| Absent | 48 | 81 |
| Indeterminate | 0 | 0 |