

NOUN

The Category of Number

- the opposition of
the singular // the plural

E.g. *fox :: foxes*

The Category of Number Paradigmatics

the singular

- oneness
- indiscreteness
(нерасчленённость)
- A debated problem

the plural

- more-than-oneness
(multitude, quantity,
numerosity)
- discreteness

(syntagmatic meanings of the plural form)



NOUNS




countables uncountables

The morpheme of plurality (allomorphs)

- *cat:: cats*
- *boy :: boys*
- *brush :: brushes*
- *wife:: wives*
- *passer-by:: passers-by*
- *man :: men*
- *tooth:: teeth*
- *deer :: deer*
- *child :: children*
- *phenomenon:: phenomena*
- *datum::data*

Nouns Foreign in Origin

- Morphological variation
- Assimilation  parallel native forms

E.g. formula — formulae, formulas

terminus — termini, terminuses

stratum — strata, stratus

- Foreign plurals are decidedly more bookish than the native ones

Uncountable nouns

- Singularia tantum
- outside the sphere of number
 - material
 - collective
 - abstract nouns
- Pluralia tantum
- more than oneness
 - ***abstract nouns*** (*the beginnings of the world*)
 - ***financial terms*** (assets)
 - ***objects consisting of two parts*** (*shorts, trousers*)
 - ***names of games*** (*billiards*)
 - ***diseases*** (*blues, measles*)
 - ***proper and geographical names*** (*The Browns, The Alps, The British Isles*)

Singularia tantum and pluralia tantum

- meaning, form, the combinability of nouns
- But meaning and form can be at variance
- A noun, singular in form, can be plural in meaning

E.g. ***The sheep are healthy.***

- A noun, plural in form, can be singular in meaning

E.g. ***The news is sad.***

Agreement between the form of the noun and the predicate

- In English logical agreement prevails over formal agreement
- Unlike Russian
- In English a singular noun, functioning as a subject, may combine with a plural predicate

E.g. *The police are in the yard.*

The happy pair were seated opposite each other.

The big fish eat the small fish, but the ocean doesn't care.

Agreement between the form of the noun and the predicate

- A plural noun combines with a singular verb, functioning as a predicate

E.g. *Physics is a science.*

Countables and uncountables


- Relative distinction in English
- Contextually countables can turn into uncountables and vice versa

E.g. Our cheeses are the best in the world.

She has more hair than wit and more faults than hairs.

She possessed certain beauties, like her hair.

Countables and uncountables

- *grass – a grass*  ***internal conversion***
- ***internal conversion***: transition from subclass to subclass:
E.g. *nouns uncount => nouns count*
- ***external conversion*** means transition from class to class:
E.g. *nouns => verbs, etc*

Neutralization of the opposition **singular :: plural**

- In syntagmatics (contextually)
- both forms come to designate generalization:

E.g. I am a poet of the woman the same as the man (the generalized singular)

The plural form

Paradigmatic and syntagmatic meanings

- Primary
- more than oneness
- remains unchanged in any context


E.g. Different situations require different behaviours.

- additional
- depend on the context
- appear along with the paradigmatic meaning
- revealed by means of the componential analysis superimposed upon the contextual analysis
- described in terms of semantic components of discreteness, emotiveness, intensiveness, expressiveness and evaluation (negative or positive)

Syntagmatic meaning of the plural form

- **E.g. *He was full of attentions to his wife, for a fortnight at least.* (W. M. Thackeray)**
- the mechanism of irony:
 - *Contextual negative evaluation*
 - The positive meaning of this word, registered in the dictionary, is ruined by the negative context.

A grammatical metaphor

- Semantic agreement: the ***presence*** of identical semantic components (semes) in the words combined or juxtaposed
- Semantic disagreement: the ***absence*** of identical semantic components
-  a grammatical metaphor
- “the hyperbolic plural”
*E.g. She walks in Beauty,
like the night of
cloudless climes and
starry skies. (G.Byron)*
- the global linguistic law of the ***asymmetry of a linguistic sign***

A grammatical metaphor

**E.g. *I was so happy to be alone,
so full of love for the great speechless earth,
That I would have laid my cheek in the grasses***
(R.Aldington, “A Moment’s Interlude”)

- The additional meanings of
emotiveness,
intensiveness,
expressiveness
evaluation
complicate the paradigmatic meaning of
“more than oneness” in any artistic text

The Metaphoric Use of the Plural of Nouns

- **Expressive connotation** is particularly strong with nouns denoting unique things

E.g. *Ahead of them was a tunnel of fire...*

They plunged into it. A glare brighter than

a dozen suns dazzled their eyes,

scorching heat seared their skins and the

roaring, crackling and crashing beat upon

ears in painful waves. (Mitchell)

“Universals” of the Plural Form

- **“augmentative” plurals**
- **to denote large amounts of substance or a high degree of something**
- **when we see the matter as it exists in nature**
- **stylistic purposes in literary prose and poetry**

“Augmentative” Plurals

*E.g. the blue waters of the Mediterranean the sands of the Sahara Desert
the snows of Kilimanjaro*

- синие воды Средиземного моря,
пески Сахары, снега Арктики
- Еще в полях белеет снег,
А воды уж весной шумят. (Тютчев)
- Люблю ее степей алмазные снега. (Фет)
- Cf. French: les eaux, les sables

Stylistic Transpositions of Singular Nouns

E.g. trees in leaf,

to have a keen eye,

blue of eye, strong of muscle

- synecdoche — the simplest case of metonymy in grammar ("pars pro toto")
- The stylistic effect of generalization

Stylistic Transpositions of Singular Nouns

*E.g. The Germans won the victories. By God they were soldiers. **The Old Hun was a soldier.** But they were cooked too. They were all cooked... **The Hun would come down** through the Trentino, and cut the railway at the Vicenza and then where would the Italians be? (Hemingway)*

Lexicalization of the plural form

the morpheme –s

- **changes a bit the semantic meaning of the word it is attached to**
- **on the way to becoming a suffix**

E.g. *How does Russian colours look like? (=flag)*

Lexicalization of the plural form

- *tables* – a classical inflexion
- *grasses* - partially lexicalized
- *colours* - already a suffix

