

# 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

(syntagmatic meanings of the plural form)

## *the plural*

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

- discreteness



# NOUNS

```
graph TD; A["NOUNS"] --> B["countables"]; A --> C["uncountables"];
```

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, stratums*

- 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





