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## NUMERALS, NUMBER AND INDIVIDUATION

**1. Introduction:**\* It is a pleasure to acknowledge my intellectual debt to Adam Evgen'evič; I have learned a good deal from his careful and extensive work on numerals in different Slavonic languages. A natural question arising from that work is the way in which numerals and grammatical number interact, a question we shall consider in section 2. Adam Evgen'evič's research shows that the interaction is somewhat surprising (section 3), specifically that noun phrases with higher numerals are less likely to control plural agreement than are those with lower numerals. We consider the implications of this finding in terms of individuation (section 4). And then we go on to show how in the light of the Slavonic situation we can better understand puzzling data from languages unrelated to Slavonic, namely Bayso and Arabic (section 5).

**2. The interaction of numerals and grammatical number:** Suppose we have a language with singular and plural number; what would we expect to find in constructions with noun phrases with numerals above '1'? One obvious answer might be that the noun would be in the plural and that the phrase would control plural agreement (both for semantic reasons). Thus in English:

(1) The first five applicants deserve to succeed.

A second answer would be that, since the number of entities is made clear by the numeral, no further marking is required and the default (singular) forms would be used. This is what we find in Hungarian (Edith Moravcsik and Peter Barta, personal communications):

(2) Két lány beszélget  
two girl.SG chat.SG  
'Two girls are chatting'.

(The plural of *lány* 'girl' is *lányok*, and the plural of *beszélget* 'chat' is *beszélgetnek*; neither would be used in (2)). The third possibility is that both singular and plural would be used. This is the situation in Slavonic. Within the noun phrase, singulars and plurals are found, but typically in a given set of circumstances one of the two is required, according to strict and quite complex rules (see, for instance, the account in section 4.10 of the different language descriptions in Comrie and Corbett 1993). However, when we look at agreement, we find considerable variation, both within languages and when we compare across the family. We might assume that the larger the number is, the more likely we are to find plural

agreement. Adam Evgen'evič's work shows emphatically that that is not the case, as we shall see.

**3. Predicate agreement in the Slavonic languages:** As noted above, the choice of predicate agreement with numeral phrases in Slavonic shows considerable variation. Often more than one form is possible; then the choice is affected by the animacy of the subject (animate subjects favour semantically justified agreement), and its position relative to the predicate (semantically justified agreement is more likely in subject-predicate order). However, the quantifier itself also has a substantial influence, and the data available suggest that this influence is independent of animacy and precedence (Corbett 1988, 48). Let us concentrate on the effect of the numeral: table 1 gives data on the different Slavonic languages.

	2	3	4	5-10	100
West Slavonic:					
Czech	PL	PL	PL	sg	sg
Slovak	PL	PL	PL	PL /sg	sg
Sorbian	DUAL	PL	PL	PL /sg	sg
Polish	99% PL (N=123) <sup>1</sup>	91% PL (N=43)	100% PL (N=15)	7% PL (N=68)	
South Slavonic:					
Old Church Slavonic	DUAL	PL	PL	(PL) /sg	
Bulgarian	PL	PL	PL	PL	PL
Macedonian	PL	PL	PL	PL	PL
Serbo-Croat	97% PL (N=735)	89% PL (N=249)	83% PL (N=133)	7% PL (N=1161)	
Slovene	DUAL	PL	PL	sg	sg
East Slavonic:					
Ukrainian	83% PL (N=208)	79% PL (N=150)	74% PL (N=34)	38% PL (N=45)	21% PL (N=14)
Belarussian	92% PL (N=219)	78% PL (N=67)	63% PL (N=16)	39% PL (N=49)	100% PL (N=2)
Russian	86% PL (N=541)	77% PL (N=247)	76% PL (N=68)	50% PL (N=220)	

Table 1. Predicate agreement with numeral phrases in Slavonic

In table 1, DUAL (where available) and PL(URAL) represent semantic agreement. When a cell has a single entry (e.g. 'PL'), this indicates that the form is used in the majority of instances, though not necessarily all. Thus in

Slovene, the plural is normal with '3' and '4', but the singular may be used in expressions of time. Where we do not have more precise data, these few exceptions are ignored (time expressions also account for some of the singular forms with '2', '3' and '4' in other languages). A gap indicates a lack of data. The information in the table comes largely from Adam Evgen'evič; the judgements and statistics presented are from Suprun (1969, 175-187) unless otherwise stated.<sup>2</sup>

In Slovak, with the numerals '5-10' the plural is used with masculine personal forms and otherwise the singular; exceptions amount to less than one percent of the examples, according to Suprun. *Sto* '100' takes the singular (Ján Bosák and Ľubomir Ďurovič personal communications). Sorbian preserves the dual; otherwise agreements are broadly similar to those of Slovak (1963a). The Polish figures are calculated from the data given in Suprun (1963b); instances where the numeral is in the genitive are excluded. The final Polish entry is for numerals of all types from '5' up to '999'. Suprun also gives seven examples of agreement with phrases with *tyśiac* '1000', all singular. Old Church Slavonic data are from Suprun (1961, 81-86); for '5-10', he has ten examples of singular predicates, six of plural predicates and two where one source has singular agreement and another has plural. However, Večerka (Večerka 1960, 197) states that in the Gospels the singular is used in the overwhelming majority of instances, hence the plural entry is bracketed. Suprun also gives an example with *sto* '100', one with *tysešita* '1000' and one with *toma* '10000'; all three have singular agreement. The Serbo-Croat statistics are taken from Sand (Sand 1971, 51-52, 73); the figure for *dva* 'two' includes examples with *oba* 'both'; '2-4' include compound numerals ending in '2-4' and the remaining figure is for all other numerals above '4'. Judgements on Slovene are from Vincenot (Vincenot 1975, 196) as well as from Suprun (1969, 176). The final entry for Ukrainian includes examples with *sorok* '40' as well as *sto* '100'.

Let us turn to the pattern revealed by table 1. The South Slavonic languages Bulgarian and Macedonian differ from the others in using the plural with all numerals above '1' in almost all instances. They are somewhat like English in this respect, while other Slavonic languages use both singular and plural. The remaining South Slavonic languages (Old Church Slavonic, Serbo-Croat and Slovene) use the dual (when available) with phrases with the numeral '2'; otherwise they show a strong preference for plural agreement for quantified phrases with the numerals '2-4', and for singular agreement (though with varying degrees of tolerance towards the plural) with numerals from '5' and above. In several languages the distinction between '2-4' on the one hand, and '5' upwards on the other, is fairly sharp. However, the statistics for Serbo-Croat and

Polish show that here the division is not absolute. It is in these languages, together with those of the East Slavonic group, where the situation is more fluid, that we find the most interesting data. The overall picture is clear: the higher the numeral the more likely is singular agreement. The form which is semantically justified becomes more likely the lower the numeral. This is clearly true in the straightforward cases like Slovak. The statistical data too support this claim, apart from two minor inconsistencies (indicated in the table with ||). These two cases need not concern us as the sample size for both numerals is small. Even apart from these, it is not the case that there is a statistically significant difference between every pair of successive numerals in each language: However, statistical advice is that the pattern is so overwhelming that statistical tests of significance are superfluous. What is important is that, apart from the two exceptions mentioned, the rank order of the numerals according to the frequency with which they take plural agreement is the same in the different languages and that this order is inversely related to numerical value. There is strong evidence that the lower the numeral is, the more likely it is to take semantically justified agreement.

**4. Individuation:** There is a clear pattern: higher numerals are less likely to take plural agreement. Why is this so? A possible answer is that higher numerals are grammatically more like nouns (see Corbett 1978). This is true in many cases, yet would we wish to claim this of the '4' as compared to '3'? (For these we do find evidence of more plural agreements with '3' than with '4'). There is evidence that they are distinguishable in grammatical terms, again from the work of Adam Evgen'evič.

If we look at their behaviour within the noun phrase, and concentrate for a while on Russian, we have a useful indicator for distinguishing '3' and '4' in the form of the attributive adjective; this can stand in the nominative or genitive plural (with the numerals *dva* 'two', *tri* 'three' and *četyre* 'four'). Several factors influence the choice. From these, we wish to focus on the role of the numeral. To do this, we need to separate out a major factor originating with the noun, which is gender. It is well established that the adjective is more likely to stand in the genitive if the noun is masculine or neuter than if it is feminine. This is confirmed by the data presented in table 2.

	masculine	feminine	neuter
Suprun (1957, 73) <sup>3</sup>	85% (132)	31% (87)	94% (17)
Corbett	100% (214)	27% (161)	93% (40)

Table 2. Use of the genitive plural with '2-4' in Russian: effect of gender (total number of examples in parentheses)

Suprun extracted his examples from literary texts, mainly modern; he includes various word-orders (43 examples are not of the type numeral-adjective-noun). My examples are from 39 prose works (novels, short stories and non-fiction, including four translations) of the period 1970–1980, a total of approximately 2.3 million words of running text.<sup>4</sup> The difference between the two sets of figures in table 2 stems largely from Suprun's inclusion of examples with word-orders where the nominative is favoured. We can see that in Modern Russian for adjectives standing between numeral and noun we find the genitive adjective with masculine and neuter nouns,<sup>5</sup> and both cases occur with the feminine.

When looking for the influence of the numeral, we should look where possible at examples where the noun is feminine. There is relevant evidence from various sources, presented in table 3.

	<i>dva/dve</i> 'two'	<i>tri</i> 'three'	<i>četyre</i> 'four'
Gallis (1947, 70)	56% (64)	66% (30)	85% (13)
Worth (1959, 123) (feminine only)	28% (29)	50% (6)	66% (3)
Suprun (1957, 77) (feminine only)	63% (147)	68% (73)	81% (16)
Corbett (feminine only)	18% (55)	48% (27)	80% (5)
Corbett (feminine only)	71% (293)	72% (82)	70% (40)
	22% (109)	38% (32)	40% (20)

Table 3. Use of the genitive plural with '2'-4' in Russian: effect of the numeral (total number of examples in parentheses)

These data are not fully comparable. Gallis' examples come from disparate sources and include some with *oba* 'both' (under *dva*). Worth used only twentieth century prose, and gives data just for feminines. Suprun's corpus and mine are as for table 2. Overall, there are some problems with the data in terms of sample size, and the uncertainty as to other interfering factors since other example types were included in some cases. When we look just at those samples where the noun is of feminine gender, then in each we find that the genitive is more likely to be found with *tri* 'three' than with *dva/dve* 'two', and more likely with *četyre* 'four' than with *tri* 'three'.

We have found a second way in which even *tri* 'three' and *četyre* 'four' can be differentiated grammatically. The higher numeral is slightly more like a noun in two respects, in that it is more likely to block access to the noun for predicate agreement (so that the default, neuter singular is more likely than with *tri* 'three') and it is more likely to take the genitive

of adnominal adjectives (suggesting that *četyre* 'four' plus noun is more like a noun-noun construction than is *tri* 'three' plus noun).

We should now consider causation. Rather than the greater or lesser similarity to a noun being the cause, I suggest rather that this is an effect. The groups which we quantify with larger numbers are the groups which are less individuated and conversely are more likely to be viewed as a unit. For this reason they are more likely to be encoded grammatically as a noun. And as a result, when there is a grammatical choice, the higher are more likely to be treated somewhat more like nouns, as we have seen with predicate agreement and with the choice of the case of the adjective in some Russian expressions. This allows us to solve the paradox. In a sense, *tri knigi* 'three books' is 'more plural' than *četyre knigi* 'four books'; we are better able to individuate three items than four. And this will help us to understand some rather perplexing data found within Afro-Asiatic languages.

**5. Number categories within Afro-Asiatic:** Consider first the Cushitic language Bayso, an endangered language with a few hundred speakers on Gidicho Island in Lake Abaya (southern Ethiopia) and on the western shore of the lake. The account here follows the relevant section of Hayward (1979), as reanalysed by Corbett and Hayward (1987). Nouns mark four categories of number: unit reference, singulative reference, paucal reference and multiple reference. Notionally the unit reference form is used to denote either an individual member or the class of the referent. It has no suffix, while the other three have distinct suffixes. The multiple reference form denotes a plurality of individual members or units. The paucal reference form denotes a small discrete number of individuals (from two to about six), while the singulative denotes a particular member only. For example:

unit reference	lúban	a lion/lion
singulative reference	lub3ntiti	a/the particular lion
paucal reference	lubanjaa	a few lions/some lions
multiple reference	lubanjool	lions

Table 4. Number forms of Bayso nouns

Agreeing elements have only three distinct forms: masculine, feminine and plural. For instance, the associative particle has the forms *ka* (masculine), *ta* (feminine) and *o* (plural). When we compare the forms of nouns with the agreement forms, the clearest regularity is that all paucal reference forms take plural agreement (Hayward 1979, 102), that is, they take forms like *o*. The singulative reference and unit reference

forms of a given noun will take the appropriate gender agreement form, masculine or feminine, according to the gender of the noun. Multiple reference forms are of two basic types. There are various irregular patterns, restricted to small numbers of nouns (details in Hayward 1979, 104–105), which we leave to one side (see Corbett and Hayward 1987 for discussion). All other nouns take a regular multiple reference form and take 'masculine' agreement (and indeed many irregular ones do so too). The regular patterns of agreement are as in table 5 (using the associative particle for illustration).

	unit reference	singulative reference	multiple reference	paucal reference
masculine	ka (MASC)	ka (MASC)	ka (MASC)	o (PLURAL)
feminine	ta (FEM)	ta (FEM)	ka (MASC)	o (PLURAL)

Table 5. Consistent agreement patterns in Bayso

The two types of noun, masculine and feminine, are on the left of the table, their possible number values along the top. As already established, for a given noun, masculine or feminine, agreements with the singulative reference and unit reference forms are identical. The unexpected thing is that table 4 shows agreement with multiple reference form nouns to be identical to that for agreement with the unit reference form (and singulative reference form) of masculine nouns.

We should consider the labels we have used. In one sense they are unimportant: 'I, II, III' would serve equally well. Yet labels should be as helpful as possible. From the theoretical point of view we need to distinguish between features on agreement controllers (the nouns in this case) and the forms of agreement targets (the associative particle here). In some languages the two match, in others they do not. In Bayso the controller features are clear. For nouns, the category of number includes four values (unit reference, singulative reference, multiple reference and paucal reference). It is the forms shown by agreement targets which are problematic. *Ta* and similar forms occur with feminine nouns when they are in the unit reference form or the singulative reference form. It is natural therefore to call such forms 'feminine' (or 'feminine singular'). *Ka* and similar forms occur not only with masculine nouns (when in the unit reference form or the singulative reference form) and with nouns of either gender in the multiple reference form. This leaves forms like *o*, which occur with paucal reference forms. We have labelled them 'plural' rather

than 'paucal'. A first reason is that plural is the traditional term. But more importantly the use of the term 'plural' is motivated by the behaviour of the personal pronouns. The subject/object forms of the third person pronoun (Hayward 1979, 110) are presented in table 6.

	singular	plural
masculine	usu	iso
feminine	ese	

Table 6. Third person pronouns in Bayso

The important point is that the plural pronoun *iso* takes agreement forms like *o*; hence the use of the term 'plural' for such forms.

Returning then to the nouns, we have the surprising situation in which regular multiple reference forms take the masculine (which is also the default form, used for agreement with phrases not marked for gender and number, such as infinitive phrases). Since the noun is itself marked for number, the failure to mark plurality by agreement is to be compared to the use of the neuter singular with some numeral phrases in Slavonic (though in Bayso we are considering ordinary noun phrases). However, paucal reference forms take the plural. This difference is unexpected, but it is in the predicted direction. Paucal reference forms are for smaller groups (two up to around six), and so are more individuated than those for which multiple reference forms are used. The paucal reference forms take the semantically justified plural. Thus the situation found in Slavonic (as in table 1) helps to elucidate the apparently puzzling Bayso situation.

A comparable situation is found in certain Arabic dialects. Blanc (Blanc 1970, 49) following Ferguson (Ferguson 1959, 620–621) states that in the relevant dialects nouns in the dual have different agreement to plurals. There is variation, but duals take plural agreement, while plurals take the feminine singular or the plural. (This is confirmed for Cairene Arabic in Belnap (Belnap 1993, 111). How can it be that nouns in the dual would take the plural but that those in the plural would have an alternative? The argument is similar to that for Bayso (and for Slavonic); two individuals are easiest to individuate, and so the plural will be favoured here, following the loss of dual agreements.

**Conclusion:** We started from a clear picture of the complex agreements of Slavonic, made possible by the careful research of Adam Evgen'evič. And from the clear picture of Slavonic we have been able to understand a little better the relation of number to numerals, and to make sense of the initially surprising situations of number marking and agreement we find in Bayso and in Arabic.

## ПРИМЕЧАНИЯ

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<sup>1</sup> Thus in the texts scanned there were 123 examples of phrases with the numeral '2' controlling predicate agreement, of which 99% (rounded to the nearest whole number) showed plural agreement.

<sup>2</sup> The data were discussed in Corbett (Corbett 1983, 220–224), but they are even more interesting than I realized then.

<sup>3</sup> The material in Suprun (1957) is reprinted with minor changes in Suprun (Suprun 1959, 61–75).

<sup>4</sup> Where more than one adjective was found in an example, each was counted separately.

<sup>5</sup> The nominative(-accusative) forms with neuter gender in my corpus are all unusual, for instance: *vse tri èti Bož'i sozdanija* '(literally) all three these God's creations' (Maksimov, *Karantin*).

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## КАТЕГОРИЯ КОЛИЧЕСТВА В ЯЗЫКОВОМ ПРЕДСТАВЛЕНИИ ФОНОВЫХ ЗНАНИЙ

Категория количества, будучи одной из наиболее широких философских категорий, связана со всем тем, что отражается человеческим сознанием, и является понятийным субстратом семантической категории, лежащей в основе функционально-семантического поля, представленного на разных уровнях структуры любого языка (Семантические категории 1985, 3-5, 47).

Языковые средства выражения категории количества в силу ее базового характера разнородны и «вездесущи», т.е. не ограничены ни тематикой, ни типом текста, ни характером представления результатов языкового членения действительности. Продолжая эту линию рассуждения, можно утверждать, что категория количества выражается и при таком функционировании единиц языка, которое опирается не только на кодифицированное знание о «кусочках действительности» и их отношениях, но и на дополнительные знания об этих «кусочках действительности» и сферах, условиях и возможностях их бытования, включая знание о разных «возможных мирах» такого бытования. О таких знаниях нередко говорят как о фоновых.

Анализ средств выражения категории количества в связи с такого рода функционированием языковых единиц вызван не намерением доказать наличие этих средств — оно задано характером самой категории, — а желанием выяснить, есть ли при таком функционировании некоторая специфика в выборе и соотношении таких средств.

В качестве материала для анализа в данной работе привлекается корпус английских традиционных детских стишков (nursery rhymes). Эти тексты несомненно являются частью культурного фонда англоговорящих и нередко входят — чаще всего частично — в другие тексты: «с годами проникновение их в различные сферы жизни — литература, быт, политика, реклама и пр. — все растет» (Демурова 1988, 30). Ср. также раздел Present-Day Universality во Введении к анализируемому словарю (Oxford Dictionary 1969, 42-45). В то же время многие из них возникли достаточно давно, и потому в них не только «сохранились приметы старых времен и нравов» (Демурова 1988, 25), но отражаются и не всегда совпадающие с современными языковые нормы и формы.

Анализируются 550 стишков, данных в «Оксфордском словаре детских стишков» (Oxford Dictionary). Для сопоставления привлека-

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В юбилейном сборнике в честь профессора А.Е. Супруна число рассматривается как фундаментальная категория сознания и языка, важная составляющая мифологии, календаря, грамматики, логики, стилистики, как источник экспрессии в древней и новой поэзии.

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