

Russian Genitive Plurals are Impostors

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Goal of the Talk: To show that, despite appearances, the form of Russian genitive plurals does not require trans-derivational correspondence, and moreover, it does not require reference to class information, upholding an important generalization about markedness of the plural.

1. ★ The Organization of Russian Inflected Words

1.1. Verbal Paradigms (Jakobson (1948))

- (1) p'is + A ('to write')
- a. p'is + A + u = p'išu [1sg] (A truncates)
 - +ot = p'išot [3sg] (A truncates)
 - +ut = p'išut [3pl] (A truncates)
 - b. p'is + A + t', l = p'isat' [infin.] / p'isal [past-masc.sg]
- (2) p'is + AJ ('to piss')
- a. p'is + AJ + u = p'isaju [1sg]
 - +ot = p'isajot [3sg]
 - +ut = p'isajut [3pl]
 - b. p'is + AJ + t', l = p'isat' [infin.] / p'isal [past-masc.sg] (J truncates)
- (3) govor + I ('to speak')
- a. govor + I + u = govor'u [1sg] (I truncates)
 - +it = govor'it [3sg] (I truncates)
 - +at = govor'at [3pl] (I truncates)
 - b. govor + I + t', l = govor'it' [infin.] / govor'il [past-masc.sg]
- (4) bol + E ('to hurt')
- a. bol + E + it = bol'it [3sg] (E truncates)
 - +at = bol'at [3pl] (E truncates)
 - b. bol + E + t', l = bol'et' [infin.] / bol'el [past-masc.sg]
- (5) bol + EJ ('to be sick')
- a. bol + EJ + u = bol'ēju [1sg]
 - +ot = bol'ejot [3sg]
 - +ut = bol'ejut [3pl]
 - b. bol + EJ + t', l = bol'et' [infin.] / bol'el [past-masc.sg] (J truncates)

Truncation Rules (Jakobson (1948); Halle (1994b))

- (6) Structural Description: V_1 immediately-precedes V_2
 Structural Change: V_1 deletes
- (7) Structural Description: /j,w/ immediately-precedes C_2
 Structural Change: /j,w/ deletes

1.2. Nominal Paradigms

- (8) Six cases, Four classes, Three genders:

(Trad.) Stem	Gender	Class	Nom. Sg	Dat Sg	Gen Sg	Instr Sg	Dat Pl
kn'ig- <i>book</i>	F	CLASS I	kn'iga	kn'ige	kn'igi	kn'igoj	kn'igam
stol- <i>table</i>	M	CLASS IIA	stol	stolu	stola	stolom	stolam
zv'er'- <i>beast</i>	M	CLASS IIA	zv'er'	zv'er'u	zv'er'a	zv'er'om	zv'er'am
nož- <i>knife</i>	M	CLASS IIA	nož	nožu	noža	nožom	nožam
ok(ŭ)n- <i>window</i>	N	CLASS IIB	okno	oknu	okna	oknom	oknam
dv'er'- <i>door</i>	F	CLASS III	dv'er'	dv'er'i	dv'er'i	dv'er'ju	dv'er'am

There's a 3-way difference between Biological Sex vs. Class vs. Gender [Harris (1991)]:
 Adjectives copy the case, gender (but not class!), and number from noun:

- (9) prostaja kn'iga
 simple-nom.fem.sg book-nom.fem.sg-CLASS I
- (10) prostaja dv'er'
 simple-nom.fem.sg door-nom.fem.sg-CLASS III
- (11) prostoj stol
 simple-nom.masc.sg table-nom.fem.sg-CLASS II
- (12) prostoj starosta
 simple-nom.masc.sg leader-nom.fem.sg-CLASS I
- (13) Ivan byl
 Ivan-nom.masc.sg-CLASS II be-past.masc.sg
- (14) Paša byl
 Pasha-nom.masc.sg-CLASS I be-past.masc.sg
- (15) Daša byla
 Dasha-nom.fem.sg-CLASS I be-past.fem.sg
- (16) Noun Case+Number endings are fused:
 /u/ ↔ DAT. SG for CLASS II, /oj/ ↔ INST. SG in for CLASS I,
 /am/ ↔ DAT.PL, ...

"It is, however, a general property of Russian that gender is never distinguished morphologically in the plural." (Bobaljik (2002), p.11)

- (17) (Apparent) generalization:
Class distinctions are neutralized in (oblique) plurals

- (18) DAT: dv'er'am / kn'igam / stolam / oknam
 PREP: dv'er'ax / kn'igax / stolax / oknax
 INST: dv'er'am'i / kn'igam'i / stolam'i / oknam'i (all /am'i/)

Adjectival endings are largely similar to nominal paradigm (cf. Matushansky and Halle (2003))

- (19) No Class features in plural adjectives:
 NOM.PL ↔ -yje (prostyje okna, kn'ig'i, dv'er'i, doma, starosty)
 PREP/GEN.PL ↔ -yx
 DAT.PL ↔ -ym
 INST.PL ↔ -ym'i

- (20) The traditional view: no theme vowels in nominal stems.
 kn'ig + a → kn'iga (NOM)
 kn'ig + e → kn'ig'e (DAT)
 stol + ∅ → stol (NOM)
 stol + u → stolu (DAT)

★ Müller (2003) has captured syncretism of many forms through shared binary Class features (e.g., Class I and III gen. sg share *-i* because I and III are both decomposed into “ $-\alpha$ ”)

★ However, those features cannot solve the Genitive Plural Conundrum (Jakobson (1957); Halle (1994b); Pertsova (2003), a.o.)

2. The Genitive Plural Conundrum

(Trad.) Stem	Class	Nom. Sg	Gen Pl
kn'ig <i>book</i>	CLASS I	kn'iga	kn'ig
stol <i>table</i>	CLASS IIA	stol	stolov
zv'er' <i>beast</i>	CLASS IIA	zv'er'	zver'ej
nož <i>knife</i>	CLASS IIA	nož	nožej
ok(ŭ)n <i>window</i>	CLASS IIB	okno	okon
dv'er' <i>door</i>	CLASS III	dv'er'	dv'er'ej
noč' <i>night</i>	CLASS III	noč'	noč'ej

(21)

Halle (1994b): “The Pl-Gen morpheme is spelled out everywhere with the abstract vowel ŭ(“yer”¹). The central distinction among the Pl-Gen forms is whether in the output they terminate in their stem consonant, as in [gub, dolot] or whether they end with a glide that is part of the material added to the stem as in /um+o+v/, /car'+e+j/, /ploščad'+e+j/.”

“...The main complexity of the Pl-Gen actualization lies in the conditions under which glide insertion takes place (following italics added by JFB/AIN):

- A glide is inserted *after all Class III stems*.

¹Yer is a vowel, and hence triggers deletion of immediately preceding vowels. Yer is deleted except when the next syllable also contains yer.

- After class II stems the glide is generally inserted after masculine, but *not* after neuter stems. There are however exceptions in both directions.
- After class I stems the glide is inserted after stems ending in clusters consisting of a consonant followed by a soft liquid /r,l/ or by /č,s,z/.

(22) gub+o+ǔ → gub+ǔ → gub ‘lip’

”[When glide insertion occurs], the Theme vowel surfaces as either /o/ or /e/ [according to readjustment rules]. The theme vowel surfaces because of the insertion of the glide after the theme:

(23) um+o → um+o+j → um+o+v → umov+ǔ → um+o+v ‘reason’
 car’e → car’ej → car’ej+ǔ → car’ej ‘tsar’

- ★ For Halle, glide insertion is stated in terms of Class (& Gender), a violation of (17)
- ★ A glide is not inserted in Classes I and IIb
- ★ However, these form a natural grouping, not based on Class/Gender.

(24) *The phonological form of the Genitive Plural is predictable based on phonological form of Nominative Singular*²³

	Structural Description	Structural Change
(25)	NOM.SG ends in V	Truncate V_{final}
	NOM.SG ends in C’ or palatal	Suffix /-ej/
	NOM.SG ends in C or /j/	Suffix /-ov/

3. Does the Nominative Singular have a Privileged Status?

Yes?:

- The Subsumption hypothesis: (based on the SPE tradition)

Genitive Case has more structure and “contains” Nominative as a subtree.
 (cf. “condense/condensation”; “cycle/cycling”; “falar/ falaré”)

Problem: Why no identity with gen. sg (or nom. pl) then, since it is also contained as a subtree?

- The Output-Output Correspondence hypothesis (Kager (1999) and Butska and Truckendbrodt (2003))

O-O possible between pairs that differ by one morphosyntactic feature.

Same Problem: Why is Nom. Sg privileged?

²Of course, there are (inevitably) lexical exceptions (Levin (1978)), which we will describe (and in fact Wug-test (Berko (1958))) in a later section (cf. Pertsova (2003), who claims that lexical exceptions to allomorphy selection can be determined by stress).

³These allomorphs fall under an observational generalization of anti-homophony (Pertsova (2003)).

- The Feature-Deletion/Fission Hypothesis (based on mechanisms of Halle (1997))
“Genitive” and “Nominative” are bundles of complex Case features.

In the plural environment, the “Genitive” features are separated into two terminals of exponence.

Spellout of one bundle results in nominative; spellout of the other modifies the PF of the nominative bundle.

Problems:

- Concord still sees Genitive Features
- Spellout of each bundle requires ordering
- Such Case features are inherently unexplanatory beyond syncretism: (cf. nominative on passive objects, instrumental on passive subjects, and genitive of negation on (certain) subjects as counterexamples).

No; nominative singular has no privileged status.

Our solution: Nominative Singular is Phonologically, (though not morphologically!) identical to the Stem, from which the genitive plural is derived.

- (26) **Claim:** Just as in verbs, there *are* theme vowels in nouns: A, O, \emptyset
(and perhaps in adjectives as well; -oj- throughout (cf. Matushansky and Halle (2003)))

Implementation:

- Apparent nominative singular endings are theme vowels.
- Nominative singular exponent is \emptyset (uniformly).
- Genitive plural endings have three allomorphs⁴
- Gen. Pl Allomorphy is phonologically determined (inwardly, cf. Bobaljik (1999)) by the Spellout of the Stem: Root+Theme

(27)

Environment	GEN.PL Allomorph
STEM ends in V	Suffix /-ǔ/
STEM ends in \emptyset (preceded by a) C' or sibilant	Suffix /-ej/
STEM ends [elsewhere]	Suffix /-ov/

Suffixation of yer triggers *phonological* deletion of the preceding vowel (as seen in verbs; (6)) there is no need to appeal to a *morphological* truncation rule.

⁴Halle (1994b), building on Flier (1972) suggests that /j/ turns into /w/ in special environments, and that there is an accompanying vocalic change. If the environment mentioned above is sufficient to trigger these phonological changes, /ej/ and /ov/ can be reduced to one allomorph. We will not pursue the matter further.

No Class Information Necessary for Genitive Plural: Purely Phonological Allomorphy!

(28) Genitive Plural Derivations:

ROOT	THEME	CASE+NUM	SURFACE
kn'ig	+ A	+ ŭ	kn'ig (A truncates, then ŭ deletes)
stol	+ ∅	+ ov	stolov
zv'er'	+ ∅	+ ej	zv'er'ej
nož	+ ∅	+ ej	nožej
ok(ŭ) n	+ A	+ ŭ	okŭn (O truncates, then second ŭ deletes)
dv'er'	+ ∅	+ ej	dv'er'ej

(Further Gen. Pl derivations will be exemplified in the next section)

(29) Nominative Singular Revisited:

ROOT	THEME	CASE+NUM	SURFACE
kn'ig	+ A	+ ∅	kn'iga
stol	+ ∅	+ ∅	stol
zv'er'	+ ∅	+ ∅	zv'er'
nož	+ ∅	+ ∅	nožej
ok(ŭ) n	+ O	+ ∅	okno
dv'er'	+ ∅	+ ∅	dv'er'

Nominative Singular has a Uniform Exponent: ∅

(30) (Derivation for other Endings, exemplified for Dative):

/e/ ↔ Class I, sg
 /u/ ↔ Class II, sg
 /i/ ↔ Class III, sg
 /am/ ↔ pl

ROOT	THEME	CASE+NUM	SURFACE
kn'ig	+ A	+ e	kn'ig'e (A truncates)
stol	+ ∅	+ u	stolu
zv'er'	+ ∅	+ u	zv'er'u
nož	+ ∅	+ u	nožu
ok(ŭ) n	+ O	+ u	oknu (O truncates)
dv'er'	+ ∅	+ i	dv'er'i

ROOT	THEME	CASE+NUM	SURFACE
kn'ig	+ A	+ am	kn'igam (A truncates)
stol	+ ∅	+ am	stolam
zv'er'	+ ∅	+ am	zv'er'am
nož	+ ∅	+ am	nožam
ok(ŭ) n	+ O	+ am	oknam (O truncates)
dv'er'	+ ∅	+ am	dv'er'am

3.1. More Genitive Plural Examples

	NOM.SG	DAT.PL	GEN.PL	
	vod'ít'el'	vod'ítel'jam	vod'ítel'ej	'driver (m.)'
	dom	domám	domóv	'house' (m.)'
	zdán'ijo	zdán'ijam	zdán'ij+∅	'building (n.)'
(31)	stat'(í)já	stat'(í)'jám	stat'ěj+∅	'article (f.)'
	kočer(ŭ)gá	kočer(ŭ)gám	kočer'óg+∅	'poker' (f.)'
	t'élo	t'elám	t'él+∅	'body (n.)'
	kn'až(ŭ)ná	kn'až(ŭ)nám	kn'ažón+∅	'princess' (f.)'
	kol'ejá	kol'ejám	kol'ěj+∅	'gauge' (f.)'

All of the data above conform to the allomorphy we posit in (27).

3.2. Exceptionality

	STEM	GEN.PL (<i>Expected</i>)	GEN.PL (Actual)	
	dýn'a	dýn'	dýn'	<i>melon (f.)</i>
(32)	pl'ečó	pl'eč	pl'eč	<i>shoulder (n.)</i>
	pól'o	pol'	*pol'ěj	<i>field (n.)</i>
	óblako	oblak	*oblakóv	<i>cloud (n.)</i>
	soldát	soldátov	*soldát	<i>soldier (n.)</i>

Postaccenting stems appear to take overt allomorphs;

“Nouns of the I and IIb declensions will have an ending in genitive plural if they have stress on the ending in the plural” (Pertsova (2003)): counterexemplified with postaccenting stems in (31).

3.3. From Moscow with Wugs

- (33) Wug test “This is a Wug-NOM.SG. I like wugs-ACC.PL. I live with wugs-INSTR.PL. I have a lot of _ GEN.PL”. Conducted with parallel Cyrillic and English transcription, with stress indicated, but not gender. n = 17:

NOM.SG	INSTR.PL	GEN.PL (predicted)	percent attested	other productions
grapá	grapám'i	grap	80%	2 grapov, 1 grap'ev (2 ineffable)
k'ingá	k'ingám'i	k'ing	93%	1 k'in'og (yer!) (1 ineffable)
p'ít'á	p'ít'am'i	p'i't'	67%	5 p'it'ej, 1 p'it'ev (1 ineffable)
tr'aló	tr'álam'i	tr'al	65%	4 tr'álov, 2 trálej
čúrko	čurkám'i	čurok	47%	7 čurkóv, 1 čúrkov (2 ineffable)
Total (Postaccenting)			70% 74%	

4. How (oblique) Plurals Lose Class Information

Recall (17): Class distinctions are neutralized in (oblique) plurals: Lexical Class/Gender information is not morphologically expressed.

Implementation: Class & Gender features are *deleted* in these environments, and hence not spelled out. The trigger for deletion is the Markedness of the environment of *Plural*.

A Possible Counterexample: Adjectival Agreement in DPs quantified by 2,3, and 4 (the “Paucal Numbers”⁵):

(34) tr’i stola tr’i kn’ig’i tr’i dv’er’i tr’i okna tr’i zv’er’a
 three tables three books three doors three windows three beasts

- Nominal Endings after these Paucals have apparent genitive singular endings.
- Additional oddities of the Paucal Numbers:

(A) Case concord appears to fail (despite consensus that 2,3,4 are adjectives (Babby (1987); Halle (1994a))

(B) Verbal agreement can be Plural (with a “genitive”!):

(35) tr’i stud’enta byl’i
 three students-masc.gen.sg. were-pl...

(36) tr’i kn’ig’i byl’i
 three books-fem.gen.sg. were-pl...

(C) Plural Adjectives show gender-sensitive concord:

(37) tr’i prostyx stud’enta byl’i
 three simple-**gen.pl** student-masc.gen.sg. were-pl... (GLOSS TO BE REVISED!)

(38) tr’i prostyje kn’ig’i byl’i
 three simple-**nom.pl** book-fem.gen.sg. were-pl...

(D) Not all Paucal nouns are identical to Genitive Singular forms:

(39) b’ez šága
 without step-gen.sg

(40) tr’i šagá/*šága
 three step-pauc/*step-gen.sg

Proposal: Apparent genitive singular is really nominative/accusative *paucal* (a non-singular, non-plural number specification).

⁵Including *poltorá* (1.5, lit. ‘half of three’).

(41) tr'i prostyx stud'enta byl'i
 three simple-**nom.pauc** student-masc.nom.pauc were-pauc.... (CORRECT GLOSS)

(42) Number Endings in the Nominative:
 NOUNS-Nom Sing Paucal Plural
 Class I ∅ -i -i
 Class IIa ∅ -a -i
 Class IIb ∅ -a -a
 Class III ∅ -i -i

ADJECTIVES-Nom Sing Paucal Plural
 Fem -aja -yje -yje
 Neut -oje **-yx** -yje
 Masc -yj **-yx** -yje

- No Gender Distinction in Plural, only in Paucal
- Paucal Number only distinguished from Plural in the Nominative;
 a further Case of neutralization based on markedness.

Advantages of Paucal Number:

- ★ Verbal agreement is *only* with nominatives.
- ★ No Plural adjectives show Class/Gender distinctions: the ones that appear to are *not plural*.

(E) Serbo-Croatian Paucals show apparently neither plural nor singular participle agreement:

(43) Tri studenta su bila/?bili/*bio
 three student-gen.sg aux-3.pl. were-pauc./?pl/*sg

★ **No Class/Gender Distinctions in (Oblique) Plurals**

5. Contributions to Understanding

- (44) No need for redundancy of class information; generalization about markedness of plural upheld
- (45) No need for O-O correspondence between surface forms of paradigm
- (46) Importance of theme vowels for correct analysis

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