

Title: Russian Numeral Construction Revisited

Author: Irina Mikaelian, The Pennsylvania State University

The paper reconsiders internal and external features of the Russian numeral construction (NUM+(Adj)N), one of the most confused and unstable zones of the Russian grammar. Based on the data collected on the Russian Internet, the research tries to discover the direction in which the system is moving.

In his comprehensive book on the surface syntax of the Russian cardinal numerals, Igor Mel'čuk called the Russian construction NUM+N "a kind of platypus, an oviparous mammal" (Mel'čuk 1985: 80). This happy metaphor reflects both the fossil diachronic nature of the Russian numerals and, respectively, their synchronic inconsistency.

However, the Russian cardinal numerals can be identified as a unique grammatical class of lexemes characterized both by particular semantics and a number of specific morpho-syntactic properties. One of the "signature" features of the Russian NUM+N constructions is a bi-directional morphological dependence between the numeral and the quantified noun. Here are some examples:

- 1) The numeral 1 (*odin*) is usually considered a regular adjective, since it agrees in gender and case with the noun it quantifies. However, singular number is intrinsic to this numeral, such as in compound numerals (21, 31, etc.), *odin* imposes singular form on the quantified noun in contradiction with the construction semantics. However, the singular number of the noun does not always track the number agreement of other syntactically related elements in the sentence, cf.:

- (1) В очном туре олимпиады *приняли* участие двадцать один студент - *победители* Интернет-тура из Москвы, Владимира, Ярославля <...> (www.yandex.ru)

Example (1) illustrates a frequent mismatching between the singular form of the quantified subject and the semantically determined plural number of the verb and apposed noun.

- 2) All other numerals present a clear-cut opposition between the constructions in direct (nominative and accusative inanimate) and oblique cases, cf:
 - a) If the noun phrase is in N or A_{inanim} case, the numeral functions as the head of the group: It determines the case of the quantified noun. In all the oblique cases, including A_{anim}, case of the quantified noun is determined externally, and the numeral is agreed with it in case as a regular modifier.
 - b) In direct constructions, numerals 2-4 (*dva, tri, četyre*, and the compound numerals 22, 33, etc.) require a non-plural form of the noun generally considered genitive singular. However, Zalizniak (2002/1967) has also proposed to consider this form a specific "counting form". As I will try to show, the latter solution agrees better with other properties of these constructions, such as (but not only) the form of the depending adjective, and especially the expansion of the genitive plural form of the adjective with the feminine noun, cf. *dve krasivyx*_{g.pl} *devuški*_{g.sg} vs. approved by the norm *dve krasivye*_{n.pl} *devuški*_{g.sg}.

Mel'čuk, I.A. 1985. *Poverxnostnyj sintaksis russkix čislovyx vyraženij*. Vienne: Wiener Slawistischer Almanach.

Zalizniak, A.A. 2002. *Russkoe imennoe slovoizmenenie. S priloženiem*. Moskva: Jazyki Slavjanskoj Kul'tury.