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#### Nina NAGAITSEVA,

orcid.org/000-0001-8188-8141
Candidate of Philological Sciences,
Professor at the Department of Humanities
of National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute"
(Kharkiv, Ukraine) kgn.fmo@gmail.com

#### Yuri ROMANOV,

orcid.org/0000-0002-7819-3119 Candidate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor at the Department of Humanities of National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute" (Kharkiv, Ukraine) yu.aleks63@gmail.com

# PRESENTATION OF SINGULARIA AND PLURALIA TANTUM NOUNS IN A COURSE OF RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

This article considers singularia and pluralia tantum nouns; despite the absence of this topic in programs on teaching Russian as a foreign language (RFL), it must be acknowledged that singularia tantum nouns constitute a significant layer of vocabulary and are quite commonly used, and pluralia tantum nouns are closely linked to cultural discourse and cannot be painlessly excluded from lexical system of the Russian language. Although this phenomenon has been thoroughly studied in classical editions of Russian grammar, problems of category of number and in particular singularia and pluralia tantum nouns are still widely discussed by modern linguists (as is noted, complex subjects can be designated both as forms of singular and forms of plural, therefore the three groups of nouns can be found: pluralia tantum (a single object indicated by plural: ворота), a full-numbered paradigm (one object is indicated by singular: ракушка), and nouns with a paradigm fluctuation (one object is indicated by both singular and plural: дверь / двери); there is a dramatic rise in the use of plural forms of many abstract nouns (риск, продажа) forming a crucial change in the development trend of Russian abstract noun number paradigms). We assume that in RFL teaching, it is important to follow the principles of step by step presentation of theoretical information on this topic (common singularia and pluralia tantum nouns, their grammatical properties, derivative characteristics; proper singularia and pluralia tantum nouns; synonymy, antonymy, and homonymy of singularia and pluralia tantum nouns; occasionalisms, etc.) to help students reach a higher level of Russian language proficiency.

**Key words:** singularia tantum, pluralia tantum, category of number, L2 learning and teaching, Russian as a foreign language.

## Ніна НАГАЙШЕВА.

orcid.org/000-0001-8188-8141

кандидат філологічних наук, професор кафедри гуманітарних наук Національного технічного університету «Харківський політехнічний інститут» (Харків, Україна) kgn.fmo@gmail.com

### Юрій РОМАНОВ,

orcid.org/0000-0002-7819-3119

кандидат філологічних наук, доцент кафедри гуманітарних наук Національного технічного університету «Харківський політехнічний інститут» (Харків, Україна) yu.aleks63(a)gmail.com

# ПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ ІМЕННИКІВ SINGULARIA TA PLURALIA TANTUM У КУРСІ РОСІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ

У статті розглянуто іменники singularia та pluralia tantum. Не зважаючи на відсутність цієї теми у програмах викладання російської мови як іноземної (далі — РЯІ), треба визнати, що іменники singularia tantum становлять значний прошарок лексики та є доволі вживаними, а іменники pluralia tantum тісно пов'язані з культурологічним дискурсом і не можуть бути безболісно виключені з лексичної системи російської мови. Хоча цей феномен досить ретельно вивчався в класичних виданнях російської граматики, проблеми категорії

числа та іменників singularia tantum та pluralia tantum зокрема продовжують широко обговорюватися сучасними лінгвістами. Наприклад, ідеться про те, що складні речі позначають як формами однини, так і формами множини, тому вирізняють три групи іменників: pluralia tantum (окремий предмет, позначений множиною: ворота); ті, що мають повну парадигму (один об'єкт позначається одниною: ракушка), та іменники з коливанням парадигми (один об'єкт позначається як одниною, так і множиною: дверь/двери). Зазначають, що відбувається різке зростання використання множинних форм багатьох абстрактних іменників (риск, продажа), що надзвичайно змінює тенденції розвитку парадигм числа абстрактних іменників у російській мові). Ми виходимо з того, що у викладанні РЯІ важливо дотримуватися принципів покрокової презентації теоретичної інформації за темою: загальні іменники singularia та pluralia tantum, їхні граматичні властивості, дериваційні характеристики; власні іменники singularia та pluralia tantum; синонімія, антонімія й омонімія іменників singularia та pluralia tantum; оказіоналізми тощо», що допомагає студентам підвищити рівень володіння російською мовою.

**Ключові слова:** singularia tantum, pluralia tantum, категорія числа, вивчення і викладання другої мови, російська мова як іноземна.

Introduction. No academic hours for singularia tantum and pluralia tantum nouns can be found in programs on RFL (Nagaitseva et al., 2014) due to the scarcity of total number of hours allotted for this discipline. However, humanities majors, graduate students, and RFL teachers who want to delve into the study of this phenomenon require an adequate response to their request, and they have every reason for this.

Firstly, singularia tantum nouns make up a significant layer of vocabulary in texts of different styles and demonstrate high frequency of use. Pluralia tantum nouns are closely connected with the cultural discourse and cannot be painlessly excluded from lexical system of the Russian language.

Secondly, when studying such nouns, their connection with etymology, idiomatic inclusions, and occasionalisms is normally tracked.

Thirdly, with their presentation, a comparative analysis of such phenomena in Russian and learners' native language / language of instruction can be made.

Fourthly, it is awareness of the importance of derivation that matters – with emphasis on most frequent affixes and their semantic specialization.

Fifthly, studying this phenomenon may significantly expand the vocabulary of learners.

Finally, formation of students' skills in correct reception and production of the above lexical units clearly indicates a higher level of Russian language proficiency.

**Review of literature.** Singularia tantum and pluralia tantum nouns are carefully examined in works on Russian grammar (Belousov et al., 2002; Shanskii, Tikhonov, 1987; Shvedova et al., 1980; Vinogradov et al., 1960; Vinogradov, 1972).

In Cambridge Reference Grammar of Russian, pluralia tantum nouns are defined as a small set of nouns that can occur only in the plural (ножницы, штаны, сутки). Historically, these are entities composed of paired parts. Singularia tantum nouns

naming masses, by virtue of their meaning, are not likely to be used in the plural. Still, a plural can be used to show that masses come in various types (the "sortal" plural) (сотни белков, ферментов, жиров, сахаров). Nouns naming abstract qualities or events, such as (производительность, великодушие) are naturally singular, but occur in the plural if the quality is manifested as different types (превратности, способности) (Timberlake, 2004).

Problems of category of number and in particular singularia tantum and pluralia tantum nouns are widely discussed in Russian linguistics.

Pluralia tantum nouns are defined as grammatical forms of plural with conflicting plural forms, collective meanings and mixed, plural and collective syntactic (Sobolev, 2005).

Objectively complex subjects can be designated both as forms of singular and forms of plural, therefore the three groups of nouns can be found: pluralia tantum (a single object indicated by plural: *εοροπα*), a full-numbered paradigm (one object is indicated by singular: *ρακγωκα*), and nouns with a paradigm fluctuation (one object is indicated by both singular and plural: *∂εερь/∂εερυ*) (Liashevskaia, 2001).

There is a dramatic rise in the use of plural forms of many abstract nouns (*puck*, *npodaæa*) forming a crucial change in the development trend of Russian abstract noun number paradigms (Gorbov, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to consider the basic features of singularia tantum and pluralia tantum nouns to be presented to international learners when practical RFL teaching.

Main body of the research. Number, inflectional category of noun, reflects extra linguistic reality and denotes number of objects in opposition ranks of singular forms and plural forms. These forms are expressed morphologically (in a paradigm) and syntactically (by usage of coordinated forms of number). Meanings of number of nouns themselves are marked synthetically (by inflections, suffixes, alternations of consonants), analytically, and adherently. Nouns with

two correlative forms of number have main semantic opposition as follows: a single subject – not a single subject.

A large group of nouns has only one form of number (singular or plural) as they express uncountable objects. Nouns having only a singular form are called singularia tantum nouns. Nouns that appear in the plural form only are called pluralia tantum nouns. They are common nouns and proper nouns.

Properties of common singularia tantum nouns are as follows.

- 1. Common singularia tantum nouns can be divided (depending on what and how they express it) into 3 large groups: material nouns, collective nouns, and abstract notions.
- 2. Material nouns denote substances of uniform composition that can be measured but not counted. Among them there are such groups of words as chemical elements and compounds (кислород, вода), various materials, substances (вата, нефть), food products (сало, мед), plants (чеснок, картофель), medicines (аспирин, йод), medical concepts (желчь, гной), etc.
- 3. Collective nouns denote an indefinite set of objects as one indivisible whole. Among them are groups of objects (мебель, обувь), persons (студенчество), fauna (зверье, воронье), flora (кустарник, шиповник), etc.
- 4. Abstract notions denote properties and actions in an abstract way not allowing the idea of counting (грусть, красота, бег, чтение).

Grammatical properties of singularia tantum nouns are as follows.

- 1. All singularia tantum nouns denote objects in abstraction from their quantity.
  - 2. They have only one form singular.
- 3. They are not combined with quantitative numerals, but combined with indefinitely quantitative words (горы мусора, мало воздуха, много горя).
- 4. Material nouns and abstract notions in the form of Genitive Case with a quantitative meaning may have variability of inflections -a/-я -y/-ю (чашка чаю, куча хламу, много шуму). The same peculiarity is observed when such nouns are combined with prepositions без, из, с, от, до (без сахару, с голоду, от испугу, не до жиру). Frequent is also the loss of mobile vowels o and e (огонь огня, уголь угля, пепел пепла, кашель кашля).
- 5. In monosyllabic nouns of feminine and masculine gender ending with the consonant, the stress is transferred to flexion in the form of Prepositional Case ( $\kappa pobb b \kappa pobu$ ,  $\epsilon nyub b \epsilon nyuu$ ,  $\epsilon nyub \delta nyuu$ ,  $\epsilon nyub \delta nyuu$ ).

There are some possibilities for singularia tantum nouns to get the forms of plural.

- 1. Material nouns may take forms of plural when naming the species / varieties of substance (*cyxue u десертные вина*), as well as large masses of substance (*вечные льды*).
- 2. Abstract notions take forms of plural when denoting specific manifestations of abstract qualities/ processes (маленькие радости, шумы в моторе), as well as describing a sign of great intensity or duration (колоссальные сдвиги, постоянные боли).
- 3. A particularly striking result of rejection of organic singularity in favor of transition to object integrity breaking plurality is observed in occasional words occurred in fiction.

Gender markers of singularia tantum nouns: like other Russian nouns, singularia tantum nouns have traditional characteristics of gender (endings in Nominative Case): for masculine – hard and soft consonant (бисер, алкоголь); for feminine – -а/-я and soft consonant (борьба, болтовня, зелень); for neuter – -о/-е / -ё (сено, пение, жильё).

As for derivative characteristics of singularia tantum nouns, most of them are derived words which are formed either without any affixes or with the help of affixes. Non-derivative nouns are few in number, and meaning of singularity is a component of their lexical meaning.

Singularia tantum nouns are formed from nouns, adjectives, and verbs; they acquire corresponding integrating meanings due to suffixes.

Singularia tantum nouns with meanings of "scientific concept, doctrine, branch", "institution", "property, attribute", "collective" (материализм, биология, героизм, деканат, аспирантура, купечество) are formed from nouns.

Singularia tantum nouns with meanings of "abstract qualities", "concept, property", "collective" (белизна, слепота, смелость, теплота, пьянство, сырье) are formed from adjectives.

Singularia tantum nouns with meanings of "action, action in progress, its result", "collective" (дружба, развитие, уважение, бегство, еда, житье-бытье) are formed from verbs.

Suffix singularia tantum nouns include:

- 1. Collective nouns of feminine gender with suffixes -б-а, -в-а, -ия, -н-я, -ар-а, -ор-а, -ур-а, -от-а, -(н)иц-а (голытьба, листва, артиллерия, родня, мошкара, детвора, клиентура, пехота, конница); of masculine gender with suffixes -ник, -няк (ельник, березняк), -ат, -итет (секретариат, генералитет) and with the meaning of complex composition (лом, сор, бой, мусор); of neuter gender with suffixes -ств-о, -еств-о, -ьё (офицерство, человечество, гнильё).
- 2. Abstract notions of feminine gender with suffixes -б-а, -от-а, -изн-а, -ин-а, -иц-а, -аци-я, -н-я, -отн-я

(резьба, краснота, новизна, тишина, агитация, возня, беготня), -ость/-есть, -ность, -емость (близость, свежесть, сущность, успеваемость); of neuter gender with suffixes -ue/-ье, -ние/-нье, -тие/-тье, -ств-о, -еств-о, -овств-о (равнодушие, веселье, терпение, терпенье, открытие, шитье, соседство, мужество, хвастовство); of masculine gender with suffixes -изм, -аж (оптимизм, туризм, ажиотаж, инструктаж).

Affixless singularia tantum nouns include:

- 1. Numerous nouns of masculine gender formed from prefixal and prefixless verbs (разбег, обжиг, заплыв, отлов, бег, сев, лов, рост).
- 2. Unproductive nouns derived from adjectives and verbs ending in soft consonant and -a (дичь, лень, мощь, ширь, тишь, рвань, гниль, нажива, хандра, слава, мелюзга).
- 3. Nouns of neuter gender with non-derivative stem (20pe, 3лο, ∂οбро, тепло).

Prefix singularia tantum nouns are derived with suffixes of opposite meaning *не-, де- (неправда, невезение, демонтаж)* and with international morphemes (биохимия, геофизика).

Prefixal-suffixal singularia tantum nouns are formed from nouns with prefixes of *без-/бес-* and various suffixes with meaning of "absence of something" (*бессонница*, *бессилие*, *бездорожье*).

Properties of common pluralia tantum nouns are as follows.

- 1. Pluralia tantum nouns are not numerous.
- 2. There are groups of words based on a collective component with: proper collective meaning to denote "paired" / compound items (ножницы, часы), a plurality of something which forms a complex whole (деньги, кудри, чары); material collective meaning to denote substances, mass in the aggregate (сливки, дрова), the remains of something (объедки, опилки); abstract collective meaning to denote complex actions (бега, побои), lengths of time (каникулы, сумерки), space (дебри), rites (именины, похороны), games (именины, похороны).

Grammatical properties of pluralia tantum nouns are as follows.

- 1. Pluralia tantum nouns do not have any morphological forms of singular even as potential. Their singularity-plurality is expressed only syntactically.
- 2. Singular of collective pluralia tantum nouns is expressed in combination with numeral *один* (*одни очки*, *сутки*) and plural with collective numerals (*двое очков, суток*) and indefinitely quantitative words (*несколько суток*, *много денег*).
- 3. Even more complicated is the expression of the above dichotomy in material pluralia tantum nouns (cf.: xлолья одна почка xлольев две пачки xлольев).

There is a difference in meanings of singularia and pluralia tantum nouns and cognate plural and singular nouns. Many singularia and pluralia tantum nouns, having a formal correlation with the corresponding nouns of plural and singular in the Old Russian language, partially or completely lost touch with them and should be considered independent lexical units. This phenomenon can be exemplified by added meaning of "much"  $(\partial one - \partial oneu)$ , "sort" (macno - macna), "consistency" (mecno - mecna), "inconsistency" (mokou - mokou).

Like other lexical units, singularia and pluralia tantum nouns are characterized by synonymy, antonymy, and homonymy.

- 1. There are numerous archaisms among synonyms: purely lexical (*чело лоб*, *ланиты щеки*); lexical-word-building (*горе горесть*); lexico-phonetic, dating back to Church Slavonicisms (*здравие*, *злато*, *сребро*).
- 2. Sometimes both synonyms are only singularia tantum nouns or only pluralia tantum nouns, and sometimes not ( $M\pi a\partial ocmb Mo\pi o\partial ocmb$ ;  $\pi ambi \partial ocnexu$ ,  $ycma zy\delta bi$ ). Dimorphism of the old and the new is connected not only with genetic continuity, but also with the possibility of using it for semantic-stylistic purposes.

Proper singularia and pluralia tantum nouns can be characterized as follows.

- 1. These nouns are individual names of unique objects (Харьков, Сумы, Одесса, Карпаты, Кавказ, Иванов, Наполеон).
- 2. The inflection of foreign proper names does not always indicate the number (*Annanayu*, *Muccucunu*).
- 3. Proper singularia tantum nouns which acquire the form of plural may denote: a group of people (квартира Ивановых); similarity transfer (Мы все глядим в Наполеоны (Пушкин)); author's rejection of singularia tantum nouns' inherent individuality in favor of depersonalizing plurality (Он ровесник всех поколений. Житель Праг, Берлинов, Гаван (Рождественский)).

Occasional singularia and pluralia tantum nouns appear in the language thanks to creative search of outstanding writers. Their word-forming is quite traditional, but they are semantically creative, and this contributes to the conclusion that they are a living and productive layer of Russian vocabulary as a whole. There are different formants used in word formation of occasionalisms.

1. Singularia tantum nouns of feminine gender with suffixes -н-я, -ость, -б-а, soft consonant, and without suffixes in -а/-я (скульня, бегня, гульня, глыбастость, невовзвратность, душистость, ярь, рьянь, хмарь, нудь, крепь, влажь, жемь, ёжь, ясь, нищь, водь, весень, лиловь, сеятьба, сердитьба, леева, предгрозя).

- 2. Singularia tantum nouns of neuter gender with suffixes -ье, ьё, -ев-о (моленье, шаганье, изречье, дамьё, машиньё, солдатьё, людьё, негритьё, громадьё, ребятьё. гулево).
- 3. Singularia tantum nouns formed by stem composition (доброшершавость, мимолетность, дрыгоножество, людоедчество, шестиэтажье, криводушье).
- 4. Pluralia tantum nouns (лягания, пережёвы, невнятицы, мерехлюндии).

There are occasional forms of plural of singularia tantum nouns (льны, сирени, бронзы, хвои, хлебы, пыли, чаи, воздуха, золота, железа, тины, дымы, мяса, тьмы, пехоты, артиллерии, мраки, ясени, детства, осени, зовы, дружбы, любови, славы, дремы, чести, скуки, жары, топоты, багрянцы, прохлады, трепеты, лепеты, злобы, исступления, дерзновения, сияния, своеволия) and оссаsional forms of singular of pluralia tantum nouns (чернило, стих, будень, вила, пенат, деньга, руина, брызг, покой).

There are deliberate mistakes in making forms (рог–рожья, снег–снеги, чистописаниев ремёсла), word usage (ждание, блестенье, окружие instead of ожидание, блеск, окружение), agreement in gender (хладный темень), etc (Khairutdinova, 2019).

The above occasionalisms cannot be found in dictionaries, their lexical meaning is not very transparent, and their true brightness can be discovered only in context.

**Conclusions.** Thus, the above theoretical background on singularia and pluralia tantum nouns provides voluminous information about this phenomenon, namely about forms and meanings, word-building potential, possibilities of text harvesting etc.

Such knowledge gives RFL teacher a chance to find the best way of singularia and pluralia tantum presentation, to develop a necessary block of exercises, to provide texts saturated with singularia and pluralia tantum vocabulary (Nagaitseva et al., 2007), so that students can reach a higher level of Russian language proficiency.

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