

### Suffixal Inflection of Nouns for Number in Russian

Number is inflectional in Russian, normally expressed by contrasting endings with a common stem (*sestr-oj* ~ *sestr-ami*). But there are nouns in Russian the singular and plural forms of which do not share a stem. Some are lexically plural and call for a derivational suffix in singular use, others are lexically singular and call for a derivational suffix in plural use. In such cases, N is not directly lexicalized, e.g., N [N /sestr/ ], and then inflected for singular or plural. Instead, a sublexical phrase-structure rule intervenes and expands N to N plus -N (noun suffix), and N and -N are lexicalized individually. The singular and plural forms of such nouns are thus suppletive, not so radically as *čelovek* ~ *ljudi* but suppletive nonetheless. These facts merit our attention because they are routinely ignored in grammars and dictionaries, where formal singular-plural stem differences are subsumed under morphophonemics and semantic differences are downplayed.

Lexically plural nouns include *gospoda* ‘masters’, *bare* ‘gentry’, *bojare* ‘boyars’, *bolgary* ‘Bulgarians’, *tatary* ‘Tatars’, and nouns suffixed with /jan/ denoting social groups. Individual members of these groups are derived with the singulative masculine suffix /in/ or with the feminine suffix /#k/: *bolgarin* ~ *bolgarka*, *graždanin* ~ *graždanka*. Another class of plural nouns is marked with the neuter suffix /ent/ denoting the young of the species, e.g., *gusjata* ‘goslings’. The singular is formed with the masculine singulative suffix /#k/, before which a readjustment rule deletes the /t/: *gusënok* (otherwise \**gusjatok*).

The lexically singular nouns that derive the plural forms with a suffix are the dozen male kinship terms like *brat* ‘brother’ (*brat’ja*), *djadja* ‘uncle’ (*djad’ja*), and *kum* ‘godfather’ (*kumov’ja*). The suffix employed is /ij/, which has wider distribution than just with these nouns. /ij/ is a neuter suffix that from count nouns like *loskut* ‘shred’ and *zub* ‘tooth’ derives the noncount nouns *loskut’e* and *zub’ë*. These singular forms, which number about two dozen, have the plural counterparts *loskut’ja* and *zub’ja*. For some reason grammars and dictionaries do not regard *loskut’ja* and *zub’ja* as the plural forms of *loskut’e* and *zub’ë*. They regard them as plural forms of *loskut* and *zub*—alongside the suffixless plural forms *loskutý* and *zuby*. But plural forms with the noncount suffix /ij/ differ in meaning from the plural forms without /ij/. The noncount meaning of the suffix is weakened in plural forms—*zub’ja* can be counted, as in *skol’ko zub’ëv na ètoj pile?*—but /ij/ signals a weakly differentiated plurality. Without the suffix, *zuby* denotes the more individuated teeth in the mouth. Web searches turn up numerous such semantic contrasts in addition to those like *prut’ja* ~ *pruty* recorded in dictionaries.

The /ij/ in *brat’ja* etc. is different. It is semantically bleached of the meaning it clearly has in *bab’ë* ‘women’ and less clearly in *zub’ja*. Therefore *brat’ja* etc. are true examples of the suffixal derivation of plural forms.

The current derivational inflection of *gospoda* [N] [N] [N] *gospodin* and *brat* [N] [N] [N] *brat’ja* are a devolution of the collective-singulative system of 16th-century Russian described by Unbegaun (1935), where singulative *latynin* ‘a Roman Catholic’ was derived from collective *latyna* ‘Roman Catholics’ and singular *brat* and *zub* were pluralized with collective *brat’ja* and *zub’e*, which were morphologically singular.

### REFERENCES

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