

# On Russian Numeral Classifiers

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## 0. Introduction

The name of this paper may sound like an oxymoron, because Russian, in addition to many other Indo-European languages, has always been considered as a language where so called sortal numeral classifiers<sup>1</sup> are absent (Aikhenvald 2000: 121; Gil 2005). This means that in Russian, unlike, for example, in Japanese, a numeral occurs in direct constructions with a count noun without the additional presence of a classifier. For example, the numeral phrase *sto gostej* ‘hundred guests’ consists of only two words: a numeral *sto* ‘hundred’ and a noun *gostej* ‘guest. Gen.Pl’. However, occasionally the following construction occurs:

- (1) *Bylo*            *sto*        *dvadcat'*        *čelovek*        *gost-ej*<sup>2</sup>.  
 to be.PST        100        20                person.CNT        guest-GEN.PL  
 ‘There were 120 guests.’

In this construction the word *čelovek* (‘person’) appears between the cardinal numeral *120* and the noun *gostej*. The occurrence of the word *čelovek* in this numeral-plus-noun construction is optional. It can be easily omitted. Nevertheless constructions containing this third element are not atypical of modern Russian and are used rather frequently<sup>3</sup>. Such constructions occur not only with the word *čelovek*, but with several other lexical items such as: *golova* ‘head’, *štuka* ‘thing’, *edinica* ‘item’ and *duša* ‘soul’.

This construction was initially alluded to by J. Greenberg (1972) before being discussed by R. Sussex (1976). The crucial difference between this construction and its similar English counterpart (e.g. *10 head of cattle*) is that it can be applied not only to collective nouns<sup>4</sup> such as *cattle*, *army* and so on, which cannot occur in direct constructions with numerals, but also to countable concrete nouns.

In this paper I will continue the research started by R. Sussex on such constructions in Russian. His paper is based only on a few examples taken from dictionaries (Sussex 1976: 146), whereas I will broaden the data by using rich material from the Russian National Corpus ([www.ruscorpora.ru](http://www.ruscorpora.ru)). In addition, I will determine a number of lexical items which can be used in such constructions, their syntactical and semantic properties, as well as the statistical characteristics of such constructions in Russian.

As stated by R. Sussex (1976), the third element in the construction displayed in (1) most closely resembles the numeral classifier. Although I will discuss whether this element is a

numeral classifier in the same sense, as this term is used to describe Thai or Japanese, hereafter for the reasons of simplicity I will continue to refer to it as a *numeral classifier*.

In the first part I will discuss the analyzed sample, as well as the search parameters for these constructions in the corpus whilst also determining what nouns the classifiers in question are used with. Following this I will consider the morphosyntactic properties of this construction and compare them to a normal two element numeral construction. The final section will debate whether these words can be called numeral classifiers and will also present discussions regarding their probable functions.

## 1. Sample

All examples which are analyzed here are taken from the Russian National Corpus (hereafter – RNC). I searched these constructions in the main corpus of RNC which contains 59 486 documents and 192 840 904 words by using the lexico-grammatical search<sup>5</sup>. The parameters of the search are as follows: the first word – *numeral*; the second word – *numeral classifier* (e.g. *čelovek* or *štuka*) in *Genitive*, and the third word (on distance from one to three words) – *noun* in *Genitive*. I examine this construction for all possible word orders by changing the order of elements in the parameters of the search. As no restrictions on the type of noun are posed, the result of the search includes examples with both count and collective nouns which provides us with an opportunity to assess how big the share of count nouns is.

Whilst R. Sussex (1976) analyzes only three numeral classifiers in his paper, I broaden the number of lexemes to five: *čelovek* ('person'), *golova* ('head'), *štuka* ('item'), *edinica* ('unit') and *duša* ('soul'). All of these nouns are chosen for the fact that they occur in numeral constructions not only with collective nouns but also with countable concrete nouns.

Table 1 demonstrates the number of examples which match the search parameters for each numeral classifier in question, that is, the number of sentences in which the three element numeral phrases are detected. These examples form the sample which is analyzed in this paper. As can be seen from Table 1 *čelovek* is the most frequently used word in such constructions, whilst *štuka* is also quite frequent and the remaining three items occur quite rarely. Apart from the search of RNC I also collected examples by myself and can say that I have heard phrases in which *čelovek* and *štuka* function as classifiers practically every day either in conversations or on TV and the Internet.

I do not pose any restrictions on the type of texts and search the main corpus in its entirety including texts from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. As a result I can say that these constructions occur in different types of texts from between the aforementioned centuries: technical texts, business and jurisprudence texts, day-to-day life texts, scientific texts, text of

Table 1. *Number of occurrences of numeral classifier constructions in the corpus*

Numeral classifier	Number of occurrences in the corpus
čelovek	1496
štuka	680
edinica	177
duša	172
golova	143

fiction, journalism and so on. Therefore, we can say that their usage is not style motivated and that the construction already existed in the eighteenth century.

## 2. Semantic characteristics of numeral classifiers

Here I will discuss each of the five numeral classifiers in question and the semantic properties of the nouns with which they can be used.

### 2.1 Čelovek<sup>6</sup> ('person')

The word *čelovek* occurs with both count (2, 3) and collective (4) nouns denoting human referents which indicate profession, occupation, nationality or kinship terms. It is often used with the noun *deti* 'children' – 90 uses out of 1496. It should be mentioned that *čelovek* is practically not employed with female referents. Only three occurrences with female referents are registered in the sample.

- (2) *V malen'koj auditorii sobralos' čelovek pjatnadcat' student-ov.*  
 In small classroom gathered  
 person.CNT 15 student-GEN.PL

'15 students gathered in a small classroom.'

[N.G.Garin-Mikhajlovsky. Students (1895)]

- (3) *Byl ženat, pyat' čelovek det-ej,*  
 Was married five person.CNT children-GEN.PL  
*s ženoj prožil 21 god <...>.*  
 with wife lived 21 year

'He was married, had five children and lived with his wife 21 years.'

[I.A.Bunin. Diaries (1911-1919)]

- (4) *U nas bylo sem' čelovek prislugi,*  
 At us were seven person.CNT children-GEN.PL  
*predstavl'aješ sebe?*  
 imagine yourself  
 'We have got seven servants, can you imagine this?'  
 [V.F. Panova. Seasons (1953)]

## 2.2 *Duša* ('soul')

The word *duša* 'soul' is used practically with the same classes of referents as *čelovek*, that is, with all kinds of human referents. Although its frequency in texts is much lower than that of *čelovek*. It is most commonly used with the word *krestjane* 'peasants' in the meaning of *serfs*. Therefore, it frequently occurs in texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as during that time Russia had an institution of serfdom whilst landowners' income was often measured by the number of serfs ('souls') they owned.

- (5) *Hotja u Ogareva bylo okolo*  
 Although at Ogarev were about  
*4 tysjač duš krestjan <...>*  
 4 thousand soul.GEN.PL peasant.GEN.PL  
 'Although Ogarev possessed around four thousand peasants...'  
 [A.Y. Panaeva. Memoirs (1889-1890)]

## 2.3 *Štuka* ('item')

The word *štuka* is used with a huge number of non-human referents denoting items of different size and shape. More frequently (476 of 680 tokens) it occurs with non-animate referents such as *pencil*, *brick* or *car*. In addition it is used quite frequently (125 of 680 tokens) with animate referents denoting all kinds of domestic and wild animals including insects, birds, caterpillars, hens, pheasants, dogs, cows, horses and so on.

- (6) *V jaščike bylo*  
 In box were  
*štuk 40 xoroš-ix jablok.*  
 item.GEN.PL 40 good-GEN.PL apple.GEN.P  
 'There were around 40 good apples in a box.'  
 [P. N. Filonov. Diaries (1930-1939)]
- (7) *Snizu k jastrebu brosilis'*  
 from below to hawk rushed  
*štuk pjat' voron otbivat' golubja.*  
 item.GEN.PL 5 crow.GEN.PL recapture pigeon

‘Around five crows rushed up to a hawk to take away a pigeon.’

[M. M. Prišvin. Diaries (1925)]

In some special cases (66 of 680 tokens) it may have referred to humans. However, in cases such as this it is used either to convey additional nuances of meaning such as irony, disrespect, and despite towards the mentioned person or to indicate familiarly relations between the interlocutors. Consider the following example (8), where the author clearly treats chekists (KGB servicemen) with contempt:

- (8) *On zašel ko mne, el u menja, pil kofe,*  
 He came to me ate at me drank coffee  
*a na drugoj den’ u mojego doma*  
 but on next day near my house  
*stojalo štuk vosem’ čekist-ov.*  
 stood item.GEN.PL eight KGB serviceman-GEN.PL

‘He came to my place, had a dinner with me, drank coffee, but next day approximately eight KGB servicemen were waiting for me outside.’

[V. B. Šklovsky. A sentimental journey (1923)]

#### 2.4 *Edinica* (‘unit’)

Unlike the words *čelovek*, *duša* and *štuka*, the word *edinica* is mostly used with collective nouns such as *texnika* ‘equipment’ or *oružije* ‘weapon’ in the following phrases: *edinica texniki* ‘unit of equipment’ or *edinica oružija* ‘unit of weapon’, although it occurs with some countable nouns denoting machines or other technical devices:

- (9) <...> *bylo prodano okolo 8500 edinic*  
 were sold around 8500 unit.GEN.PL  
*ekskavator-ov etoj marki*  
 excavator-GEN.PL that brand

‘Around 8500 excavators of this brand were sold.’

[Presentation of DAEWOO in Western Siberia (2003) // «Mining Industry», 2003.10.29]

#### 2.5 *Golova* (‘head’)

Similar to the English *head* Russian *golova* very frequently accompanies the collective noun *skot* ‘cattle’. In more than 50% of cases (85 tokens of 143) *golova* occurs with this noun, whilst the other 50% sees it occurring with nouns which refer to herd animals such as horses, cows or deers, which are countable nouns in Russian.

- (10) *U menja sto golov lošad-ej <...>*  
 At me 100 head.GEN.PL horse-GEN.PL

‘I’ve got 100 horses.’

[L. N. Tolstoy. *Cossacks* (1863)]

## 2.6 Use with count nouns

Let us return to the question which we posed at the beginning of this section, namely assessing how big the share of count nouns in this construction is. As is clearly demonstrated in Table 2, the five classifiers in question are split into two groups: the first group consists of *čelovek*, *štuka* and *duša* which mostly occur with count nouns (more than 90% of all tokens), and the second group consists of *edinica* and *golova* which occur mostly with collective nouns.

Therefore, the share of usage with count nouns is found to vary drastically depending on the noun.

Table 2. *Number of occurrences of numeral classifier constructions with count nouns*

Numeral classifier	Number of occurrences in the corpus	Share of count nouns
čelovek 'person'	1496	94%
duša 'soul'	172	91%
štuka 'item'	680	90%
golova 'head'	143	31%
edinica 'unit'	177	6.8%

## 3. Morphosyntactic properties of the numeral classifier construction

### 3.1 Numeral morphology

Before delving into discussions regarding morphosyntactic features of the tripartite numeral constructions with numeral classifiers, it is necessary to mention the main properties of normal numeral constructions in Russian, which are in fact one of the most problematic issues of Russian grammar. Russian numeral NPs have been discussed in a great deal of the literature, therefore, for detailed discussion refer to (Corbett 1993; Mel'čuk 1985; Timberlake 2004). Here I will comment only on several features of numeral structures which are of immediate relevance.

Numeral phrases in Russian behave differently depending on the numeral and on the case of the whole phrase. In oblique cases the numeral behaves as an adjective and agrees with the quantified noun in case and number. When the numeral phrase is nominative or accusative, the noun takes genitive singular with numerals 2, 3, 4 or with complex numerals ending in these and genitive plural, when it is used with numerals 5 and above or complex numerals ending in these. Consider, for example, two phrases in the nominative case: *dva gost-ja* 'two guests' and *pjat' gost-ej* 'five guests'. In the first phrase the noun *gost'* 'guest' is in the form of genitive singular,

while in the second phrase it is in the form of genitive plural<sup>7</sup>. The numeral *odin* ‘one’ and all other complex numerals ending in *odin*, require nouns in singular and agree with them as an adjective in case and gender.

### 3.2 Use of numeral classifiers with different types of numerals

Rich data from the RNC allows me to claim that constructions with classifiers can be used with all cardinal numerals, although R. Sussex and A. Aikhenvald argue that they can be employed only with numerals bigger than four (Aikhenvald 2000: 121; Sussex 1972: 147). My sample includes many examples of this construction with the numerals 2, 3 and 4 and even several examples with the numeral 1 (11-13).

- (11) *A Sapožnikov razvel v konce ogoroda*  
 But Sapožnikov cultivated in end garden  
*odn-u štuk-u klubnik-i*  
 one-FEM.ACC.SG item-ACC.SG strawberry-GEN.SG  
 ‘Sapožnikov cultivated one strawberry plant at the end of the garden.’  
 [M. Ančarov. The Box Forest (1979)]

- (12) *Ubito 300, <...> i 4 čelovek-a načal’nik-ov.*  
 Killed 300 and 4 person-GEN.SG commander-GEN.PL  
 ‘300 persons and 4 commanders were killed.’  
 [I. I. Mixel’son (1774)]

- (13) *Dnevnoj racion kursant-ov sostavljali xleb, <...>*  
 Daily ration cadet-GEN.PL consisted bread  
*i tri štuk-i sigaret.*  
 and 3 item-GEN.SG cigarette-GEN.PL  
 ‘The daily ration of cadets consisted of bread <...> and three cigarettes.’  
 [V. M. Koževnikov. Shield and Sword (1968)]

Numeral classifiers cannot be used with collective numerals<sup>8</sup> such as *dvoje*, *troje* and so on. This seems to be natural, as the function of collective numerals appears to be opposite to the function of classifiers. Collective numerals are used to emphasize the existence of group, while the use of classifiers suggests that the highlighted entities are individuals.

### 3.3 Use of numeral classifiers in oblique cases

Another restriction stated by R. Sussex pertains to the usage of numeral classifiers in the constructions in oblique cases. He claims that they only occur in nominative or accusative (Sussex 1972: 147). However my sample contains examples in which numeral classifiers are used in oblique cases: genitive in (14), dative in (15), instrumental in (16) and prepositional in (17).

- (14) *Vopros o možnosti postavki pjatidesjat-i*

question of possibility delivery fifty-GEN  
*štuk peč-ej zavisit ot pravitel'stva*  
 item.GEN.PL stove-GEN.PL depend from government

‘The possibility of delivery 50 stoves depends on the government.’

[A.Mikoyan. So it was. (1971-1974)]

- (15) <...> *ne soznavala svoix objazannostej*  
 not was.aware.of her responsibilities  
*i otnošenij k 1200 duš podvlastnyx*  
 and attitude to 1200 soul.GEN.PL dependant  
*ej l'ud-ej .*

to her person-GEN.PL

‘She was not aware of her responsibilities and relations towards 1200 people subservient to her.’

[S.T. Aksakov (1858)]

- (16) *Ustalyj golodny sčastlivyj Levin v desjatom*  
 weary hungry happy Levin at ten  
*času utra <...> s devjnatnecat-ju štuk-ami*  
 o'clock morning with 19-INST item-INST.PL  
*krasn-oj dič-i <...> vernulsja na kvartiru.*  
 fine-GEN.SG game-GEN.SG returned to lodging

‘At ten o'clock Levin, weary, hungry, and happy returned to his night's lodging with nineteen head of fine game.’

[L.N. Tolstoy. Anna Karenina (1878)]

- (17) *Opasnos't' v <...> etix tysjač-ax gol-ov*  
 danger in these thousand-PREP.PL head-GEN.PL  
*rabočego skot-a.*  
 working cattle-GEN.SG

‘The danger is in these thousands of heads of cattle.’

[V.G. Korolenko (1907)]

In this context it is interesting to observe the share of each case in the sample. Table 3 shows the frequency with which each case occurs in the sample. The most frequent case is nominative, then depending on the classifier, either accusative or genitive follows. Instrumental, dative and prepositional occur very rarely. Indeed, prepositional case occurs only twice, dative is used only a few times and except for (15) exclusively in a distributive function.



Table 3. Frequency of use of numerals in each case

Case	čelovek 'person'		štuka 'item'		duša 'soul'		golova 'head'		edinica 'unit'	
	N <sup>9</sup>	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
NOM	1007	67.3	315	46.3	79	45.9	92	63.9	41	23.2
ACC	330	22.1	331	48.7	47	27.3	23	16.0	63	35.6
GEN	151	10.1	23	3.4	38	22.1	24	16.7	73	41.2
DAT	2	0.1	8	1.2	4	2.3	1	0.7	0	0
INSTR	5	0.3	3	0.4	4	2.3	3	2.1	0	0
PREP	1	0.1	0	0	0	0	1	0.7	0	0
TOTAL	1496		680		172		144		177	

### 3.4 Use with quantifiers

The classifiers examined in this paper behave differently with regards their use with quantifiers. The only quantifier with which all of them can be used is *neskol'ko* 'several'.

- (18) *Priexali eščo neskol'ko čelovek gost-ej*  
 Came also several person.CNT guest-GEN.PL  
*iz Ruana i iz Pariža.*  
 from Rouen and from Paris

'Some more guests came from Rouen and Paris.'

[P. D. Bobyrkin. Memories (1906-1913)]

*Čelovek* 'person', *štuka* 'item', and *duša* 'soul' cannot be used without numerals in adjective constructions, with demonstratives or after quantifiers such as *mnogo* 'many, a lot of', *malo* 'little, few' and *skol'ko* 'how many'. Conversely, *golova* 'head' and *edinica* 'unit' can, as demonstrated in (19). However it is necessary to make one very important limitation. All of the tokens in which the classifiers *golova* 'head' and *edinica* 'unit' are used with adjectives or quantifiers, are with collective rather than count nouns.

- (19) *Jestestvenno eto potrebujet izgotovlenije*  
 naturally this require production  
*nov-yx edinic texnik-i*  
 new-GEN.PL3 item.GEN.SG equipment-GEN.SG  
*dlja dobyči uglja.*  
 for mining coal

‘Naturally this will require the production of new units of equipment for coal mining.’  
[V. Zenin. Coal Mining Industry (2004)]

### 3.5 Use of classifiers in anaphoric constructions

All classifiers can be used anaphorically, that is, without the quantified nouns, if they are previously mentioned in the text or can be restored from the non-linguistic context.

### 3.6 Head and governess within the tripartite numeral construction

The numeral classifier forms a constituent with the numeral. No other element or constituent can be inserted between the classifier and the numeral. Cinque and Karpova discuss analogical constructions in Bulgarian and note that these classifiers cannot be modified by pronouns or adjectives (Cinque, Karpova 2007: 47). This is also true of Russian constructions with numeral classifiers (see examples (20) and (21)).

(20) \**pjat'*      *moix*      *čelovek*      *detej*  
Five      my      person.CNT      child.GEN.PL  
‘Five my children.’

(21) \**pjat'*      *zdorovyx*      *čelovek*      *detej*  
Five      healthy      person.CNT      child.GEN.PL  
‘Five healthy children.’

The classifier is governed by the numeral exactly as the noun is governed by the numeral in two element noun-plus-numeral constructions, that is, the classifier takes the genitive singular when it is used with the numerals 2, 3, 4 or with complex numerals ending in these and genitive plurals when it is used with the numerals 5, above 5, or complex numerals ending in these.

The numeral and the classifier form one constituent governing the quantified noun which always takes genitive plural. Sentences with the numerals 2, 3 and 4 provide us with additional evidence in support of this statement. Let us consider examples (12) and (13). In these sentences the classifier (not the noun!) takes GEN.SG required with the numerals 2, 3 and 4, while the noun is in the form of GEN.PL. At the same time the noun can be separated from the numeral-plus-classifier constituent by any kind of constituent and can take any position in the sentence. Consider, for example, the following sentence (22):

(22) *Kabanov*   *u*      *nas*      *teper'*      *vosemnadcat'*      *štuk*  
boar      at      we.GEN      now      18      item.GEN.PL  
‘As for wild boars, we have got now eighteen animals.’

[A. N. Tolstoy. The Road to Calvary (1928)]

The noun precedes the numeral-plus-classifier constituent and is separated from it by the pronoun with a preposition and an adverb.

The numeral-plus-classifier constituent can be also attributed to two nouns. For example

in (23), the constituent *200 čelovek* ‘200 persons’ is attributed to two nouns *gusar i dragunov* ‘hussars and dragoons’.

- (23) *On imel pri sebe togda bolee 200*  
 he had at himself that time more 200  
*čelovek gusar i dragun-ov*  
 person.CNT hussar.GEN.PL and dragoon-GEN.PL  
 ‘He had at that time more than 200 hussars and dragoons.’  
 [A. Bolotov (1800)]

### 3.7 Word order

J. Greenberg (1972: 28) establishes four possible constituent orders in numeral constructions with classifiers. He also notices that the classifier always remains within the same constituent as the numeral.

- (a) [NumCl] N
- (b) N [NumCl]
- (c) [ClNum] N
- (d) N [ClNum]

All four of these orders are possible in Russian. The peculiarity of NPs with cardinal numerals in Russian is that the order of elements in them is meaningful. In the neutral order, numerals usually precede the nouns which are quantified. The inverted order of elements, that is, the ones in which the noun comes before the numeral indicates approximate number.

In cases of tripartite constructions with classifiers, the order of numeral and classifier (not a noun) becomes important. Therefore, the word order in (a) and (b) expresses the precise quantity, whilst the word order (c) and (d), in which the classifier precedes the numeral, expresses the approximate quantity. The noun can either precede the constituent of numeral and classifier or follow it. Its position depends on the pragmatics.

## 4. Conclusion

Here I will discuss two questions: whether or not these nouns can be called numeral classifiers and what they are used for.

A. Aikhenvald (2000: 2) defines numeral classifiers as ‘special morphemes which only appear next to a numeral, or a quantifier’. She emphasizes that ‘[t]hey may categorize the referent of a noun in terms of its animacy, shape, and other inherent properties’. In this respect the nouns examined in this paper can be regarded as numeral classifiers. They give semantic characteristics of a noun in terms of animacy, physical properties and function without bringing any additional meaning: *čelovek* ‘person’, *duša* ‘soul’ are used only with human referents, whilst *golova* ‘head’

occurs with animate referents, and as a rule, herd animals, *štuka* ‘item’ occur with non-humans referents, *edinica* ‘unit’ is employed with non-animate nouns, referring to machines, weapons and mechanical devices.

Interestingly, in this classification most of the animals are attributed to the classifier *štuka* (‘item’) and therefore occur in the same class as non-animate referents as opposed to human referents which occur with the classifier *čelovek* ‘person’ or *duša* ‘soul’. Therefore, numeral classifiers suggest another categorization of nouns by animacy, which differs from the one which exists in the Russian case system. The distinction by animacy is restricted solely to the form of accusative - singular for masculine nouns and plural for masculine and feminine nouns. In animate subclasses the form of accusative coincides with genitive, whilst in the inanimate subclass it coincides with nominative. The use of numeral classifiers enriches Russian with one more categorizations of nouns by animacy:

Humans – Nonhumans (numeral classifiers)

Animates – Inanimates (form of accusative)

I find no proof across a large number of examples for morphosyntactical restrictions such as use with numerals above 4 and only in direct cases (nominative and accusative) which are described by Sussex (1976: 147). All classifiers can be used in oblique cases and with all types of cardinal numerals. The only difference between these classifiers and the nouns originates from their semantic weakening.

A. Aikhenvald considers these constructions as an incipient system of numeral classifiers and attributes their appearance to the individualizing use of generics (Aikhenvald 2000: 121).

However, it is important to separate the use of the classifiers with count nouns and collective nouns. For collective nouns, which are indifferent towards number, the function of classifiers is precisely described by J. Greenberg: the classifiers along with singulative affixes serve as individualizers (Greenberg 1972: 25). Overt expression of unit counting is also the main function of numeral classifiers in the numeral classifier languages. Indeed according to J. Greenberg most of them lack the obligatory expression of number. However, here I am examining constructions with count nouns, which are already highly individualized. Therefore, I cannot consider their function as an individualizing one. With this in mind, the natural question which arises is what they are used for. One more crucial difference of this construction when compared with numeral classifier languages, and as mentioned by Sussex, is its optionality, that is, the classifier can be omitted without changing the meaning or acceptability of the sentence (Sussex 1976: 149). One of my proposals is that their function is entirely pragmatic and they are used to mark topicalized

or emphasized constituents. Let us consider the following examples:

- (24) *Odnix tol'ko detalek tam nasčityvajetsja*  
 single only components there are  
**11 štuk!**  
 11 item.GEN.PL

‘There are somewhat like 11 components!’

[A. Timofeev. Volvo S40/V40 (1996-1999) // Autopilot (2002)]

- (25) *Celyx šest' štuk zelen-yx*  
 whole six item.GEN.PL green-GEN.PL  
**kamušk-ov vzjal!**  
 stone-GEN.PL took

‘I took up to six green stones!’

[P. P. Bažov (1937)]

In both examples, the noun precedes the constituent with the numeral classifier and is used in the emphatic constructions.

Apart from these uses there are some occurrences of numeral classifiers which require further study. For example, occasionally NPs with and without numeral classifiers occur in one sentence: a NP with a collective numeral and a NP with a numeral classifier; a two element NP with a cardinal numeral and a noun and a tripartite NP with a numeral classifier. Consider the following example (26):

- (26) *Odin iz bednejšix krestjan imel u sebja*  
 one from the poorest peasants had at himself  
 togda **8 čelovek synov-ej i**  
 that.time 8 person.CNT son.GEN.PL and  
**4 dočer-ej.**

4 daughter-GEN.PL

‘At that time one of the poorest peasants had 8 sons and 4 daughters.’

[N.I. Novikov. Russian proverbs (1782)]

The first NP with the masculine noun *syn* ‘son’ is used with the cardinal numeral and the classifier *čelovek*, while in the second NP the feminine noun *doč* ‘daughter’ is employed with a two element NP, consisting of the collective numeral and the noun. When count nouns are listed together with mass nouns, which must be used in a construction with a numeral and with a quantifier, it seems that numeral classifiers are used with count nouns for the sole reason of uniformity.

Without any doubt we observe an incipient developing system of numeral classifiers which

being used primarily as individualizers of collectives are beginning to be used with count nouns. We can see that the classifiers in question occur at different stages of this process: the classifiers *edinica* and *golova* are still used mostly with collectives, while *človek*, *štuka* and *duša* occur in 90% of cases with count nouns.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACC – accusative, CL – classifier, CNT – count form, FEM – feminine, GEN – genitive, INST – instrumental, PL – plural, PST – past, SG – singular, N – noun, NP – noun phrase, NUM – numeral.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> It is important to distinguish sortal classifiers from the mensural ones. Sortal classifiers are used with so called nouns of high count ability such as *man*, *dog*, *pen* and so on. Mensural classifiers are used with mass nouns and provide them ‘with a unit of measure by means of which they may be than counted’ (Gil 2005). Therefore, mensural classifiers provide the unit which is counted, while sortal classifiers only categorize this unit (for a more detailed discussion see Aikhenvald 2000: 114-120).

<sup>2</sup> I am using the standard scholarly transliteration system for Cyrillic, as accepted by the *Slavic and East European Journal* among others.

<sup>3</sup> For native speakers of Russian these expressions sound perfectly natural in discourse, although being taken out of context they may raise doubts about their correctness.

<sup>4</sup> Collective nouns in Russian are nouns which are indifferent with regards to number and express non-discrete homogenous groups of people, animals, inanimate things, concepts, or other things, for example *molodež* ‘youth’, *prisluga* ‘servants’, *skot* ‘cattle’, and *belje* ‘linen’. As a rule they are singular in form.

<sup>5</sup> A lexico-grammatical search makes it possible to input ‘a sequence of lexemes and/or word forms with certain grammatical and/or semantic features’ (RNC).

<sup>6</sup> The word *človek* is used only in singular form, whilst in plural a suppletive form *l’udi* is employed. The only exception is a numeral construction, in which a form *človek* occurs. It is even occasionally referred to as a *special count form*. In glosses I mark it as CNT (count form).

<sup>7</sup> Some researches prefer to distinguish forms used in numeral phrases from genitive singular and plural. Indeed they refer to them as ‘smaller’ and ‘greater’ paucal forms respectively (Paperno 2012; Timberlake 2004: 187). The reason for such a distinction is that several nouns combining with numerals occur in forms identical not to genitive plural, but to nominative singular: *pjat’ človek* ‘five persons’ (Gen.Pl is a suppletive form *ljudej*), *pjat’ kilogramm* ‘five kilograms’ (Gen.Pl is *kilogramm*). Nevertheless, in this paper I gloss these forms as genitive singular and genitive plural (only form *človek* which occurs with numeral I mark as ‘person-CNT’ that stands for count form) as the number of nouns with the aforementioned distinction is

relatively small. In addition, the term *paucal* is too conventional and can be misleading as in this context its meaning differs from the traditional one 'express few instances (opposed to many) of the referent'. Simply put Russian paucal forms can express many referents, for example in the phrase *sto dva gostja* '102 guests'. Numeral 102 requires a so called 'small paucal' (or genitive singular) although 102 guests cannot be interpreted as a few.

<sup>8</sup> Collective numerals (*dvoje* 'pair, twosome', *troje* 'threesome' etc.) are used with adjectival substantives, inanimate pluralia tantum nouns (*chasy* 'watches', *sanki* 'sledge'), as well as groups of individuals. They are also used as an alternative to cardinal numerals with animate nouns (*dvoje studentov* 'two students'). Collective numerals are freely used on their own without a noun, while cardinal numerals require a noun, unless used as predicates or in elliptical contexts.

<sup>9</sup> N stands for the number of occurrences.

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### Corpus:

Russian National Corpus (RNC) <http://www.ruscorpora.ru>