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## THE INTRICACIES OF THE RUSSIAN NUMERAL SYSTEM. AN INSIGHT INTO CARDINAL AND COLLECTIVE NUMERALS

**Abstract.** The present study aims to investigate constructions with collective and cardinal numerals accompanied by nouns denoting people in the Russian language. By closely examining constructions that follow such patterns, I will explore the possibility that numerals function as a type of classifier, whether morphological or semantic (Yanko, 2004). Thus, I will take a closer look at the nouns selected by numerals and the restrictions imposed on them. In this article I will also advance two proposals: one that is concerned with the case assigned by collective numerals and the other linked to the analysis of higher numerals as morphological classifiers.

**Keywords:** collective numerals, cardinal numerals, quantification, classifiers

### 1. Introduction

The Russian numerical system has been a controversial topic and consequently, the focus of many discussions in Russian linguistics. Notwithstanding the attention, it rather seems that questions regarding the intricacies of this heterogenous system still linger.

Thus, through the present paper, I aim to contribute to the discussions by endeavoring to shed light on the distributional patterns of cardinal and collective numerals accompanied by human-denoting nouns. For lower numerals and collective numerals, I will mainly draw upon Tatyana Yanko's account 'Russian Numerals with Nouns denoting human beings' (2004)

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and argue in favor of the view she elaborates upon in her study, namely that numerals behave like classifiers of two kinds, morphological and semantic. Additionally, for the discussion on collective numerals I will endeavor to advocate for their analysis as assigners of the Genitive of Quantification by building upon Bailyn's account in 'The Syntax of Russian' (2012). As a next step I will direct my attention towards higher numerals as I will put forth the idea that they, too, act like morphological classifiers. Through this proposal, although inchoate, I intend to counter Elena Titov's claim that it is the Genitive of Quantification, henceforth referred to by GQ, which rules out the co-occurrence of higher numerals with the genitive plural form of the noun *ljudi* 'people'. Examples will be drawn from relevant studies and The Russian National Corpus.

## 2. Overview of the Behavior of Cardinal Numerals

Before delving into the proposal postulated by Tatyano Yanko, it is necessary to provide a brief but clear presentation of cardinal numerals and the motivation behind choosing them as a central point to this study.

G.C. Corbett, in his 1978 work 'Universals in the syntax of cardinal numbers', formulated two universals which serve a descriptive purpose to the syntactic behavior of cardinal numerals:

(1) *They form a continuum ranging from adjective-like to noun-like.*

(2) *Nouniness increases with numerical value.*

As for Russian cardinal numerals, they seem to conform to the characteristics outlined in the aforementioned universal to a certain extent. *Odin* 'one' behaves entirely like an adjective, agreeing with the noun it precedes in all its phi-features. The examples to follow illustrate in order: agreement in gender; agreement in number<sup>2</sup>; agreement in case.

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<sup>2</sup> In order to exemplify agreement in number, Corbett (1978) has made use of the pluralia tantum nouns *sani* 'newspaper' and *ochki* 'glasses'.

- (3) *Odin zhurnal; odna gazeta;*  
 one.MASC. magazine.MASC; one.FEM newspaper.FEM;  
*odno okno*  
 one.NTR. window.NTR  
 'one magazine'; one newspaper'; 'one window' (Corbett, 1978,  
 p. 356)
- (4) *Odni sani*  
 one.PL. sledge.PL  
 'one sledge' (Ibid.)
- (5) *Odni ochki*  
 one.PL. glasses.PL.  
 'one pair of glasses'
- (6) *Odnim zhurnalom; odnu*  
 one.MASC.INSTR. magazine.MASC.INSTR.; one.FEM.ACC.  
*gazetu*  
 newspaper.FEM.ACC  
 'one magazine'; 'one newspaper' (Ibid.)

The numeral *dva/dve* 'two' will select a noun in Genitive singular<sup>3</sup> form with which it will agree in gender. The numerals *tri* 'three' and *chetyre* 'four' follow the same pattern but with no gender distinction.

- (7) *Dva mesjaca; dve*  
 two.MASC. month..GEN.SG.MASC two.FEM.  
*nedeli*  
 week..GEN.SG.FEM  
 'two months'; 'two weeks'

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<sup>3</sup> If a numeral appears in an oblique case position, it will agree in case with the nominal phrase following it, thus displaying a more 'adjectival' behavior. However, this aspect is not relevant to the present discussion and shall not be approached as of now.

- (8) *tri goda; tri dnja; tri stiha*  
 three year.GEN.SG.; three day.GEN.SG; three verses.GEN.SG  
 'three years'; 'three days'; 'three verses'

- (9) *chetyre stoletiya; chetyre jetapa;*  
 four century.GEN.SG.; four stages.GEN.PL;  
*chetyre pary*  
 four pairs.GEN.PL  
 'four centuries'; 'four stages'; 'four pairs'

Higher numerals, more precisely 5 and above, will assign Genitive plural to the nominal phrase.

- (10) *pyat iazikov; sem gosudarstvo;*  
 five. language.GEN.PL; seven state.GEN.PL;  
*dvadcat' dnei*  
 twenty days.GEN.PL  
 'five languages'; 'seven states'; 'twenty days'

However, the tableau is not as uniform as it seems at first glance, as there are certain incongruities which need to be addressed. One such incongruity occurs when the numerals *dva*, *tri* and *chetyre* precede a noun phrase which contains an adjective. In such cases, the peculiarity does not lie with the noun, which will be inflected for Genitive singular, but with the adjective, which will bear a different case depending on the gender. If feminine, the adjective will be assigned Nominative plural (15)-(16), whereas, if the construction is masculine or neuter, the adjective will then prefer Genitive plural (11)- (13). In either situation, the addition of an adjective leads to a mismatch between the constituents of the noun phrase in terms of number feature.

- (11) *dva krasivyyx muzhika*  
 Two.NOM.MASC beautiful.GEN.PL.MASC man.GEN.SG.MASC  
 'Two beautiful men.'

- (12) *tri krasivyyx yabloka*  
 three.NOM beautiful.GEN.PL.MASC apple.GEN.SG.MASC  
 'three beautiful apples'
- (13) *chetyre bazovyyh voprosa*  
 four core.GEN.PL.MASC. question.GEN.SG.MASC  
 'four core questions'
- (14) *chetyre umnye devushki*  
 four.NOM. smart.NOM.PL.FEM girl.GEN.SG.FEM  
 'Four smart girls'
- (15) *dve krasivye zhenshhiny*  
 Two.FEM. beautiful.NOM.PL.FEM woman.GEN.SG.FEM  
 'Two beautiful women.' (Yanko, 2004, p. 6)
- (16) *dve raznye veshhi*  
 two different.NOM.PL.FEM thing.GEN.SG.FEM  
 'Two different things'

Considering the behavior of masculine nouns ending in 'a' in such constructions adds an additional layer of complexity to the problem. Such nouns are inflected according to the feminine declension pattern. The identity between their paradigms is illustrated in Table 1 below, with the aid of the nouns *muzhchina* 'man' and *zhenshina* 'woman'.

Table 1

The declension of feminine nouns and masculine nouns ending in –a

Case	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<i>muzhchina zhenshina</i>	<i>muzhchiny zhenshiny</i>
Genitive	<i>muzhchiny zhenshiny</i>	<i>muzhchin zhenshin</i>
Dative	<i>muzhchine zhenshine</i>	<i>muzhchinam zhenshinam</i>
Accusative	<i>muzhchinu zhenshinu</i>	<i>muzhchin zhenshin</i>
Instrumental	<i>muzhchinoy zhenshinoy</i>	<i>Muzhchinamy zhenshinamy</i>
Prepositional	<i>muzhchine zhenshine</i>	<i>Muzhchinah zhenshinah</i>

Thus, whenever they are accompanied by the cardinal numerals *tri* and *chetyre*, they should stick to the feminine declension pattern, as in (17)-(18), but such constructions are at most peripheral and native speakers seem to avoid them as they prefer to use collective numerals with nouns that are part of this category (19)-(20).

- (17) ?*tri muzhchiny*  
 three man.GEN.SG  
 'three men'
- (18) ?*chetyre muzhchiny*  
 four man.GEN.SG  
 'four men'
- (19) *troe muzhchin*  
 three men.GEN.PL  
 'three men'
- (20) *chetvero muzhchin*  
 four men.GEN.PL  
 'four men'

A search in the Russian National Corpus yielded 203 occurrences of the construction *troe muzschin*, whereas instances of *tri muzhschiny* were only 4, so significantly less frequent. A similar discrepancy can be noticed with *chetvero muzhschin*, which appears 81 times, and *chetyre muzhschiny*, which occurs again, only sporadically (4 times). Thus, one can safely state that the preference for collective numeral + masculine noun ending in -a is prevalent.

Considering higher numerals further complicates the problem. In the literature on Russian Numerals the proposal that higher numerals assign the GQ has been widely accepted (Boškovič, 2006; Baylin, 2011 among others).

- (21) *vosem' zhenshhin; pjat' detej;*  
 eight women.GEN.PL; five children.GEN.PL;  
*shest' uchitelej*  
 six teachers.GEN.PL  
 'eight women'; 'five children'; 'six teachers'

Nonetheless, the combination between higher numerals and the noun *chelovek* ‘man’ seems to pose some problems as it deviates from the norm. If the rules were to be respected, (22) should be grammatically correct. However, this is not the case as (22) is deemed ungrammatical, whereas (23) is considered to be the correct despite the noun *chelovek* appearing in what seems to be the Nominative singular form.

(22) \**vosem' ljudey*  
 eight people.GEN.PL  
 ‘eight people’

(23) *vosem' chelovek*  
 eight person.NOM.S  
 ‘eight people’

All the incongruities presented so far will be addressed in the subsequent sections.

### 3. Overview of the Behavior of Collective Numerals

This section is entirely dedicated to providing a comprehensive insight into the behavior of collective numerals. Collective numerals constitute a rather limited class and they are formed from their cardinal counterparts by means of suffixation, as illustrated in Table 2 below.

In terms of meaning, there is a difference in emphasis as ‘the use of the collective numeral emphasizes the cohesiveness of the group, by contrast with the individualizing nature of the cardinals’ (Wade, 2011, p. 222). The last four, namely *semero* ‘seven’, *vosmero* ‘eight’, *devjatero* ‘nine’ and *desjatero* ‘ten’, although possible, are rarely used by native speakers, which explains the scarcity of occurrences in the National Corpus.

Table 2

## Cardinal and collective numerals

Cardinal numerals	Collective numerals
Dva	dvoe
Tri	troe
Chetyre	chetvero
Pjat	pjatero
shest	shestero
Sem	semero
vosem	vosmero
devjat	devjatero
desjat	desjatero

In terms of their distributional patterns, it is a widely acknowledged fact that they do not combine with nouns which denote females (Suprun, 1957, p. 80; 1964, p. 74; Vinogradov, 1972, p. 249; *Russkaja grammatika*, 1982, p. 79; Iurac, 2008, p. 141; Wade, 2011, p. 222) but they freely combine with nouns with male reference.

- (24) ?*troe zhenshin*  
 three woman.GEN.PL  
 'three women'
- (25) ?*dvoe debushek*  
 Two girl.GEN.PL  
 'two girls'
- (26) ?*chetvero studentok*  
 four student.FEM.GEN.PL  
 'four students'
- (27) *troe muzhchin*  
 three man.GEN.PL  
 'three men'
- (28) *dvoe studentov*  
 two student.MASC.GEN.PL  
 'two students'



- (29) *pjatero uchenikov*  
 five pupil.MASC.GEN.PL  
 'five pupils'

However, the picture is far from being complete as numerous so-called exceptions have been observed in the language. The next section will address peculiar situations in which the behavior of collective numerals seems to deviate from the standard.

As previously mentioned, the rules by which collective numerals function do not seem to apply across-the-board as numerous exceptions can be observed in their behavior. One such exception is the incompatibility with men's first names:

- (30) *\*troe Nikit*  
 three Nikitas.GEN.PL  
 'three Nikitas'
- (31) *\*dvoe Johnov*  
 two Johns.GEN.PL  
 'two Johns' (Yanko, 2004, p. 10)

Even more peculiar is the fact that there is no such restriction on family names.

- (32) *dvoe Johnsonov*  
 two Johnson.GEN.PL  
 'two Johnsons' (Ibid., p. 11)
- (33) *My shestero Geretti sideli dozhidajas' svoej ocheredi*  
 We six Geretti sat waiting one's turn  
 'We, six people called Geretti, were sitting waiting for our turn.' (Suprun, 1957, p. 80)

Another apparent peculiarity is the restricted combinability with others subcategories of nouns that denote males:

- (34) *Vas'a vseгда schital, shto u nego dvoe otcov:*  
 Vas'a always believed that at him two fathers;  
*odin, kotoryj rodil,*  
 the one which gave birth (to him)  
*i drugoj, kotoryj vyrastil;*  
 and the other who raised (him)  
 (Yanko, 2004, p. 10)
- (35) *\*Dl'a uc'astija v dramax Pushkina*  
 for participation in dramas of Pushkin  
*podgotovleno dvoe mel'nikov troe jurodivyx;*  
 are rehearsed two millers three God's fools (*Ibid.*)
- (36) *?Do moego vystuplenija es'c'o troe dokladc'ikov*  
 Before my presentation still more three paper-givers (*Ibid.*)

All the unique cases presented so far will be elaborated upon in section 3; as for the case they assign, they will select a complement headed by a noun in Genitive, plural, as it can be observed in the examples above. However, I believe that the issue of case-assignment needs to be addressed in a separate subsection considering I will analyze collective numerals as assigners of the Genitive of Quantification.

#### 4. Collective Numerals as Assigners of GQ

In order to advocate for the analysis of collective numerals as GQ assigners, I will closely follow Bailyn's (2011) line of reasoning for the phenomenon. In his account, Bailyn advanced the proposal that structural Genitive case is the result of case-assigning/checking by Q, the head of QP.

- (37) The source of structural Genitive case: Genitive case is assigned/  
 checked by [Q]. (Bailyn, 2011, p. 200)

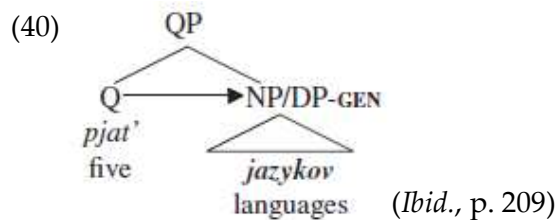
Furthermore, the author subsumes the following 'core instances' under structural Genitive: Genitive of Negation, Quantificational Genitive, Adnominal

Genitive, Partitive Genitive, Intensional Genitive and Comparative Genitive. For reasons of pertinence, I have chosen to reiterate only the examples provided for GQ.

- (38) *mnogo problem*  
 Many problems.GEN.PL  
 'many problems'

- (39) *pjat' jazykov*  
 five languages.GEN.PL  
 'five languages' (*Ibid.*)

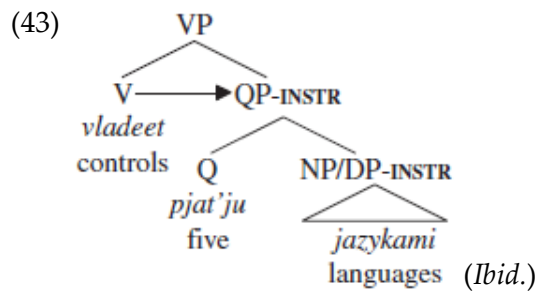
In (38) and (39) the quantificational elements are the adverb *mnogo* and the higher numeral *pjat'*. At first glance, the syntactic derivation in (40) is a seemingly appropriate representation for (39).



However, the derivation in (40) proves to be lacking as it cannot account for the dichotomy in the syntactic behavior of higher numerals. In (41) the phrase *pjat' jazykov* occupies an Accusative position and the noun is assigned Genitive plural by the numeral *pjat'*, whereas in (42), the verb *vladeet* discharges Instrumental case onto its complement. In this case, the noun will no longer be inflected for Genitive, but for Instrumental as the lexical verb is the element that is responsible for assigning case. Thus, (41) is an instance of structural case, more precisely GQ, whilst (42) is an instance of lexical case. The examples below do not illustrate a rare occurrence, but a well-known fact regarding the behavior of higher numerals: whenever they appear in non-oblique cases, they will no longer assign Genitive case. Consequently, (40) cannot be an accurate representation of the phenomenon.

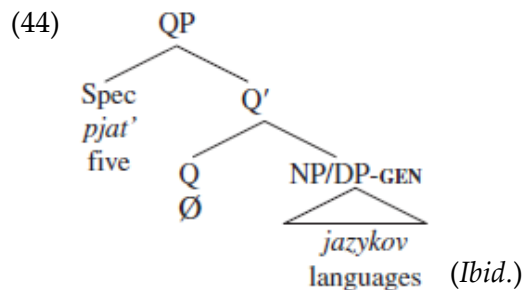
- (41) *Dijana znaet pjat' jazykov.*  
 Diana knows five languages.GEN.PL  
 'Diana knows five languages.'
- (42) *Dijana vladeet pjat'ju jazykami.*  
 Diana controls five.INSTR. languages.INSTR.PL  
 'Diana knows five languages.' (*Ibid.*)

Bailyn (2011) provides an interesting explanation to the heterogeneous behavior depicted in the examples above. He claims that when the numeral occupies the head position, 'the case feature is absorbed, and case cannot be directly assigned and instead has to come from outside the local domain' (*Ibid.*, p. 210). So, in example (41) *pjat'* is indeed the head of the QP, as illustrated below.



In the case of (42) *pjat'* will no longer head the QP, as this would engender the absorption of the case. Instead, it will occupy the specifier position, while the head will remain null in order to enable the assignment of GQ.

Thus, the derivation for (41) will be the following:



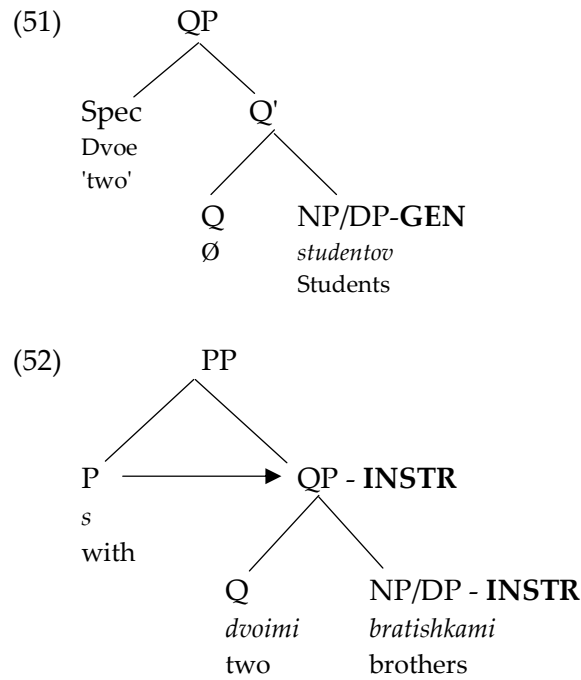
After a detour into the intricacies of GQ assignment, we shall redirect our attention towards collective numerals. As presented in the previous subsection, collective numerals, similarly to higher numerals and adverbs such as *mnogo*, assign Genitive plural to nouns. The relevant examples have been reiterated below.

- (45) *troe muzhchin*  
 three man.GEN.PL  
 'three men'
- (46) *dvoe studentov*  
 two student.MASC.GEN.PL  
 'two students'
- (47) *pjatero uchenikov*  
 five pupil.MASC.GEN.PL  
 'five pupils'

Furthermore, collective numerals display the same heterogenous behavior when they occupy non-oblique case positions. In all the examples provided in (48)-(50), the case assigners are the prepositions, namely *s* 'with', which assigns Instrumental case to its complement, and *k* 'to', which assigns Dative case.

- (48) *s dvoimi bratishkami*  
 with two.INSTR. brothers.INSTR.PL  
 '...with two brothers'
- (49) *k dvoim raznym chelovekam*  
 to two.DAT. different.DAT.PL person.DAT.PL  
 '...to two people'
- (50) *k troim tehničarjam*  
 to three.DAT. technicians.DAT.PL  
 '... to three technicians'

Thus, the syntactic derivations that Baylin formulates in order to account for the behavior pattern of cardinal numerals, seem to constitute an adequate representation for the behavior of collective numerals, as well. The corresponding structures for (46) and (48) can be found in (51), respectively (52):



Taking into consideration the fact that the analysis for collective numerals perfectly aligns with the analysis for higher cardinal numerals, I propose to analyze them as GQ assigners, too.

## 5. Morphological Classifiers: Yanko (2004)

Yanko (2004) delves into the incongruencies of the distributional pattern of cardinal and collective numerals, aiming to provide an appropriate explanation to the heterogenous behavior. Thus, she advances the proposal that some cardinal numerals, namely *tri* and *chetyre*, are morphological classifiers, whereas collective numerals are semantic. This section is dedicated to briefly presenting her account and builds upon the information offered in the previous sections.

### 5.1. *Tri and chetyre*

As it has been already pointed out in section 2 of the present paper, native speakers generally avoid using *tri* and *chetyre* with masculine nouns ending in *-a* and prefer to employ collective numerals in such cases. Based on this empirical observation, Yanko (2004) formulates the hypothesis that ‘the feminine syntactic pattern produces a “femininizing” effect on nouns with male reference’ (Yanko, 2004, p. 7) and further explains that this “feminizing effect” does not occur with the numeral *dva/dve* due to the fact that it is morphologically marked for gender. Moreover, she claims that collective numerals bear a ‘masculinizing’ effect, which explains their incompatibility with nouns that denote females.

Another argument which further reinforces her hypothesis stems from common gender nouns, such as *sirota* ‘orphan’ and *starosta* ‘monitor’, which can occur as either feminine or masculine. Whenever such nouns are accompanied by cardinal numerals, they will be understood as referring to a feminine entity. Thus, interpreting example (53) as three sons would be deemed a misconstrual.

- (53) *vdova i tri sirota*  
 widow and three orphans.GEN.SG  
 ‘a widow and three daughters’ (Yanko, 2004, p. 7)

Due to the clash between the feminine declension pattern and the lexical meaning of masculine nouns ending in *-a* engendered by numerical constructions with *tri* and *chetyre*, the Russian language has developed an alternate way which makes use of collective numerals. Thus, the numerals *tri* and *chetyre* seem to act as morphological classifiers of nouns with male reference, i.e. they mark out masculine nouns that denote humans and end in *-a*, which they generally do not precede.

### 5.2. *Collective numerals*

In order to explain the incongruities in the co-occurrences with certain nouns, Yanko (2004) postulates a classification of nouns with human reference

based on a semantic criterion and depending to the subcategory a noun pertain to, it will either co-occur with collective numerals or not. Each subcategory will be elaborated upon in a separate subsection.

- (54) (I) 'A human being as an individual specified by a certain ontological parameter'
- (II) 'The name or function of a human being'
- (III) 'A human being as a body'
- (IV) 'A human being as a measure' (Yanko, 2004, p. 11)

#### 5.2.1. *Human being as an individual*

Yanko describes this subcategory as the prototypical meaning of a noun with human reference. In this case, the noun refers to a human 'endowed with mind, heart and flesh' (Yanko, 2004, p. 11), characterized by a certain ontological pattern that distinguishes them. Nouns pertaining freely combine with collective numerals.

- (55) ...*pogibli troe soldat*  
 ...died three soldiers.GEN.PL  
 '... three soldiers died'
- (56) *troe professional'nyh pisatelej*  
 three professionals.GEN.PL writer.GEN.PL  
 'three professional writers'
- (57) *troe pobeditelej*  
 three winners.GEN.PL  
 'three winners'

#### 5.2.2. *Names and functions of people*

The second category ranges over nouns that refer to first names and nouns that depict social roles, positions and ranks. The former do not attribute



a distinctive characteristic to the person, i.e. they lack the ontological characteristic to specify a person (Yanko, 2004, p. 12) and, as a consequence, they do not co-occur with collective numerals. The examples in (30) and (31) are reiterated in (58) and (59).

- (58) *\*troe Nikit*  
 three Nikitas.GEN.PL  
 'three Nikitas'

- (59) *\*dvoe Johnov*  
 two Johns.GEN.PL  
 'two Johns' (Yanko, 2004, p. 10)

On the other hand, the latter subcategory proves to be more complex as it can either refer to the person that has the role or the role itself. Based on this distinction, it will further branch into: nouns that have both meanings (professor), nouns that mainly denote people, not the role (*soldat* 'soldier'), nouns that can only denote the role (*adresat* 'addressee'). When they refer to the role itself, the missing component is that of a person endowed with mind, heart and flesh, as illustrated below.

- (60) *Objavljaetsja vakansija rukovoditelja.*  
 is announced vacancy manager.GEN.SG  
 'A vacancy for a manager is announced.' (*Ibid.*)
- (61) *On poluchil zvanie admirala.*  
 He got rank a dmiral.GEN.SG  
 'He got the rank of admiral' (*Ibid.*)

However, when they do have a human referent, that will co-occur with collective numerals.

- (62) ... *troe deputatov*                      *objavili*  
 ... three deputy.GEN.PL. announced  
 '.... three deputies announced' (*Ibid.*)

- (63) *Troe professorov umerlo...*  
 three professor.GEN.PL died  
 'Three professors died...' (*Ibid.*)

### 5.2.3. Human being as a body

Nouns which are members of this class refer to physical bodies, but such occurrences are rather rare. As they do not have a human referent, they will not combine with collective numerals.

- (64) *Chelovek sostoit na 90% iz vody.*  
 Human being consists of 90% from water  
 'A human body consists of 90% water.' (*Ibid.*, p. 15)

### 5.2.4. Human being as a measure

Such nouns refer to humans as a measure of space (65), time (66) and weight (67).

- (65) *On sidel v kresle za dva zritelja ot menja.*  
 He sat in armchair in two spectators from me  
 'He sat two seats away from me.' (*Ibid.*)
- (66) *Do moevo doklada eshhjo odin dokladchik.*  
 Until my presentation more one speaker.  
 'There is one speaker before my presentation.' (*Ibid.*)
- (67) *Odin shtangist vesom kak dva zhokeja.*  
 One weight-lifter weight same two jockeys.  
 'One weight-lifter weighs the same as two jockeys.' (*Ibid.*, p. 16)

Similarly to the previous subcategory, co-occurrences with collective numerals are rather scarce and unnatural.

(68) ?*On sidel v kresle za dvoe zritelja ot menja.*  
 He sat in armchair in two spectators.GEN.PL from me  
 'He sat two seats away from me.' (*Ibid.*)

(69) ?*Do moevo doklada eshho troe dokladchikov.*  
 Until my presentation more three speakers.GEN.PL  
 'There are three speakers until my presentation.' (*Ibid.*)

Hence, Yanko draws the conclusion that collective numerals are sensitive to semantic subtleties encoded in the meaning of nouns with human reference and puts forth the hypothesis that collective numerals are semantic classifiers which only select nouns that denote active people as they 'form a concept of a group of people joined together by a certain ontological parameter' (Yanko, 2004, p. 23).

## 6. Higher numerals

In this section I will draw upon Elena Titov's paper 'Number agreement mismatches in Russian numerical phrases' (2017) and Yanko's paper (2004) in order to outline a proposal for the analysis of higher numerals (*pjat* 'five and above'). More precisely, I propose that higher numerals can be analyzed as morphological classifiers, hypothesis which aligns with Yanko's proposal for lower and collective numerals, thus providing a uniform account for both classes. The present section builds upon the information underscored in section 2, consequently only a brief rerun of the issue shall suffice.

As already pointed out, higher numerals select a complement headed by a noun, to which they assign GQ. Hence, the noun will resurface in Genitive plural form. However, they do not co-occur with the plural form *ljudi* 'people', as the correspondent of the phrase 'five people' in Russian is none other than *pjat' chelovek* 'five man.NOM.SG', in spite of the fact that the noun *chelovek* surfaces in Nominative singular form<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Whether the form 'chelovek' in numerical constructions with higher numerals, such as 'pjat' chelovek' is indeed Nominative singular or merely homophonous with Nominative singular is of no concern to the present proposal as of now. Thus, it will not be addressed.

The Russian National Corpus abounds in examples which illustrate this peculiar feature of the class:

- (70) *V lift vlezli s trudom pjat' chelovek.*  
 In lift climbed with difficulty five person.NOM.SG  
 'Five people climbed with difficulty in the lift.'
- (71) *V hore on derzhal tridcat' shest' chelovek.*  
 In choir he kept thirty six person.NOM.SG  
 'He kept thirty-six people in the choir.'
- (72) *V orkestre bylo dvadcat' vosem' chelovek.*  
 In orchestra were twenty eight person.NOM.SG  
 'The orchestra had twenty-eight members.'

Titov (2017) argues that this phenomenon is a consequence of GQ assignment. She begins by noting that the words *chelovek* 'person' and *ljudi* 'people' are one of the sole exceptions in the nominal system of the Russian language as *chelovek* lacks a plural lexical form, whereas *ljudi* lacks a singular form<sup>5</sup>. She further observes that the same does not hold for constructions which consist of noun + noun in Genitive plural, such as (73).

- (73) *gruppa ljudej*  
 Group people.GEN.PL  
 'a/the group of people' (Titov, 2017, p. 404)
- (74) *\*gruppa chelovek/cheloveka*  
 group person.NOM.SG (*Ibid.*)

Furthermore, she considers the difference between the two types of construction to be a difference of case, as in (73) the noun *gruppa* assigns lexical Genitive, whereas higher numerals assign GQ. She hypothesizes

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<sup>5</sup> Although *ljudi* is oftentimes mentioned as the plural of the noun *chelovek* in Russian prescriptive grammars, the etymology of the words does not support this claim as they are not related. Thus, they are distinct lexical items.

that it is GQ which places a constraint on the noun it selects, namely to have ‘a lexically realised unit for counting’ (Ibid.), i.e. a singular lexical form. Thus, the following condition is formulated:

- (75) NPs headed by a noun that lacks a unit for counting are unable to carry GQ. (Ibid., p. 405)

So, due to the fact that *ljudi* does not have such a unit for counting, it is therefore unable to receive structural GQ. However, the noun *chelovek* checks the condition in (75), so it could technically bear GQ but because it lacks a plural form, it will revert to the default form, which is Nominative singular.

Although Titov’s account of the phenomenon seems to adequately explain this strange pattern in the behavior of higher numerals, it fails to hold true for the following situations:

- (76) *mnogo ljudei*  
many people.GEN.PL  
‘many people’

- (77) *troje ljudei*  
three people.GEN.PL  
‘three people’

In both phrases GQ is assigned, either by the adverb ‘mnogo’ or by the collective numeral ‘troje’. If Titov’s hypothesis were true, then such constructions should be deemed ungrammatical as the noun *ljudi* should fail to receive GQ due to the aforementioned constraint. But, as we can see, this is not the case.

Thus, I believe that a significantly more straightforward explanation accounts for this phenomenon. Whenever higher numerals co-occur with nouns with human reference, they will always select a noun which is not devoid of the singular lexical form. Thus, they behave like morphological classifiers which will always select nouns that have a lexically-realized unit for counting and will rule out those nouns that lack such a unit, as it is the case of *ljudi*.

However, one might wonder why, then, higher numerals combine with the plural form ‘*deti*’ (78) – (80), as *deti* ‘children’ forms a suppletive pair with the singular form *rebenok* ‘child’. The explanation behind this situation has been already provided by Titov (2017): despite having a suppletive singular counterpart, the non-suppletive form *ditja* ‘child’ still exists in the language. (81)-(83). Thus, *deti* does not pertain to the same category as *ljudi*, as it does have a singular lexical form.

- (78) *U menja pjat’ detej*  
 At me five children.GEN.PL  
 ‘I have five children.’
- (79) ... *rodila sem’ detej*  
 ... gave birth seven children.GEN.PL  
 ‘...gave birth to seven children.’
- (80) ... *v sem’e bylo shest’ detej*  
 ... in family were six children.GEN.PL  
 ‘There were six children in the family.’
- (81) *ditja bez glazu*  
 child without eye  
 ‘a child without an eye’
- (82) *Ditja prishlo...*  
 child arrived...  
 ‘The child arrived...’
- (83) ...*otec, suprug i ditja*  
 ...the father, spouse and child  
 ‘...the father, spouse and child.’ (Russian National Corpus)

The proposal I have put forth in this unit is only in its early stages, definitely needing more refining and a larger number of arguments in order to support it. However, I believe it provides a good starting point for further research.

## 7. Conclusions

In this paper I have purported to offer a detailed tableau of the behavior of cardinal and collective numerals, however, given the complexity of the numerical system in Russian, further research is required for a more comprehensive insight. Through a brief look at Yanko's study (2004) I have aimed at supporting the hypothesis she puts forward, through which she claims that lower numerals and collective numerals act as classifiers. Moreover, I have posited the idea that higher numerals act as classifiers, much like their lower and collective counterparts, thus providing a uniform account of the phenomena. Finally, I have also outlined the idea that collective numerals are GQ assigns, on par with higher numerals and adverb such as *mnogo* and *malo*.

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