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**ZROBIĘ TO BEZ ZWŁOK...<sup>1</sup>**  
**THE CATEGORY OF NUMBER IN THE TEACHING  
OF POLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
TO UKRAINIAN-SPEAKING PEOPLE**

(THIS ARTICLE WAS TRANSLATED FROM POLISH BY JAKUB WOSIK)

**Keywords:** category of number, *singularia tantum* nouns, *pluralia tantum* nouns, teaching Polish as a foreign language, Polish language, Ukrainian language

**Abstract.** This article discusses the peculiarities of the category of number of Polish and Ukrainian nouns. To indicate the problem areas related to the teaching of the category of number to Ukrainian-speaking persons, the author analysed Polish and Ukrainian lexemes in terms of their fulfilments of the grammatical category of number. The article presents the contexts which may trigger errors, which in turn may cause a comical effect or distort communication. The data were collected from Polish and Ukrainian dictionaries, as well as the National Corpus of Polish and the Ukrainian Text Corpus.

The category of noun number, in particular *singularia tantum* and *pluralia tantum* nouns peculiar for the group, often become the focus of Slavic linguists. The provenance and development of the grammatical category of number and its instances in Slavic languages were analysed by Vladimir Degtyarev (1987; 1989). The word formation, semantic and inflective characteristics of *pluralia tantum* nouns, and the history of their development in Polish were discussed in works by: Anna Andrzejczuk (2007, 2009), Anna Cieślíkowa (1992), Andrzej Dyszak (1999, 2001), Teresa Friedelówna (1968), Joanna Gradkowska (1989), Ewa Rogowska (1991), Jolanta Tambor (2017), and Sebastian Żurowski (2014); and in Ukrainian: Lesia Altytseva (2003), Oksana Korin (2010), Alla Ternova (2004), and others. Analyses of the semantics of number forms, in particular

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<sup>1</sup> A humorous number-based error which could be translated as “I will do it without corpses”, while the correct version should read “Zrobię to bez zwłoki” (I will do it without delay).

the functional aspect of the meanings of collective, material, and abstract nouns which belong to the *singularia tantum* group, were studied in Polish by: Anna Andrzejczuk (2009), Andrzej Bogusławski (1973), Antonina Grybosiowa (1988), Andrzej Dyszak (1999, 2001), Kazimierz Feleszko (1980), Grażyna Habrajska (1995), Aleksandra Krupianka (1988), Piotr Krzyżanowski (1988, 2002), Ewa Rogowska (1992), and Olga Szapkina (2013, 2017); and in Ukrainian by: Lesia Altytseva (2003), Olena Bezpoiasko (1991), Vitalii Boretskyi (2008), Olha Elia-shevska (2004), Andrii Kolesnykov (2000), Viacheslav Merinov (2012), Tetiana Moroz (2011, 2015, 2016), Inna Nazarenko (2008), Lubov Nedbailo (1968), and Ihor Pohribnyi (1999).

Despite the fact that so many researchers are interested in the category of number, there are few works related to the differences in the fulfilment of number forms in related Slavic languages. One attempt at comparing the applications of singular and plural forms of the names of fruit and vegetables in Polish and Russian was made by Olga Szapkina (1980). Jolanta Miturska-Bojanowska (2003) studied the use of singular and plural polysemic nouns in Polish and Russian. Some of the mistakes in the usage of nominal number forms in the Polish of Ukrainians was discussed by Ałła Krawczuk (2015, pp. 380–381). However, there are no detailed studies which would feature analyses of the areas in the usage of nominal number forms in Polish which cause problems to Ukrainians who learn the language. This article is intended to partly fill that gap.

Therefore, in this text I analyse Polish and Ukrainian nouns which differ in terms of how they fulfil the category of number. I analysed 80 Polish lexemes and their Ukrainian equivalents and the contexts of their usage in both languages. The study material was mainly collected from Polish language dictionaries (ISJP (2000); USJP (2003); WSPP (2004); WSJP (2007)) and Ukrainian language dictionaries (VTSSUM (2007); ILSSU (2007)), as well as corpora of the studied languages (in the case of Polish, I used the Polish National Corpus (hereinafter NKJP), and for Ukrainian: the Ukrainian Text Corpus (hereinafter KTUM)), and texts from the internet (using the Google search engine).

It would seem that the category of number, semantic for most nouns, should not cause any problems for Ukrainians learning Polish. And yet even at the basic levels of learning Polish, there appear lexemes which require additional grammatical clarification in terms of their number. Polish *singularia tantum* and *pluralia tantum* nouns may correspond to lexemes in Ukrainian of a different value of the number category (vide Table 1).

Table 1. *Polish singularia tantum and pluralia tantum nouns and corresponding lexemes in Ukrainian of a different value of the number category*

Polish	Ukrainian
<i>sentymet</i> [sentiment]	<i>sentymety</i> (plural)
<i>zwłoka</i> [delay]	<i>zvolikannia</i> (singular) / <i>zvolikannia</i> (plural)
<i>skrzypce</i> [violin]	<i>skrypka/skrypky</i>
<i>zajęcia</i> [classes]	<i>zaniattia</i> (singular) / <i>zaniattia</i> (plural)
<i>binokle</i> [pince-nez]	<i>binokl/binokli<sup>a</sup></i>
<i>realia</i> [reality]	<i>realiia/realii</i>
<i>personalia</i> [personal details]	<i>personaliia/personalii</i>
<i>kulinaria</i> [cuisine]	<i>kulinariia</i> (singular)
<i>tekstyli</i> [textiles]	<i>tekstyl</i> (singular)
<i>peryferie</i> [outskirts]	<i>peryferiia</i> (singular)

<sup>a</sup> The Polish word *binokle* and the Ukrainian *binokl* are so-called inter-linguistic homonyms. The Polish word denotes “glasses without the earpieces”, while the Ukrainian denotes an “optical device used for dual-ocular observation of distant objects.”

Source: own study

Unfamiliarity with the number differences of the quoted words often leads to using incorrect forms, which in turn disturbs communication or evokes a comical effect. For example, the Polish word *zwłoka* denoting “delay in performance of something” (WSJP) is qualified in dictionaries as *singulare tantum*. Its Ukrainian equivalent of *zvolikannia* is a dual number word, e.g.: Ukrainian *Ale sprawa ne terpila zvolikannia* [But the matter was urgent] (KTUM: Vynnychuk Yu. *Khudozhnia proza*, 2016), *Ivetta vyrishyla bez zvolikan ziasuvaty stupin prychetnosti donchynoho kavalera do medytsyny* [Ivetta decided to immediately find out about her daughter’s companion’s attitude to medicine](KTUM: Liuko Dashvar. *Maty vse*, 2010), *Dopomoha ne terpyt zvolikan* [Help hates delays] (<https://ukurier.gov.ua>, 2015). When using the word *zwłoka*, a Ukrainian person, under the influence of their mother tongue, may create structures with the plural form of the word (*\*bez zwłok*, *\*nie ciepieć zwłok*) which will lead to a misunderstanding as the word *zwłoki* denotes “corpse; the body of a dead person or animal” (WSJP). Furthermore, learners may incorrectly understand the Polish contexts with plural

forms, e.g. *grać na skrzypcach* (several?) [play the violin – in Polish “skrzypce” is a *plurale tantum* noun], *spotkamy się na zajęciach* (how many?) [we’ll meet in class – the Polish word for “class” is “zajęcia”, which, again, is a *plurale tantum* noun], or treat the plural form as singular, choose an incorrect declension pattern or distort the agreement with other elements in a sentence, e.g. *Mieszkam na \*peryferii* [I live in the \*periphery], *Mocną stroną imprezy \*była kulinaria* [The \*cuisines were the strong point of the event].<sup>2</sup>

The Ukrainian nouns included in the groups of *singularia tantum* and *pluralia tantum* may possess the complete number paradigm in Polish (Table 2).

Table 2. *Ukrainian singularia tantum and pluralia tantum and corresponding Polish lexemes possessing the complete number paradigm*

Polish	Ukrainian
<i>makaron/makarony</i> [pasta]	<i>makarony</i> (plural)
<i>rodzynek, rodzynka/rodzynki</i> [rasin, rasins]	<i>rodzynki</i> (plural)
<i>debata/debaty</i> [debate/debates]	<i>debaty</i> (plural)
<i>objęcie/objęcia</i> [embrace/embraces]	<i>obiimy</i> (plural)
<i>kadra/kadry</i> [staff]	<i>kadry</i> (plural)
<i>kpina/kpiny</i> [mockery]	<i>kpyny</i> (plural)
<i>mebel/meble</i> [piece/pieces of furniture]	<i>mebli</i> (plural)
<i>kurs/kursy</i> [course/courses]	<i>kursy</i> (plural)
<i>zboże/zboża</i> [cereal/cereals]	<i>zbizhzhia</i> (singular)
<i>kosmetyk/kosmetyki</i> [cosmetic/cosmetics]	<i>kosmetyka</i> (singular)
<i>sport/sporty</i> [sport/sports]	<i>sport</i> (singular)
<i>władza/władze</i> [authorities]	<i>wlada</i> (singular)
<i>informacja/informacje</i> [piece/pieces of information]	<i>informatsiia</i> (singular)

Source: own study

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Polish nouns used in the plural and their Ukrainian counterparts which are used in singular form (vide Bundza 2016).

Some Ukrainian *pluralia tantum* denote phenomena which are both singular (e.g., the Ukrainian *U Lvovi kandydatam u mery mozhut vlashtuvaty shche odni debaty* [In Lviv, candidates running for mayor can get **one more debates**] (<https://portal.lviv.ua>, 2015), *Tomu shvydko zapysalasia na movni kursy v odnu z mistsevykh shkil* [Therefore, she quickly signed up for language **courses** to one of the local schools] (<https://www.dw.com>, 2015)) and plural (e.g., the Ukrainian ... *tobto po 18 rokakh riznykh debat Deklaratsiia bula odnoholosno pryniata i zatverdzhena Asambleieiu* [so after 18 years of various **debates** the Declaration was unanimously passed and approved by the assembly] ([www.un-wla.org](http://www.un-wla.org), 1979), *Kolosalniyi rozvytok IT sfery u Lvovi ta v Ukraini zahalom porodzhuie takozh bezlich kursiv prohramuvannia* [The huge boom in IT in Lviv and throughout Ukraine results also in the creation of many software development **courses**] (<https://lgs.lviv.ua>, 2018)). Polish nouns used in plural form indicate plurality of designators (e.g., the Polish *Kolejne dwie debaty z udzialem laureatów poświęcone były literaturze* [The following two **debates** with the prize-winners were devoted to literature] (NKJP: Polityka, 2003), *Są też prowadzone różne kursy językowe* [There are also various language **courses** available] (NKJP: Wychowawca, 2009)), as singularity is conveyed by singular forms (e.g., ...*każdy może przysłuchiwać się, a nawet uczestniczyć w debacie* [anyone can listen to, or even take part in the **debate**] (NKJP: Gazeta Wrocławska, 1999), ...*jedną z nagród otrzymaną w konkursie jest kurs języka włoskiego* [one of the prizes in the competition is an Italian language **course**] (NKJP: Trybuna Śląska, 2001)). Therefore, one can assume that when using the plural forms of the words *debata* and *kurs* speakers of Ukrainian mean a singular referent: \**Wziąłem udział w debatach* [I participated in debates], \**Chcę pójść na kursy językowe* [I want to go on language courses], while plural forms in such contexts may be received by Poles as denoting plurality.

The words *makaron* [pasta] and *kadra* [staff] have a somewhat different nature, as their singular forms are collective (cf. respective definitions: *makaron* “non-sweet dough of flour, eggs and water, cut into various shapes, eaten as an addition to soups or main course” (WSJP); *kadra* “group of people specialising in a discipline, working in one company or in one institution” (WSJP), and the examples of their uses: *zupa z makaronem* [soup with pasta], *makaron w sosie* [pasta in sauce]; *kadra lekarzy* [staff of doctors], *zmienić kadre* [change the staff]). However, the nature of the usage of the plural forms of those words is different: as indicated by the quoted examples and the NKJP data, it is often the case that the *makaron* lexeme is a singular form (in the WSJP there is only one example in plural: *kolorowe makarony* [coloured pasta]; in the normalised version of the corpus: 1,401 instances in singular and 182 in plural). Plural contexts denote, e.g., the many varieties, portions, packaging options, e.g.: the Polish *Jeżeli polskie makarony są dziś mniej odległe jakościowo od włoskich czy hiszpańskich,*

*jest to zasługą właśnie profesora Wolskiego* [If Polish **pastas** are less distant in terms of quality from Italian or Spanish pasta, that is thanks to professor Wolski] (NKJP: Morawski Z. *Gdzie ten dom, gdzie ten świat*, 1994), *Są oczywiście wszelkie wyroby spożywcze, jak kasze, mąki, makarony i wiele innych artykułów potrzebnych w każdym gospodarstwie domowym* [Those are, of course, all food products, such as groats, flours, **pastas**, and many other products necessary in every household] (NKJP: EKO-U Nas, 2002), *Najszybciej idą kurczaki, porcje rosółowe, makarony, cukier, kawa i wszelkie konserwy* [The most sought-after are chickens, chicken stew meat portions, **pastas**, sugar, coffee, and all kinds of tinned goods] (NKJP: Polityka, 2009). In Ukrainian, in such contexts, the only possible form is the plural, i.e. *makarony*, e.g.: the Ukrainian *Vrantsi znaishlasia voda, buly narubani drova, zvereni makarony* [In the morning, there was water, wood was chopped, **pastas** were cooked] (KTUM: Ekspedytsiia, XXI, 2008), *A-a, u vas zapasiv hrechky ta makaroniv na pivroku ye* [Oh, you have stock piled buckwheat and **pastas** for 6 months] (KTUM: Dzerkalo tyzhnia, 2014), ... *u komirkakh velykoi chastyny tamteshnikh pensioneriv uzhe stilky riznykh krupiv ta makaroniv* (KTUM: Halychyna, 2015). Therefore, learners of Polish under the influence of Ukrainian may use plural forms where Poles would use singular forms: *\*zupa z makaronami* [soup with **pastas**], *\*makarony z sosem* [**pastas** with sauce].

The number characteristics of the nouns *władza* [authorities], *kosmetyk* [cosmetic], and *zboże* [cereal] may cause problems to Ukrainians as their Ukrainian counterparts are not used in the plural. The word *władza* meaning “institutions, governing bodies managing something; also: people who govern and manage something” [USJP] is usually used in the plural form and classified in the *pluralia tantum* group, e.g., the Polish *Polskie władze zbyt rzadko korzystały z doświadczeń innych krajów przy restrukturyzacji czy wręcz likwidacji górnictwa* [Polish **authorities** too rarely used the experiences of other countries in restructuring or ending mining] (NKJP: Szczepański J.J. *Górniki polski*, 2005). The corresponding Ukrainian word *vlada* with a similar meaning is a *singulare tantum* noun, e.g., the Ukrainian *Yak rozporiadysia ukrainska vlada piatma misiatsiamy, pokazhe chas* [How Ukrainian **authority** will govern in five months, time will tell] (KTUM: Dzerkalo tyzhnia, 2009), which may result in Ukrainians not using the plural form of the word *władza* in Polish.

The Ukrainian noun *kosmetyka* denotes a group and a limitation of the number form, e.g., the Ukrainian ... *pratsiuie armii medykiv, farmatsevtiv, vyrobnykiv kosmetyky ta plastychnykh khirurhiv* [There is working an army of physicians, pharmacists, manufacturers of **cosmetic** and plastic surgeons] (KTUM: Dzerkalo tyzhnia, 2012), ... *odiahaietsia duzhe prostenko, zhodnoi kosmetyky* [She dresses plainly, no **cosmetic**] (KTUM: unian.net, 2009). The Polish counterpart of the Ukrainian word which denotes a group is the plural form of the *kosmetyk* lexeme, e.g., the Polish *Swoją fabrykę producent kosmetyków zamierza wybudować do końca tego roku* [The manufacturer of **cosmetics** intends to build its factory by



the end of the year] (NKJP: Słowo Polskie, 2006), *Kobiety podkreślały urodę wszelkimi sposobami, stosując kosmetyki* [Women emphasise their beauty with all available means, using **cosmetics**] (NKJP: Chwalba A. *Obyczaje w Polsce...*, 2004). To refer to a single product, it is possible in Ukrainian to use only the analytical structure (e.g. *kosmetychnyj zasib*), while in Polish for that meaning one uses the singular form of the word *kosmetyk*, e.g., in Polish *...jeśli masz jasną cerę, nie warto kusić się na kosmetyk przeznaczony do ciemnej skóry* [if you have a light complexion, don't bother with a **cosmetic** intended for a dark complexion] (NKJP: Cosmopolitan, 2000). The situation with the use of the analysed words becomes further complicated due to the differences in terms of the category of gender: the Ukrainian lexeme *kosmetyka* is feminine. An incorrect use of singular form instead of plural denoting a group may be accompanied by an incorrect gender form, and, as a consequence, an incorrect selection of declension, e.g., *promocja na \*kosmetykę* [special offer on cosmetics].

When discussing the category of number in Polish, one should also mention the fact that some dual-number nouns are used in one of the numbers in specific contexts, while in Ukrainian in the same contexts the other number is used, e.g.: the Polish *bez problemu / nie ma problemu* [no problem / there is no problem] with the singular form and the Ukrainian *bez problem* with the plural (e.g., the Polish *...w dodatku bez problemu znalazł miejsce na parkingu* [additionally, he found a parking spot **without a problem**] (NKJP: Samson H. *Pułapka na motyla*, 2000), *Z tym dokumentem vin bez problem zarejestruvavsia na reis* [With this document, he checked in without any **problems**] (KTUM: UNIAN, 2017)). Another obstacle for the correct application of the Polish expression *bez problemu* is the gender difference of the words which results in the creation of a plural genitive of the word *\*problema* according to an incorrect pattern: *\*bez problem*. When teaching Ukrainians Polish, it is worth focussing on the noun *informacja* [information] which can take both the singular and the plural forms. A corpus analysis of the contexts with the uses of the words *informacja* [piece of information] and *informacje* [details] indicated a more common use of the plural form<sup>3</sup>, e.g. the Polish *Wszelkie dodatkowe informacje, komunikaty będziemy podawać na bieżąco* [We will communicate any additional **details** and announcements on a regular basis] (NKJP: *Tygodnik Podhalański*, 1997), *Znajdziesz tu również szczegółowe informacje dotyczące konkursu* [Here, you can also find the **details** regarding the competition] (NKJP: Cosmopolitan, 2000). The Ukrainian word *informatsiia* is a *singulare tantum* noun and it is not used in the plural form, e.g. the Ukrainian *Takozh dodatkovu informatsiiu mozhna otrymaty v odnoho z orhanizatoriv zakhodu zakhodu* [You can also receive an additional **information** from one of the proj-

<sup>3</sup>For example, a corpus analysis of the combination of the word *informacja* with adjectives *dodatkowy* [additional] and *szczegółowy* [detailed] indicated a 70:1 ratio of contexts with the plural form to contexts with the singular form.

ect organisers] (KTUM: Misto, 2013), *Bilsh detalna informatsiia pro stvorennia i funktsionuvannia hromadivskykh rad v Ukraini* [A more detailed **information** on the establishing and functioning of territorial councils in Ukraine] (KTUM: Viche, 2014).

In Polish, the *pluralia tantum* group includes, apart from common nouns, proper nouns, including toponyms, the Ukrainian counterparts of which have the singular form (Table 3).

Table 3. Polish *pluralia tantum* toponyms, with the Ukrainian counterparts

Polish	Ukrainian
<i>Czechy</i> [Czechia]	<i>Chekhiia</i> (singular)
<i>Niemcy</i> [Germany]	<i>Nimechchyna</i> (singular)
<i>Węgry</i> [Hungary]	<i>Uhorshchyna</i> (singular)
<i>Włochy</i> [Italy]	<i>Italiia</i> (singular)
<i>Chiny</i> [China]	<i>Kytai</i> (singular)
<i>Indie</i> [India]	<i>Indiia</i> (singular)
<i>Katowice</i>	<i>Katovitse</i> (singular, indeclinable) (rarely <i>Katovytsi</i> (plural))
<i>Kielce</i>	<i>Keltse</i> (singular, indeclinable) (rarely <i>Keltsi</i> (plural))
<i>Gliwice</i>	<i>Hlivitse</i> (singular, indeclinable) (rarely <i>Hlivitysi</i> (plural))

Source: own study

Therefore, when introducing the names of countries in class, it is worth emphasising those differences in order to help Ukrainian students avoid possible errors (*\*Byłem w Indii, \*Jadę do Gliwice*).

The analysed examples indicate several areas which are worth considering when teaching Polish to Ukrainian-speaking groups. Under the influence of Ukrainian, students may use incorrect forms of number (non-existent or which are not used in specific contexts), e.g. *\*bez zwłok, \*na peryferii, \*w Indii*. The interferences from Ukrainian may induce them to use the plural form to denote singular referents instead of the proper singular forms (*\*uczestniczyć w debatach* ([participate in debates] instead of one debate), *\*zapisać na kursy* ([sign up for courses] instead of one course), *\*zupa z makaronami* [soup with pastas] instead of pasta). The fact that some Ukrainian nouns lack the plural form may cause abuses of the *singula-*



ris counterparts in Polish instead of the correct plural form (*informacja, władza*). Speakers of Ukrainian may incorrectly understand Polish contexts with number forms, e.g., *grać na skrzypcach* ([play the violin] several?), *rozmawiać o Czechach* ([talk about the Czech Republic] talk about Czechs?). Therefore, when preparing Polish course material, one must remember about the differences in terms of the category of number to help students in Ukraine avoid possible errors.

## ABBREVIATIONS OF NAMES OF DICTIONARIES AND SOURCES

- ILSSU – *Intehrovana leksykohraficzna sistema „Slovnyky Ukrainy”*, 2007, [CD-ROM 3.1].  
ISJP – *Inny słownik języka polskiego*, 2000, M. Bańko (ed.), vol. I–II, Warsaw.  
KTUM – *Korpus tekstiv ukrainskoi movy*, [online] <http://www.mova.info> [26.05.2019].  
NKJP – *Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego* (Polish National Corpus), [online] <http://www.nkjp.pl> [26.05.2019].  
USJP – *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego*, 2003, S. Dubisz (ed.), vol. I–IV, Warsaw.  
VTSSUM – *Velykyi tлумachnyi slovnyk suchasnoi ukrainskoi movy*, 2007, V.T. Busla, Kyiv, Irpin.  
WSJP – *Wielki słownik języka polskiego*, 2007, P. Żmigrodzki (ed.), [online] <http://www.wsjp.pl> [26.05.2019].  
WSPP – *Wielki słownik poprawnej polszczyzny PWN*, 2004, A. Markowski (ed.), Warsaw.

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### **ZROBIĘ TO BEZ ZWŁOK... KATEGORIA LICZBY W NAUCZANIU JĘZYKA POLSKIEGO JAKO OBCEGO OSÓB UKRAIŃSKOJĘZYCZNYCH**

**Słowa kluczowe:** kategoria liczby, rzeczowniki *singularia tantum*, rzeczowniki pluralia tantum, nauczanie języka polskiego jako obcego, język polski, język ukraiński

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł przedstawia osobliwości kategorii liczby polskich i ukraińskich rzeczowników. W celu wskazania trudnych miejsc związanych z nauczaniem kategorii liczby osób ukraińskojęzycznych przeanalizowano polskie i ukraińskie leksemy pod względem realizacji wartości gramatycznej kategorii liczby. Przedstawiono konteksty, w których możliwe jest popełnianie błędów, co może wywołać efekt komiczny lub zakłócić komunikację. Źródłem informacji są słowniki języka polskiego i ukraińskiego, a także zasoby Narodowego Korpusu Języka Polskiego oraz Korpusu Tekstów Języka Ukraińskiego.

