

NON-TYPICAL CASES OF PLURAL NOUNS IN ENGLISH AND POLISH

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The aim of the present paper is to survey the contexts allowing the usage of plural forms the sense of which goes beyond the standard concept of plural. The considered examples are claimed to be non-typical not because of their syntactic form but because of the new semantic values they bring about: the forms presented below exceed the limits of standard definitions of plural, which specify its meaning as "more than one" or "other than one" (Strang 1964 : 85, Quirk et al. 1972 : 165).

The problem of singular/plural distinction is closely connected with the mass/count distinction and some linguists claim these two distinctions to be inseparable. Gleason, for instance, suggests that, since in fact every common noun can occur both as mass and as count, the count/mass distinction does not divide the English nouns into two separate subclasses. It is thus similar to the singular/plural distinction in that it affects nearly all nouns and takes similar forms in the surface structure (Gleason 1965 : 134—137).

Katz's proposals are still more radical: the [+Count] and [-Count] features determine the co-occurrence relations between determiners and nouns and between nouns and singularity and plurality (Katz 1972 : 374).

Gleason's and Katz's statements, which associate number with countness and massness, were accepted as the basic assumption of the present paper. However, although Gleason's claim is that almost every noun can be used both as count and as mass, only the plurals of [+Count] nouns will be here considered as standard.

Although many linguists have been concerned with some aspects of the phenomenon of non-typical plurals, it seems that its scope and frequency of occurrence have not been fully recognized yet. Most authors treat non-standard plurals marginally, and their presence in dictionaries is also rather

incidental. My tentative classification and rich exemplification are thus supposed to signal that the phenomenon is common and varied enough to attract greater attention and to be taken into account by grammarians and lexicographers.

All the analysed material is based on information given by British and Polish informants, but, since dictionaries often do not confirm this information, each part contains some brief comments as to the dictionary interpretation.

Two dictionaries have been consulted in all the discussed cases, these are: *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* and *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, but the nouns which appeared to be controversial have also been looked up in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, *Słownik Ortograficzny Języka Polskiego* and *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny*.

In the approach taken so far the problem of non-typical plurals concerns mainly those nouns which, being basically [-Count] occur in [+Count] form as well. However, the reclassified plurals cannot be interpreted as true count nouns, since the addition of the plural ending is always accompanied by a change of meaning and in its new sense the noun can occur in plural only. Presumably, we are here concerned not with syntactic shift, but with semantic reclassification.

It is very difficult to specify the scope of the changes brought about by semantic reclassification. In a great number of cases the reclassification will in fact result in a new lexical item, but on etymological grounds and because of the high degree of sense similarity the two meanings are usually considered to be contextually conditioned variant readings of the same noun. The other possible result of reclassification is a modification of the field of reference — the modification which does not influence the basic meaning of a noun.

There is still one more argument for accepting the semantic source of non-typical plurals, namely, the fact that very few of them can be modified by a numeral. Thus, contrary to the standard concept of countness, the presence of the -s ending is not accompanied by true countability. To be able to account for this in my paper I assume two distinctions instead of one, i.e., count/mass distinction is here supplemented by countable/uncountable distinction which determines the presence or absence of numeral modification. Needless to say, "count" does not imply "countable".

1.1. Mass nouns denoting metals will start our discussion of reclassified plurals: *iron* as well as Polish *żelazo* is basically a mass noun, but we can produce a plural form *irons* in such expressions as *fire-irons*, *irons* in the sense of "stirrups" or *put somebody in irons* — an equivalent for Polish *zakuć kogoś w żelaza*, i.e., in cases where features of the substance are in a way transposed on the product. However, this pluralization is not followed by countability.

for none of these examples allow numeral modification. A plural form of *iron* accompanied by a numeral (*two irons*) is also acceptable, e.g., in the very common shortening of *flat-iron*. In Polish the form *żelaza* cannot be modified by a numeral.

The next example, *bronze*, is used in the plural form *bronzes* in the sense of works of art, statues made of bronze. *Bronze* in English, however, corresponds to two different terms in Polish: *brąz* and *spiż*. The plural form *brązy* is parallel to English *bronzes* (works of art), whereas the form *spiże* is restricted to two meanings: cannons and bells. *Brass* also has the plural form *brasses* denoting things made of brass, but the Polish equivalent *mosiądz* cannot be pluralized. All of these plurals, in Polish as well as in English, do not allow numerals as modifiers.

Silver does not have a plural form in English except for a colloquial use with the "a" article or in plural when we speak about sports medals.¹ In Polish the plural form *srebra*, which cannot be modified by numerals, again denotes products made of silver, namely, tableware or liturgical vessels.

Copper and *nickel* both have a very common plural form meaning "coins", which can be modified by numerals: *five coppers* or *three nickels* is perfectly acceptable in English.

In Polish *miedź* does not have a plural form, whereas the plural *nikle*, as well as *chromy*, denotes nickel or chromium ornaments (e.g. of motorcars); neither form can be modified by numerals. Surprisingly enough, SJP,² while taking into account the common usage of *nikle*, adds the specification "no plural" to the entry of *chrom*.

Złoto is basically not pluralized, although SJP allows the plural, but uncountable, use of *złota* in the sense of liturgical vessels ("złota kościelne"). The countable form of *gold* is acceptable only in the case of "medals" (see note 1).

Finally, the mass noun *marble* can be pluralized to denote marble sculptures, as in *the Elgin Marbles*.

Another group of nouns which are subject to reclassification is the group of fabrics.³ *Silk* has the plural form *silks* in the sense of "garments made of silk", *cotton* is pluralized to *cottons* (cotton garments), but *wool*, according to SOED, cannot be reclassified in this way, as there is a separate form *woolens* to express the same kind of dependency (see also part 2). In Polish *jedwab*

¹ "International Herald Tribune" of February 14/15th 1976 says that one of the competitors in Olympic Games won "two golds and a silver".

² For the sake of convenience titles of dictionaries are here used in an abbreviated form: SJP — *Słownik Języka Polskiego*, SOED — *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*.

³ As regards fabrics see also part 2.

is pluralized into *jedwabie* — silk dresses and *welna* into *welny* — woolen clothes; *barwełna* cannot be reclassified in this way. All these pluralizations of fabrics, in Polish as well as in English, do not allow numeral modification.

The next examples in this section are *paper* and *glass*. *Paper* can have a plural countable form in several meanings, but not when *papers* mean: notes, documents, letters, memoranda. In Polish we predominantly use *papiery* in the sense of documents.

The mass noun *glass* has the plural form *glasses*, which denotes any article made of glass, in particular it can stand for spectacles, and thus remain uncountable, or for drinking vessels, and thus become countable. The Polish equivalent *szkło* is pluralized mainly with regard to spectacles or to the very lenses. Like in English, this form cannot be modified by numerals.

The Polish noun *ślodycz* denotes the quality, the feature of being sweet, and thus its plural uncountable form *ślodycze* stands for sweets. The relation in English is not so clear, since *sweets* are derived from the adjective *sweet* and not from the noun *sweetness*.

A somewhat obsolete synonym of *ślodycze* is the uncountable pluralization of *cukier* — *cukry*. Another meaning of *cukry* is that of chemical compounds.

The noun *weight*, which basically stands for a specific characteristic of objects, can also be applied to denote an object or objects used for measuring weight: *a weight* or *(two) weights*. In Polish the case is somewhat different, as we have two separate items to cover these readings: *waga* (or *ciężar*) for *weight* and *odważnik* — *odważniki* for *a weight* — *weights*.

Finally, the Polish *fiolet* is reclassified into the uncountable plural form *fiolety* when it stands for bishop's robes, as their colour is their essential feature.

There is another interesting example concerning garments. The word *gronostaj* — *ermine* can be pluralized in two ways: when the animal is meant we are allowed to use numerals, but when we mean trimmings or garments made of ermine only the plural form can be used, as in: *przybrany w gronostaje* — *wearing ermines*.

The above examples present the linguistic phenomenon that can hardly be interpreted within the frame of the so far established syntactic and semantic terms. The derived nouns are not always standard plurals — most of them cannot be modified by numerals. What is more, in this new, derived sense they are often used in plural only, whereas true count nouns have the possibility of forming both singular and plural. Finally, they involve changes in meaning which are not accounted for by syntactic relations.

The semantic interpretation of the above examples will involve semantic ambiguity, as they all have at least two readings: one stands for the sub-

stance, the other for the product, but their identical phonetic form is not incidental, on the contrary, the semantic markers which are essential for the "substance item" are also essential for the "product item", and thus we are here concerned with a high degree of semantic similarity. With regard to this I claim the two forms to be two readings of the same noun, not separate lexical items.

The above discussion concerns one type of semantic reclassification, but further considerations will attempt to point to some more examples of this kind of regularity.

1.2. As Grzebieniowski has noted in his analysis of the English morphology and syntax, the plural form of some abstract nouns has concrete meaning, as e.g. in "force" — "forces" (military) (Grzebieniowski 1964: 42). This type of semantic reclassification — the one in which the possibility of using the plural comes with the specification or individualization of some general concept or phenomenon — will be discussed in this section.

1.2.1. We can quote a number of general or even abstract concepts and notions which can be assigned the exact, but concrete equivalents. Thus, the abstract concept of *height* as a measurement from bottom to top, has its concrete counterparts in various *heights* or *a height* of a particular object. Another meaning of the plural form *heights* is synonymous with *hills* — but in this sense it is uncountable.

Altitude — almost an equivalent of *height*, but more often used in a geometrical sense, also has its plural form *altitudes*.

Polish *wysokość* reveals the same kind of regularity, producing the plural form *wysokości*.

However, all these plurals can hardly be used with numerals alone, except perhaps for such a geometrical description as *dwie wysokości trójkąta*, but they are often accompanied by the adjective *różny* — *different*, as in: *Obserwacje prowadzono na dwu różnych wysokościach* — *Observations were carried out on two different heights*. Besides that, the adjectival modification of this noun is also rather limited.⁴

The same opposition of abstract and concrete, and the same kind of modification, is revealed by the three remaining dimensions: *depth*, *width* and *length* (*głębokość*, *szerokość*, *długość*). However, *width* and *length*, as well as Polish *szerokość* and *długość*, can also become countable when they denote

⁴ Interestingly enough, in Polish we use such adjectives as *duży* or *mały* in order to modify *wysokość*, whereas in English *high* and *low* are used (e.g. *high altitudes*). This is certainly due to the fact that *niska wysokość* would be felt self-contradictory, and *wysoka wysokość* redundant on etymological grounds.

the dimensions of a swimming pool: *He managed four widths (two lengths) of a swimming pool* — *Przeplłynął cztery szerokości (dwie długości basenu).*⁵

Length and *długość* may also be used in the set phrases: *to win by two lengths* — *wygrać o dwie długości* (mainly in horse racing, cycling and boat racing).

The Polish noun *pieniądz* is an abstract economic concept, whereas its plural form *pieniądze* stands for funds, banknotes and coins. Interestingly enough, this relation in English works the other way round. Singular *money* is concrete, whereas plural *monies* is an abstract term used in banking. None of these forms can be modified by a numeral.

Weight behaves similarly to measurements: it is often met in plural when expressing heaviness of particular objects, often in a numerical form, (e.g. *the weights of the planets*).

The Polish noun *waga* (*ciężar*) is rarely used in plural *wagi*, except for set expressions *miary i wagi* — *weights and measures* and *podnoszenie ciężarów*.

Another abstract concept, *time*, is often pluralized to denote a specified period, such as: *the times of Henry VIII*. Parallely in Polish: abstract *czas* versus *czasy stanisławowskie*. Numerals never modify *times* or *czasy*, but adjectives do, e.g. *good times* — *dobre czasy*.

The undoubtedly abstract noun *love* can have a plural form *loves* in the sense of love affairs, such as: "loves like ours have always been hated" (Jones 1975 : 603). In Polish this form is even more common: *miłości Woltera, miłości mojego życia*.⁶ Numerals are never used in such phrases.

The item *beauty* has mainly the qualitative character, but it can also denote a person or an object which is particularly beautiful: *two famous beauties of those times, the beauties of Donne's poetry*.

Evil is an abstract concept of wrong-doing, but it can be reclassified to mean an evil thing or deed, as in: *choosing the lesser of the two evils*. Polish *zło* has no plural form in any case.

Art (as well as Polish *sztuka*) stands for all creative skills and achievements of humanity, but when we want to stress its concrete branches we can use the plural form *arts* (e.g. *fine arts, Master of Arts*) *sztuki* (*sztuki piękne, sztuki plastyczne*). None of these forms can be used with a numeral, and, since all these expressions are kind of set phrases even the adjectival modification is very limited.

The noun *good* denotes some abstract qualities, but *goods* have gradually come to mean commodities or merchandise. Polish *dobro* is also used as an abstract concept, whereas its plural form means either real property (e.g. *dobra ziemskie*) or good things (e.g. *dobra doczesne*). Both forms, *goods* and *dobra*,

⁵ SJP and *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny* do not confirm this usage.

⁶ The entry *miłość* is specified "blm" in SJP and in *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny*.

cannot be modified by numerals, except for a specific economic use, e.g., *szę to dwa różne dobra*.

Basically *life* denotes a state of being alive, and as such cannot be pluralized, but when it means a state of existence of an individual or when it refers to tenacity of life it has a plural form as in: *How many lives were lost in the accident?*, *A cat has nine lives*.

The plural form of *życie* is not acceptable in Polish (unless we consider highly colloquial "uratował dwa życia ludzkie"), except for one very specific colloquial use: the Warsaw daily "Życie Warszawy" is often abbreviated to "Życie", and thus we sometimes buy *dwa "Życia"*. The same applies to other names of newspapers: "Kultura", "Polityka", etc.

Besides denoting dying in the general sense *death* can also apply to individual instances of death, as in: *There were many deaths of influenza last winter*. In Polish we have two separate items: non-pluralized *śmierć*, and pluralized, countable *zgon*.

Finally, abstract nouns with *-ness* suffix can be found in such phrases as: *small kindnesses* — acts of kindness, *difficulties* — difficult problems, or seemingly odd "obviousnesses" (Althusser 1970 : 145) or "bitternesses" (Jones 1975 : 25). The phenomenon is much more common in Polish, e.g. *świadczyć grzeczności, prawić uprzejmości, mówić złośliwości*. Both Polish and English examples cannot be modified by numerals.

Finally, the abstract noun *oszczędność* (*czasu, pieniędzy*) — *saving* (of time, of money) can be pluralized to *oszczędności* — *savings* to denote the money saved up.

1.2.2. Another type of reclassification from the general to the particular is represented by various skills, which, abstract in themselves, result in concrete products.

For instance, such nouns as *sculpture, painting, engraving, writing, poetry* are not pluralized when they stand for a skill, but they can have a plural countable form when they denote a concrete product of this skill. Thus we can have: *two ancient sculptures, several impressionist paintings, five valuable engravings*.

Apparently the form *writings*, e.g. *Ben Jonson's writings*, cannot be preceded by a numeral, since it is predominantly used as a collective noun denoting the writer's literary output as a whole. The form *poetries* is possible, but very rare.

This kind of relation is much less common in Polish; apparently, it concerns only three nouns: *rzeźba, poezja* and *pismo*. However, while plural *rzeźby* can be preceded by a numeral when individual works of art are meant, the form *poezje* and *pisma* are used similarly to *writings*, i.e. as collective

nouns denoting the literary output, e.g. *poezje Norwida, pisma Bolesława Prusa*.⁷ While speaking about individual countable pieces of poetry we have to use the form *poems — wiersze*.

1.2.3. The next type of reclassification concerns continuous, non-concrete natural phenomena and elements, such as *light, fire, snow, rain, water* and *sand*, and their individual, concrete, non-continuous forms and instances of occurrence, i.e. *lights* (sources of light), *fires* (instances of burning), *snows* (snowfalls or snow expanses), *rains* (rainfalls), *waters* (water expanses), or *sands* (sand expanses). Countable form of these is hardly possible, and must be definitely rejected in the case of *waters* and *sands*. The countable form of *fires* seems to be acceptable only when we speak about instances of destructive burning, such as: *We have already had two forest fires this week*.

The Polish equivalents reveal the same kind of regularity: *światło, ogień, dym, mgła, śnieg, deszcz, woda, piasek, lód* as general denotations of natural phenomena are always singular. The possibility of a plural form appears with individual instances of their occurrence, as in: *zapalone światła, dymy fabryczne, ognie ofiarne, mgły i zamglenia, głębokie śniegi, ulewne deszcze, wody terytorialne, piaski Mazowsza, lody na rzece*. Numerals are basically not used in such phrases, except perhaps for *światła* and *ognie*.⁸

1.2.4. The last section in this paragraph presents several examples which do not fit into patterns outlined above but which still stand in accordance with the general pattern given in 1.2. For instance, the plants such as *grass* or *paprika* are not generally pluralized when they stand for a species, but when we mean individual plants of grass or individual pods of paprika we often use the form *grasses* or *paprikas*. Polish equivalents follow the same pattern: *trawa — (uncountable) trawy*, as in *trawy poźółkły*, and *papryka — (countable) papryki*, as in *pokroić dwie papryki*.

The last problem in this section is pluralizing the nouns in set phrases: *smelling salts, Epsom salts, table waters, sole trzeźwiące, ruchome piaski, wody zdrojowe*. Obviously, numerals are not acceptable in these phrases.

1.3. The hitherto applied criteria do not cover a number of semantically reclassified pluralizations which appear in a very specific, usually unique context. For instance, the shareholders of steel and oil corporations would ask *How are steels?* or *How are oils?* — meaning, of course, the position or price of shares of oil and steel companies.

⁷ There is still another meaning of *pismo* — “an official document”, in which it is also used as a countable plural.

⁸ I do not consider here such idioms as: *gra w dwa ognie, zostać wziętym w dwa ognie* — parallel to English *between two fires*.

Some restaurants serve set meals called *tea* or *afternoon tea* and in this sense *tea* can be used in the countable plural, as in: *The waitress has served fifteen teas since three o'clock*.

Both Polish and English nouns expressing numbers can be reclassified into the plural, e.g. when we mean size of shoes (*Czy są siódemki?*, *I wear sevens*) or tram numbers (*Przejechały dwie trzynastki*). Another interesting example of such usage is the sailor's term *the roaring forties* — *ryczące czterdziestki* denoting the stormy regions between 40° and 50° south latitude.

The plural form of *lód — lody* is also used in the sense of frozen sweets. Interestingly enough, the plural has to be maintained regardless of the number of portions. The English equivalent, *ice-cream*, is similarly reclassified, or rather, abbreviated to *ice* or *ices*, but the plural and singular forms are here used regularly, i.e. we ask for *one water-ice* or *two lemon ices*.

One of the meanings of *air* denotes appearance or manner, as e.g. *He has an air of importance*, but when used in plural, in such an expression as *give oneself airs*, it slightly changes its meaning into unnatural pretentious behaviour.

The Polish noun *chleb* can also be used in plural in the sense: “loaves of bread”, but, unlike the previous examples, where the numeral modification was only acceptable, it is now necessary, as in: *Mam kupić dwa chleby*.

Our final example here is the pluralization of *kurz* in *ścierać kurze*.

1.4. In this section we shall deal not only with number, but also with gender. Namely, some of the nouns which distinguish masculine and feminine forms have the possibility of reclassifying their plural masculine forms to stand for dual gender as well. Thus, while the singular form *actor* refers always to a man, the plural form *actors* denotes either both men and women or men only. In fact, the sense of *actors* as regards gender is solely dependent on the context, for it means “two men” in: *Golas and Brando are actors*, but men and women in the dictionary entry of *cast* in SOED: “...the set of actors collectively...”.

Among the nouns which are morphologically unmarked for gender (*brother — sister, brat — siostra*) only a few can presumably be used in the dual gender sense, e.g. *dogs — psy*. An additional example in Polish is the dialectal use of *ojcowie* in the sense of “parents”.

Morphologically marked nouns, both Polish and English, allow possibilities for the dual gender plural. In English this would concern the nouns taking *-ess* feminine suffix: *god, steward, lion, tiger*, and, especially, *author* and *poet*, since *authoress* and *poetess* forms are rare. Polish nouns taking feminine suffixes *-ica* (*kot — kocica*) and *-ka* (*kelner — kelnerka*) are also subject to reclassification.

There are, however, several pairs which will probably not be reclassified, apparently because the masculine/feminine distinction is unlikely to be disregarded (*duke — duchess, emperor — empress, książę — księżna, cesarz — cesarzowa, król — królowa*).

Interestingly enough, *stallions* and *mares*, which are masculine and feminine respectively, are supplemented by the third, only dual form — *horses*. (In Polish *ogierzy — klacze — konie*).

Contrary to English, the Polish system of numerals can disambiguate the gender of personal nouns. Namely, *czterej nauczyciele* refers to men, *cztery nauczycielki* to women, whereas *czworo nauczycieli* — to both men and women. Still, as the collective numerals can modify only personal nouns, the problem of gender of animal nouns remains unsolved.

2. The second part of the present paper presents another basis for pluralization of mass nouns, the one which was briefly mentioned by Quirk et al. (1972), Katz (1972), Gleason (1965), Lyons (1968) and Jacobs and Rosenbaum (1968).

A Grammar of Contemporary English considers the plural form of such mass nouns as *bread*, as in: *What breads have you got today?* to be the case of conversion of a mass noun into a count noun; *breads* in that case means kinds or types of bread (Quirk et al. 1972: 128 n. [a]).

This explanation, however, cannot be accepted as satisfactory, since [+Count] and [-Count] are syntactic features and the conversion from [-Count] to [+Count], being an example of syntactic, not semantic, shift, cannot account for the new interpretation of meaning. The syntactic shift from mass to count can also be understood as the shift from the collective reference to the distributive one. It is the case in Quirk's example, but such a statement does not exhaust the semantic interpretation of the sentence, since what the speaker has in mind is not loaves of bread, but kinds of bread, i.e. distributive reference is here a reference to variety as well.

There are other reasons to claim that it is semantic, not syntactic reclassification that underlies such forms. First, the addition of the plural ending does not automatically entail countability, i.e. acceptability of numeral modification. What is more, the plural form itself often requires some contextual justification. The most common contextual means which enables us to use the plural in the sense of "kinds" is the adjective *different* — in Polish, parallelly, *różny*. The need to use *different* becomes more obvious if we try to modify the "kinds" plurals with numerals. In the majority of cases native speakers confirm that phrases with numerals and *different* — *różny* (*two different inks, dwa różne atramenty*) are perfectly acceptable and unambiguous, while these with numerals only (?*two inks, ?dwa atramenty, ? five fuels,*

?*pięć paliw*) are at the best substandard. *Different* — *różny* can obviously be substituted by other contexts, or even extra-linguistic situation, as long as the reference to types is clearly indicated.

Contrary to most examples in part 1, none of the cases of "kinds" reclassification brings about the formation of a new lexical item — the only modification concerns the field of reference.

The examples from both languages are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1*

English lexical item	SOED	British informant	Polish equivalent	SJP	Polish informant
gold	+	—	złoto	—	—
meat	+	+	mięso	—	±
cheese	—	+	ser	—	+
bread	—	±	chleb	—	—
sugar	+	+	cukier	blm	—
coal	—	±	węgiel	—	±
ink	+	+	atrament	—	+
oil	+	+	olej	—	+
fuel	+	+	paliwo	—	+
tobacco	—	+	tytoń	—	+
wood	+	+	drewno	blm	—
wool	+	+	welna	—	+
silk	—	+	jedwab	+	+
cotton	—	+	bawełna	blm	+
wine	—	+	wino	—	+
beer	—	+	piwo	+	+
brandy	—	+	koniak	—	+
red	+	+	czerwień	blm	+
violet	—	+	fiolet	—	+
steel	—	±	stal	+	+
glass	—	—	szkło	+	+

* "+" — "kinds" plural confirmed,

"—" not confirmed,

"±"—doubtful, "blm"—dictionary symbol for 'no plural'.

Only some of the entries in SOED have "kinds of" in the list of their readings. We could assume that separate entries are given to those items which are very common in this particular form but it is impossible to judge whether the form *wools* is more popular than *silks*, still, *wools* in the sense "kinds of wool" have a reading in SOED, while *silks* do not. Even if we refer to reality, it is equally easy to enumerate kinds of wool (shetland wool, lamb wool) and the kinds of silk (natural silk, Chinese silk).

The examples of "kinds" plural in SJP are very rare and many nouns are classified "blm". It seems that the examples given are in a way incidental,

while the regularity as such is not recognized at all. It is probably due to the fact that the examples in SJP are taken from literary works, whereas the usage in question is colloquial.

Czerwień, for instance, is specified "blm" while art critics often use the form *czerwienie* to denote various shades of red.

Ser in SJP is assigned the plural form *sery*, but only as lumps of cheese we can buy in shops, whereas we undeniably can say: *Nie lubię ostrych serów*.

Atrament has not "blm" specification, but the entry does not give any plural example, while we often produce such a form in sentences like: *Nie podobają mi się kolorowe atramenty*.

SJP gives the example of the plural form *oleje* only in the context *oleje święte*, which would rather fit into the pattern of 1.2.4., whereas there is a popular form *smary i oleje* which denotes "kinds of". Analogously, *paliwo* is pluralized to *paliwa* when different kinds of fuel are meant, e.g. *paliwa płynne*.

The pipe smoker will certainly say *tytonie* to denote different blends of tobacco.

Wetna has not "blm" specification in SJP as *bawetna* has, but the examples given in the entry again do not include the shop advertisement *wetny*. Of all fabrics only *jedwab* entry contains adequate examples (*jedwabie sztuczne i naturalne*).

The treatment of the names of drinks is also incoherent: *piwo* has the example *piwa jasne*, while *wino* has none, although we can say *wina czerwone*, *wina stolowe*, etc.

As regards other dictionaries, Webster's dictionary does not recognize such possibilities of plural formation, although some entries contain a few uncommented examples, e.g. *writing inks*. Identical approach can be observed in *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny* — in some entries we are given an example, e.g. *soki warzywne* in the entry of *sok*, but in the remaining cases the "kinds" plural is disregarded.

3. In the present part I intend to analyse a very specific usage of plurals of both mass and count nouns, when the phrases in question stand for portions.

3.1. Let us first consider "portions" pluralizations of mass nouns. For instance, in Polish we order *dwa mleka*, *trzy kawy*, *dwie herbaty*, *cztery piwa*, *dwa soki pomarańczowe* or *trzy koniaki*. SJP confirms only the most common forms of the "portions" plural: *kawy*, *herbaty* and *piwa*, whereas the other examples are not mentioned, and *mleko* is even marked as "blm".

Also in the entry of the basically mass noun *zupa* the phrases denoting portions, such as: *dwie zupy mleczne* are not discussed. The other, still more

colloquial, form of ordering soup — *dwie pomidorowe*, *dwie ogórkowe*, etc., is not considered either.

Presumably, SJP acknowledges the possibility of such a reclassification of nouns into the "portions" plural, but only in the most common cases.

Parallel English nouns can often be found in similar contexts: *two coffees*, *four brandies*, *two beers*, *four juices*. The case of *milk* is a little doubtful, as not all my informants confirmed the possibility of plural. As regards SOED, it does not exemplify such a regularity at all, while Webster's dictionary discusses the "portions" plural of *coffee*, *beer* and *whiskey* — *juice* and *tea*, however, are again left out.

Contrary to the examples in parts 1 and 2 "portions" phrases are obligatorily modified by numerals, as without the need to express plurality, definite number of portions, the reclassification of a noun would be unnecessary and the plural form nonsensical. Thus, this time, the syntactic change accompanying the semantic reclassification is fully regular: [—Count] changes into [+Count].

3.2. Types of reclassification presented so far concerned only mass nouns. The "portions" shift, however, covers count nouns as well, and, since their plural form is grammatical, the reclassification enforces its reformulation.

A pea, *a bean*, *a noodle*, *a mushroom* have regular plural forms *peas*, *beans*, *noodles*, *mushrooms*, which, except being standard plurals, are used to denote the name of a dish or a portion of this dish. Thus the numeral modification of these nouns, e.g., *two peas*, *three beans*, is meaningful only when we speak about separate items, as in: *There were only two peas in the pod*.

Using numerals as modifiers to cases denoting portions of a dish would be confusing, hence the natural way to ask for a given number of portions is: *mushrooms for two*, *peas for one*, etc.

The regularity is also very common in Polish, i.e. nouns such as: *naleśnik*, *pieczarka*, *pyza*, *knedel*, *pieróg*, etc., have regular plural forms which can be modified by numerals when denoting separate objects (e.g. *zjeść dwa naleśniki*), but the same plurals are pre- or post-modified by the phrase composed of a numeral and *razy* when they stand for more than one portion, e.g. *pierogi dwa razy*, *trzy razy knedle*, etc., or by the word *raz* when only one portion is meant (*raz naleśniki*).

Groszek is a singular collective form for pea seeds,⁹ so when it stands for a portion of peas the form *groszki* is definitely rejected and it is pluralized by means of *razy*. *Fasolka*, however, can be unambiguously pluralized in both

⁹ The plural form *groszki* is used only in the sense of "polka dot pattern".

ways: *Poproszę dwie fasolki po bretońsku* or *Poproszę dwa razy fasolkę po bretońsku*.

A diminutive form *buraczek* has a regular countable plural form, thus a portion of a vegetable called *buraczki* has to be pluralized with *razy* or equivalent phrases.

The same rule will also hold for the nouns not having a singular form, e.g. Polish *frytki*. As regards English *chips*, this form can be referred to the singular *a chip* in the same way as, e.g., *noodles*.

SOED, as well as Webster's dictionary, do not consider the possibility of plurals meaning dishes in any of the cases mentioned above; all the nouns are analysed only from the point of view of their singular form and plural forms are not assigned any specific meaning.

SJP acknowledges plural forms in the sense of "portions" in those cases where this very form is the dominant one (*kluska, knedel, pieróg, pyza*), and in these entries the nouns in question are followed by "zwykle lm" specification (usually in plural).

In the entries of *pieczarka* and *naleśnik* there is no "zwykle lm" and thus the plural examples quoted do not exemplify the issue now under consideration.

Also the entries of *groszek* and *fasolka* do not emphasize the possibility of reclassification, both nouns are defined as collective for seeds or plants.

The specific plural usage of *buraczki* is discussed as a separate item and classified "zwykle lm".

Finally, *frytki*, as not having a singular form at all, are classified "bip" (no singular).

3.3. The last section in this part presents a few items of minor importance, which, however, add something to our discussion of specific behaviour of plurals in contexts denoting portions.

The English nouns *cake* and *pie* can have two lexical readings expressed by Polish *ciasto* and *ciastko*. However, not all kinds of cakes are available in both variants, and thus a customer asking for *a cheese-cake* or *two apple-pies* will be served a piece or pieces of cake, not the whole cake or even more than one.

In Polish we presumably can cite only two nouns which allow such a usage: *tort* and *keks* (we order *dwa torty, trzy keksy*, etc.). *Sernik* and *piernik* are common both as big and small cakes so the order *dwa serniki* clearly refers to small cakes.

Except for the possibility of count and mass usage of *cake*, the dictionaries do not confirm the acceptability of the above phrases.

Presumably, the examples analysed in this part show that the name of a dish or a drink, when printed in a menu card, can be treated as a singular unmodified form denoting a portion. Since this form may be mass or count, or even plural, its numeral modification or plural form may deviate from what we consider to be correct phrases. However, these "deviations" not only do not make the phrases nonsensical, but, on the contrary, are the only means to make them meaningful in a given context.

What is also worth noticing is the fact that the reclassification presented in this part allows for true countability, including singular and plural. Namely, the form *one beer* — *jedno piwo* is as much reclassified as *two beers* — *dwa piwa*, since *beer* is basically not countable.

Finally, it is the first case in this paper in which one semantic regularity results in more than one kind of phrase in the surface structure: *one brandy* and *peas for one, two brandies* and *peas for two*, etc. This confirms our earlier claim that semantics is here prior to syntax.

4. The final part of the present paper discusses stylistic and semantic consequences of form variance — generally speaking, the variant plurals are overt signs of ambiguity, which in singular can be revealed only by the context.

4.1. The first section of the present part is devoted to the analysis of these nouns which have more than one plural form and the variant forms of which belong to different registers of the language or are stylistically marked for some specific use.

For instance, foreign plurals of English nouns often occur in variation with regular plurals. As it was pointed out by Quirk et al. (1972: 181), the foreign plurals, such as: *formulae, antennae, appendices*, etc., tend to occur in technical usage, whereas the regular ones, such as: *formulas, antennas, appendixes*, etc., — in everyday speech.

However, when we consult the dictionaries many cases appear to be controversial (e.g. SOED claims the form *antennas* to be occasional, while *The Advanced Learner's Dictionary* rejects it altogether).

In Polish the irregular stylistically marked plural form is to be found in the class of masculine human nouns, such as *doktor, robotnik, Francuz*, etc., which, having the regular plurals, like: *doktorzy, robotnicy, Francuzi*, etc., (i.e. according to human declension) can also be used in the derogatory sense in the form *doktory, robotniki, Francuzy*, (i.e. according to non-human declension). However, not all the nouns have the variant derogatory form, and in these cases the demonstrative adjective remains as the only sign of stylistic marking, e.g., *ci malarze* — *te malarze*.

The noun *anioł* is also a very interesting example from the stylistic point of view; there are three plural forms of *anioł*: *aniółowie* — found in religious texts, *anieli* — emotional, somewhat obsolete, and *anioly* — used in everyday style.

4.2. The present section is devoted to the problem of nouns having more than one lexical reading when one of these readings requires a different plural form. In these cases the plural form can be interpreted to have the quality of differentiating not only stylistic, but also semantic values, the more so as in all the examples below the singular declension does not have any overt signs of ambiguity.

The English examples are not numerous and they are included in most English grammars. They are: *brother* — *brothers* (members of the same family) and *brethren* (members of the same religious society); *penny* — *pennies* (individual coins) and *pence* (items in British currency); *index* — *indexes* (tables of contents, lists of items given at the end of books) and *indices* (forefingers, markers). Finally, there is a group of animal names (*fish*, *antelope*, *reindeer*, *flounder*, *herring*) which take the -s ending when they denote different individuals (*the fishes of the Baltic Sea*) and the *o* ending when they stand for hunting quarries (*they caught only a few fish*).

In Polish such meaningful variants are much more common. Let us consider two examples suggested by J. Tokarski (1973: 99): *akt* and *organ*. *Akt* is usually pluralized to (countable) *akty*, but when it stands for official documents, it receives the Latin ending -a (*akta*¹⁰, and the numeral modification is rejected. *Organ* has the plural form *organy* in biological sense, but *organa* when it denotes institutions, offices or journals. This distribution of plurals is confirmed by *Słownik Ortograficzny* and *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny*, but not by SJP, which gives the form *organa* only as an obsolete one, and does not quote any examples of this use. Like *akta*, the form *organa* seems to be somewhat "reluctant" to accept plurals.

The noun *oko* has two possible plurals: *oczy* (the former dual number) — eyes, and *oka* — eyes of fat on soup, meshes in a net. *Ucho* has the plural form *uszy* (also former dual number) in the sense of ears, but *ucha* when it means "a handle". Interestingly enough, the forms *oczy* and *uszy* never occur with ordinary numerals, but with collective ones, as in: *dwoje oczu*, *uszu*.

The noun *król* has the plural form *królowie* (human declension) when it means "male ruler of a state", but *króle* (non-human declension) when it denotes a playing card with a picture of a king. The entry of *król* in SJP discusses both readings, but the change of declension and plural form is not en-

countered. *Słownik Ortograficzny* and *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny*, on the other hand, discuss each of the readings and its declension in separate entries.

Hetman, *goniec* or *skoczek* follow human masculine declension and have the plural forms *hetmani*, *gońcy* and *skoczkowie* when they denote a military commander in former Poland, an errand-boy and a jumper respectively, but when they denote pieces in chess, i.e., a queen, a bishop and a knight, respectively, the declension becomes non-human and the plural forms have different endings: *hetmany*, *gońce*, *skoczki*.

The dictionary interpretation of these plurals does not always confirm our observations. SJP, for instance, classifies the form *hetmany* as obsolete. Also the forms *gońce* and *gońcowie* are given in SJP as obsolete plurals of *goniec*, while the form *gońcy* is classified as the only modern one. However, the part of the entry devoted to chess gives the example "gońce jednokolorowe", although no plural variants are acknowledged at the beginning. *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny* omits the "chess" meaning in the case of *hetman* and *skoczek*; the entry of *goniec* has this meaning in the list of its readings, but no variance of forms is here encountered. *Słownik Ortograficzny*, on the other hand, leaves out the variants of *goniec* and *skoczek*.

The noun *szach* is perhaps the most controversial in this group. When it stands for a monarch its plural form is *szachowie*, but its second plural variant *szachy* is also ambiguous. It can denote the game of chess, or a chess set and in these senses it occurs only in plural, or it can stand for a check position in chess, and it is then common both in singular and in plural, e.g., *dać komuś dwa szachy w jednej partii*.

In SJP the entry *szach* is formally assigned the plural form *szachowie* and the other form is not given in any of its subsections, although it is present in the examples to the sections discussing the game and the set of pieces. A part of the entry devoted to a check gives neither forms nor examples of plural.

In *Słownik Ortograficzny* we can find three entries: 1. *szach* — *szachowie* (shah), 2. *szach* (a check) — no plural form given, and 3. *szachy* (chess) — no singular form. The interpretation in *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny* is more or less the same, but the entry of "a check" is classified "zwykle lm" (usually no plural).

4.3. Finally, we must consider the cases where the plural form of a noun can be used in two or more different meanings. For instance, *względy* (*powodowały nim względy polityczne* versus *darzyć kogoś względami*), *strony* (*dwie strony zagadnienia* versus *jego ojczyste strony*), *barwy* (*barwy zasadnicze* versus *barwy klubowe*), *kolory* (in the sense of "colours" versus "rosy complexion"). And in

¹⁰ It is not the same case as *koszty* -a, *grunty* -a, since there the -a ending is obsolete.

English: *colours* can be interpreted in three ways — 1. tints, hues, 2. a flag, 3. colours of a club, regiment, etc.

I found only one example common to Polish and English: *ash* — *popiół* denotes a powder remaining after something has burnt. Its plural *ashes* — *popioły* either means the same as *ash* or refers to burnt or cremated remains of the human body.

4.4. This section discusses subject names with *-ics* ending: *mathematics*, *linguistics*, etc.; both English subject names and their Polish equivalents are usually not pluralized. There are several studies, however, which developed more than one system that can bear the name of the study itself and thus created the need for using them in the plural form.

In this sense these terms are usually modified by an adjective, e.g., *many-valued logics*, *modal logics*, *non-Euclidean geometries*, *Boolean algebras*. The Polish equivalents are analogous except for *algebra Boole'a*.

Neither Polish nor English dictionaries consider the possibility of such a use: *Słownik Poprawnej Polszczyzny* classifies all the three nouns as not having the plural form ("blm"); in SJP only *logika* is specified in this way.

4.5. The last section in this part is devoted to several miscellaneous cases.

There are some nouns, like, for example, *fume*, which can be used both in singular and in plural without a change of meaning. The same applies to *sky* — *skies*, but the plural *skies* has an additional, metaphorical interpretation — as a synonym of heavens (Polish *nieba* is used only in this metaphorical sense).

The singular forms of the nouns *ryby* and *książka* are sometimes used in a collective sense, as in: *ryba dziś bierze* or *książka polska ma dobrą sławę za granicą*.

The following examples illustrate the possibility of using a singular form with collective reference in the phrases concerning doing shopping. Masculine nouns are here used in plural: *kupiłam ziemniaki*, *buraki*, while feminine nouns in singular: *kupiłam marchew*, *pietruszkę*. The names of fruit, however, are used in plural regardless of gender.

Interesting examples can also be encountered among geographical names, e.g. the form *Ameryki* denoting North and South America and *the Americas* — for both continents and Central America considered together; different meanings of *India* — *Indie*, *India* — *Indies*; the form *the Two Chinas* often used by journalists to denote China and Taiwan; and, finally, the name of the former kingdom including Naples and Sicily — *Królestwo Obojga Sycylii*, in English — *The Kingdom of Two Sicilies*.

CONCLUSIONS

The general conclusions can be summed up in the following statements:

1. Mass nouns can be used in the plural (but not in the standard sense), when a semantic reclassification, i.e., a partial change in meaning, is involved.
2. As a result of the reclassification we often obtain a new lexical reading of an item, which, however, preserves high degree of semantic similarity. In other cases the field of reference of the item is altered (limited or modified).
3. Semantic reclassification may account for such regularities as: substance — product relation, particularization of general concepts, plurals of mass nouns meaning "kinds", plurals of mass and count nouns denoting portions, etc.
4. Reclassification originates on the semantic level and thus its formal, syntactic aspect reveals many irregularities (possibility of the plural form is not always followed by the use of the *a* article in singular, numeral modification is often restricted or unacceptable, in many cases the presence of the adjective *different* — *różny* is the prerequisite of acceptability, etc.).
5. If the noun has more than one plural form, its plural variants may be stylistically marked or reveal semantic differences within an ambiguous item.
6. The final conclusion is that in certain contexts the plural is an overt sign of semantic reclassification, and not just a grammatical device used to indicate plurality pure and simple.

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