

## NP ellipsis with predicative long form adjectives in Russian: a response to Borik (2014)

**Background:** A prominent analysis of Russian long form adjectives holds that they are adnominal whereas short form adjectives are predicative where predicative uses of long form adjectives involve a zero nominal (see 1; Babby 1975; Siegel 1976; Bailyn 2012).

- (1) *Et-o pivo NP[ prekrasn-oj-e Ø<sub>N</sub>]*  
 this-NOM.N.SG beer.NOM.SG wonderful-LF-NOM.N.SG  
 ‘This beer is wonderful.’

Borik (2014) argues that the zero nominal account wrongly predicts singular agreement with *plurality tantum* nominals: nominal predication over pluralis tantum nominals is necessarily singular (1a) while all predicative adjectives are necessarily plural, long (1b) or short (1c). In general, Borik criticizes that a zero noun analysis for its lack of  $\varphi$ -feature dependency between a zero nominal and the subject.

- (2) Agreement with *plurality tantum* nouns in non-verbal predication

- a. *Et-i nožnic-i {prekrasn-yj podarok / \*prekrasn-yj-e}*  
 this-NOM.PL scissors-NOM.PL wonderful-LF.NOM.M.SG gift.NOM.SG wonderful-LF-NOM.PL  
*podark-i}*  
 gift-NOM.PL

‘These scissors are a wonderful present.’

- b. *Et-i nožnic-i {prekrasn-yj-e / \*prekrasn-yj / \*prekrasn-aj-a / \*prekrasn-oj-e}*  
 this-NOM.PL scissors-NOM.PL wonderful-LF.NOM.PL wonderful-LF.NOM.M.SG  
 wonderful-LF-NOM.F.SG wonderful-LF-NOM.N.SG

‘These scissors are wonderful.’

- c. *Et-i nožnic-i {prekrasn-y / \*prekrasen / \*prekrasn-a / \*prekrasn-o}*  
 this-NOM.PL scissors-NOM.PL wonderful.SF-PL wonderful.SF.M.SG wonderful.SF-F.SG  
 wonderful.SF-N.SG

‘These scissors are wonderful.’

**The claim:** The zero nominal is an elided nominal: the necessary  $\varphi$ -feature dependency is enforced via syntactic identity conditions on NP ellipsis: the argument is that gender feature matching is enforced, while number feature matching is not, in line with identity enforced for NP ellipsis (Ranero 2021)—features on little *n* have to match, the higher features (number, person) do not.

**Gender features** necessarily match between an antecedent and an elided noun (3a) and between the subject and the predicative long form adjective (3b).

- (3) a. *Maša našla moju zarjadku, a {tvoju/ \*tvoj/ \*tvoë} ona poka ne našla.*  
 M. found my.F charger but your.F your.M your.N she yet not found  
 ‘Masha found my charger, but she didn’t find yours yet.’
- b. *Moja vodka sliškom {tepl-aja/ \*tepl-yj / \*tepl-oje}*  
 my.F vodka too warm-LF.F warm-LF.M warm-LF.N  
 ‘My vodka is too warm.’

**Number features** do not necessarily match in NP ellipsis (4a). While they seem to do with predicative long form adjectives (4b), the appearance are misleading—the effect is semantic in nature. The evidence comes from numeral phrases which can trigger singular agreement with verbs (4c) but cannot with adjectives (4d), because their referent is plural.

- (4) a. *Moj edinstvenn-yj zont ja kupil a ty vse svo-i ukral*  
 my.M one.and.only-LF.M umbrella 1SG bought and you all.PL REFL.POSS-PL stole  
 ‘I bought my only umbrella whereas you stole all of yours.’
- b. *Et-a čašk-a {gr<sup>1</sup>azn-a-ja / \*gr<sup>1</sup>azn-yje}*  
 this-PL cup-PL dirty-LF-F.SG dirty-LF.PL  
 ‘These cups are dirty.’
- c. *Dva studenta zabolet-o / zabolet-i*  
 two student.GEN.SG got.sick.PST-N.SG got.sick.PST-PL  
 ‘Two students got sick.’
- d. *Dva studenta umn-yje / \*umn-oe*  
 two student.GEN.SG smart-LF.PL smart-LF.N.SG  
 ‘Two students are smart.’

**Pluralia tantum** nominals, on which Borik’s argument rests, are accounted for by analyzing them as having a plural feature on little *n* (Kramer 2015), making the plural feature on the adjective required by the identity condition.

**Honorific pronouns** occur with a singular predicative long form adjective despite triggering plural verbal agreement (which has been taken to support a zero nominal view). Honorific plural feature, however, isn’t uninterpreted (Wang 2023)—therefore, not on little *n* (see also Puškar-Gallien 2019). The plural number on the honorific pronoun then is not subject to the identity condition and is determined by the numerosity of the referent. Indeed, a plural predicative long form adjective is possible with a honorific pronoun, insofar as the referent is plural.

- (5) *Vy {prekrasn-yj / prekrasn-yj-e}*  
 2PL wonderful-LF.NOM.M.SG wonderful-LF-NOM.PL

‘You (hon.) are wonderful.’ (the variants differ in the number of people addressed)

**Implications:** This work argues for NP ellipsis as a source of a  $\varphi$ -feature dependency that allows certain mismatches. Additionally, the adnominal analysis of Russian long form adjectives is defended, in support of the theories that analyze long form morphology as facilitating modification.

**References:** • Babby, L. (1975). *A Transformational Grammar of Russian Adjectives*. Mouton. • Bailyn, J. (2012). *The Syntax of Russian*. Cambridge University Press. • Borik, O. (2014). The argument structure of long and short form adjectives and participles in Russian. *Lingua*, 149:139–165. • Kramer, R. (2015). *The morphosyntax of gender*. Oxford University Press. • Puškar-Gallien, Z. (2019). Resolving polite conflicts in predicate agreement. *Glossa: a journal of general linguistics*, 4(1):1–25. • Ranero, R. (2021). *Identity conditions on ellipsis*. PhD thesis, University of Maryland College Park. • Siegel, M. (1976). Capturing the Russian adjective. In Partee, B., editor, *Montague Grammar*, pages 293–309. Academic Press. • Wang, R. (2023). Honorifics without [hon]. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*, 41(3):1287–1347.