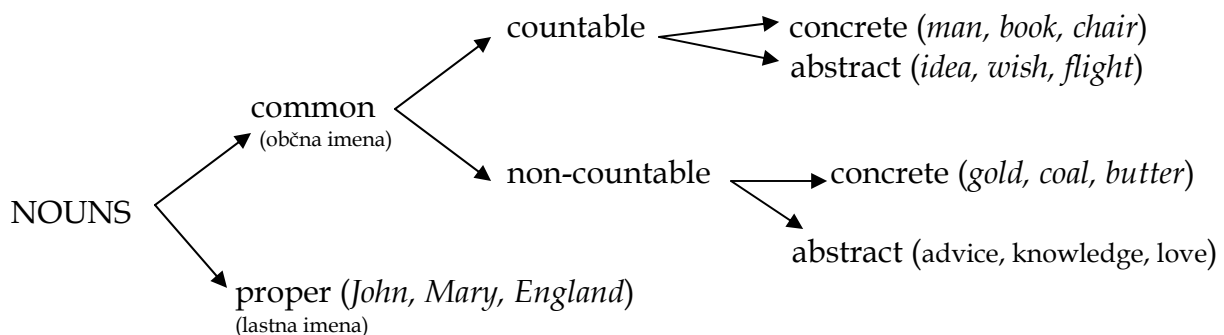


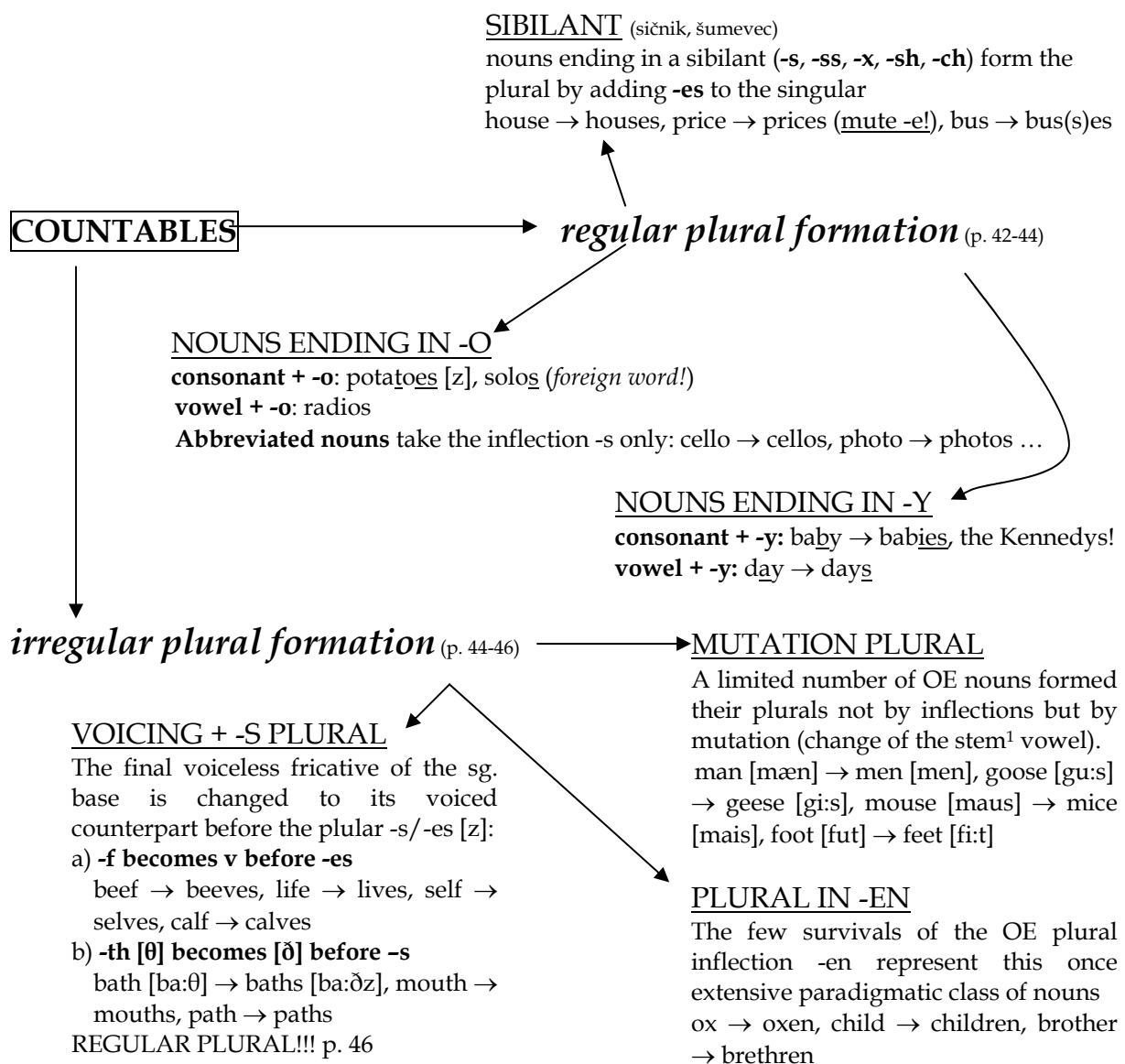
NOUN CLASSES (countables, non-countables)

(Blaganje-Konte, p. 41-59)

From the grammatical point of view the most important division of nouns is that according to the category of number into COUNTABLES and NON-COUNTABLES.



The classification of nouns into concrete and abstract ... is semantic (it depends on the meaning of the word).



¹ the part of a word that stays the same when different endings are added to it

→ *zero plural (unchanged plural)* (p. 46-48)

Some nouns take the **zero plural inflection** and thus have only one form for the singular and the plural (**one-form countable nouns**).

ANIMAL NAMES

a) **deer, sheep, grouse**

b) **fish** and nouns denoting some kinds of fish (cod, carp, dace, mackerel, plaice, salmon, trout)

The plural form **fishes, trouts, carps** ... (never **plaices, *salmons!*) are used only to denote the variety of the kind. *There are many fishes* (various kinds) *in the net*.

The following nouns denoting fish take the regular plural: **anchovy** → **anchovies**, **herring** → **herrings**, **sardine** → **sardines**, **sprat** → **sprats**, **sole** → **soles**, **eel** → **eels**.

Nouns denoting sea animals other than fish also take the regular plural (**crabs, lobster, shrimps** ...).

SOME QUANTITATIVE (NUMERICAL) NOUNS

Hundred, thousand, million, brace, dozen, gross, head, score, yoke when premodified, esp. by cardinal numerals (**two hundred people, five million stars**).

two brace of partridge

two dozen handkerchiefs

fifteen head of cattle

four score years

Two yoke of oxen drew the cart.

The nouns **pound, stone** and **foot** often take a zero plural inflection, when followed by a smaller unit:

The bill came to **four pound ten**.

She used to weight **nine stone** (or **stones**) but she has gone down to **eight stone three**.

His brother is **six foot three**.

His brother is **six foot** (or **feet**) tall.

NOUNS IN -(E)S: AMLS, BARRACKS, CROSS-ROADS, GALLOWES, HEADQUARTERS, MEANS, SERIES, SPECIES (examples p. 48!)

→ *plural of compound nouns* (p. 48-49)

There are three ways of pluralizing compound nouns:

1. Usually only the last element is pluralized whether it is a noun or some other part of speech.

lady-bird → **lady-birds**

forget-me-not → **forget-me-nots**

boy-friend → **boy-friends**

good-for-nothing → **good-for-nothings**

school-mate → **school-mates**

merry-go-round → **merry-go-rounds**

2. Both nouns are pluralized:

a) when the first element is **man** or **woman**, on condition that this element denotes the sex of the compound (**man friend** → **men friends**, **woman doctor** → **women doctors** ...)

b) when the first element is a classifying genitive (**a man's club** or **a men's club** → **men's clubs**, **a printer's error** or **printers' error** → **printers' error** ...)

3. In compound nouns where the noun is postmodified by a prepositional phrase, an adjective, an adverb or an infinitive, the first element (the noun) is usually pluralized:

editor-in-chief → **editors-in-chief**

mother-to-be → **mothers-to-be**

point of view → **points of view**

runner-up → **runners-up**

man-of-war → **men-of-war**

passer-by → **passers-by**

In a number of compounds where a noun is postmodified by an adjective, the compound is felt as a single unit, thus the plural **-s** is often added at the end:

lord mayors, brigadier generals, court-martials, knight-errants, poet laureates

Similarly in some compound where the noun is postmodified by a prepositional phrase (particularly in AmE and becoming more and more common in BrE):

commander-in-chiefs for **commanders-in-chief**
mother-in-laws for **mothers-in-law**
sister-in-laws for **sisters-in-law**

→ **plural of titles** (p. 49-50)

If a **title + a proper noun** is pluralized, the usual practice is to pluralize the proper noun.

Colloquial: **the (two) Miss Browns**
the (three) Doctor Greys

Official: **the (two) Misses Brown**
the (three) Doctors Grey

NOTE:

1. *Mrs.* is never pluralized nor written in full!
2. The plural form of *Mr.* is *Messrs* (short for *Messieurs*) but it can be used in business language only; otherwise *Mr.* remains unchanged.

→ **plural of foreign nouns** (p. 50-51)

GREEK NOUNS IN -IS, -ON

analysis → analyses, axis → axes, basis → bases,
crisis → crises, hypothesis → hypotheses,
oasis → oases, thesis → theses, criterion → criteria,
phenomenon → phenomena

LATIN NOUNS IN -US, -UM, -A

bacillus → bacilli, stimulus → stimuli,
radius → radii, bacterium → bacteria ...

FRENCH NOUNS

beau → beaux, bureau → bureaux, monsieur
→ messieurs, madam → mesdames

The longer a foreign word has been in the language and the more it has been used, the more it tends to acquire the English plural inflection **-s**, particularly in non-technical, everyday language (**natural process of assimilation**). p. 50!

A great number of foreign nouns have become completely naturalized and always take the English plural inflection (asylum → asylums, bonus → bonuses, campus → campuses, encyclop(a)edia → encyclop(a)edias, virus → viruses ...).

NON-COUNTABLES

Non-countable nouns do not change their form. They are subdivided into two large groups:

1. singular non-countable nouns lacking the plural,
2. plural non-countable nouns lacking the singular.

▲ *singular non-countable nouns* (p. 51-55)

MASS NOUNS

MATERIALS: chalk, gold, iron, rubber, wood ...

FLUIDS: blood, milk, petrol, water, wine ...

GASES: air, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, smoke ...

To denote individual quantities mass nouns may be used with specific **partitives**:

a piece / a loaf / a slice of bread

a piece / a slice of cake, bacon, salami ...

a piece / a lump of coal

a piece / a sheet of paper

a piece / a bar of chocolate, soap

Mass (material) nouns can be used as countable nouns in the singular and plural when they denote:

a) DIFFERENT SORTS

They produce high quality **cheeses**. They served different **wines** at the wedding reception.

b) INDIVIDUAL QUANTITIES

Two **ice-creams** please. How many **sugars** do you take in your tea?

c) OBJECTS MADE OF A PARTICULAR MATERIAL

They have two **irons** but neither of them is in order. He was dressed in **tweeds**.

ABSTRACT NOUNS

NATURAL PHENOMENA: cold, heat, lightning, sunshine, weather

ABSTRACT IDEAS: courage, freedom, happiness, luck, peace

Abstract nouns may be used as countable nouns when they denote an object exhibiting the quality expressed by the noun:

Beauty is only skin deep. *but* Mrs. Brown's daughters are all renowned **beauties**.

Some abstract nouns are used in the plural to intensify the meaning expressed by the singular: the **frosts** of an arctic winter, the **chills** of winter, the **colds** of midwinter, the **heats** of Africa

The plural of some non-countable nouns denotes depth of feeling: **My sympathies! Many thanks! Congratulations!**

En : *Slov*
UNCOUNT.
information
advice
knowledge
news
work

Slov
COUNT.

En : *Slov.*
COUNT.
imports
exports
developments
energy
life
risk

En : *Slov.*

PL. : SG.

Make up your minds!
This will break your parents' hearts.
(p. 54!)

NOUNS ENDING IN -ICS

The name of sciences ending in -ics, though plural in form are nowadays usually treated as singulars.

Acoustics is the science of heard sound.

Phonetics is a branch of linguistics.

Politics demands a person's whole energies.

But the above nouns are usually treated as plurals when practical is meant:

The **acoustics** of our new concert hall **are** good.

His **phonetics are** first class.

The nouns **athletics**, **gymnastics**, **tactics** are generally considered as plural since they imply practical application:

Athletics are an essential part of the Olympic Games.

Gymnastics help to keep you fit.

Some names of diseases in -s are usually treated as singulars.

Measles is an infectious disease.

Mumps is accompanied by a painful swelling in the neck.

Rickets is caused by deficiency in vitamin D.

→ *plural non-countable nouns* (p. 55-57)

A number of English non-countable nouns lack a singular form and are used only in the plural (*pluralia tantum*).

1. **the names of instruments and tools**

bellows, clippers, fetters, pincers, tongs, pliers, scales, scissors, shears, tweezers, glasses (spectacles), goggles

2. **the names of articles of clothing consisting of two identical parts**

braces, (riding) breeches, briefs (panties), corduroys, flannels, knickers, knicker-bockers, shorts, suspenders (suspender-belt!), overalls, pyjamas (pyjama belt!), tights, trousers (trouser-leg), (under) pants

3. **the names of some parts of the body**

bowels, entrails, guts, intestines (small intestine, large intestine!)

4. **nouns in -s denoting places** (indefinite plurality)

environs, lodgings, outskirts, premises, slums, suburbs, tropics, whereabouts

5. **the names of mountain ranges, some islands and countries**

the Alps, the Balkans, the Rockies, the West Indies, the Netherlands (p. 56!)

6. **some miscellaneous nouns denoting indefinite plurality**

auspices, customs, clothes, digs, dregs, goods, grapes, hops, looks, morals, oats, remains, preserves, railings, suds

7. **a number of substantivized adjectives**

the ancients, the classics, the drinkables, the eatables/edibles, the greens, the moderns, the movables, the odds, the particulars, the rapids, the shallows, the valuables

→ *nouns of multitude* (p. 57-58)

Nouns of multitude are *pluralia tantum* judging by their patterning. Though singular in form they are used with determiners that pattern either with all nouns or with plural nouns only and always take a plural verb: **CATTLE, FOLK, GENTRY, MILITIA, KINDRED, PEOPLE, POLICE, VERMIN, YOUTH.**

→ *plurals with different meanings* (p. 58-59)

The plurals of some nouns have two or more meanings of which one is usually similar to the singular meaning, the other(s) being different from it. In such cases the plural form has been **lexicalized** (it has acquired another lexical meaning, which results in **homonymy** – the occurrence of words that have the same spelling and pronunciation but a different meaning).

See Blaganje-Konte, p. 58-59 for examples!