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DUALITY OF PLURALITY: GRAMMATICAL DIFFICULTIES AND STYLISTIC MARKEDNESS

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The phenomenon of duality has been discussed among many linguists for quite a long time now, as it is one of the forms that is rare. Despite that, this form, which denotes exactly two entities in nouns, still remains crucial in some languages (e.g. Slovene, Hebrew, Arabic). Surveying double plurals is therefore relevant for understanding how grammatical categories evolve through history, why it’s being replaced by other forms and how certain forms convey subtle difference in stylistic meaning.

The objectives of the study include the following aspects. First and foremost, it aims to define the key concepts, such as the noun, grammatical number and the types of number (singular, dual and plural). Second of all, it traces the origins of the dual number and outlines its development in Proto-Indo-European and selected daughter languages. This diachronic component draws on reconstructed PIE dual endings and on clear reflexes in languages such as Vedic Sanskrit and Homeric Greek. Third, it describes the cross-linguistic typology of grammatical number distinctions with an emphasis on the dual form of nouns. In addition, the study explores the decline and loss of the dual in the Indo-European language family, analyses the survival of dual forms and dual meanings in modern languages and dialects and investigates practical examples of duality and plurality in literary texts, with particular attention to Old English pronouns and reduplicated plural forms. The analysis also examines compensatory strategies that appear when the dual is lost – regular, irregular, invariable plurals and some explicit lexical markers.

The research employs descriptive, comparative, and contextual analysis methods. The material of the study includes grammatical descriptions, historical linguistic data and textual examples drawn from Old English poetry and dialectal sources.

Key words: *dual number, grammatical number, plural forms, reduplicated plurals, Proto-Indo-European, Old English.*

Кусмина Марія-Магдалина, Гриців Наталія. Двоїна множини: граматичні труднощі та стилістичне забарвлення

Феномен двоїни вже досить давно обговорюється багатьма лінгвістами, оскільки це одна з рідкісних форм множини. Незважаючи на це, ця форма, що позначає саме дві сутності в іменниках, усе ще залишається важливою в деяких мовах (наприклад, словенській, івриті, арабській тощо). Тому дослідження подвійної множини є важливим для розуміння того, як граматичні категорії еволюціонують протягом історії, чому вони замінюються іншими формами і як певні форми передають тонкі відмінності в стилістичному забарвленні.

Це дослідження включає такі аспекти. Перш за все, воно має на меті визначити ключові поняття, такі як «іменник», «граматична кількість» і «види числа» (однина, двоїна і множина). По-друге, воно розглядає походження подвійного числа та окреслює його розвиток у праіндоєвропейській мові та окремих дочірніх мовах. Цей діахронічний компонент базується на реконструйованих закінченнях подвійного числа праіндоєвропейської мови та на прикладах у таких мовах, як ведичний санскрит та гомерівська грецька. По-третє, стаття описує міжмовну типологію граматичних відмінностей

числа з акцентом на подвійній формі іменників. Окрім того, у дослідженні розглядається занепад і втрата двоїни в індоєвропейській мовній сім'ї, аналізується збереження форм двоїни та подвійних значень у сучасних мовах і діалектах, а також досліджуються практичні приклади двоїни та множини в літературних текстах з особливою увагою до староанглійських займенників і редупліковаих форм множини. Аналіз також розглядає компенсаторні стратегії, що з›являються за втрати двоїни: правильні, неправильні, незмінні форми множини та деякі явні лексичні маркери.

У дослідженні використовуються методи описового, порівняльного та контекстуального аналізу. Матеріал дослідження включає граматичні описи, історичні лінгвістичні дані та текстові приклади, узяті зі староанглійської поезії та діалектних джерел.

Ключові слова: *двоїна, граматичне число, форми множини, редупліковані форми множини, праіндоєвропейська мова, староанглійська мова.*

Introduction. This study discusses the problem of how the dual number has evolved and is styled in languages that no longer have a dedicated dual form. Both the historical decline of the dual and the modern traces of dual meaning are investigated in this article. In particular, the focus is on the stylistic and functional roles of the dual form – for instance, dual pronouns in Old English poetry or reduplicated plurals in dialect – and what they reveal about expressing "two" without a built-in dual inflection. Altogether, the research problem is to understand the interplay between dual and plural number: how loss of a grammatical dual is reflected in language structures and style, and how exactly two entities were marked before and how they are expressed today.

Aims of the research. The aim of the investigation is to analyse the grammatical status of dual forms and their stylistic markedness in languages where they were used. The study seeks to define key concepts such as the noun, grammatical number and the main types of number such as singular, dual and plural in order to provide a clear theoretical foundation. It traces the origins of the dual number and highlights its development in Proto-Indo-European and selected daughter languages. Furthermore, the investigation explores the cross-linguistic typology of grammatical number distinctions with particular emphasis on the dual form of nouns, describing its decline and eventual loss in most Indo-European languages. At the same time, it analyses the survival of dual forms and dual meanings in modern languages and dialects, highlighting examples where the dual persists either morphologically or functionally. Finally, the study investigates practical examples of duality and plurality in literary texts, with special attention to Old English dual pronouns and reduplicated plural forms, in order to explore how dual meanings are expressed.

A noun is a major word class that usually names people, places, things, events, substances, or qualities [1]. This fundamental definition, however, frequently overlooks the complexity of its morphological features. To thoroughly investigate the topic of dual number, a broad understanding of this phenomenon is essential, particularly in terms of investigating the topic of dual number. Drawing upon on Longman's Dictionary, a noun is formally defined as a word which is capable of functioning as a subject or object and be modified by determiners or adjectives [2, p. 412]. Therefore, the grammatical status of a noun expresses its full identity by interacting with other elements on the syntax level. Without this interaction, further modifications of the noun form could not be possible – determiners and adjectives may show the features which a noun could have. And one of the most crucial features which may govern its surrounding modifiers is the number of the noun.

Grammatical number is a morphological aspect which expresses count quantities of the noun and associated agreeing elements (e.g. pronouns, adjectives) such as "one", "two" or "more than two" [3]. Due to that, the distinction of number categories is presented as "singular" or "plural" most of the time, as these are the most widespread categories. They may affect agreement on adjectives, determiners, and verbs and can be expressed in the presence of a numeral adjective or quantifiers (e.g. *two*, *many*, *some*).

Although many languages distinct only singular and plural, certain of them have additional categories, including the dual, trial and paucal number [3]. **The dual**, fundamentally, is the grammatical mechanism designed to single out "two" languages units – exactly a pair – and can be characterised in different ways depending on the analytical focus; from a grammatical viewpoint it is the number that literally means "two persons or things" [4]. In practice, when a noun

or pronoun is marked as dual it tells the listener that the speaker has precisely two referents in mind, usually conceived as a paired or tightly linked unit rather than as an indefinite small group. In languages that preserve dual morphology within their grammar, agreement can extend beyond nouns and pronouns: verbs and other agreeing elements frequently adopt distinct dual forms to align with the dual-marked argument [5].

For instance, these could be pronouns in English such as *both* in contrast to another similar word like *all*, *either* as opposed to *any*, etc. In these cases, *both* refers to two specific things, while *all* refers to each of three or more things, and *either* – used when there are two alternatives – contrasts with *any*, which is neutral over a possibly larger set of things. Another good example of the difference between dual number and plural are determiners; in Modern Standard Arabic there are dual and plural demonstrative determiners like هذانِ (hādhān) "these two" (masculine), هاتانِ (hātān) "these two" (feminine), and the opposite to the previous ones هؤلاء (hā'ulā'i) "these (people)", which exactly has a plural meaning in it, not dual.

Crucially, in many languages, plural forms have supplanted to cover the function of the dual. There are different types of **plural forms**, such as regular plurals, irregular plurals and invariable (or zero) plurals. With respect to nouns – specifically plural nouns – the most common form in English is the regular plural, formed by adding an inflectional affix written as -s/-es to the singular noun (e.g. *cat – cats*; *bus – buses*). Inflectional affixes are a letter or sound, or group of letters or sounds, which are attached to a word to show its grammatical categories (for example, number, tense or case) without changing the word's core meaning or its lexical class [2, p. 17]. Regular plural formation is what learners first come across and what most grammars treat as the typical pluralisation mechanism. On the other hand, the second major class is irregular plurals, which "may involve vowel shifts, ending replacement, or complete word changes, and don't follow a single rule" [6]. To give an example, the plural form *man – men* shows the vowel shift, the ending replacement is evident in *leaf – leaves* and some words need complete word changes, such as *person – people* or *child – children*. Finally, certain nouns are invariable (or zero-plural): they retain an identical form in singular and plural (*sheep*; *species*; *aircraft*) and need to be memorised due to their historically established forms.

Since Modern English does not have a dual number in its grammar, functions that would be expressed by dual morphology are carried out by the regular plural. The same absence of dual forms is present in most modern Indo-European languages; nevertheless, the dual can still be found in a few languages such as Irish, Scottish Gaelic, Lithuanian, Slovene and Sorbian [5].

For instance, in Slovene the dual is active, both morphologically and syntactically, in the majority of contexts: dual morphology is obligatory except for nouns that are natural pairs (e.g. *trousers*, *eyes*, *ears*, *hands*, *legs*, *feet*, *kidneys*, *lungs*), for which the plural form is usually used unless the speaker wants to stress that something is true for both one and the other part of the pair. Therefore, the speaker could say *oči me bolijo* ("my eyes hurt"), although to emphasise that the feeling affects both eyes the speaker may use the dual *obe očesi me bolita*. Similarly, following the distributive pronoun *obe/oba* ("both"), the subsequent noun must appear in the dual; however, the use of *obe* itself is not required, since the dual morphological form on a noun such as *očesi* already conveys the meaning "both" [5].

The dual persists in a few specific dialect groups too. For instance, although Standard German – like English – lost its dual, some southern German dialects retain a dual pronoun *enk* (related to the Old English *inc*, "to you two") in place of the older plural form. Thus, while most modern Arabic dialects have replaced historical duals with general plurals, natural pairs (e.g. *idēn,* "hands") keep the former dual form [7].

In languages where the dual has weakened or disappeared, its semantic function is often compensated for by plural strategies. One such strategy is the use of reduplicated plurals. According to Wikipedia`s article on the topic of a reduplicated plural, it is defined as "a grammatical form achieved by the superfluous use of a second plural ending" [8]. In standard English, the plural of a noun is typically formed with a single suffix (for example, *book – books*). **Reduplicated plural**, on the other hand, adds an extra plural suffix beyond the usual one. As follows, a noun can acquire two plural morphemes. A clear example to demonstrate this mechanism is the Sussex *Ammut-castès*, meaning "ant-hills" [9, p. 13].

The same pattern is demonstrated across several lexical items in Sussex: the epenthetic *-es* is maintained and repeated. This phenomenon is visible in the following well-known Sussex riddle: "I saw the *ghostesses* / Sitting on their *postesses*, / Eating of their *toastesses*, / And fighting with their *fistesses* [ibid.]".

The Sussex pluralisation is made not simply by adding "s" after "-st", but by adding "es" as its usual plural or a reduplicated "-esses" [8]. The usage of the reduplicated plural in the previous example is also particularly shown in Lewis Carroll's *Canto IV* of "*Hys Nouryture"* [10, p. 27] from the poetry collection "*Phantasmagoria"*, but the main difference between them lies in the endings: Carroll, instead of using the Sussex "-esses" applies "-eses", without the additional "-s": "It's not in Nursery Rhymes? And yet / I almost think it is – / "Three little *Ghosteses*" were set / "On *posteses*", you know, and ate / Their 'buttered *toasteses* [ibid.]".

In Carrol's "*Hys Nouryture"*, the narrator and ghost discuss the lines resembling nursery rhymes, including the plurals *ghosteses*, *posteses* and *toasteses*. By imitating the Sussex reduplicated plural, Carroll creates a playful, rhythmic effect that echoes folk speech.

Reduplicated plural has also been documented in some rarer forms of American English. Certain speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and New York Latino English show these alternatives only in a few isolated lexical cases. For instance, the noun *test* may be used with the plural *testes* rather than the standard *tests* [8].

If to talk about the development of the dual forms, comparative linguistics suggests that **Proto-Indo-European** (PIE) did have a dual number, even though the surviving evidence is not extensive. Based on the available data from later Indo-European languages, researchers have outlined several case endings that were probably used specifically for the dual. One of the commonly cited reconstructions comes from Mallory and Adams (2006), who offer an approximate set of nominal endings [5]. For interpretation of these endings, convention is as follows: an asterisk (*) marks a reconstructed form; h_1, h_2, h_3 represent laryngeal sounds (the capital *H* stands for an unspecified laryngeal); parentheses indicate optional segments (e.g. *-h_1(e)* means *-h_1* with possible *-e*); a sequence like *-oH* means the vowel *o* plus a laryngeal; a final *s* (as in *-oHs*) indicates an added sibilant sound. Abbreviations are: Nom. (nominative), Acc. (accusative), Voc. (vocative), Gen. (genitive), Abl. (ablative), Dat. (dative), Loc. (locative), Inst. (instrumental).

Mallory and Addams (2006) reconstruct the endings in such a way: Nom./Acc./Voc. dual *-h_1(e)* (laryngeal h_1 with an optional *-e* vocalic element), Gen./Abl. dual *-h_1(e)* or *-oHs* (either the same laryngeal form as the nom./acc. or an alternate formation with *o* + laryngeal + *s*), Dat. dual *-me* (attested in several branches) or *-OH* (vowel + laryngeal), Loc. dual *-$h_1$ow* (built on the laryngeal plus *-ow* (cf. later-stage *-ōw* reflexes)), Inst. dual *-$b^h ih_1$* (formed with *$b^h i$-* plus a laryngeal h_1) [5].

These reconstructed five dual case-endings for PIE by Mallory and Adams (2006) are reflected in the daughter paradigms. The clearest textbook reflexes occur in Vedic Sanskrit, where masculine nouns have Nom./Acc. dual *-au* (बालौ, pronounced as bālau), Gen./Loc. dual *-yoḥ* (बालयोः, pronounced as bālayoḥ), and the familiar Inst./Dat. dual *-bhyām* (बालाभ्याम्, pronounced as bālābhyām) [11, p. 117]. Homeric Greek preserves the dual as a two-form system (Nom./Acc./Voc. and Gen./Dat.): the Nom./Acc./Voc. dual endings descend from **-h_1(e)* (seen as Homeric *-ε* in many paradigms), while the Gen./Dat. dual corresponds to the **-oH* type; proper-name duals such as the Homeric *Αἴαντε* generally denotes Ajax together with his companion Teucer, illustrating the dual's associative/paired usage in epic formulae [12, p. 173]. Early Slavic (Old Church Slavonic/Proto-Slavic) likewise preserves specialised dual forms (e.g. dative dual reflexes like *-ma*/*-om* in various reconstructions), and adjectives and pronouns systematically agree with nouns in the dual across these archaic stages [5].

Comparative morphology shows that the dual was a grammatical number in Proto-Indo-European used obligatorily for natural pairs and secondarily as an "associative" or elliptical dual. Linguists reconstruct PIE forms like **$h_2$ówi h_1e* "two sheep" and **h_2éǵro h_1* "two fields" to illustrate concrete dual examples [13]. The dual could denote a literal pair of entities or an implied duo: for example, the Vedic form **Mitrā́* (Mitrá- dual) is understood as "Mitra and Varuṇa" (Varuṇa in the dual), while the Homeric dual *Αἴαντε* ("Aiante") conventionally refers to Ajax together with Teucer and Latin *Castorēs* to Castor and Pollux. To put it another way, when a

dual form of a proper noun occurs it often means that person and his close associate are taken as a set [ibid.].

From antiquity onward the dual largely fell into disuse in most branches. Latin and its Italic relatives lost the dual almost entirely; only a few fossil forms (e.g. *ambo*/*-ae* meaning "both") and certain numerals (e.g. *duo/duae* meaning "two") hint at it [ibid.]. Similarly, in Ancient Greek the dual gradually declined during the Classical period and disappeared by the Hellenistic era [ibid.]. Within the Germanic family, Proto-Germanic had already lost dual noun inflections (and with them thirdperson dual verbs) by the earliest records. Only first- and second-person dual pronouns (and their verb forms) remained [13]. **Old English** continued this trend: it had no dual noun forms, and its only dual survivals were the pronouns *wit* ("we two")/*ġit* ("you two") plus cases (accusative *unc*/*inc*, genitive *uncer/ incer*). In fact, the runic inscription on the 8th-century Ruthwell Cross famously includes the words *uŋket men ba ætgad[re]* ("us two"), which shows the Old English dual pronoun *wit* ("we two") [13].

By the Middle English period the dual was nearly gone. Dual pronouns survived only in certain dialects until about 1300: for example, *wit/ unc* (Nom./Acc.) and *ġit/inc* appear in late Old English and early Middle English texts, then evolve into forms like *ȝit*, *unk*, *hunk* before disappearing in most varieties [5]. As Danny Bate notes, "English once had [the dual], but in English it's disappeared into oblivion" [13], the plural taking over the "two" meaning in virtually all contexts. That is the reason for translators to use phrases like *we two* or *the two of us* to convey the correct meaning while translating the texts into Modern English [14].

The best representative of applying this technique is shown in the famous work of Anglo-Saxon literature "*Beowulf"*. The dual pronouns occur a couple of times in this poem and are used in three case forms: nominative, accusative and dative. The nominative dual pronoun is shown in the next passage: "*Hæfdon swurd nacod, þa wit on sund reon, / heard on handa. Wit unc wið hronfixas / werian þohton*" (Beowulf 537–540) [15]. This passage focuses on the relationship between Beowulf and Breca. Beowulf refers to this episode to correct Unferth's taunt, describing the event as a dangerous encounter in which he was armed to defend himself against sea creatures. The usage of the dual pronoun *wit* is shown in the sentence "*Wit unc wið hronfixas / werian þohto*", where *wit* means "we two" (the 1-st person dual nominative), *unc* – "(to) us two" (1-st person dual accusative or dative), *wið* – "against/towards", *hronfixas* – "whale-fishes" as whale-creatures/sea-beasts (the compound of hron meaning whale and fixas meaning fish), *werian* – "to defend", *þohton* – the past plural of *þencan* meaning "to think/to intend" [16]. Literal translation to Modern English of the clause is: "We two intended to defend ourselves against the whale-creatures". The version by Seamus Heaney presents a slightly altered version of the Old English, which says: "Each of us swam holding a sword, / A naked, hard-proofed blade for protection / Against the whale-beasts" and replaces the sentence with an explanatory element [15]. Here, the pronoun *wit*, the first-person dual nominative, is used alongside *unc*, the first-person dual accusative. This pairing shows the shared experience between two people – Beowulf and Breca – and intensifies a sense of unity through the use of *unc*.

We can also notice the usage of *unc* in the next lines: "*Nelle ic beorges weard / oferfleon fotes trem, ac unc sceal / weorðan æt wealle swa unc wyrd geteoð, / Metod manna gehwæs*" (Beowulf, 2525–2528) [15]. Before Beowulf enters the Dragon's lair, he prepares to meet the barrow-guardian alone. He begins with a resolute vow: "*Nelle ic beorges weard / oferfleon fotes trem*" ("I won't shift a foot / When I meet the cave-guard: … [ibid.]") and accepts whatever fate (*wyrd*) is determined for him and the Dragon. The fate he accepts is a dual fate – in the part "*weorðan æt wealle swa unc wyrd geteoð*" in Modern English *weorðan* means "to become/ to happen/to turn out", *æt* – "at", *wealle* – "rampart", *swa* – "as/just as", *unc* – "us two" (first-person dual accusative/dative), *wyrd* – "fate/destiny", *geteoð* – "determines/decides" [16]. If to translate literally, that is "to happen at the wall as fate determines for us two".

Additionally, the genitive is shown in the next passage: "*hwylc earfoðhwil uncer Grendles …*" (Beowulf, 2005) [15]. Lines 2003–2013 state the Beowulf's report to King Hygelac upon returning to Geatland. Following the successful completion of his quest in Denmark (the land of the Scyldings), Beowulf returned home to the court of his sovereign and uncle, King Hygelac. Beowulf concisely summarises the

main event – the wrestling match with the monster Grendel. In the original text to show that he and the monster were in the battle one-on-one he says: "*hwylc earfoðhwil uncer Grendles*", where *hwylc* is an alternative form of *hwelċ* meaning "which one", *earfoþhwíl* means "hard time, time of hardship", *uncer* – "of us two" (first-person dual genitive) and *Grendles* is the name of the monster [15]. Literal translation in Modern English would be: "Which hardship-time of us two (and) Grendel's", and the alternative, slightly altered translation by Seamus Heaney is "Myself and Grendel coming to grips" [ibid.]. In both of these translations the usage of *uncer* as a dual pronoun, meaning the pair of Beowulf and Grendles, shows the hard time shared by both characters.

There are also some cases where a reinforcer of the dual meaning for the genitive *uncer* may be used. For instance, "*Gebide ge on beorge byrnum werede, / secgas on searwum, hwæðer sel mæge / æfter wælræse wunde gedygan uncer twega"* (Beowulf, 2530–2533) [15]. The mentioned speech occurs immediately after Beowulf has addressed the Dragon and before the physical confrontation begins. Beowulf has led his company of Geatish warriors to the Dragon's lair, but he decides he must face this foe alone. Beowulf first issues a formal command to his men – "*Gebide ge on beorge byrnum werede, / secgas on searwum...* [ibid.]" ("Men at arms, remain here on the barrow, safe in your armor..."). Beowulf then defines the nature of the upcoming duel, using the dual pronoun: *"...hwæðer sel mæge ... wunde gedygan uncer twega* [ibid.]" ("...to see which one of us is better in the end at bearing wounds in a deadly fray"). Here we have *uncer* used again, additionally with *twega* which is a reinforcer of the dual meaning.

From a grammar perspective, dual pronouns pose difficulties: Old English plural genitive is normally *ure* ("our"), so *uncer* can be mistaken for an archaism or scribal variant. Recognising *uncer* (and *unc*) as dual requires knowing the *wit* paradigm [5].

The plurality in Old English is also expressed by nouns. Old English nouns change their form according to case and number, so plural meanings are shown by distinctive endings. In The Dream of the Rood, which is one of the famous Christian poems, several nouns appear in plural forms (often in genitive or accusative). Some of these are included in the next passages. One of the examples is *sorga* in the lines "*Nū ðū miht ġehȳran, hæleð mīn se lēofa, / þæt iċ bealuwara weorc ġebiden hæbbe, / sārra sorga"* (The Dream of the Rood, 78–80) [17]. In this passage the Cross is speaking, saying "Now thou mayst hear, my dearest man, that bale of woes have I endured, of sorrows sore [18]". The noun *sorga* (from *sorg*, "sorrow") appears in the phrase *sārra sorga*. According to the glossing dictionary, *sorga* is a strong feminine noun in the genitive plural [17]. In context *sārra sorga* literally means "of sorrows [that are] sore/painful". The genitive plural ending *-a* on *sorga* marks it as plural ("of many sorrows"). In modern translation, it is rendered as "of sorrows sore" (*sārra* in *sārra sorga* is the genitive plural of the adjective *sar* "sore, painful").

Another example is shown in the next lines: "*Nū ðū miht ġehȳran, hæleð mīn se lēofa, / þæt iċ bealuwara weorc ġebiden hæbbe, / sārra sorga"* (The Dream of the Rood, 78–80) [17]. The phrase *bealuwara weorc* means roughly "evil deeds" or "evil works". Here *weorc* (from *weorc*, "work, deed") is used as the object of "have I endured" (*gebiden hæbbe*). The dictionary embedded into the website with the poem notes *weorc* as a strong neuter noun in the accusative plural [16]. Neuter strong nouns in Old English typically have identical nominative and accusative forms; here *weorc* remains unchanged for the plural. In context it means "works" or "deeds" (plural). The translator has it as "bale of woes" [18], but literally *bealuwara weorc* is "[bale] of evil deeds".

Another example is the plural *langunghwīla*: "*Ġebæd iċ mē þā tō þan bēame blīðe mōde, / elne mycle, þǣr iċ āna wæs /mǣte werede. Wæs mōdsefa / āfȳsed on forðweġe; feala ealra ġebād/ langunghwīla*" (The Dream of the Rood, 122–126) [17]. In this section the Cross speaks of waiting with "great zeal" and enduring "many *langunghwīla*". The word *langunghwīla* is identified as a strong feminine noun in the genitive plural of *langunghwil* [16]. It is a compound of *langung* ("longing, desire") and *hwīl* ("time"), literally "times of longing". Thus, *langunghwīla* means "of times of longing". In modern translation the phrase is rendered as "hours of longing" [18].

The dual form of plural remains actively used in only a few modern Indo-European languages now. Slovenian and the Sorbian languages (Upper/Lower Sorbian) preserve a full

morphological dual number in nouns, adjectives, pronouns and verbs [5]. (Slovene, for instance, requires dual forms except in natural pairs like *krošnje* "twin-trees" [ibid.]. Old Gaelic languages continue to use specialised dual constructions: modern Irish and Scottish Gaelic still use dual-like forms with the numeral for two. For instance, *mo dhá lámh*/*mo dhà làim* mean "my two hands" (Irish *dhá* and Gaelic *dhà* are dual markers for two) [13]. Among Slavic languages, only Slovene and Sorbian kept the dual as a full part of grammar [5]. Most other Slavic tongues lost a true dual, but traces remain in old number agreement. For example, Czech and Polish still employ special forms for "two": in Czech *dva* ("two" masc.), *dvě* ("two" fem./neut.), and even higher numerals like *dvě stě* ("two hundred") preserve an old dual form [ibid.]. In fact, modern Czech employs *dvě* (feminine two) in *dvě stě korun českých* ("two hundred Czech crowns").

Interestingly, a few modern English varieties have introduced and reintroduced dual reference in their pronominal systems, in other words in their set of pronouns used in the languages. In certain Australian Aboriginal English dialects and in Torres Strait English, new "duals" like *menyou* (1st-person inclusive "we two"), *mentwofella* (1st-person exclusive "we two"), *yuntu ofella* or *yunut ofella* (2nd person "you two"), etc. have emerged. To give another example, Central Australian Aboriginal English has *menyou*, *mentwofella*, *yountwofella* and *twofella* for "we two, you two, those two" respectively. Torres Strait English uses *mitu* ("we two") and *yutu* ("you two") [5]. These forms are specialised markers for exactly two participants, rather than ordinary plurals. They are thought to have arisen through language contact and reanalysis (e.g. influence from Indigenous Australian languages that have dual pronouns). In any case, they show that English speakers in some communities have re-created a sort of dual number for pronouns.

Conclusions. The article has demonstrated that the dual number, although marginal in most modern languages, represents a historically significant and conceptually distinct grammatical category. Originating as a fully functional number system in Proto-Indo-European, the dual was once systematically expressed in nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs. Over time, however, processes of simplification and reanalysis led to its gradual decline and eventual loss in the majority of Indo-European languages, including English, Latin and most Germanic and Romance varieties.

It is also shown, that in languages where the dual disappeared, its semantic function was largely absorbed by the plural. Nevertheless, this replacement is not neutral: the plural lacks the precision of "exactly two" and often requires additional lexical or syntactic means to convey dual meaning. As a result, traces of duality remain visible in fossilised forms, specialised pronouns, numeral constructions and dialectal features. Languages such as Slovene and Sorbian illustrate that a fully grammatical dual can still function productively, while other languages preserve only partial or indirect reflexes.

In Old English poetry, especially in Beowulf, dual pronouns such as wit, unc, and uncer serve not only a grammatical function but also reinforce thematic elements of partnership, shared fate and opposition. Their correct interpretation poses grammatical difficulties for modern readers and translators, as the dual forms are easily confused with plurals or archaisms. Similarly, the research of reduplicated plural forms in the Sussex dialect and in Lewis Carroll's "Phantasmagoria" demonstrates how non-standard pluralisation strategies can compensate for lost distinctions and acquire expressive stylistic value.

Overall, the study confirms that the relationship between duality and plurality is not merely a matter of numerical distinction but reflects broader processes of grammatical change, stylistic markedness and linguistic creativity. Even in languages where the dual has formally disappeared, the concept of "two-ness" continues to shape grammatical structures and textual meaning. This highlights the dynamic nature of grammatical categories and underscores the importance of diachronic and contextual approaches in linguistic analysis.

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