

**THE CATEGORY OF CASE IN THE SYSTEM OF MODERN RUSSIAN
SUBSTANTIVE INFLECTION: STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC ASPECT****Khamraeva Dilrabo Ramazanovna**Lecturer of Russian Language and
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Abstract. This article explores the grammatical category of case in modern Russian from the perspective of structural-semantic and functional approaches. The classical six-case paradigm of substantive declension is examined in detail, analyzing the underlying invariant meanings of cases and their contextually and syntactically determined modifications. Particular attention is paid to the interlevel nature of case, the phenomenon of case syncretism (morphological homonymy of inflections), and the functioning of the so-called peripheral, or "second" case forms (partitive and locative) within the framework of everyday speech practice. Based on a detailed analysis of the valences of governing lexemes, the syntactic nature of the case form is substantiated as an interlevel node linking the underlying semantics of an utterance with its linear-grammatical structure. This work contributes to the systematization of ideas about the categorical status of case and the mechanisms of interaction between morphology and syntax in Slavic studies.

Key words: morphology of the Russian language, case paradigm, substantive inflection, syncretism of inflections, semantic-syntactic functions, invariant of meaning, partitive, locative, inflection, valency.

Introduction. The grammatical category of case traditionally occupies a central, fundamental place in the morphological system of the Russian language. As one of the most complex and multifaceted categories, case serves as the primary means of expressing the syntactic relationships of a noun with other lexemes (verbs, names, adverbial units) in the structure of a coherent utterance. In linguistics, case is defined as an inflectional category realized through a ramified system of inflections that encodes both purely syntactic positions (for example, the relationship of subject to predicate) and the complex semantic-syntactic (role) functions of a noun (agent, patient, instrument, addressee).

The relevance of case paradigm research at the beginning of the 21st century stems from the need for a profound theoretical rethinking of the dichotomy of direct and oblique cases, as well as the nature of inflectional syncretism, which manifests a profound and inseparable connection between the morphological expression of a lexeme and its syntactic position in a sentence. Despite a long history of study, the categorical boundaries of case, the nature of its invariant meanings, and the status of peripheral forms remain the subject of heated debate in the academic community.

The purpose of this article is to present a detailed systemic description of the six-case structure of the substantive declension of the modern Russian language, to identify their basic semantic functions, to analyze the boundary phenomena of the case paradigm and to explicate the syntactic determinacy of case forms in the functional aspect.

Methods. The methodological framework for this study was based on the fundamental principles of structural-semantic analysis, the tenets of functional-communicative grammar, and the distributional method. A synchronic approach to analyzing linguistic material allowed us to examine the case system as a fixed yet internally dynamic structure.



The following research methods were consistently applied in the work:

- The method of grammatical oppositions was used to highlight strong (marked) and weak (unmarked) grammatical meanings within the case paradigm, as well as to contrast the direct case with the indirect case.
- Contextual and distributional analysis made it possible to distinguish between the periodic (absolute, isolated) and the globular (dependent, constructive) use of word forms, and also to identify the dependence of case semantics on the lexical environment.
- The method of component analysis of grammatical meaning was used to decompose case meanings into elementary semantic features (semes of directionality, objectivity, instrumentality, etc.).

The material for the analysis was the normative paradigms of substantive declension, recorded in the academic "Russian Grammar" (1980), as well as representative examples from modern discourse, illustrating the living tendencies of the development of the case system.

Results. The morphological system of the modern Russian language verifies the stable presence of six main (core) cases. Based on syntactic independence, they are strictly divided into the direct case (nominative) and a group of oblique cases (genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, and prepositional). Each of these has an abstract, invariant meaning, which is specified and fragmented into submeanings under specific syntagmatic and lexical conditions.

Nominative case. The nominative case is the only direct case, semantically independent of verbal or nominal government. It occupies a completely autonomous position in syntactic structure. Its key functions are nominative (absolute naming of a substance without reference to a predicate) and syntactically subjective (marking the active agent in the structure of a two-part sentence). The nominative case lacks prepositions and is the initial form of a noun.

Genitive case . The genitive case is characterized by the broadest range of adverbial and adverbial functions of all the oblique cases, making its structure nuclear-peripheral. The main macromeanings of the genitive case include:

- Partitivity (quantitative relation, indication of a part of the whole);
- Possession (expression of belonging of an object to a person or another substance);
- Ablativity (the semantics of removal, outcome, as well as marking the absence or complete negation of an object in negative constructions).

Dative case.

The dative case fundamentally implements the semantics of **directionality**, primarily acting as the case of the addressee or beneficiary (the person in whose interests the action is performed). In prepositionless constructions, it determines the object experiencing an indirect, mediated influence (" help a friend "), and in specific impersonal sentences, it is transformed into a marker of **the logical subject of a state** (" I'm cold", "the student can't sleep ").

Accusative case .

The accusative case is functionally fixed as the case of **the direct object** of transitive verbs. Its semantic core lies in expressing the ultimate, total scope of an object in an action. The object expressed by the accusative case undergoes radical internal or external changes during the predicative act, is transformed, or is re-created as a result of this action (like building a house or reading a book).

Instrumental case .

The instrumental case exhibits the greatest syncretic diversity of instrumental, descriptive, and adverbial meanings. At a deep level, it represents:

- A tool or means of performing an action (**instrumentalis** - to chop with an axe);
- Togetherness (**comitative** - to go with a friend);
- Formal agent in passive, passive constructions (the law was adopted by the Duma);
- Various temporal, spatial and qualifying parameters (fly like an arrow, go through the forest).



Prepositional

The prepositional case is syntactically bound to an absolute degree, as it functions exclusively in conjunction with prepositions. Its semantic field is clearly divided between two macrospheres: **locative meaning** (spatial landmarks, the location of an action) and **object-oriented/explanatory meaning** (the sphere of cognitive, mental, or speech activity of a person— thinking about the future, talking about science).

Discussion. Analysis of theoretical and empirical material reveals a profound structural asymmetry between the limited number of morphological forms (six cases) and the potentially infinite range of semantic, logical, and syntactic relations they express. This contradiction is resolved by language through two key mechanisms: case syncretism and the use of prepositional devices.

One of the most controversial and complex issues in academic Russian studies remains the problem of **case syncretism** . A striking example is the coincidence of the accusative and nominative forms of inanimate masculine and neuter nouns (I see a house — there is a house), as well as the accusative and genitive forms of animate masculine nouns (I see a cat — there is no cat). This phenomenon convincingly demonstrates that the conceptual semantic category of animateness/inanimateness is deeply integrated into the morphological case paradigm and directly influences the linear coding of the text. The syncretism of inflections is compensated for by a strict syntactic context and word order, which prevents communicants from confusing the subject and object of an action.

The second important aspect of the discussion concerns the grammatical status of the so-called "**second**" (**peripheral**) **cases** . In everyday speech, relics of Proto-Slavic inflections that do not fit within the rigid framework of the six-case system are clearly visible:

- **Second genitive (partitive, quantitative-separative):** inflection -y/-ю instead of the standard -a/-я in material nouns (to drink tea, to buy sugar ;
- **Second prepositional (locative, local):** the inflection -ý/-ío under stress instead of -e to denote a limited space (in the forest, on the bridge, in the closet).

In the linguistic literature (in the works of A. A. Zaliznyak, V. A. Plungyan), there is a debate about whether the Russian case paradigm should be expanded to 8–9 cases (including the vocative/vocative— Bozhe, mam; limitative; zhdatelny, etc.). However, most academic researchers and the authors of "Russian Grammar-80" rightly view these forms as peripheral variants, stylistically or semantically limited doublets within the existing invariants of the genitive and prepositional cases. They lack universality and generality, as they are characteristic only of narrow lexical-semantic groups of masculine nouns of the second declension.

Thus, the functional potential of the case form is directly and strictly dependent on the valences of the governing word (primarily the predicate-verb). This definitively demonstrates the syntactic, connective nature of this category. Case inflection serves not simply as an isolated marker of a single noun, but as a complex intersystemic node that translates the conceptual mental structures of consciousness into the linear-grammatical fabric of the sentence.

Conclusion. Based on the comprehensive structural, semantic, and functional analysis of the case system of modern Russian substantive inflection, it is possible to formulate the following final conclusions:

1. The category of case in Russian is not an isolated morphological property of a noun, but rather a dynamic, multi-level system of interlevel nature. Its morphological indicators (inflections) are rigidly determined by syntactic positions, the type of relationship (agreement, control), and the semantic- valence characteristics of the governing lexemes.
2. The traditional six-case structure of the noun declension core possesses a colossal degree of abstraction, systemic stability, and pragmatic redundancy. The regular inclusion of variant peripheral forms (partitive and locative) in speech practice does not disrupt the basic paradigm,



but rather acts as microsystemic adaptive mechanisms that compensate for semantic gaps and are functionally limited to strictly defined lexical classes of words.

3. The phenomenon of case syncretism (homonymy of inflections) clearly illustrates the fundamental law of economy of linguistic resources. Differentiation and precise recognition of grammatical and role meanings when endings coincide is successfully transferred from the morphological to the syntactic level (through prepositional construction, word order, and verb context). This confirms the inseparable dialectical unity of morphology and syntax in the structure of the Russian language.

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