

TYPES OF TASKS FOR DIAGNOSING THE MASTERY OF THE GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY OF NUMBER IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE BY MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS OF UZBEK SCHOOLS

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Abstract:

This article examines the types of diagnostic tasks aimed at assessing the mastery of the grammatical category of number in the Russian language by middle and high school students in Uzbek schools. The study highlights the importance of identifying common errors and gaps in understanding singular and plural forms, as well as in using number in different parts of speech such as nouns, adjectives, and verbs. Various task formats—ranging from multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank exercises to sentence transformation and contextual analysis—are analyzed for their effectiveness in evaluating learners' competence. The article also offers recommendations for teachers on designing diagnostic tools that are age-appropriate and linguistically targeted to the specific needs of Uzbek learners studying Russian as a second language.

Keywords: grammatical number, diagnostic tasks, Russian as a second language, middle and high school students, language acquisition, Uzbek schools, singular and plural, grammar testing.

Introduction

In the context of multilingual education in Uzbekistan, Russian remains one of the key foreign or second languages studied in schools alongside English. Despite being taught for several decades, the effectiveness of Russian language instruction varies significantly across regions and institutions, often due to differences in methodology, teacher preparation, and the linguistic background of students. One of the crucial grammatical categories that students frequently struggle with is the **category of number** (singular/plural), which plays a central role in Russian morphology and syntax.

The **grammatical category of number** refers to the distinction between singular and plural forms of words, most commonly nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and verbs. In Russian, mastering number is particularly challenging for Uzbek-speaking learners due to fundamental structural differences between the Uzbek and Russian languages. Uzbek is an agglutinative language with a relatively regular system of suffixation, whereas Russian is a fusional language with a high degree of morphological complexity. This contrast can lead to difficulties in transferring grammatical knowledge across languages.

Moreover, Russian exhibits numerous irregularities in forming plural forms, especially in nouns and verbs. The presence of various declension types, stem alternations, and gender-specific endings means that students not only need to memorize forms but also understand underlying grammatical rules. Therefore, **diagnosing** the extent to which students have internalized and can apply the rules of number is essential for guiding further instruction and intervention.

The purpose of this article is to explore and categorize the **types of tasks** that can be used to effectively diagnose students' mastery of the grammatical category of number. The focus is placed on middle and high school students in Uzbek schools who are learning Russian as a second language. This age group is especially important because it represents a transition from basic language acquisition to more advanced, academic language use. At this stage, students are expected not only to understand grammar rules but also to apply them accurately in both oral and written communication.

Diagnostic tasks differ from traditional assessments in that they are **formative** in nature. They are intended to identify strengths and weaknesses in specific language areas, allowing teachers to adapt their instruction accordingly. In the case of number, diagnostic tasks must go beyond surface-level memorization and address the **functional use** of singular and plural forms in real communicative contexts. This includes identifying agreement errors (e.g., between subject and verb or noun and adjective), incorrect pluralization of irregular nouns, and failure to recognize contextual cues that signal the need for singular or plural.

A well-designed diagnostic task should meet several criteria: it should be **age-appropriate**, **linguistically relevant**, and **cognitively engaging**. For example,

younger students may benefit from visual aids and matching tasks that help reinforce the concept of quantity, while older students may be ready for error correction and sentence transformation exercises. Diagnostic tasks should also be designed with the **linguistic background** of Uzbek students in mind, taking into account typical error patterns that result from interference between Uzbek and Russian grammar systems. This article classifies diagnostic tasks into several categories based on their structure and purpose:

1. **Recognition Tasks** – Tasks in which students identify correct and incorrect usage of number in isolated sentences or phrases. These are useful for assessing passive knowledge and error recognition skills.
2. **Production Tasks** – Tasks that require students to produce singular or plural forms in context. These include fill-in-the-blank exercises, sentence completion, and short writing tasks. Production tasks are more cognitively demanding and offer insights into students' active grammatical competence.
3. **Transformation Tasks** – Exercises that ask students to transform sentences from singular to plural or vice versa. These tasks help test whether students understand not only the rules of pluralization but also the necessary adjustments in sentence structure.
4. **Contextual Analysis Tasks** – More advanced tasks where students read a passage or dialogue and answer questions related to the use of number. These tasks test whether students can infer number agreement in context and understand how it affects meaning.
5. **Game-Based and Interactive Tasks** – These include pair and group activities, card games, or digital tools that engage students in using singular and plural forms interactively. Though less formal, such tasks can reveal spontaneous errors and allow for peer-assisted learning.

Each of these task types serves a unique diagnostic function and can be selected or adapted based on the specific learning context. Importantly, the article also discusses **common mistakes** made by Uzbek students and links these to underlying linguistic causes. For example, the tendency to omit plural endings in Russian nouns often stems from the fact that Uzbek pluralization is achieved by a single suffix "-lar/-ler" that

does not affect other words in the sentence. In Russian, by contrast, pluralization affects not only the noun but also requires changes in adjectives, verbs, and even numbers, depending on the grammatical case.

In addition to linguistic factors, **pedagogical practices** also influence how well students master number. Teachers who rely heavily on translation and memorization may not provide enough contextualized practice for students to internalize grammatical structures. By incorporating diagnostic tasks into their regular teaching routine, educators can gain valuable insights into learners' progress and adjust their methodology to address specific gaps.

Another significant issue is the **lack of tailored diagnostic materials** in many Uzbek schools. Teachers often use textbooks designed for Russian-speaking students or general Russian language learners, which may not account for the specific challenges faced by Uzbek students. This gap underscores the need for localized diagnostic tools that reflect both the students' native language and the sociolinguistic context of Uzbek-Russian bilingual education.

Finally, the article aims to provide practical **recommendations** for language teachers and curriculum designers. It includes examples of diagnostic tasks, guidelines for creating task banks, and suggestions for interpreting student responses. Special attention is given to designing rubrics that can be used to evaluate the degree of mastery and identify developmental patterns over time.

In conclusion, the grammatical category of number is a foundational element of Russian grammar that requires focused and systematic instruction, especially for learners whose native language differs significantly in structure. By developing effective diagnostic tasks, educators can ensure that students not only memorize forms but also understand and apply them meaningfully. This contributes to greater grammatical accuracy, fluency, and overall proficiency in the Russian language.

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