STUDY OF RUSSIAN CASE FORMS IN LINGUISTICS

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Abstract

In Russian, the word order in the sentence is flexible because the relationships between words are shown by word endings. These endings are used to build different word forms which are divided into several groups called cases. The article provides an in-depth analysis of these.

Key words: word order, cases, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numerals, nominative, accusative, prepositional, genitive, dative, instrumental.

I. Introduction

Cases are the forms of nouns, adjectives, pronouns and numerals to represent their grammatical function in a sentence. Most often, these word forms are built with help of word endings: words may add or change the ending. However, changes in the stem of words are also possible.

The Russian language has six cases: nominative, accusative, prepositional, genitive, dative, and instrumental. In each case, words have a form for singular and a form for plural. Therefore, a noun may have 12 forms: 6 forms for singular and 6 forms for plural. It is also possible that forms of a word in different cases are similar or a word has only one form for all cases.

II. Literature review

Here you can find a brief description of the six Russian cases:
The nominative case shows the subject, or the doer of the action or the predicate.
The genitive case shows possession, and it is also often used in a negation.
The dative case marks the indirect object, or the receiver of the action.
The accusative case shows the direct object, or the object of the action.
The instrumental case indicates the "instrument" (or means) of the action, or how the action is done.
The prepositional (or locative) case shows the location, or where the action takes place.
These are basic functions of Russian cases. Cases may also be used for many other purposes and you can find more information about it in other articles devoted to cases of nouns.

III. Analysis

The form of Russian nouns that is given in dictionaries, also referred to as citation form, is usually the singular form of the nominative case.

Examples below demonstrate the use of cases in Russian:

Nominative:
Студент говорит. – The student is speaking.
The word студент (student) is the subject and doing the action. It is in nominative case form in this sentence.

Genitive: Работа студента очень интересная. – The work of the student is very interesting.
The subject of this sentence is the word работа (work) which is in nominative case form. The word студента is the genitive case form of the word студент (student) and it shows that the work belongs to this student.
Dative
Студент пишет письмо сестре. – The student is writing a letter to his sister.
The word сестре (to the sister) marks the receiver of the action. It is the dative case form of the word сестра (sister).

Accusative
Студент читает книгу. – The student is reading a book.
The word книгу (book) marks the object of the action. It is the accusative case form of the word книга (book).

Instrumental
Студент пишет ручкой. – The student is writing with a pen.
The word ручкой (with a pen) marks the means of the action. It is the instrumental case form of the word ручка (pen).

Prepositional
Студент живёт в Москве. – The student lives in Moscow.
The word Москва (Moscow), together with preposition в (in), marks the location of the action. Москва is the prepositional case form of the word Москва (Moscow).

IV. Discussion

4 parts of speech can have cases: nouns, adjectives, numerals and pronouns. But the main thing is, of course, cases of nouns. Because other parts of speech have the same case as the noun, so they depend on it. One more example – a deeper one. To make you understand the cases better. Let’s take the word TABLE.
The table can find itself in different situations and can play different roles in the sentence. Let’s take the word TABLE and look at what happens with it in different cases.

Nominative case
- У меня есть стол - I have a table.
Genitive case
- У меня нет стола - I have no table.
Dative case
- Я подарю каждому из вас по столу - I will present a table to each one of you.
Accusative case
- Я люблю этот стол - I like this table.
Instrumental case
- Я доволен своим столом - I am happy with my table.
Prepositional case
- Я думаю о своём новом столе - I am thinking about my new table.

Now, look at English examples. We declined the word table in different cases. And actually, we see no real significant and visible difference. The word "table" stays the same in every sentence. That’s why cases in English are only some theoretical stuff needed for specialists only, maybe. But those who learn English as a foreign language do not learn cases at all. Technically, in English, we use prepositions and other nouns to identify what role the table plays in the sentence. And I like this English approach because it is simple. But in Russian, the situation changes dramatically. The word TABLE – СТОЛ changed its ending 4 times, 2 times it didn’t. That’s why we need to learn cases in Russian. Because in Russian, we use cases everywhere and a lot. I mean, in every sentence. And in different cases, the words have different endings.

4 parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, adjectives and numerals change their ending.
And spoken and written differently. And it happens in every sentence! So, in simple words, case shows the role of the word in the sentence.

Along with cases, a very important moment is declension. Or in Russian, it is called "склонение". Declension is when you change the form, gender or the case of the word. And in Russian language, it is done via changing the ending of the word. So, declension is the mechanism of changing the word from its original form by changing the case, gender or the form. And, again, we decline words by changing their endings.

Learning cases

The thing is that cases are not some isolated thing. And they are much interconnected with forms and genders. And cases are learned through the mechanism of declension. Before, I told you about declension. It is changing a form, gender or a case of the word. And it is done via changing the ending. Maybe you have seen that there are 1, 2, 3 declensions in Russian grammar. If not – no biggie. Generally, these are just rules that combine the gender and the case altogether. You can learn Russian grammar through this mechanism. Or there is the way that does not involve this mechanism. It depends on the textbook you are learning with. Here is what I mean. Here is the rule for the genitive case for nouns. And the mechanism is the following.

We take a noun. In the nominative case. It is the default case, and all nouns in the dictionary are in the nominative case. And we change the ending according to gender and the form.

The word ДОМ – HOUSE.

We look at the word and according to its last letter, we see that it has a masculine gender. Because it ends in a consonant. So, to get a singular genitive form, according to the rule we add –А.

And get ДОМА.

ДОМ - ДОМА.

If we want genitive plural, we add –ОВ and get ДОМОВ.

ДОМ - ДОМОВ.

So, we say in the genitive case: I have no house – У меня нет дома

I have no houses – У меня нет домов.

So, that is the mechanism.

We identify what case we want a noun (or other parts of speech) to be.

Then, according to rule, we detect it’s gender.

Decide what form it should be and BANG – change the noun into the case.

Nailed it! It is done with the help of rules and practice. Especially practice.

Have you seen the rule I have shown you?

Well, there are 5 such big rules for all cases except the nominative. And several minor rules. And that’s only for nouns unit!

Do you really think you can learn them all?

I do not stop repeating that language is a skill. And you can study all that by simply understanding the theory and practicing a lot.

OK. Now one very important moment.

How can I know that I need prepositional case, or instrumental, or accusative?

Or some other. Well, you can’t at your current level. And you should not bother yourself with this question. You will need your endings changing skill in the future.

Conclusion

In short, Russian horses have different shapes, and by distinguishing them, you can learn the language more deeply. Cases are nouns, adjectives, rhymes, and number forms to express the
grammatical function of a sentence. Often, these word forms are formed using word endings: words can add or change endings. However, there can also be changes in the depth of words. There are six cases in Russian: nominative, accusative, prepositional, genitive, dative, and instrumental. Distinguishing these from each other is a requirement of today.

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