

### 3. NUMBER

#### 3.1. *The Category of Number in Modern Lithuanian*

3.1.1. Nominal number is one of the central noun phrase categories and one of the most commonly encountered grammatical categories in the languages of the world (Lucy 1992). Many languages distinguish only two number properties: singular and plural (as in modern Lithuanian); others additionally distinguish a dual (as in Old Lithuanian and some dialects now) and (rarely) a trial (Stump, 1998). With respect to nouns, Ambrazas et al. (1997: 65) point out that in Lithuanian the category of number consists of two groups of morphological forms, singular and plural, which convey the meanings of ‘one’ as opposed to ‘more than one’. The meanings of singularity and plurality are formally expressed by case endings. Due to the fact that declensional endings of nouns indicate several parameters, those of number and case, it is the number of cases that gives the total number of singular and plural forms in Lithuanian.

Jakobson (1971) and then Greenberg (1966), have shown that ‘non-singular’ is a marked category as opposed to the unmarked category ‘singular’. Natural Morphology (i.e., Dressler et al. 1987) has always claimed also that it follows from universal principles what is more or less marked; e.g., plurality is cognitively more complex, pragmatically less normal than singularity, and that frequency of use is a consequence.

3.1.2. The basic group of variable nouns which can be inflected for number are countable nouns. The other, smaller group, consists of nouns which cannot change their number. These include singular (*singularia tantum*) and plural nouns (*pluralia tantum*) (Ambrazas et al. 1997, Paulauskienė 1994, Valeckienė 1998).

3.1.3. In general, all singular case forms are formally marked by endings, i.e., the plural is not formed by adding a plural suffix to the respective singular form (e.g., *nam-as*:SG:NOM – *nam-ai*:PL:NOM ‘house’). The only exceptions are feminine nominatives which end in the stem forms *-ė* (Sg. Nom. *gėl-ė* ‘flower’) from which the plural forms are derived, e.g., Nom. *gėl-ės*, Acc. *gėl-es*, Dat. *gėl-ėms*, Ins. *gėl-ėmis*, Loc. *gėl-ėse*. The other forms change the stem, e.g., Sg. Nom. *mam-a*, Pl. Nom. *mam-os*. Thus the plural nominative *-ės* is more transparent and thus easier to acquire than all the other plural nominative forms.

### 3.2. *The Acquisition of the Category of Number: a Survey of Previous Research*

3.2.1. The ability to perceive the meaning of a grammatical category is determined by a child's cognitive development (Bowerman 1994). Crosslinguistic research has provided ample evidence for maintaining that the acquisition of number may occur quite early, around 1;6-1;10: even a small child is able to distinguish between the opposition of 'one' and 'more than one'. Nouns must be classified into countable and uncountable ones. At an early phase, a child is apt to use actively only countable nouns, only much later the distinction between countable and uncountable nouns is grasped (cf. Ceytlin 1988). The acquisition of the category of number begins already before the emergence of uncountable nouns.

3.2.2. In child language, the category of number is primarily expressed by lexical means, i.e., with the help of the numeral *du* 'two' or the adverb *daug* 'many'. This happens rather early, when a child points to two or more objects. The perception of the number opposition conveyed in this way has been noticed in many languages, among them Russian (cf. Gvozdev 1949, Ceytlin 1997a) and Latvian (cf. Rūķe-Draviņa 1982). The hypothesis that, at an early phase, a child uses numerals for marking number distinctions has been verified by experimental methods in a variety of languages; this is especially true for English (cf. Berko 1958, Ervin, Miller 1963, Anisfeld, Tucker 1973). Soon after the lexical marking of number has been acquired, or sometimes even parallel with it, the formal singular/plural marking emerges as well.

It is difficult to establish a universal sequence of how number and case categories are acquired; the process is influenced by the typological characteristics of individual languages (Dressler 1998). However, even typologically close languages can yield different results, as is the case with Baltic (Latvian) and Slavic (Russian). For Latvian, Rūķe-Draviņa (1973: 256) maintains that the formal number distinction is acquired later than that of case. As far as Russian is concerned, Slobin (1966: 141) asserts that classes which are based on such semantic criteria as case, tense and person, appear much later than those which possess a concrete reference, i.e., number. This assertion is corroborated by research of other scholars, such as Gvozdev (1949) or Ceytlin (1988), who have established that a morphological expression of the category of number occurs earlier than that of case.

3.2.3. It often happens that during the process of language acquisition inflectional endings of one category are dominant over others. It can be claimed in this connection that in early language acquisition a frequent, maybe even universal, phenomenon of using singular forms instead of expected plural forms is one such instance (Gvozdev 1949, Slobin 1966, Rūķe-Draviņa 1973). Singular forms are used in all situations before the singular/plural semantic distinction is grasped by a child, i.e., singular is the unmarked, plural the marked category. However, even later plural forms are replaced with singular forms in spite of the fact that the concept of plurality has been appropriated. The relevant examples are *divi kupe* (*divas kurpes*) ‘two shoes’ (Rūķe-Draviņa 1982) or *two minute* (*two minutes*) (Cazden 1968). It can be claimed that the semantic concept of the category of number occurs earlier than the formal marking of the category (Bybee 1979). Up to the time when the correct formal marking has been acquired some inflectional forms will be substituted by others: in this case, singular forms will substitute plural forms. In sum, singular noun forms are acquired earlier than plural noun forms.

3.2.4. The process of acquisition of uncountable noun forms (*singularia tantum* and *pluralia tantum*) presents more problems. Grammatically correct forms appear quite early, before the age of two (data on Russian in Gvozdev 1949, Ceytlin 1988; on Latvian in Rūķe-Draviņa 1982). However, this fact does not mean that a child has acquired the category – rather, it points to the opposite. The use of plural forms when only one object is meant allows us to claim that a child has not acquired the number distinctions and is using the plural form without any analysis (Ceytlin 1988). When the singular/plural opposition has been acquired, it sometimes gives rise to the phenomenon of generalization, which can be defined in the following way: the plural noun form is perceived as an obligatory form to be used with plural number of object nouns in the real world, whereas the singular form is used to denote one object. The relevant examples are *odna sankā edet* (*odni sanki edut*) ‘one sledge is driving’ (Gvozdev 1949). Gvozdev adduces more examples of the kind, i.e., the incorrect usage of *pluralia tantum*, as in *Kupit tebe sanki? – Net, kupi tolko odnu sanku* ‘Shall I buy you sledges? – No, buy just one sledge’. Difficulties in the process of acquisition of *pluralia tantum* nouns are related to the fact that the plural form is not used to denote the quantity of objects. *Pluralia tantum* nouns are located in the periphery of the system and therefore it takes a rather long period of time, often lasting until the school age, to master them (see Ceytlin 1988, Gordon 1994).

### 3.3. The Development of the Category of Number in Rūta's Speech

3.3.1. *Countable nouns*. The analysed material shows that already at 1;7 Rūta has perceived the quantitative difference 'one/more than one'. This assertion can be illustrated by the following examples:

M: *Rūtyte, kiek pirštelių turi?* 'Rūtyte, how many fingers:DIM have you got?'

R: *Du*. 'Two'.

M: *Pirštelių?* 'Fingers:DIM?'

R: *Du*. 'Two'.

M: *Pirštelių daug*. 'You have got many fingers:DIM'.

R: *Daug, daug*. 'Many, many'.

M: *Daug*. 'Many'.

M: *O kiek kojųčių?* 'And how many legs:DIM have you got?'

R: *Daug*. 'Many'.

M: *Ne, kojytes dvi*. 'No, you have got two legs:DIM'.

R: *Di (dvi)*. 'Two'. (1;7)

M: *Kiek čia ratukų?* 'How many wheels:DIM are there?'

R: *Daug*. 'Many'.

M: *Daug, tikrai daug, šeši?* 'Many, really, many, six?'

R: *Du*. 'Two'.

M: *Paskaičiuok, vienas, du, trys, keturi, penki, šeši*. 'Just count, one, two, three, four, five, six'.

M: *Tai kiek čia yra?* 'So, how many are there?'

R: *Daug*. 'Many'. (1;8)

M: *Žiūrėk, kiek čia?* 'Look here, how many?'

R: *Du*. 'Two'

M: *Teisingai, dvi*. 'That's right, two'.

M: *Dvi špulytės*. 'Two reels:DIM?'

R: *Daug*. 'Many'. (1;8)

M: *Kiek atnešti?* 'How many shall I bring?'

R: *Daug*. 'Many'.

M: *O gal vieną?* 'Maybe one?'

R: *Daug*. 'Many'.

M: *Vieną ar du?* 'One or two?'

R: *Du*. 'Two'. (1;8)

The above examples demonstrate that Rūta is able to distinguish the quantitative opposition of 'one/more than one'. The second member of the opposition is comprised of two lexical items, the numeral *du* 'two' and the adverb *daug* 'many', and both are used in the same sense. The early concept of number in Rūta's speech includes only 'one' and 'two'. In view of this it can be concluded that the concept of quantity, as perceived by children, is rather limited in scope and encompasses a small and clearly understandable number of elements. However, this early

concept of number distinction is language-spontaneous and is not based on the process of counting (even though the above examples show Mother's efforts to teach Rūta to count as well). This is just a quick, effortless and precise perception of several elements, four at most, which is not based on any rules. Data from other languages shows that it is only from the age of four that the early concept of quantity is integrated into the concept of number, which is based on the process of counting (Stephany 1998).

It is possible to claim that Rūta has already perceived the existence of the category of number, and she expresses the opposition 'one/more than one (i.e., *many*, *two*)' lexically. Rūta already has achieved a certain level of cognitive development as well, because she can distinguish one or several objects in the real world.

3.3.2. The first plural forms were observed at 1;7: Rūta forms the masculine nominative plural *-ai* correctly:

M: *O čia, Rūtyte, kas čia yra?* 'And here, Rūtyte, what is it here?'

R: *Paukai (plaukai)*. 'Hair'.

M: *Kas čia yra, Rūtyte?* 'What is it here, Rūtyte?'

R: *Batai*. 'Shoes'.

M: *Batai?* 'Shoes?'

R: *Taip*. 'Yes'.

M: *O čia kas?* 'And what is here?'

R: *Baka (batas)*. 'A shoe'.

M: *Kitas batas, taip?* 'Another shoe, isn't it?'

R: *Taip*. 'Yes'.

R: *Du*. 'Two'.

M: *Du iš viso batai*. 'Two shoes, all in all'.

The two examples, however, can not provide us with sufficient grounds to claim that the girl has fully acquired the plural form of this class of masculine nouns. Most probably, this is an example of a mechanical repetition of familiar forms, whereas the real morphological rules will be acquired and applied later (cf. Pinker 1994). It is not possible to talk about the correct usage of plural forms due to the fact that Rūta has not yet acquired the inflectional ending of masculine nominative singular form: instead of the expected ending *-as* or *-is*, Rūta often resorts to the premorpheme<sup>14</sup> *-a*. However, already in a month's time the first

<sup>14</sup> The premorpheme *a* or a 'filler' is prosodically appropriate but semantically it is an empty element. In child language it gradually develops into free or bound grammatical morphemes (cf. Peters & Menn 1993: 743). In early phases of Rūta's speech these premorphemes were used quite often. For example, the

correct oppositions of feminine nominative singular/plural forms appear, e.g., *ganenėlė – ganenėlės (grandinėlə)* ‘chain:DIM’, *kalelė – kalelės (kaladėlė)* ‘block:DIM’. In the majority of cases, the nominative singular of masculine noun endings *-as* and *-is* are formed correctly: *meniukas (meškiukas)* ‘teddy-bear:DIM’, *etiukas (kamuoliukas)* ‘ball:DIM’, *jatas (ratas)* ‘wheel’, *telelis (tėvelis)* ‘Daddy’.

On the other hand, quite a number of examples with the premorpheme *-a* can be found, e.g., *boka (bokštas)* ‘tower’, *obuoliuka (obuoliukas)* ‘apple:DIM’, *telelia (senelis)* ‘Granpa’. The same premorpheme appears in contexts where plural forms in *-ai* are expected, e.g., *baka (batai)* ‘shoes’, *leliuka (leliukai)* ‘babies’, *kaliolia (karoliai)* ‘beads’, and *teniuka (šuniukai)* ‘dogs:DIM’.

From the period of 1;7 onwards the correct masculine nominative plural form *batai* ‘shoes’ was observed; however, the incorrectly formed plural forms *baka*, *batuka* ‘shoes:DIM’ are noted as well. Instances of a parallel usage of correct and incorrect masculine plural inflectional ending forms are present until the age of 2;0. It has been noticed that approximately from 1;9 onwards plural forms become more common for both feminine and masculine nouns (see Table 3.1). During the age of 1;9 singular/plural oppositions for the same lemma increase, e.g., *balionas – balionai* ‘balloons’, *bananas – bananai* ‘bananas’, *batukas – batukai* ‘shoes:DIM’, *obuoliukas – obuoliukai* ‘apples:DIM’, *gėlytė – gėlytės* ‘flowers:DIM’, *kaladėlė – kaladėlės* ‘blocks:DIM’, *lėlytė – lėlytės* ‘dolls: DIM’. Rūta’s 1;8 period, i.e., the beginning of protomorphology, can be identified as the beginning of a more frequent formation of plural forms (i.e., a plural spurt and the emergence of the number opposition within the same lemma). From now on the girl uses more plural forms with every month (see Table 3.1).

The comparison of distribution of singular and plural forms in Rūta’s and Mother’s speech (see Tables 3.1 and 3.2) clearly demonstrates that the difference in plural formation is not great. Therefore data from Rūta’s speech recorded during the last months of observation almost equal the frequencies in Mother’s – that is, adult – language (18% and 21% respectively). Otherwise Mother uses consistently more plurals than Rūta.

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nominative, accusative, and dative cases appear with *a*, as in *suniuka (šuniukas, šuniuka, šuniukai, šuniukai)*. Rūta uses this premorpheme instead of prefixes, e.g., *ajeikia (nerekia)* ‘do not need’, *aieskot (paieškot)* ‘to look for’, and prepositions, as in *a auką (į lauką)* ‘to go outdoors’, *a Liną (pas Liną)* ‘at Linas’.

Table 3.1: The distribution of singular and plural noun forms (%) in Rūta's speech (1;7-2;5)

	1;7	1;8	1;9	1;10	1;11	2;0	2;1	2;2	2;3	2;4	2;5	Total
SG.	96	86	91	91	90	88	87	84	85	86	82	87
PL.	4	14 <sup>15</sup>	9	9	10	12	13	16	15	14	18	13

Table 3.2: The distribution of singular and plural noun forms (%) in Mother's speech (1;7-2;5)

	1;7	1;8	1;9	1;10	1;11	2;0	2;1	2;2	2;3	2;4	2;5	Total
SG.	80	85	85	86	84	83	82	81	79	80	79	83
PL.	20	15	15	14	16	17	18	19	21	20	21	17

3.3.3. It deserves to be mentioned that during the 1;7-1;8 period plural forms most frequently are marked for nominative, whereas from 1;9 and 1;10 on in addition to the nominative other cases of nouns appear. Our data contain several genitive forms, e.g., *obuoliuku* 'apple:GEN:PL', *tiulciu* (*sulčiu*) 'juice:GEN:PL', there are some nouns marked accusative, e.g., *paukus* (*plaukus*) 'hair:ACC:PL', the dative noun form, e.g., *piteliam* (*piršteliam*) 'finger:DAT:PL', and the instrumental case, as in *teliukais* (*šuniukais*) 'dogs:DIM:INSTR:PL', *akais* (*vaikais*) 'children:INSTR', *kojytėm* 'legs:DIM:INSTR:PL'. Plural forms of different cases increase further on. The most frequent is the nominative case, then follow genitive and accusative. Instrumental is only slightly more frequent than dative; the latter case shows a very low frequency of occurrence. It is noteworthy that the plural forms of different cases have been acquired and used correctly much quicker than the respective singular forms. This quicker acquisition is due to the fact that the meaning of every case has been appropriated during the process of the acquisition of singular forms.

3.3.4. Whether and to what extent a child is able to use a certain form correctly is shown by the context. Contextually determined usage of forms reveals how a child understands the construction in question. The analysis of plural forms of Rūta's speech is based on the criteria established and applied by Cazden (1968) and Stephany (1997c).

<sup>15</sup> The high percentage of plurals appears due to the frequent repetition of one word (from 46 tokens 21 take *karoliai* 'beads').

3.3.4.1. *Linguistic context*

## a) Correct plural forms within plural contexts:

- 1;7 the nominative masculine: *batai* ‘shoes’, *paukai (plaukai)* ‘hair’;
- 1;8 the nominative masculine and feminine: *karoliai* ‘beads’, *gagenėlės (grandinėlės)*, ‘chains:DIM’, *tiultys (sultys)* ‘juice’;  
the genitive masculine and feminine: *obuoliukų* ‘apples’, *tiultių (sulčių)* ‘juice’;  
the accusative masculine: *paukus (plaukus)* ‘hair’;
- 1;9 the nominative masculine and feminine forms: *balionai* ‘balloons’, *mytiukai (mygtukai)* ‘buttons’, *atai (raktai)* ‘keys’; *atytės (antytės)* ‘ducks:DIM’, *aidės (raidės)* ‘letters’, *tiutės (šiukšlės)* ‘garbage’;  
the genitive masculine and feminine: *bananų* ‘bananas’, *natų* ‘notes’, *atytių (akychių)* ‘eyes:DIM’, *tiūtių (šiūkšliu)* ‘garbage’;  
the accusative feminine: *natas* ‘notes’, *gėlytes* ‘flowers’;
- 1;11 the nominative masculine and feminine: *aikai (vaikai)* ‘children’, *ziniai (žirniai)* ‘peas’, *palmės* ‘palm trees’;  
the genitive masculine and feminine forms: *ziedų (žiedų)* ‘blossom’, *gėlyčių* ‘flowers:DIM’, *lėlyčių* ‘dolls:DIM’;  
the accusative masculine and feminine: *zinius (žirnius)* ‘peas’, *gugutes (gurgutes)*;
- 2;3 the nominative masculine and feminine: *kabajai (kibirai)* ‘buckets’, *metiukai (meškiukai)* ‘teddy-bears:DIM’, *megaitės* ‘girls’, *rankytės* ‘hands:DIM’;  
the genitive masculine and feminine: *sedainiukų (saldainiuku)* ‘candies:DIM’, *peilių* ‘knives’, *dovanų* ‘gifts’;  
the accusative masculine and feminine: *kiausinukus (kiaušinukus)* ‘eggs:DIM’, *pupeles* ‘beans’;
- 2;5 the nominative masculine and feminine: *vaistukai* ‘medicine:DIM’, *pesiukai (pieštukai)* ‘pencils:DIM’, *pėdos* ‘feet’, *vėliavos* ‘flags’;  
the genitive masculine and feminine: *pukų* ‘fluff’, *baldelių* ‘furniture: DIM’, *valandų* ‘hours’, *mašinių* ‘cars’;  
the accusative masculine and feminine: *dantukus* ‘teeth:DIM’, *rankas* ‘hands’.

Examples of other cases are not presented here due to a very low frequency of occurrence.

## b) Incorrect singular forms appearing in plural contexts:

M: *O kas čia tokie?* ‘What are these?’

R: *Kamuoliukas.* ‘A ball:DIM’. (1;9)



M: *Su Linu važiuosim į šventę?* ‘Are we going to the festival with Linas?’

R: *A balionas (į balionų)* ‘To the balloon’.

M: *Rytoj ar poryt bus balionų šventė.* ‘There is going to be a festival of balloons tomorrow or the day after tomorrow’. (1;10)

c) Nouns following the numerals *vienas* ‘one’ and *du* ‘two’ and the adverb *daug* ‘many’.

We have already pointed out that during an early phase of language acquisition, especially up to 2;0, while referring to more than one object Rūta used to add the numeral *du* ‘two’ or the adverb *daug* ‘many’. Up to that period one-word utterances were most frequent in Rūta’s speech and, consequently, answers given to Mother’s questions consisted of either *du* ‘two’ or *daug* ‘many’, or a repetition of these lexical items. The period of two-word utterances (around 1;11 and onwards) already exhibits the use of these lexical items in combination with nouns.

1. Grammatically correct utterances:

R: *Atų daug, atų (raktų)*. ‘Many keys, keys’. (1;11)

R: *Pausiasi (prausiasi) daug kaliolių (karolių), daug.* ‘Many beads are washing themselves, many’. (1;11)

R: *Duok du nuokatų (nuotraukų)*. ‘Give me two photos’. (2;3)

R: *Galima daug pinigų.* ‘It is possible (to have?) much money’. (2;5)

2. Grammatically incorrect utterances:

R: *Te balionas, daug.* ‘Take the ballon, many’. (1;11)

R: *Cia (čia) daug kengūriukas.* ‘There are many kangaroo:DIM’. (2;2)

R: *Cia (čia) du jeikia (reikia) vėliava.* ‘Here two flag is needed’. (2;2)

The above examples demonstrate that sometimes nouns used in combination with *daug* ‘many’ and *du* ‘two’ appear with incorrect case forms; however, this type of error is not frequent and the recordings made after the 2;2 period do not contain such errors.

### 3.3.4.2. *Non-linguistic contexts*

R: *Tiūtos (šiukslės)*. ‘Garbage’. (1;9)

Situation: Rūta recognises the sounds made by the garbage truck outside.

R: *Pausiukai (paukščiukai) cia (čia)*. ‘Birds:DIM here’. (2;1)

Situation: Rūta is pointing to a picture in a book.

This type of examples are not very common in our material. Usually Rūta spontaneously produces plural noun forms in appropriate contexts, especially after the 2;0 period.

3.3.5. *Uncountable nouns.* It is obvious that children encounter most problems during the process of understanding and acquiring a correct usage of uncountable nouns (*singularia* and *pluralia tantum*). Most probably it seems weird for them to use a plural noun form to refer to a single item, and, conversely, to use a singular form while referring to many objects.

3.3.5.1. With respect to the use of uncountable nouns in child language, two phenomena have been noticed. First, on a par with countable nouns, the group of uncountable nouns is used to express the idea of quantity (Ceytin 1988). Uncountable nouns in the plural form appear in situations when children try to convey the actual quantity of objects, e.g., *Ne, cia ne siukai, cia abatytė* (*Ne, čia ne cukrus, čia arbatytė*) ‘No, these are not sugars:PL, it’s tea’ (2;5); *Cia nėra amaliukų* (*Čia nėra smėliuko*) ‘There are no sands:DIM:PL here’ (2;4). The reverse situation occurs when only one object is seen, for example, *Akinuką nesiu* (*Akinukus nešu*) ‘I’m carrying an eye-glass:DIM:SG’ (2;0); *akanys, akabins, akabis* (*akiniai*) ‘eye-glass:SG’ (1;10); *Neskauda, cia zikukas* (*Neskauda, čia žirkutės*) ‘It does not hurt, it is one scissor:DIM:SG’ (2;2). Second, uncountable material and mass nouns can be interpreted as having a partitive meaning, e.g., *duona* ‘bread’ can refer to *duonos riekė* ‘a slice of bread’, as in *man duona nukrito* (‘a slice of bread has fallen down’), *pienas* ‘milk’ can mean ‘a glass of milk’. Due to the fact that material nouns can be measured, they are interpreted as having both singular and plural forms. We know that adults do not use plural forms in such cases; young children, on the other hand, equate the category of number with the concept of quantity. Moreover, they are not aware of exceptions existing in their native languages and therefore resort to plural forms when they deem it necessary. This tendency can be observed in the following examples: *Mamytei daviau buteliukus* ‘I have given the bottles:DIM to Mummy’; *į buteliukus pienu* ‘milks:PL in the bottles: DIM’ (1;11); *Cia yra deniukų* (*Čia yra vandenuko*) ‘there are waters: DIM:PL here’ (talking about some water in a glass) (2;2).

The above discussion can be summarised as follows. With respect to countable nouns, Rūta does not face major problems in acquiring singular and plural forms. On the other hand, if a noun belongs to the groups of *singularia* or *pluralia tantum*, she shows a tendency to use plural inflectional endings with *singularia tantum* nouns and singular inflectional endings with *pluralia tantum* nouns. Research into other languages supports these tendencies and exhibit a considerably universal character (Gvozdev 1949, Cazden 1968, Park 1978, Rūķe-Draviņa 1982, Levy 1988a, Gordon 1994).

3.3.5.2. Uncountable nouns, especially *pluralia tantum*, are quite frequent in Rūta's speech.<sup>16</sup>

Results presented in Table 3.3 demonstrate high frequency of these forms in Rūta's speech. This tendency can be explained by the fact that in Rūta's speech one word is repeated out of proportions, i.e., out of 31 instances of *pluralia tantum* the word *karoliai* 'beads' appear 22 times (1;8); out of 22 nouns in the period of 1;9 *natos* 'musical notes' give 12 tokens; out of 52 words 26 tokens are represented by the word *rūmai* 'palace' during the 2;2 period, whereas the 2;4 period shows 57 tokens of *Kalėdos* 'Christmas' out of the total of 80 examples.

We did not observe that errors in uncountable noun usage are numerous in Rūta's data; moreover, such errors did not persist long.

Table 3.3: The use of uncountable (*pluralia tantum*) nouns in Rūta's and Mother's speech (1;7-2;5)

	1;7	1;8	1;9	1;10	1;11	2;0	2;1	2;2	2;3	2;4	2;5
Mother	4	45	76	45	33	51	57	48	47	58	52
Rūta	-	31	22	30	28	35	50	52	59	80	54

27 different *pluralia tantum* nouns appear as 441 tokens in Rūta's speech. The biggest and the most frequently used LSG of *pluralia tantum* nouns refers to 'Clothes' (represented by 8 different noun types): *akiniai* 'glasses' (57 tokens), *džinsai* 'jeans', *karoliai* 'beads', *kelnės* 'pants', *naktiniai* 'nights'. The LSG 'Food' is presented by 3 noun types: *sultys* 'juice' (14 tokens), *ledai* 'ice-cream', *miltai* 'flour'; the category 'Other things' consists of 4 nouns: *natos* 'musical notes', *pinigai* 'money', *skalbinių* 'laundry'. The LSG 'Toys' is represented by 2 nouns: the noun *rūmai* 'palace' (66 tokens), *supynės* 'swing', etc. *Pluralia tantum*, as well as *singularia tantum*, nouns are not numerous but they appear quite frequently in both Mother's and Rūta's speech.

3.3.6. The analysis of the acquisition of the category of noun number in Rūta's speech allows us to state the following:

1. The girl started to express the category of number via the lexical items *du* 'two' and *daug* 'many' relatively early, during the 1;7 period.

<sup>16</sup> We are not going to discuss *singularia tantum* nouns separately due to the fact that in colloquial speech such nouns are often used as countable nouns. In view of this during the codification process this type of nouns was not treated as an spontaneous variable; consequently, no statistical data are available.

Most examples of this type with plural forms are one-word utterances given as responses to Mother's question *Kiek yra?* 'How many are there?' This period is also marked by the lack of concord between gender and case (cf. 3.3.1).

2. Singular and plural noun forms in Rūta's speech appear at 1;7; it has to be pointed out that the first plural forms are imitations of adult speech. However, beginning with the 1;8 period there occur grammatically correct feminine plural forms as opposed to their respective singular forms. After a month, masculine plural forms were noted as well. It can be claimed then that a formal plural marking emerges during the 1;8 period (at 1;9 first oppositions and plural spurt were observed). It is noteworthy that the Lithuanian data differ from the Latvian one where the acquisition of formal plural marking is placed around the period of 2;0 (cf. 3.3.2).

3. The formal marking of the category of number emerges in parallel with that of case, during the 1;8 period, i.e., marking first appears in macroclass II (feminine), followed by macroclass I (masculine).

4. After Rūta has started to use plural forms, she has acquired the grammatically correct inflectional endings very quickly. The acquisition of a formal plural case marking in a relatively short period of time has been facilitated by a simultaneous acquisition of case semantics and a formal singular case marking.

5. Some infrequent substitution of plural forms by singular forms in *pluralia tantum* nouns and vice versa, *singularia tantum* nouns marked as plural, has been noted as well. Rūta shows the tendency to interpret all nouns as countable (cf. 3.3.5).

In sum, our research data corroborate important assumptions about the general tendencies evident in the acquisition of the category of number; these tendencies are shared by other languages as well. Our findings did not reveal any specific features in Rūta's speech apart from some idiosyncratic occurrences.