

Chapter 42

Plural 'one' lagging behind singular 'one' in Bulgarian. A syntactic approach

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This paper analyzes the issue of Bulgarian plural numeral 'one' *edni* whose grammaticalization process lags behind the one of singular 'one' *edin*. The grammaticalization processes of the two items run in parallel, but *edni* is "delayed" as it has not shifted from the stage of indefinite determiner to that of article-like element. The explanations present in the literature (historical recentness of *edni*, its lower frequency of occurrence, and its being contrasted with *drugi* 'others') are shown to be not sufficient to account for this "delay". A new syntax-based account is presented, building on the proposal that *edni* spells out a bigger portion of structure than singular *edin*. This is formalized in two ways: either *edni* spells out a covert noun, or it has a plural feature on top. It is further assumed that the structural correlate of the shift indefinite determiner > indefinite article-like element is the reanalysis SpecDP > D. The big structure of *edni* thus slows down such a reanalysis.

Keywords: Bulgarian, grammaticalization, numeral 'one', plural 'one'

1 Introduction

Bulgarian scholars already in the 1980s have recognized to the numeral *edin* 'one' the additional status of exponent of indefiniteness, despite debating on its categorical status. Georgiev (1967 [1978]); Pašov (1978); Stojanov (1987) consider it just an indefinite pronoun; Maslov (1982); Nicolova (2008; 2017); Burov (2004) claim that it is an indefinite article; Stamenov (1985; 1987); Kucarov (2007) take an intermediate position, claiming that it displays article-like functions in some

contexts but not in others, hence it cannot be considered a fully-fledged indefinite article.¹

The aforementioned debates focus on singular *edin*. However, there exists in Bulgarian a plural form of the first numeral, i.e., *edni*.² Despite its “contradictory” nature combining a singular numeral with plural morphology, *edni* was mostly overlooked. Some authors barely mention its presence, regarding it as a somehow exceptional form (Andrejčin 1978; Bojadžiev et al. 1978; Kucarov 2007). Others consider *edni* as being a numeral only when it quantifies over *pluralia tantum* nouns, while being an indefinite pronoun/article in combination with plural count nouns (Maslov 1982; Nicolova 2008; 2017).

More recently, there have been attempts to analyze *edin* from the point of view of its grammaticalization (Geist 2013; Yovkova-Shii 2022). This perspective has shown that plural *edni* seems to be less grammaticalized than singular *edin*. However, this recent finding has not received a satisfactory account to date. The aim of the present contribution is to offer a possible explanation for the “delay” of plural *edni* with respect to singular *edin*.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows: §1.1 presents recent functional investigations on the grammaticalization of *edin*. §1.2 introduces the issue of plural *edni*, comparing its grammaticalization path with that of singular *edin*. §2 presents three possible reasons for the “delay” of *edni*: historical recentness (§2.1), low frequency of occurrence (§2.2), and contrast with *drugi* ‘others’ (§2.3). §3 presents a previous proposal on the syntax of grammaticalization of *edin*. §4 presents two possible formalizations of the proposal that plural *edni* has a bigger structure than singular *edin*: *edni* spelling out a covert noun (§4.1), and *edni* having a (prominent) plural feature in its structure (§4.2). §4.3 explains the “delay” of *edni* linking its bigger structure to the syntax of the grammaticalization process. §5 concludes the paper.

1.1 The grammaticalization of *edin*

The status of *edin* from the point of view of grammaticalization has been explored by Geist (2013), who builds upon the cross-linguistic models of grammaticalization of ‘one’ elaborated by Givón (1981) and Heine (1997) to assess to what stage *edin* has proceeded in this process. She adapts the preceding models, proposing a new one (reported in Table 1) which better fits the Bulgarian data.³

¹See Stoevski (2019) for a more detailed literature review.

²*Edni* is the only plural form, since Bulgarian does not distinguish Gender in the plural.

³More recently, the same attempt has been carried out by Yovkova-Shii (2022) who mostly maintains Geist’s arrangement of the stages, just substituting the “predicative/generic use”

Table 1: Geist’s (2013) model of grammaticalization for Bulgarian *edin*

Stage	Function
(i) numeral	quantitative function (1)
(ii) presentative marker	introducing a new salient referent known to the speaker only (2)
(iii) specific marker	introducing a new referent (independently of its salience) known to the speaker only (3)
(iv) predicative and generic use	non-referential interpretation in predicative position (4) and in generic sentences (5)
(v) non-referential use in modal and negative scope	narrow scope reading under a modal (3c) or a negative operator (6)
(vi) generalized article	obligatory in all indefinite contexts (7)

Stage (i) is trivially that of the numeral, whose function is to indicate “that the set to which the referent of the noun phrase belongs consists of exactly one entity” (Schroeder 2006: 556). This is the case of (1),⁴ where *edin* is modified by the adverb *samo* ‘only’ which foregrounds its numeral semantics.

- (1) Samo edin telefon li imate?
 only one.M telephone.M Q have.PRS.2PL
 ‘Do you only have one telephone (or two)?’ (p. 127)

The functions in (ii) and (iii) are typical of the “indefinite determiner” stage. As observed by Givón (1981), grammaticalization is accompanied by a process of semantic bleaching, i.e., the lexical item “loses” some shades of its original semantics. In (ii) and (iii), *edin* “loses” the quantificational reading: cardinality is not at issue anymore, while referentiality is foregrounded. In fact, both (ii) and (iii) introduce a new referent that is known to the speaker but presented as unknown to the hearer. A referent is known whenever it satisfies the condition of “identifiability”: *edin* X is identifiable if the speaker can answer the question “what X is that?” (Ionin 2013: 82). The peculiarity of the presentative marker is

with a more general “non-specific marker” label. The latter is in turn further divided in three sub-stages: “predicative use”, “generic use”, and “non-predicative/non-generic use”.

⁴All the examples in this Section are taken from Geist (2013), unless otherwise specified. For this reason, only page numbers are indicated.

that the introduced referent is salient (in the sense of Givón 1981: 36), i.e., it is taken up in subsequent discourse by, e.g., a pronoun (see (2)).

- (2) Imalo edno vreme edin starec. Toj
have.PST.PRT.3SG.N one.N time.N one.M old-man.M he
imal trima sina.
have.PST.PRT.3SG.M three son.BF
'Once upon a time there was an old man. He had three sons.' (p. 131)

Salience is not a necessary condition for stage (iii), which must instead only satisfy "identifiability". This causes *edin X* to take wide scope over other operators (in fact, the only possible continuation of (3a) is (3b)).

- (3) a. Čete mi se edno spisanie.
read.PRS.3SG I.DAT REFL one.N journal.N
'I want to read a journal.'
b. A imenno, poslednijat broj na Novo Vreme
'Namely, the last issue of Novo Vreme.'
c. # Kakvoto i da e.
'Any journal would do.' (p. 132)

Stage (iv) signals the transition to the "indefinite article" domain, as the following functions are typically ascribed to indefinite articles. In stage (iv), *edin* should be able to occur in predicative position with a non-referential interpretation. This condition is not met in Bulgarian, as *edin* is banned from predicational sentences (4a). It can optionally occur only in identity sentences (4b) where, however, it gets a referential reading.

- (4) a. Toj e (*edin) žurnalist po profesija.
he be.PRS.1SG one.M journalist.M by profession.F
'He is a journalist by profession.'
b. Toj e (edin) žurnalist, kogoto poznavam otdavna.
he be.PRS.1SG one.M journalist.M whom know.PRS.1SG long-ago
'He is a journalist who I have known for a long time.' (p. 139f.)

In generic sentences, instead, *edin* felicitously occurs with a non-referential interpretation (5). This step is characterized by a further semantic bleaching. Now *edin* does not refer to the denotation of the noun it co-occurs with (like in the determiner stage), but rather to its connotation (see Givón 1981).

- (5) *(Edin) lekar bi pomognal.
 one.M doctor.M COND.3SG help.PST.PRT.M
 ‘A doctor would help.’ (p. 143)

As far as (v) is concerned, (3) has already shown that a narrow scope reading of *edin* in intensional contexts is not possible. The same goes with negation: *edin* must take scope over it (6).

- (6) # Toj ne spomena edna podrobnost.
 he not mention.PST.3SG one.F detail.F
 ‘He didn’t mention some detail.’ (p. 144)

As for (vi), a fully-fledged indefinite article should be able to occur in every context, as it is required for mere syntactic reasons. However, the use of *edin* in Bulgarian is far from being obligatory (7).

- (7) V stajata vlezte dete.
 in room.F.DEF enter.PST.3SG child.N
 ‘A child came into the room.’ (p. 136, from *Ivanova & Koval’ 1994: 59*)

On the basis of these data, Geist justly concludes that *edin* in Bulgarian has acquired stage (iii) and has taken a step towards stage (iv), which however is not fully established yet. This means that *edin* is an indefinite determiner with full rights, but it cannot be considered to be a fully-fledged indefinite article.

1.2 The case of plural *edni*

Nicolova (2008: 208) and *Nicolova (2017: 165)* had pointed out already in her Bulgarian grammars that plural *edni* seems to be more restricted than singular *edin* in its use. This observation is taken up, among others, by *Aleksova (2019)* and *Yovkova-Shii (2022)*, who take the restrictions in the use of *edni* to be the symptom of a lower degree of grammaticalization.

This claim is based on the observation that *edni* follows the same path of grammaticalization of its singular counterpart. *Edni* carries out cardinal functions (stage (i) from Table 1), although limited to *pluralia tantum* nouns (8).

- (8) Tja vze samo edni čorapi.
 she take.PST.3SG only one.PL sock.PL
 ‘She only took one (pair of) socks.’ (Maslov 1982: 367)

Yovkova-Shii (2022: 98) argues that the numeral use of *edni* is “a restricted transpositional use, developed on the analogy with singular forms”. Moreover, she claims that in (8), *edni* is ambiguous between the numeral and the non-specificity marker interpretation. These two arguments lead her to conclude that “the first stage in the grammaticalization process concerning *edni* is vague” (p. 98).

I would like to point out a couple of issues in this argumentation. First, the restrictedness of *edni* itself cannot justify the transpositional nature of its use. In fact, it is true that plural *edni* cannot quantify over singular or plural count nouns,⁵ but the same holds for singular *edin* when it comes to *pluralia tantum*, mass, and plural count nouns. This means that also the distribution of singular *edin* is restricted. Its limitations, however, appear to be less evident given that *pluralia tantum* are much rarer than mass nouns (Rauhut 2022: 60). Second, the ambiguity of *edni* between cardinal and non-specific interpretation is actually in line with its numeral nature (foregrounded in (8) by the presence of *samo* ‘only’). Indeed, numerals are ambiguous with respect to their scope properties and their interpretation (Spector 2013).⁶ I thus take the stage (i) of grammaticalization of plural *edni* to be in line with that of singular *edin*.

Edni can also easily function as a presentative (9) and specific marker (10) (stages (ii) and (iii) from Table 1, respectively). It also takes wide scope in intensional contexts (only (10b) is a possible continuation of (10a)).

- (9) Imalo edno vreme edni hora, koito živeeli na
 have.PST.PRT.SG.N one.N time.N one.PL people.PL who live.PST.PRT.PL on
 hǎlm v krasivata ravnina na Toskana.
 hill.M in beautiful.F.DEF plain.F of Tuscany
 ‘Once upon a time there were people who lived on a hill in the beautiful
 plain of Tuscany.’ (<http://www.zavedil.com/travel-italy-san-gimignano/>,
 accessed May 2024)
- (10) a. Direktorāt iska da naznači [edni sčetrovoditeli]_i.
 manager.M.DEF want.PRS.3SG DA hire.PRS.3SG one.PL accountant.PL
 ‘The manager wants to hire some accountants.’
 b. Az veče se zapoznax s tjax_i.
 ‘I already met them.’ (Izvorski 1994: 243)

⁵In the case of plural count nouns, *edin* assumes the status of indefinite marker (see Maslov 1982).

⁶Givón (1981: 51) observes that “quantifying expressions [...] imply referentiality but do not imply prior-acquaintance/familiarity”. This means that they can refer to non-specific entities.

- c. # Za sážalenie, ošte nikogo ne e nameril.
 ‘Unfortunately, he has not found anyone yet.’

In predicative position, plural *edni* displays the same asymmetry found with the singular: it is barred from predicational (i.e., non-referential) sentences (11a), but admitted in identity (i.e., referential) ones (11b).

- (11) a. Stojan i Božana sa (*edni) učiteli.
 Stojan and Božana be.PRS.3PL one.PL teacher.PL
 ‘Stojan and Božana are teachers.’
- b. Stojan i Božana sa (edni) učiteli, koito poznavam
 Stojan and Božana be.PRS.3PL one.PL teacher.PL whom know.PRS.1SG
 otdavna.
 long-time
 ‘Stojan and Božana are teachers whom I have known for a long time.’

Generic sentences seem to be the context where the plural form lags behind the singular one. As *Yovkova-Shii (2022: 99)* points out, “[t]he use of *edni* with generic nouns is limited, and in generic sentences with plural nouns, nonarticled forms are usually used and are more appropriate than forms with *edni* [...], although examples can be found where the form with *edni* is also possible”. She exemplifies such a context by quoting (on p. 99) the example in (12).

- (12) (Edni) cvetja, ostaveni bez voda, uvjahvat.
 one.PL flower.PL leave.PST.PRT.PL without water.F wither.PRS.3PL
 ‘Flowers that are not watered wither.’ (quoted from *Izvorski 1994: 240*)

Her claim is, however, problematic. *Edni* is admitted in generic sentences only if the referent is further modified (i.e., if further restricted by e.g., an appositive clause as in (12)). It is known that modification itself can license items that would be barred otherwise (*Dayal 2004*). A similar case is found in Italian with the so-called “partitive determiner” (*Cardinaletti & Giusti 2016*). The referents introduced by it can get a generic reading only if modified (in the case of (13a) by the adjective *veri* ‘true’), otherwise they get an obligatorily specific interpretation (13b). The same applies to *edni*: if left without modification, the subject of (12) gets a specific reading (14).

- (13) a. Dei veri italiani bevono il caffè al
 PRT.DET true.PL Italian.PL drink.PRS.3PL M.DEF coffee.M at.M.DEF
 mattino.
 morning.M
 ‘True Italians drink coffee in the morning.’

- b. # Degli italiani bevono il caffè al mattino.
PRT.DET Italian.PL drink.PRS.3PL M.DEF coffee.M at.M.DEF morning.M
'Some (specific) Italians drink coffee in the morning.'

- (14) # Edni cvetja uvjahvat.
one.PL flower.PL wither.PRS.3PL
'Some (specific) flowers wither.'

Singular *edin*, instead, does not need modification to be licensed in generic contexts. For this reason, while for the singular form stage (iv) is partially acquired, for the plural one I take stage (iv) not to be acquired at all.

In stages (v) and (vi) the two forms go in parallel, as also *edni* takes obligatory wide scope in modal contexts (see 10) and under negation (15). Moreover, the obligatoriness requirement for *edni* is also not met, as shown in (11b) and (12).

- (15) # Toj ne spomena edni podrobnosti.
he not mention.PST.3SG one.PL detail.PL
'He didn't mention some details.'

The bottom line of this brief investigation is that the grammaticalization of plural *edni* runs in parallel with the one of singular *edin*. This is expected given that this numeral is morphologically an adjective (more details in Section 3), whose plural form is to be conceived of as just being part of its inflectional paradigm. However, the plural form lags behind the singular one, and this asymmetry surfaces in generic contexts. This is not an isolated case: Pozas Loyo (2022) describes a similar situation in Ibero-Romance, where plural *unos* 'one' is less grammaticalized than singular 'one' in that the former is precisely excluded in generic contexts. However, she refers to Laca & Tasmowski (1996: 113), who argue that this restriction seems not to hold for Spanish. Thus, it seems that, even if at some point plural 'one' lags behind singular 'one', it may "catch up".

2 Possible reasons for the "delay" of *edni*

The "delay" of plural *edni* with respect to singular *edin* still calls for a satisfactory explanation. The causes of this discrepancy are certainly varied and complex, and intertwined with each other. In the next subsections I review three possible causes that could have slowed down the grammaticalization of *edni*, showing however that neither of them is sufficient to explain the observed asymmetry.

2.1 Historical recentness

Both [Aleksova \(2019\)](#) and [Yovkova-Shii \(2022\)](#) justify the lower degree of grammaticalization of *edni* by referring to a claim made by [Nicolova](#) about the alleged historical recentness of this plural form. [Nicolova \(2017: 165\)](#) claims that “[h]istorically the indefinite article *edni* is the latest addition to the system of articles and this explains its relatively low frequency of occurrence” (cf. [Nicolova 2008: 108](#) for the Bulgarian version). Although being a plausible reason, this quote is problematic for two reasons: (i) it is not clear what the author means by “latest addition”, and (ii) neither a source nor evidence is given to corroborate this claim. The reason for (i) is that the “latest addition” is ambiguous: it could be interpreted either “historically” (i.e., plural *edni* appears in the written records later than singular *edin*) or logically (i.e., the plural form is logically derived from the singular one, hence it is a later addition). The latter interpretation is surely plausible;⁷ however, the use of words such as “historically” and “article system” lead towards the former one. As for (ii), the way this claim is phrased does not allow to understand whether it is grounded on some historical data and from what period of Bulgarian. In any case, this remark is not meant to discredit [Nicolova’s](#) invaluable and extensive work on the grammar of Bulgarian, of which plural *edni* is just a detail.

This clarification is independently needed to establish whether the historical recentness of *edni* is empirically supported. For this purpose, I analyzed the occurrences of the lexeme *edin̄o* ‘one’ in four Old Church Slavonic manuscripts, namely *Codex Assemanianus* (CA, [Kurz’s 1955](#) edition), *Savvina Kniga* (SK, [Ščepkin’s 1997](#) edition), *Codex Zographensis* (CZ, [Jagić’s 1879](#) edition), and *Codex Marianus* (CM, [Jagić’s 1883](#) edition).⁸ These manuscripts are all translations of New Testament Greek Gospels ([Flier 1974](#); [Huntley 1993](#)). CA and SK are Gospel lectionaries (i.e., a collection of lessons from the Gospels needed for church services), while CZ and CM are tetraevangelia (i.e., they include all the texts from the four Gospels).⁹ All these four manuscripts are dated around the 10th-11th century in

⁷I thank Ani Kemalova (p.c.) for pointing out to me the possible logical reading of this claim, which is probably the interpretation [Nicolova](#) had in mind.

⁸The digitalized and annotated version of these manuscripts is freely available on the TITUS platform (copyright by Jost Gippert): <https://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/indexe.htm?texte/texte2.htm> (last accessed September 2024). Furthermore, the platform gives the possibility to compare the OCS text with the text of the Greek New Testament (i.e., an archetypal model of the source text for the OCS translations) based on the critical edition by [Aland et al. \(1983\)](#).

⁹CA, CM, and CZ are written in the Glagolitic alphabet, while SK is written in the Cyrillic alphabet. In the TITUS platform, the Cyrillic transliteration is provided along with the Glagolitic original for CA, CM, and CZ.

the area of present-day Northern Macedonia (only SK is traced back to present-day eastern Bulgaria). The choice of these texts is relevant for two reasons. First, Old Church Slavonic (OCS) is known to be tightly related to an ancient stage of Bulgarian (indeed it is often referred to as Old Bulgarian, see [Scatton 1993: 188](#), [Nicolova 2017: 26](#)).¹⁰ Second, OCS is “the language of the oldest attested writings in a Slavonic language” ([Comrie & Corbett 1993: 3](#)), hence it suits to verify the presence of plural ‘one’. In fact, if it is present in these texts, it means that the two forms co-existed at least from the moment in which Slavonic started to be written.¹¹

The results of the investigation are reported in [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Occurrences of singular and plural ‘one’ in the four OCS manuscripts

	total	<i>edin̆.SG</i>	<i>edini.PL</i>	% plural
CA	150	142	7	4.67
CZ	226	214	11	4.87
CM	317	270	46	14.51
SK	122	121	1	0.82

As shown in [Table 2](#), a form for plural ‘one’ (*edini*) is present, although its percentage of occurrence is very low. However, in all the contexts, *edini* co-occurs with countable plural nouns. It is thus important to have a look at the functions this lexeme carries out: they are presented in [Table 3](#).

In one case ([Matthew 28:16](#)) the plural numeral heads the periphrasis *Ediny že na desęte* (lit. one.PL PAR on ten.LOC) translating Greek *hendeka* ‘eleven’. Otherwise, *edini* in CA and CZ mainly takes an adverbial-like function, either translating Greek *monos* ‘alone’ or *kat’ idían* ‘in private’ (see [\(16\)](#) and [\(17\)](#), respectively). Interestingly, OCS ‘one’ also takes over indefinite functions, translating the Greek indefinite *tis* ‘some’ [\(18\)](#), but only in SK and CM. Note that this indefinite use is not a calque from New Testament Greek, which displays a word

¹⁰The designation of OCS as “Old Bulgarian” is not entirely correct, as OCS has different Balkan influences and presents many Moravianisms, given its primary function as a language for the dissemination of ecclesiastical texts during the missionary activity in Great Moravia ([Huntley 1993: 125](#)). Still, there is no question that OCS is heavily influenced by Bulgarian dialects spoken at that time in the Bulgarian Empire ([Picchio 1991](#)).

¹¹Theoretically, a possibility exists that plural *edni* was introduced later than singular *edin* before the beginning of the written tradition. Unfortunately, this possibility is impossible to verify, hence resulting in a vacuous speculation (but see [Schenker 1993: 92](#) about the probable existence of plural ‘one’ in Proto-Slavonic).

Table 3: Functions of plural ‘one’ distinguished on the basis of the Greek word/phrase it translates: *hendeka* ‘eleven’, *monos* ‘alone’, *kat’ idían* ‘in private’, *tis* ‘some’, and – when there is no equivalent

	<i>hendeka</i>	<i>monos</i>	<i>kat’ idían</i>	<i>tis</i>	–
CA	1	3	1	0	2
CZ	1	4	6	0	0
CM	1	4	6	34	1
SK	0	0	0	1	0

different from that of the numeral. Furthermore, New Testament Greek did not have a plural form for the numeral *heis* ‘one’, hence the presence of *edini* in OCS cannot be induced by the Greek text.

- (16) нъ *edini* oučenici ego idō
 but one.NOM.PL student.NOM.PL his go.AOR.3SG
 Greek: alla *monoi* hoi mathētai autou apēlthon
 but alone the disciples of-him went-away
 ‘but [that] His disciples had gone away alone’ (John 6:22; CA, CM, CZ)
- (17) роіѡтѣ і<sou>s petra i ěkova i ioana brata ego
 ‘Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother’
 і възведе іѣ на горѡ vysokō *ediny*
 and take-up.PST.3SG them.ACC on mountain.F.ACC tall.F.ACC one.ACC.PL
 Greek: kai anathērei autoùs eis óros ypselón *kat’ idían*
 and brings-up them into mountain lofty in-private
 ‘and brought them up to a high mountain alone’ (Matthew 17:1; CA, CM, CZ)
- (18) іѡштѡма же има се *edini* отѣ koustodiię
 going.DAT.DL PAR they.DAT.DL PAR one.NOM.PL from soldier.GEN.PL
 prišedŕše vŕ gradŕ
 come.PST.3PL in city.M.ACC
 Greek: *tines tēs koustōdías*
 some of-the custody-men
 ‘While they were going, indeed, some of the soldiers went into the city’
 (Matthew 28:11; SK, CM)

Greek: *kritēs tis ēn én tini pólei*
 judge some was in some city
 ‘In a city there was a judge’ (Luke 18:2; CA, CZ)

The data lead to two important observations. First, *edini* was independently available with non-indefinite functions. This does not support Yovkova-Shii’s (2022) claim that “[t]he shift of the numeral *edin* to a marker of indefiniteness can be considered the reason that triggered the appearance of the plural form for the paradigm of the *edin* forms to be completed” (p. 98). Second, once singular *edin̄* is admitted with an indefinite interpretation, plural *edini* also becomes available with the same reading. Such an observation fails to support the claim that *edni* is historically more recent. Even if the plural form is logically derived from (hence is more recent than) the singular one, the presented data show that they develop the indefinite function at the same time. This fully complies with the status of plural ‘one’ as part of the inflectional paradigm of this lexical item.

As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, there are two potential issues here. First, it is known that OCS is a literary and liturgical language which differs from the spoken one, of which there are no records. Second, it is possible that Nicolova refers to a subsequent stage of Bulgarian in which plural ‘one’ dropped out of use. As for the first issue, I would argue that, although OCS is far from the spoken language, the very presence in the texts of both singular and plural *edin̄* (with both numeral-related and indefinite interpretations) indicates that this item existed and that it was available at least to a community of speakers. As for the second issue, I recognize the possibility that plural ‘one’ dropped out in later stages of Bulgarian. This would need an in-depth diachronic study to be verified. However, very preliminary observations on some Middle-Modern Bulgarian manuscripts confirm the presence of plural ‘one’ also in later texts.¹⁴ A few examples are reported in (21).

- (21) a. *da se ne postideť v’ tí čas ne*
 PAR REFL not be-ashamed.PRS.3PL in this.M.ACC hour.M.ACC NEG.PRT

¹⁴The examples reported in (21) are taken from the open access platform Cyrillomethodiana: <https://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/> (last access in October 2024). This platform collects the digitalized version of 147 manuscripts from the 11th to the 18th century. The example in (21a) is taken from a collection of texts by Joan Zlatoust (https://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/textcorpus/show/doc_149). The example in (21b) is taken from “Manasieva hronika” by Konstantin Manacij (https://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/textcorpus/show/doc_169). The example in (21c) is taken from “Is-torija Slavjanobălgarska” by Paisij Hilendarski (https://histdict.uni-sofia.bg/textcorpus/show/doc_137).

- mōžīie edini nō i ženi
 man.NOM.PL one.NOM.PL but and woman.NOM.PL
 ‘so that in this moment not just men alone, but also women are not
 ashamed’ (Jagičev zlatoust, 13th c., pp. 148b-149a)
- b. na ediny že svoę dlani v̄bziraō
 on one.ACC.PL PAR self’s.ACC.PL palm.ACC.PL observe.PRS.1SG
 ‘I look at my own palms alone’ (Prēmōdrago manasīa i lětopisca
 s̄braniē lētno 6+7, 14th c., p. 5190)
- c. i razdelili se bolgári na dvóe
 ‘and the Bulgarians split into two’
 edini iskáli na c<a>r<s>tvo svetoslava
 one.NOM.PL want.PST.PRT.PL on kingdom.N.ACC Svetoslav.M.GEN
 pervago
 first.M.GEN
 ‘some of them wanted to go to the kingdom of Svetoslav the First’
 (Istorija Slavjanobālgarska, 18th c., p. 41v, line 17-18)

The evidence reported so far fails to support historical recentness as a possible cause for the “delay” of plural *edni*. An in-depth diachronic study is needed to fully support this observation. This shall be addressed in future research. For the time being, however, I take the recentness explanation not to be fully supported, leaving this issue open.

In the following subsections I review other possible explanations, showing how they by themselves are not sufficient to account for the asymmetry found between the singular and the plural forms.

2.2 Low frequency of occurrence

One possible reason for the discrepancy in the grammaticalization between singular *edin* and plural *edni* could be the lower frequency of occurrence of the latter if compared to the former. This is observed by Pozas Loyo (2022) in Ibero-Romance languages (all of which have articles) which admit bare plurals under certain conditions, but completely rule out bare singulars. This inevitably results in singular ‘one’ occurring much more frequently than plural ‘one’.

The same theoretically should not apply to Bulgarian, as in this language bare singulars are not obligatorily introduced by *edin* but can remain bare (see (7)). Nevertheless, a corpus search for all the singular and plural forms of *edin* reveals a surprising difference between them. As shown in Table 4, singular *edin* (including *edna.F* and *edno.N*) occurs way more often than plural *edni*. These data are

taken from the Bulgarian National Corpus (BNC)¹⁵ and from the corpus “ELEXIS Bulgarian Web 2021” (ELEXIS) available on SketchEngine (Kilgarriff et al. 2004; 2014).¹⁶

Table 4: Occurrences of singular *edin* and plural *edni* in the Bulgarian National Corpus (BNC) and in the corpus “ELEXIS Bulgarian Web 2021” (ELEXIS)

	<i>edin.SG</i>	<i>edni.PL</i>	% plural
BNC	1,095,570	18,409	1.65
ELEXIS	3.894.609	157.577	4.05

The percentages of plural *edni* in present-day Bulgarian are similar to those reported in Table 2 for OCS, indicating a quite stable occurrence ratio between the singular and the plural form over time.

Despite the evident asymmetry, it is risky to take the low frequency of occurrence of *edni* to be the cause of its “delay” in grammaticalization. In doing so, we would run into a circularity problem. As observed by Pozas Loyo (2022), the lower frequency is caused by a lower grammaticalization stage. We would thus be trapped into a chicken-and-egg situation, where lower grammaticalization causes less occurrences, which in turn would cause lower grammaticalization: it is not clear what causes what. It is thus safer to consider the lower frequency of occurrence of *edni* only as a surface consequence of its lower degree of grammaticalization.

2.3 Reinforcement by contrast

Another possible cause for the “delay” of the plural form is the reinforcement it gets as it often occurs in sentences where *edni(te)* ‘one.PL.DEF’ is contrasted with *drugi(te)* ‘other.PL.DEF’, as in (22).

- (22) a. *Edni idvat peša, drugi s kolelo; edni sami,*
 one.PL come.PRS.3PL by-foot other.PL with bicycle.N one.PL alone.PL
drugi s prijateli.
 other.PL with friend.PL
 ‘Some come by foot, other by bike; some slone, others with friends.’

¹⁵The BNC contains about 1.2 billion words and is freely accessible at <https://dcl.bas.bg/bulnc/> (last access in September 2024).

¹⁶ELEXIS contains more than 1 billion words. It is available on the SketchEngine platform: <http://www.sketchengine.eu> (last access in September 2024).

(ELEXIS, token 18906787)

- b. I ednite, i drugite mrazjat i nenaviždat
 and one.PL.DET and other.PL.DEF hate.PRS.3PL and detest.PRS.3PL
 silnata nacionalna dāržava. Ednite osāznato, drugite
 strong.F.DEF national.F state.F one.PL.DEF consciously other.PL.DEF
 spored instinkta si.
 according instinct.M.DEF self's
 'The ones and the others both hate and detest the strong national
 state. The ones consciously, the others according to their instinct.'

(ELEXIS, token 52408421)

This situation would be somehow similar to what is found with *whether* in Modern English (van Gelderen 2004; 2009). This item is expected to follow the complementizer cycle and to be reanalyzed from specifier to head of the CP. This, however, has not happened, and *whether* has resisted reanalysis, maintaining its specifier status. van Gelderen (2004; 2009) proposes that the reason for this is the phrasal status of this item promoted by the tendency (in this case, a prescriptive one) to reinforce it with *or not*. In fact, her corpus analysis reveals that *whether* is followed by *or not* in 18% of the occurrences (van Gelderen 2004: 95).

Also in the case of *edni*, a collocation analysis reveals that the word *drugi(te)* is among the most frequent words occurring within three words after *edni(te)*. The data in Table 5 (referred to the ELEXIS corpus) indeed reveal that *drugi* 'others' is the fifth most frequently occurring word within the three words following *edni*. Unfortunately, such an explanation is not tenable, an analogous collocation is found for singular *edin* as well, as reported in Table 5 for comparison.

Table 5: Most frequently occurring items within three words after *edni* and *edin* in ELEXIS

<i>edni</i> .PL (147,620 occur.)		<i>edin</i> .SG (1,590,276 occur.)	
lemma	occurr.	lemma	occurr.
<i>ot</i> 'from'	44,651	<i>ot</i> 'from'	408,632
<i>i</i> 'and'	27,978	,	266,672
,	25,170	.	162,550
<i>sāšti</i> 'same'	17,360	<i>i</i> 'and'	122,950
<i>drugi</i> 'others'	10,074	<i>na</i> 'of/on'	109,586
.	8,960	<i>drug</i> 'other'	70,695

What Table 5 shows is that both the singular and the plural forms display similar collocations, as both of them are often used in opposition with ‘other(s)’. Despite this, singular *edin* has proceeded further than plural *edni* in the grammaticalization path. Given this evidence, I conclude that reinforcement by contrast with *drug(i)* ‘others’ cannot be the cause of the “delay” of *edni*. The reason must then be looked for in some other domain. In the next section, I propose an explanation rooted in syntax.

3 Towards a syntactic perspective

Since the claim that *edni* is historically more recent than its singular counterpart is not supported by historical data, and since the frequency and the reinforcement accounts have been proven to be insufficient, we need to find another way to explain the “delay” of this plural form.

A good starting point is the observation that the grammaticalization of ‘one’ is a widespread phenomenon that affects languages that are geographically and genealogically distant (see Robbeets & Cuyckens 2013: 3). For this reason, such a process is taken to result from “universal principles of grammatical change” (Robbeets 2013: 149). Moreover, this grammaticalization path roughly follows the same stages cross-linguistically (in fact, the models proposed by Givón 1981 and Heine 1997 for different languages display similar stages). All this seems to suggest that the reason behind the “delay” of *edni* must be deeply rooted in the language, hence having to do with the syntax and the semantics of this lexical item. The present proposal indeed builds on a recent syntactic approach to the grammaticalization of singular *edin* in Bulgarian (Molinari 2023) to find in the syntax/semantics interface the possible reason for the “gap” in the grammaticalization of *edni*.

Molinari (2023) investigates the process of grammaticalization of (singular) *edin* in Bulgarian, individuating different structural positions for the different categorial statuses of this item. He follows previous work on numerals in Bulgarian by Giusti & Dimitrova-Vulchanova (1996) and takes *edin* to occur in a *Mittelfeld* position, sitting in the specifier of a dedicated projection NumP. The specifier status of *edin* is derived in contrast with the supposed head status of other numerals (Giusti & Dimitrova-Vulchanova 1996: 133) that trigger the so-called *brojna forma* (‘numeral form’) on masculine nouns (23) and can be easily bypassed by an adjective (24). *Edin*, in contrast, does not trigger any form on the noun but just agrees with it (25a) and cannot be bypassed by an adjective (25b).

- (23) Dva(ta) stola.
two.(DEF) chair.BF
'(The) two chairs.' (Giusti & Dimitrova-Vulchanova 1996: 142)
- (24) a. Dvete novi knigi.
two.DEF new books
'The two new books.'
b. Novite dve knigi.
new.DEF two books
'The new two books.' (Giusti & Dimitrova-Vulchanova 1996: 133,
adapted)
- (25) a. Edin stol / edna kniga / edno dete
one.SG.M chair.SG.M one.SG.F book.SG.F one.SG.N child.SG.N
'One chair / one book / one child'
b. {Edna nova / *Nova edna} kniga veće e po
one.SG.F new new one.SG.F book.SG.F already be.PRS.3SG at
knjžarnicite.
book-shops.DEF
'One new book is already available in book-shops.'
(Molinari 2023: 177, adapted)

Moreover, the *Mittelfeld* position of *edin* is shown by its possibility to appear after (but crucially not before) a demonstrative (26).

- (26) {Tozi edin / *Edin tozi} muž.
this one.SG.M one.SG.M this man
'This (particular) man.' (Dimitrova-Vulchanova & Tomić 2009: 9)

The indefinite specific marker and the article-like *edin* are instead argued to occur in SpecDP and D, respectively. Molinari builds upon the proposal put forth by Giusti (1994; 1997; 2002; 2015), who argues that the class of determiners is not a homogeneous one, as demonstratives and pronouns occupy SpecDP (see also Brugè 2002), while articles are D heads. The two categorical statuses of *edin* are torn apart since their properties align with different classes of determiners.

The interpretation of the indefinite marker *edin* as an element referring to some specific entity known to the speaker fits well with SpecDP, given the assumption (see Brugè 2002; Giusti 2002) that the interpretation of referential elements happens in that position. The fact that in (26) *edin* can only have a numeral reading (also reported by Belaj & Matovac 2015: 14 for Croatian) is structurally

accounted for proposing that the demonstrative and specific *edin* compete for the same position. In the presence of a demonstrative, then, only the lower *edin* (i.e., the numeral) is available. Specific *edin* can also be substituted by other non-numeral indefinites, like *njakakäv* ‘some’ (27), which would instead infelicitously substitute the numeral (e.g., in (1)). These indefinites are higher than numerals and precede them (28a). The same also holds for plural *edni* (28b).¹⁷

- (27) {Edin / Njakakäv} tvoj poznat te
 one.M some.M.SG your.M.SG acquaintance.M you.2SG.ACC
 tãrsi po telefona.
 look-for.PRS.3SG at phone.M.DEF
 ‘A/Some friend of yours is looking for you on the phone.’
 (Biserov & Aleksandrova 2023: 110, adapted)
- (28) a. Njakakvi dvama studenti mi gostuvaxa...
 some.PL two.VIR student.PL I.DAT visit.PST.3PL
 ‘Some two students visited me...’ (BNC; L00198386bCIA)
- b. Tova go kazvam v slučaj će edni dvama dobre izvestni
 this.N it.ACC say.PRS.1SG in case.M that one.PL two.VIR well known.PL
 šãforumci vzemat da si pomisljat nešto...
 forum-mate.PL take.PRS.3PL DA REFL think.PRS.3PL something
 ‘I say this in case two well known forum mates come up with
 something...’ (bgTenTen12, token 397374359)

Such specific *edin* also shares with pronouns (and demonstratives) the ability of licensing null nominals (29), which are understood as always being [+human]. In general, specific *edin* maintains its interpretable number feature since it refers to singular entities.

- (29) a. Vidjah njakoj <NP> da vliza v kãštata i
 see.AOR.1SG some.M.SG DA enter.PRS.3SG in home.F.DEF and
 se obadih na policijata.
 self call.AOR.1SG to police.F.DEF
 ‘I saw someone enter the house and I called the police’
 (Stoevski 2019: 194, adapted)

¹⁷Despite Molinari (2023) focuses on singular *edin* and argues that plural *edni* would deserve a separate study, he includes examples with the latter to show its higher position with respect to the numerals. Such examples are in fact not possible to be produced with the singular form, as they would result in the ungrammatical sequence **edin edin*.

- b. Pisax, kogato edin <NP> se provikna: - “Smärt na
 write.IMPF.1SG when one.M self shout.AOR.3SG death to
 bălgarite!”
 Bulgarian.PL.DEF
 ‘I was writing when someone shouted: “Death to the Bulgarians!”’
 (bgTenTen12, token 57083048)

Singular *edin* appearing in generic sentences, instead, displays different properties, that brings it closer to article-like elements. In fact, it is strongly phonetically reduced and cannot be focussed: stressing *edin* in a sentence like (30) results in a specific reading of this item. Moreover, it cannot license null nominals (31), and cannot be substituted by indefinite pronouns (32), but only by the definite article (33a). Furthermore, in such a context, the numeral feature of *edin* is not interpretable anymore, since the noun it introduces does not refer to one singleton individual, but to the extension of the NP itself (hence, to the members of the NP). The non-interpretability of the Number feature on *edin* in this case is further supported by the fact that it can even be replaced by the plural article (33b).

- (30) # EDNA žena vinagi e prava.
 one.F woman.F always be.PRS.3SG right.F
 ‘A (specific) woman is always right.’ (Molinari 2023: 193)
- (31) (Talking about women)
 *Edna vinagi e prava.
 one.F always be.PRS.3SG right.F
 (intended) ‘A woman is always right.’ (Molinari 2023: 194)
- (32) # Njakakva žena vinagi e prava.
 some.F.SG woman.F always be.PRS.3SG right.F
 ‘Some (specific) woman is always right.’
- (33) a. Ženata vinagi e prava.
 woman.F.DEF always be.PRS.3SG right.F
 b. Ženite vinagi sa pravi.
 woman.PL.DEF always be.PRS.3PL right.PL
 ‘Women are always right.’ (Molinari 2023: 191)

The resulting model is consistent with Roberts & Roussou’s (2003) and van Gelderen’s (2004) formal approaches to grammaticalization. In Roberts & Roussou’s (2003)

terms, the process consists in (i) a shift upwards in the structural hierarchy (SpecNumP > SpecDP) followed by (ii) a structural reanalysis (SpecDP > D). Both (i) and (ii) are instantiations of the parameter shift “Merge over Move” (i.e., feature checking that was satisfied by Move is satisfied by direct Merge after the grammaticalization has taken place) and exemplify the bias of the human parser towards simpler structures. Similarly, in the model proposed by [van Gelderen \(2004; 2011\)](#), (i) is justified by the “Late Merge Principle” (LMP), i.e., a principle analogous to “Merge over Move” formulated as “Merge as late as possible” ([van Gelderen 2004](#): 12). (ii) is an example of the “Head Preference Principle” (HPP) that prefers heads over specifiers (as [van Gelderen 2004](#): 11 puts it, “Be a head, rather than a phrase”). The model of grammaticalization elaborated by Molinari is reported in Figure 1.

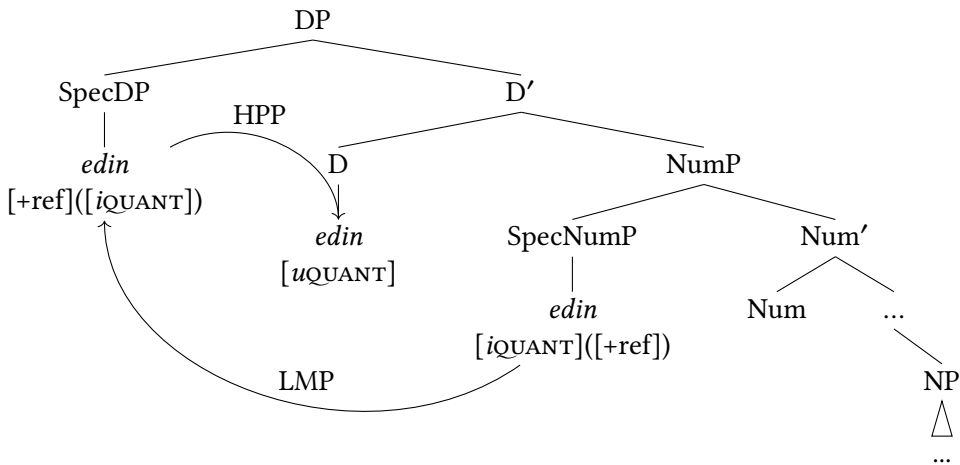


Figure 1: Grammaticalization of *edin* ([Molinari 2023](#): 202, adapted)

The whole model is also in line with [van Gelderen’s \(2011\)](#) observation that in the grammaticalization processes the amount of uninterpretable features increases at the expense of interpretable ones.

Having set the background, I turn to lay out a new proposal to account for the “delay” of plural *edni*.

4 A syntactic approach to *edni*

In this section, I propose that *edni* spells out a bigger portion of structure if compared to singular *edin*. This idea can, however, be formalized in at least two different ways, that I present in what follows.

4.1 *Edni* spells out a covert noun

A way to argue for a bigger structure of plural *edni* if compared to singular *edin* is to show that the former spells out a covert noun that is absent in the latter.

To this end, I build on recent proposals by Smith (2015; 2016; 2017; 2021), who investigates English mass-plural (like *furniture*) and *pluralia tantum* nouns, focusing on the role of inherent number in the structure and the agreement pattern of such items. Smith assumes that a single phi-feature is split in two halves: an uninterpretable feature [*uF*] readable at the morphological interface, and an interpretable feature [*iF*] readable at the semantic interface. Although these features in most cases coincide, there are idiosyncratic instances where they can diverge or where one of them can be missing altogether. Smith analyzes “hybrid nouns” (Smith 2021: 3) where [*uF*] and [*iF*] do not match up. A classical example is that of “fake-mass nouns” (in Smith 2015; 2016), also called “*furniture*-nouns” (in Smith 2021), as they are typically represented by a noun like *furniture* in English.

Smith handles such cases adopting a neo-constructivist approach (see e.g., Borer 2005; Alexiadou et al. 2007 *i.a.*), locating the inherent features of the noun on the root *n*.¹⁸ Specifically, a noun like *furniture* is on the one hand inherently individuated (as it can combine with distributive predicates like *large* and be compared by number) and has a plural [*iF*] (indicated as *i#* in Figure 2). On the other hand, *furniture* is morphologically a mass noun (as it can never show up with plural morphology and cannot control plural agreement), resulting in a structure like the one in Figure 2.

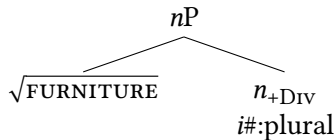


Figure 2: Representation of the noun *furniture* (from Smith 2021: 201)

Given its inherent number specification, *furniture* cannot in principle directly combine with numerals. However, non-inherent number features can be introduced directly in the structure, in a functional projection NumP. In the case of

¹⁸Smith borrows from Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993) the idea that roots are acategorial and need to be defined in the structure. *n* is thus the category defining node for roots denoting a noun. In Smith’s account, *n* comes specified for $\pm\text{DIV}$, determining whether the root determines an entity that can/cannot be divided. $n_{+\text{DIV}}$ refers to a noun whose denotation is divisible in minimal atoms.

furniture, a dummy (like *piece*, as in (34)) needs to be inserted in NumP to supply for the lack of structural number features. The resulting structure is given in Figure 3.

(34) three *(pieces of) furniture

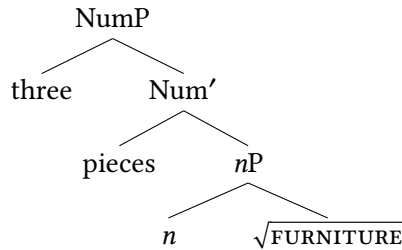


Figure 3: Representation of (34) (from Smith 2021: 195)

A similar situation applies to *pluralia tantum* nouns like *scissors* (Figure 4). They are also individuated and have an inherent number specification which, differently from *furniture*-nouns, is morphological in nature. Semantically, they are by default interpreted as plural (taken to be the unmarked value by Smith), but they can also get a singular interpretation by virtue of the fact that the latter is entailed in the former.

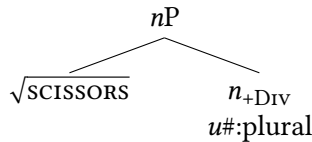


Figure 4: Representation of the noun *scissors* (from Smith 2021: 196)

By virtue of their inherent number features, *pluralia tantum* cannot combine directly with a numeral, but they need the intervention of a dummy (like *pair*).¹⁹ The same happens in Bulgarian.

Let us start by observing the parallelism between the case of *furniture*-nouns and that of *pluralia tantum* by taking the example in (35a). As argued by Smith (2015; 2016; 2021), *pluralia tantum* nouns cannot directly combine with numerals, but they need a dummy to be inserted. This is the case of (35a), whose structure is given in Figure 5, in analogy with Figure 3.

¹⁹In this use, *pair* is a dummy because it is semantically bleached: it does not denote a set composed of two separate elements. For example, *one pair of scissors* indicates a single item, not two distinct scissors.

- (35) a. *edin* *(*čift*) *očila*
 one.M pair.M glasses.PL
 b. *edni* *očila*
 one.PL glasses.PL
 ‘one pair of glasses’

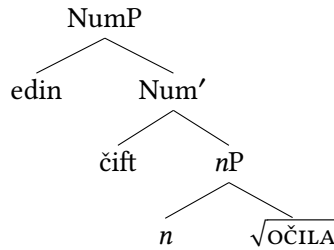


Figure 5: Representation of (35a)

It is clear from (35b) that the phrase with plural *edni* conveys the same meaning of (35a), arguably having the same structural representation. Moreover, adding the word *čiftove* ‘pairs’ in (35b) would give rise to the infelicitous reading that there are multiple pairs of glasses.²⁰ This amounts to saying that (35b) is structurally analogous to (35a) (i.e., as in Figure 5), and also that *edni* takes over the function of the dummy. This means that its structure is bigger than the one of singular *edin*, as tentatively represented in Figure 6.

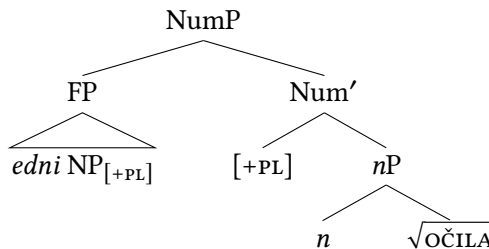


Figure 6: Tentative representation of (35b)

As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, the representation in Figure 6 finds

²⁰An anonymous reviewer asks what the structural representation of *edni čiftove očila* (one.PL pair.PL glasses.PL) ‘some pairs of glasses’ would be. In this case, *edni* would not function as a numeral anymore, as it combines with a countable plural noun. It is thus to be considered an indefinite marker sitting in SpecDP in the extended projection of the noun *čiftove*.

support in examples like (36), where the singular periphrasis *edin čift* is referred back by the plural clitic pronoun *gi*.²¹

- (36) Anna kupi edin čift očila i gi složi v
Anna buy.AOR.3SG one.M pair.M glasses.PL and them.ACC put.AOR.3SG in
čekmedžeto.
drawer.N.DEF
'Anna bought one pair of glasses and put it in the drawer.'

The presence of a covert noun selected by plural 'one' is also the fulcrum of *Lopez Palma's* (2007) proposal, who analyzes the syntax and semantics of *unos* 'one.PL' in Ibero-Romance. She bases her analysis on previous observations that *unos* gives rise to group readings (*Villalta 1994; Laca & Tasmowski 1996; Gutiérrez-Rexach 2001*). To achieve this reading, Lopez Palma assumes the presence of a covert group-denoting sortal noun (*e.GROUP*) that is selected by *unos* itself, resulting in a structure like (37).²²

- (37) [_{DP} unos [_{NP} *e.GROUP* [... [_{NP} N.PL]]]]. (Lopez Palma 2007: 248)

A recent account in the same spirit has been proposed by *Kayne (2017; 2020)*. He argues that *one* in English is accompanied by a silent adjective responsible for distinguishing its numeral semantics from other readings (see (38a) where the covert noun in capital letters is present vs. (38b) where it must be absent).

- (38) a. John has two brothers and one SINGLE sister.
b. Mary has just written one (*SINGLE) hell of a paper.
(*Kayne 2020*: 343, adapted)

Despite *Kayne's* proposal holds for singular *one*, it goes in the direction of proposing the presence of an overt noun in the structure of the numeral (see *Zweig 2005; Ionin & Matushansky 2018 i.a.* for similar proposals that numerals modify a covert noun).

As shown, the proposal of *edni* being accompanied by a covert noun is supported by the quantification of *pluralia tantum* nouns and by similar proposals found in the literature. However, although such an account is a convenient possibility, it is in general undesirable to resort to covert material, as it is difficult to

²¹I thank the anonymous reviewer for kindly providing the example in 36.

²²The literature on Bulgarian *edni* does not mention the availability of group readings. The same outcome was obtained after consulting a few L1 speakers. This issue is left open for further investigation. In any case, the absence of a group reading does not hinder the proposal put forth here, as the presence of a covert noun is not justified by this particular interpretation.

theoretically define the range of variation in the covert nouns that can co-occur with *edni* and to limit it. For this reason, I will propose an alternative formalization for the more complex structure of *edni*.

4.2 *Edni* has more functional structure

Smith's (2021) account has more to offer for the case at hand. In fact, the numeral 'one' itself falls within the category of items with an inherent number specification. Intuitively, 'one' is inherently specified for singular number on both the morphological and semantic level. However, Smith's analysis concerns nouns, while *edin* in Bulgarian behaves like an adjective.

Let us now briefly consider the categorial nature of *edin*. Its categorial boundaries look somehow blurred.²³ Considering the noun-adjective continuum, *edin* does not occupy the latter extreme, but rather it is somewhere in between, although shifted towards the adjective edge. Evidence for the nominal use of *edin* are traceable already in the OCS manuscripts introduced in §2.1. In such uses, the neuter form *edino* always shows up (39).

- (39) da bŏdŏtŏ *edino* ěkože i my *edino*
 so-that be.FUT.3PL one.N like and we one.N
 'that they may be one even as We are one' (John 17:22; CA, SK, CM)

The adjectival nature of *edin* is instead trivially revealed by its full agreement pattern for Gender and Number with the head noun (see, e.g., (25a)). The mixed nature of *edin* is also predicted by the QP-hypothesis (Cardinaletti & Giusti 1992; 2006; 2017) that takes quantifiers (including cardinals) to be semi-functional categories, i.e., to have both lexical and functional properties. The latter ones cause QPs to have selectional properties: existential QPs like cardinal numbers always select for indefinite nominals. The categorial ambiguity has been shown so far to hold for *edin* as well, given that this item is found to take over different functions in its history: numeral, indefinite marker, article-like element, and even adjective, adverb, and noun.²⁴

²³Numerals in general are a challenging category to define as they tend to straddle the boundary that divides nouns from adjectives (see Klockmann 2015).

²⁴In present-day Bulgarian, adjectival uses of *edin* seem to be found (see (i)): even in absence of the phrase *i săšt* 'and same', the adjectival meaning 'the same' is achieved.

- (i) Petăr i brat mu izpolzvat edin (i săšt) kompjutăr.
 Peter and brother he.DAT use.PRS.3PL one.M and same.M computer.M
 'Peter and his brother use the same computer.' (Molinari 2023: 178)

The bottom line here is that *edin* cannot be treated as a mere adjective, as its nature is way more complex. Probably, the best way of characterizing *edin* is through its underspecification. This item, in fact, can be considered the most underspecified one (e.g., in comparison with other cardinal numerals). This underspecification, on the one hand, causes it to have blurred syntactic categorical boundaries. On the other hand, it forces *edin* to find external licensors (generally the head noun) to agree with. This gives *edin* its adjective-like behavior. Whenever no licensor is available, *edin* thus appears in its default (neuter) form and functions as a noun.

As seen in (39), it is possible that *edin* has a partially nominal nature that aligns it with the nouns with inherent number features described by Smith. In such a case, *edin* would be semantically specified for singular number. However, its underspecification forces it to agree with the head noun, hence its semantic singularity can be “overwritten” by morphological agreement. Whenever this happens, a plural feature needs to be forced into the structure: as Smith argues, non-inherent number features are introduced structurally, in a NumP projection. The addition of a further functional layer results in an enlargement of the internal structure of *edin*. Its structure can roughly be represented as in Figure 7, where *n* has been replaced by a generic *x* to indicate the fuzzy categorical status of *edin*, which does not overlap with that of nouns, but neither to that of adjectives.

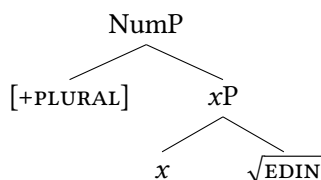


Figure 7: Hypothetical representation of the lexical entry for *edni*

In general, the idea that plurals are “bigger” than singulars is not totally new, if one considers a syntactic approach to morphology like Nanosyntax (Starke 2009). Within such a framework, lexical entries are stored in the lexicon as trees composed of hierarchically ordered features. Syntax builds such trees by merging features together and, whenever there is in the lexicon an item that matches the tree, the latter is spelled out as the matching lexical item. Importantly, features in Nanosyntax are privative, i.e., whenever a feature is not expressed, it is absent altogether from the structure. Caha (2021) builds on Harley & Ritter’s (2002) feature hierarchy, proposing that singular is the default value and that plural is obtained by merging a plural phrase (PlP) on top, as shown in Figure 8.

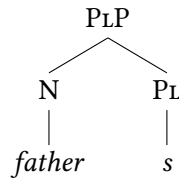


Figure 8: Simplified structure of the plural *fathers* (Caha 2023: 13)

Plural is thus associated with a bigger structure. Something similar could indeed be envisaged for plural *edni*, e.g., Figure 9. Further support is given by Wągiel & Caha (2020), who propose that the internal structure of cardinal numerals is more or less complex depending on their function.

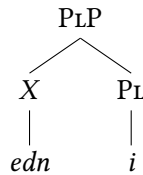


Figure 9: Simplified structure of the plural *edni*

Note that in a nanosyntactic perspective the same analysis would hold even under the assumption that *edin* is a simple adjective, since Caha (2023) has shown that agreeing modifiers display the same functional sequence of the item they agree with.

This approach that argues for a bigger structure of *edni* gives a prominent role to plural Number. It is thus legitimate to ask ourselves why Number is so relevant while Gender is not as it does not influence the stage of grammaticalization of *edin*. There are possibly two reasons for that. The first one, linked to the previous discussion, is the syntactic status of Number features. It is agreed upon that Number in syntax projects an independent phrase, while there is no agreement on whether Gender heads its own projection (see, e.g., Picallo 1991; Koopman 2003a,b; De Belder & van Koppen 2016 for Gender features projecting an independent GenP; cf. Ritter 1993; Di Domenico 1997; Alexiadou 2004; Alexiadou et al. 2007; Kramer 2015; 2016 for evidence against Gender projections). The second reason is related to the first one, and has to do with the cognitive prominence of Number features. Up to date, there are several empirical studies showing that Number information is processed before Gender and has a more prominent role in antecedent disambiguation (Nicol 1988; De Vincenzi 1999; De Vincenzi & Di

Domenico 1999; Barber & Carreiras 2005; Carminati 2005; Volpato 2010; Dispaladro et al. 2015). These findings bring evidence in favor of the feature geometry proposed by Harley & Ritter (2002: 486) where Number is ranked higher than Gender. This corresponds to a greater cognitive salience of the former with respect to the latter. The greater cognitive salience of Number is thus the discriminating factor that allows plural to significantly impact on the grammaticalization of *edni*, differently from Gender. Moreover, it has been argued that singular is the default value for Number, with plural being the marked one (Greenberg 1963; Harley & Ritter 2002; Caha 2021; 2023).²⁵ In the case of ‘one’, it is pretty straightforward to consider the singular as the unmarked value for the Number feature. Markedness is also interpreted in structural terms, with more marked options being structurally bigger, hence more prominent from a cognitive point of view.

To conclude, it is worth observing that the two possible formalizations of the more complex structure of *edni* presented in this section and in §4.1 do not exclude each other. *Edni* could have a complex structure because of a plural feature added on top, and at the same time spell out a covert noun. I leave the verification of which of the two best fits the case at hand for future research. I now turn to link the complex structure of *edni* with its delay in the grammaticalization path.

4.3 A syntactic approach to the “delay” of *edni*

In this paragraph I provide a possible explanation for the fact that plural *edni* lags behind singular *edin*, linking the more complex structure of the former with the grammaticalization model presented in §3.

In §1.2 it was shown that the grammaticalization path of plural *edni* runs in parallel with that of singular *edin*. Consequently, the model described in §3 for the latter is supposed to hold for the former as well. The idea is that *edni* is a numeral modifying *pluralia tantum* nominals, merged in SpecNumP. Just like the singular numeral, *edni* cannot be bypassed by an attributive adjective (40).²⁶ Moreover,

²⁵There is also a tradition that takes plural to be less marked than singular; on this, see Yatsushiro et al. (2017) and references therein.

²⁶An anonymous reviewer points out that, in a context in which strong emphasis is placed on the adjective, and the sentence is accompanied by emphatic intonation, the adjective can precede *edni*, as in (i), kindly provided by the reviewer themselves.

- (i) (?)Golemi edni sgradi.
big.PL one.PL building.PL
‘Some BIG buildings.’

However, here we are dealing with an A¹-movement to the left periphery of the nominal expression (see Giusti 1996), and the linear order is felt as being strongly marked. The same

differently from the other numerals (taken to be heads by Giusti & Dimitrova-Vulchanova 1996), *edni* does not trigger *brojna forma* on masculine nouns (recall (23)), but rather agrees for Number with nouns displaying the canonical plural form (41a).²⁷ The same happens with indefinites like *njakakäv* ‘some’ (41b).

(40) Kupih si {edni hubavi / *hubavi edni} očila.
 buy.AOR.1SG REFL one.PL nice.PL nice.PL one.PL glasses.PL
 ‘I bought myself a nice pair of glasses.’

(41) a. Edni stolove.
 one.PL chair.PL
 ‘Some chairs’
 b. Njakakvi stolove.
 some.PL chair.PL
 ‘Some chairs (or others).’

In the first step of grammaticalization, when it comes to be used as an indefinite specific marker, it undergoes a shift upwards in the structure. As observed in (28b), there is evidence that *edni* is higher than numerals. Its position can thus be characterized as SpecDP. Such a shift, also in this case, goes hand in hand with a process of semantic bleaching as the upper bound of the numeral is weakened. In fact, the numeral *edni* can only combine with *pluralia tantum* nouns (i.e., semantically singular but morphologically plural). Indefinite *edni*, instead, can combine with semantically plural nouns (denoting more than one referent). Consequently, the quantificational reading is not available anymore.

According to the model in Figure 1, this first step only involves a “remerge” of the whole projection of *edni* to a higher structural position, without any intervention on the internal structure of the item. Such a shift can thus take place without problems, as the amount of structure does not matter at this point. The

happens with singular *edin*: in (ii), there is a contrastive focus reading on the adjective *dobär*.

(ii) Dobär edin student.
 good.M one.M student.M
 ‘One GOOD student.’ (Tasseva-Kurktchieva & Dubinsky 2018: 303)

The orders in (i) and (ii) need to be licensed by a special intonation contour, which would thus license orders that are not generally available.

²⁷The quantifier *njakolko* ‘a few’ and the interrogative pronoun *kolko* ‘how much/many’ pattern with numerals in triggering *brojna forma* on masculine nouns. According to Bernard (1954: 36) (quoted in Franks 2018: 109), *njakolko* triggers the *brojna forma* because it suggests a precise (or at least approximate) number.

“delay” of *edni* shows up in the following step, the one involving the transition to an article-like status, whose structural correlate is the reanalysis from specifier to head of the DP. At this point, the size of the lexical element has a direct impact on the process of reanalysis, as bigger structures are cognitively more prominent and presumably require more time to be reanalysed. Recall from §4.2 that Number information is cognitively more salient than Gender one. Furthermore, under the assumption that plural is the marked Number feature for ‘one’, the system ends up facing the challenge of reanalyzing a cognitively salient and marked interpretable feature into an uninterpretable one.²⁸ Given its saliency and markedness, it is possible that such a feature resists reanalysis and delays the whole grammaticalization process. The resulting overall model for *edni* thus results in Figure 10.

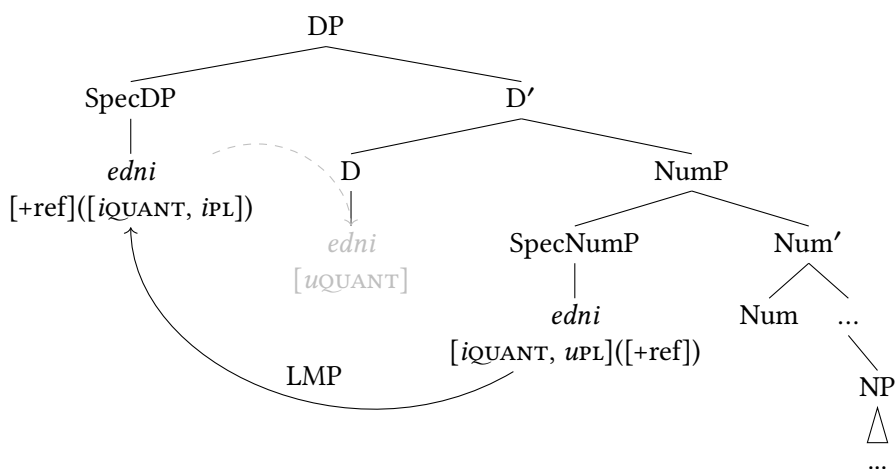


Figure 10: Grammaticalization of *edni*

As a side note, such a model is also able to elegantly explain why in other languages where singular ‘one’ is grammaticalized up to the specific marker stage that, e.g., Polish, plural ‘one’ is not delayed (Hwaszcz & Kędzierska 2018).

5 Conclusion and outlook

The present contribution dealt with the puzzling issue of the Bulgarian plural numeral *edni* ‘one’, as it displays a “delay” with respect to its singular counterpart *edin* in the grammaticalization process. I showed that plural *edni* follows the

²⁸I assume that, once indefinite *edni* combines with plural nouns, its plural feature is interpretable (pace Lopez Palma 2007).

same grammaticalization path of singular *edin*, although the former lags behind the latter as it is not admitted in generic sentences with non-referential interpretation. Three possible causes for this discrepancy were considered: (i) the fact that *edni* is historically more recent than *edin* (as proposed by Nicolova 2008; 2017); (ii) the lower frequency of occurrences of *edni*; (iii) the frequent reinforcement of *edni* by *drugi* ‘others’. The cause in (i) is not supported by historical data that show how plural ‘one’ appears together with singular ‘one’ already in OCS manuscripts. Furthermore, plural ‘one’ appears with an indefinite interpretation only in those manuscripts where also singular ‘one’ functions as an indefinite. As for (ii), I argued that taking the low frequency of occurrence of *edni* as the cause of its “delay” leads to a circularity problem and is to be avoided. Regarding (iii), the contrast with *drugi(te)* ‘others’ is not tenable as possible cause, as singular *edin* is contrasted with *drug* ‘other’ at a similar rate.

Building on a recent proposal by Molinari (2023) on the syntax of the grammaticalization path of singular *edin*, I proposed that the “delay” of plural *edni* is rooted in the syntax. The main idea is that *edni* is more complex than its singular counterpart and spells out a bigger portion of structure. This is achieved by proposing that *edni* either is accompanied by a silent noun, or is structurally more complex given the presence of a non-inherent plural feature. *Edni* starts out in SpecNumP as a numeral, and combines with *pluralia tantum* nouns. Semantic bleaching leads it to lose its upper bound, and it starts combining with plural count nouns. At this point, *edni* is not a numeral anymore but functions as an indefinite determiner. It undergoes a shift upwards in the structure (cf. “Merge over Move” in Roberts & Roussou’s 2003 terms; Late Merge Principle in van Gelderen’s 2004 terms) and comes to be merged in SpecDP. This shift happens without problems, as no reanalysis of its internal structure is involved. In the next step, instead, its big structure slows down the process, as SpecDP should be reanalyzed as D. The presence of either a covert noun or of a salient and interpretable plural feature makes Spec > head reanalysis harder, slowing down the process.

The present contributions leaves open the question of how exactly the diachronic development of ‘one’ happened in the history of Bulgarian. The in-depth diachronic study on ‘one’ in the available Middle and Modern Bulgarian written records is thus left for future research. Further investigation is also needed to determine which formalization better suits the complex structure of *edni*, possibly investigating whether this item triggers particular readings (e.g., the group reading of *unos*, see Lopez Palma 2007). Moreover, the role and the nature of plural features on this apparently singular numeral need additional investigation.

Abbreviations

1	first person	INSTR	instrumental
2	second person	M	masculine
3	third person	N	neuter
ACC	accusative	NOM	nominative
AOR	aurist	PAR	particle
BF	<i>brojna forma</i>	PL	plural
DAT	dative	PRS	present tense
DEF	definite article	PRT	participle
DL	dual	PRT.DET	partitive determiner
F	feminine	PST	past
GEN	genitive	REFL	reflexive
IMP	imperative	SG	singular
IMPF	imperative	VIR	virile

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