

Down with the themes! For a classless declension in Russian morphology

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The declension class is defined as a property of a noun or an adjective determining the choice of its case endings and, unlike gender, lacking any syntactic effects. Three recent attempts have been made to derive Russian declension classes: (1) various DM approaches (Müller 2004a, b, Alexiadou and Müller 2008, and Privizentseva 2023, see also Nessel 1994) treat the declension class of a noun as a combination of two binary features, (2) Caha 2021 offers a nanosyntactic analysis ascribing the declension class to the root size, (3) Halle 1994 and Bailyn and Nevins 2008 argue that declension is (totally or partially) determined by the theme. I will propose, in line with several recent studies deriving declension classes from the underlying representations of nominal stems (cf. Spaelti 2004, Emonds and Spaelti 2005 for Latin, Lampitelli and Ulfsbjorninn 2023 for Italian), that Russian declension class can be derived from the gender and final consonant of the stem, and that the so-called “nominal theme” should be analyzed as the exponent of the singular number.