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## SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DUAL IN SLOVENIAN<sup>1</sup>

The article deals with dual forms in Slovenian and their use in standard Slovenian, the dialects of Slovenian and the colloquial language of Ljubljana. The article draws attention to the fact that a stronger degree of formal markedness of part of dual forms (consistent with a stronger degree of semantic double markedness of dual forms), which is a result of the historical development, and the pragmatic value of the dual when the reference is to two people, contribute to the vitality of this grammatical category.

V prispevku se govori o dvojskih oblikah v slovenščini, o njihovi rabi, o odnosu med temi oblikami v knjižnem jeziku in narečjih ter pogovornem jeziku Ljubljane. Opozarja se, da krepkejša oblikovna markiranost dela dvojskih oblik (kar ustreza pomensko krepkejši dvojni markiranosti dvojskih oblik), do katere je prišlo v zgodovinskem razvoju, poleg pragmatične teže, ki jo ima dvojina, kadar je govor o dveh osebah, prispeva k vitalnosti te kategorije.

**Key words:** The use of the dual in Slovenian, paired nouns, historical development of the dual in Slovenian, pragmatic value of the dual in Slovenian

**Ključne besede:** raba dvojine v slovenščini, parni samostalniki, zgodovinski razvoj dvojine v slovenščini, pragmatična vrednost dvojine v slovenščini

Slovenian is one of the few European languages exhibiting the grammatical category of the dual. As far as Slavic languages are concerned, this category is also found in Upper and Lower Sorbian. According to Corbett (2000: 36), the dual is also found in some newly-formed dual forms in Breton.

The following definition of the category number is found in a recent grammar of Slovenian: »Number is the morphological expression of quantity for values one, two, three or more in nominal and some predicative words, and in finite verb forms /.../. There are three numbers in Slovenian; /.../ *Singular* refers to the value 'one', *dual* to the value 'two' (or 'one and one') and *plural* to the value 'more than two' (or 'more than one and one')« (Toporišič 2000: 271).

### The forms and the use of the dual

The category of the dual is an inherent property of nouns and personal pronouns. In other parts of speech (adjectives, adjectival pronouns, participles, verbs, etc.) it appears as an agreeing category. The grammar of Slovenian provides dual paradigms for all inflected parts of speech that show the category of number. Nouns and the agreeing

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parts of speech – comprising adjectival pronouns, adjectives, numerals and participles – display special dual forms only in the nominative, the accusative, the dative and the instrumental, while the genitive and locative forms are identical to plural forms. Distinctive dual forms (different from the plural ones) are exhibited by finite forms of verbs, with the dual forms for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person being identical. Personal pronouns display special dual forms in all cases.

The nominative and accusative of dual nouns of masculine gender and the agreeing parts of speech are typically expressed by the ending -a (*dva* 'two-du.', *tista* 'those-du.', *moja* 'my-du.', *lepa* 'beautiful-du.', *sinova* 'sons-du.', *delala* 'worked-du.', etc.). This ending is also found in all three finite dual verb forms in the present tense, which in standard Slovenian do not show special endings for gender (*delava* 'we work-du.', *delata* 'you work-du.', *delata* 'they work-du.'). Dual personal pronouns of masculine gender in the nominative end in -**dva** 'two' (*midva* 'we-two', *vidva* 'you-two', *onadva* 'they-two'). This ending differs from the singular and the plural ending. Dual forms of feminine and neuter gender do not display one typical ending. The nouns and the agreeing parts of speech are expressed by the ending -i in the nominative (*tisti* 'those-du.', *moji* 'my-du.', *lepi* 'beautiful-du.', *hčeri* 'daughters-du.', *okni* 'windows-du.', *delali* 'worked-du.') and only exceptionally by the ending -e (*v dve gube* literally 'in two folds-du.', 'hunched'). The form of the numeral is **dve** 'two-du.', which is how personal pronouns in the nominative end as well (*midve/medve* 'we-two-fem.', *vidve/vedve* 'you-two-fem.', *onidve/onedve* 'they-two-fem.'). The verb ending is the same for all genders: -a.

The noun in its dual form is usually premodified by the numerals *dva* 'two-masc.', *dve* 'two-fem./neu.', or the pronouns *oba* 'both-masc.', *obe* 'both-fem./neu.'. Such premodification can be omitted if the speaker knows that the nominal phrase refers to two entities. All parts of speech agreeing with the noun in its dual form (i.e. adjectives, adjectival pronouns, numerals and participles) as well the predicator and its complements are also found in their dual forms (Toporišič 2000: 609):

*Dva*                      *otroka*                      *hodita*                      še                      v šolo.  
 Two-du.masc.nom. child-du.masc.nom. go-3du.pres. still to school  
 »Two children still go to school.«

*Otroka*                      *hodita*                      še                      v šolo.  
 child-du.masc.nom. go-3du.pres.                      still to school  
 »The two children still go to school.«

*Ta*                      *dva*                      *stola*                      *sta*                      *polomljena*.  
 These-du.masc.nom. two-du.masc.nom. chair-du.masc.nom. be-3du.pres. broken-du.masc.  
 »These two chairs are broken.«                      nom.

*Ti*                      *dve*                      *knjigi*                      *sta*                      *predragi*.  
 These-du.fem.nom. two-du.fem.nom. book-du.fem.nom. be-3du.pres. too-expensive-du.fem.  
 »These two books are too expensive.«                      nom.



Ana je kupila dva zvezka.  
Ana be-3sing.pres. buy-ptc.sg.fem two-du.masc.acc. notebook-du.masc.acc.  
»Ana bought two notebooks.«

Ana je šla v kino s svojima prijateljicama/  
A. is gone to movies with her-du.fem.in. friend-du.fem.in./

z dvema novima prijateljicama.  
with two-du.fem.in. new-du.fem.in. friend-du.fem.in.  
»Ana went to the movies with her two friends/ with her two new friends.«

When two people are involved, a dual personal pronoun is used. (the 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronoun can refer to two things as well, though such contexts are extremely rare). When the pronoun is the subject of the sentence, it is often dropped in the same way as the personal pronouns functioning as subjects are generally omitted. The category of number is in such cases expressed by the verb form:

*Midva* bova šla po levi poti, *vidva* pa po desni.  
we (1du.masc.) be (1du.fut.) go (ptc.du.masc.) on left road you (2du.masc.) pa on right  
»The two of us will take the road on the left, while the two of you the one on the right.«

Včeraj *sva* šla v kino.  
Yesterday be (1du.pres.) go (ptc.du.masc.) to movies  
»Yesterday the two of us went to the movies.«

Kdaj *gresta* v kino?  
When go (2du.pres.) or go (3du.pres.) to movies  
»When are the two of you going to the movies? or When are the two of them going to the movies?«

If the subject is a coordinate noun phrase such as *jaz in Tone* 'I and Tone'; *ti in Tone* 'you and Tone'; *on in Tone* 'he and Tone', it can be replaced by the phrase *midva s Tonetom* 'us (du.) with Tone'; *vidva s Tonetom* 'you (du.) with Tone'; *onadva s Tonetom* 'they (du.) with Tone', as exemplified below. The examples are taken from (Toporišič 2000: 608).

Tone in jaz *sva* šla h kovaču.  
Tone and I be (1du.pres.) go (ptc.du.masc.) to blacksmith.  
»Tone and I went to the blacksmith«

*Midva* s Tonetom *sva* šla h kovaču.  
We (1du.) with Tone (in.) be (1du.pres.) go (ptc.du.masc.) to blacksmith.  
»Tone and I went to the blacksmith.«

S Tonetom *sva* šla h kovaču.  
with Tone (in.) be (1du.pres.) go (ptc.du.masc.) to blacksmith  
»Tone and I went to the blacksmith«



A subject consisting of two singular headwords generally requires a dual predicate (Toporišič 2000: 609):

Borut in Meta pridno študirata.  
Borut and Meta hard study (3du.pres.).  
»Borut and Meta are studying hard«

Ne ti ne jaz nisva kriva.  
Neither you nor I not-be (1du.pres.) guilty-du.masc.nom.  
»Neither of the two of us is guilty«

When the coordinate subject is composed of one head of masculine gender and one head of feminine gender, the predicate that agrees with the subject shows dual masculine agreement, since masculine gender is the unmarked gender; (Toporišič 2000: 266, see also Toporišič 2000: 609):

Janez in Micka sta šla v kino.  
Janez (sg.masc.) and Micka (sg.fem.) be (3du.pres.) go (ptc.du.masc.) to movies  
»Janez and Micka went to the movies.«

Slovenian exhibits the polite use of the second person plural form instead of the second person singular to address one person, which expresses respect and distance on the part of the speaker. It is interesting to note that it is often more adequate to use the dual form when addressing two people we would separately address with an honorific form (see also Corbett 2000: 226). The use of the dual disambiguates the otherwise ambiguous meaning of the utterance – if the plural form is used, it is not clear whether the speaker is referring to one, two or even more people.

Kdo ve, zakaj vam tega ni povedala. Saj sta bili tako rekoč  
neločljivi.  
who knows why you (pl.hon.) this not told saj be (3du.pres.) be (ptc.du.fem.) so to say  
inseparable  
(du.fem.)  
»Who knows why she did not tell you that. Especially since you two were practically inseparable.«

The plural personal pronoun *vam* refers to the listener, whom the speaker addresses with the honorific form. The dual forms *bili* and *neločljivi* refer to the listener and some other person of feminine gender.

The dual is used in the same way when the speaker is referring to himself or herself and the listener whom he or she addresses with the honorific plural.

Naj ostane med nama. Saj menda veste, da je Makiko v Evropi,  
mar ne?  
Let remain between we-du.in. saj certainly know (3pl.hon.pres.) that is Makiko in Europe,  
mar not  
»This is between the two of us. You do know that Makiko is in Europe, don't you?«



The dual can also be used when talking to a child about an action that will either be performed only by the adult or by the child (Toporišič 2000: 508):

Zdaj bova pa juho pojedla.  
now be (1du.fut.) *pa* shoes put on (ptc.du.masc.)  
»Now we shall eat up the soup.«

Zdaj bova pa čevlje obula.  
now be (1du.fut.) *pa* shoes put on (ptc.du.masc.)  
»Now we shall put on the shoes.«

A similar example is found in (Corbett 2000: 227), where, after an acupuncture session, the doctor is talking to a patient whom he addresses with the honorific plural.

Gospod Orešnik, zdaj bova pobrala iglice.  
Mister Orešnik now be-1du.fut take out (ptc.du.masc.) needles  
»Mr. Orešnik, we shall take out the needles now.«

It appears that the use of the dual in the examples above establishes a special connection of cooperation between the speaker and the listener and some degree of a patronizing attitude to the listener (adult to child, doctor to patient).

### Markedness/Unmarkedness

In general, the singular is considered the unmarked form against the dual and the plural, while the plural is the unmarked form against the dual, (Toporišič 2000: 271, slightly differing from Corbett 2000: 38ff). Therefore, in certain contexts it is possible to use the plural instead of the dual and the singular instead of the plural.

Dual forms exhibit many structural idiosyncrasies: they are longer than the corresponding singular and plural forms (as observed by Toporišič 2000: 272) and most of them are expressed by the ending *-a*, typical of the dual masculine form. The structure of dual personal pronouns in the nominative case is especially transparent: these pronouns are composed of the elements *mi* 'we-pl.masc.'; *me* 'we-pl.fem.'; *vi* 'you-pl.masc.'; *ve* 'you-pl.fem.'; *ona* 'they-du.masc.' etc. followed by the numerals *dva*, *dve* 'two'. The numerals *dva*, *dve* 'two' can sometimes be added (but spelt separately) in the oblique cases as well: *naju/vaju/njiju dveh* 'we-du.gen./you-du.gen./them-du.gen. two'; *nama/vama/njima dvema* 'we-du.dat./you-du.dat./them-du.dat. two', etc. (Toporišič 2000: 305-6). Such a structure confirms the claim that the more a certain form is marked in terms of its meaning the more complex and composed of longer elements its structure is (Stolz 1988: 477-81).

In the nominative, all nominal dual masculine forms and all finite verb forms (of all genders) are expressed by the ending *-a*. Thus, in a sentence with a dual masculine subject, all inflected agreeing forms have the ending *-a*. No such uniformity in terms of the morphological ending is found with the plural or with the dual feminine and neuter subjects.



Dual:

Masculine:

*Midva/vidva/onadva/dva brata sva/sta mlada//*  
We-du./you-du./they-du./two brother-du. be (1du./2,3du.pres.) young (du.masc.)

*sva/sta bila mlada // hodiva/hodita v šolo.*  
be (1du./2,3du.pres.) be (ptc.du.masc.) young (du.masc.) go (1du./2,3du.pres.) to school  
»The two of us/the two of you/the two of them/two brothers are young//were young//go to school.«

Feminine:

*Midve/vidve /onidve / dve sestri sva/sta// mladi//*  
We-du./you-du./they-du./two sisters-du. be (1du./2,3du.pres.) young (du.fem.)//

*sva/sta bili mladi // hodiva/hodita v šolo.*  
be (1du./2,3du.pres.) be (ptc.du.fem.) young (du.fem.) go (1du./2,3du.pres.) to school  
»The two of us/the two of you/the two of them/two sisters are young//were young//go to school.«

Neuter:

*Dve okni sta odprti // sta bili odprti.*  
Two (du.neu.) windows (du.neu.) be (3du.pres.) open (du.neu.) // be (du.neu.pres.) be (ptc. du.neu.) open (du.neu.)

»Two windows are open//were open.«

Plural:

Masculine:

*Mi/vi/oni/otroci smo/ste/so mladi // smo/ste/so*  
We/you/they/children be (1pl./2pl./3pl.pres.) young (pl.masc.) be (1pl./2pl./3pl.pres.)  
*bili mladi//*  
be (ptc.pl.masc.) young (pl.masc.)

*hodimo/hodite/hodijo v šolo.*  
go (1pl./2pl./3pl.pres.) to school  
»We/you/they/children/ are young//were young//go to school.«

Feminine:

*Me/ve/one smo/ste/so mlade /smo/ste, so/*  
We/you/they (fem.) be (1pl./2pl./3pl.pres.) young (pl.fem.) be (1pl./2pl./3pl.pres.)  
*bile mlade //*  
be (ptc.pl.fem.) young (pl.fem.)

*hodimo/hodite/hodijo v šolo.*  
go (1pl./2pl./3pl.pres.) to school  
»We/you/they are young//were young//go to school.«

Neuter:

Vsa okna so odprta // so bila  
 all (pl.neu.) windows (pl.neu.) be (3pl.pres.) open (pl.neu.) // be (3pl.pres.) be (ptc.pl.neu.  
 odprta.  
 open (pl.neu.)

»All windows are open//were open.«

Given that marked forms are less often used than less marked or unmarked forms, dual forms are less commonly used than plural or singular forms. This fact is confirmed by Neweklowsky and Ozbalt (cited in Corbett 2000: 281–282) showing that the occurrence of the three numbers in Slovenian is as follows: the use of the singular compared to the use of the plural is 3:1, while the dual is used in fewer than one percent of the cases (according to some other research it is a bit higher). In terms of part of speech, the use of the dual is distributed as follows: nouns: 0.5 %, adjectives: 1 %, pronouns: 1.9 %, verbs: 2.4 %.

Considering that the plural is unmarked in comparison with the dual, the plural can be used instead of the dual in certain cases if such use is justified. The exact conditions for this kind of use have not been thoroughly investigated in the literature. One possibility in colloquial language is mentioned by Toporišič (1970/71), namely that in families with two sons or two daughters, plural phrases are often used instead of dual ones: *naši fantje* 'our-pl. boys-pl.'; *naša dekleta* 'our-pl. girls-pl.' instead of *naša fanta* 'our-du. boys-du.'; *naši dekleti* 'our-du. girls-du.'

### Paired nouns

The fact that in Slovenian nouns denoting body parts which occur in pairs, such as *roke* 'hands', *noge* 'feet', *oči* 'eyes', or articles of clothing consisting of two elements, such as *čevlji* 'shoes', *rokavice* 'gloves', or biological pairs, such as *starši* 'parents', are used in the plural might come as a surprise.

Noge me bolijo.

Foot (pl.) *me* hurt (3pl.pres.)

»My feet hurt.«

Nogavice so se mi strgale.

Sock (pl.) be (3pl.) *se* to-me tear (ptc.pl.fem).

»I tore my socks/My socks tore on me.«

Grammarians consider such use of the plural as following from the notion of redundancy – every person has two hands, two feet and so on. Such argumentation is found already in Jernej Kopitar (1808: 218), Toporišič (2000: 271) and in the Sorbian linguistic atlas (Sorbischer Sprachatlas: 34).

If the numerals *dva*, *dve* 'two' or *oba*, *obe* 'both' are used as premodifiers of these nouns, the latter behave as regular countable nouns and take dual agreement.



Vsi imamo dve roki in dve nogi. (Delo, 30. 11. 1997, p. 15)  
all have (1pl.pres.) two hand (du.) and two foot (du).  
»We all have two hands and two feet.«

Obe nogi me bolita.  
both foot (du.) me hurt (3du.pres).  
»Both my feet hurt.«

Človek ima dve nogi, pes pa štiri.  
human has two foot-du. dog *pa* four  
»A human has two feet, while a dog has four.«

Corbett (2000) claims that this phenomenon shows that the dual in Slovenian is optional (pp. 42–44) because, despite the fact that the category of number in Slovenian is obligatorily expressed, the plural can be used to refer to two entities.

Such an explanation does not consider the fact that these nouns represent a special category in terms of meaning. They do indeed refer to body parts (e.g. *roke* 'hands'), articles of clothing (e.g. *rokavice* 'gloves') or a group of people (e.g. *starši* 'parents') composed of two parts; however, the central part of their meaning is the unity of the two parts with respect to their function. Even Corbett (2000: 80) notes that such nouns in some languages behave in a special way and wonders whether the nouns of the type *boots* or *ears* refer to one thing or two things – that is, whether they refer to the means of hearing or two ears; or to footwear or two boots.

It certainly seems that Slovenian offers evidence that such nouns show a special behavior. Nouns such as *noge* 'feet', *roke* 'hands', *nogavice* 'socks', should be considered a kind of *pluralia tantum* (*dualia tantum* in some languages with the dual, e.g. in Old Church Slavic, Žolobov and Krys'ko 2001: 24), denoting a body part or a garment that is incidentally composed of two parts. On the other hand, nouns such as *noga* 'foot', *roka* 'hand', *nogavica* 'sock', are countable nouns found in all three numbers.

Leva noga me boli. Ena nogavica je strgana.  
left foot (sg.) me hurts. One sock (sg. be-sg.) torn.  
»My left foot hurts. One sock is torn.«

Človek ima dve nogi. Dve nogavici sta strgani.  
human has two foot (du.) two sock (du.) be (du) torn.  
»A human has two feet. Two socks are torn.«

Klavir ima tri noge. Tri nogavice so strgane.  
piano has three foot (pl.) three sock (pl.) be (pl.) torn  
»A piano has three feet. Three socks are torn.«

In this sense, the use of the dual in Slovenian is not optional. The speaker cannot choose between the plural or the dual when talking about the two entities that countable nouns such as *noga* 'foot', *roka* 'hand' or *rokavica* 'glove' denote. In the same way, the speaker has no choice with the nouns denoting body parts and articles of clothing





consisting of two identical parts. These are normally used in the plural and without the numeral *dva/dve* 'two'. The sentences *\*Dve nogi me bolita* (\*My two feet hurt) and *\*Kupil sem si dve nogavici* (\*I bought myself two socks) do not make sense.

The use of the nouns *noga* 'foot', *roka* 'hand' in the dual without the numeral is possible, though rare. If we assume that the dual of these nouns is the dual of the countable nouns *noga* 'foot' and *roka* 'hand', then the meaning of the dual form *nogi* 'foot-dual', is different from the meaning of the *plurale tantum* *noge* 'foot-plural'. *Noge* 'foot-plural' denotes a body part, while the form *nogi* 'foot-dual', refers not to one body part but to two individual entities. Such use can be found in the elevated or poetic style:

Njeni beli roki sta počivali na mizi.  
Her (du.) white (du.) hand (du.) be (3du.pres.) rest (past.ptc.du.) on table  
»Her two white hands were resting on the table.«

It is very hard if not impossible to find a context in which the utterance *Nogi me bolita* 'My feet-dual hurt' could be used. In her column on proper language use, J. Bavčar considers such use of the dual funny. (Delo, 30. 9. 2002, Književni listi, p. 3).

The noun *starši* 'parents-pl.' shows interesting behavior. On the one hand, it belongs to the same group as nouns for paired body parts and paired objects – Toporišič assigns it to the same group as other paired nouns, naming it a *biological pair* (Toporišič 2000: 271). On the other hand, it is special in the sense that it denotes people. In the contemporary language the dual form *starša* 'parents-du.' is commonly used in addition to the plural form *starši*. The reason for such behavior probably lies in the fact that this noun denotes two people that can be easily perceived either as one unit of two people (a biological pair) or as two individual persons: the mother and the father (which has become typical of the modern way of life). The phrase *oče in mati* 'father and mother' is often used instead of *starši* 'parents'; in such cases the predicate shows dual agreement.

Starši so me obiskali.  
Parent (pl.) be (3pl.pres.) me visit (ptc.pl.)  
»My parents visited me.«

Oče in mati sta me obiskala.  
Father (sg.) and mother (sg.) be (3du.pres.) me visit (ptc.du.)  
»My father and mother visited me.«

Starša sta me obiskala.  
Parent (du.) be (3du.pres.) me visit (ptc.du.)  
»My parents visited me.«

The form *starša* 'parents-du.' is considered a substandard variant by the *Slovenski pravopis*, while the *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* considers it a variant of the more common form *starši* 'parents-pl.' without assigning it to any register.

Such development, i.e. the emergence of the dual form *starša* next to the more common plural variant, is a proof that the category of the dual in Slovenian is alive and points to the fact that the use of the dual and the meaning of 'person' are intimately connected. (See also Corbett 2000: 56ff, where a hierarchy of linguistic categories expressing number is suggested. In this hierarchy, the personal pronouns are immediately followed by the categories *kin* and *human*). In other words, the dual is more important when referring to people than when referring to things. A group of two people differs from a group of three or more people in a more important way than a group of two things differs from a group of three or more things.

### The dual in Slovenian dialects and the colloquial language (of Ljubljana)

Up to this point the dual has been discussed in the form as it is prescribed by the grammar of the standard Slovenian language. Until recently, the most comprehensive reference for the occurrence of the dual in Slovenian dialects has been the linguistic atlas and the accompanying monograph by Lucien Tesnière (1925). Now, however, we can find more up-to-date data in the doctoral dissertation *Dvojina v slovenskih narečjih* 'The dual in Slovenian dialects' by T. Jakop. The dissertation offers linguistic maps based on the data collected for the Slovenian linguistic atlas and some other sources, which systematically show dual forms of individual parts of speech. As mentioned by the author herself, the collected material suffers from certain shortcomings, (such as its origin extending over a long period of time, beginning in the 1940s, and its being partly documented by students). Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly an important contemporary indicator of the spread of the dual in Slovenian dialects. The results obtained by Jakop's research do not differ significantly from Tesnière's, which in itself is interesting, considering that several linguists thought that the dual in Slovenian is condemned to extinction.

One can see in Tesnière's atlas that the following forms (in dialectal variations) are spread almost throughout all Slovenian territory:

- 1) *dva brata* 'two brother-du.masc.nom.' (map 10)
- 2) *midva* 'we-du.masc.', *onadva* 'they-du.masc.', *medve* 'we-du.fem.', *vedve* 'you-du.fem.', *onidve* 'they-du.fem.' (maps 41–44)
- 3) *naju* 'us-du.' (map 46), *najin* 'ours-du.masc.', *vajina* 'yours-du.fem.' (47), *z nama* 'with us-du.' (52)
- 4) *mlada* 'young-du.masc.nom.' as in *moja dva brata sta mlada* 'my two brothers are young' (55)
- 5) *midva piševa* 'we-du.masc. write-1du.pres.', *vidva govorita* 'you-du.masc. talk-2du.pres.', *onadva pišeta* 'they-du.masc. write-3du.pres.' (65–67)

In most Slovenian regions, the dual is preserved in the forms stated above. It is replaced by the plural only at the periphery of Slovenian territory.

Tjaša Jakop's dissertation shows that that the most widely spread dual forms are (the linguistic maps in her dissertation do not completely overlap with Tesnière's, therefore the absence of a form found in Tesnière's maps does not necessarily mean its absence in the material obtained by Jakop):

- 1) *midva* 'we-du.masc.' (map number 6), *midve* 'we-du.fem.' (7)
- 2) *dva sin-(ov)-a* 'two sons-du.nom.' (12)
- 3) *dobra sin-(ov)-a* 'good sons-du.nom.' (20)

Dual forms of nominative neuter nouns are also widespread, though in a great number of dialects these nouns became masculine in gender (*dve okni* (neu.), *dva okna* (masc.) 'two windows') (18).

These are followed by:

- 1) 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> person of the present tense verb
- 2) personal pronouns in the genitive and dative *naju* 'we-gen.', *nama* 'we-dat.'

Dual forms of nominative feminine nouns, the oblique cases of masculine and feminine nouns and adjectives are less widely spread.

Let us sum up the main findings of Jakop's dissertation (pp. 199–203):

- 1) The pluralization of verb forms has occurred in the southwest part (the *nadiško*, *briško*, *kraško* and *istrsko* dialects) and the extreme southeast part (the *belokranjsko* dialect) of Slovenian linguistic territory. It thus appears as if the dual were weakening under the influence of Italian, Friulian and Croatian but not German and Hungarian. Other dialects preserve the dual in verb forms at least when the subject is of masculine gender, while verb forms with a subject of feminine gender are more readily pluralized.
- 2) Dual pronouns are characteristic of a predominant part of Slovenian linguistic territory. Plural forms are found only in the extreme southwest (the *nadiško* dialect, the *banjško* speech, the *kraško* dialect), in the southwest – in the eastern part of the *kostelsko* dialect, in the *južno belokranjsko* and *severno belokranjsko* dialects, and, as a consequence of colonization, in the *baško* speech.
- 3) The dual in nouns is most firmly established in the nouns of masculine gender, in a substantial number of cases existing only in the nominative and the accusative. The dual form in the nominative and the accusative and the plural form in all other cases is found in the central *koroško* dialects, most *rezijansko* dialects, the *tersko*, *nadiško* and *briško* dialects, most of the speeches of the *kraško*, *istrsko* and *notranjsko* dialects, the *cerkljansko* dialect, most of the speeches of the *gorenjsko* dialect, the *baško* speech, the *vzhodnodolenjsko* speech and the *posavsko sevniško-krško* speech, the *zgornejavinjsko* dialect and most of the speeches of the *južnobelokranjsko* and *severnobelokranjsko* dialects.
- 4) As in nouns, the dual in adjectives is better preserved in the masculine gender (which of course follows from the agreeing role of the adjective). Only in some speeches the dual is better preserved in nouns than in adjectives (e.g. *dobre hčeri* 'good-pl. daughters-du.', *dobrim sinoma* 'good-pl. sons-du.').
- 5) The forms *dva*, *dve* 'two' exist in all dialects. The dative and the instrumental are pluralized in a significant number of dialects.

According to the author, the comparison of Tesnière's data with more recent data reveals that the geographical extent of the use of the dual forms has not lessened significantly. The dual is extinct only in a small part of Slovenian linguistic territory (mostly in the southwest and extreme southeast), while other Slovenian dialects preserve it – albeit to a different extent.



As regards the vitality of the dual, an interesting finding by Jakop (Jakop 2004: 49ff) is that the distinction between the dual verb forms of feminine and masculine gender, for example in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular: *greva* 'we go-masc.' : *greve* 'we go-fem.', inexistent in standard Slovenian but existing in some Slovenian dialects, has recently appeared also in the language of Ljubljana. As discussed at Jakop's dissertation defense, this phenomenon has been observed by several female linguists when dealing with less educated female speakers in typically female environments, such as at the hairdresser's (e.g. *Kaj bove?* 'What are we having-fem.', meaning 'Which hairdressing service would you like?')

The substandard colloquial language of Ljubljana is also characterized by the replacement of the standard feminine dual ending *-i* by the ending *-e* (Toporišič 2000: 20). The ending *-e* is from a historical perspective perhaps unjustly considered only a plural ending, though it can be seen also as the continuation of *jat*, the old feminine dual ending of »hard« stems (preserved e.g. in the feminine form of the numeral *dve* 'two', in the form *v dve gubé* 'lit. in two folds-du.', 'hunched', in the alternative dual ending *roké* 'hands-du.'). Nevertheless, its being identical to the plural ending undoubtedly leads to pluralization. The following are typical examples from the colloquial language of Ljubljana:

Kupil                    sem                    dve knjige.  
Buy (ptc.sg.masc.) be (1sg.pres.) two book (pl.fem.)  
»I bought two books.«

Včeraj    *sva*                    šle                    v kino.  
yesterday be (1du.pres.) go (ptc.pl.fem.) to movies  
»Yesterday we went to the movies.«

Koliko    *so*                    stale                    *te*                    dve knjige? (Jakopin 1966: 103)  
how much be (3pl.pres.) cost (ptc.pl.fem.) these (pl.fem.) two book (pl.fem.)  
»How much did these two books cost?«

In the colloquial language of Ljubljana the dual is often dropped in the dative and the instrumental of all genders. A typical mistake made by the speakers of this variant is using the phrase *pred dvemi leti* 'two years-pl. ago', instead of *pred dvema letoma* 'two years-du. ago', Nouns of neuter gender in the non-standard variant often acquire a masculine ending. In such cases they keep the category of the dual though with the masculine endings (homonymous to the ending for neuter plural): *dva stanovanja* 'two-masc.du. apartments-masc.du.', *dva vprašanja* 'two-masc.du. questions-masc.du.'.

Being myself a speaker of the colloquial language of Ljubljana, I can see that the dual is consistently used in all examples that were classified as most common by Tesnière. That is, the dual is preserved in the sentences in which the subject is either a personal pronoun (which is often dropped so that dual agreement is visible on the verb), a noun of masculine gender, or a coordinate phrase such as *Janez in Jože* 'Janez and Jože'; *Janez in Micka* 'Janez and Micka'. In such sentences the predicate carries dual agreement. In such positions, the dual is also consistently used in substandard



varieties, which can be seen from the paragraph of slang quoted by Toporišič. In this story of a meeting of two young people, the dual is used with all verbs in the sentences where the two of them are the subjects (Toporišič 2000: 26). This excerpt is a good illustration of the importance and use of the dual – the dual is used in a story about the actions of two people. Here we can also see why in Slovenian the dual is best preserved in verb forms. The first person personal pronoun is dropped everywhere, so the only remaining forms are verbs (*se poznava* 'we know-du. each other', *sva se zezala* 'we were joking-du. around', *se šarmirava* 'we are flirting-du.', *sva se v zdrav mozak* 'we are teasing-du. each other').

### A comment from the historical point of view

As already stated by Belić, Slavic languages are especially suitable for the study of the dual, the reason being that no other Indo-European group of languages has preserved this category to such an extent as Slavic languages have. Žolobov (Žolobov, Krys'ko 2001: 14) relates this fact to the preservation of Indo-European mythology of paired gods and the Slavic worship of twins. The state in Proto-Slavic is probably closest to the state in Old Church Slavic, where, amongst others, the following properties are characteristic of the dual:

- Dual nominal endings of the genitive and the locative differed from the plural ones in Old Church Slavic and thus supposedly also in Proto-Slavic.
- Paired nouns were used in the dual (many Indo-Europeanists believe the dual originated from the forms of paired nouns).
- The nominative of personal pronouns in the dual is in Proto-Slavic reconstructed as \*vĕ for the 1<sup>st</sup> person and \*vy for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person (Vaillant 1958: 454). The fact that the form for the second person dual nominative was a homophone to the second person plural nominative \*vy can be seen as one of the reasons for the instability of the dual pronominal-verbal paradigm.

The dual existed in early periods of Slavic languages, for example in Old Russian (the most contemporary and relevant study is found in the monograph by Žolobov and Krys'ko 2001). But it has, as a live grammatical category, disappeared from all Slavic languages except from Slovenian and Upper and Lower Sorbian (leaving more or less noticeable traces in all Slavic languages, for example, Russian два брата from which три, четыре брата). The historical development of the dual in Slovenian is characterized by the following points:

- 1) Dual endings in the genitive and the locative of all nominal forms were replaced by plural endings, personal pronouns being an exception.
- 2) In Slovenian, paired nouns are used in their plural forms. As can be seen from 16<sup>th</sup> century texts, such use had been established already before the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as 16<sup>th</sup> century texts show practically the same state as found in the contemporary language. Traces of the older state, when these nouns were presumably used in the dual, as in Old Church Slavic and Old Russian, are extremely scarce (e.g. *pred bosima ozima* 'in front of god's eyes-du.' in the Freising manuscripts). Such a development of the dual is not unique to Slovenian. That paired nouns are the first

linguistic category in which the dual was replaced by the plural can also be seen in the Sorbian linguistic atlas (Sorbischer Sprachatlas 11: 22). Yet in most Sorbian dialects these nouns are used in the dual (which probably explains why the dual is more often used in Sorbian than in Slovenian, a surprising fact for (Corbett 2000: 282)).

Before eventually replacing the dual, the plural in Slovenian was certainly optionally used as an unmarked number in paired nouns for a period of time in the same way as it is used nowadays in some Sorbian dialects (Sorbischer Sprachatlas 11: 20) or it was used in Old Russian (Žolobov, Krys'ko 2001: 139ff). In Slovenian, however, the plural has prevailed and is thus no longer considered optional.

The paired noun *starši* 'parents-pl.' differs from other paired nouns, as it is often used in its dual form *starša* 'parents-du.' and which appears to be a recent phenomenon. This noun can also be assumed to have been used in its dual form in the past, but in the 16<sup>th</sup> century texts (as seen from the data at the history of the Slovenian language section at the *Inštitut za slovenski jezik Frana Ramovša*) it always appears in the plural form and had thus undergone the same development as other paired nouns. Let us compare examples from Old Church Slavic, the translation of the Bible by Dalmatin and the contemporary translation of the Bible into Slovenian.

Къто съгреси: съ ли или родителя его? (St John's Gospel IX.2, Ostromirov's Gospel)

Gdu je greshil? leta ali njegovi Starishi? (Dalmatin's translation)

Kdo je grešil, on ali njegovi starši? (the contemporary translation, 1997)

'Who sinned, he or his parents?'

The story of Suzana in Dalmatin's translation of the Bible (Prophets, 207ff) consistently uses the plural form *starishi* in the meaning »father and mother« (that is the plural for paired nouns) and the dual form *starisha* in the meaning »elders« (that is the dual for the countable noun *starešina* 'elder'):

Ona je imela brumne Starishe (father and mother), kateri so njo bily podvuzhili po Mosesovi Postavi. ... Tvistu lejtu pak stabila dva Starisha (two elders-du.) is mej folka k'Rihtarjem postaulena. ... Inu kadar sta njo ta Starisha vsak dan vidila noter hodejzoh, so nyu hude shelje pruti njej obshle, de sta norela. ... Inu obeniga zhloveka nej bilu v'tem verti, kakor le ta dva Starisha, katera sta se bila skrivshi skrila, inu sta na njo shpegala. ... Je ona prishla svojemi Starishimi (with parents) inu otruki, inu sovso svojo shlahto.

The reason for this noun being nowadays often used in the dual certainly lies in the fact that it refers to two people, two independently acting subjects.

- 3) The nominative of dual personal pronouns in Slovenian developed in an interesting way. While the forms of oblique cases are a continuation of the Proto-Slavic forms, the nominative forms of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person *midva* 'we-du.', *vidva* 'you-du.' are innovations – transparent structures consisting of the elements *mi* 'we' and *vi* 'you' and the element *dva* 'two'. *Vi* 'you' is the continuation of the Proto-Slavic \*vy, a homophonous form for the dual and the plural, a fact that certainly influenced the use of the plural pronoun *mi* 'we' in dual contexts. There appear to be no traces of the Proto-Slavic 1<sup>st</sup> person nominative dual \*vĕ in Slovenian. As

pointed out by Tesnière (1925a: 316–317) and as seen in 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant texts, it seems that a weakening of the dual in the nominative pronouns for the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> persons occurred in the history of the Slovenian language. This development had an influence on the verbal dual as well, since the verb started to be used in the plural with the pronouns *mi* 'we' and *vi* 'you'. The process was stopped by the emergence of the new dual pronoun forms for personal pronouns.

The following possibilities are thus found in dual contexts in 16<sup>th</sup> century texts:

- a) *mi/vi* 'we/you' + dual verb:

**my hozheva ... vy nevesta**

'we want ... you don't know' (Dalmatin 1584, Mark X)

- b) *mi/vi* 'we/you' + plural verb (in dual contexts, the subject is 'Adam and Eve'):

**my ieimo** ta sad tih dreues kir so v tim paradyski

'we eat this fruit of the trees that are in the paradise'

sh nikako smertyo ne **vmeryete**

'with no death you will die'

(Trubar, Katekizem 1550)

- c) *midva/vidva* 'we-du/you-du' + dual verb:

**Midua Ieua** od sadou tih Driues vtim Vertu

'we are eating the fruits of the trees in the garden'

**De vidua ne vmerieta** /... /

'that you don't die...'

(Trubar, Tiga noviga testamenta ena dolga predgovor 1557)

It therefore appears that the gradual disappearing of the dual was stopped by the emergence of new dual personal pronoun forms, since these require dual agreement with the verb. The optionality of the element *dva* 'two' attaching to the dual personal pronouns *mi* 'we', *vi* 'you', *ona* 'they' in the 16<sup>th</sup> century is discussed by Bohorič in his grammar (De Verbo: 109). Apart from these new, strengthened personal pronouns, a stable position of the central dual pronominal-verbal paradigm was also established by the equalization of verb suffixes, which were in all three persons clearly marked by the suffix *-a* (when the subject was of masculine gender; in Protestant texts, dual verb forms differ according to gender, as stated also in the grammar by Bohorič). In Proto-Slavic, the reconstructed suffixes for the 1<sup>st</sup> person dual and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person dual are *-vě* and *-te*, respectively. The language system responded to the weakening of dual forms by creating forms with a stronger degree of morphological markedness with respect to the state in Proto-Slavic and with respect to the singular and the plural.

Personal pronouns (and agreeing verb forms) appear to have been an important factor in preserving the dual in Slovenian. Namely, the information whether two or more people are part of the event is relevant. As already mentioned, Corbett (2000) notes that there exists the following hierarchy of linguistic categories expressing number: personal pronoun (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> person), kin, human, animate, and inanimate. The higher in this hierarchy a category is found, the more probable it is that it expresses the category of number and that the latter is expressed by the parts of speech showing agreement (Corbett 2000: 56ff.). Despite the fact that Corbett's hierarchy is not specifically about the dual, but mostly about distinguishing between the plural and

the singular, one can certainly see its explanatory force when it comes to distinguishing between the plural and the dual. The importance of personal pronouns, especially the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns, for the category of the dual is discussed also by Žolobov (Žolobov, Kryš'ko 2001: 30ff). Žolobov stresses that the special importance of the pronominal-verbal paradigm in relation to the dual is supported by typological as well as historical facts. There are many languages in which the dual is found only with personal pronouns and/or the agreeing verb forms. A special role is played by the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns, which are most strongly associated with the notion of 'person' and mark the participants in a dialogue. Personal pronouns are more closely tied to verbs than nouns are, which can be seen from the pronominal origin of the verb suffixes in numerous languages. The reason for the preservation of the dual in the pronominal-verbal paradigm could be ascribed to the fact that this paradigm is a core structure of the dialogue.

From a historical perspective, one can see that the dual in Slovenian does not exist in the same form as it supposedly existed in Proto-Slavic and as found in Old Church Slavic. In its historical development, it has undergone change; some segments have been replaced by the plural, some segments show a higher degree of morphological markedness than in the past. From a typological perspective, parallel phenomena in terms of the development of dual forms and its final results can be observed in Sorbian, the other Slavic language with a preserved dual, (Derganc 1994).

#### **The assumed connection of the dual with extralinguistic reality; the pragmatic value of the dual**

The field of linguistics witnessed also some assumptions about the existence of the dual being directly linked to the stage of civilizational development. Meillet, for instance, claimed that the omission of the dual occurred due to the development of abstract thought and that the loss of the dual is a sign of a higher degree of civilization (Tesnière 1925a: VII–IX). Such explanation can be found also in some Russian historical grammars (e. g. Gorškova, Haburgaev 1981: 158). Many linguists considered such direct linking of linguistic facts to extralinguistic ones unacceptable and stressed the intralinguistic reasons for the preservation or omission of the dual, among others Dostál (1954: 25–26), N. S. Trubeckoj and Jakobson (according to Lenček 1994: 204) and Iordanskij (1960: 7). Tesnière does not reject Meillet's hypothesis, however, in the introduction to his monograph on the dual in Slovenian, he feels that it is contradictory in nature and that it does not match reality (Tesnière 1925a: IX).

Contrary to Meillet, W. von Humboldt states in his well-known treatise *Ueber den Dualis* that the notion of duality is deeply rooted in the human perception of the world and that expressing the number of any two objects is only the most obvious and superficial task of the dual. Human beings see and perceive several objects and phenomena as forming a tighter duality: from paired body parts, the division of the human race into two sexes, natural phenomena such as day and night, the sky and the earth, to such psychological and linguistic phenomena as perceiving oneself in relation to other human beings and realizing the possibility of communicating only between two





people, the speaker and the listener. As a grammatical means of expressing these deep dualities the dual is »neither an extravagance nor an unnecessary growth on the body of the language« (1985: 402).

The expressive potential of the dual in Slovenian is studied by R. Lenček, whose work includes also Humboldt's ideas and Jakobson's thoughts on the poetic potential of different grammatical categories. Lenček (1982) points out that the dual in personal pronouns and verb forms, which has to be used to refer to two people, implies also meanings other than those relating to grammar: solidarity, intimacy between two people, a connection in emotions, intentions and actions of two people. The dual is therefore an especially suggestive means used in love poems, which can be seen from the examples provided by the author. Lenček appends to his article a short composition by the poet Dane Zajc on his feelings about the dual. Let me quote some examples that are surprisingly in tune with Humboldt's thoughts on the subject.

»Mother and I are my first experience of duality. /.../ As though the two of us were alone in the world. /.../ Only later, father, brothers, both sisters cross the threshold into my memories; plurality enters, and with it, the world. /.../ There are many things I remember doing when I was a child. But my most vivid recollections are of things I did with another, in twos. /.../ A love poem in a foreign language remains alien to me unless I can discover from the context that the lyrical plot unfolds in the dual. I can only »think« love in the dual. /.../ The singular is to the dual and to the plural as solitude (to be alone) is to trust, trustfulness and intimacy (to be two) and finally, to the world, which is plurality. The bridge which links the condition of being one (alone) with the condition to being in the world is that most enigmatic of bridges: being two« (Lenček 1982: 211–212).

These connotations are alive not only in poetry but in the everyday use of language as well. Dane Zajc mentions that when one wants to hide an intimate relationship with another person, he or she uses the plural. One does not say: *Bila sva skupaj*, 'we-du. were-du. together' but *Bili smo skupaj*, 'we-pl. were-pl. together'. Such linguistic behavior is typical of young people who want to avoid the unpleasant interrogation by their parents and thus say *Bili smo v kinu*, 'we-pl. were-pl. at the movies' instead of *Bila sva v kinu*, 'we-du. were-du. at the movies'. Similarly, one can use the plural instead of the dual in order to distance oneself from the closeness conveyed by the dual. When used to refer to people, it thus appears that apart from grammatical information, the grammatical category of the dual in Slovenian also expresses connotations such as intimacy, closeness and solidarity between two people.

### Child language

As far as I know, the use of the dual in child language has not yet been analyzed. Some of the data can be found in Kranjc (1999). Although the goal of her research goes beyond establishing the use of the dual, some data from her book are interesting also in that respect.

When describing child grammar at the morphological level, the author observes that, though rarely, the dual occurs in the speech of 2–3 year old children in the

Sevnica preschool. Here one should note that the dual is rare in general (see above). The author further observes that the dual is quite regularly present in the speech of a Ljubljana boy of the same age, concluding that this difference results from differences of the dialects surrounding the children. While the dual is gradually disappearing from the Sevnica dialect, the boy in Ljubljana is growing up in an environment where the standard variant of Slovenian is spoken. Jakop (2004) notes that in the Sevnica dialect, the state of the dual is quite similar to the state in many dialects of Slovenian: the dual is found with personal pronouns, in verb forms and in the nominative/accusative cases of masculine nouns; the dual is disappearing in oblique cases and in feminine gender. One cannot conclude from the data in Kranjc's book that the dual in the language of Sevnica children is being replaced by the plural. There are simply not many contexts requiring the use of the dual among the sentences that they uttered. Let me state some examples from the speech of Sevnica children in which the dual is used.

Ko bom pa jes velik, *boma* pa z mamico enak stara.  
when be (1sg.fut.) *pa* I big be (1du.fut.) *pa* with mummy same old (du.masc.)  
»When I am grown up, my mummy and I will be the same age.«  
[Kranjc 1999: 108]

*Kila*.  
cover-ptc.du.masc.  
'(Shall the two of us) cover (the bunny)'  
[Kranjc 1999: 118]

In the statement above the child invited the researcher to do something together (i.e. to cover the bunny, because it is sleepy).

V Sevnici bundo kuple, kupl smo, ati mami kupla. Bundo včeri.  
in Sevnica coat buy (pl.) buy (pl.) be (1pl.pres.) dad mum buy (3du.) coat yesterday  
Smo tuki vozl cest.  
be (1pl.pres.) here drive (pl. road)  
»Yesterday we bought a coat in Sevnica, my mum and dad bought a coat. We drove here on this road.«  
[Kranjc 1999: 124]

In the statement above, the dual is interchanged with the plural. The plural is used when the child expresses the actions of the entire family (together with his parents), while the dual is used when the child expresses the actions by his mother and father.

Včeri je kupla liziko pa sladoled. Hiter *sma*  
yesterday be (3sg.pres.) buy (ptc.sg.fem.) lollipop and ice-cream quickly be (1du.  
šla.  
go-ptc.du.masc.)  
»Yesterday she bought a lollipop and ice-cream. The two of us left quickly.«  
[Kranjc 1999: 125]



I recall the following utterance from the speech of my two-and-a-half-year-old grandson (father from Ljubljana, mother from Maribor): *mami tati huda bila* 'mum dad angry-du.masc. be-ptc.du.masc.?'; 'My mum and dad were angry.'

These few fragmented claims about child language are here to note the following: it does not seem to be the case that children are having trouble with dual forms in language varieties where dual forms indeed exist. In addition, the utterances above show that the first natural contexts requiring the dual in child language are utterances about activities of two people, the child and someone else (often the mother) or the father and the mother – the relevant forms are pronominal-verbal forms or the verb forms where the personal pronoun is omitted (as in the examples stated above).

V angleščino prevedla  
Tatjana Marvin.

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#### POVZETEK

Slovenščina je eden redkih evropskih jezikov, ki ima slovnično kategorijo dvojine. Dvojina je imanentna kategorija samostalnika in osebnega zaimka, v drugih besednih vrstah je ujemalna, čeprav, glede na to, da se v slovenščini osebni zaimek pogosto opušča, tedaj postane nosilec dvojine glagol. Dvojina se uporablja, kadar je govora o dveh entitetah: dveh osebah, dveh stvarih itd. Uporablja se ob števniku *dva*, *dve* ali *pa*, kadar se *ve*, da je govor o dveh entitetah. Parni samostalniki, ki pomenijo parne organe, oblačila itd. se v slovenščini uporabljajo v množini, verjetno zaradi redundantnosti. Dvojina je dvojno markirana, če izhajamo iz domneve, da je množina markirana nasproti ednini. Dvojina je markirana nasproti množini, saj pomeni »več kot eden (= množina), in sicer natanko dva«. Dvojna pomenska markiranost se odraža tudi v zapletenejši strukturi markiranosti mnogih dvojninskih oblik: imenske besedne vrste m. sp. v imenovalniku in glagolske končnice imajo v dvojini značilno končnico *-a*, imenovalnik dvojninskih osebnih zaimkov je še posebej zaznamovan z elementom *-dva*. Prav te strukturno markirane dvojninske oblike tvorijo tudi jedro dvojninskih struktur, ki se uporabljajo, kot kažejo dialektološke raziskave, na večini slovenskega ozemlja. Glede na knjižni jezik se dvojina umika pri samostalniki ženskega sp. in z njimi ujemajočih se oblikah ter v odvisnih sklonih. Teritorialno se dvojina opušča na robovih slovenskega ozemlja, predvsem na meji s hrvaščino in italijanščino.

O vitalnosti dvojine v slovenščini pričajo nekateri novi pojavi dvojine, tako npr. vedno pogostejša raba parnega samostalnika *starši* v dvojini – *starša* – ali pojav posebnih, od m. sp. drugačnih glagolskih končnic ž. sp. v nižjem pogovornem govoru Ljubljane, kar je bilo prej značilno le za nekatera narečja. Zdi se, da je obstoju dvojine poleg oblikovne markiranosti nekaterih dvojninskih oblik v prid pragmatična pomembnost dvojine takrat, ko je govor o ljudeh.