Agreement with International Corporate Names in Russian

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Abstract

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many foreign words have been borrowed into Russian, including the names of the biggest international companies. A lot of them have kept their spelling in Latin letters to stand out among Cyrillic letters. These new loanwords are assigned one of the three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter) in Russian, but native speakers can use different rules for gender assignment: gender can be assigned based on the formal rule (phonological or morphological criterion), semantic rule (as an analogy to the existing word or Basic Hyperonym Constraint suggested by Thornton, 2007), or default gender, which is masculine, according to Poplack, Pousada and Sankoff (1988). The aim of this study was to examine the patterns of gender assignment to corporate names spelled in English and to determine the hierarchy of the gender assignment rules. First, a Google search was conducted to collect examples of different genders assigned to fifteen company names used without their hyperonym, and then these names were divided into different types of corporations: retail, food/beverage, car manufacturers and other. The names were searched in the Russian National Corpus to check the frequency of gender assignment. Based on the data collected, the hierarchy of the gender assignment rules depends on the type of the company. For a number of company names, including retail and food/beverage corporations, hyperonyms seem to be the main gender assignment rule, while for car manufacturers, the phonological form of the word determines the gender agreement. The data do not support default gender (masculine) assignment rule.

Keywords: Russian language, gender assignment, loanwords, semantic rules for gender assignment, phonological rules for gender assignment

1. Introduction

Changes in the government and politics of Russia in the last twenty-five years have allowed for more foreign products to appear in the country. As a result, many foreign words were borrowed into the Russian language in the last two decades. These words had to be adjusted to the Russian pronunciation and grammar systems. Among these words, there are names of the biggest international companies, some of which have affiliates in Russia. A lot of these companies keep their brand names spelled in English letters, thus making them stand out among Cyrillic letters. Spelling them in English also allows companies to avoid variations in Russian spelling[1].

Since Russian has three genders (masculine, feminine, and neuter) and two numbers (singular and plural), the question arises: which gender and number would these company names take? Because the Russian language does not include articles, the only way to determine the gender and number of these nouns is to examine their agreement with verbs, possessive pronouns, or adjectives, which are assigned by Russian native speakers. In this paper, I review previous cross-linguistic and Russian studies on gender assignment in loanwords in Sections 2, present research questions in Section 3, investigate different instances of company names' agreement using both Google and the Russian National Corpus in Section 4, and then I suggest possible interpretations of these variants in Section 5.[2]

2. Gender assignment in loanwords

2.1. Cross-linguistic gender assignment in loanwords

The assignment of gender in different languages has been widely studied. Corbett & Fraser (2000) claimed that there are two systems for gender assignment in the world languages: one where gender is assigned formally (phonologically or morphologically) and one where it is assigned semantically. Formal features can predict gender assignment for many words, but not all, while semantic features are enough for all words in semantic systems.[3] Thus, semantic gender assignment rules dominate over formal rules (Corbett & Fraser, 2000). Similarly, Bloomfield (1933) suggested that gender can be assigned semantically or based on the phonological shape of the word. If a noun denotes an animate being, then it is assigned masculine or feminine gender based on biological sex. If the noun is inanimate, the gender assignment can be phonological or morphological (Corbett, 1991). Phonological assignment depends on the last sound(s) of a noun in each particular language. For example, nouns that end in *–a* usually belong to the feminine class in Russian and Italian; in contrast, nouns that end in *–o* belong to the neuter class in Russian, whereas in Italian these nouns are assigned to the masculine class. While gender assignment in Italian depends mainly on phonological criteria, in Russian, it depends on the inflectional class to which a noun belongs and can be seen in the oblique cases (Corbett, 1991).

[1] For example, the name *Facebook* appears in Cyrillic both as *Фейсбук* and *Фэйсбук.*

[2] I thank the anonymous reviewers for their feedback and suggestions to integrate corpus search in the study, along with a different presentation of the data.

[3] This distinction is important for this study because Corbett & Fraser (2000) cite Russian as a language with formal gender assignment.

Gender assignment of loanwords in the languages with a grammatical gender distinction is different since native speakers have to assign gender to the words which were not present in the language before. Various researchers have tried to construct a hierarchy of gender assignment rules. One of the earlier analyses was suggested by Ibrahim (1973) and summarized by El-Youseph (2008, p.12-13):

1) Semantic gender: biological sex
2) Analogical gender: loan word takes the gender of a near-synonym in borrowing language
3) Gender of the suffix: if it resembles any gender-assigning suffixes in the borrowing language
4) Homophony and rhyme: if a borrowed word sounds like a word in the borrowing language, it assumes that word's gender
5) Default gender assignment
6) Gender of the word in the source language
7) Differentiation of meaning: such as *das Band* 'the rubber band', *die Band* 'the military band'

Later, Hock (1991) suggested the following parameters for gender assignment (p.401):

1) Formal criteria
2) General semantic criteria
3) Consideration of the gender of semantically related native words
4) A "default" class to which words are assigned if none of the other criteria provides a solution.

Hock's hierarchy is similar to the one suggested by Ibrahim (1972). However, it is not as specific as Ibrahim's, and it places formal criteria before semantic.

Similar to semantic analogy is the Basic Level Hyperonym Constraint suggested by Thornton (2007). In her study, Thornton studied gender assignment of car brand names in Italian. All of them were assigned feminine gender, and the gender of the word *car* ('macchina') is feminine in Italian. Thus, Thornton suggested The Basic Level Hyperonym Constraint, which means that gender is inherited only from the mid-level term. In this case, the word *car* is a mid-level term because it has a required amount of information. The word *vehicle* has a broader meaning, and thus, it represents superordinate level. The name of the car has very specific information, so it is a term at the subordinate level. This means that the car brand is assigned the gender of the term at the mid-level (what Thornton calls Basic Level), while Superordinate Hypernonym cannot assign a gender to its hyponym.

El-Yousseph (2010) followed Thornton's research and studied the names of cars, drinks, and toothpastes in Catalan, and how gender is assigned to them. The Catalan native speakers had to fill in the blanks with appropriate articles before the product name which included real brand names and made-up words. El-Yousseph (2010) argues that car brand names were assigned the masculine article (even for feminine-shaped words that end in /a/) by the participants because of the hyperonym 'car' is masculine in Catalan. However, drinks and toothpastes were affected more by the phonological shape of the word. Even though the hyperonym for drinks ('beverage') is of feminine gender, the drinks that ended in a consonant were assigned masculine gender. The

drinks that ended in /a/ were assigned feminine gender. Similarly, the hyperonym for toothpaste is feminine, yet, the brand names were assigned masculine for names that end in a consonant and feminine for names that ended in /a/. El-Yousseph (2010) suggested that both word shape and default gender are the factors for masculine gender assignment in such cases. Thus, the results of this study show that it is not always the hyperonym constraint that predicts the gender assignment for brand names, and phonological rules play an important role as well.

2.2. Russian gender assignment in loanwords

There are three genders in Russian: masculine, feminine, and neuter. Rice (2005) stated the following markedness hierarchy for gender in Russian: neuter>feminine>masculine; thus masculine is the most unmarked and neuter the most marked gender. Then, Rice (2005) states a semantic constraint: if a noun denotes a biological male, it is masculine, otherwise it is feminine or neuter. The formal (in this case, phonological) constraint is the following: if a noun ends in /a/, it is feminine, otherwise it is masculine or neuter.

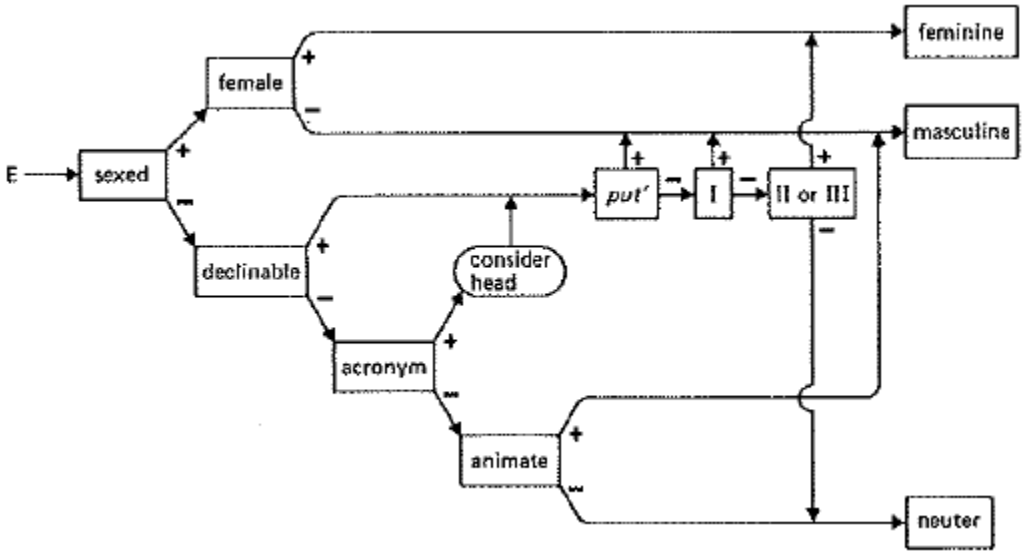
Since the gender of the noun (masculine and feminine) can be predicted from the biological sex of the entity (e.g. *mužčina* 'man,' and *ženščina* 'woman'), neuter gender is rarely used for live entities with the exception of substantivized adjectives (e.g. *životnoe* 'animal') and borrowed words (e.g. *konferans'e* 'MC'). However, it is not always possible to predict the gender of inanimate nouns. Corbett (1982) claims that lexical items are specified in the lexicon: both their phonological form and meaning--meaning does not always predict form, and form does not predict meaning.

Corbett & Fraser (2000) claimed that gender is predictable in Russian based on formal criteria, specifically declension class to which a noun belongs. Declension class usually can be determined by the word's stem. Gender can predict the declension class, and declension class can predict gender (Corbett, 1982). Traditionally, scholars consider Russian to have three declension classes:

1) Words like *zakon* 'law' (masculine), *vino* 'wine' (neuter)
2) Words like *škola* 'school' (feminine), *mužčina* 'man' (masculine)
3) Words like *kost'* 'bone' (feminine).

The reason the declension class is so important in Russian is because every time a word is used in a sentence, it must be assigned a certain case depending on the declension class. Corbett (1991) stated that "in morphological systems, like Russian, the loanword must be accommodated within the morphological pattern of the language. Its gender then follows from its morphology" (p.72). He claimed that "the phonological form of some borrowings means that they do not fit into any declensional type and so remain indeclinable" (Corbett, 1991, p.72). Thus, he came to the conclusion that inanimate indeclinable borrowings should be neuter as illustrated in Figure 1 (Corbett, 1991, p.41).

Figure 1. *Gender assignment in Russian by Corbett (1991, p.41)*



According to Figure 1, if a borrowed word is [+sex], then there are only two possibilities: the word is either masculine or feminine. If the word is [-sex] but [+declinable], then its gender would depend on the declension class: words of Class I are masculine, words of class II and III are feminine. The word *put'* 'way' is masculine and has its own declension pattern, thus it has a separate box in the figure. Similarly, if the word is an acronym, then the head would determine the gender according to the head's declension pattern. Finally, if the borrowed word is [-declinable][-acronym][-animate], it should be assigned to the neuter gender in Russian. This claim is also supported in other works by Corbett & Fraser (2000), Chernyshev (1970), and Graudina (2001); each of these scholars posits that all indeclinable borrowed words that are singular inanimate and which end in /a/, /e/, /i/, or /o/ would be neuter.

On the other hand, Poplack, Pousada and Sankoff (1988) claim that borrowed words may receive the unmarked gender, which is "generally taken to be the one with the largest number of nouns in it" (p.21-23). The Russian language includes about 46% nouns in masculine and 41% in feminine gender (Akhutina et al., 1999) which means that the gender distribution is almost equal but there are slightly more masculine nouns. As I stated earlier, masculine is the unmarked gender in Russian, thus, new loanwords might receive masculine gender assignment in Russian.

Further support for assigning masculine to borrowed words comes from Chirsheva (2009), who conducted a study on code-switching in Russian. Unlike Corbett (1991), she claims that "the gender of Russian nouns is not always easy to predict by semantics or form" (Chirsheva, 2009, p.8). She comes to the conclusion that morphological rules do not play a significant role in gender assignment in code-switching, while the main rules are semantic and phonological. By semantic rules, Chirsheva means not only biological sex, but also semantic analogy to an existing word in the language, similar to Thornton's Basic Hyperonym Constraint. Chirsheva argues that the rules of assigning neuter to indeclinable borrowed words do not apply to code-switching, where English borrowed words tend to get the default masculine. Neuter gender is assigned only based on semantic analogy. This conclusion is of great importance to my study since the company name use is similar to code-switching: only one foreign word is inserted into the sentence.

Janurik (2010) cites American English as the main source of the loanwords in Russian. The fast response to the events via electronic media contributes even more to the presence of

loanwords spelled in English because there is no time to search for an equivalent Russian term. And in cases of brand names, a loanword allows their owners to make their original trademark name more recognizable in the foreign context (Janurik, 2010). But even loanwords spelled in the Latin alphabet acquire Russian grammatical categories, like gender, number, and case. Janurik (2010) claims that most English loanwords belong to the masculine gender if they end in a consonant. However, semantic analogy is important for words with irregular endings, for example, *parti* 'party' is feminine in Russian because the Russian word *večerinka* 'party' is feminine (Janurik, 2010).

It is worth noting that the gender of a borrowed word is unstable for some period of time after it has arrived into the language (Corbett, 1991), but when the word is used frequently, its gender stabilizes. Since the use of English brands in the Russian language is a relatively recent development, this period of loanword instability explains the existence of different gender and number assignment to the same corporate name in Russian.

3. Research questions

With regards to the previous studies, the research questions of this study are:

1) Is there a hierarchy of gender assignment to the corporate names used in the Russian language but spelled in English letters?
2) Do formal (phonological) rules come before hyperonyms (semantic rules)?

Based on the formal criteria, I expect all company names that end in a consonant to be masculine, all names that end in /a/ to be feminine, all names that end in /o/ or /e/ to be neuter. The semantic criteria predicts that names will be assigned gender based on their hyperonym. According to the default gender criteria, all names will be assigned masculine gender which is the default gender in Russian.

4. Method and Data Collection

At the initial stages of the research, I examined the gender agreement with fifteen multinational company names: American Airlines, Apple, Coca-Cola, Google, Intel, Johnson & Johnson, McDonald's, Microsoft, Nestle, PepsiCo, PetroChina, Porsche, Procter & Gamble, Walmart, and Wells Fargo. I performed a Google search for the names of these companies together with the verbs *vypustit'* 'to issue', *otkryt'* 'to open' and *slit'sja* 'to merge' using masculine, feminine, neuter, and plural forms for these verbs in the past tense together with the company names spelled in the Latin alphabet. The data come from news releases, forums, and company blogs. Some company names appear with variable gender and number agreement. All possible variants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. *Gender and Number Agreement with Company Names*

Company name	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter	Plural
Apple, Porsche, Nestle, Google, Microsoft	✓	✓	✓	✓
American Airlines, Coca-Cola, Procter&Gamble, Johnson&Johnson, Intel	✓	✓		✓
PepsiCo, McDonalds, Walmart	✓	✓		
PetroChina		✓		
Wells Fargo	✓			

Examples of the findings in Table 1 are presented in (1)-(5)[4]:

(1) All genders and numbers: Apple, Porsche, Nestle, Google, Microsoft

a. Feminine:
Apple vypustil-a promo-video dlja iPhone 5
Apple release-past.3sg.fem promo-video for iPhone 5
'Apple released a promo video for iPhone 5.'

b. Masculine:
Apple vypustil-ø novuju iOS s panoramnym foto.
Apple release-past.3sg.masc new iOS with panoramic photo
'Apple released a new iOS with panoramic photography.'

c. Neuter:
Apple vypustil-o final'nuju versiju iOS 6
Apple release-past.3sg.neut final version iOS 6
'Apple released the final version, iOS 6.'

d. Plural:
Apple vypustil-i otdel'noe priloženie dlja podkaslov
Apple release-past.3pl separate application for podcasts
'Apple released a separate application for podcasts.'

[4] Past=past tense, 3sg=third person singular, 3pl=third person plural, fem=feminine, masc=masculine, neut=neuter.

(2) All genders except for neuter: American Airlines, Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, Johnson & Johnson, Intel

a. Feminine:

Coca-Cola vypustil-a kollekciju odeždy v čest' 100-letija
Coca-Cola released-past.3sg.fem collection clothes in honor 100-year butylki.
bottle
'Coca-Cola released a new collection in honor of the 100th anniversary of the bottle.'

b. Masculine:

Coca-Cola vypustil-ø limitirovannuju seriju Diet-Coke.
Coca-Cola release-past.3sg.masc limited series Diet-Coke
'Coca-Cola released a limited series of Diet-Coke.'

c. Plural:

Coca-Cola vypustil-i novyj reklamnyj rolik s 2PM.
Coca-Cola release-past.3sg.masc new commercial with 2PM
'Coca-Cola released a new commercial featuring 2PM.'

(3) Only masculine or feminine: PepsiCo, McDonalds, Walmart

a. Masculine:

McDonald's otkryl-ø svoj samyj bol'šoj restoran.
McDonald's open-past.3sg.masc. own the biggest restaurant
'McDonald's opened its biggest restaurant.'

b. Feminine:

McDonald's otkryl-a tretij restoran v Krymu.
McDonald's open-past.3sg.fem third restaurant in Crimea
'McDonald's opened its third restaurant in the Crimea.'

(4) Only feminine: PetroChina

PetroChina otkryl-a na šelfe Želtogo morja krupnejšee za 10
PetroChina open-past.3sg.fem. on shelf Yellow sea biggest in 10
let mestoroždenie nefti.
years deposit oil
'PetroChina discovered the biggest deposit of oil in the last ten years in the shelf of the Yellow Sea.'

(5) Only masculine: Wells Fargo[5].

Na segonjašnij den' Wells Fargo otkryl- ø uže bole milliona
On today's day Wells Fargo open-past.3sg.masc. already more million
sčetov po dannym karty Matricula.
account according data card Marticula
'Today, Wells Fargo has already opened more than a million accounts, according to the data by the card Matricula.'

In order to check if there are patterns of gender assignment among these company names, during the second stage of research, they were categorized as retail corporations, food/beverage corporations, car manufacturers, and other. Based on the previous research, formal criteria (phonologically-based assignment), semantic (hyperonym), and default gender assignment are the main predictors of the gender of a corporate name. To control for the phonologically-based assignment, more company names were added[6]. The final list of company names under analysis is presented in Table 2 where the names are grouped according to the last phoneme in the Russian pronunciation of the name. These phonemes can predict the following gender and number assignment:

Table 2. *Company Names under Analysis*

	Masculine (ends in a consonant)	Feminine (ends in /a/)	Neuter (ends in /e/ or /o/	Plural or neuter[7] (ends in /i/)
Retail	Auchan Walmart	IKEA	Metro	
Food/beverage	Danone McDonald's	Coca-Cola	PepsiCo Nestle	
Car manufacturer	Volkswagen Nissan	Toyota KIA	Renault Porsche	Mitsubishi
Various	Apple Google Microsoft Intel	PetroChina	WellsFargo	Sanofi Sony

The company names that consist of two words or are plural in English, like *American Airlines*, *Procter & Gamble*, *General Motors*, and *Johnson & Johnson*, were analyzed separately

[5] The word *bank* 'bank' is masculine in Russian.
[6] Though I tried to keep the same number of companies in each category, it turned out to be impossible because there are more company names that end in a consonant than any other ending. The final list gives an idea of what the patterns for agreement might look like but it is not, by any means, exhaustive.
[7] For example, the word *taksi* – 'taxi' that ends in /i/ is neuter but usually morpheme /i/ or /y/ is used for plural nouns.

to check if Russians treat them as plural and assign plural number agreement in Russian, like in the following example found during the Google search:

(6) American Airlines otkryli novyj rejs Čikago-Moskva.
American Airlines opened-past.3pl. new flight Chicago-Moscow
'American Airlines started a new Chicago-Moscow flight.'

Based on the semantic criteria, different gender assignments can be predicted for the corporate names depending on their defining word or hyperonym. For example, possible hyperonyms for these company names can be:

1) Retail corporations: *gipermarket* 'supermarket' (M)[8], *magazin* 'store' (M), *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F), *set' magazinov* 'chain store' (F)
2) Food/beverage corporations: *proizvoditel'* 'manufacturer' (M), *brend* 'brand' (M), *restoran* 'restaurant' (M), *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F), *set' restoranov* 'restaurant chain' (F)
3) Car manufacturers: *proizvoditel'* 'manufacturer' (M), *koncern* 'concern' (M), *avtodiler* 'car dealer' (M), *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F), *predstavitel'stvo* 'representative office' (N); if a car model is meant, possible hyperonyms are: *avtomobil'* 'car' (M), *mašina*[9] 'car' (F), *model'* 'model' (F)
4) Other companies: *proizvoditel'* 'manufacturer (M), *bank* 'bank' (M), *brend* 'brand' (M), *firma* 'firm' (F), *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F).

The company names under analysis were manually searched in the Russian National Corpus to check the frequency of gender and possibility of plural number agreement with these company names[10]. Since there are no articles in Russian that indicate the word's gender, it can be observed only in the agreement on the verb in the past tense, adjectival and possessive endings. From all examples in the Russian National Corpus which indicated agreement (the name was used with any verb in the past tense or an adjective was used before the name), only those that did not have a hyperonym before them were used to calculate the number of instances of different types of agreement. It was done to observe the gender agreement patterns of the company name itself. If the name was used with the hyperonym, then the gender of that hyperonym was assigned to the verb or adjective. When the company name was used by itself, there were instances of different gender assignment. The majority of the company names found in the Russian National Corpus were used with their defining word or hyperonym, which means that full company names are often used with their hyperonyms to avoid the question of gender assignment.

The frequency of agreement patterns from the Russian National Corpus is presented in Table 3.

[8] (M) stands for masculine, (F) for feminine, (N) for neuter.
[9] The Big Explanatory Dictionary (2014) has the word *mašina* marked as colloquial. According to the Russian National Corpus, the word *mašina* has 15,971 entries while the word *avtomobil'* has only 8,133 entries. Thus, the word *mašina* is used more frequently.
[10] In the Russian National Corpus, there is no grammatical information available for company names spelled in English.

Table 3. *Frequency of Gender Agreement in the Russian National Corpus*

Company name	Phonologically predicted gender	Possible hyperonym	Number of agreement instances found in the National Corpus		
			Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
		Retail corporations			
Auchan	Masculine	*gipermarket* – 'supermarket' (m),	-	1 (100%)	-
Walmart	Masculine	*magazin* – 'store' (m),	-	-	-
IKEA	Feminine	*kompanija* - 'company' (f), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f), *set'*	-	9 (100%)	-
Metro	Neuter	*magazinov* – 'chain store' (f);	-	3 (100%)	-
		Food/beverage corporations			
Danone	Masculine	*proizvoditel'* 'manufacturer (m),	-	1 (100%)	-
McDonald's	Masculine	*brend* – 'brand' (m),	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	-
Coca-Cola	Feminine	*restoran* – 'restaurant' (m), *kompanija* - 'company' (f),	-	6 (100%)	-
PepsiCo	Neuter	*korporacija* – 'corporation' (f), *set'*	-	8 (100%)	-
Nestle	Neuter	*restoranov* – 'restaurant chain' (f)	-	2 (100%)	-
		Car manufacturers			
Volkswagen	Masculine	*proizvoditel'* – 'manufacturer' (m),	4 (100%)	-	-
Nissan	Masculine	*koncern* – 'concern' (m), *avtodiler* – 'car	12 (55%)	10 (45%)	-
Toyota	Feminine	dealer' (m), *kompanija* – 'company' (f),	8 (15%)	47 (85%)	-
KIA	Feminine	*korporacija* – 'corporation' (f),	3 (33%)	6 (67%)	-
Renault	Neuter	*predstavitel'stvo* – 'representative office'	23 (74%)	7 (23%)	1(3%) (neut)
Porsche	Neuter	(n); *avtomobil'* – 'car' (m), *mašina* – 'car' (f),	11 (92%)	1 (8%)	-
Mitsubishi	Plural/ Neuter	*model'* – 'model' (f)	12 (71%)	5 (29%)	-

Table 3. *Frequency of Gender Agreement in the Russian National Corpus Continued*

Company name	Phonologically predicted gender	Possible hyperonym	Number of agreement instances found in the National Corpus		
			Masculine	Feminine	Other
		Various			
Apple	Masculine	*brend* – 'brand' (m), firma – 'firm' (f), *kompanija* - 'company' (f), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f)	1 (6%)	16 (94%)	-
Google	Masculine	*kompanija* - 'company' (f), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f)	5 (100%)	-	-
Microsoft	Masculine	*brend* – 'brand' (m), firma – 'firm' (f), *kompanija* - 'company' (f), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f)	4 (14%)	25 (86%)	-
Intel	Masculine	*brend* – 'brand' (m), firma – 'firm' (f), *kompanija* - 'company' (f), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f)	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	-
PetroChina	Feminine	*kompanija* - 'company' (f), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f)	-	4 (100%)	-
WellsFargo	Neuter	*bank* – 'bank' (m), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f)	1 (100%)	-	-
Sanofi	Plural/ Neuter	*kompanija* - 'company' (f), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f)	-	1 (100%)	-
Sony	Plural/ Neuter	*brend* – 'brand' (m), firma – 'firm' (f), *kompanija* - 'company' (f), *korporacija* – 'corporation' (f)	1 (9%)	10 (91%)	-

The data in Table 3 present some relevant patterns. For retail corporations, there are not enough data to conclude if the phonological ending can predict masculine gender, but the hyperonyms like *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F), *set' magazinov* 'chain store' (F) are the main factor for the feminine agreement.

Similar to retail corporations, for food/beverage corporations, there are not enough data on masculine agreement to draw conclusions. However, hyperonyms like *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F), *set' restoranov* – 'restaurant chain' (F) predict feminine gender, even for nouns that phonologically sound like neuter.

For car manufacturers, names that sound phonologically feminine trigger feminine agreement, otherwise, they are masculine. If the model of a car is referenced, either masculine or feminine gender can be used. Since there are two words in Russian that mean 'a car' and which are masculine (*avtomobil'*) and feminine (*mašina*), either one can be used as a hyperonym.

For various corporations, there is a tendency to use feminine agreement more than masculine. The only exception is the name *Google*, which triggers masculine agreement based on the phonological ending and *WellsFargo* that uses masculine agreement based on the hyperonym *bank* (M).

It is interesting to note that apart from masculine and feminine agreement, other types of agreement were not used. There is only one instance where neuter was used with the name *Renault* which can be explained by the phonological ending or by the hyperonym *predstavitel'stvo* – 'representative office' (N).

Table 4 presents company names that consisted of two words and could be analyzed as plural by Russian speakers like in example (6) above:

Table 4. *Other Company Names*[11]

Company name	Possible hyperonym	Number of agreement instances found in the National Corpus		
		Masculine	Feminine	Plural
Procter & Gamble	*brend* 'brand' (M), firma 'firm' (F), *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F)	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	-
General Motors	*proizvoditel'* 'manufacturer' (M), *koncern* 'concern' (M), *avtodiler* 'car dealer' (M), *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F), *predstavitel'stvo* 'representative office' (N)	4 (57%)	3 (43%)	-
American Airlines	*aviakompanija* 'air company' (F)	-	1 (100%)	-

As shown in Table 4, no instances of plural agreement were found and it is not possible to determine the pattern among these names. It is possible that there are more instances of

[11] *Johnson & Johnson* is not included in this table because no examples of this company name without its hyperonym were found in the Russian National Corpus.

masculine agreement due to the number of consonantal endings among company names studied. However, the number of instances for the name *General Motors* is almost equal for masculine and feminine agreement, and there is only one instance of the name *American Airlines* without a hyperonym, and this name was assigned the feminine gender. More data are needed to come to an analysis for the company names that consist of more than one word.

5. Discussion

The data collected do not provide homogenous results. Retail and food/beverage corporations are assigned feminine agreement based on feminine hyperonyms like *kompanija* 'company' (F), *korporacija* 'corporation' (F), and *set' magazinov* 'chain store' (F). Thus, there are many feminine-shaped words that are used without their hyperonyms, unlike masculine-shaped names. A possible explanation is that in cases of competing rules (formal vs. semantic) native speakers prefer using corporate names with the hyperonyms to avoid assigning gender to a word spelled in English letters. The default gender assignment rule predicts that the masculine gender will be assigned to loanwords, however, the existing data for the retail and food/beverage corporations do not support this claim. The only corporate name that was assigned masculine gender in the data is *McDonald's* which is masculine by shape and whose hyperonym might be 'restaurant' (a masculine word in Russian) rather than *kompanija* 'company' (F) or *korporacija* 'corporation' (F).

As for car manufacturing corporations, the results are different. It appears that masculine-shaped names are assigned masculine gender while feminine-shaped names are assigned feminine gender. Thus, the formal criteria take precedence over the semantic criteria. However, neuter-shaped names were also assigned masculine gender. This fact can be explained by masculine hyperonyms *proizvoditel'* 'manufacturer' (M), *koncern* 'concern' (M), *avtodiler* 'car dealer' (M), or by the default gender assignment rule.

In the examples collected, the car manufacturing company names were used to denote both corporations and car models. The same car model was assigned both masculine and feminine gender in different entries which can be explained by the existence of two words meaning 'car,' *avtomobil'* (M) and *mašina* (F), and either of these words can serve as a possible hyperonym for the car name. Similar to retail and food/beverage corporations, the large number of feminine agreement examples does not support default gender (masculine) as the main criteria for the gender assignment of company names. The only neuter agreement in all collected data appeared in the group that consists of car manufacturing company names. The name *Renault* is neuter based on the pronunciation [reˈno], and it can also refer to *predstavitel'stvo* (N) – 'representative office' as a possible hyperonym. Thus, based on these data, it is difficult to state which rules (formal, semantic, or default gender) come first in the gender assignment for car manufacturing corporations. Similar to previous types of corporations, more data are needed to arrive to more definite conclusions.

With various company names, the feminine gender is assigned more frequently, even to names that are phonologically masculine or neuter. Thus, the hyperonyms like *kompanija* 'company' (F) and *korporacija* 'corporation' (F) are the decisive factor for the majority of these names. At the same time, both *Apple* and *Google* end in the consonant cluster where the first element is a stop and the second one is liquid /l/, yet these names are assigned different genders. It is possible to explain the masculine gender by another hyperonym *poisk* 'search,' though in the

data collected, the name was used to denote the corporation, not the search engine. It appears that in the case of *Google*, the phonological criterion takes precedence over the semantic criterion.

Similar to the previous example, the company names that consist of two names or are plural in English but end in a consonant are assigned masculine gender in Russian. However, the number of entries is not very high, and *General Motors* is assigned feminine gender almost as often as masculine. Thus, both formal and semantic (and potentially default gender agreement) rules are applied here at the same rate. What is clear about these results is that Russian speakers do not analyze these names as plural forms.

Based on the data collected, the hierarchy of the gender assignment rules depends on the type of the company. For a number of company names, including retail and food/beverage corporations, hyperonyms seem to be the main gender assignment rule, while for car manufacturers, the phonological form of the word determines the gender agreement. The data do not support default gender (masculine) assignment rule.

Due to the number of different gender agreement, it is clear that gender assignment in corporate names is still at the stage of stabilizing in the Russian language. During the initial stage of the study, examples of multiple attested gender agreement strategies were found, but the data collected from the Russian National Corpus showed that the choice of gender agreement is between masculine and feminine genders, while neuter is not assigned to company names (except for one example). The small number of entries for some company names does not allow us to draw definite conclusions. More company names should be added to answer the research questions of the study but as it was mentioned before, the majority of the company names are phonologically masculine, and thus, it is difficult to control for the number of company names in each group based on the phonological ending. Another study is needed which will include the tasks for native speakers of Russian where they will have to fill in the endings for the past tense forms or case endings for adjectives in the sentences with the corporate names. Such a study would allow us to determine which gender and number native speakers intuitively prefer to assign in a cloze test.

6. Conclusion

This paper investigates gender and number assignment of international corporate names in the Russian language. These names are spelled in the Latin letters, which make them prominent in a Cyrillic sentence. During the initial stages of the study, the following cases were observed: 1) names with all attested gender number agreement strategies, 2) all genders and numbers except for neuter agreement, 3) only masculine or feminine agreement, 4) only feminine agreement, 5) only masculine agreement. These results suggest the following prediction: neuter>plural>masculine/feminine, i.e. if the company name was used with the neuter agreement, then plural and masculine or feminine agreements were possible as well. If the name was used with the plural agreement, then masculine and feminine gender agreements were possible as well. During the next stage of the study that involved search in the Russian National Corpus, the following cases were found: 1) only masculine, 2) only feminine, 3) masculine and feminine agreement, 4) one instance of agreement with all genders. Thus, only masculine or feminine agreement or both are possible, and it is impossible to predict other genders and numbers as in the Google search. This can be explained by the fact that Google search provided examples from various sources, including different registers, while the examples from the National Russian Corpus appeared mainly articles from journals and newspapers.

The findings of the study show that there are no universal rules that apply to the gender agreement of corporate names in Russian. It appears that both formal (phonological) and semantic (hyperonym) criteria are at force when native speakers assign gender. Retail, food/beverage and a number of other corporations are assigned feminine gender based on the hyperonyms, while the phonological form of the word predicts gender agreement for car manufacturers. Further study in which Russian native speakers can fill out a cloze test with the company names will allow us to collect more data on gender assignment, which will help to determine gender assignment patterns.

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Appendix. List of the websites from which example sentences were taken:

http://www.forbes.ru/rating/50-krupneishikh-inostrannykh-kompanii-v-rossii/2015
http://casualuniverse.com/2012/06/apple-vypustili-otdelnoe-prilozhenie-dlya-podkastov/
http://habrahabr.ru/post/133678/
http://hybrydtech.ru/?p=1015
http://news.finance.ua/ru/~/1/0/all/2001/11/26/3203
http://nvworld.ru/news/intel-release-16-new-cpu/
http://onlgamer.ru/blog/apple-vypustilo-finalnuyu-versiyu-ios-6/
http://popsop.ru/11486
http://readnote.ru/google-vyipustilo-rukovodstvo-dlya-nachinayushhih-optimizatorov/
http://watermarket.ru/articles/2322
http://world.lb.ua/news/2012/06/27/158257_mcdonalds_otkril_samiy_bolshoy.html
-http://www.3dnews.ru/news/632751/
http://www.adme.ru/pack/pringles-izmenili-banke-procter-gamble-vypustila-novuyu-linejku-chipsov-pringles-16376/?single_article_previous_discussions
http://www.adme.ru/pack/pringles-izmenili-banke-procter-gamble-vypustila-novuyu-linejku-chipsov-pringles-16376/?single_article_previous_discussions
http://www.agregator.pro/porshe_slilsya_v_odno_tseloe_s_folksvagenom.790418.html
http://www.aif.ru/society/news/21141
http://www.autonewspages.ru/novosti_avtokompaniy/porsche-otkrylo-unikalnyj-muzej/index.php
http://www.bravica.ru/prime/national.htm
http://www.cnews.ru/news/top/index.shtml?2008/02/28/289976
http://www.cnews.ru/news/top/index.shtml?2012/10/19/507021
http://www.cnews.ru/top/2012/10/30/intel_vypustila_novoe_pokolenie_ssdnakopiteley_508059
http://www.detskiysad.ru/medicina/med37.html
http://www.itoday.ru/news/2725.html
http://www.klerk.ru/soft/news/220264/
http://www.macdigger.ru/iphone-ipod/apple-vypustila-promo-video-dlya-iphone-5.html
http://www.my-akvarium.com/news/8990
http://www.notebook-center.ru/news_4540.html
http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/337116
http://www.odl-mission.org/procter-gamble-vypustil-novoe-mojuschee-sredstvo/
http://www.oilru.com/news/42812/
http://www.realcoding.net/news/microsoft-vypustilo-novuyu-visual-studio-2012.html
http://www.scitech-news.ru/2012/11/microsoft-vypustil-internet-explorer-10-dlya-windows-7/
http://www.sostav.ru/news/2006/11/13/5u/
http://www.uabanker.net/daily/2007/02/022707_1730.shtml
http://www.upakovano.ru/news/416479
http://www.yesasia.ru/archives/198579
http://www.zhensovet.com/ut/topic/14566-iiaue-dhaaen-american-airlines-eeaai-iineaa/
https://twitter.com/OnlinerBY/statuses/231022065396879360
news.maxi.am/news-hi-teck/1873/google-vipustili-brauzer-chrome-dlja-iphone-i-ipad.html