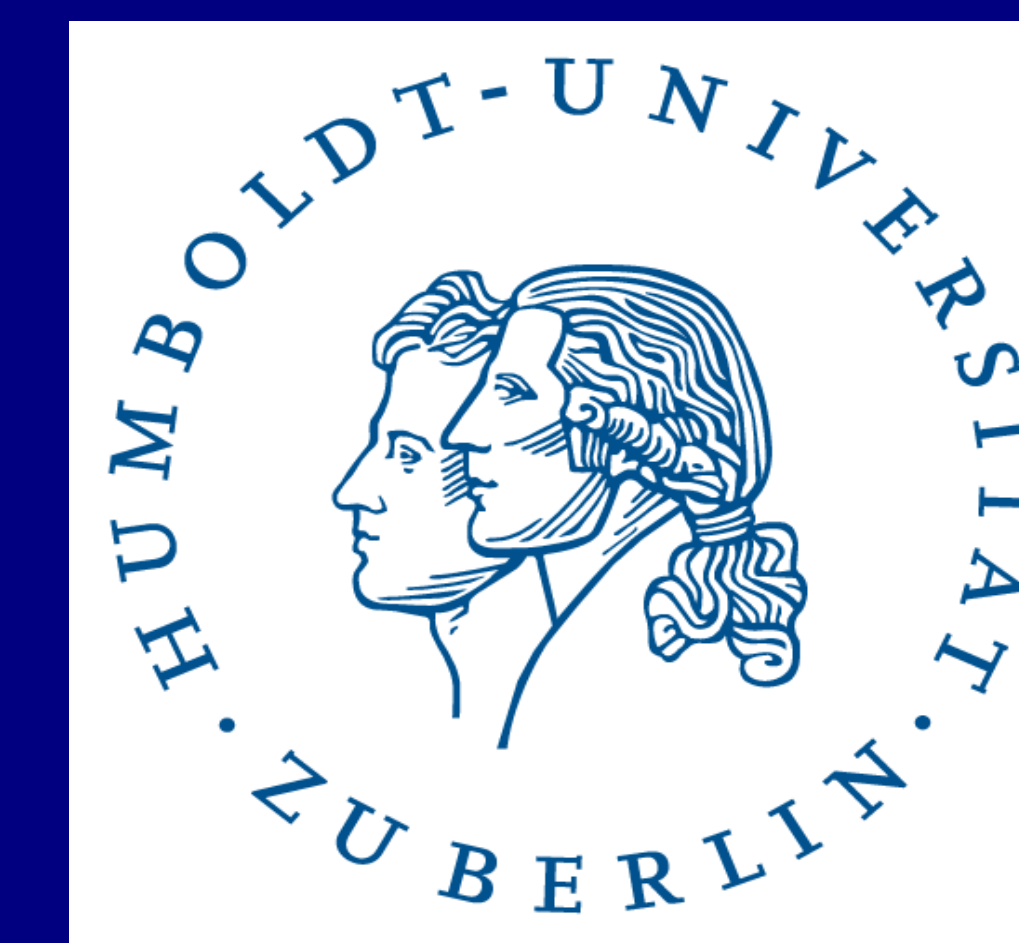


# Non-canonical object marking in the history of Russian language

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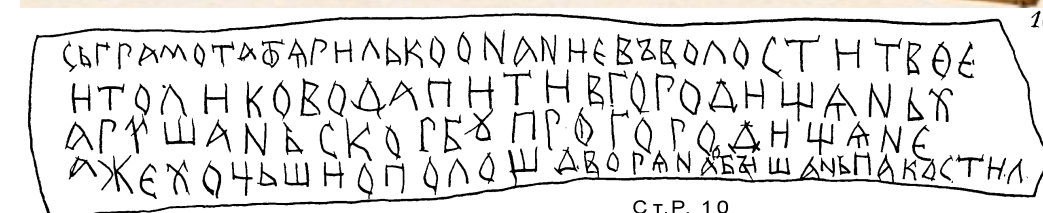
## Phenomenon - Nominativus cum Infinitivo (Ncl)

Is the most unusual syntactic phenomenon in the history of Russian, where direct object of an independent or dependent infinitive verb appears in the nominative case (NOM) instead of accusative (ACC).

This type of construction was attested in early written Russian since the XII cent. and was used regularly in the **chancellery language** of the XVI cent. Up to the late XVII cent. it will then disappear from written language, but it survives in some modern dialects and in folklore texts.

(1) Russian-Livonian records N 38, 1250

*както-намъ (DatS) ·вашей-братъи-правда (NOM) даму (INF)*



gramoty.ru (Birchbark Literacy from Medieval Rus)

‘and so we(dat.) must give(inf) to you (brothers) an oath(nom)’

(2) Birchbark gramoty (Gr. N 10, Stara Rusa 1160–1180):

*въ волости твоеи толико вода (NOM) питу (INF) в городищаньх*

‘In your volost, in your property, we must only drink(inf) water(nom.) (but anything to eat)’

Examples from dialect and folklore:

(3) *А вот не знаю, почему, шо в дом идешь, дак надо в первую очередь взять кошку.*

*Кинуть (INF) кошка (NOM), бросить (INF) кошка (NOM).*

‘I dont know why, when you come in to new house, you should firstly take a cat. Throw the cat (into the house)’

(4) *Рука (NOM) приложитъ (INF) и душа (NOM) положитъ (INF)* (Book of rus. Proverbs. p.158)

‘Put your hand and your heart in what you do’

## Properties of Ncl construction:

1. form function mismatch (nominative case for an object)
2. relatively robust word order:  
**DatS** [PRE] + **NOM.OBJECT** [PRE] + **indep. INF**
3. optional Dative (logical) Subject
4. modal meaning of ‘necessity, obligation, possibility’, i.e., deontic semantics in the apparent absence of modal verbs

### Restrictions (?!):

- morphological: seems be limited to fem.Sg. nouns of the -a and -i type;
- geographical: “Northern Russian” Dialect;
- stylistically: artifact of chancery language.

## Case variation in object marking ...

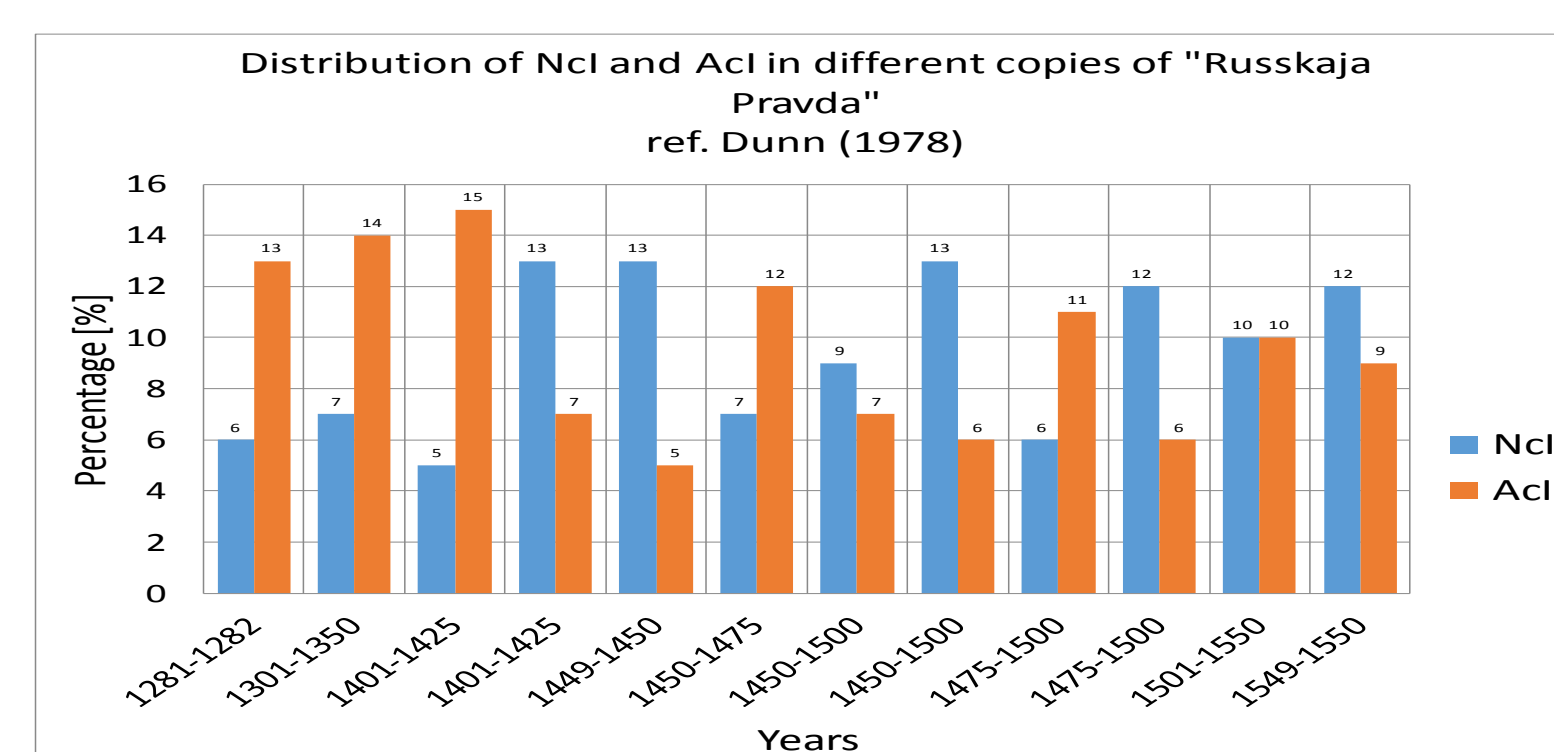
### NOM or ACC + Infinitive

already in the early Russian written texts and texts dating mainly from the XV-XVII cent., both NOM and ACC could be used for the licensing direct object with (in)dependent infinitives

Example of ACC + Infinitive from Smol.gr. 1229:

*Такову правду (ACC) възъати (INF) роусиноу оу ризѣ и на гочкъмъ березѣ*

‘those kind of agreement(acc.) should be hold(inf) by Russian in Riga and in Gotland harbor’



Example of a degree of alternation between NOM and ACC + Infinitive in different copies of Russkaja pravda (12 copies from 1281 to 1550) [see Dunn (1978)]

## Goal

This study investigate the strategies for non-canonical object marking in Russian from a diachronically perspective. It tries to explain mechanism of case variation (NOM or ACC) in such kind of infinitival constructions.

**Previous work:** traditionally, the choice of case explained as „purely random“ (Dunn 1978:191) and not motivated or A. Timberlake (1974:32) postulates „nominative object rule“, (which was a motivated rule in Old Russian) and explains alternation with ACC as “simply stylistic variation”...

## My Hypothesis: it was complex, non-homogenous, phenomenon in the history of Russian and the case variation was motivated by linguistic and non-linguistic factors

**The bottom line:** careful consideration of factors causing variation in object marking is crucial for explaining nature, origin and developing of Ncl in the history of Russian

## Data source— diachronic corpus

We created a subcorpus for the **chancery language** of Middle Russian, from XII to late XVII century, containing **560.743** tokens.

It is part of **RRuDi corpus** - a Russian Diachronic Online (DFG-Project) + ruscorpora (historical subcorpus), Birchbark literacy.

### Criteria (metadata):

- **Type of text:** (legal and official documents as well as quasi-official/hybrid), publ. and private correspondence)
- **Period** (2 Samples: I. Sample approx. 1200—1400; II. Sample—approx. 1400—late of 1750)
- **Geography** (28 towns)

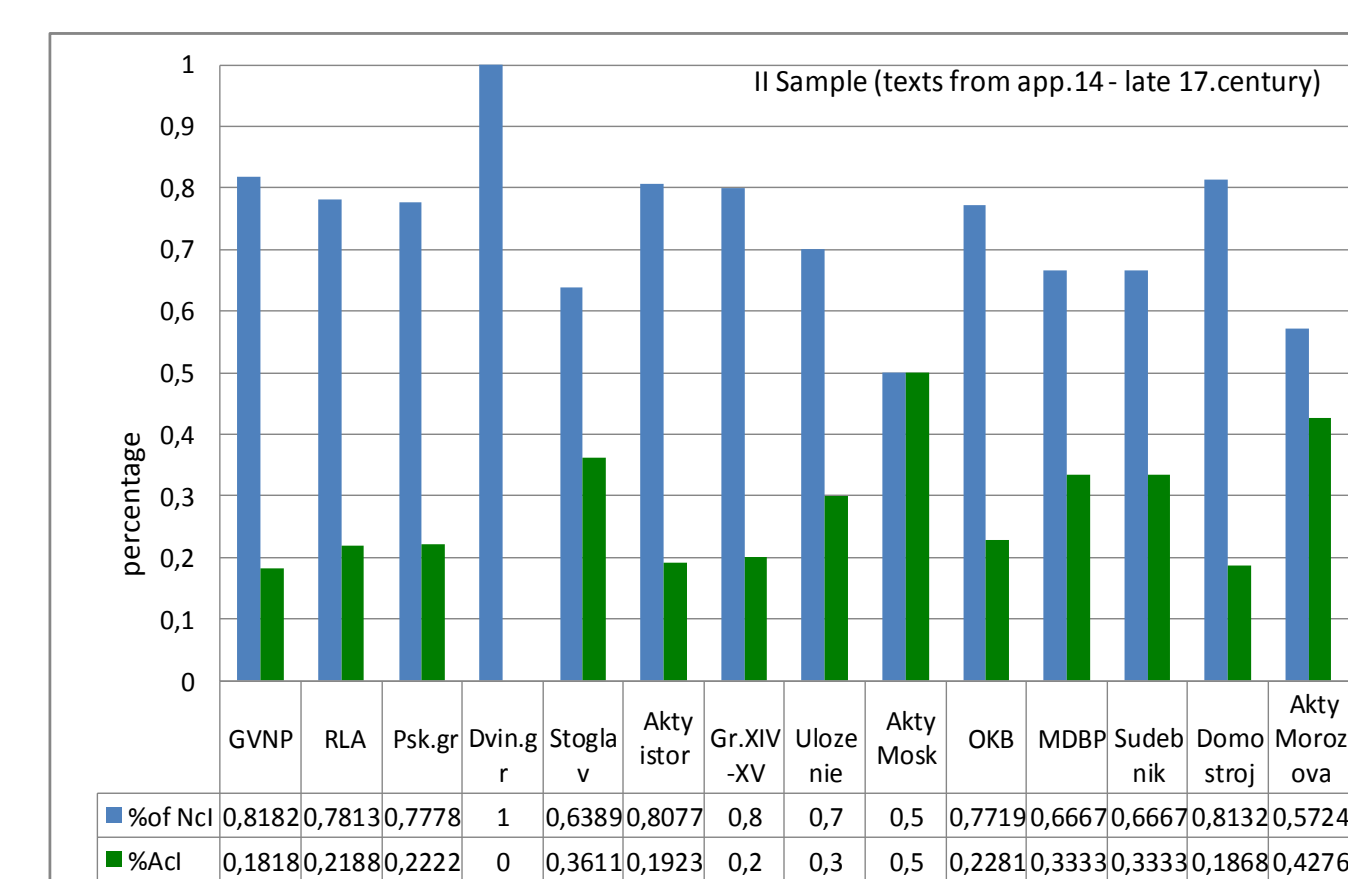
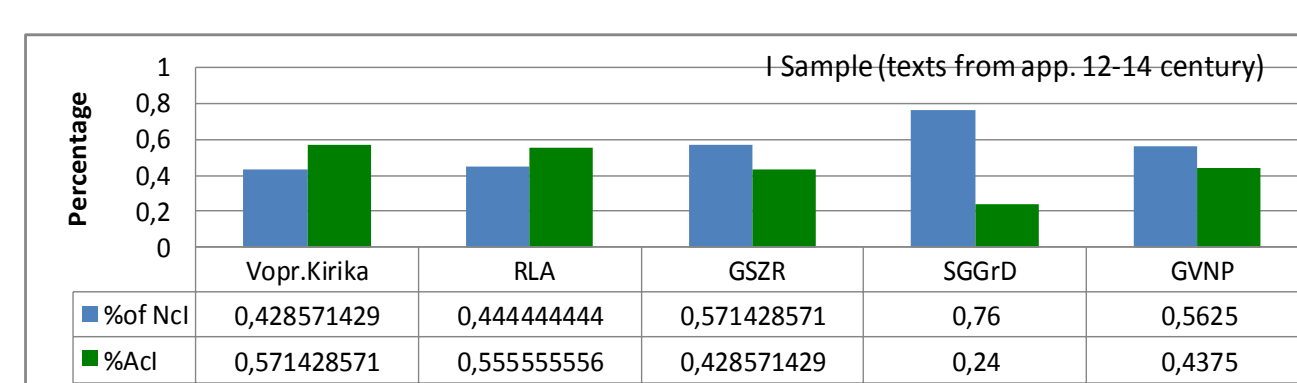
### Annotation (GATE) – clause and construction (11 types of primary and secondary constructions)

## Results and Discussion

1. Percentage distribution of Ncl and Acl in subcorpus for chancery language from 1100 to 1700 AD (RUS)



2. Distribution of Ncl and Acl constructions in different texts from 2 Samples



3. Factor analysis

## Was the choice of case marking purely random or it was a rule-derived process in some periods?

## Which factors could be significant and determine whether NOM or ACC was used for the object of an independent infinitive verb in Middle Russian?

I Sample ( approx. 1200—1401)

CONSTR:	no:POST	no:PRE	yes:POST	yes:PRE
Acl	7	4	8	6
Ncl	1	6	14	18

II Sample (approx. 1401—1750)

CONSTR:	no:POST	no:PRE	yes:POST	yes:PRE
Acl	10	8	17	21
Ncl	25	28	41	99

Exp. From II Sample where Dats [-]:

- *А корову (ACC,PRE) кунуть (INF)* (Psk.sud.gr. 1387 - 1467) ‘and a cow necessary to buy’

Model Likelihood

I Sample (appr. 1201—1401)

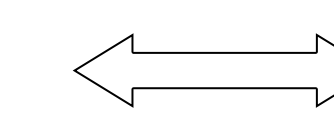
Pearson's Chi-squared test

data: table (CONSTR1, POSITION)

X-squared = 2.838, df = 1, **p-value = 0.09206**

data: table (CONSTR1, DatS)

X-squared = 5.1146, df = 1, **p-value = 0.02373**



II Sample (appr. 1401—1750)

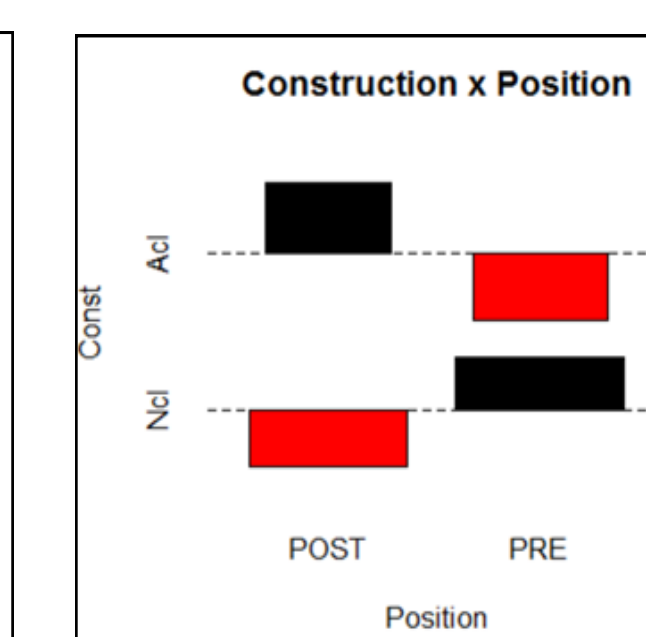
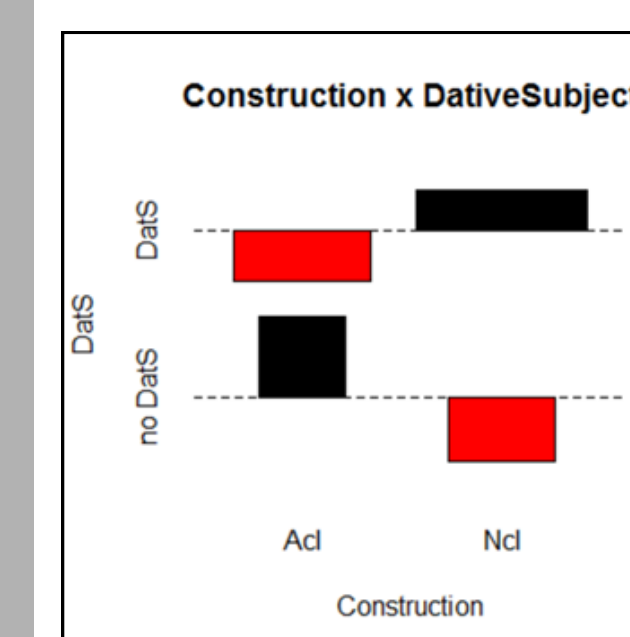
data: table (CONSTR1, POSITION)

X-squared = 3.6448, df = 1, **p-value = 0.05625**

chisq.test(table(CONSTR1, DatS), correct=F)

data: table (CONSTR1, DatS)

X-squared = 0.46674, df = 1, p-value = **0.4945**



## Interpretation

Preliminary analyses of linguistic factors shows, that two main linguistic factors seems governing the variant choice:

- 1) presence or absence of a subject in dative;
- 2) position of the noun in accusative or nominative case

BUT the effect of this two factors changed with time and has not the same effect of two variants. Predominance of examples in I period of constructions with NOM and DatS points to contamination between Ncl and DAT-NOM construction, which has certain structural and semantical affinities. This could be helpful to explain also the origin of Ncl construction. It supports idea about reanalysis of Ncl construction > in the II period the structural features as POSITION of noun became more important.

Also quantitative analysis of data > Ncl „formula of petition“/figura etymologica (as „служба служить, пашня пахать, грамота давать“) —> facts: less different „type of constructions“ and alternations in the same contexts: *Одна жена (NOM) понять (INF) по закону, а другая (ACC) понять (INF) для детей* («Пов. о куры и лисице» XVII)

## Conclusion:

1. Distributional analysis identifies
  - the predominance of Ncl construction especially in the middle and last period
  - the most frequent constructional variant: (DatS[+]) + NOM/ACC[PRE] + INF
  - the evidence of Domostroj and Stoglav indicates that in the language of Moscow the use of the Ncl was acceptable not only in the Prikazny jazyk, but also in the levels of language that can be considered Church slavonic

2. These preliminary analyse of linguistics factors has demonstrated that, contrary to the prescriptive literature, a range of linguistic factors seems to condition the choice of case variants in this types of construction

More generally, the analysis of underlying linguistic parameters of variation can provide an insight into the nature of complex morphosyntactic phenomena —> change of the strategies of object marking

## Perspectives:

- Multivariate analysis of linguistic and nonlinguistic factors and they interactions
- functional interpretation of different variants (secondary construction types) and they development
- functionality in modern dialects
- Semantic of construction

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