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**Parametrizing intralinguistic variation:**  
Case assignment strategies in Russian event nominalizations<sup>1</sup>

Anastasia Gerasimova

The paper deals with the issue of intralingual variation in the context of Russian event nominalizations. Experimental data show that external arguments in nominalizations can be assigned both genitive and instrumental case, i.e. exhibit differential case marking. In this paper I investigate the distribution of the two patterns of case assignment among speakers and demonstrate that both configurations can coexist in one individual grammar. My analysis suggests that it is the amount of functional structure of the constituent undergoing nominalization that determines the observed case variation.

*1. Introduction*

The concept of parametric variation is foundational in linguistics. Since the Theory of Principles and Parameters it has been common to see the differences between languages as the result of parameter realization (Chomsky & Lasnik 1993; Pesetsky 2003). This approach was preserved within the Minimalist framework, where formal features of lexical and functional heads serve as parameters predetermining the outcome of the derivation. Consequently, cross-linguistic morphosyntactic variation results from language-specific values of general parameters.

However, variation can also be found within a single language. Broadly, one can distinguish between two types of intralingual variation; either grammatical variants of one language are distributed among the speakers, or they coexist within individual grammars. In both cases the variation can be parameterized: either the parameter settings are different for distinct speech communities (e.g. as in the case of dialects or sociolects) or the parameter settings may be triggered by factors internal to the grammar.

This paper addresses the issue of intralingual variation in the context of Russian event nominalizations. Nominalizations are verbal derivatives that demonstrate both nominal and verbal properties. Abney (1987) proposed that the syntactic structure of nominalizations includes a verbal phrase, which explains the derivational relation with verbs and such verbal properties of nominalizations as case assignment and adverbial modification. Since the

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external distribution of nominalizations is identical to the distribution of noun phrases, the verbal phrase is generally analyzed as being embedded within a DP projection.

Grimshaw (1990) provided evidence for the existence of two types of nominalizations, namely result and process (event) nominals. Both types have an argument structure which is associated with the VP. The distinction can be proven by a set of diagnostics. For example, process nominals obligatorily take internal arguments (1a), and the telicity test is also applicable to them. Only nominals with a process interpretation may take aspectual modifiers (consider (1b) vs. (1c)) and agent-oriented modifiers (1d),

- (1) a. Vashe upravlenie \*(**pomest'-em**) prodlitsja  
 your management (PROCESS) estate-INSTR will last  
 do vstuplenija naslednika v svoi prava.  
 till coming heir.GEN into his rights  
 ‘Your management of the estate will continue till accession of the heir.’
- b. **Postojanno** otkryvanie shkaf-a privelo  
 constant opening (PROCESS) wardrobe-GEN lead  
 k tomu, chto ruchka otvalilas'  
 to that handle fell off  
 ‘The constant opening of the wardrobe resulted in that the handle fell off.’
- c. (**\*postojanno**) otkrytie schet-a v banke pozvoljaet  
 constant opening (RESULT) bank account-GEN allows  
 vam uchastvovat' v rozygryshe  
 you participate in give-away  
 ‘The constant opening of the bank account allows you to participate in a give-away.’
- d. nanesenie im Tarasovu  
 causing (PROCESS) he.INSTR Tarasov.DAT  
**umyshlenno** telesn-yh povrezhdeni-j  
 deliberately (AGENT-ORIENTED MODIFIER) bodily-GEN injuries-GEN  
 ‘his causing injury to Tarasov in a deliberate way’  
 (Pazel'skaya & Tatevosov 2008: (8))

Alexiadou (2001) proposed that the differences between the two types of nominalizations result from differences in the amount of functional structure dominating the VP: process nominals, unlike result nominalizations, contain at least the *v*P projection. Alexiadou shows that higher verbal projections can also be present in the syntactic structure of nominalizations: thus, manner modification correlates with the presence of the aspectual layer AspP in Polish; while the embedding of a CP results in a nominalized clause in Greek. Therefore, the structural shape of nominalizations is a parameter of cross-linguistic variation.

The amount of functional structure that is nominalized can also be a parameter of intralinguistic variation. In this paper I focus on case marking patterns within Russian nominalizations and investigate whether the variation found within Russian nominalizations is the result of different parameter settings. The aim of this study is to show what triggers the

variation: the case marking strategy that speakers stick to, or the functional “size” of the nominalization.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 2, I provide an overview of Russian event nominalizations and consider case marking strategies with different structural types of verbal stems. Section 3 presents an experimental study on what strategy speakers choose in the process of speech production and defines the range of the case variation. Next, using experimentally obtained acceptability judgments I study the availability of the two case marking strategies for different speakers (Section 4). Finally, Section 5 provides an analysis of differential case marking in Russian event nominalizations: I suggest that case variation follows from the variable structural shape of Russian event nominalizations.

## 2. *Argument structure of Russian event nominalizations*

In Russian, eventive nominalizations include regular deverbal nominals derived with the highly productive suffixes *-nij/-tij-*, as well as nominals formed with less productive affixes *-k-*, *-ot-*, *-stv-*, *-b-* and *-zn'-* (Shvedova 1980). In this paper I adopt the approach proposed by Pazel'skaya and Tatevosov (2008), who argue that *-nij/-tij-* are in fact complex affixes that consist of the “substantive” affix *-ij-*, and the “nominal” affix *-n/-t-*, which can be also found within passive participles. I will also rely on the Mirror Principle that states that affix ordering reflects the sequence of syntactic derivations (Baker 1985).

As noted above, process nominalizations have an argument structure which is associated with functional layers. The *vP* projection is present within process nominals only. Pazel'skaya and Tatevosov (2008) argue that the presence of the *vP* layer in Russian process nominalizations correlates with several syntactic properties, viz.: availability for adverbial modification (e.g. agent-oriented modifiers), causative-inchoative alternation, and the ability of the external argument to control PRO in purpose clauses (Roeper 1987).

As for the higher verbal projections, Alexiadou (2001) compares Russian and Polish nominals and states that there is no AspP in Russian nominalizations because there is no true aspectual opposition. Pazel'skaya and Tatevosov (2008) investigate the set of affixes that are possible within the nominalized stem and their compatibility. Contrary to Alexiadou, they show that nominalizations may attach the imperfective suffix *-yva-*, which indicates the presence of AspP. Therefore, the maximum projection which can appear in Russian process nominalizations is AspP.

Ljutikova (2014) develops the hypothesis that nominalizations have argument structure regardless of the presence of derivational affixes in the stem. In other words, nominals which lack *-nij/-tij-* or other suffixes are still considered to be derived from the verb stem (e.g. *torgovlja* ‘trade’, *kritika* ‘criticising’). In this paper I will follow this view on the structure of nominalizations.

### 2.1. *Case marking strategies*

The case marking strategy for arguments of nominalizations is a parameter of cross-linguistic variation in WALS (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2013). The classification created by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2002) is based upon differences in marking of the only argument of an intransitive stem (S), agent (A) and patient/theme (P) of a transitive stem. Russian event nominalizations

belong to the ergative-possessive type. This means that the arguments of intransitives and internal arguments of transitive stems are marked with the possessive, genitive case (GEN), while external arguments of transitives are assigned instrumental case (INSTR).

(2) a. Internal argument of intransitive marked GEN

padenie kurs-a rubl-ja  
 fall course-GEN rouble-GEN  
 ‘fall of rouble course (weakening of rouble)’

b. External argument of intransitive marked GEN

vorchanie sosed-ej  
 grumbling neighbors-GEN  
 ‘neighbors’ grumbling’

c. Internal argument marked GEN and external argument marked INSTR within transitive stem

ispolnenie ari-i Shaljapin-ym  
 performance aria-GEN Chaliapin-INSTR  
 ‘performance of aria by Chaliapin’

Nevertheless, the corpus and Internet data show that instrumental case marking of the external arguments is not limited to prototypical transitive stems (Pereltsvaig, Lyutikova, Gerasimova 2016, forthcoming). Firstly, the external argument of transitive nominalizations with lexically governed internal arguments can be marked with both the GEN and INSTR (3-4).

(3) podrazhanie chelovek-a prirod-e  
 imitating man-GEN nature-DAT  
 ‘man’s imitation of nature’

(4) podrazhanie chelovek-om tvorchesk-oj moshch-i  
 imitating man-INSTR creative-DAT power-DAT  
 ‘man’s imitation of the creative power’

Secondly, the INSTR is also possible with intransitive unergative stems, stems that do not have internal argument.

(5) hozhdenie rebenk-om na cypochkah  
 walking.around child-INSTR on tiptoe  
 ‘child’s walking on tiptoe’

Two alternatives are possible, which means that the external argument demonstrates differential case marking. In other words, the case marking strategy is one of the parameters of intralingual variation for Russian. However, corpus data provide no information either on speakers’ consistency in assigning INSTR to external arguments or on the quantitative characteristics of INSTR usage with different stems. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an experiment that would provide evidence for the existence of two case marking strategies in the modern Russian language.

### 3. Differential case marking

In order to define the range of variation, I conducted an experiment focusing on what cases speakers choose in the process of speech production. The examined stems included nominalizations derived from unergative stems and transitive stems with lexical government. The latter include nominals with internal argument in dative (Trans-DAT), instrumental (Trans-INSTR), or in the form of prepositional phrase (Trans-PP). The nominalizations with an internal argument in the GEN were examined in the experiments, however, they were not considered in the analysis since speakers tend to avoid the same case on both internal and external arguments. In other words, for this type of nominal the external argument is assigned INSTR due to other factors than for other types.

To verify the results of the experiment the stimuli also included unaccusative nominalizations, which have only internal arguments, and prototypical transitive stems.

The data was collected from 120 participants. The study was conducted via Google Forms and consisted of a fill-in-the-blanks task: native speakers were asked to generate arguments of nominalizations assigning cases that sounded most natural to them. Examples of stimuli for different stems can be seen in (6) (verbs and nominalizations are italicized). An example of the filled gap can be found in (7).

(6) a. Unaccusative stem

V jetom godu **prezident** *pribyl* na final'nyj match, i *pribytie* \_\_\_\_\_ privleklo mnogo vnimanija k chempionatu.

‘This year the president.NOM *arrived* to the final game, and the *arrival* \_\_\_\_\_ drew attention to the championship.’

b. Unergative stem

Dazhe zimoj **dedushka** *plavaet* v rechke kazhdyj den', hotja ezhdnevnoe *plavanie* \_\_\_\_\_ bespokoit vsju sem'ju.

‘Even in the winter the **grandfather**.NOM *swims* in the river every day, although day-to-day *swimming* \_\_\_\_\_ worries the whole family.’

c. Trans-DAT stem

V ljubom spore **sekretar'** *terpelivo poddakival nachal'nik-u*, no ezhdnevnoe *poddakivanie* \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ ni k chemu ne privelo.’

‘In any argument the **secretary**.NOM *has* patiently *consented* to the director-DAT, but the everyday *consenting* \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ lead to nowhere.’

d. Trans-INSTR stem

Vse leto **sosedka** *torgovala kartin-ami* v centre goroda, no torgovlja \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ prinosila mizernyj dohod.

‘The whole summer the **neighbour**.NOM *traded* paintings-INSTR in the city center, but the *trade* \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ was bringing a poor income.’

e. Trans-PP stem

Celyj god **inzhener** *terpelivo uhazhival za artistk-oj*, hotja uhazhivanie \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ bylo ves'ma svoeobraznym.



‘The whole year the **engineer.NOM** *has* patiently *been courting* the **actress-INSTR (PP)**, but the *courtship* \_\_\_\_\_ was pretty strange.’

f. Transitive stem

V tot mesjac **armija** *osvobodila* **stolic-u**, i *osvobozhdenie* \_\_\_\_\_ sil'no podnjalo boevoj duh vseh soldat.

‘That month the **army.NOM** *reconquered* the **capital-ACC**, and *reconquest* \_\_\_\_\_ lift the martial spirit.’

(7) V tot mesjac **armija** *osvobodila* **stolic-u**, i *osvobozhdenie* armiej stolicy sil'no podnjalo boevoj duh vseh soldat.

‘That month the **army.NOM** *reconquered* the **capital-ACC**, and *reconquest* by the army.INSTR of the capital.GEN lift the martial spirit.’

8) В тот месяц **армия** *освободила* **столицу**, и *освобождение* \_\_\_\_\_ **сильно** подняло боевой дух всех солдат.

8) \*

Figure 1. Example fill-in-the-blanks task for the sentence (6f) as it was in the Google Form

The results of the experiment validate the hypothesis about two case marking strategies in Russian nominalizations. On the basis of the experimental data we can conclude that in this experiment Russian native speakers are inconsistent in using INSTR. In accordance with the observed usage speakers can be grouped into two clusters depending on how frequently they used INSTR in the survey.

Among the 120 participants 56% of respondents assigned INSTR to external arguments of nominalizations with lexically governed internal argument at least once. There was no significant correlation between age, gender, city, level of education and the ability to use INSTR. Consequently, case marking strategy is indeed one of the parameters of intralingual variation for Russian.

The results have also shown that within intransitive stems the external argument is commonly marked with GEN. In unergatives, external arguments are marked INSTR significantly rarely, but such cases exist (e.g. *plavanie dedushkoj* ‘swimming of the grandfather.GEN’). Finally, for transitive nominalizations the ergative-possessive model was confirmed.

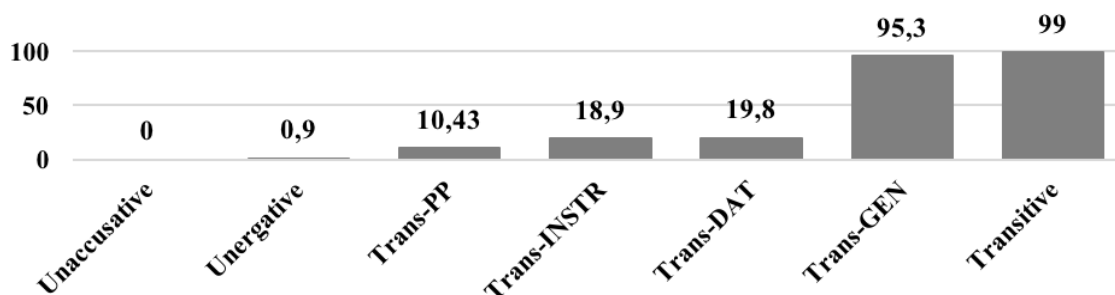


Figure 2. INSTR case marking (percentage %)

### 3.1. *What case is predicted?*

As was previously shown in Pereltsvaig, Lyutikova & Gerasimova (2016), the two existing case theories make distinct predictions about case marking for nominalizations whose internal argument is lexically governed.

Dependent Case Theory (Marantz 1991) predicts that the external argument is assigned GEN. In this theory case is considered to be a morphological phenomenon that is determined by the structural position of a caseless DP and other DPs within a case competition domain. Case realization is predicted by the disjunctive hierarchy, according to which at the beginning of the derivation most specific case features take precedence over everything else. In this theory Russian GEN is an unmarked adnominal case, which appears under the lack of another caseless DP within a case competition domain. The internal argument is assigned lexically-governed case. It is impossible to assign the dependent case because the internal argument is already marked. Consequently, following the case realization disjunctive hierarchy the external argument receives unmarked case.

On the contrary, Inherent Case Theory (Woolford 2006) expects the external argument to be marked with INSTR. This theory distinguishes two types of nonstructural Case: lexical Case and inherent Case, that are in complementary distribution. In Russian INSTR is an inherent Case, which is assigned independently from the internal argument and which is associated with the Agent  $\theta$ -role.

For unergative stems we can find the same predictions. For unergatives the internal argument cannot influence case assignment mechanisms because it does not exist. In other words, in Dependent Case Theory there is no other caseless DP in the case competition domain. In Inherent Case Theory the assignment of the inherent Case does not correlate with the assignment of the lexical Case. Although the respondents have used external argument of unergative stems in INSTR significantly infrequently, from the predictions of the two theories and from earlier examples from the Internet (4) we can draw the conclusion that differential case marking may occur within unergative nominalizations.

So far we have examined two opposing theories, both of which can be used for modelling different phenomena. Each of the theories can justify only one alternative in terms of differential case marking. However, would it be legitimate to conclude that neither of the theories corresponds to the language reality? To answer this question we should take into account the different types of intralingual variation.

### 3.2. *Types of intralingual variation*

Variation commonly exists within a single language and falls into two types of variance: grammatical variants of one language can be distributed among the speakers or they may coexist within the grammatical scope of one individual. The first type of variation prevails within speech communities and is dictated by a number of factors such as area, social class, gender, and genre, such as the *was/were* variation across English dialects and sociolects (Anderwald 2001). Another type occurs in the speech of one individual and is caused by the presence of several variants for one linguistic configuration. In this case the choice of the grammatical variant is determined by a factor internal to the grammar.

In order to model the differential case marking of the external argument it is essential to find out which model of intralingual variation is represented in the case of Russian event nominalizations. If the ability to mark the external argument with INSTR is individual, then the two modalities of case assignment will be distributed among speakers. Alternatively, if both strategies are equally available to any speaker, we should account for how the two case configurations can coexist in one individual grammar. In other words, the case assignment mechanisms have to allow the choice between GEN and INSTR. The problem is particularly interesting in the context of the recent discussion as to whether the coexistence of two modalities of case assignment is possible within one language (Baker & Vinokurova 2010; Levin & Preminger 2015).

The experimental data has shown the inconsistency of Russian native speakers in using INSTR: more than 50% of respondents have assigned INSTR to the external argument of nominalizations with lexical government. To this end I suggest a hypothesis that the two modalities of case assignment in Russian nominalizations are distributed among the speakers.

#### 4. Distribution of two modalities of case assignment

In order to test the hypothesis I conducted a new experiment with the same respondents. This experiment examined how speakers estimate the acceptability of cases when reading sentences. The data was collected from 78 respondents from the first experiment. The task involved evaluating the acceptability of event nominal constructions with external argument marked GEN or INSTR using a five point Likert scale. The examined stems included: transitives, transitive stems with lexically governed internal argument, and unergatives.

In the first experiment INSTR was rarely assigned to external arguments of unergative nominalizations. However, such examples have been found in the corpus. Interestingly, most of the examples found are characterized by an adverbial or PP modification of the nominalization. Hence, along with sentences with bare unergative nominalizations I added sentences with the same unergative stems modified with adverbs to the stimuli.

- (8) a. *Gracioznoe hozhdenie model-ej bylo vysoko oceneno dizajnerom.*  
 ‘Graceful walking of the models-GEN was highly appreciated by the designer.’
- b. *Gracioznoe hozhdenie modeljami **po podiumu** bylo vysoko oceneno dizajnerom.*  
 ‘Graceful walking by the models.INSTR **on the runway** was highly appreciated by the designer.’

6. Грациозное хождение моделей было высоко оценено дизайнером.\*

1 2 3 4 5

плохо ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ хорошо

‘bad’ ‘good’

Figure 3. Evaluation task for the sentence (8a) as it appeared in the Google Form

As the result of the experiment we analyzed the acceptability judgements of the stimuli and calculated the average acceptability scores.<sup>2</sup>

The experimental study revealed that there is a significant difference in INSTR acceptance for different stems.<sup>3</sup> Critically, INSTR is most acceptable with transitives. It is significantly less acceptable with stems with lexical government. Finally, INSTR was considered to be the least acceptable within unergative stems. This distribution of the scores correlates with the results of the first experiment, except for unergatives. Within the latter INSTR was practically not used, however, the acceptability score was significantly higher than the lowest possible score. Another remarkable result to emerge from the data is that PP modification of unergative stems significantly increases the acceptability of the external argument in INSTR. The difference between the scores of INSTR with modified unergatives and transitives with lexical government appeared to be non-significant. Consequently, it can be concluded that PP-modification raises the acceptability of INSTR.

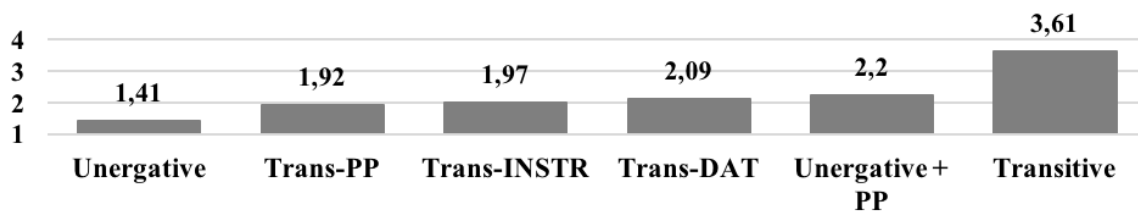


Figure 4. Acceptability of INSTR case marking (mean values)

Another intriguing correlation is related to the consistency of judgements of INSTR. Speakers can be grouped into two clusters depending on how they evaluated INSTR in the second experiment.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the survey has shown that Russian native speakers are inconsistent in using INSTR.

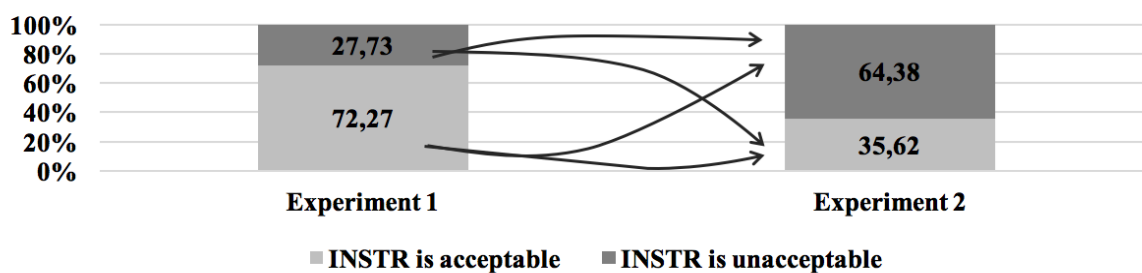


Figure 5. Respondents' grouping based on INSTR acceptability

<sup>2</sup> Prior to analyzing the average scores I examined the consistency of the range respondents' judgements. To do this we compared the variance of scores of each respondent with the group variance using the Fisher test. The test shows whether the ratio of the two variances goes beyond stochastic fluctuations. As a result I found seven respondents who demonstrated significantly low variance, and two respondents who demonstrated significantly high variance (had a lot of polar scores), which makes only 10% of all the participants. The other 90% demonstrated statistically the same range of scores.

<sup>3</sup> To group the types of nominalizations Student's *t*-test was applied to the sets of acceptability scores for different types of eventive nominalizations. *T*-test shows whether the mean differences between the sets are significant. In order to avoid an assumption about the normality of variance the sets of scores have also been tested for homogeneity using Mann-Whitney *U*-test. The results of the two statistical tests coincided.

<sup>4</sup> To find clusters, the *k*-means clustering method ( $k=2$ ) was applied.

In the next stage I compared the acceptability judgements with data on production, namely whether the respondent assigned INSTR to the external argument of stems that allow for that. Curiously, speakers' evaluation of the INSTR acceptability is not consistent with the grouping based on actual usage in speech. Thus, the participant who constantly assigns INSTR to external arguments of action nominal constructions may estimate sentences with INSTR to be much less preferable than with GEN and vice versa. This means that the two strategies of case assignment to arguments of nominalization are equally available to any speaker. The hypothesis that predicts in Russian two modalities of case assignment distributed among the speakers must be rejected. Therefore, the experimental study shows that there is a need for a new model that would take into account an eventual coexistence of two alternatives for case marking and explain speakers' preferences when choosing the case of the external argument.

### 5. Analysis

It was previously said that the structural shape of nominalization is one of the parameters of cross-linguistic variation (Alexiadou 2001). This analysis will go a step further and build on the idea that the structure of nominalizations can vary within one language.

Kratzer (1996) claims that English nominalizers can embed syntactic structures of variable size. She compared the two types of gerunds ( $acc_{ing}$  and  $poss_{ing}$ ) in which the direct object can receive accusative case and the type of gerund ( $of_{ing}$ ) that attaches the direct object via the preposition *of*. Kratzer claims that the difference in argument structure results from the fact that  $acc_{ing}$  and  $poss_{ing}$  gerunds embed  $\nu P$ , while  $of_{ing}$  contains at most VP.

- (9) a. his rebuilding of the barn ( $of_{ing}$ ) (Kratzer 1996:33)  
 b. his rebuilding the barn ( $poss_{ing}$ )

The same idea was implemented in the analysis of the causative-inchoative alternation in Russian. Tatevosov (2008) argues that its interpretation depends on the amount of structure that is nominalized. If it is the VP that is nominalized, the semantic interpretation is intransitive, whilst when the  $\nu P$  is nominalized, the nominalization has transitive meaning.

I will use the same approach to model the differential case marking in Russian nominalizations. First, we will consider the two opposing options. An external argument in INSTR is obligatory with transitives but impossible with unaccusatives, which do not have an external argument that could be assigned INSTR. There is clear evidence for the  $\nu P$  in the structure of transitive nominalizations. Otherwise it would be impossible to express both internal and external arguments. On the contrary, with unaccusatives there is no external argument. Consequently, the functional head  $\nu$  has no purpose in appearing within unaccusatives.

Transitive stems with lexical government and unergatives are similar in terms of case assignment mechanisms. Then the differential case marking is determined by the amount of structure that is nominalized: the external argument is assigned INSTR when the nominalizer embeds the  $\nu P$ , and it is assigned GEN when the nominalizer embeds the VP.

The validity of the proposed model is emphasized by the syntactic behavior of unergatives. With unergative stems PP-modification increases the acceptability of INSTR. This argues for a greater amount of syntactic structure. Moreover, the structural differences between the two

types of nominalizations can be proved by the ungrammaticality of conjunction-reduction (10).

- (10) a. \*poddakivanie sekretar-ja director-u i  
 consenting secretary-GEN director-DAT and  
 buhgalter-om zamestitel-ju  
 accountant-INSTR deputy-DAT
- b. poddakivanie sekretar-ja director-u i  
 consenting secretary-GEN director-DAT and  
 buhgalter-a zamestitel-ju  
 accountant-GEN deputy-DAT
- c. poddakivanie sekretar-em director-u i  
 consenting secretary-INSTR director-DAT and  
 zamestitel-ju buhgalter-om  
 accountant-INSTR deputy-DAT

‘consenting of the secretary to the director and of the accountant to the deputy’

The suggested analysis fits with the modelling of other argument supporting deverbal configurations, namely passive participles. In Gerasimova (to appear) the argument structure of passive participles was compared with that of nominalizations on the basis of three parameters: the position of arguments with regard to the head, the order of arguments (“Int” for internal; “Ext” for external), and the case assignment strategy.

	Case assignment strategy	Arguments always follow the head	The arguments’ order
Nominalization type A	GEN	+	Ext Int
Nominalization type B	INSTR	+	Int Ext
Passive participles	INSTR	-	Ext Int

Table 1. Comparison of the two types of nominalizations with passive participles

This study has shown that the two types of nominalizations demonstrate similarities that differ from the structure of participles. As for both nominalizations with an external argument in GEN and passive participles speakers prefer the precedence of the external argument, whilst the external argument in INSTR follows the internal argument. On the contrary, the external argument with a passive participle is obligatorily assigned INSTR, as in the case of *vP* nominalization. This serves as evidence for the presence of *vP* in passive participles. However, the different word order of arguments in the case of nominalizations with INSTR probably shows that there may be verbal projections other than *vP*, where the internal argument moves. This speculation may be legitimate because, as was mentioned in Section 2, AspP is the maximum possible projection in Russian process nominalization. However, further work needs to be done to model the differences in argument order.

## 6. Conclusion

The evidence from this study suggests that differential case marking results not from differences in case assignment mechanisms but from two structural options that are available to some speakers. Therefore, in Russian the parameter of intralingual variation is not the case marking strategy but the amount of structure that is nominalized.

The findings of the study leave open the question as to why INSTR is significantly less acceptable with unergatives without a PP, although following the analysis, nominalizations from unergative stems can embed the *v*P. This question probably concerns a broader discussion on the fairness of comparison between production and acceptability experiments. Notably, it is interesting to find out to what range speakers are consistent in evaluating the constructions they produce as acceptable. Moreover, it needs to be determined what level of unacceptability verifies that the structure is ungrammatical (see (Knyazev 2017) about an acceptability decrease due to grammatical effects and its relation to absolute ungrammaticality). A comparison of the two methods and analysis of the differences in the results they provide is a vital issue for future research.

To sum up, in this paper I have addressed the issue of differential case marking in Russian process nominalizations. I conducted two linguistic experiments focusing on what cases speakers choose in the process of speech production and how they estimate the acceptability of cases when reading sentences. The results of the experiments proved that there are two case assignment strategies and that they coexist within the case grammar of one speaker. Finally, I suggested an analysis stating that the choice of case correlates with the structural shape of nominalization.

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