

## Grammatical relations in Russian: a view from the verbal lexicon

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Subjecthood and, to a somewhat lesser extent, (direct) objecthood tests have been extensively studied for Russian [Kozinsky 1983; Comrie 1989: 77-84; Schoorlemmer 1993; Chvany 1996; Testelec 2001: 322-344, Letuchij 2012]. In particular, many findings have been reported with respect to the distribution of subject properties in those constructions where the association between agent and topic and nominative case is disrupted for this or that grammatical reason (e.g. in the dative-infinitive constructions, in the passive constructions, etc.) [Timberlake 1976; Moore & Perlmutter 2000; Bonch-Osmolovskaja 2003; Zimmerling 2009; 2012].

What transpires in much of this work is the assumption that behavioral and control properties must be identical within broad classes of arguments that can be identified through morphological case and, to a lesser extent, semantic/thematic role distinctions. In particular, potential non-canonical subjects are routinely tested against the background non-derived nominative arguments (i.e. “canonical subjects”), which presupposes that non-derived nominative arguments themselves are homogeneous in relevant respects [Kozinsky 1983]. Sometimes further divisions within the set of nominative arguments are acknowledged, but these divisions are typically defined in broad syntactic terms (e.g. nominative arguments of transitive vs. intransitive verbs, or “unaccusative” vs. “unergative” verbs [Pesetsky 1982; Babyonyshev 1996]). Thus, incongruences between individual verbs are looked over, ignored or interpreted as unsystematic noise (cf. gaps in expected patterns of participle formation).

This paper adopts a bottom-up empirically-driven approach to grammatical relations; it aims at checking whether arguments of individual verbs in Russian do indeed form large equivalence sets with respect to “argument selectors” [Bickel 2011]. For this purpose I used a sample of 323 verbs that covers all major verb types defined in terms of numerical valency, case frames and thematic role configurations. The 697 lexically-specified arguments in basic clauses containing these verbs were checked against a list of 27 potential argument selectors. Many selectors that I use go back to [Keenan 1976] and/or have well-established counterparts in other languages (case and agreement, control of reflexives, coordinate reduction, etc.), while other criteria are clearly language-specific (e.g. behavioral properties in relative, comparative and distributive constructions). Whenever possible, I identified values in the database based upon (non-)occurrence of relevant constructions in natural texts (Russian National Corpus, [www.ruscorpora.ru](http://www.ruscorpora.ru), or web searches), otherwise I resorted to grammaticality judgments. Conclusions that I arrived at based on the analysis of the database include the following.

1) For the majority of selectors there is a huge amount of variation between individual verbs. Thus, the usual practice of analyzing exemplar sentences and carrying over the results onto the whole class of “similar” arguments should be abandoned as a cherry-picking technique.

2) There is a smallish group of control criteria that almost exceptionlessly converge upon the class of nominative arguments. Such are e.g. controllees in dependent infinitival and adverbial participial clauses; importantly, nominative case is neither necessary nor sufficient condition for the controllers in the same clause-linkage configurations. The label of “subject” can be maintained for this set of arguments, but it must be borne in mind that this category is directly relevant for only a very small set of syntactic constructions in Russian.

3) The evidence for the direct object relation is still weaker. Most importantly, accusative case, which is often viewed as a defining property of direct objects, is not directly linked to any syntactic selector. In particular, accusative S-arguments are syntactically different from both accusative P-arguments and nominative S-arguments; in 3-place verbs some criteria select only those arguments that are marked for accusative case and Ts (rather than Gs) in terms of “generalized argument roles” (as understood in [Bickel 2011]).

4) Only one test has been found that syntactically differentiates between Ts and Gs that are neither in the nominative, nor in the accusative: with respect to the use of the reciprocal pronoun *drug druga* ‘each other’ dative arguments are hierarchically lower than nominative and accusative arguments, but higher than all other arguments. This can be taken as evidence for the existence of the (somewhat marginal) category of indirect objects in Russian.

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