The object Genitive of negation in North Russian dialects

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The study investigates the phenomenon of replacement of the Accusative case in direct object by the Genitive case in the context of predicates under negation in the modern North-Russian dialects. This opposition is showed in the following examples:

(1) N’éť já màslen’ic-y n’e pômn’-u
    No, I carnival-GEN.SG NEG remember-PST.1SG
    No, I don’t remember a spring carnival (Purnema village, Onežskiy district, Arhangelsk region)

(2) My rýb-u n’e lovi-l-i, byl-á na bót-e,
    We fish-ACC NEG catch-PST-PL, be-PST.3SG on boat-DAT
    We didn’t fishing, I was fishing on boat (Purnema village, Onežskiy district, Arhangelsk region)

The Genitive of negation is the Eastern Circum-Baltic isogloss. These structures are present in the Slavic, Baltic and Finnic languages [Arkadiev 2016, 2017, Seržant 2015…]. Many researchers studied the genitive of negation on the material of the standard Russian language [Babby 2001, Paducheva 1997, 2013, Partee, Borschev 2004…]. In the standard Russian, the accusative case is used in the most of cases. In North Russian dialects, we can see the predominance of the genitive under negation in direct object position [Serjant 2015: 305]. In our study, we compare this phenomenon in standard Russian, Southern Russian dialects and North Russian dialects, but the focus of research is in North Russian dialects.

The study is based on the data collected during fieldwork in Synyaky village (Ustiansky district, Arhangelsk region), Purnema village (Onežskiy district, Arhangelsk region), Rogovatka village (Starooskolsky district, Belogorod region) and the data of Ustja River Basin Corpus and Russian National Corpus

We have discovered seven types of syntactic contexts with genitive of negation: finite verb, infinitive, modal pedicative ‘nado’(need) with infinitive, ‘nado’ without verb forms, imperative and verb ‘to be’ with infinitive. All contexts include “local” and “long-distance” genitive of negation. The difference between “local” and “long-distance” genitive of negation is showed in examples (1) and (3)

(3) Poká t’épló top’i-t’ péč’k’-I n’e nádó vs’ó tak’i
    While warm burn-INF stove-GEN.SG NEG need all PART
    While it is warm, it’s not necessary to light a stove (Purnema village, Onežskiy district, Arhangelsk region)
In example (3) (“long distance”) the genitive object depends on transitive infinitive, which depends on modal predicative ‘nado’ (needs).

We consider some various features associated with the choice between the accusative and the genitive, according to the typological data. There are the word order, syntactic environment, specificity of object, information structure, verb semantics, and aspect. In our study, we consider all types of contexts with genitive of negation from this point of view. Analyses of the word order, information structure and specificity of object showed that these factors are not relevant in this case. The aspect and verb semantics are features that seem to be relevant. According to the papers of previous researchers [Padučeva 2013…], in standard Russian there are special accusative and genitive verb classes, which can have either accusative or genitive arguments in object position and have the different semantics. North Russian dialects demonstrate the different distribution of verbs in this classification, than the distribution observed in standard Russian and those verbs can have different types of object arguments (Genitive/Accusative) accordingly. In the most examples with the genitive of negation in our sample, verbs are in imperfect form.

References:
Padučeva 2013 – Paducheva E.V. Russkoe otricatel’noe predloženie // LRC publishing house 2013