

Diachronic paths to uninflectedness in South Slavonic

MATTHEW BAERMAN, GREVILLE G. CORBETT,
ALEXANDER KRASOVITSKY, MARIA KYUSEVA

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Workshop 8 Uninflectedness



Serbian-Bulgarian dialectal continuum

Serbian

Nominative

Accusative

Genitive

Dative

Locative

Instrumental



Bulgarian

General case

Serbian-Bulgarian dialectal continuum

Serbian	Transitional system 1	Transitional system 2	Bulgarian	
Nominative	Nominative	Nominative	General case	
Dative	Dative	Accusative		
Accusative	Accusative			Nominative
Genitive	Genitive			
Locative	Locative			
Instrumental	Instrumental			

Competing co-grammars in transitional systems

Roadmap

- Constructional variation
 - The loss of genitive in dialects of South-East Serbia
- Variation conditioned by information structure
 - The loss of accusative in dialects of North-West Bulgaria
- Conclusions

Constructional variation

THE LOSS OF GENITIVE IN SERBIAN DIALECTS

DATA: SOURCES

Archive of the Institute
for Balkan Studies

Fieldwork in the municipality
of Brus

30h 36m 52s
404 000 tokens

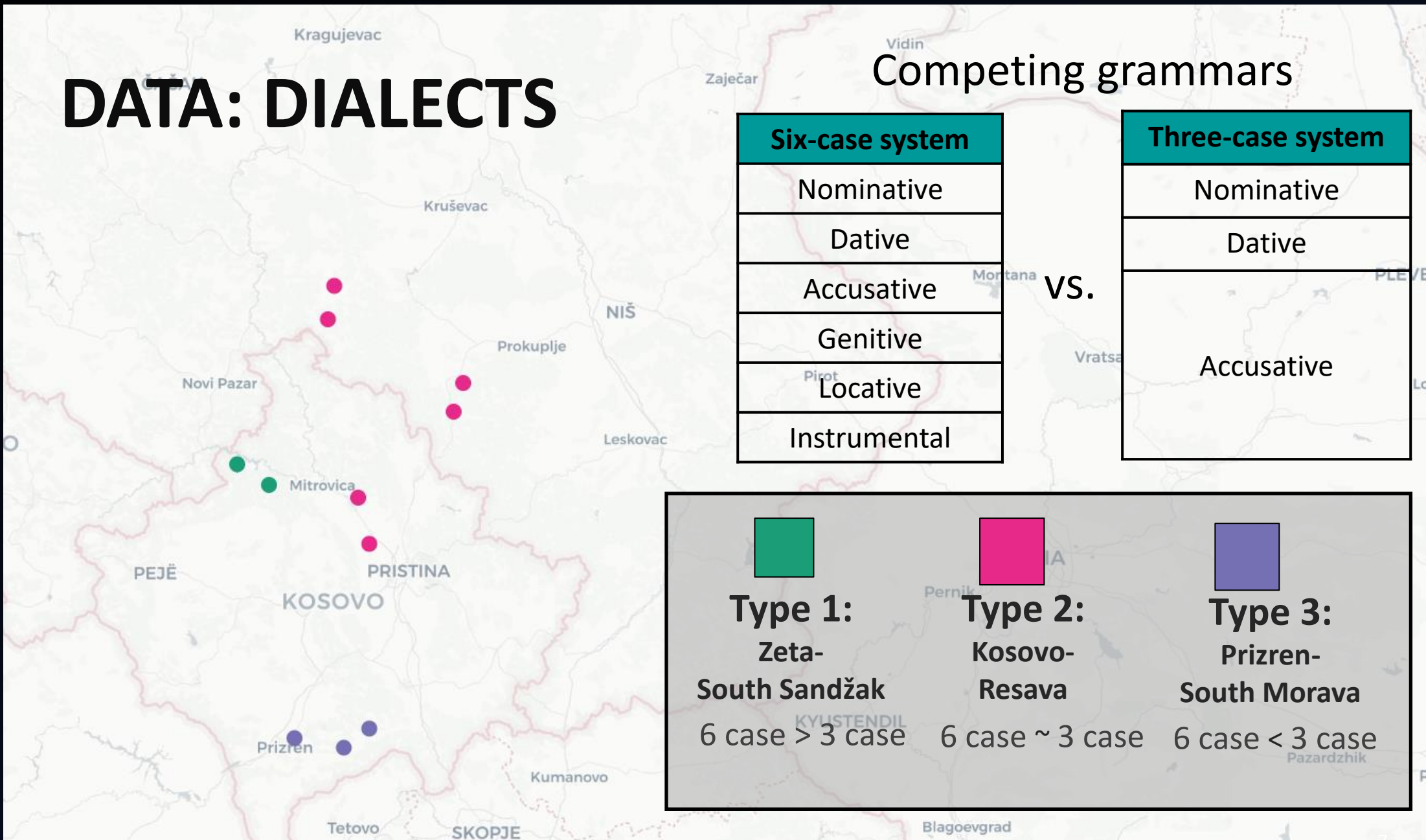
DATA: DIALECTS


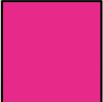
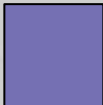
Competing grammars

Six-case system
Nominative
Dative
Accusative
Genitive
Locative
Instrumental

Three-case system
Nominative
Dative
Accusative

VS.



		
Type 1:	Type 2:	Type 3:
Zeta- South Sandžak	Kosovo- Resava	Prizren- South Morava
6 case > 3 case	6 case ~ 3 case	6 case < 3 case

Constructions with genitive

Adnominal

pones-i ***laš-u*** ***rakij-e***
bring-IMP.SG bottle-ACC.SG raki-GEN.SG
'Bring a bottle of raki'

Prepositional

tkajen-o ***od*** ***vun-e***
weave[PTCP]-SG.N from wool-GEN.SG
'It is woven from wool'

od

Quantifier

da-j ***malo*** ***vod-e***
give-IMP.SG a.little water-GEN.SG
'Give me a little bit of water'

Constructions with genitive

Adnominal

pones-i ***laš-u*** ***rakij-e*** / ***rakij-u***
bring-IMP.SG bottle-ACC.SG raki-GEN.SG / raki-ACC.SG
'Bring a bottle of raki'

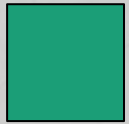
Prepositional

tkajen-o ***od*** ***vun-e*** / ***vun-u***
weave[PTCP]-SG.N from wool-GEN.SG / wool-ACC.SG
'It is woven from wool'

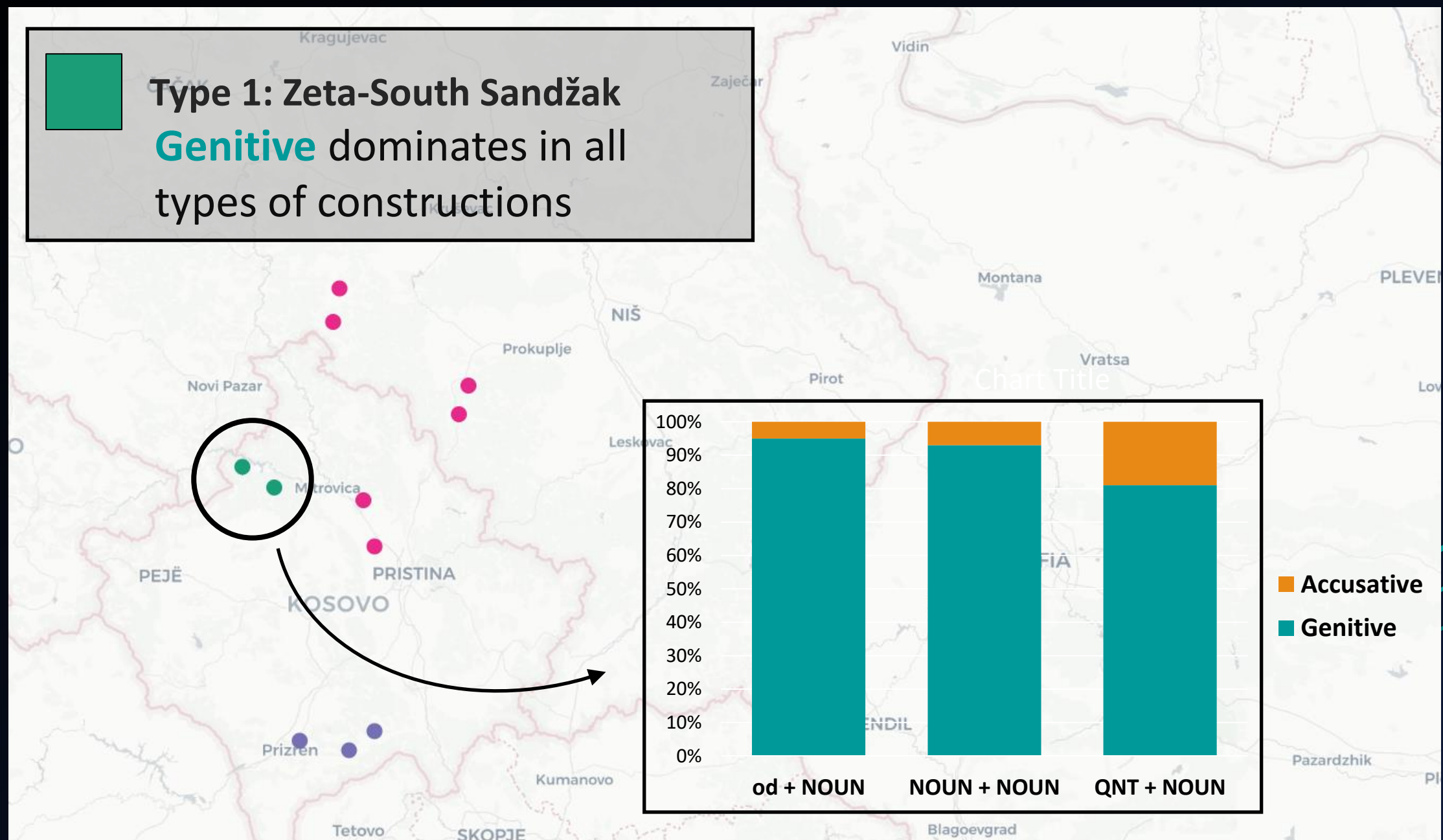
od

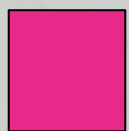
Quantifier

da-j ***malo*** ***vod-e*** / ***vod-u***
give-IMP.SG a.little water-GEN.SG / water-ACC.SG
'Give me a little bit of water'



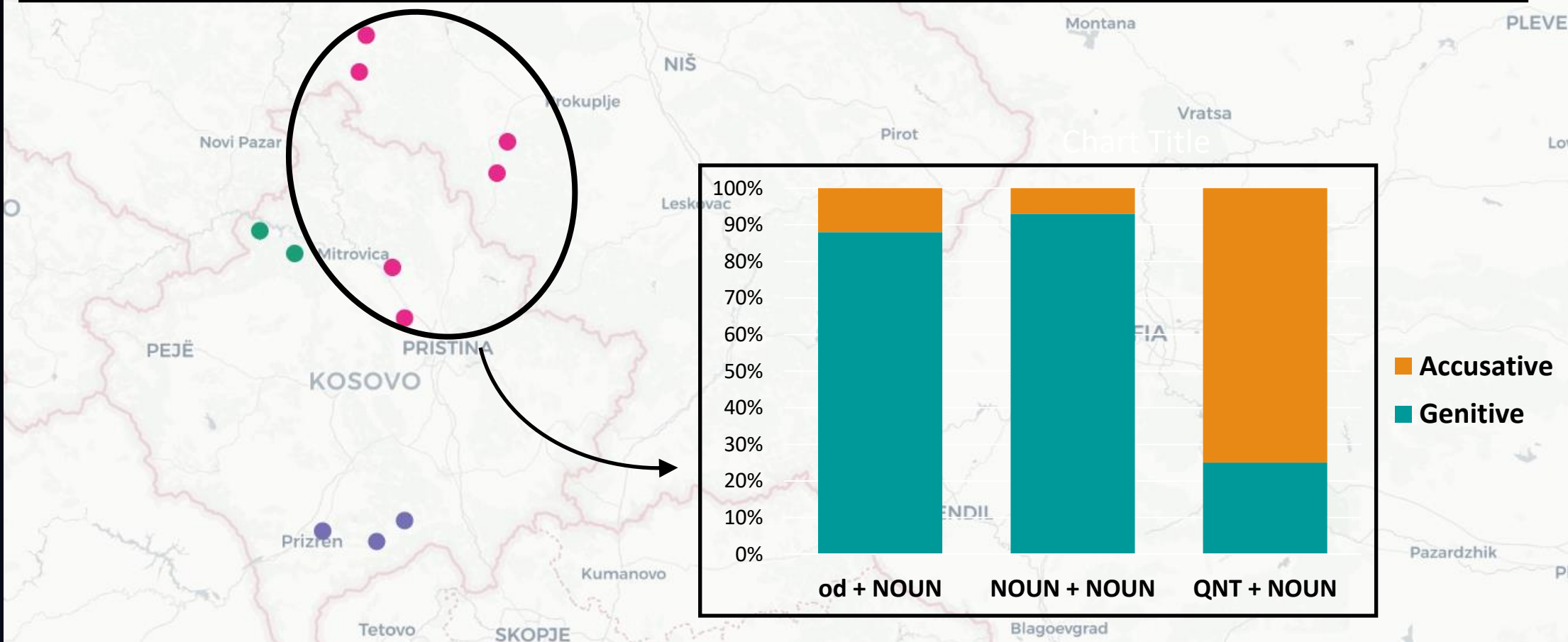
Type 1: Zeta-South Sandžak
Genitive dominates in all types of constructions

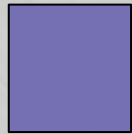




Type 2: Kosovo-Resava

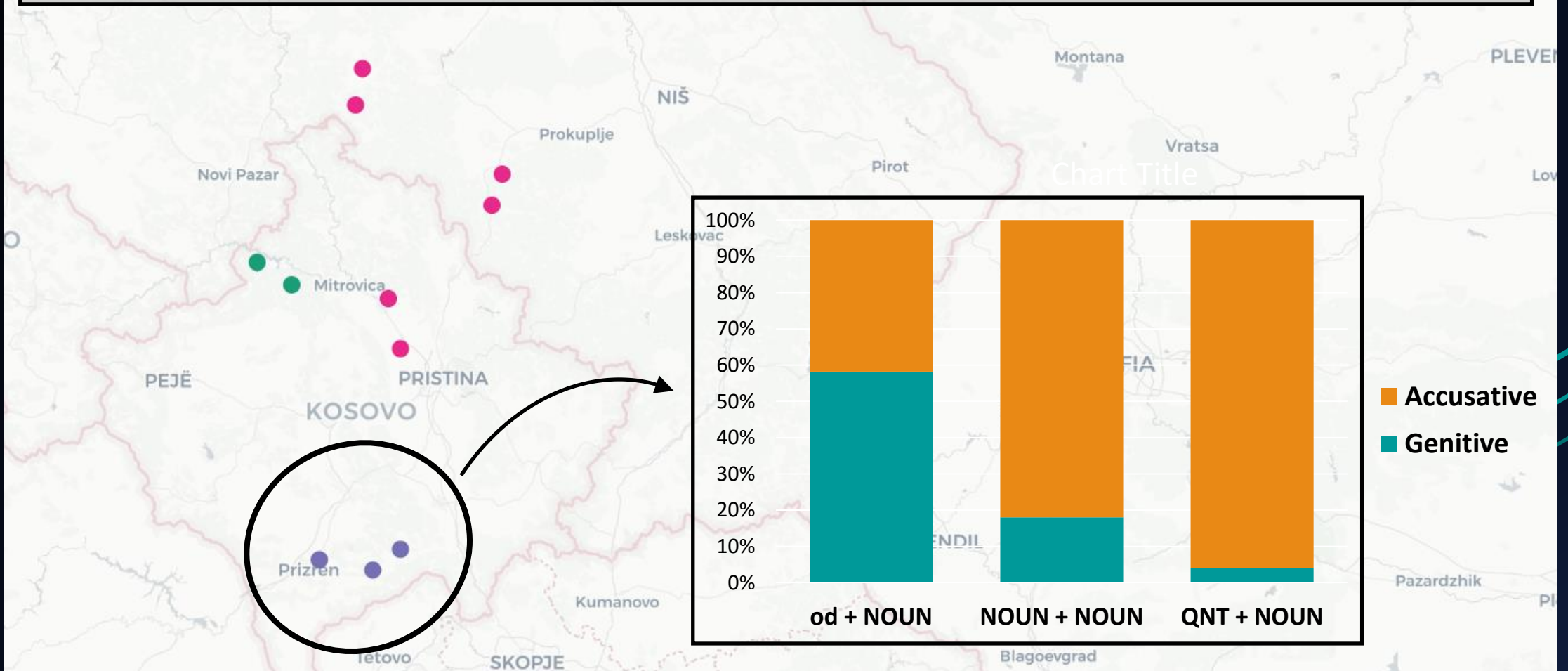
Genitive dominates in the prepositional and adnominal constructions, but **accusative** dominates in the construction with a quantifier



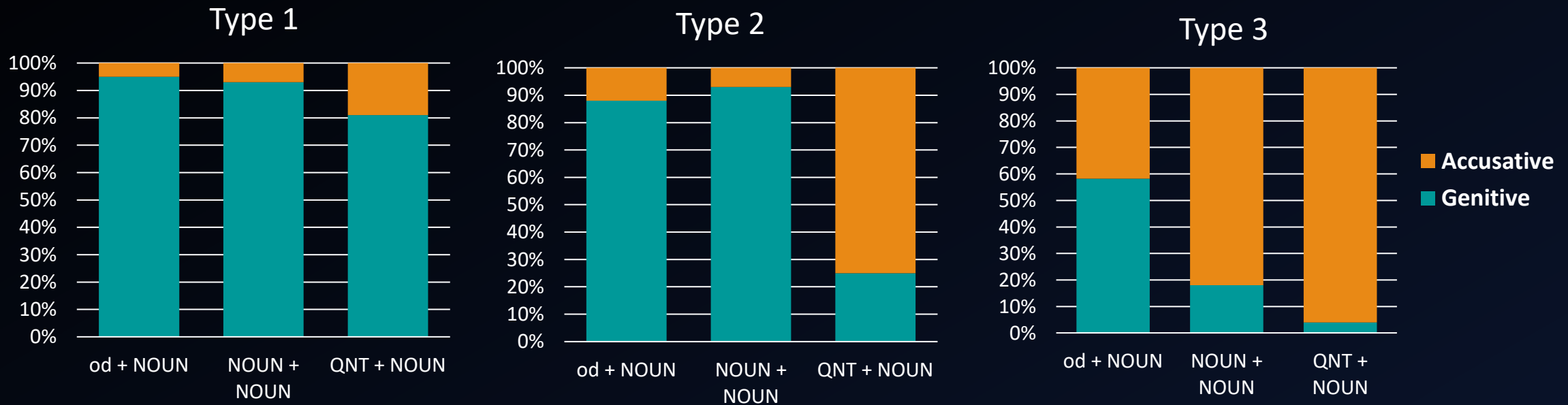


Type 3: Prizren-South Morava

Accusative dominates in the adnominal construction and with a quantifier, proper variation in the prepositional construction



GEN vs. ACC variation in Serbian dialects



Genitive disappears at a different rate in different constructions

PREP + NOUN



NOUN + NOUN



QNT + NOUN

Why is genitive preserved better with prepositions?

- This is not straightforwardly compatible with analyses, in which the decline of cases is correlated with (or motivated by) the rise of prepositions.

(Heine, Claudi & Hünemeyer 1991; Lehmann 1985; Meyer 1920)

- Potential driving factors of variation:

- disambiguation



- strength of connection



Serbian-Bulgarian dialectal continuum

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Competing co-grammars in transitional systems

Case loss: a two-case system in decline

North-West Bulgarian dialects retain a two-case distinction, nominative vs. accusative, though on just one of the four (historical) inflection classes:

	Inflection class 2 'mother'	Inflection class 1 'doctor'	Inflection class 3 'salt'	Inflection class 4 'village'
NOM	majk-a	lekar	sol	selo
ACC	majk-u			

Case loss: a two-case system in decline

Nominative and accusative on class II nouns: a canonical situation

(1) *Majk-a* *pita*
mother-NOM asks
'Mother asks.'

(2) *Pitaj* *majk-u*
ask mother-ACC
'Ask mother.'

(3) *Naučixa* *ot* *majk-u*
they.learned from mother-ACC
'They learned from mother.'

Subjects

Other (non-subject)
functions

Case loss: a two-case system in decline

Nominative and accusative on class II nouns: variable case marking on non-subject nouns

(1) *Majk-a* *pita*
mother-NOM asks
'Mother asks.'

(2) *Pitaj* *majk-u* / *majk-a*
ask mother-ACC / mother-NOM
'Ask mother.'

(3) *Naučixa* *ot* *majk-u* / *majk-a*
they.learned from mother-ACC / mother-NOM
'They learned from mother.'

Subjects

Other (non-subject)
functions: accusative
or nominative

Case loss: a two-case system in decline

- Fieldwork in North-West Bulgaria: 2021, 2022
Vladimir Zhobov (University of Sofia)
Alexander Krasovitsky (University of Surrey)
- Informal interviews recorded in 31 villages around Belogradchik and Trân
- Dialectal affiliation: Frontier North-West dialects
- 46 dialectal speakers born between 1926 and 1950
- Only 13 speakers retain accusative on non-subject nouns
- Corpus: \approx 168,000 words (13 speakers)



Case loss: a two-case system in decline

The probability of one of the two cases on non-subject nouns varies considerably between speakers:

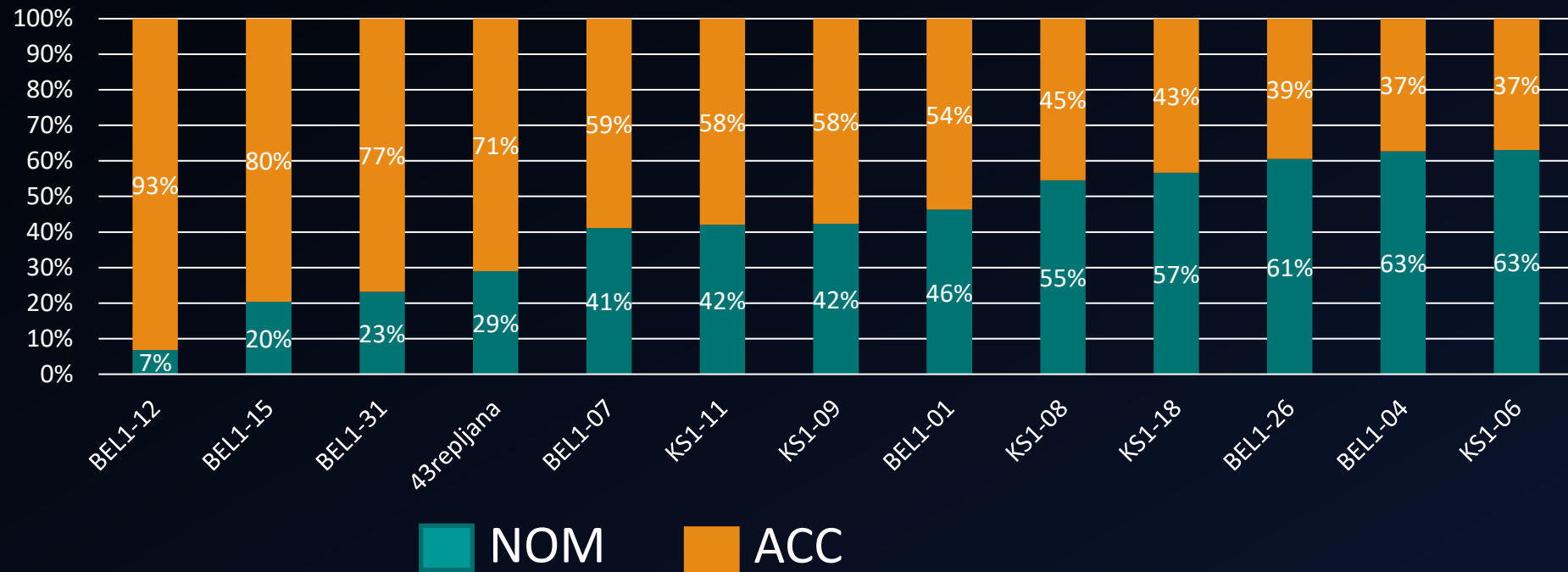


Figure 1. Relative frequency of **NOM** and **ACC** Inflection Class 2 forms in non-subject positions in the corpus (by speaker). 13 speakers, 2554 phrases extracted.

Variation in case marking: information structure as a condition

Why information structure?

- The impact of pragmatic salience on speakers' choice (nominative vs. accusative) was noticeable during the interviews and was even more pronounced in the elicitation process.
- Information structure (topic vs. focus) is claimed as a cause for variable case marking cross-linguistically (e. g. Frank 1990, Aikhenvald 2010, Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011)

Variation in case marking: information structure

We look at:

- the effect of pragmatic salience on variable case marking in non-subject positions.
- the frequency of nominative and accusative under the following pragmatic conditions:
 - topic/repeated focus
 - focus and contrastive topic

Data:

- Sub-corpus size: \approx 81,000 words
- Six speakers
- Sample: 979 phrases with class II nouns annotated phrase type (NP/PP), word order and information structure

Variation in case marking: information structure

The effect of information structure on variable case marking on non-subject nouns:

Accusative is likely to be used in pragmatically least highlighted parts of an utterance (topic or repeated focus)

- (a) *I slam-a-ta otzad. I otvârlju **slam-u-tu** nastaranu*
and straw-NOM-DEF.NOM behind and they.toss straw-ACC-DEF.ACC aside
'And the straw is behind. And they toss the straw aside.'
- TOPIC
-


Variation in case marking: information structure

The effect of information structure on variable case marking on non-subject nouns:

Nominative is more frequent under pragmatically more salient conditions (focus, contrastive topic).

(b)	<i>Ako</i>	<i>nema</i>	<i>reka</i>	–	<i>nosimo</i>	<i>vod-a</i>
	if	no	river		we.carry	water-NOM
	‘If there is no river, we carry water.’					

FOCUS



Variation in case marking: information structure

Strong effect of information structure on speakers' choices

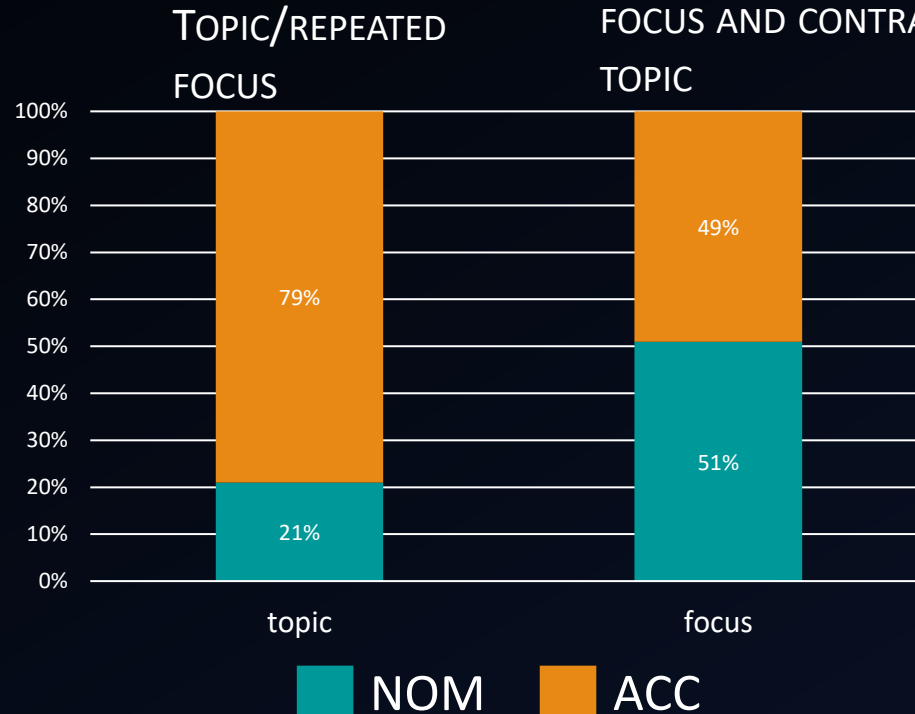


Figure 2. Nominative and accusative on non-subject nouns.

- Non-subject nouns are more likely to take accusative in pragmatically less salient positions
- Pragmatically more salient part of a sentence show stronger preference for nominative on non-subjects.

Variation in case marking: information structure vs. other factors

How does information structure interact with phrase structure?

- Strong effect of phrase structure (NP vs. PP) has been found at previous stages of case loss (illustrated here by the data from East Serbian dialects).
- We look at the effect of phrase structure in NW Bulgarian in connection with information structure and word order.

Variation in case marking: word order

Three word types: postverbal, preverbal and isolated with NPs:

Postverbal:	<i>Ne smo slagali vod-u</i> we be.1PL put.1.PL water-ACC 'We added water'
Preverbal:	<i>Krav-a smo imali</i> cow-NOM be.1.PL have.1.PL 'We've had a cow'
Isolated:	<i>Ne sâm imala bab-u,</i> NEG be.1.SG have.1.SG.F grandmother-ACC <i>samo majk-a</i> only mother-NOM 'I didn't have a grandmother, just a mother.'

Variation in case marking: word order

Three word types: postverbal, preverbal and isolated with PPs:

Postverbal: *I ojdemo večerom na večerrj-u*
and we.will.go in.the.evening on evening.meal-ACC
'And in the evening we will go to have evening meal.'

Preverbal: *Na bašt-a mi pomagax.*
on father-NOM my I.helped
'I helped my father.'

Isolated: *Ima li češma?*
'Is there a tap?'

Otzad češmata. Na kuxničk-u
in.the.rear tap on kitchen-ACC
'The tap is in the rear. In the kitchen.'

Variation in case marking: information structure

The effect of information structure and word order on variable case marking on non-subject nouns



Figure 3. Preverbal, postverbal and isolated NPs and PPs in topic and focus positions

Variation in case marking: information structure

The effect of information structure and word order on variable case marking on non-subject nouns

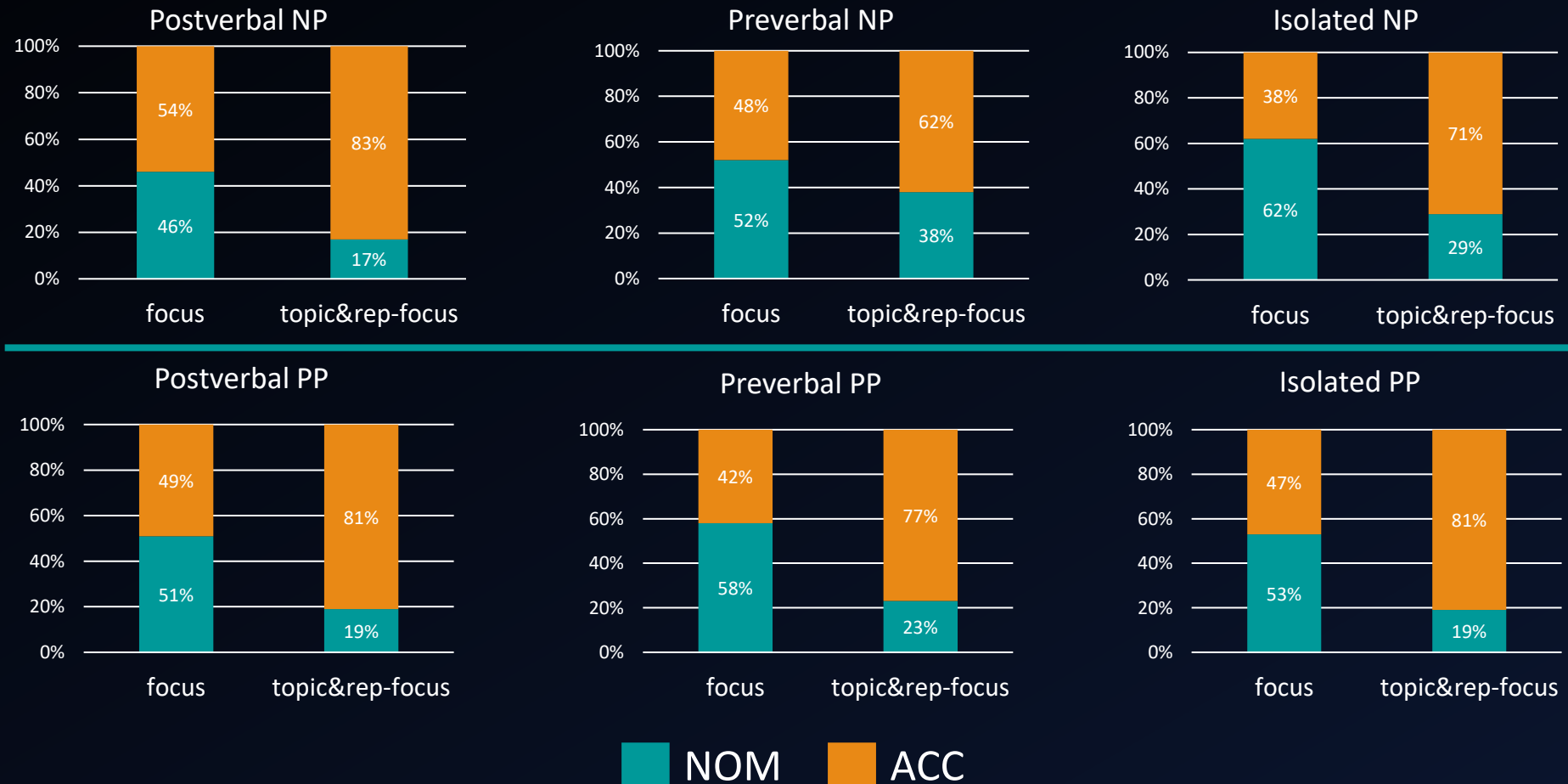


Figure 3. Preverbal, postverbal and isolated NPs and PPs in topic and focus positions

Variation in case marking: information structure

Strong effect of information is found **for all three linear structures**: postverbal, preverbal and isolated positions and both **with NP and PP**

- Pragmatically more important parts of an utterance (e. g. focus or contrastive topic) demonstrate a strong tendency to generalize nominative on non-subject nouns.
- Accusative as a distinct non-subject case is better preserved in pragmatically less important positions (topic and repeated focus).
- No effect of structural conditions: NPs and PPs show similar sensitivity to information structure.

Variation in case marking: phrase type, WO & information structure

ANOVA summary

Phrase type (NP vs. PP)	Word order	Information structure
NO EFFECT p = 0.35 in connection with WO and IS p = 0.29 taken separately	WEAK EFFECT (?) p = 0.18 in connection with WO and phrase type p < 0.001 taken separately	STRONG EFFECT p < 0.001 under any condition(s)

Thanks to Dr Alexander Stewart, St Andrews

- Information structure proved to be a strong factor conditioning speakers' choices.
- Phrase type has no effect with neither pragmatic position and neither type of linear structure.
- The data leave us unsure about the effect of word order.

Variation in case marking: information structure

The process of case loss is to a large extent shaped by strong pressure imposed on speakers by structural and sociolinguistic factors.

INTERNAL FACTORS: Three of four noun classes lost morphological case marking (classes I, II and IV) , which may contribute to the marginalisation of such distinctions in Class II.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC FACTORS: speakers are exposed to language varieties without case distinctions on a daily basis (younger speakers, TV, written language, diglossia). This can marginalize ACC forms, restricting them to less highlighted parts of an utterance and promote NOM forms as more prestigious and appropriate.

Conclusions-1

- Variation in case marking along the Serbian-Bulgarian dialectal continuum is conditioned by factors of different nature. These include:
 - constructional factor (the original case is used only in some constructions)
 - information structure (case is determined by the prominence in the phrase)
- Constructions / phrasal structure is an important factor in Serbian dialects and it has no role in Bulgarian dialects
- Information structure plays a prominent role in Bulgarian dialects, no evidence for it in Serbian dialects

Conclusions-2

- Different factors play role at different stages of the case loss
- South-Eastern dialects of Serbia have a functioning six-case system, in competition with a three-case system. Here only structural factors play role.
- North-Western dialects of Bulgaria have a residual case system. Variation in these dialects is motivated not only by language-internal structural factors, but also by extra-linguistic factors, i.e. social pressure of the standard.