

# Introduction

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The second issue of *Balcania et Slavia* (2025) brings together five contributions addressing central questions at the interface between syntax, semantics, and language acquisition, with particular emphasis on Slavic languages in a comparative perspective. The volume is organized into two thematically coherent parts. The first comprises three studies devoted to binominal constructions and their role in encoding categorization, similitude, and metaphorical interpretation. The second part presents two contributions focusing on the acquisition of pronominal clitics in Serbo-Croatian and on the semantic and translational properties of a specialized verbal construction in Russian.

The first part opens with the article “Binominal Constructions with Instrumental N<sub>2</sub> in Russian: *Pir goroj i piva rekoj*” by Valentina Benigni and Luisa Ruvoletto. The authors examine Russian binominal constructions in which the instrumental noun projects metaphorical meaning onto the head noun. In contrast to genitive binominals, which primarily perform a classificatory function, the instrumental construction encodes manner-based similitude mediated by implicit predication. The analysis identifies a gradient of lexicalization ranging from productive formations to fixed idiomatic expressions and situates these constructions within a broader comparative perspective through a systematic comparison with Italian. The study thus contributes to clarifying the syntactic and semantic

mechanisms underlying metaphorical nominal modification and their cross-linguistic variation.

This is followed by the contribution “Binominal Constructions and Categorization: An Experiment on Categorial Membership in Italian and Russian” by Beatrice Bernasconi and Alessia Lacroce, which investigates the extent to which binominal constructions – specifically the Italian [N1 di N2] and Russian [N1 N2 GEN] patterns – may assume classifier-like functions in languages lacking dedicated classifier systems. Within this framework, the first noun assumes a categorizing function, while the second represents the entity undergoing categorization. Addressing a gap in the literature, the authors provide experimental evidence based on a categorization task conducted with native speakers of Italian and Russian, thereby empirically validating a taxonomy derived from corpus-based observations and contributing to a deeper understanding of the linguistic encoding of categorization.

The third article in this section, “Watercourse Metaphors in Polish and Russian: The Case of the Metaphorical Classifiers *rzeka, potok, strumień, struga* and *reka, potok, ručej, struja*” by Agnieszka Latos and Erica Pinelli, explores binominal constructions in which the classifier element is drawn from the semantic domain of natural watercourses. Drawing on corpus-based analysis, the authors identify the collocational preferences and semantic specializations associated with these metaphorical classifiers and examine the semantic features transferred from the source domain to a range of abstract target domains. Their findings reveal both convergent and divergent patterns in Polish and Russian, shedding light on the interaction between lexical semantics, metaphor, and grammatical structure.

The second part of the issue opens with Boban Arsenijević’s article, “Overt, Omitted and Cliticized Structural Arguments in Preschool Speakers of Serbian Dialectal Varieties”, which examines the acquisition of direct object expression in Serbo-Croatian across different dialectal contexts. Pronominal clitics, as structurally deficient elements encoding discourse-given referents, alternate with null and lexical expressions and their acquisition reflects the development of both morphological realization and syntactic licensing. Previous research has suggested that overt clitics emerge through a developmental process in which children initially rely on an uninflected pronominal form and subsequently acquire the fully specified clitic paradigm. The study shows that this process is shaped not only by internal grammatical development but also by dialectal input, with varieties displaying a higher degree of clitic grammaticalization facilitating their acquisition. These findings contribute to clarifying the relationship between syntactic structure, discourse representation, and grammatical development.

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The volume concludes with Viktoria Lazareva's contribution, "La costruzione russa *tak i ne + V*: prospettive di analisi e soluzioni traduttive", which offers a corpus-based investigation of the Russian construction *tak i ne + V* from both a semantic and translational perspective. The author identifies the grammatical and pragmatic constraints governing its interpretation and demonstrates that the construction encodes a complex configuration of meanings, including counter-expectational, frustrative, and affective nuances, which lack a direct structural equivalent in Italian. The analysis thus provides important insights into the interaction between grammatical structure, semantic interpretation, and cross-linguistic equivalence.

Taken together, the contributions included in this issue offer a coherent perspective on the mechanisms through which languages encode categorization, argument structure, and speaker-related meanings. By combining corpus-based, experimental, and theoretical approaches, and integrating comparative and acquisitional perspectives, the studies presented here contribute to a deeper understanding of the functional architecture of grammar and its development, highlighting the relevance of Slavic languages for broader theoretical inquiry.

