# The order of genitive and accusative clitics in Czech

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#### Outline

#### Introduction

- 2 Clitics and other pronouns
- 3 Construction 1: Genitive subject extraction
- Onstruction 2: Accusative-genitive ditransitives

#### 5 Discussion

## Introduction

Czech pronominal "second-position" clitics follow set order: REFL-DAT-ACC (cf. Franks & King, 2000, p. 105):

(1) Já jsem se mu ho ne-odvážila dát.
 I PST.ISG REFLACC him.DAT it.ACC NEG-dared give.INF
 'I didn't dare to give it to him.' (cf. Veselovská, 1995, p. 273)

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'I didn't dare to give it to him.' (cf. Veselovská, 1995, p. 273)

Genitive clitics are much rarer and follow datives:

 Můj život má právě tolik smyslu, kolik mu my life has just as.much meaning.GEN how.much it.DAT ho dám. it.GEN give.ISG
 'My life has just as much meaning as I give it.' (SYNVII) Sentences with both genitive and accusative clitics are rare, their order is disputed

- Veselovská (1995), Toman (1999): GEN-ACC order standard
- Lenertová (2004): ACC-GEN order required
- Franks and King (2000), Hana (2007): preferences vary, judgements strained, combination perhaps ungrammatical

Similar reports for South Slavic languages! (Browne, 2004; Franks & King, 2000)

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Issues with previous claims:

- Based on small numbers of sentences/judgements
- Often fail to account for important syntactic factors

I present corpus studies of two constructions with GEN and ACC clitics:

- Both orders occur: grammatical to at least some speakers (though rare)! (contra Franks & King, 2000)
- Order heavily dependent on syntactic factors: merged order and person
- Sporadic GEN-ACC order with cases *flipped* (the argument expected to have ACC instead has GEN)

I present corpus studies of two constructions with GEN and ACC clitics:

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Conclusion:

• Suggestive of some *grammatical* pressure preferring GEN-ACC order, like DAT-ACC preference but weaker (cf. Tabachnick, 2024; Toman, 1999)

#### Outline

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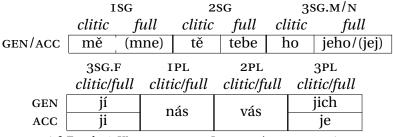
#### 2 Clitics and other pronouns

Construction 1: Genitive subject extraction

#### Onstruction 2: Accusative-genitive ditransitives

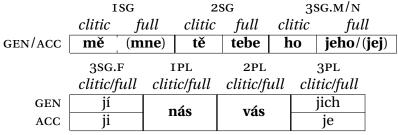
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## Genitive and accusative pronouns



(cf. Franks & King, 2000, p. 98; Lenertová, 2004, p. 152)

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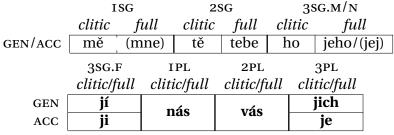


(cf. Franks & King, 2000, p. 98; Lenertová, 2004, p. 152)

Widespread genitive-accusative syncretism

- 3SG.F distinction neutralized for some, usually to *jí* (Hana, 2007, p. 78), though generally retained in writing
- Syncretic clitics glossed from context: *ho* = him.gen or him.acc
- Non-syncretic clitics glossed with underline: *jich* = them.<u>GEN</u>

## Genitive and accusative pronouns



(cf. Franks & King, 2000, p. 98; Lenertová, 2004, p. 152)

Widespread clitic-full pronoun syncretism

- Possibility: full pronoun "masquerading" as clitic at end of cluster (see Franks & King, 2000, p. 108)
- Full pronouns are usually focused and in different positions
- Doesn't seem to be a major factor in my studies

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Numbers  $\geq$  5 and other quantifiers take *genitive* complements, which can extract and cliticize:

(3) Petr jich nalezl tehdy pět.
Petr.NOM them.<u>GEN</u> found.м.sG then five
'Petr found five of them at that time.' (Toman, 1986, р. 131)

When extracted from the subject, this clitic can cooccur with a direct object clitic:

(4) Navštívilo jich ho jen pár.
visited.N.SG them.<u>GEN</u> him.ACC only couple
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- Toman (1999, p. 205): Prefers GEN-ACC order, but judgements "perhaps" not "relatively stable"
- Franks and King (2000, p. 108): Both orders marked %, three speakers varied ("both orders pretty bad", AG "only possible order", GA "relatively OK")
- Hana (2007, p. 113): Both orders found in corpus, "The judgements are largely speaker dependent, some speakers judging both orders as incorrect or marginal."

- SYNVII corpus from the Czech National corpus (Křen et al., 2022)
- Heavily weighted towards journalistic texts
- Only texts marked as written in Czech (no translations)
- Size:  $\sim$ 5.9 billion words

- Sequences of two genitive or accusative clitics
- Some clitics excluded for giving too many false positives
  - mě, jí, je
- Crucial: included 3PL.GEN *jich*, by far the most common subject complement

- Initial search: 1198 sentences
- Manually coded
- 330 target sentences with GEN quantity complement and ACC direct object clitics

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- 330 target sentences with GEN quantity complement and ACC direct object clitics
- By comparison: 15,183 hits for sequence *mu ho* (him/it.dat him/it.acc)

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#### **Basic results**

Both orders are well-attested ...

	ordei	r
GA	AG	% GA
145	185	43.9%

Both orders are well-attested ... but largely vary by person!

person			orde	r	
	GEN	ACC	GA	AG	% GA
	3	1/2	37	175	17.5%
	1/2	3	20	2	92.9%
	3	3	88	8	91.7%
	to	tal	145	185	43.9%

- When both clitics are 3, strong preference for GEN-ACC order
- Strong preference for 1/2 clitics to precede 3 as known from DAT/ACC combinations cross-linguistically (e.g. Béjar & Rezac, 2003) and in Czech (Sturgeon et al., 2011) (Person Case Constraint)

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(6) 'He only trusted a couple of doctors ...' i když ho jich prohlížela celá řada. even when him.ACC them.<u>GEN</u> examined whole row 'even though a whole series of them examined him.'

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If the quantifier precedes the GEN pronoun, maybe it's not a clitic. However, this construction doesn't appear in other positions – non-clitic reading likely unacceptable.

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Both of the ACC 3-GEN 1/2 sentences have adjacent quantifiers

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Unlike before, these may not be clitics, since the construction occurs elsewhere:

(8) [Nás sedm] pak v květnu letělo na Bali us.GEN seven then in May flew.N.SG to Bali 'The seven of us then flew to Bali in May.'

(SYNvii)

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Attested tokens show variable resolution of two often competing pressures:

- GEN extracted from subject > ACC object: usually (but not always) observed
- 1/2 > 3: usually (but not always) triumphs over the case/argument order

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## Background

A few verbs, most commonly *zbavit* 'rid', take ACC patient and GEN theme:

 (9) Zbavili Alenu občanství. rid.m.pl Alena.acc citizenship.gen
 'They stripped Alena of her citizenship.' (Franks & King, 2000, p. 108)

(9) shows the default merged order of arguments ACC > GEN (Franks & King, 2000, p. 109; cf. Dvořák, 2010)

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Both arguments can cliticize (at least for some speakers):

(10) Nakonec **ji ho** zbavili. finally her.<u>ACC</u> him.GEN rid.M.PL 'They finally rid her of him.' (Lenertová, 2004, p. 154)

- Lenertová (2004, p. 154): ACC-GEN usually required, with one exception
- Franks and King (2000, pp. 108–9): speakers preferred ACC-GEN "to the limited extent that they could provide judgments at all", "very strained", "suggests that simultaneous realization of both accusative and genitive clitics is simply not grammatical"

- Sequences of two genitive or accusative clitics
- With a form of *zbavit* (perf) or *zbavovat* (impf) 'rid'  $\leq$  4 words away
- Filtered out more common reflexivized and passive forms

- Initial search: 322 sentences
- Manually coded
- 197 target sentences with both arguments of *zbavit* cliticized

### Are speakers avoiding GEN+ACC clitic combinations?

If so, both arguments of *zbavit* should cliticize less often than other ditransitives.

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				both	% both		
merged order	ι	verb	total	clitics	clitics		
ACC-GEN	zbavit	'rid'	111063	322	0.29%		
	svěřit	'entrust'	78898	913	1.16%		
ACC-DAT	podřídit	'subordinate'	13219	23	0.17%		
	poskytnout	'provide'	768 027	2661	0.35%		
DAT-ACC	darovat	'gift'	112153	1253	1.12%		
inclue	includes false positives, ditransitive types from Dvořák (2010)						

Depends on the verb – rates for *zbavit* are within the range of others, no clear evidence for avoidance

Overwhelming majority: 1/2 patient (ACC) and 3 theme (GEN)

person		order		
GEN	ACC	GA	AG	
3	1/2	I	160	

• Strong preferences for 1/2-3 and patient-theme

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person		order				
GEN	ACC	GA	AG	flipped GA		
3	1/2	Ι	160	I		
1/2	3	0	0	I		
3	3	2	26	6		

- Strong preferences for 1/2-3 and patient-theme
- When both clitics are 3, strong preference for patient-theme order, with *both* case orders:
  - canonical: ACC patient, GEN theme
  - flipped: GEN patient, ACC theme

### Third-person only

When both clitics are 3, strong preference for patient-theme order

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(II) 'Your loved ones will be under tension, ...' zbavte je ho. rid.IMP.2PL them.<u>ACC</u> it.GEN 'relieve them of it.'

## Third-person only

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person		order			
GEN	ACC	GA	AG	flipped GA	
3	3	2	26	6	

- (II) 'Your loved ones will be under tension, ...' zbavte **je ho**. rid.IMP.2PL them.<u>ACC</u> it.GEN 'relieve them of it.'
- (12) 'They gave an ex-mayor a position for mayors. ...' Museli jí ho zbavit. had.PL it.<u>GEN</u> him.ACC rid.INF
   'They had to strip him of it.'

# Flipped case

person		order			
GEN	ACC	GA	AG	flipped GA	
3	3	2	26	6	

Recall: most clitics are syncretic in GEN and ACC, except:

- 3SG.F: GEN jí, ACC ji
- 3PL: GEN *jich*, ACC *je*

These clitics sometimes appear with the "wrong" case:

- (13) '... her face is adorned by a real pig's snout. ...' Zbavit jí (ji) ho může jen opravdová láska. rid.INF her.<u>GEN</u>! it.ACC! can only true love 'Only true love can rid her of it.'
- (14) 'They always come to the operation with great fear. ...' Na vás je, abyste jich (je) ho zbavili. on you.PL is COND.2PL them.<u>GEN</u>! it.ACC! rid.INF 'It's your job to rid them of it.'

- Maybe this is neutralization of 3SG.F *ji* (ACC) and *ji* (GEN) (cf. Hana, 2007, p. 78)
- A large corpus always has some typos, copyediting errors, etc.

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  - Greater use of *ji* for canonical ACC than expected

	clitic	
canonical case	ji	jí
accusative (ji)	1	5
genitive (jí)	I	57

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  - Greater use of *jí* for canonical ACC than expected
  - Also occurs with 3PL je (ACC)  $\rightarrow jich$  (GEN)

	$cl$	itic	clitic	
canonical case	ji	jí	je jich	
accusative (ji, je)	1	5	2 2	
genitive ( <i>jí, jich</i> )	Ι	57	0 81	

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- A large corpus always has some typos, copyediting errors, etc.
  - This is a rare construction, and flipped case clusters make up a sizable proportion

Attested tokens show variable resolution of *four* often competing pressures:

- 1/2 > 3: (essentially) always holds
- patient > theme: usually wins out
- GEN > ACC: sometimes wins over argument order
- case assignment: occasionally sacrificed to align argument and case orders

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- GEN/ACC combinations are robustly, if quite rarely, attested (contra Franks & King, 2000)
- In two constructions, we see variation in clitic order to satisfy multiple pressures:
  - Person Case Constraint (1/2 > 3)
  - patient > theme in ACC-GEN ditransitives
  - GEN > ACC

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- In two constructions, we see variation in clitic order to satisfy multiple pressures:
  - Person Case Constraint (1/2 > 3)
  - patient > theme in ACC-GEN ditransitives
  - GEN > ACC
- The GEN-ACC order preference is much weaker than the DAT-ACC order preference
  - Clash with PCC often leads to ungrammaticality, though ACC-DAT order to satisfy PCC is sparsely attested (Sturgeon et al., 2011)
  - DAT-ACC order fully trumps patient-theme order for ACC-DAT ditransitives (Dvořák, 2010; Tabachnick, 2024)

### The GEN-ACC preference

Is it really there?

• Needed to explain flipped case tokens in ditransitive

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  - Widespread syncretism in GEN-ACC clitics e.g. perhaps syncretic clitics can "count" as one or the other case as needed

Why is it there at all?

- The source must be some *grammatical* mechanism enforcing DAT>ACC, DAT>GEN, and GEN>ACC
- This DAT-GEN-ACC order aligns with the *case containment* hierarchy independently proposed to account for morphological syncretism (Caha, 2009)
- Proposal (cf. Tabachnick, 2024): case-based template enforced by clitic probe that attracts clitics in this case order

- Experimental testing of the relative strength of the different factors
- Extension to other second-position clitic languages
  - Franks and King (2000, pp. 29, 45): ACC-GEN order claimed for Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian
  - Browne (2004): Judgements are mixed, speakers tend to avoid
  - Preliminary corpus study in Slovenian shows similar patterns as Czech

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