

# A Diachronic Analysis of the AI Construction: Its Syntactic and Functional Aspects

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In present-day English, verbs of mental perception such as *believe* can take the accusative-with-infinitive construction (hereafter, the AI construction), which is referred to as the exceptional Case-marking construction (hereafter, the ECM construction) among generative linguists.

(1) John believes [her to be honest].

This construction is 'exceptional' partly because there are no corresponding constructions in other Germanic languages or Romance languages.

In this paper, I would like to analyze the ECM construction diachronically, giving a syntactic and functional account for why the ECM construction exists in English in the first place. I will argue that there were two main causal factors for the appearance of the ECM construction. The first is an influence from Latin, where verbs of mental perception could take the AI construction.

(2) Latin

credo	terram	esse
believe (PRE 1SG)	earth (ACC)	be (INF PRE)

'I believe the earth to be round.'

The second is the reanalysis of *to*-infinitives as IP. This change occurred during ME.

(3) [<sub>PP</sub> [<sub>P</sub> to] [<sub>VP</sub> V . . . ]] → [<sub>IP</sub> . . . [<sub>inf</sub> to] [<sub>VP</sub> V . . . ]]

I will also show that the syntactic and functional analysis that I will present in Section 2 can capture in an elegant way an interrelationship between infinitival complements with the IP status and the emergence of the ECM construction.