

A Role and Reference Grammar Description of the Finnish Partitive

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Finnish

Uralic language spoken in Finland, Northern Sweden and Karelia (RF)

Typical of Uralic languages:

- Vowel harmony
- (very) large case systems
- Agglutinative nature

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	karhu	karhu-t
Accusative	karhu-n	karhu-t
Genitive	karhu-n	karhu-j-en
Partitive	karhu-a	karhu-j-a
Essive	karhu-na	karhu-i-na
Translative	karhu-ksi	karhu-i-ksi
Inessive	karhu-ssa	karhu-i-ssa
Elicative	karhu-sta	karhu-i-sta
Illative	karhu-un	karhu-i-hin
Adessive	karhu-lla	karhu-i-lla
Ablative	karhu-lta	karhu-i-lta
Allative	karhu-lle	karhu-i-lle
Abessive	karhu-tta	karhu-i-tta
Comitative		karhu-i-ne-
Instrumental		karhu-i-n

Partitive Case

Q: What does the partitive case express and how can it be captured in RRG?

Partitive?

Ostan

Osta-n

buy-PRS.1SG

'I buy pens.'

kyniä

kyn-i-ä

pen-PL-PART

Ostan

Osta-n

buy-PRS.1SG

'I buy the pens.'

kynät

kynä-t

pen-ACC.PL

Partitive?

Saa-n karhu-t
Get-PRS.1SG bear-ACC.PL
“I’ll get the bears”

Saa-n karhu-j-a
Get-PRS.1SG bear-PL-PART
“I’ll get bears”

Partitive?

*Saa-n kahta karhu-a
Get-1SG two(PART) bear-PART
“I’ll get two bears”

→ Reading of RP influences case marking

→ Quantitatively indeterminate (Kiparsky 1998)

Aspectual function

Matti	ost-i	maito-a	(tunni-n)
Matti	buy-PST.3SG	milk-PART	(hour-ACC)

“Matti bought milk (for an hour)”

Activity ([-telic]) → partitive

Aspectual function

Matti	ost-i	maido-n	(tunni-ssa)
Matti	buy-PST.3SG	milk-ACC	(hour-INE)

“Matti bought the milk (in an hour)”

Active Accomplishment ([+telic]) → accusative

Aspectual function

Henkilö	tappo-i	karhu-n
Person.NOM	kill-PST.3SG	bear-ACC

“The person killed a bear”

Causative accomplishment ([+telic]) →
accusative

Aspectual function

Ampua (to shoot):

shoot dead → accusative

shoot at → partitive

Aspectual function

Ammu-i-n

karhu-n

Shoot-PST-1SG

bear-ACC

“I shot the bear (dead)”

active accomplishment ([+telic])

Ammu-i-n

karhu-a

Shoot-PST-1SG

bear-PART

“I shot at the bear”

activity ([-telic])

Aspectual function

If [-telic] in feature matrix → partitive

If [+telic] in feature matrix → accusative

NP-function

Saa-n karhu-t
Get-PRS.1SG bear-ACC.PL
“I’ll get the bears”

Saa-n karhu-j-a
Get-PRS.1SG bear-PL-PART
“I’ll get bears”

NP-function

In first example:

[+ telic] → accusative

However, if object is read as [-QD] →
accusative is replaced with partitive

NP-function

[-telic]?

Object receives PART by virtue of [-telic]

Q: Can object receive ACC if read as [+QD]?

A: NO!

NP-function

Etsi-n karhu-j-a
Seek-1SG bear-PL-PART
“I am looking for bears”

Etsi-n karhu-j-a
Seek-1SG bear-PL-PART
“I am looking for the bears”

NP-function

*Etsi-n karhu-t
Seek-1SG bear-ACC.PL

“I am looking for the bears”

Case substitution replaces ACC with PART
(1-way process)

2 functions – ambiguities

Ammuin

karhuja

Ammu-i-n

karhu-j-a

Shoot-PST-1SG

bear-PL-PART

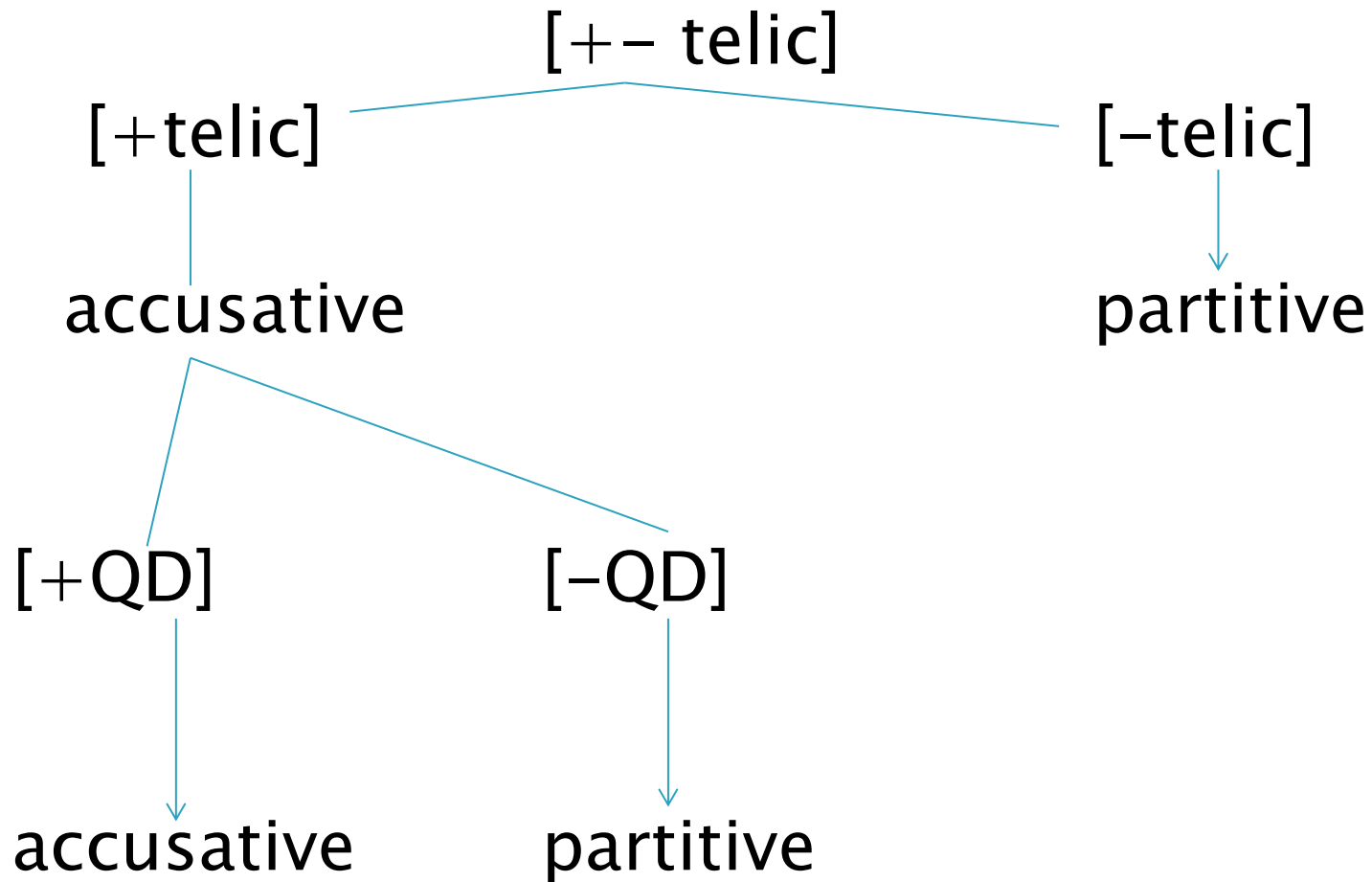
Source of PART?

NP → I shot bears dead

Aspect → I shot at the bears

Both → I shot at bears

Summary



Approaches

Traditional accounts: 2 distinct functions

Kiparsky (1998): 1 function: Expressing the „unboundedness“ of the VP

My approach – 2 functions

[+– telic] in feature matrix determines case of „other“ macrorole argument

+

Case substitution (\approx Korean case spreading)

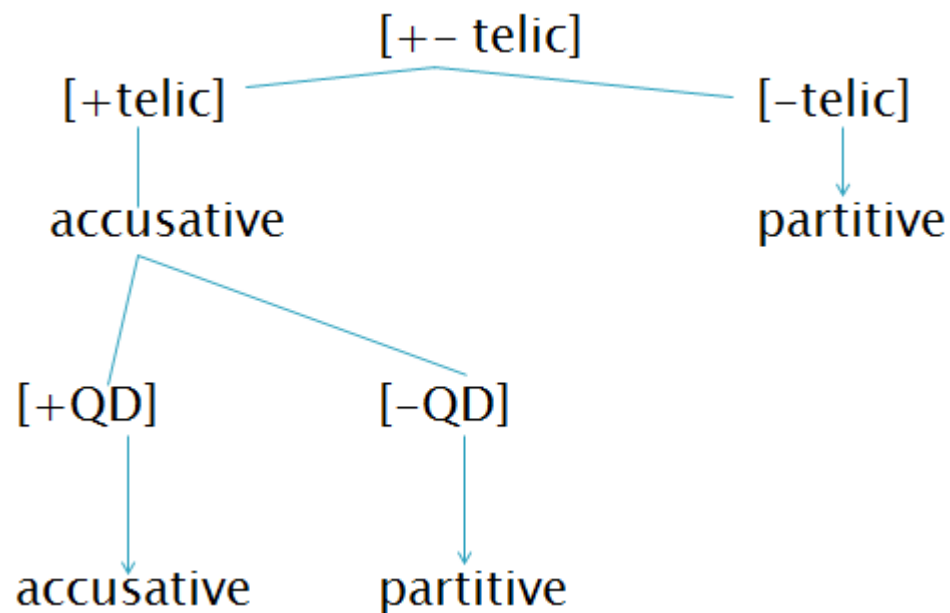
Korean case spreading

Chelswu-ka	san-ey	kan-ess-ta
Chelswu-NOM	mountain-LOC	go-PST-DECL
“Chelswu went to(wards) the mountain.”		

Chelswu-ka	san-lul	kan-ess-ta
Chelswu-NOM	mountain-ACC	go-PST-DECL
“Chelswu went to the mountain.”		

Case assignment rules?

Using a decision tree, it is possible to draw up case assignment rules.



Role and Reference Grammar

Standard Case Assignment Rules:

- a) Assign nominative case to the highest ranking macrorole argument (in terms of the AUH)
- b) Assign accusative case to the other macrorole argument (in terms of the AUH)

Assignment Rules for Finnish

- a) Assign nominative case to the highest-ranking macrorole argument (in terms of the AUH)
- b) Assign partitive case to the other macrorole argument if the verb is [-telic]. If the verb is [+telic], assign accusative by default unless if the conditions specified in c) apply. If so, apply rule c)
- c) Replace case marking on the lowest ranking macrorole argument with partitive case iff it is read as quantitatively indeterminate.

Assignment Rules for Finnish

- a) Assign nominative case to the highest-ranking macrorole argument (in terms of the AUH)
- b) Assign partitive case to the other macrorole argument if the verb is [-telic]. If the verb is [+telic], assign accusative by default.
- c) Replace case marking on the lowest ranking macrorole argument with partitive case iff it is read as quantitatively indeterminate.

Partitive Subjects

Piha-lla leikk-i laps-i-a
courtyard-ADE play-PRS.3SG child-PL-PART
“There are children playing in the courtyard”

karhu-j-a kuol-i
bear-PL-PART die-PST.3SG
“Bears died”

Partitive Subjects – Restriction

*karhu-j-a sö-i hunaja-a
bear-PL-PART eat-PST honey-PART.SG
“There were bears eating honey”

→ Only 1 partitively marked argument in the core

Partitive Subjects

karhu-t

bear-NOM.PL

“The bears died”

kuol-i-vat

die-PST-3PL

karhu-j-a

bear-PL-PART

“Bears died”

kuol-i

die-PST.3SG

Partitive Subjects

Change rules a) and c) to accommodate for highest ranking macrorole argument taking partitive?

Observations

- ▶ Only with certain intransitive verbs (MR 1)
- ▶ Different word order (VS > SV)
- ▶ Number agreement on verb (3SG)

Constructional schema

Construction: Finnish presentational construction
(indeterminate)

Syntax:	template: core 1 (default), core 2 PSA: 4.15a
Morphology:	PSA: Case assignment rule C
Verb agreement:	3SG
Semantics:	PSA is [-QD], part of existential/presentational state of affairs
Pragmatics:	unspecified

Problems

Certain verbs assign other case than rules
Predict. E.g.:

Näe-n	häne-t
see-1SG	3SG-ACC
"I see him/her"	

~~[-telic] → Partitive case~~

Solution?

Different Aktionsart-class?

„see“ as achievement → [+telic] → accusative

„realize“ (oivaltaa), “acknowledge” (myöntää)
„notice“ (huomata, havaita, keksiä)...

Conclusion

The occurrences of the partitive can be captured with a general principle ([+– telic]), the concept of **case spreading** and a **constructional schema**

**Thank you for your
attention!**

Sources

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