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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>karhu</td>
<td>karhu-t</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>karhu-n</td>
<td>karhu-t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>karhu-n</td>
<td>karhu-j-en</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partitive</td>
<td>karhu-a</td>
<td>karhu-j-a</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essive</td>
<td>karhu-na</td>
<td>karhu-i-na</td>
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<tr>
<td>Translative</td>
<td>karhu-ksi</td>
<td>karhu-i-ksi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inessive</td>
<td>karhu-ssa</td>
<td>karhu-i-ssa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elative</td>
<td>karhu-sta</td>
<td>karhu-i-sta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illative</td>
<td>karhu-un</td>
<td>karhu-i-hin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adessive</td>
<td>karhu-lia</td>
<td>karhu-i-lia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>karhu-lta</td>
<td>karhu-i-lta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allative</td>
<td>karhu-lle</td>
<td>karhu-i-lle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abessive</td>
<td>karhu-tta</td>
<td>karhu-i-tta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comitative</td>
<td></td>
<td>karhu-i-ne-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td></td>
<td>karhu-i-n</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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)
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
Basketball 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):

\[\text{shoot dead} \rightarrow \text{accusative}\]

\[\text{shoot at} \rightarrow \text{partitive}\]
Aspectual function

Ammu-ı-n    karhu-n
Shoot-PST-1SG  bear-ACC
“I shot the bear (dead)"

active accomplishment ([+telic])

Ammu-ı-n    karhu-a
Shoot-PST-1SG  bear-PART
“I shot at the bear"

activity ([−telic])
Aspectual function

If $[-\text{telic}]$ in feature matrix $\rightarrow$ partitive

If $[+\text{telic}]$ in feature matrix $\rightarrow$ 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] $\rightarrow$ accusative

However, if object is read as [−QD] $\rightarrow$
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–nkarhu–j–a
Seek–1SGbear–PL–PART
“I am looking for bears”

Etsi–nkarhu–j–a
Seek–1SGbear–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

[+telic]  [-telic]

accusative  partitive

[+QD]  [-QD]

accusative  partitive
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 (≈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.”
Using a decision tree, it is possible to draw up case assignment rules.
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 \([-\text{telic}\)]. If the verb is \([+\text{telic}\)], 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-lle 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
“There are bears”
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  kuol-i-vat
bear-NOM.PL  die-PST-3PL
“The bears died”

karhu-j-a  kuol-i
bear-PL-PART  die-PST.3SG
“Bears died”
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 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Morphology</strong>:</td>
<td>PSA: Case assignment rule C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verb agreement</strong>:</td>
<td>3SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semantics</strong>:</td>
<td>PSA is [–QD], part of existential/presentational state of affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pragmatics</strong>:</td>
<td>unspecified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Problems

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

Näe–n
see–1SG
'I see him/her"

häne–t
3SG–ACC

[-telic] → Partitive case
"see" as achievement → [+telic] → accusative

"realize" (oivaltaa), "acknowledge" (myöntää),
"notice" (huomata, havaita, keksia)…
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