**Partitives and differential marking of core arguments: a cross-linguistic survey**

**Abstract**

This paper aims at a unified treatment of a number of morphologically different items, including partitive cases (Balto-Finnic, Basque), partitive genitives/ablatives (various Indo-European languages), partitive articles (Romance) and particles (Oceanic). It is argued that all items considered share the common characteristic of indicating indefiniteness to various extents. In particular, I discuss the idea that the Finnish partitive case instantiates a special type of differential object marking (symmetrical DOM), disregarding the fact that the partitive can also mark subjects, something which is not true for other DOM marking devices. Setting various partitive items in a cross-linguistic perspective, one can indicate a diachronic cline which moves away from partitive nominal construction, and leads to indefiniteness marker. This diachronic development explains the extension of partitives from direct object first to existential subjects, then to all types of subject and other syntactic functions (e.g. complement of adposition). Of the languages discussed, only French and Italian display the end stage of grammaticalization, possibly on account of the peculiar interaction of the partitive marker with the definite article.

*Keywords:* partitive case, partitive article, (in)definiteness, existentiality, differential object marking.

**1.    Introduction**

## 1.1. Aims and scope of the paper

A small number of languages with morphological case marking feature a case called 'partitive'. In some other languages, there are other cases, typically genitives or ablatives, that are said to 'function as partitives'. In addition, there exists a partitive article in some Romance languages, and some Oceanic languages exhibit partitive determiners, verbal affixes or other clitics. This apparently heterogeneous array of different items has never been considered in a unified perspective, even though, as we will see in this paper, they present striking similarities.

In typologically oriented literature, partitive cases of the Balto-Finnic type have recently been studied in the framework of differential object marking (de Swart, de Hoop 2007, de Hoop, Malchokov 2008,), or as non-canonical core arguments (Sands, Campbell 2001). Partitive genitives of various Indo-European languages have not been paid much attention to by typologists; existing studies set them in the framework of partitive or pseudo-partitive constructions (Koptievskaja-Tamm 2001, Napoli 2010; see sec. 1.2 for definitions). Romance partitive articles, which are fully grammaticalized determiners, are infrequently related to other partitives, possibly because of formal differences. Finally, Oceanic partitives are generally little known outside the small circle of specialists.

In this paper, I would like to suggest that the different items that I will survey and group under the label of partitives are former case marking categories located at different stages along a grammaticalization cline that leads them in the direction of determiners. Seen in this light, their common features receive an explanation; the (in some cases considerable) dissimilarities can be partly explained through categorial differences. As I will argue, the Romance partitive articles have gone all the way through this change, while some other categories display its inception, but never fully accomplished it. However, they all share the common characteristics of indicating indefiniteness, at least in some contexts and to some extent.

That partitive cases in particular should better be classified as determiners is not a completely new idea: in formally oriented literature it has been proposed at least for Basque (Laka 1996, Artiagoita 2002) and for Finnish (Asbury 2006a, b). Even in such cases, however, different partitive devices found in genetically (and often areally) unrelated languages have never been investigated in connection with one another. With this paper, I intend to fill this gap, and provide a tentative explanation for specificities of single partitive morphemes and differences in degrees of grammaticalization. In doing so, I also question the appropriateness of describing the alternation between accusative and partitive case marked NPs as an instance of differential object marking (DOM), and argue that, when this is done, occurrences of partitive subjects in the same language are left unattended .

The paper is organized as follows. In sec. 2 I describe the evolution of Latin *de* 'of' and its reflexes in the partitive determiner of some Romance languages. I discuss the shift undergone by the preposition, which changed from being the marker of partitive nominal constructions to indicating indefiniteness, and argue that this shift was crucially triggered by an existential inference brought about by partitives. In sec. 3 I survey partitive items in four languages: Finnish, Basque, Ancient Greek and Araki. I show to what extent partitive marked NPs also occur as subjects, and how they relate to asserted or non-asserted utterances. In sec. 4 I return to the Romance partitive determiner and take a closer look at its distribution, showing that some alleged limitations find no evidence in texts. sec. 5 focuses on the differences between partitive/accusative alternation for direct objects in the languages surveyed and other types of DOM. Sec. 6 contains the conclusions.

The remainder of this section is devoted to a better description of partitives described in this paper, relative to other uses of the term 'partitive' in the literature concerning partitive and pseudo-partitive nominal constructions(1.2), and to the grammaticalization cline which underlies the development of partitives leading them to markers of indefiniteness (1.3).

## 1.2. Partitives: terminological issues

As remarked above, a reason for lack of a unified treatment of partitive items discussed here may well lie in their diverse nature (case morphemes, particles, articles); another important reason, which I am going to briefly discuss in this introduction, is the basic misunderstanding concerning different uses of the word 'partitive'. The existing literature often fails to distinguish between partitive items such as for example the Finnish partitive case, and partitive nominal constructions, of the type described in Hoeksema (1996) and Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001). Partitive nominal constructions have a referential meaning, and "involve a presupposed set of items or a presupposed entity referred to by one of the nominals" (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2006: 218), as in:

(1.)    *a bottle of that wine*

(2.)    *Fred nam van de cake.*

        Fred took  of  the cake

        'Fred took some of the cake.' (Dutch)

Often, languages that have a partitive case do not use it in partitive constructions, as shown in Finnish:

(3.)    *pala    tästä    hyvästä    kakusta*

        bit:NOM this:ELAT good:ELAT cake:ELAT

        'a bit of this good cake' (from Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001)

The Finnish partitive case, as will be discussed at length in sec. 3, does not occur in such constructions; rather, it indicates that a certain referent is indefinite, as in:

(4.)     *Elmeri loysi          mansikoita.*

Elmer  find:3SG.PAST strawberry:PL.PRTV

'Elmer found some (i.e. and indefinite quantity of not previously identified) strawberries.'


This confusion is clearly reflected in Heine and Kuteva (2004: 32-33), who mix up the two

categories, and quote the Finnish sentence in example (4) along with a German partitive

construction in (5):


(5.)     *Gib mir ein bisschen vom Käse!*

give me a bit from+the cheese

'Give me a bit of the cheese!'


Similar to the Dutch example in (2), the PP *vom Käse* in (5) indicates an indefinite quantity of a

certain, well identifiable piece of cheese, for example the cheese which the speaker sees on the

table. The authors must be aware of some lack of homogeneity, as they remark: "Note, however,

that "partitive" does not appear to be a unified notion (Martin Haspelmath, personal

communication)." However, they do not attempt to go deeper in this issue.

Koprtjevskaja-Tamm (2001, 2006) further distinguishes between partitive and pseudo-

partitive constructions. The latter are non-referential:


(6.)     *A bottle of wine.*


In comparison with (1), the word *bottle* in (6) " merely quantifies over the kind of entity ... indicated

by the other nominal." (Koptjevskaja Tamm 2006: 218). Indeed, partitive items discussed in this

paper variously merge with partitive and/or pseudo-partitive constructions to different extents. The Finnish partitive case, for example, occurs in pseudo-partitive constructions:

(7.)    *säkki        perunoita*

        sack:NOM potato:PL.PRTV

        'a sack of potatoes' (from Koptjevskaja Tamm 2001: 523).

As we will see in the course of the paper, the extent to which partitive cases and similar items also occur in partitive and pseudo-partitive constructions is connected with the stage they have reached in the grammaticalization process that I describe below.

## 1.3.    *Grammaticalization: from partitivity to indefiniteness*

In fact, partitives items described here start out diachronically from partitive constructions, but then undergo a grammaticalization process that leads them to loose their primary case marking function and take over other functions: indicate indefiniteness, degrees of affectedness, imperfective aspect, and so on, as I discuss further on in this paper. During such a process, partitives go through usual steps in grammaticalization, among which decategorialization (see Hopper 1991). Consider the preposition *de*, which was part of the Late Latin and Old French partitive construction and later developed into the so-called partitive article: at some stage during this process, as pointed out by Carlier, *de* lost the properties typical of the category of prepositions: "*de* is not plainly a preposition because it does not establish a syntactic or semantic relationship between the constituent it heads and an external element." (2007: 21). Indeed, decategorialization of *de* when used as an article is also shown by its possible co-occurrence with other primary prepositions (see below, sec. 4 for the examples).

Decategorialization may not be so clear in the case of case markers: for example, in the languages that present partitive cases, such case markers do not co-occur with other case markers (cf. Asbury 2006a). However, partitive cases typically do not fulfill the function of other cases. Let us consider the Finnish partitive: contrary to other cases in the same language, it does not indicate a grammatical relation, as it can be used for direct objects, subjects, and complements of adpositions (see sec. 3.1). The same holds for the Greek partitive genitive (sec. 3.2) and the Basque partitive (sec. 3.3): clearly, partitive cases do not share the distribution of other case marking devices (Moravcsik 1978); they do not fulfill the typical function of morphological case of "marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads" (Blake 1994: 1), and they do not even indicate a specific semantic role (see further Luraghi 2009). They, too, share properties of determiners, even if they have reached different stages of grammaticalization, as we will see in the course of the paper. Only the Romance partitive article seems to have undergone the whole process, as shown by the fact that it split up completely not only from partitive but also from pseudo-partitive constructions, as will be discussed in sec. 2.2 and 4.

## 2.    Diachrony of partitives

Historically, partitive cases/adpositions derive from ablatives: evidence is available from different languages, such as Basque and Finnish.[1] They start out as partitive constructions functioning as direct objects, and only at a later stage in grammaticalization extend to other syntactic positions (in

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[1] Heine and Kuteva (2004) set up a grammaticalization chain: ABLATIVE > A[dnominal]-POSSESSIVE > PARTITIVE, but also remark that "[w]hether there is always an intermediate A-POSSESSIVE stage in this evolution is not entirely clear; as appears to be the case in some other grammaticalization processes, the evolution may proceed straight from the initial to the final meaning." (p. 33). A cursory consideration of the languages described in this paper seems to offer evidence for both developments; for this reason, I will not pursue the issue further here.

the first place to subject position of existential clauses). In this section, I analyze the chronology of this development in the case of the Romance partitive article, which is sufficiently attested and can be traced back to Late Latin partitive constructions.

*2.1.  Late Latin*

The ablative construction out of which partitives originate occurs in Late Latin, as shown in the following examples:[2]

(8.)  *et  misit          ad agricolas      in tempore  servum      ut  ab   agricolis*

and send:PF.3SG to  peasant:ACC.PL in time:ABL  servant:ACC for from peasant:ABL.PL

*acciperet                de    fructu    vineae*

collect:SUBJ.IMPF.3SG from fruit:ABL vineyard:GEN

"At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard.", Mark 12.2;

(9.)  *dicit          eis        Iesus        adferte                de   piscibus   quos*

say:PRS.3SG 3.DAT.PL Jesus:NOM bring:IMPER.PRS.3PL from fish:ABL.PL REL.ACC.PL

*prendidistis  nunc*

catch:PF.2PL now

"Jesus said to them, 'Bring some of the fish you have just caught!'" John 21.10;

(10.)  *et ipse      in nobis   quoniam de  Spiritu    suo          dedit        nobis*

and 3SG.NOM in 1PL.ABL because  from spirit:ABL POSS.3.ABL give:PF.3SG 1PL.DAT

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[2] The Greek Bible, which has been the main source for the Latin translation, also contains a few genitive subjects; they are sometimes regarded as due to Hebrew influence, even though Classical Greek did have genitive (partitive) subjects, as we will see below (see also Conti 2010 fn. 3 for discussion). They are variously translated into Latin with the nominative or with a prepositional phrase with *ex*. I am leaving aside the issue of translation here.
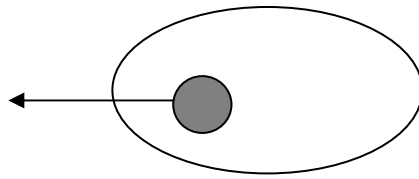
"[We know that we live in him] and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.", 1 John 4.13;

(11.)  *probet         autem se        ipsum     homo      et sic <u>de</u>   pane      illo*

examine:SUBJ.3SG indeed REFL.ACC self:ACC man:NOM and so  from bread:ABL DEM.ABL

*edat            et <u>de</u> calice    bibat*

eat:SUBJ.PRS.3SG and from cup:ABL drink:SUBJ.PRS.3SG

"A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of/from the cup.", 1 *Corinthians* 11.28.

The above examples contain a variety of different types of noun that function as source in the partitive construction: a mass noun in (8), a plural counts in (9), an abstract noun in (10) and a singular count in (11) (in fact, *pane* 'bread' could also be regarded as a mass noun, compare *fructu* 'fruit' in (8)). The last example also indicates that the source meaning was clearly expressed by this construction: indeed, the second *de* phrase, *de calice* is ambiguous between a partitive ('of that cup', with cup metonymically understood as its content), and a source reading ('from that cup'). The Latin examples all contain partitive constructions, implying that the *de* phrase indicates a specific referent, a part of which is affected by the state of affairs, and do not have a possible indefinite interpretation, as grammaticalized partitives can have to varying extents. This is shown, among other things, by the fact that they are all accompanied by some type of determiner or modifier that identifies the specific referent. Thus, *de piscibus* in (9) means 'some of those specific fish', and could not possibly mean 'some (indefinite) fish', as Italian *dei pesci* or French *des poissons* normally mean. The meaning of the Latin partitive construction can be represented as in Figure 1:
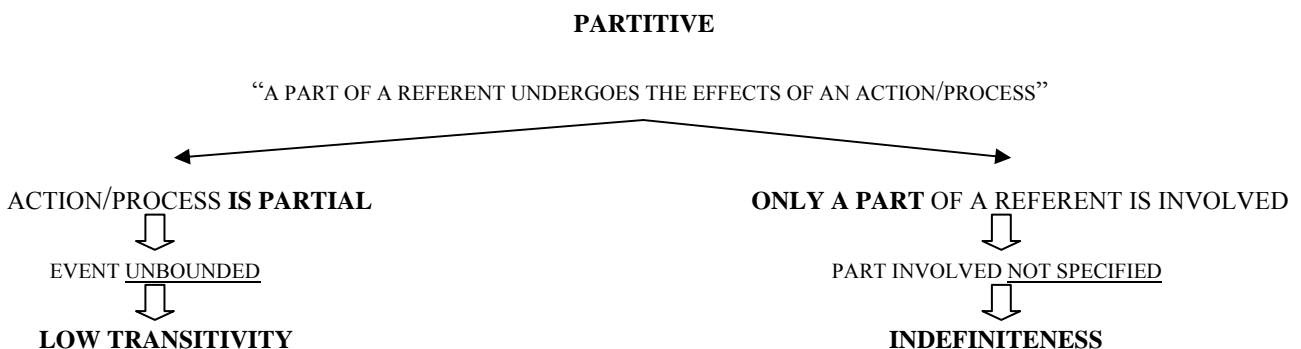
FIGURE 1: THE PARTITIVE CONTRUCTION

(from Carlier 2007: 4)

As the examples show, this construction typically occurs in the place of a direct object: as already remarked, it indicates that a part of a referent undergoes the process, possibly a change of state, indicated by the verb. As often noted, the partitive construction indicates partial affectedness: crucially, however, at this stage partial affectedness does not coincide with a low degree of affectedness. To the contrary, the part of the referent which undergoes the effects of the state of affairs may be affected to any degree, including high, as it can undergo a change of state: typically, partitive expressions occur with verbs of ingestion, which imply that the referent of the direct object is consumed.

Different inferences may arise from the occurrence of a partitive construction in the place of a direct object, which can be represented as in Figure 2.[3]

FIGURE 2: INFERENCES ARISING FROM THE PARTITIVE CONSTRUCTION

**PARTITIVE**

"A PART OF A REFERENT UNDERGOES THE EFFECTS OF AN ACTION/PROCESS"

ACTION/PROCESS **IS PARTIAL**　　　　　　　　　**ONLY A PART** OF A REFERENT IS INVOLVED

EVENT UNBOUNDED　　　　　　　　　　　PART INVOLVED NOT SPECIFIED

**LOW TRANSITIVITY**　　　　　　　　　　　**INDEFINITENESS**

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[3] Note that, while the left branch inference (indefinitness) holds for all partitives surveyed in this paer, the right branch one might not be universally available, as shown by the paculiar developemnt in Araki, in which the partitive marker attached to the verb indicates perfective aspect. See below, sec. 3.4.

In one case, the fact that only a part of a referent is affected gives rise to the implicature that affectedness is partial (i.e. the feature of partiality is profiled): this leads to the use of the partitive in low transitivity contexts. Low transitivity may be understood in various manners, including as implying imperfectivity, as in Finnish, or non-assertivity, as in Basque and various Oceanic languages.

The other implicature, represented on the right branch of Fig. 1, arises from the same notion, but leads to an indefinite interpretation, according to which "a non-specified quantity is necessarily non-uniquely identifiable to the hearer." (Carlier 2007: 27). In this latter case, it is the feature of non-specificity which is profiled and eventually gains relevance. A further step in grammaticalization and semantic change is achieved when such pragmatic implicatures become more prominent than the original notion out of which they originated (see Traugott, Dasher 2002 and Traugott 2003: 635). These two clines of grammaticalization coexist to varying extents in languages with grammaticalized partitives, as we will see in the next sections. It needs to be stressed that affectedness is not a property connected with a certain grammatical relation (e.g. direct object); rather, it is a semantic property: accordingly, even though partitives seem to always originate from partitive constructions that occur in the place of direct objects, they may extend to other syntactic positions, as they in fact do.

## 2.2.    *Steps in the grammaticalization of the French partitive article*

### 2.2.1.  Old French

The development of the French partitive article, nowadays fully grammaticalized as indefinite article, has been exhaustively investigated in Carlier (2007). According to the author, the Old French partitive construction still retains a clear referential meaning, as it presupposes a

contextually specified partition set. Thus in Old French, in an occurrence such as (12):

(12.)   *Il boit del vin*

   ('He drinks of-the wine')

*del vin* presupposes that there is for example a bottle of wine on the table. In such cases the partitive isolates within this partition set a non-specified quantity.

The increasing grammaticalization of the preposition in its change to an indefinite marker implies decategorialization: as prepositions indicate the relation of a phrase to the predicate, steps further in this development are achieved when the *de* phrase extends to non-object position. The beginning of this development is shown in Old French, when the *de* phrase started to appear as subject of the verb 'be' already at the stage at which it was still a partitive nominal constructions, as shown in (13):

(13.)   *Il   trova .i.    ostel    en selve  clere: De   sains moines i     a     de sa contree  Qui por*
   he found there dwelling in forest sparse of    saint  monks there have from his land that for
   *l'   amor de Dieu bien l'    ostelerent.*
   the love  of   God well him lodged
   "He found a dwelling in a sparse forest: there were of holy monks from his land that lodged him for God's sake." (12 century, adapted from Carlier 2007: 14)

2.2.2.  The rise of an existential implicature

In example (13) *de* occurs alone, without merging with the definite article, which is the trademark of the French partitive determiner: as remarked above, this is a partitive construction, and this occurrence shows that the extension to existential subjects happened before the shift of the partitive

12

to indefinite marker. This development opened the way for the rise of an existential implicature, which constitutes the turning point in the spread of the partitive preposition as a marker of indefiniteness. Both in object and subject position, the partitive construction indicates that there is a part of a given referent which is such as to undergo the effects of a state of affairs: so for example (12) is understood as indicating that a part of a give quantity of wine is such as to undergo the effects of being drunk. The shift to indefiniteness is achieved when the existential predication is disconnected from the presupposed set and becomes general. At such a stage, (13) receives the interpretation that some monks (out of an indefinite set) exist which are such as to dwell there.

Such development explains why, as shown in French, Italian (sec. 2.3), Greek (sec. 3.2), and possibly Araki (sec. 3.4), partitive subjects start to be used in existential clauses, and later extend to unaccusative verbs, as shown in Basque (sec. 3.3). This extension is likely to imply an intermediate stage at which partitive subjects extend from existential to presentative clauses, also attested to in Medieval Spanish (sec. 2.3): indeed, unaccusative verbs are often used to the purpose of introducing new referents, which are typically indefinite, into the discourse. Only later are partitive subjects further extended to unergative and finally transitive verbs, a change which appears to be ongoing in Finnish (sec. 3.1). Both in Finnish and in Basque, as we will see, the existential implication is still the main feature of partitive subjects.

### 2.2.3   From Old to Middle French

Coming back to French, during the Middle French period the partitive article developed, with the following semantic properties (from Carlier 2007: 26):

> i. The notion of partition set fades away.
> ii. The notion of a non-specified quantity remains.
> iii. The partitive article acquires the new property of marking indefiniteness.

Carlier further points out that "this new property is not determined by the real world properties of

the referent, but it is discourse-oriented: it indicates to the hearer that the referent is not uniquely identifiable for him."

According to (Carlier 2007: 3), at a certain moment in the history of French the partitive article split away from the partitive construction by a process of divergence. Remarkably, this split was triggered when the existential implicature shifted to indefiniteness, following the process outlined above. It must be added that in Modern French the partitive article does not occur in pseudo-partitive constructions either: French pseudo-partitives feature the preposition *de* without the article, as shown in:

(14.) *une bouteille de ce bon vin*

a bottle of this good wine

'a bottle of this good wine' (partitive construction)

(15.) *une bouteille de vin*

a bottle of wine

'a bottle of wine' (pseudo-partitive construction)

(16.) *J'ai bu du vin.*

I have drunk prtv wine

'I drank some wine' (partitive article, indefinite)

*2.3. Early partitive determiners in other Romance languages*

Decategorialization of the ablative/genitive preposition is not limited to Old French. Other Romance varieties attests to an analogous development. In Old Italian we find occurrences such as:

(17.) *Ela mançà **del** pomo qe li de' un serpente*

she ate     of+the apple that her gave a snake

"She ate of the apple that a snake gave her", *Uguccione da Lodi,* (beginning of 13. century)

(18.) ***Del***    *mal fa*   *quela asai sí ke*   *no*   *g'*   *è mensura*.

of+the evil does she   much so that not there is measure

"She does so much evil that it cannot be measured" *Pietro da Bescapè, 1274*

(19.) *che **del***    *ben non vi*   *sia*

that of+the good neg there is

"that there is not some good" *Ubertino del Bianco d'Arezzo, a. 1269*


Let us compare the above examples with those containing Latin partitive constructions in sec. 2.1. Example (17) contains a referential singular count and is a real partitive construction. Example (18) contains an abstract noun with a quantifier (*asai* 'much'); again, this is a real partitive construction.

In (19), however, *del ben* 'some good', the subject of an existential clause, allows for an indefinite, rather than strictly partitive interpretation. According to Carlier (2007), partitive with an indefinite reading do not occur in Old French, unless they are accompanied by quantifiers. Presslich (2000) has shown that the development of the partitive in Old Italian and Old French followed essentially the same steps. Thus, example (19) may be taken as a first indication of the occurrence of indefinite partitive articles at the end of the Old Romance period after the mid-13th century. Indeed, one can further remark that *del* contains both the partitive preposition *di* (corresponding to French *de*) and the definite article in its internal makeup, contrary what we have seen in to the 'real' partitive nominal construction extended to subject in Old French example (13).

Modern Spanish has no traces of partitive articles of the type found in French and Italian; however, Old Spanish attests to a similar development: this is in line with the well known fact that Old Spanish also had a partitive clitic, which disappeared at a later stage. The fact that the partitive article could occur with subject NPs, as shown in example (20), indicates that the

grammaticalization process had already started. As in the occurrence in (19), in (20) the partitive preposition is accompanied by the definite article. Again, we are dealing with a text written in the second half of the 13th century:


(20.)   *Et   salieron    a él   **de los omnes** buenos*

and they.came to him of the  men   good

"And some good men came to him", Alfonso X el Sabio, *Primera Crónica general*, 1260-1284.


This type of partitive later disappeared from Spanish, as did the partitive clitic; in French, instead, it reached the final stage of grammaticalization and turned into an indefinite determiner, as indicated by its complete split from partitive and pseudo-partitive constructions described above. In Italian, the grammaticalization process continued at a much slower pace than in French: the sudden increase reported in Carlier (2007) from Middle French does not have a parallel in Italian (see Presslich 2000). In Modern Italian, the partitive article is productively used in very much the same way as in French, but the situation is somewhat more complex, as it distribution displays regional variation and speakers judgment also varies as to its use in the written register. I will come back to this issue in sec. 4.2.


## 3.      Partitives cross-linguistically

In this section I analyze partitives in various languages, starting from the best known case of the Finnish partitive case. I will then survey the partitive usage of the genitive in Ancient Greek, the Basque partitive case, and the partitive clitic in Araki, an Oceanic language. These languages do not

exhaust all types of partitive markers attested in the languages of the world, but they offer a fairly varied picture of different stages in grammaticalization, and indicate quite different directions taken by markers after initial stages.

## 3.1. *Finnish*

The use of the partitive case for core arguments in Finnish is widely studied. In the framework of differential marking of direct objects, Finnish has been said to have 'symmetrical' DOM (de Hoop, Malchukov 2008); partitive subjects/objects are sometimes labeled as non-canonical, even though, as we will see considering the examples in this section, "they are in fact quite canonical" (Sands, Campbell 2001: 252).

### 3.1.1. Partitive objects

According to Huumo (2010), "the partitive case marks the object under three conditions: a) in negated sentences, b) in aspectually unbounded sentences (more precisely: atelic, progressive, cessative, and irresultative (semelfactive) sentences), and c) in sentences where the object NP refers to an open, indefinite quantity." This situation is sometimes understood as indicating that it is thought that partitive objects indicate low affectedness; however, things are not so easy, as shown by the variety of possible interpretations arising from example (21).

(21.)  *Sotilaat          tappoivat  vihollisia*

soldier:PL.NOM kill:PST.3PL enemy:PL.PRTV

a. "The soldiers were killing enemies" (imperfective aspect + indefinite object),

b. "The soldiers killed some enemies" (only indefiniteness of the object profiled),

c. "The soldiers were killing the enemies" (only imperfectivity profiled)

The partitive can have implications for verbal aspect, indicating imperfective, or it can have implications regarding the direct object, which can be conceived as indefinite; these implications can be combined or either one can be relevant. So in (a) the verb receives an atelic reading and the direct object is indefiniteness; in (b) only indefiniteness of the direct object is profiled, while verbal aspect is understood as telic, and in (c) only imperfectivity is profiled, while the object is definite. Note that rather than with partial affectedness one has to do with indefiniteness: the event only concerns part of the direct object referent, which undergoes a change of state, and is consequently highly affected.

Some other occurrences only allow profiling of either aspect, as in (22), or definiteness, as in (23):

(22.) *Pitelin        kädessäni         kirjaa        (tunnin).*

Hold:PST.1SG   hand.INE.1SGPX   book:PRTV  (hour:TOT)

'I was holding/ held [a/the] book in my hand (for an hour).'

(23.) *Löysin        voita        (\*minuutin).*

Find:PST.1SG butter:PRTV  (\*minuteTOT)

'I found some butter (\*for a minute).'

In (22), in which verbal aspect is atelic, the partitive is required even with a definite count noun as direct object: as Huumo (2010) remarks, "the aspectual function of the partitive thus "conceals" the quantity of the referent". Similarly, stative verbs such as *rakasta* 'love' only allow partitive objects, as they can only indicate unbound events, and in addition they have a low degree of transitivity (see sec. 3.2.2 on similar usage of the partitive genitive in Greek). On the contrary in (23) the object is indefinite, and the partitive is required in spite of verbal telicity. As a conclusion, the examples show that partitive objects are not necessarily partially affected and situation not

necessarily low in transitivity; in addition, they are not limited to atelic situations (see also Kiparksy 1998: 272).

### 3.1.2. Partitive subjects: between existentiality and indefiniteness

Partitive subjects are also often said to occur only in connection with low transitivity; as we will see, this is only partially true. Indeed, they are frequent with unaccusative verbs, with which, similar to partitive objects, they can either trigger an imperfective reading of the verb, as in (a), or indicate indefiniteness, as in (b):

(24.) *Vieraita          saapui.*

　　　Guest.PL.PRTV arrive:PST.3SG

　　　a. 'Guests kept arriving.'

　　　b. '[Some] guests arrived.'

However, partitive subjects are also possible with unergative verbs and with some transitive verbs. Rather than being connected with transitivity, the main implication in such cases is existential (see Huumo 2003):

(25.) *Lapsia          leikki          puistossa koko   iltapäivän.*

　　　child:PL.PRTV play:PST.3SG    park:INE whole afternoon:ACC

　　　'There were children playing in the park during the whole afternoon.'

(26.) *Useita          ihmisiä          odotti          sateessa  bussia.*

　　　Many:PL.PRTV person:PL.PRTV wait-PST.3SG rain-INE bus-PAR

　　　'There were many people waiting for the bus in the rain.'

In (25) it is said that some indefinite and unspecified children have been playing during a specific time span in a specific space: crucially, these may have not been the same children, but the action has been continued in the relevant time/space without interruption. Both in (25) and in (26) the main implication appears to be existential.

Recently, an ongoing change has been reported, whereby partitive subjects are being extended to change-of state verbs, with no existential implication, and tend to convey simple indefiniteness (Vilkuna 1989: 260): apparently, the Finnish partitive is undergoing a further step in grammaticalization, similar to the Romance partitive when it turned into an article. Such extension is having the effect that partitive subjects are extending to all types of verb, in very much the same way as nominative subjects. Still, the fact that partitive subjects are 'real' subjects has been questioned (see Sand, Campbell 2001: 266-269 for discussion and references). Notably, partitive subjects, contrary to nominative, do not trigger verb agreement, but are always accompanied by third person singular verbs. However, syntactic test seem to indicate subjecthood also in the case of partitive, as shown in example (27), which I quote from Sands and Campbell (2001: 167):

(27.)  *Tuli          miehiä      ja  naisia        ja  tekivät*

come:3SG.PAST man:PL.PRTV and woman:PL.PRTV and make:PAST.3PL

*tupasiaan                  kaikille  rinteille*

cabin.PL.PRTV.3PL.POSS  all.PL.ALL slope.PL.ALL

"There came men and women and they made their cabins on all the hillsides."

Example (27) contains two coordinated sentences; the first one features a partitive subject (*miehiä ja naisia* 'men and women') and a verb in the third person singular (*tuli* '(there) came'); the second has no overt subject: the elliptical subject refers to the partitive NP of the preceding sentence, and the verb is in the third person plural. This indicates that the partitive NP in the first sentence does

indeed have subject properties.

The fact that agreement with the verb has not (yet?) developed may be taken as a consequence of the behavior-before-coding principle (Haspelmath 2010): in very much the same way as in Romance, the partitive started out marking objects, then extended to subject starting from existential clauses and unaccusative verbs, and is presently gaining further ground in its extension to all types of verb and its function of indicating indefiniteness. Unlike the Romance partitive, the Finnish partitive has acquired behavioral properties of subjects, such as null-anaphora control, but not coding properties, among which verb agreement.

### 3.1.3. The marker

The partitive marker is a case ending; it shares the morphological distribution of case endings (i.e. it cannot co-occur with other case endings), even though it is not connected with a grammatical function. Indeed, beside direct objects and subjects, it can mark some adverbials and complements of some adpositions, alternating with other cases (see Lestrade 2009 and Huumo ms. on the usage and meaning of the adpositional partitive). As shown in sec. 1.1., the partitive case does not occur in partitive constructions, but it occurs in pseudo-partitives. The role of the partitive in indicating indefiniteness is quite clear, and it also feeds on the fact that Finnish has no determiners. That the Finnish partitive should better be regarded as a determiner has been argued by Asbury (2006a).

### 3.2. *Ancient Greek: partitive use of the genitive*

As in many other ancient and modern Indo-European languages, in Ancient Greek the genitive was often used as a partitive. The extent to which this peculiar use of the genitive is found in Ancient Greek is higher than in other languages, as it could also extend to subject and trigger verb agreement. In spite of this, which points to a high degree of grammaticalization, occurrences remain

quite infrequent. In addition, partitive objects and subjects display differences in the interplay of the partitive genitive and the definite article.


3.2.1.  Partitive or partitive construction?

In Ancient Greek, similar to other Indo-European languages, the genitive case can be used as a partitive. In some cases, the bare genitive seems to function as a partitive construction. This is the case especially in Homeric Greek, as shown in (28), in which no definite article existed, while in Classical Greek the partitive construction occurs with the definite article, as in (29).


(28.)  *allá  sphi      dósan       lotoîo      pásasthai*

but   3PL.DAT give:AOR.3PL lotus:GEN eat:AOR.INF

'but [the Lotus-eaters] gave them (some) lotus to eat.' (*Od*. 9. 93)

(29.)  *Kuaxárēs       kaì  hoi      pareóntes                daitumónes  **tôn***

Cyaxares:NOM and ART.NOM.PL be.present:PTCP.PRS.NOM.PL guest:NOM.PL ART.GEN.PL

***kreôn        toútōn       epásanto***

flesh:GEN.PL DEM.GEN.PL eat:AOR.MID.3PL

"Cyaxares and the guests who were with him ate of that flesh" Hdt. 1.73.6


Variation between the partitive construction, which indicates that only a part of the direct object referent is affected, and the accusative can be exemplified by the next two examples:


(30.)  *pleúsantes            es Leukáda   tền      Korinthíōn       apoikían   tês*

sail:PTCP.PRS.NOM.PL to  Leucas:ACC ART.ACC Corinthian:GEN.PL colony:ACC ART.GEN

*gês        étemon*

land:GEN ravage:AOR.3PL

'sailing to Leucas, the colony of the Corinthians, they ravaged *the country*' (Thuc. 1.30.2)

(31.) *hoi        Ēleîoi ...        Lereatōn        tḕn        gên        étemon*

ART.NOM.PL Elean:NOM.PL Lepreate:GEN.PL ART.ACC land:ACC ravage:AOR.3PL

'the Eleans ravaged *the land of the Lepreates*' (Thuc. 5.31.3)

In other occurrences, the genitive, in very much the same way as the Finnish partitive, indicates indefiniteness of the direct object referent. Following Delbrück (1911: 585), Napoli (2010) argues that this partitive reading is only possible when the genitive NP does not co-occur with the definite article; when the definite article occurs, as in (32) and (33), the genitive must be understood as a partitive construction, as in (29).

(32.) *ikhthúōn        dè        oú        sphi        éxesti        pásasthai*

fish:GEN.PL PTC NEG 3PL.DAT may:PRS.3SG. eat:AOR.INF

'they may not eat fish.' (Hdt., 2.37. 18–19)

(33.) *he        dè        khelṓnē hótan **ékheōs**        phágēi        epesthíei        tḕn        oríganon*

ART.NOM PTC turtle    when snake:GEN eat:SUBJ.PRS.3SG eat:PRS.3SG ART.ACC oreganon:ACC

"In case they eat snake, turtles take oregano (as an antidote)", Arist., *HA* 612a24[4]

Napoli (2010) mistakenly refers to occurrences such as (32) and (33) as pseudo-partitive: in fact, pseudo-partitive as defined by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001, 2006) is an adnominal construction and it is non-referential, while here the genitive rather has the indefinite implication (it indicates an

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[4] Napoli (2010) only considers verbs of consumption: while various occurences point toward a similar usage of the partitive genitive with other verbs, a thorough corpus study of this matter is still in need.

indefinite quantity of an entity).[5]


### 3.2.2. Partitive marking of core constituents

In the preceding section, I have shown how the partitive genitive can indicate indefiniteness of direct objects, similar to the Finnish partitive. It must be added that the extent to which this is the case is much more limited in Greek. This limitation partly follows from the fact that, as we have seen above, the genitive also enters partitive constructions; in addition, genitive direct objects are obligatory with numerous verbs. Such constituents are real direct objects, as shown by possible passivization (see Conti 1998, Luraghi 2010); typically, and as in the case of Finnish stative verbs described above, they occur with low transitivity verbs, which do not indicate a change of state, such as verbs of perception, mental activity, or verbs that mean 'touch' or 'reach'. Some verbs allow for accusative/genitive variation; in some cases, such variation triggers different meanings of the verb, but in most cases factors that affect it are harder to indicate. In any case, when different meanings are available in such contexts, the genitive typically indicates a lesser degree of affectedness. An example is the verb *orégein* 'reach (out)' in Homeric Greek, which indicates that the referent of the direct object is actually reached only with the accusative, whole the genitive indicates failure to accomplish the action (see Luraghi 2011 for details).

Both verbs that only take the genitive and those that allow for alternation with the accusative are in sharp contrast with those with which the genitive has a partitive interpretation, as seen in sec. 3.2.1. Indeed, when the genitive functions as a partitive or as a partitive construction it does not indicate a low transitivity or a low degree of affectedness; rather, it indicates that only a part of a certain referent is affected by the event. The degree of affectedness can be high, as it can imply change of state, as with verbs of consumption; in the case of alternation, as shown in (30) and (31),

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[5] Note that Napoli argues that the function of the partitive genitive (and of the Finnish partitive case) is rather to indicate unboundedness, and not indefiniteness.

there is no difference triggered by degrees of affectedness: rather, the difference lies in the fact that

the partitive genitive signals that only a part of the referent is affected, to the same degree as

signaled by the accusative.

Besides partitive objects, partitive subjects also occur, most often in existential clauses (see

Conti 2010). Examples are:


(34.) *eisì    gàr **autôn**    kaì parà basiléi    tôn        Perséōn*

be:PRES.3PL PTC DEM.GEN.PL and by    king:DAT ART.GEN.PL.M Persian:GEN.PL.M

"There are (some) *of these* (*sc.* ants) even by the king of the Persians" (Hdt. 3.102.2);

(35.) *eisì    dè    kaì tôn        perì   phúsin    hoi        toiaútēn    mèn ouk*

be:3SG PTC and ART.GEN.PL about nature:ACC ART.NOM.PL such:ACC PTC NEG

*epragmateúthēsan akribologían    perì    tâs        phlébas*

labor:AOR.3PL        precision:ACC about ART.ACC.PL vein:ACC.PL

 'There are also *scientist* who have not investigated the veins with so much accuracy.' (Arist.

*HA* 513a.9)

 (36.) *en hósoisi        toû        liparoû enên*

in INDEF.DAT.PL ART.GEN fat.GEN    be:IMPF.3SG

'There was *fat* even in them (*sc.* the bones)'14 (Hp. *Carn*. 4.6)


Note that in these occurrences the partitive genitive has an indefinite reading, similar to examples

(28) and (29) with a partitive object. However, and contrary to the genitive in (29), the partitive

genitive as indefinite subject seems to be associated with the definite article. It is also remarkable

that partitive subjects usually occur with the verb 'be', in some cases with a clear existential

implication, as in (34) and (35).

### 3.2.3. The marker

There is no special partitive marker: the genitive case can be contextually understood as functioning as a partitive. Partitive subjects trigger verbal agreement; besides partitive objects and subjects there are partitive adverbials and, limited to Homeric Greek, partitive complements of adpositions (see Luraghi 2003, Conti, Luraghi forthc.). Besides functioning as a partitive case, the genitive also occurs in partitive and pseudo-partitive constructions. Definite determiners exist in post-Homeric Greek; their relation with indefinite objects and subjects seems to be different: indefinite partitive objects do not take the definite article, while partitive subjects, which are all indefinite, co-occur with it.

### *3.3.    Basque: partitive and definite determiner*

### 3.3.1.  Restrictions on the occurrence of the partitive

The Basque partitive marker can only be attached to transitive objects or intransitive subjects in some specific syntactic environments: with negation, partial interrogatives, *before* clauses, *without* clauses, some quantifiers, superlatives, and,  to a limited extent, in presentative sentences (see Etxeberria forthc.). It is commonly taken to be better described as a determiner rather than a case, even though it is used only in variation with the absolute case. According to Etxeberria (forthc.), "[t]he partitive marker can be argued to be the negative form of the existential interpretation (in absolutive case) of the Basque definite article (D) [-a(k)]". Etxeberria instantiates his claim with the following examples:

(37.)   *Amaiak    **goxokiak** jan    ditu.*            [√DEFINITE / √EXISTENTIAL]

Amaia:ERG candy:DEF.PL EAT  AUX

"Amaia has eaten (the) candies"

(38.) *Amaiak    ez ditu **goxokiak**   jan*          [√DEFINITE / *EXISTENTIAL]

      Amaia:ERG NEG AUX candy:DEF.PL eat

      "Amaia has not eaten the candies"

(39.) *Amaiak     ez du **goxokirik**   jan*          [*DEFINITE / √EXISTENTIAL]

      Amaia:ERG NEG AUX candy:PRTV  eat

      "Amaia has not eaten any candy."

Note that, even though the partitive is an alternative to the definite determiner here, it does not really seem to indicate indefiniteness: rather, it is interpreted existentially. So the partitive in (39) has the implication that there exist no candy regarding which one can predicate that Amaia ate it. Indeed, the Basque partitive with negation does not correspond to the French partitive article (i.e. to a fully grammaticalized determiner), but rather to French (pseudo)-partitive usage of *de* without determiner, which, interestingly, appears to be number indifferent, very much like the Basque partitive:

(40.) *Amaia n'a pas mangé de bonbons.*

This existential meaning explains the occurrence of the partitive with unique referents in emphatic negations, as in:

(41.) *ETArik      ez  balego*                      (Joxe Azurmendi, *Euskal Herria krisian*, 1999)

      ETA:PRTV  NEG  if.be:3SG.IRR

      'If there were not ETA' (emphatic)

      "If there were neither ETA nor any other armed organization [like ETA]" (metaphoric; from Aristimuño forthc.)

Among other uses of the partitive not connected with polarity, standard of comparison may be understood as a remnant of the old ablative meaning:

(42.) *Jostailurik politena nik ekarri dut gaur.*

      toy:PRTV    nicest   I:ERG bring AUX today

      "I brought the nicest toy today."

Occurrence in existential sentences is, according to Etxeberria (forthc.), limited to nouns modified by adjectives; otherwise the partitive can only occur in exclamations:

(43.) *gizon onik         bada Euskal Herrian*

      man good:PL.PRTV yes.is  Basque contry:LOC

      'There are good men in the Basque Country'

Again the implication seems to be existential, rather than indefinite.

3.3.2.  Diachrony of the Basque partitive

In Old Basque, the use of the partitive was apparently less constrained than today, as remarked in Aristimuño (forthc.): "... certain current restrictions did not exist then: for example, in Lazarraga's manuscript (c. 1567) we find partitives also in "normal" affirmative sentences ..., mostly in a strict sense of partiality (but only with subjunctive or completive verb forms, or with cardinal numerals)." Aristimuño quotes the following examples:

(44.) *Artalastoa      agin egizu      ni-k    ahal dagidan        gauza.rik*

corn.silk:DET  order  AUX.IMP.2SG  1SG.ERG  can   do:1SG.3SG.SBJV thing.PRTV

"Order a corn silk so I can do something [sexually].";

(45.)  *Dama-rik  dakus-en-ean* (corrected from < *dama bat dakusenean*)

lady:PRTV (s)he.sees:COMP.LOC

"When (s)he sees a lady..."


Thus in Old Basque the partitive was limited to non-asserted contexts, including subordinate clauses; later, connection with non-assertivity caused its distribution to became more limited.


### 3.3.3.   The marker

Marking of case and definiteness are combined in Basque; the partitive shares the distribution of the (definite) absolutive, and is considered to be "number neutral". Diachronically, it is though to derive from an ablative case, a meaning which it still retains in lexicalized adverbs. This explains its distribution, which is the same as other case morphemes, and the fact that it cannot co-occur with them, even though its nature as a determiner is indicated by the fact that it is in complementary distribution with the definite determiner, as noted above. Basque is an ergative language: both the definite determiner and the partitive can occur with the subject of intransitive verbs and the patient/object of transitive verbs, which do not bear other case markers. So in a sense the distribution of the partitive case affix is not exactly the same as the distribution of other cases.


### 3.4.    *A view from the Southern emisphere: Araki*


Araki belongs to the Oceanic group of Austronesian languages, more precisely, to North and Central Vanuatu (François 2002: 4). It is a highly endangered language, with just a handful of speakers. The description here is based on François (2002); similar partitive particles exist in other

Vanuatu languages, such as Paamese (Crowley 1982), Mwotlap (François 2001), Abma (Schneider 2008), and Unua (Pearce 2010).

3.4.1. Usage of the partitive particle

Araki has a particle *re*, most often preceding a direct object noun phrase, which functions as partitive or indefinite article. It is connected to modality, and is incompatible with realis affirmative, and only found in irrealis or negative or counterfactual clauses, as shown in:

(46.)   *Nam dogo na inu   re    hae.*

      1S:R feel 1S:I drink PRTV kava

      "I feel like drinking some kava."

(47.)   *No-ku      ta, o    vodo  re   þaka-ku, re vina-ku.*

      POSS-1S dad 2S:I make PRTV bow-1S, PRTV arrow-1S

      "Dad, could you make me a bow, make me some arrows?" (from François 2002: 53-54).

The partitive particle is not limited to direct objects: even though this seems to be its most frequent usage, it can occur with other constituents as well, including subjects (apparently only with the verb 'be) and obliques:

(48.)   *... co de  re    huira  co  roho ro  raholo lo   cada di ...*

      1IN:I say PRTV octopus 3S:I stay PRG straight LOC place ANA

      "(if you go to the sea) suppose that some octopus is right in that place…"

(49.)   *Nam dogo na  sile-ko n-re          presin*.

      1S:R feel 1S:I give-2S OBL- PRTV present

      "I feel like giving you a present." (from François 2002: 56).

In addition, some time adverbs also occurs, such as *n-re dan* 'sometimes, from time to time' (*lit.* 'on some days', François 2002: 56).

The fact that the partitive cannot occur with realis modality (similar to Basque) has the effect that the particle cannot extend to the whole range of uses of an indefinite article, as shown in the examples below:

(50.)  *Þaivuho,  na ul   re leta co sivo    sa-n   puá.*

tomorrow 1S:I write PRTV letter 3S:I go.down to-CST Mum

"Tomorrow, I shall write a letter to my mother."

(51.)  *Nanovi,   nam uli-a   leta   mo sivo    sa-n puá.*

yesterday 1S:R write-3S letter 3R  go.down to-CST Mum

"Yesterday, I wrote a letter to my mother." (from François 2002: 122).

This does not mean that the particle cannot appear with past realis. However, in such cases it occurs before the verb, rather than before the direct object, and its semantic scope is also shifted to the verb, as shown in:

(52.)  *Nam  re    inum-i-a hae.*

1S:R PRTV drink-TR-3S kava

"I have drunk the/some kava."

The effect is that the particle becomes an aspectual marker: rather then imperfectivity as in Finnish, however, the Arki partitive indicates perfectivity. François explains this as follows:

if the action is already performed / Realis, then the object is necessarily specific (e.g. 'I have drunk some kava'), and cannot be introduced by **re**; yet it is still possible to extract the action itself, and this is how **re** has grammaticised on the left of the verb, where aspectual particles are: **Nam re inum-i-a hae**. The latter sentence can be glossed 'There is a certain amount of my drinking, involving a specific quantity of kava'.

3.4.2.  The marker

The Araki partitive is a clitic which, as we have seen above, takes as its phonological host the phrase on which it also has scope. This is most often a noun but it can also be the verb. In other Oceanic languages of Vanuatu, similar clitics can be hosted by NPs or by verbs, not necessarily depending on their scope. In Abma, for example, the clitic *te* is always hosted by the verb phonologically, even in the case that its scope is the direct object (Schneider 2010). Araki also has a proclitic definite article *va* which does not co-occur with the partitive. In descriptions of Araki, the partitive is indeed considered a determiner, but its relation with case marking is unclear (the Oceanic languages are mostly incorporating). Nothing is known regarding its origins, but note that there are certain prepositions, such as the locative, which function in a similar way as to their position with respect to NPs. Decategorialization is present also in this language, as the partitive particle also extended to VPs.

**4.      Partitive subjects/objects in French and Italian: distribution and odd beliefs**

The partitive article of the Romance languages is in fact an indefinite article, which appears in complementary distribution with the indefinite article deriving from Latin *unum*, that is with mass nouns and plural count nouns, and has the same distribution of other articles, as it can occur with any type of NP, including object, subject, and complement of adpositions. Below are some examples.

(53.) *E' venuto l'amico di Giovanni / E' venuto un amico di Giovanni*

is come the friend of John / is come a friend of John

"John's friend / a friend of John's came"

(54.) *Sono venuti gli amici di Giovanni / Sono venuti **degli amici di Giovanni***

are come the friends of John / are come PART friends of John

"John's friends / some friends of John's came"

(55.) *J'ai acheté le livre / J'ai acheté les livres*

I have bought the book / I have bought the books

"I bought the book / I bought the books"

(56.) *J'ai acheté un livre / J'ai acheté **des livres***

I have bought a book / I have bought PART books

"I bought a book / I bought some books"

(57.) *J'ai acheté le pain / J'ai acheté **du pain***

I have bought the bread / I have bought PART bread

"I bought the bread / I bought some bread"


In spite of its distribution, and of the fact that the Romance languages are far from being undocumented or hardly accessible, some odd believes regarding the partitive article exist, which I am going to discuss in the next section.


*4.1.   Some odd believes regarding the Romance partitive*


According to Körner (1981, 1987), Romance languages display a complementary distribution of DOM, which occurs in Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian, and partitive objects, as in French, with Italian taking an unclear position between the two groups. In an often quoted passage, Körner

(1981: 154) stated that neither objects marked by DOM, nor partitive objects can be promoted to subjects and keep their type of overt marker. Now, while it is true that one cannot say:


(58.)   *Maria besó  a     Juan / *A    Juan fue besado por Maria*

       Mary kissed OBJ John  / * OBJ John was kissed by    Mary


Körner ideas regarding the French partitive articles are at odds with the actual practice. In (59):


(59.)   ***Du      pain** est mangé par moi* (ungrammatical according to Körner 1981: 154, 1987)

       PRTV bread is  eaten   by   me

       "Some bread is eaten by me"


there is indeed nothing ungrammatical. Surprisingly, Körner seems to ignore that French *du* is an article, rather than a preposition (or the marker of a case relation) as Spanish *a*, and that (59) *is* grammatical, although perhaps infrequent for pragmatic, rather than grammatical reasons. Compare the following examples:


(60.)   ***Du      pain** mangé par une personne donnée ne peut pas être consommé par **des autres***

       PRTV bread eaten by   a    person    given   not can be    consumed      by PRTV other

       "Bread eaten by a given person cannot be eaten by others"

       http://www.worldlingo.com/ma/enwiki/fr/Private_good

(61.)   ***Des   personnes** ont été   vues embarquer à bord du    jet de ministère russe des Situations*

       PRTV people  have been seen embark  on board of+the jet of ministry Russian of+the affairs

       *d'urgence*

       of urgency

"Some people have been seen embarking on the airplane of the Russian ministry for Urgent

Affairs" http://www.ocvidh.org/article.php?sid=1618

This misunderstanding looks quite striking, and it is coupled by questionable observations

regarding the usage of partitive articles in Italian. Stark (2007) for example is at pains to provide

support for the in-between position of Italian among Romance languages, proposed by Körner (cf.

above). She argues that, similar to Old French at the earliest stage in grammaticalization, partitive

articles in Italian do not occur with abstract nouns, and that the sentence in (62) is ungrammatical:

(62.)   *Dimostrò      **(della) pazienza** in questa situazione.*

       he.exhibited PART patience  in this      situation

       "He exhibited patience in this situation"

       (Ungrammatical with partitive article according to Stark 2007: 50)

Unfortunately, this is not the case. The situation in Italian is more complex then in French, on

account of the fact that not all regional varieties feature the partitive article: in particular, Southern

regional varieties seem not to have it. However, for most speakers, (62) is perfectly grammatical,

and similar examples are easily found:

(63.)   *Ha avuto **della pazienza** Domenico Marciano nella ricerca e ha avuto molta perizia nella*

       has had PRTV patience Domenico Marciano in+the research and has jad much care in+the

       *ricostruzione   di 500 anni di relazioni*

       reconstruction of 500 years of relations

       "Domenico Marciano has been patient in research and careful in the reconstruction of a 500

       years' relation" (*Cinquecento anni di storia: le relazioni tra l'Italia e le Filippine*, by D.

Marcianò, from P. Crupi's *Introduction*)

(64.)  *[il libro è] molto pesante e dispersivo ...: ci vuole della costanza per riuscire a seguire il*

the book is very heavy and unstructured one needs prtv patience to be.able to follow the

*filo    del discorso senza distrarsi*

thread of+the discourse without distracting(refl)

"[The book is] very heavy and hard to read, you need some perseverance to follow its thread

without getting distracted."

(http://www.ibs.it/ser/serrec.asp?em=13273&rec=381)


The  most important difference between French and Italian is that the Italian partitive article

is never obligatory, and it is felt by some speakers as a feature of the spoken language;

consequently, its usage in the written register is less frequent than in the spoken one. For this

reason, and for its geographical somewhat limited distribution, the partitive article is most often

described in an inaccurate way. Even in the reference grammar by Renzi one finds some

descriptions that do not match reality. Thus, according to Renzi (1991: 378), the partitive article still

has a limited usage with primary prepositions, as it cannot occur with *da* 'from', *in* 'in' and *di* 'of'.

Now, while it is true that one does not normally use ??*di del* or *di dei* (but note that even in French

one does not find *\*de du*), both *in* and *da* are commonly used with the partitive article. The latter

preposition occurs on this usage already in Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi*:


(65.)  *Il viandante che  fosse    incontrato **da de'**  contadini, fuor  della  strada maestra*

the passerby who would.be encountered by PRTV peasants outside of+the road   main

"The passerby who should be encountered by some peasants outside the main road"

(Manzoni, *I promessi sposi*)

36

*4.2.     How do odd believes arise? A corpus study of Italian*

In order to find out what the actual distribution of the partitive article in Italian looks like, I carried out a short corpus study based on the *Corpus e Lessico di Frequenza dell'Italiano Scritto* (CoLFIS) partly available at: http://www.ge.ilc.cnr.it/strumenti.php. In a corpus comprising 3,798,275 tokens, I found 2,604 occurrences of the partitive article. Of these, I sampled the first 949, and found the distribution shown in Tab. 1:

TABLE 1: DISTRIBITION OF PARTITIVE ARTICLES IN STANDARD ITALIAN

| SYNTACTIC FUNCTION | | | NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES |
|---|---|---|---|
| **DIRECT OBJECT** | | | **562** |
| **SUBJECT** | TYPES OF VERB | | **174** |
| | existential predicates | 58 | |
| | passive | 16 | |
| | impersonal passive | 13 | |
| | transitive | 7 | |
| | unergative | 4 | |
| **PREDICATE NOUN** | REFERRING TO | | **142** |
| | subject | 141 | |
| | object | 1 | |
| **COMPLEMENT OF PREPOSITION** | PREPOSITION | | **71** |
| | con | 42 | |
| | a | 19 | |
| | per | 4 | |
| | su | 3 | |
| | in | 2 | |

In Italian, the partitive determiner functions pretty much as in French, as fully grammaticalized determiner. In particular, one can see that partitive objects are not partially affected:

(66.)     *In uno studio, persone affette  da diabete hanno bevuto del    vino bianco (circa 600 ml, tre*

in a      study    people  affected by diabetes have drunk PRTV wine white  about 60 ml three

*bicchieri medi)*

glass      medium

"In a test, people ill with diabetes drunk some white wine (about 600 ml., three medium

sized glasses). http://www.ultraeasy.eu/it/dangerous_to_be_drunk.php


Partitive objects/subjects are not incompatible with telicity:


(67.)   *Sono tornata alla     base affamata e ho       divorato dei    sandwich con una sorprendente*

I.am returned to+the base hungry and I.have devoured PRTV sandwich with a surprising

*voracità*

voracity

"I came back hungry to the base camp and ate up some sandwiches with surprising voracity"

(R. Lazzarini *Emozionario Australe* )


Partitive objects are not incremental themes:


(68.)   *\*Ieri      sera     ho     letto del     libro*

yesterday evening I.have read PRTV book

"\*Las night I read part of the book"


In addition, as already remarked above, partitive articles occur with all primary prepositions except

for *di*, thus showing that decategorialization is fully achieved.

How do odd believes arise then? The answer is that, being indefinite, partitive articles share

the distribution of indefinite articles; partitive subjects are frequently used to introduce new

referents into the text and consequently they often co-occur with low transitivity predicates, even though this is not necessarily the case, either in Italian or in French.

Different frequency of subjects vs. objects and unaccusative vs. unergative or transitive subjects is due to discourse factors: prototypical subjects of transitive verbs (agents) tend to be definite, while prototypical objects tend to be indefinite. Subjects of existential clauses are typically indefinite, as well as subjects that are newly introduced into discourse by other types of verb, typically unaccusative rather than highly transitive predicates. Because subjects of unaccusative verbs are similar to objects in various respects, apparently scholars tend to forget that partitive articles are not a special feature of direct objects, but are typical of indefinite subjects as well.

## 4.4. *The marker*

As compared to other items described in this paper, the Romance partitive displays a number of morphological peculiarities. In the first place, it originated from a preposition, rather than a bound morpheme, as the Finnish and Basque partitive cases. As a consequence, it has a bigger autonomy, which makes decategorialization more perspicuous: in Finnish for example the partitive case marker does not display a different distribution from other case morphemes, while the Romance partitive article does indeed have a distribution which keeps it distinct from other primary prepositions.

In addition, partitive *de* in French and *di* in Italian merge with the definite article: this keeps them distinct from the use of the same morphemes not only in partitive but also in pseudo-partitive construction. As Finnish has no definite article, and in Basque definiteness is indicated by case allomorphs, in these languages there is no clear distinction between the partitive indicating indefiniteness, and in pseudo-partitive constructions. Interaction between the partitive genitive and the definite article is found in Classical Greek. In this language, the partitive genitive is associated with the definite article with partitive subjects, as in the Romance languages; contrary to the latter,

though, the distribution of indefinite partitive genitive and definite article seems to work the other way around in the case of partitive objects. As this matter has been studied only to a certain extent, it would deserve to be pursued further (for example, by expanding the sample of partitive objects to other verbs, besides verbs of consumption).

**5. Do partitive cases have anything to do with differential marking of core constituents?**

As I remarked in section 1.1, partitive cases, with special regard to Finnish, have been described instantiating as a special type of DOM. De Hoop and Malchukov (2008) distinguish between asymmetrical DOM, whereby certain objects are unmarked while other are marked, as in Spanish, and symmetrical DOM, whereby all objects are marked, but take different cases. They use Finnish and the possible variation between the accusative and the partitive (see sec. 3.1.1 above) as an example of symmetrical DOM. Interestingly, in their paper de Hoop and Malchukv also ignore that the partitive does not only alternate with the accusative, but also with the nominative. In other words, as repeatedly highlighted here, partitives are not limited to direct object position, and this peculiarity sets it apart from DOM strategies, which are limited to the marking of direct objects, as already remarked in sec. 4 on the example of Spanish and French. (An obvious objection could be that Finnish partitive subjects are less 'canonical' than partitive objects; see sec. 3.1.2 for arguments in favor of canonicity of partitive subjects.)

In very much the same way as Körner in his remarks on the French partitive article, de Hoop and Malchukov seem to be unaware of the fact that Spanish DOM involves a preposition, i.e. the marker of a grammatical relation, while Finnish, similar to French, involves an item which has the morphological makeup of a case (for French, a preposition), but a different distribution, as it is not associated with a given grammatical relation they bear.

A further problem with the idea that the partitive should be defined as symmetrical DOM becomes evident when we set the Finnish partitive case in cross-linguistic comparison. Indeed, once one has recognized the similarity between the Finnish partitive case and the French partitive determiner, that is, to indicate indefiniteness, one can also realize that the idea that there are morphological correspondences between asymmetrical and symmetrical DOM is a fallacy. Indeed, because Finnish is an inflectional language and the partitive is a case ending, it is in complementary distribution with other case endings, so when an NP is not marked with the partitive it is necessarily marked with another case. However, this is not true in French, in which the partitive derives from a preposition, and NPs that are not marked for partitive do not take another morphologically similar marker: rather, they come with another (definite or indefinite) article.

## 6.     Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the use of partitive cases and determiners in various languages. I have argued that such morphemes are better regarded as occupying different places on a grammaticalization scale which leads them to become markers of indefiniteness. This diachronic development originates from an implicature by which a partitive construction is understood as referring to an indefinite quantity, rather than to an indefinite part of a given set.
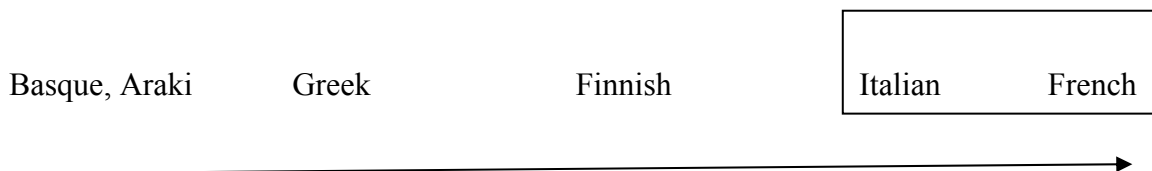
A further step in grammaticalization arises when the notion of indefinite quantity acquires an existential force. The original meaning of partitives, which relates them to partially accomplished processes, makes them especially fit for negated statements, non-asserted clauses, low transitivity, imperfective aspect: indeed, in some languages the partitive specializes for such usages and does not go further, as in Basque and Araki. If the partitive is introduced also in assertions, as in Greek, Finnish, and in the Romance languages, it can move a step further in

grammaticalization and acquire an indefinite reading, independent of the existential implication. The use of partitive subjects can offer a diagnostic for this further change: when partitive subjects spread to all types of verb and indefiniteness is the major feature which gets profiled, grammaticalization is fully accomplished.

The languages discussed in the preceding sections represent different stages in the grammaticalization process, as shown in Fig. 3.

FIG. 2: DEGREES OF GRAMMATICALIZATION

| Basque, Araki | Greek | Finnish | Italian | French |

In Basque and Araki, partitives do not occur in assertions, while in Classical Greek, partitive objects and subjects have no such restriction, but subjects only occur with the verb 'be'. In Finnish, an ongoing change is reported by which partitive subjects are increasingly understood as indefinite, rather than bring about an existential interpretation. In all these languages, partitives also occur in partitive constructions or at least in pseudo-partitive ones (the latter is the case in Finnish).

In Italian and in French, partitive articles have undergone the complete grammaticalization process and are indefinite determiners. They do not appear in partitive or pseudo-partitive constructions, and, even though they originated from the merger of a primary preposition with the definite article, they can no longer be considered as containing prepositions. Note that their original morphological makeup may explain why Romance partitives proved more prone to undergo the whole grammaticalization process than other categories studied here: only in the Romance languages does the partitive marker interact with the definite article in this way.

The peculiar grammaticalization cline displayed by the partitive (from case marker to

determiner) is a distinctive trademark of the items surveyed here, and sets them apart from DOM phenomena, as does the tendency of partitives to spread to subjects of existential clauses at an earlier stage in their development. A cross-linguistic survey of partitives sheds light on their real nature, and highlights the decategorialization process, by which they approach the class of determiners, rather than case markers.

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