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A Discourse Perspective on the Grammaticization of the Partitive Case in Finnish

1. Introduction[1]

Finnish is often mentioned as an example of a language with a rich case marking system. Some of the cases have more semantic content, whereas others are more constrained by grammatical factors in their use (for a discussion of the distinction between grammatical and oblique cases in Finnish, see Helasvuo forthcoming a).[2] In this paper, I will focus on the partitive, which is an interesting borderline case between the grammatical and oblique cases. More specifically, I will look at the historical development of the partitive from a local case marker into a grammatical case in the light of its use in present-day conversational discourse.

Table 1 gives an overview of the case system with examples of the most productive cases. The table presents only singular forms; most of these cases also inflect in the plural (the accusative is an exception since there is no accusative form in the plural).

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[1] The very first version of this paper was presented in the SKY workshop on Discourse, grammar, and grammaticalization in Mekrijärvi, Finland, in September 1994. My warmest thanks to the participants of the workshop for stimulating comments and discussions. In addition, I would like to thank Pentti Leino, Susanna Shore and Sandra Thompson for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I also learnt a lot from the comments by the anonymous referees of the SKY yearbook, for which I am grateful.

[2] By oblique cases I mean cases other than grammatical (see e.g. Nichols 1983). This term includes the local cases as well as a few others which are not so frequent. Oblique cases other than the local ones will not be discussed in this paper.

Case form	Case ending	Singular ex.	translation
I Nominative	-∅	*talo*	a/the house
Accusative	-*n*	*talon*	a/the house
(Acc of pers. pron.	-*t*	*minut*	me)
Partitive	-*(t)A*	*taloa*	(of) a/the house
II Genitive	-*n*	*talon*	of a/the house
Essive	-*nA*	*talona*	as/for a/the house
Translative	-*ksI*	*taloksi*	into (a/the) house
Inessive	-*ssA*	*talossa*	in(side) the house
Elative	-*stA*	*talosta*	from in(side) the house
Illative	-*Vn, -hVn, -seen*	*taloon*	into (a/the) house
Adessive	-*llA*	*talolla*	by/on/near a/the house
Ablative	-*ltA*	*talolta*	from the house
Allative	-*lle*	*talolle*	to the house

Table 1. The Finnish case system.

Thus, Finnish has 8 local cases (given under II in table 1), and 3-4 cases that have been grammaticized to a greater extent (I; the genitive is somewhat problematic in this respect but will not be discussed here; for discussion, see Laitinen 1992, Laitinen - Vilkuna 1993). The nominative has no ending either in the singular or in the plural. In the nominative plural, however, there is a plural marker -*t* to code number.[3] There is a special accusative marking for personal pronouns and the personal interrogative pronoun *kuka / ken* 'who' (*kene-t* 'whom') both in the plural and in the singular, but other pronouns and nouns do not inflect in the plural accusative.

Originally, the partitive was used in locative expressions to indicate movement away from something. This locative meaning has been lost to a great extent; it can only be found in some adverbs (e.g. *koto-a* 'home-PTV; from home', see ex. 1). Instead, the partitive codes grammatical relations in the core of the clause. In other words, a case that used to mark NPs with adverbial function is now being used mainly to code NPs in the

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[3] The same plural marker is used in 3rd person plural verb forms.

object role (ex. 2a), in the predicate nominal role (ex. 2b), as "subjects" of existential clauses (ex. 2c; see Helasvuo 1996), or even as subjects of intransitive clauses (ex. 2d). (Abbreviations used in the glosses are explained in the appendix. The partitive NPs under discussion are given in bold.)

(1) Lähdi-n **koto-a.**
     went-1SG home-PTV
     'I went away from home.'

(2a) me alettiin teke-en **lumi-luola-a** sii-hen kinokse-en.
     we started make-INF snow-cave-PTV it-ILL   snow-ILL
     'We started to make a cave in the snow.'

(2b) oli-ks ne **norjalais-i-a.**
     were-Q they Norwegian-PL-PTV
     'Were they Norwegians?'

(2c) siel oli **tämmös-i-ä**   **lautas-i-a** ja **tarjottim-i-i.**
     there were this kind of-PL-PTV plate-PL-PTV and tray-PL-PTV
     '(On the market), there were these kinds of plates and trays (for sale).'

(2d) siin   tapahtu siin   isä-ssä **jo-ta-i**   **pehmenemis-tä**
     it+INE happened it+INE father-INE some-PTV-PRON softening-PTV

     loppu-a kohti.
     end-PTV toward

     'There was perhaps some softening in the father towards the end (of the play).'

Many researchers have assumed that the expansion of the partitive to the syntactic roles in the clause core started off in the object and proceeded to predicate nominals and intransitive subjects (cf. e.g. Itkonen 1972). This order of expansion is supported by the relative frequencies of partitive NPs in respective syntactic roles in spoken data from modern Finnish: the partitive is most frequent in the object role and least frequent in the intransitive subject role. There are also severe restrictions with respect to the verbs that allow for partitive marking of intransitive subjects, and the partitive is unlikely as a possible case marker for transitive subjects (in my data, there were no

examples; for (constructed) examples, see Huumo and Perko 1993).

This paper will follow the development of the partitive from Proto-Uralic down to modern Finnish. I will discuss the development with respect to the case system as a whole in order to point to system-internal pressures for the changes in the use of the partitive. Also discussed are system-external pressures for changes, such as the discourse need to introduce new referents and track them. I will also show that the different functions the partitive serves in the modern data have a common denominator, namely, low transitivity. But first, I will describe my data.

2. Data

The data for this study come from 6 conversations between 2-6 speakers of Finnish. The conversations have been audiotaped, and I have chosen one excerpt from each conversation for closer analysis. The excerpts are 5-8 min long each, totalling approx. 40 min of audiotapes, which I have transcribed and coded. The examples presented in this paper come from this corpus, with the exception of examples 7 and 12b.

There were almost 1800 NPs in the data, and of these 266 were in the partitive. All NPs were coded for syntactic function, and also, for several features of information flow which were designed to capture relevant characteristics of the use of partitive NPs in managing information in discourse. Features to be coded included the following:

activation cost: A referent was coded as new, if the NP referred to a referent which was not mentioned in the discourse or which was not present at the moment of speaking.

semantic class: Referents were coded for humanness vs. non-humanness.

tracking: An NP was coded as tracking if the referent was mentioned more than one time during the discourse (Durie 1994 uses the term *trackable* for referents of this kind; see also Tao 1996).

With respect to the features chosen for coding, there were no observable differences between speakers in the use of the partitive.

The database represents the use of the partitive in one genre of spoken interaction, namely, informal everyday conversation. This choice of data reflects the underlying assumption that everyday conversation is the most natural habitat of language use where grammaticization patterns are most readily observable. I hope that this study opens up perspectives for the study of the use of the partitive in other genres.

3. From local to grammatical case

This section outlines the development of the partitive from a local case into a grammatical case. First, I will describe the Uralic case system, especially the marking of the object. I will then discuss different proposals concerning the development of the partitive. I will attempt to relate the proposed developments to the dynamics of the case system and clause structure.

3.1. About the Uralic case system

It is generally assumed that even in the Uralic protolanguage there was a case marking system with six cases, namely the nominative (no ending), the genitive (*-n*), and the accusative (*-m*) and three local cases, namely the locative (-nA), the lative (*-n*, -k), and the separative (-tA; see e.g. Korhonen 1991). The local cases exhibited a tripartite system that was similar to the modern system (see table 1 above): the locative situated something in a location, the lative indicated movement towards something, and the separative indicated movement away from something. Of these three, the lative is no longer productive in

modern Finnish, whereas the locative has developed a more abstract locative meaning, and is now called the "essive" in Finnish linguistics (see table 1). As was mentioned above, the separative has almost lost its locative meaning; instead, it has been transformed into the partitive.

It has been assumed that originally there was a distinction between the nominative and the accusative in the object role based on definiteness: the accusative was used only for definite singular NPs and the nominative for all other object NPs (table 2; Setälä 1884, Itkonen 1972: 183).

Singular		Plural
Definite	Indefinite	Def + Indef
Accusative	Nominative	Nominative

Table 2. Object marking in the Uralic protolanguage (Itkonen 1972).

From a different viewpoint we could say that only definite singular objects had object marking, and all other objects were unmarked. The same principle also applies to the modern language with respect to the plural: there is no accusative form in the plural. In the singular, however, the object marking system has undergone several changes, mainly because the partitive has entered the system for object marking on a par with the nominative and the accusative.

Thus, in the Uralic protolanguage the partitive was purely a local case, whereas NPs in the core roles, i.e. subjects and objects, were in the nominative. The only exceptions were definite singular objects which were given accusative marking.

3.2. The expansion of the partitive

This section concerns the development of the partitive into a grammatical case. The partitive has many functions; inter alia, it can be used to express quantification and aspectual distinctions. Broadly speaking, the different functions fall into two catego-

ries, (i) those pertaining to the reference being made with the NP (e.g., by quantifying the referent), and (ii) those that influence the interpretation of the clause as a whole (e.g., aspect). I will show, however, that the different functions of the partitive have a common denominator, namely, low transitivity (Hopper - Thompson 1980). Low transitivity can be seen as an index of the role of the partitive as a case marker that shares features with both the core cases and the obliques. This will be discussed in section 4 on the basis of an analysis of modern conversational Finnish.

3.2.1. Partitive and the referent of the NP

This section focuses on those functions of the partitive pertaining to the reference of the partitive NP. In the Uralic proto-language, object marking was based on the interpretation of the object NP as definite (accusative marking) or indefinite (nominative). Features of the referent of the object NP were also relevant when the partitive started to develop into an object marking case: its use was dependent on whether the referent of the object was interpreted as being partially affected. Later on, the partitive started to express open quantification.

Itkonen (1972) has suggested that the expansion of the partitive started in the Volga-Finnic period in connection with certain verbs. The partitive started to be used as an argument of some verbs that meant some kind of separation, taking away a part of something or willingness to take away. Included were verbs such as 'to take', 'to eat', and more abstract ones, such as 'to be afraid of sthing', 'to be ashamed of sthing'. Itkonen's claim is supported by data from the Volgan languages Mordvin and Mari, where the equivalents of these verbs take a separative (partitive) argument. Itkonen, like many others, assumes that the partitive was used in these cases to indicate partial affectedness of the object. Itkonen leaves open the question of possible motivations for the reinterpretation of the separative argument. We could assume that when taking something from a location

we infer that the location continues to exist, and likewise, when we take something from a substance it is inferred that the substance is not emptied. This kind of inferencing could have facilitated the interpretation of the partitive as referring to a partially affected referent. But why was the partitive argument reanalyzed as an object?

Leino (1996) approaches the development of the partitive by looking at the meaning potential of the elative in present-day written data. His hypothesis is that the on-going grammaticization processes that can be seen in the elative at present are parallel to those concerning the partitive that took place starting in the Volga-Finnic period. Reminiscent of the development of the partitive, the elative is a local case that has lost its locative meaning in some contexts and is more constrained by grammatical factors in its use. For example, some verbs require an elative argument in their rection (verbal government; e.g. *pitää suklaa-sta* 'like chocolate-ELA'). From a cognitive linguistic perspective, Leino proposes that in constructions where the object (landmark) is not specified the source takes up characteristics of the object. Leino gives the following as an example:

(3) Aio-t-ko   kaiva-a **siitä?**
    be going to-2SG-Q dig-INF it+ELA
    'Are you going to dig from there?'

In (3), the object of digging is not specified. Instead, the source expression *siitä* 'from there' becomes more salient. According to Leino, this opens up the possibility of semantic restructuration, where the source takes up characteristics typical of objects. Leino proposes that a parallel development has taken place in the case of the partitive. (Leino 1996.) Syntactically, this would mean that in the absence of an object, the locative NP (the partitive/separative or the elative) lends itself for reanalysis as an object.

It is important to note that Leino's proposal applies to all verbs irrespective of verb type, whereas Itkonen assumes that the development started off in connection with certain verbs that

indicate separation. However, the two approaches do not exclude each other: the verbs mentioned by Itkonen allow for Leino's suggestion that restructuration has taken place: omission of object makes the source expression become more object-like, thus instigating the restructuration process.

Both Itkonen and Leino look at the grammaticization of the partitive from the viewpoint of the restructuration of verbal argument structure. However, it was not only that the argument structure contained potential for change, but also that the dynamics of the case system itself called for considerable re-organization of the system. The case system was in a state of a flux during the Volga-Finnic period: The system was extended to include two new local cases, the inessive and the elative (see e.g. Hakulinen 1979: 103). The elative took over the more con-crete sense of the partitive (separative). Phonologically the ela-tive suffix consisted of the old partitive ending -ta or -tä and a lative -s, yielding -sta or -stä, thus enforcing a locative interpre-tation for the partitive. This may have strengthened a more abstract interpretation of the old partitive.

Interestingly enough, in the course of the grammaticization process, as the partitive became more abstract - and more grammatical - the ending eroded phonologically. Namely, in late Proto-Finnic, i.e. after the partitive had entered the object marking system, it started to take part in the suffixal gradation system. In certain contexts, the -t- of the original -tA-ending was lenited and became a dental spirant -δ. Later on, the spirant was weakened and lost. Through this change, the partitive became less like other local cases and more like the grammatical cases: in principle, the local case endings add an extra syllable to the word, whereas the endings for the grammatical cases do not (see table 1 above).[4] In an interesting way, the partitive mor-phologically presents an intermediate case between the gram-matical and the oblique cases: in the partitive, the case ending

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[4] There are exceptions here: although historically the illative case ending has always added an extra syllable to the word stem, this need not be so in modern Finnish (cf. e.g. ta-lo-hon > ta-loon 'to the house').

sometimes does add a syllable (e.g. *talo-a* 'house-PTV'), but sometimes it does not (e.g. *kala-a* 'fish-PTV).

Itkonen assumes that in the early stages of its grammaticization process, the partitive was used in connection with certain verbs to express partial affectness of the object. Larjavaara (1991) takes this to have provided a basis for the development of a semantic opposition of part (expressed by the partitive) vs. whole (nominative & accusative).[5] Consider table 3:

Singular		Plural	
Part	**Whole**	**Part**	**Whole**
Partitive	Acc/Nom	Partitive	Nominative

Table 3. Object marking in Proto-Finnic (cf. Larjavaara 1991).

Larjavaara does not discuss the possible consequences of this change for the old opposition between the nominative and the accusative based on definiteness (accusative for definite singular referents and nominative for all others). It seems to me that the two oppositions are close enough to create confusion in the system, although it may have been possible to maintain a separate marking - the accusative - for definite singular NPs side by side with a new marking - the partitive - for NPs referring to partially affected referents. However, more pressure for changes in the division of labor between the nominative and the accusative was soon to be created as the quantificational distinctions expressed by the partitive developed further.

The use of partitive NPs to indicate partial affectedness of the object was gradually extended to include more verbs. Furthermore, there was a gradual shift from partial quantification to open quantification. Examples 4a and 4b illustrate this.

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[5] Larjavaara (1991) discusses the partitive as opposed to the "accusative". He includes under the heading "accusative" both morphological accusative (ending -*n*, former -*m*) and nominative (no ending; Larjavaara 1991: 403-404). This is in line with the received view on object marking in Finnish linguistics (cf. e.g. Hakulinen - Karlsson 1979, Leino 1991).

(4a) *koita*   *to-ta*   *räkä-ä.*
    try+IMP+2SG   that-PTV snot-PTV
    'Try (some of) that shrimp (cheese).' (lit. *that snot*; cf. Swedish *räka* 'shrimp')

(4b) *sä   oo-t   teh-ny   kaikk-i-i taide-hankinto-i.*
    you be-2SG make-PCP all-PL-PTV art-purchase-PL+PTV
    'You have made all (kinds of) art investments.'

In example 4a the object NP *tota räkää* 'that shrimp (cheese)-PTV' allows for a partial interpretation, which is claimed to have been the only interpretation at some point in the development of the partitive. In contrast, the object NP in 4b *kaikkii taidehankintoi* 'all (kinds of) art investments-PTV' can only be interpreted as a case of open quantification: the number of investments (or purchases) is left open. Larjavaara (1991: 401-402) assumes that the shift from partial to open quantification started in connection with NPs referring to some substance (cf. ex. 3a above) in the following fashion:

> away from a substance > part of a substance > open quantity of a substance

Only later on did the use of the partitive spread to NPs referring to entities (cf. ex. 4b).[6]

As the use of the partitive expanded, the semantic opposition between the nominative and the accusative based on definiteness was shaken. The object marking system underwent a restructuring process. In Proto-Finnic, there were interesting phonological changes which are very likely to have had an impact on the restructuring process. Namely, word-final -*m* became -*n*. This change made the former accusative ending -*m* coalesce with the genitive ending -*n*. After this change, there have been no formal grounds to distinguish the accusative from

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[6] Leino (1996) does not discuss the interpretation of the partitive as conveying partial affectedness of the referent of the NP. However, it seems that he does not assume that partial affectedness was ever part of the meaning potential of the partitive. Instead, his proposal applies to verbs irrespective of whether they imply partial affectedness of their arguments or not.

the genitive; only syntactic distribution keeps them apart (in principle, the accusative is a marker of verbal arguments, whereas the genitive marks adnominal modifiers).[7] In the end, the distinction between the nominative and the accusative was no longer semantic but rather, it was based on morphosyntactic criteria, such as the existence of an overt NP subject. In modern Finnish, the nominative and the accusative are, for the most part, in complementary distribution and regulated by morpho-syntactic criteria (see table 4; for further discussion, see Helasvuo forthcoming b.) This is illustrated in table 4. (In the table, Ø indicates zero ending, and the grey areas indicate that the given case marking is not available as a choice in the context, e.g., nominative case is not available for object marking if there is an NP subject in the clause.)

	Singular			Plural		
	Part	Acc	Nom	Part	Acc	Nom
Personal pronouns	-A	-t	▨	-tä	-t	▨
Other pronouns and nouns						
-in clauses with an NP subj	-(t)A	-n	▨	-(t)A	▨	-Ø
-in clauses without an NP subj	-(t)A	▨	-Ø	-(t)A	▨	-Ø

Table 4. Object marking in Finnish (a rough outline).

Note, however, that personal pronouns behave differently in this respect: they have adopted a special accusative marker -*t* (this is a recent development which is not followed in all dialects of Finnish, see Laitinen 1992).

To summarize, the partitive started to develop into a grammatical case from the old separative during the Volga-Finnic period. It has been assumed that it was first used only in connection with certain verbs which had a general meaning of

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[7] In recent years, several scholars have suggested that there are no grounds for distinguishing the accusative from the genitive in the modern language, but instead, both should be called the genitive (see e.g. Shore 1992, Nemvalts 1994). According to this view, only personal pronouns inflect in the accusative.

'taking away a part of something' either in a concrete sense (e.g. the verb 'to eat') or in a more abstract sense (e.g. 'to be afraid'). Except for these few verbs that allowed for the partitive, objects were marked either with the nominative or the accusative. Gradually, the partitive started to spread to other contexts too. By early Proto-Finnic, an opposition of part vs. whole was developed where the partitive carried the partial interpretation, and the nominative and the accusative expressed a whole. This opposition provided a basis for the later development of the partitive as a marker of open quantification. With this development, the distinction between the nominative and the accusative was no longer based on definiteness, but rather, syntactic features of the whole clause. The object marking system as a whole became more oriented towards features of the clause.

3.2.2. Partitive and the clause

In this section, I will discuss how the partitive came to express aspectual distinctions. Also discussed is the use of the partitive in clauses with negative polarity.

Larjavaara (1991) proposes that aspectual distinctions in connection with the partitive started to develop in past tense clauses which expressed partial quantification. According to him, in such clauses the action was terminated, but it still did not cover the domain of the object referent and thus was not carried to an end with respect to the object. As a next step in the development of aspect, the use of the partitive was extended to progressive clauses, and gradually, the partitive was grammaticized as a marker of imperfective aspect. Ex. 5 shows how the accusative vs. partitive distinction works to express perfective and imperfective aspect.

(5)   *hän ..sirpi-n   pist-i   to-ta   naru-n pää-hän,*
      he   sickle-ACC put-PST+3SG that-PTV rope-GEN end-ILL

      ja   hän vet-i   pitkin pohja-a   si-tä sitte perä-ssä.[8]
      and he pull-PST+3SG along bottom-PTV it-PTV then behind-INE

      'He put a sickle in the end of a rope and then pulled it along the bottom
      (of the sea) behind (himself) (in order to cut weeds).'

In ex. 5 line 1, the clause expresses punctual action which is terminated and therefore, the object *sirpin* 'sickle-ACC' is in the accusative. In contrast, the clause in line 2 expresses progressive activity which is extended through time, and accordingly, the object *sitä* 'it-PTV' stands in the partitive. The end point of the action is not in focus; the activity is. Note also that the referent of the object *sitä* 'it-PTV' in line 2 is not highly individuated, since it can refer either to the sickle or to the whole construction with both the sickle and the rope.

Heinämäki (1983, 1994) discusses aspect in Finnish in terms of object marking. She focuses on the accusative; according to her, accusative marking can be used to set a bound to the activity or state described by the verb, thus making it telic. In ex. 5, the accusative marking of the NP *sirpin* 'sickle-ACC' (line 1) sets a bound, whereas no such bound is set in the clause in line 2.

With some verbs which are inherently imperfective, and thus, low in transitivity (e.g. *tarkoittaa* 'to mean', *ajatella* 'to think', *odottaa* 'to wait'), there is no alternation in the object case marking, but the partitive has become obligatory (ex. 6).

(6)   *kyl mä Narjus-ta-ki vähä ihmettele-n*
      yes I   N.-PTV-CLITIC a little wonder-1SG
      'Sure I am somewhat amazed at Narjus.'

In ex. 6, the verb *ihmetellä* 'to wonder' can only take a partitive object. Although these verbs are inherently imperfective (often

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[8] *Tota* 'that-PTV' is a partitive form of the demonstrative 'that'. In example 5 line 1, however, *tota* is being used as a particle: it appears in a crystallized form (the partitive) irrespective of the syntax of the rest of the clause.

called "irresultative" in Finnish linguistics), the imperfectivity can be cancelled with an adverbial phrase that sets a bound to the activity (Heinämäki 1983). Consider the following example (from Heinämäki 1983):

(7) *Lapsi odotti itsensä kipeäksi*
child waited herself-ACC ill-TRA
'The child was so full of expectation that she made herself ill.'

In ex. 7, the adverbial *kipeäksi* 'ill-TRA' sets a bound to the activity of waiting, and thus, makes the accusative marking of the object possible. Without the bounding adverbial, the accusative would not be acceptable.[9]

Clauses with imperfective aspect focus on the process of the action instead of the completion. In negative clauses the focus is even further away from the completion of the process, as either the process itself or the existence of its participants are negated. Given this link to imperfectivity, it is not surprising that the partitive has become grammaticized as an object marker in negative clauses (see ex. 8).

(8) *e-n mä oo huoman-nu ero-o.*
NEG-1SG I be+INF notice-PCP difference-PTV
'I haven't noticed any difference.'

The object NP *eroo* 'difference-PTV' is in the partitive because it is under the scope of the negation verb *en*.

Of the three object cases, the partitive is the one that invites most inferences on the speaker's stance towards what is being said. It can be used if the speaker is dubious about the existence of the object referent (ex. 9; 9 is the line preceeding ex. 8). It

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[9]The interplay of the object marking and other bounding adverbials has inspired many researchers (see especially Heinämäki 1983, Leino 1991). However, these speculations have little to do with the grammaticization phenomena discussed here, since it is rare to find cases in actual data where an independent adverbial phrase "cancels" the interpretation of the activity expressed by the object and the verb.

can also be used in requests in order to be polite (ex. 10). (See
Yli-Vakkuri 1986.)

(9) *oo-t   sä   muute   huoman-nu   siin mi-tä-än*
     be-2SG you by the way notice-PCP   there some-PTV-PRON

ero-o.
difference-PTV

'By the way, have you noticed any difference there?'

(10) *anna-t   sä   si-tä   salaatti-kulho-a.*
      give-2SG you it-PTV salad-bowl-PTV
      'Could you pass the saladbowl?'

To summarize, the partitive is grammaticizing as a marker
of imperfective aspect. With some verbs of inherent low transi-
tivity ("irresultative verbs" in Finnish linguistics), the partitive
has become the only possible object marking. The partitive has
also been grammaticized to mark object NPs which are under
the scope of negation. There is a common denominator in all of
these grammaticization processes, namely, low transitivity. The
ways in which the partitive is associated with low transitivity is
the topic of the next section.

3.2.3. Partitive and transitivity

Transitivity has traditionally been considered a feature of the
verb: a verb is transitive if it takes two arguments, an agent
(subject) and a patient (object). According to this view, clauses
with partitive objects are no different from clauses with nomi-
native or accusative objects in terms of transitivity. In Finnish
linguistics, there is a rich literature on some problematic verbs
that sometimes take an object and sometimes do not ("transitive-
intransitive" verbs, Penttilä 1963: 539-540; see also discussion
in Leino 1991: 21-36). However, there is an alternative view
which sees transitivity more as a feature of the whole clause
than a characteristic of an invidual verb (cf. Hopper and
Thompson 1980). In this section, I will discuss the different

functions of the partitive in terms of the scalar notion of transitivity as proposed by Hopper and Thompson. I will show that clauses with partitive objects lack most of the features associated with high transitivity and instead, exhibit low transitivity.

In their paper on transitivity in grammar and discourse (1980), Hopper and Thompson propose that transitivity could be best characterized in terms of different components which concern the participants and the aspect of the clause, and volitionality and punctuality of action. Instead of a binary notion of transitivity, they propose a scale of transitivity in which the highest ranking is given to clauses with two participants in which the action is telic, punctual and volitional, the clause is affirmative and the transitive agent (A) is high in potency and the object is totally affected and highly individuated.

Hopper and Thompson (1980) identify affectedness and individuation of object as indicators of the degree of transitivity expressed by a clause. With their capacity to express open quantification, partitive NPs exhibit low transitivity. Partitive NPs are often mass nouns or they refer to inanimates, and thus, they are less individuated than are objects in the accusative or nominative case (see ex. 4 above and discussion in section 4 below). Partitive objects may join the verb to form a predicate phrase where the object is still a separate NP but it is not referential but predicating (ex. 11a and b). We can refer to it as a predicating NP.

(11a) *kerro*   *terveis-i-i.*
      tell+IMP+2SG greeting-PL-PTV
      'Say hello (to your husband).'

(11b) *si-lle* *pitä-ä*   *anta-a* *virikke-i-tä.*
      it-ALL must-3SG give-INF stimulus-PL-PTV
      'One must give stimuli to it (the cat).'

In 11a and b, the objects *terveisii* 'greetings-PTV' and *virikkeitä* 'stimuli-PTV' are serving predicating rather than referring functions. Clauses containing predicating NPs tend to exhibit

low transitivity, since predicating NPs are less individuated than referential ones.

As discussed above, the partitive has come to be used as a marker of imperfective aspect, which is also a feature associated with low transitivity. Moreover, it has been grammaticized as a marker of object or intransitive subject under the scope of negation (see ex. 8 above). Hopper and Thompson (1980) identify affirmative clauses with high transitivity, whereas negative clauses exhibit low transitivity.

To sum up, the partitive has come to be used in clauses expressing imperfective aspect or negation. Often enough the referent of the partitive NP is only partially affected and not highly individuated. Thus, the partitive has become strongly associated with low transitivity as it has been grammaticized into a case marker of the core roles.

4. What are partitive NPs used for in modern conversational Finnish?

In an interesting way, the partitive carries a record of its history in the diverse functions it can serve in discourse. Some partitive NPs still function as adverbials, while the majority serve in the core roles (mainly as objects). In this section, I will discuss the following questions: (i) what kind of work partitive NPs do in discourse, (ii) what kind of referents they bring into discourse, and (iii) how the referents are treated thereafter. I will show that in its discourse profile, the partitive still shares some features that are more typical of the local cases than of the core cases.

Partitive NPs serve in a variety of syntactic functions in modern conversational data. Almost half of them function as objects, whereas others serve as predicate nominals, free NPs, or even as intransitive subjects (see examples in 2 above). Some function as the core NP in presentational constructions (the so-called "existential subject" in Finnish linguistics, see ex. 2c

above).[10] Some partitive NPs still serve adverbial functions indicating source location (see ex. 1 above). This is, of course, the oldest layer in the use of the partitive. There are also some adverbials of time and measurement which have a partitive vs. accusative alternation which is sensitive to similar distinctions as the object case marking (negative vs. affirmative, open vs. bounded). Consider the following examples (12b is a fabricated example).

(12a) *siin   vaan **koko aja-n**   seiso-tt-i-in   ja*
     there only   all   time-ACC stand-PSS-PST-PERS and

     puhu-tt-i-in.
     talk-PSS-PST-PERS

     'There [in a play] they were just standing and talking all the time.'

(12b) *ei   siin   **koko aika-a**   seiso-ttu   ja*
     NEG+3SG there all   time-PTV stand-PSS+PCP and

     puhu-ttu.
     talk-PSS+PCP

     'They weren't just standing and talking all the time there.'[11]

The time adverbial *koko ajan* 'all the time-ACC' in 12a is in the accusative because the clause is affirmative, but in 12b, which is a constructed variant of 12a, the time adverbial has to be in the partitive since it is negated. This usage has counterparts in other languages: inter alia in Obolo (Benue-Congo), oblique NPs are distinguished from core NPs with the use of prepositions, but

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[10] Of the 266 partitive NPs in my data, 47.4 % were objects, 13.9 % presentational NPs (so-called "existential subjects"), 8.3 % predicate nominals, 8.3 % free NPs, 4.5 % intransitive subjects, 4.1 % adverbials.

[11] The Finnish passive is different from the Indo-European passives: it implies a personal agent which is left unspecified (for discussion, see Shore 1988). In the present and past tense, which are simple (not periphrastic) passive forms, there is a suffix (glossed as PERS in 12a) besides the passive marker which appears in the same morphotactic slot as the personal endings in the active forms (cf. ex. 10 *anna-t* 'give-2SG'). It has been called "the 4th person" (Tuomikoski 1971).

certain time and measurement adverbials may appear without a preposition - as if they were core NPs - to indicate more complete coverage or more thorough effect of the process described by the verb (Helasvuo 1992). Note also that in the English translations of examples 12a and b, the time adverbial *all the time* is not marked with a preposition although oblique NPs usually are marked in English.

Among the core roles subject and object, the object role is clearly the slot for non-human referents, whereas the subject role typically accommodates human referents. This can clearly be seen in my Finnish data, where almost all transitive subjects are human (over 90 %), while less than half of intransitive subjects and only 6 % of objects are human (see Helasvuo forthcoming b for details). Moreover, there is evidence from other languages that the low percentage of human referents might be characteristic of the object role even in more general terms (see Du Bois 1987 for Sacapultec, Herring 1989 for Tamil, Ashby and Bentivoglio 1993 for French and Spanish, Nakayama and Ichihashi-Nakayama 1994 for Japanese, Kärkkäinen 1996 for English).

Given the fact that almost half of the partitive NPs function as objects in Finnish, we could hypothesize that the tendency for preferring non-human referents shows up in the discourse profile for partitive NPs. This indeed is the case, as can be seen in table 5.

Case of NP and sem. class	Human N	Human %	Total N
Nom	421	42,7	987
Acc	3	4,3	69
Ptv	13	4,9	266
Genitive	15	31,2	48
Locative	94	22,1	426
Total	125	15,5	809

Table 5. The distribution of human referents across cases.

In table 5, I have combined all NPs irrespective of their syntactic function. We can see that both partitive and accusative NPs have very few human referents, whereas over 40 % of nominative NPs are human.

If we look at how new mentions are distributed across cases, we can see that the nominative stands out as the case with the fewest new mentions (around 26 % of nominative NPs refer to new referents), whereas all the other cases contain more than 40 % new mentions. The results are given as table 6 (see Helasvuo forthcoming a).

Case of NP and	New		Total
distr. of new	N	%	N
Nom	258	26,1	987
Acc	33	47,8	69
Ptv	130	48,9	266
Genitive	22	45,8	48
Locative	186	43,7	426
Total	629	35,0	1796

Table 6. The distribution of new mentions across cases.

In Helasvuo (forthcoming a) I show that one of the main differences between the core and oblique cases in Finnish lies in the way in which they are used to keep track of referents that have been brought into the discourse (Durie 1994 reports on similar findings based on Acehnese conversational data). I claim that the core cases are the ones used for introducing participants that will be tracked in the discourse, whereas only a few of the referents that are introduced using a locative NP are ever mentioned again. Fewer than 10 % of the referents that had been introduced with a locative NP were mentioned again. In other words, participants that were somehow central to the discourse were introduced in the core cases. I would like to further specify this claim here. Table 7 shows the case of the initial mention and the number of further mentions of the referents.

Case of new mention	Further mentioned N	%	Total of new N
Nom	112	43,4	258
Acc	10	30,3	33
Ptv	19	14,6	130
Locative	18	9,7	186
Total	159	26,2	607

Table 7. The distribution of further mentions across cases with which the initial mention was made.

In table 7 we can see that if a referent is introduced using a nominative NP, it is quite likely to be mentioned again (43 %), whereas those referents that are introduced using the accusative case are less likely to be mentioned again (30 %). The local cases rank lowest here: fewer than 10 % of referents first mentioned in a local case were mentioned again. Interestingly enough, the partitive is very close to the local cases here as fewer than 15 % of the referents introduced with a partitive NP were tracked.

It is important to note that this applies not only to partitive NPs functioning as objects but also to the so-called existential "subjects". Although the Finnish existential constructions (constructions with a locative NP + *olla* 'to be' + $NP_{nom/ptv}$) are used for introducing new referents, the referents are usually not mentioned again (for more discussion see Helasvuo 1996).

Example 13 serves to illustrate these findings. The excerpt comes from a telephone conversation between mother and daughter. The mother explains what she has been doing during the day:

(13)
1   *sit   mää   käv-i-n   pankki-asio-i-ta-ni*
    then I   go-PST-1SG bank-matter-PL-PTV-1SGPX

2   *hoita-ma-s   ja,*
    take care-INF-INE and

3   *käv-i-n   posti-s   ja,*
      go-PST-1SG post office-INE and

4   *... (1.2) ja   tota, ... (2.0) ö kampaaja-l,*
               and er   hairdresser-ADE

5   ***mu-n*   *tukka* *leikat-t-i-i*   *ja,*
      I-GEN   hair   cut-PSS-PST-PERS and

6   *... (1.7) ja   tota, mi-tä-s   mä sit **muu-t** te-i-n.*
              and er   what-PTV-CLITIC I   then else-PTV do-PST-1SG

7   *... (1.5) ha-i-n   ö, yhm, .. pölynimuri-in   se-n,*
              look for-PST-1SG   vacuumcleaner-ILL it-ACC

8   *.. (0.3) **poisto-ilman-suodatin-t** ja,*
           exhaust-air-filter-PTV   and

9   *... (1.3) **pöly-pusse-i** ja,*
           dust-bag-PL+PTV and

    'Then I went to take care of some banking matters, I went to the post office and er... to the hairdresser's, my hair was cut and, and er, what else did I do. I fetched / looked for an air filter for the vacuum cleaner and, dust bags and ...'

Throughout the whole passage, the topic is what the speaker had been doing during the day. The emphasis is on the activities described, not the results. The speaker uses transitive verbs (line 2 *hoitaa* 'take care of', line 5 *leikata* 'cut', line 6 *tehdä* 'do', line 7 *hakea* 'fetch/look for') with objects that are mainly in the partitive (line 1 *pankkiasioitani* 'my banking matters-PTV', line 6 *mitäs muuta* 'what else-PTV', line 8 *poistoilmansuodatinta* 'air filter-PTV', line 9 *pölypussei* 'dust bags-PTV'). Note that these objects are referring to entities that are not specific. On lines 1-2, the construction *käydä hoitamassa pankkiasioita* 'go to take care of banking matters-PTV' is used to refer to activities that are normally done in a bank without naming anything specifically. Similarly, *käydä postissa* 'go to the post office' (line 3) and *(käydä) kampaajalla* 'go to the hairdresser's' (line 4) refer to activities that normally take place at a post office or at the hairdresser's. In the example, the only nominative object is on

line 5 *mun tukka* 'my hair' which refers to a body part of the speaker. The hesitation on line 7-8 is interesting from the point of view of the distinction between the partitive and the accusative: the speaker uses the verb *hakea* which can be understood either as referring to an action with an endpoint (which could be translated with 'fetch') or as referring to an ongoing activity ('look for'). The accusative form of the pronoun 'it' *sen* (line 7) picks out the perfective reading of the verb. This is, however, changed on line 8 when the speaker continues with a partitive NP *poistoilmansuodatinta* 'air filter-PTV'. The partitive object forces an imperfective interpretation where the activity is being in focus and not the result. Note that none of the partitive objects become tracked, and, interestingly enough, the same is true of the locative adverbials too (line 3 *postis* 'in a/the post office', line 4 *kampaajal* 'at the hairdresser's', line 7 *pölyn-imuriin* 'for the vacuum cleaner').

The question that I would like to address here is: what does this tell about the discourse use of the partitive? The partitive accommodates mainly non-human referents. It is quite often used for introducing new referents, but these referents do not get tracked and therefore, they are not central to the discourse. We could claim that human referents in general are more central to our communication, and thus exhibit higher continuity in discourse (cf. articles in Givón 1983). But this claim does not explain an interesting difference between the accusative and the partitive: both accusative and partitive have very low percentages for mentions of human referents (cf. table 5). Nevertheless, referents that have been introduced with an accusative NP are much more likely to be mentioned again than the ones that are first mentioned with a partitive NP (cf. table 7). A possible explanation for this is transitivity: as shown in section 3.2.3., the partitive has become strongly associated with low transitivity. Partitive NPs refer to referents that are less individuated and less affected than are referents of accusative NPs. In clauses containing partitive objects, the referents of the objects are not in focus but the processes are. It is only natural,

then, that partitive NPs are not very likely to be tracked. In this respect, the partitive still shows characteristics that are more typical of oblique cases than the core cases.

5. Conclusions

The development of grammatical cases from oblique ones has been attested in many languages. Inter alia, the development of the Finnish partitive case has a counterpart in French where the preposition *de* developed from a locative item into a marker of partial object. In the course of the grammaticization process of the partitive, there has been erosion in the phonological substance of the partitive ending. This phonological erosion was compensated by pragmatic strengthening.

The old Finno-Ugric object marking system with different markings for definite and indefinite objects was based on the semantics of the referent of the object NP. When the partitive entered into the system, there was a gradual shift in focus towards clausal features such as aspect and negative polarity, and, ultimately, to the expression of the speaker's subjective point of view (e.g. expression of the speaker's commitment or politeness).

In the course of the grammaticization process, the partitive became strongly associated with low transitivity. Accordingly, the referents of the partitive NPs are not highly individuated and only partially affected. In clauses with negative polarity or with verbs of inherent low transitivity, the partitive has become obligatory.

In sum, referents of partitive NPs are usually not in focus, but rather, it is the process expressed by the clause that is central to the discourse. I have shown that referents that are introduced with a partitive NP are not very likely to be mentioned again. This is a feature that the partitive still has in common with the oblique cases, whereas it does show alignment with the other core cases in some other features (for example, it is sensitive to the scope of negation). Thus, the partitive carries

a record of its history in the ways it is used in modern discourse.

Appendix: Form Glosses

Nominal markings

PTV partitive; ACC accusative; GEN genitive; TRA translative; INE inessive; ILL illative; ADE adessive; ALL allative; PRON latter part of a discontinuous pronominal form (e.g. in *mi-tä-än* the *än* is glossed as PRON)

Verbal markings

PST past tense; 1SG 1st person singular marking; 3PL 3rd person plural marking; NEG negation verb; INF infinitival form; IMP imperative; PSS passive; PERS personal ending in the passive; PCP participle

Others

PL plural; PX possessive suffix; Q question clitic; - (minus sign) shows morpheme boundary; + (plus sign) distinguishes glosses of fused morphemes

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