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# Crosslinguistic variation in partitives

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## 1. Introduction

This special issue of *Linguistic Variation* entitled “Partitives cross-linguistically: dimensions of variation” contains a selection of peer-reviewed papers that were presented at the second PARTE (Partitivity in European languages) workshop in Pavia in September 2019. PARTE is a European collaboration between researchers working on partitivity. The PARTE collaboration is financed by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research NWO (Grant 236-70-007) and the University of Zurich, the University of Pavia, the Ca’ Foscari University of Venice and the Károli Gáspár University of Budapest. Other participating universities and research institutes are the University of Amsterdam, the Meertens Institute, the University of Turku, the Goethe University Frankfurt, the Christian Albrecht University of Kiel, the CNRS in Bayonne and the University of Leipzig.

As has been highlighted in the literature (see Luraghi & Huumo 2014a: 3–4) the word ‘partitive’ has often been used in reference to different types of linguistic items or constructions without further specification. In recent years, a number of studies have called attention to the different features of items covered by this label. In particular, it has been shown that partitive cases of languages such as Finnish, Estonian and Basque have much in common with partitive genitives known from the Indo-European languages as well as with partitive articles featured by some Romance languages, which in their turn parallel partitive determiners, verbal affixes or other clitics from Oceanic languages. This apparently heterogeneous array of different items did not receive a unified treatment in spite of striking similarities and of extensive language-specific studies, partly because the label ‘partitive’ blurred the difference between these items and partitive constructions (on which see Section 2). The papers collected in Luraghi & Huumo (2014b), partly based on the workshop *Partitives* held in 2010 in Vilnius, constitute a turning point in this respect, in that they brought together research on partitive cases, partitive genitives, and partitive articles, highlighting the common property of such items to indicate indefiniteness and unboundedness, at least in some contexts and to some extent.

Since then, comparative studies that focus on different facets of partitives crosslinguistically have multiplied, even across theoretical borders, as reflected in numerous conferences and publications. The PARTE network originates in several workshops that were organized by Elisabeth Stark and colleagues at the University of Zurich in 2014 and 2016 that brought together syntacticians and typologists. Although the PARTE network comprises 11 universities and institutions and 18 researchers, the partitivity network in a broader sense is much larger, and includes researchers who presented their work on partitivity at workshops in Venice in 2017, Pavia in 2019 and Frankfurt in 2019. Most of the contributors of this special issue on “Partitives cross-linguistically” are members of the extended network. The collaboration resulted already in several volumes and special issues, more specifically Falco & Zamparelli (2019); Ihsane & Stark (2020); Ihsane (2020) and Sleeman & Giusti (2021).

Members and contributors of the PARTE network have focused on different aspects of partitivity, and have tried to shed light on the relation between the various items which are referred to as ‘partitives’ in the literature, including their diachronic development, as we discuss in Section 2.

## 2. Partitive constructions and their developments

In this section we present some basic notions related to partitivity, focusing on types of constructions connected with the notion of part/whole relation, i.e. the partitive nominal construction, or ‘proper partitive’, and the pseudo-partitive construction (Section 2.1). We use the cover term ‘partitive construction(s)’ to include both constructions, and sketch in a simplified way the diachronic relation between them. As observed in Section 1, the term ‘partitive’, ‘partitives’ has been used with different meanings, comprising partitive and pseudo-partitive constructions, faded partitives and indefinite or ‘generalized’ partitives. We use the label ‘partitive elements’ to indicate the latter two groups of items. As we argue in Section 2.2, partitive elements may be shown to have developed out of partitive constructions through semantic bleaching and grammaticalization.

### 2.1 Partitive constructions

The distinction between the proper partitive construction and the pseudo-partitive construction has been discussed for English by Selkirk (1977) and Jackendoff (1977:107–126) and from a more typological, European, perspective by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001). The difference between the two constructions is illustrated by examples (1) and (2) from the title of Koptjevskaja’s seminal paper.

(1) *a piece of the cake*

(2) *a cup of tea*

Example (1) illustrates the proper partitive construction. As Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001: 523) puts it, in this construction a PART of something is taken. The pseudo-partitive construction, as illustrated in (2), is used to specify the AMOUNT of something. Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001: 527) calls the first part of both constructions the Measure and the second part the Substance.

In the proper partitive construction, the Substance is a presupposed superset from which a subset is taken, and as such it is most often definite, as formulated in Jackendoff's (1977: 113) Partitive Constraint. In the pseudo-partitive construction, the Measure merely quantifies over the kind of entity, which is non-referential. However, Koptjevskaja-Tamm observes that the semantic borderline between the two constructions is not watertight. The two questions "May I have a glass of wine?" and "May I have a glass of that wine?", expressed by someone who points at a bottle of wine, are quasi-synonymous.

In the proper partitive construction, the Measure may be expressed by a numeral or a similar quantifier, or a nominal quantifier, as in examples (3)–(5).

(3) *five of Mary's books*

(4) *some of that good tea*

(5) *a cup of this good tea*

Besides quantificational expressions, the proper partitive construction may also be introduced by a superlative (see also Hoeksema 1996: 9, Sleeman & Ihsane 2016; Falco & Zamparelli 2019: 5, Westveer 2021), as in (6).

(6) *the youngest of the students*

The pseudo-partitive construction is introduced by a nominal quantifier, as in (2).

Semantically, pseudo-partitive constructions come very close to quantificational constructions such as (7) and (8).

(7) *some tea*

(8) *five books*

Like Koptjevskaja-Tamm, both Giusti & Sleeman (2021) and Seržant (2021) distinguish quantificational constructions as in (7) and (8) from pseudo-partitive constructions, which are introduced by a quantificational nominal. Giusti & Sleeman call the constructions in (7) and (8) simply "quantificational expressions". They observe that such quantificational expressions may also imply that the indefinite set is picked out of a larger set previously introduced into the discourse, in

which case Seržant calls them “implicit expressions of a true partitive relation”. See example (9).

(9) *I have read three books.*

Besides the semantic differences between proper partitives and pseudo-partitives, there are also syntactic differences between the two constructions. One of the differences concerns subject-verb agreement. Since in (10) the verb agrees with the Measure, the proper partitive construction should be analyzed as a left-headed construction (see Stickney 2004; Keizer 2007; Rutkowski 2007).

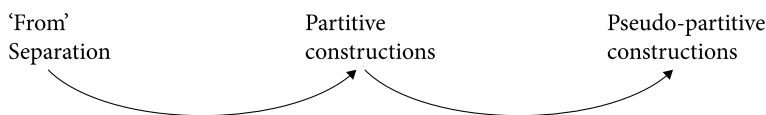
(10) *One of the cats is black.*

On the other hand, the pseudo-partitive construction in English has been argued to be a right-headed construction (see Selkirk 1977; Stickney 2004; Rutkowski 2007), as shown by the fact that the verb agrees with the Substance as in (11) (from Fernández-Pena 2020: 25).

(11) *A number of filter samples were collected on the two days of the experiment.*

Diachronically, pseudo-partitives have been shown to emerge from partitive nominal constructions, as argued by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001: 535–536; Luraghi & Kittilä 2014: 49–60; see also Seržant 2021). In partitive constructions the Substance may have a locative origin. According to Seržant (2021), the most frequent source of partitive markers are spatial adpositions; spatial relations involved may be of different types. In the first place, one can find the separative strategy (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001, 2009), involving an adposition or a case marker that indicates an ablative relation. Examples are available from several European languages, such as French *de* ‘from’, Russian *iz* ‘out of’, German *von* ‘from’ or the ablative case in Mordvinic languages (Harris & Campbell 1995: 363).

The Finnish partitive case shows a further step. Synchronically, the Balto-Finnic partitive does not have any spatial meaning; however, it can be traced back to the Uralic ablative, as illustrated in detail in Grünthal (this issue). Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001: 536) illustrates the grammaticalization process whereby markers of the ablative relation (cases or adpositions) may give rise to markers of partitive constructions through a grammaticalization process, as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The rise of Partitive Constructions and Pseudo-Partitive Constructions in Finnish

As Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001: 536) further remarks, besides the development of an abstract meaning out of a spatial one, the Finnish partitive also illustrates two other steps frequently occurring in grammaticalization, i.e. the loss of the original separative meaning and the consequent extension of the partitive to new functions, not connected with the original spatial meaning.

Other strategies found in partitive constructions are the locative strategy with adpositions meaning ‘among’, ‘between’ or ‘inside’, possession, as in English *of* and Italian *di* ‘of’ and simple juxtaposition of the Measure and the Substance, without the use of an adposition. They will be illustrated in Section 3.1, along with further examples of the ablative strategy.

## 2.2 Partitive elements

Partitive constructions may also develop into ‘faded’ partitives, a term introduced by van der Lubbe (1982) to indicate seemingly partitive constructions in which, however, there is only a vague hint to a possible part-whole relation, as discussed in De Hoop (2003: 193–206; see also Zwarts 1987). Consider examples (12) and (13) from De Hoop (2003: 194).

- (12) *Ik lees nooit dikke boeken.*  
 I read never thick books  
 ‘I never read thick books.’
- (13) *Ik lees nooit van die dikke boeken.*  
 I read never of those thick books  
 ‘I never read of those thick books.’

According to De Hoop, in (12) the speaker never reads thick books, possibly because they “never see or buy thick books, or maybe because [they] never knew there exist any thick books.” In (13), on the other hand, the speaker knows that “there are thick books and [does] not read them, for some reason or another, but it cannot be just a coincidence.” In other words, the existence of a certain set of entities is presupposed, and the speaker refers to an indefinite sub-set of such entities. To put it in the terms of De Hoop (2003: 196) “in the case of an ordinary partitive, the set is contextually determined, whereas in the case of a *van die*-NP the set is located in the hearer’s knowledge-store.” This difference is crucial for the development of partitive elements to indicate indefiniteness.

A further step in this process leads to a situation in which no pre-existing whole is presupposed, as described by Carlier (2007) in her study of the development of the French partitive article. Carlier argues that, while in Old French partitive constructions containing *de* have a clear referential meaning, starting from

Middle French “the notion of partition set fades away”: in this way, *de* becomes a fully-fledged article, and “acquires the new property of marking indefiniteness” (2007: 26), resulting in the Modern French partitive/indefinite article, as in (14).

- (14) *Il a mangé du pain.*  
 he has eaten from-the (=some) bread  
 ‘He ate some bread.’

Carlier (2007: 9) points out that the starting point for this development can be traced back to the use of partitive constructions with consumption verbs (or ‘fragmentative’ verbs to use the terminology of Englebert 1992: 133), with which it had a separative function: indeed, according to Foulet (1965), *boire* ‘drink’ and *manger* ‘eat’ were the most frequent verbs in this construction in Old French. An example is (15).

- (15) *Del vin volentiers bevai-ent.*  
 of.the.M.SG wine.SG gladly drink-IMPF.3PL  
 ‘They drink gladly (some) of the wine.’  
 (Chrétien de Troyes, Erec, 3178, from Carlier & Lamiroy 2014)

Gradually, the preposition *de* combined with the definite article (as in *du*, consisting of *de* and *le*) developed into an indefinite article used with mass nouns and plural nouns. The onset of this development can already be seen in Late Latin, in occurrences such as (16) (see Luraghi 2013).

- (16) *dicit eis Iesus adferte de piscibus*  
 say.PRS.3SG 3.DAT.PL JESUS.NOM bring.IMPER.PRS.3PL from fish.ABL.PL  
*quos prendidistis nunc.*  
 REL.ACC.PL catch.PRF.2PL now  
 ‘Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught!”’  
 (John 21.10)

Luraghi & Albonico (2021) argue that a development similar to the one outlined for French by Carlier (2007) also happened in Old Italian for the preposition *di* ‘of’ accompanied by the definite article, leading to an indefinite interpretation.

The Latin preposition *de* had an ablative meaning, and the same is true for the French preposition *de*, from which the partitive indefinite article originated. As remarked in Section 2.1, ablative cases are also at the origin of partitive case markers in the Balto-Finnic languages (see Luraghi et al. 2020: 5–7, 21–24 and references therein). On the other hand, the preposition that gave rise to the Italian partitive article, i.e. *di*, has the possessive meaning ‘of’, and has a counterpart in the partitive genitive of other Indo-European languages. The separative and the

possessive strategies are frequently found in partitive constructions, as we argued in Section 2.1.

The same strategies are also employed to form NP-external partitive pronouns (Seržant 2021). Whereas some Bantu languages make use of a locative clitic ‘there’ to mark partitivity, in Romance languages a clitic pronoun is used that stems from the separative pronoun *inde* ‘from there’ in Latin (Badia Margarit 1947), such as French *en* in (17). In some Germanic languages and dialects (Glaser 1992, 1993; Strobel 2017) a weak pronoun is used that originates in a possessive form, the third person pronoun *iro* ‘of them’, such as Dutch *er* in (18) (Bech 1952; Philippa et al. 2003).

- (17) *Ils en ont trois.*  
 they PAR have three  
 ‘They have three (of them).’
- (18) *Ze hebben er drie.*  
 they have PAR three  
 ‘They have three (of them).’

### 3. Variation in the morphological expression of partitivity

In this section, we discuss more in detail the morphological expression of partitivity, focusing on variation. We start with partitive nominal and pseudo-partitive constructions (Section 3.1) and proceed then with partitive elements (Section 3.2).

#### 3.1 Partitive constructions

Partitive constructions involve two nouns and a marker of the partitive relation, typically a case marker or an adposition (see Section 2.1). Cases found in partitive constructions are most typically the partitive (if available), the ablative and the genitive. In Finnish, for example, the partitive case can occur in pseudo-partitive constructions and, under certain constraints, in proper partitive constructions as well. Examples are (19) and (20) (from Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001: 531).

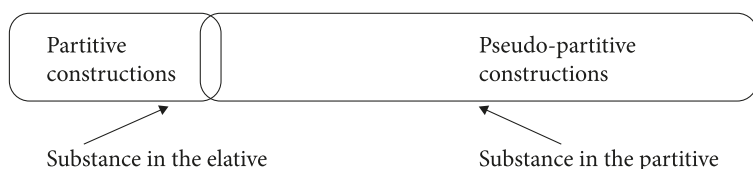
- (19) *Osta säkki perunoita!*  
 buy.IMP.2SG sack.NOM potato.PAR.PL  
 ‘Buy a sack of potatoes!’
- (20) *Anna minulle pala tätä hyvää kakkua*  
 give 1SG.ALL bit.NOM DEM.PAR good.PAR cake.PAR  
 ‘Give me a bit of this good cake.’



More typically, in partitive nominal constructions the elative occurs, as in (21).

- (21) *Anna minulle pala tästä hyvästä kakusta.*  
 give 1SG.ALL bit.NOM DEM.ELA good.ELA cake.ELA  
 ‘Give me a bit of this good cake.’

Indeed, as argued in Luraghi & Huumo (2014: 2) “the part-whole reading in (20) is triggered by the occurrence of the demonstrative ‘this’”. On the other hand, if no demonstrative occurs, the part-whole relation remains when the elative is used, but the partitive tends to have an indefinite meaning (see Section 3.2.2). As Koptjevskaja-Tamm points out, the division of labor between the elative and the partitive case in partitive constructions largely corresponds to the distinction between partitive nominal constructions (elative) and pseudo-partitive constructions (partitive), as shown in Figure 2 (from Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001: 533).



**Figure 2.** Division of labor between nominal constructions involving partitive-marked and elative-marked Substance nominals in Finnish

Similar to Finnish, Hungarian also makes use of the elative case in partitive constructions, as in (22). An example of a language that features the ablative case in partitive constructions is Turkish, as in (23) and another language is East Armenian, as in (24).

- (22) *gyerek-e-i-m-ből a leg-fiatal-a-bb*  
 child-LK-PL-POSS.1SG-ELA ART SUP-young-LK-CMPR  
 ‘the youngest of my children’ (from Tamm 2014: 102)

- (23) *Meyve-ler-den üç elma(-yi) ye-di-m.*  
 fruit-PL-ABL three apple(-ACC) eat-PST-1SG  
 ‘I ate three apples of the fruits.’ (from von Heusinger & Kornfilt 2021)

- (24) *mi gavat' ayd hamow surč-ic'*  
 one cup.NOM that good coffee-ABL  
 ‘one cup of that good coffee’ (from Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001: 528)

In several Indo-European languages, the genitive can occur in partitive constructions. Examples are Ancient Greek in (25) and Russian in (26) and (27).

- (25) *kàì gàr Kuaxárēs kaí hoi pareóntes*  
 and PTC Cyaxares.NOM and ART.NOM.PL be\_there.PTCP.PRS.NOM.PL  
*daitumónes tôn kreôn totoútôn epásanto*  
 guest.NOM.PL ART.GEN.PL flesh.GEN.PL DEM.GEN.PL eat.AOR.MID.3PL  
 ‘Cyaxares and the guests who were with him ate of that [sc. of a boy] flesh.’  
 (Hdt., 1.73.6)

Russian uses the genitive case both in the proper partitive construction, as in (26) and in pseudopartitive constructions as in (27). In the latter, some nouns can show a special form of the genitive, the so-called ‘second genitive’ (see Daniel 2014, Ter-Avanesova & Daniel, this issue).

- (26) *čáška etogo vkusnogo čaja*  
 cup.NOM DEM.GEN good.GEN tea.GEN  
 ‘a cup of this good tea’
- (27) *čáška čaja/čajju*  
 cup.NOM tea.GEN/GEN2  
 ‘a cup of tea’

Furthermore, as has already been observed in Section 2.1, juxtaposition is also a strategy used for the expression of partitives. Examples (28) from Swedish, (29) from East Armenian (from Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001: 524 and 528) and (30) from Hungarian (from Tamm 2014: 102) illustrate juxtaposition in the pseudo-partitive construction.

- (28) *en kopp te*  
 DET.INDF.COM.SG cup tea  
 ‘a cup of tea’
- (29) *mi gavat’ surč*  
 one cup.NOM coffee.NOM  
 ‘one cup of coffee’
- (30) *egy pohár bor*  
 DET.INDF glass.NOM wine.NOM  
 ‘a glass of wine’

The ‘among’ meaning is used, for instance, in the Modern Italian *tra/fra*-construction. Giusti & Sleeman (2021: 7) state that Italian *tra/fra* (‘out of’) is a locative preposition with a partitive interpretation alternating with Italian *di* ‘of’ (cf. Cardinaletti & Giusti 2006, 2017; Giusti 2021):

- (31) *alcuni tra i posti più belli della Sardegna*  
 some among the spots most beautiful of.the Sardinia  
 ‘some of the most beautiful spots of Sardinia’
- (32) *Ho letto solo questi libri di linguistica tra/fra quelli che mi*  
 have.PRS.1SG read only these books of linguistics among those that to\_me  
*avevi consigliato.*  
 have.PST.2SG recommended  
 ‘I only read these books out of those that you had recommended to me.’

The locative strategy is also found in other Romance languages, such as French with the preposition *parmi* (Sleeman & Ihsane 2016: 10).

Variation may also concern agreement patterns. In Section 2.1 we gave an example of subject – verb agreement with the Measure in the proper partitive construction in (10) and with the Substance in the pseudo-partitive construction in (11). It has been shown in the literature, however, that agreement may also take place with the Substance in the proper partitive construction and with the Measure in the pseudo-partitive construction. Various factors have been advanced to account for the variation, such as a quantificational or a referential interpretation of the Measure (see, e.g., Keizer 2007). Whereas *number* has a quantificational interpretation in (11), it has a referential interpretation in the pseudo-partitive construction in (33) (from Fernández-Pena 2020: 25).

- (33) *The number of work permits was eight hundred and sixty-eight.*

Proper partitive constructions may show the same ambiguity, as shown by Selkirk (1977) by means of example (34).

- (34) a. *A bunch of those flowers were thrown out on the back lawn.*  
 b. *A bunch of those flowers was thrown out on the back lawn.*

Kalnača & Lokmane (this issue) show that in Latvian the predicate may agree in gender and number with either the Measure or the Substance of partitive constructions.

### 3.2 Partitive elements

In this section we discuss partitive elements, as defined in Section 2.2. In Section 3.2.1 we illustrate the function of partitive pronouns, typical of several Romance and of some Germanic languages. Section 3.2.2 is devoted to so-called ‘generalized’ partitives, i.e. partitive cases, partitive genitives, partitive articles that express notions other than partivity, such as indefiniteness or unboundedness. We

conclude in Section 3.2.3 by discussing the use of partitive elements in differential marking of core grammatical relations.

### 3.2.1 *Partitive pronouns*

In the previous section we have seen that the Substance may also take the form of a partitive pronoun. In this section, we concentrate on partitive pronouns of Romance and Germanic languages.

The Romance languages vary with respect to the presence of a partitive pronoun. Italian, French and Catalan all have a partitive pronoun. On the other hand, even though the partitive pronoun is thought of having developed in Proto-Romance, it was lost from Spanish and Portuguese: early (apparent) attestations remain in medieval texts (Badia Margarit 1947).

The partitive pronoun, also called a quantitative pronoun, typically occurs in combination with an elliptical noun phrase introduced by a quantifier, as illustrated in (17) and (18). In French, the partitive pronoun *en* may be used in combination with an elliptical indefinite noun phrase containing an adjective as in (35) (Sleeman & Ihsane 2021:209). Dutch varieties show a more complex situation with dialectal variation with respect to the syntactic contexts in which the partitive pronoun is used. In standard Netherlandic Dutch, a similar construction is not allowed, as shown in (36) (from Sleeman & Ihsane 2020:788, 769), but it is in Belgian standard Dutch (De Schutter 1992, Sleeman 1998). Whereas in Belgian standard Dutch the partitive pronoun *er* may be used as a substitution of bare nouns with an unspecified quantity as in (37) and (38), this is not the case in standard Netherlandic Dutch (De Schutter 1992; Sleeman 1998). In standard Netherlandic Dutch, *er* would be replaced by the definite pronoun *ze* ‘them’ in (37) and by a repetition of the noun *thee* ‘tea’ in (38), see Sleeman & Ihsane (2020).

- (35) *Marie a acheté un ballon bleu. Pierre en a acheté un rouge*  
 Marie has bought a ball blue. Pierre PAR has bought a red  
 ‘Marie bought a blue ball. Pierre bought a red one.’
- (36) ... *Paul heeft (\*er) een rode gekocht.*  
 Paul has PAR a red.one bought  
 ‘Paul bought a red one.’ [Situation: Marie has bought a blue balloon.]
- (37) *Ik koop wel eens postzegels maar ik verkoop er nooit*  
 I buy sometimes stamps but I sell PAR never  
 ‘Sometimes I buy stamps, but I never sell them.’
- (38) *Als je die thee niet lust, hebben we er ook uit India.*  
 If you that tea not like have we PAR also from India  
 ‘I you don’t like that tea, we also have tea from India.’

Within a language or dialect, the partitive pronoun may be used depending on the syntactic or semantic context. Sleeman & Ihsane (2020) show that the partitive pronoun is only used in combination with indefinite elliptical noun phrases, but not with definite ones, as the comparison of the French example (35) with example (39) from the same language shows:

- (39) *Tristan a vu le petit hôtel. Paul \*(en) a vu le grand.*  
 Tristan has seen the small hotel Paul PAR has seen the big  
 ‘Tristan has seen the small hotel. Paul has seen the big one.’

Berends et al. (2021: 239–240) show that in Dutch, but not in French, the form of the partitive pronoun may vary according to the interpretation. In combination with the fraction nominal *de helft* ‘half’ only the form *ervan* ‘of it/them’ may be used, which has a proper partitive interpretation. The weak pronoun *er* is excluded in this context, as shown in (40) and (41).

- (40) *\*Zij bakt er de helft.*  
 she bakes PAR the half  
 ‘She bakes half of them.’
- (41) *Zij bakt de helft ervan / Zij bakt er de helft van.*  
 she bakes the half of\_them / she bakes PAR the half of  
 ‘She bakes half of them.’

Berends et al. (2021: 240) also show that in combination with the presuppositional quantifier *sommige* ‘some’ native Dutch speakers’ acceptance of the use of *er* diverges from the ungrammaticality of this combination reported in the literature (De Jong 1983, De Hoop 1992), see (42).

- (42) *\*Zij bakt er sommige.*  
 she bakes PAR some  
 ‘She bakes some of them.’

Sleeman (this issue) investigates the acceptance by native speakers of the use of the partitive pronoun in Dutch and Italian according to the syntactic function of the elliptical noun phrase.

### 3.2.2 ‘Generalized’ partitives

In the previous section we have seen that proper partitives may undergo semantic bleaching, and may develop into ‘faded’ or ‘generalized’ partitives, i.e., items that do not convey a proper partitive meaning, as they do not refer to a pre-established whole.

The form and presence of such partitives show cross-linguistic variation, as shown in Luraghi & Kittilä (2014: 20–28). As we have seen in the previous section, French uses a partitive article that was originally based on a preposition (Carlier 2007; Carlier & Lamiroy 2014), but that became grammaticalized into a partitive article. Italian also developed a partitive article (Luraghi & Albonico 2021), although on a dialectal level and in informal Italian it is not equally distributed throughout Italy and shows optionality (Cardinaletti & Giusti 2018, 2020). Although Catalan has a partitive pronoun, it does not have a partitive article. Contrary to some authors who have claimed that Modern Gallo- or Italo-Romance-like indefinite partitive articles are sporadically attested in Old Spanish and Old-Portuguese (Crispim 1996; Eberenz 2008), Carlier & Lamiroy (2014: 501–506) show that these constructions, sporadically attested in 13th century Old Spanish, are proper partitive constructions, as they “presuppose extraction from a contextually (deictically or anaphorically) defined partition set” (2014: 502). Gerards & Stark (2020) argue that such constructions are in fact PPs in which the quantifier is left out. This means that grammaticalization into partitive articles did not take place.

The Romance partitive article has been shown to partly overlap with the Finnish partitive case, in contexts in which the latter indicates indefiniteness, compare French (43) and Finnish (45) (from Luraghi & Kittilä 2014: 19), in which the partitive article and the partitive case can be said to indicate partial objects. In French, partitive determiners are used to express partial objects; for total objects either the indefinite article *un* or the definite article *il/la* can be used in the singular (44), while in the plural one finds the definite article *les*. In Finnish, partial objects are expressed by means of the partitive, whereas total objects are expressed by means by the accusative (genitive) (46).

- (43) *Aino a mangé du pain.*  
 Aino has eaten PAR bread  
 ‘Aino ate (some) bread.’
- (44) *Aino a mangé un/le pain.*  
 Aino has eaten a/the bread  
 ‘Aino ate a (loaf of)/the bread.’
- (45) *Aino sö-i leipä-ä.*  
 Aino eat-PST.3SG bread-PAR  
 ‘Aino ate (some of the) bread.’
- (46) *Aino sö-i leivä-n.*  
 Aino eat-PST.3SG bread-ACC  
 ‘Aino ate the (whole) bread.’

In both languages, the same partitive element can indicate indefiniteness with subjects, as in French (47) and Finnish (49). Definite subjects in the same contexts show the definite article in French (48) and the nominative case in Finnish (50).

- (47) *Des femmes sont venues et parties.*  
 PAR women are come and gone  
 ‘Some women came and went (away).’  
 (<https://www.cairn.info/revue-cahiers-du-genre-2004-2-page-193.htm>)
- (48) *Les femmes sont venues.*  
 the women are come  
 ‘The women came.’
- (49) *Nais-i-a tul-i koti-in.*  
 woman-PL-PAR come-PST.3SG home-ILL  
 ‘Some women came home.’
- (50) *Naise-t tul-i-vat koti-in.*  
 Woman.NOM.-PL come-PST-3PL home-ILL  
 ‘The women came home.’

According to Kiparsky (1998), de Swart (2006), Giusti & Sleeman (2021:10) both the French partitive article and the Finnish partitive case generally express unboundedness and are used in atelic situations, as shown by examples (51) and (52) (from Ihsane 2005: 217) for French and examples (53) and (54) (from Huumo 2021: 305) for Finnish.

- (51) *Il a bu de la biere/??une bière pendant deux heures.*  
 he has drunk PAR beer/a beer for two hours  
 ‘He drank beer/a beer for two hours.’
- (52) *Il a mangé des pommes/??une pomme pendant une minute*  
 he has eaten PAR apples/ an apple for one minute  
 ‘He has eaten apples/one apple for one minute.’
- (53) *John jo-i vet-tä minuuti-n.*  
 John drink-PST.3SG water-PAR minute-ACC  
 ‘John drank water for one minute.’
- (54) *John sö-i omeno-i-ta tunni-n.*  
 John eat-PST.3SG apple-PL-PAR hour-ACC  
 ‘John ate apples for an hour.’

Huumo (2021) shows that partitive case in Finnish may be determined by three factors: quantitative boundedness of the referential object, non-culmination of

the event and negation. The factor ‘negation’ is illustrated in the examples (55) and (56), taken from Huumo (2021: 297). Notably, the occurrence of partitive cases or partitive genitives in the context of negation is cross-linguistically quite frequent, as illustrated by Miestamo (2014).

(55) *E-n lue kirja-a.*  
 NEG-1SG read.CNG book-PAR  
 ‘I am not reading a/the book.’; ‘I will not read a/the book.’

(56) *Pöydä-llä ei ole kirja-a.*  
 table-ADE NEG.3SG be.CNG book-PAR  
 ‘There is no book on the table.’

Metslang & Habicht (this issue) examine the variation in object case (partial and total objects) in Estonian texts from the 17th to the 20th century, assessing sociolinguistic variation.

Concerning the use of partitive elements in different syntactic functions, an asymmetry emerges between subject and object, which can be shown to reflect the diachronic path of extension of such items from ‘proper’ partitive constructions to other functions, in particular to the expression of indefiniteness/unboundedness. Luraghi (MS) sketches the development of the range of syntactic functions of the partitive article in French: the contexts extended from direct object to the subject of existential clauses, the subject of presentational clauses, the subject of unaccusative verbs (57), the subject of unergative verbs and the subject of transitive verbs (58). From direct objects the use of the partitive article also extended to prepositional objects, with the exception of the use after the preposition *de* (Luraghi MS). The examples have been taken from Carlier (2021: 83):

(57) *Des paquets arrivaient sans arrêt.*  
 PAR packets were\_arriving without stop  
 ‘Packets were arriving all the time.’

(58) *Du sang teignit le sac.*  
 PAR blood tinted the bag.  
 ‘Blood tinted the bag.’

However, as Bosveld-de Smet (1998) shows, in subject position the use of the partitive determiner in French is much more restricted than in object position. This is confirmed by Luraghi (MS) and Luraghi & Albonico (2021) for Modern Standard Italian.

The extension of the Finnish partitive case to subjects is currently in progress. According to Huumo (2003), partitive subjects mostly have an existential interpretation in Finnish, and occur with unaccusative verbs, as in (49). However,



partitive subjects are increasingly extending to other types of verbs, including unergative and transitive as in (59) (from Huumo 2018: 430), with which the partitive case indicates indefiniteness. According to Huumo (2018: 449) “there is a pressure to mark indefinite plural subjects with the partitive not only in existential clauses (which are intransitive) but also in some transitive clauses.”

- (59) *Viera-i-ta ihmisi-ä hak-i tavaro-i-ta piene-sta*  
 strange-PL-PAR person-PL-PAR fetch-PST.3SG thing-PL-PAR small-ELA  
*vaaleanpunaise-sta huonee-sta.*  
 pink-ELA room-ELA  
 ‘Strange people were fetching things from the small pink room.’

A particular case is partitive case on predicate adjectives in copular constructions. In (60) the predicate is in the partitive, because the subject nominal designates a substance. In (61), on the other hand, the predicative adjective is in the nominative, because the subject nominal designates a discrete entity. The examples have been taken from Huumo (2021: 296–297).

- (60) *Kahvi on musta-a.*  
 coffee(NOM) be.PRS.3SG black-PAR  
 ‘(The) coffee is black.’
- (61) *Tuoli on musta.*  
 chair(NOM) be.PRS.3SG black(NOM)  
 ‘The chair is black.’

Partitive genitive subjects are virtually limited to existential clauses with the verb ‘be’ or to unaccusative verbs in Indo-European languages that allow them, such as Ancient Greek (Conti & Luraghi 2014), ancient Indo-Iranian languages (Dahl 2014), Russian and Latvian.

Huumo (2013) and Tamm (2014) show that the partitive case may also be used with adpositions in Finnish and Estonian. The motivation for the use of the partitive in adpositional phrases may be connected with its other uses, as with the preposition ‘without’ in the Finnish Example (62), taken from Tamm (2014: 90), in which the preposition *ilman* ‘without’ has a negative meaning. According to Tamm (2014: 105), this is not the case in the Estonian example (63), in which semantic partitivity has completely bleached and in which partitive case has become a structural case assigned by the preposition.

- (62) *ilman rahaa*  
 without money.PAR  
 ‘without money’

- (63) *mööda Jõge*  
 along river.PAR  
 ‘along the river’

In Basque, the partitive case does not occur in assertions, but only with sentential negation, in exclamative existential sentences, yes/no questions, conditionals, *before*-clauses, *without*-clauses and epistemic modals. Following Giannakidou (1998), Etxeberria (2021: 339) calls these contexts non-veridical.

Tamm (2014) shows that another context in which partitive case in Estonian can be used is evidentiality. This is illustrated by Example (64) (from Tamm 2014: 90).

- (64) *Mari tule-va-t koju.*  
 Mary.NOM come-PERS.PRS.PTCP-PAR home.ILL  
 ‘Allegedly/reportedly, Mary will come home.’

Like Huumo (2021); Tamm (2014) relates the use of partitivity to incompleteness: incompleteness of the NP (part-of-NP meaning) or incompleteness of the event, in the case of a negated event or a non-culminating or unbounded event (part-of-V meaning). Tamm states that incompleteness is also expressed by (64), but this time it is incomplete evidence, viz. incomplete evidence for the completion of the event.

Irimia & Schneider-Zioga (this issue) discuss the sociative causative in the Bantu language Kinande, where partitive morphology occurs on a nominal without giving the nominal an NP-related partitive interpretation. They argue that the source of the partitivity in this construction lies in the co-extensiveness relation (incrementality relation) between the causing and the caused subevent.

### 3.2.3 *Partitives and differential object marking*

In the previous subsection we have seen that case marking may contribute to the interpretation of the sentence, more specifically the interpretation of the noun phrase and the verb. Especially in studies devoted to the Finnish and Estonian partitive case, partitive marking of direct objects has often been approached in the wider framework of differential object marking (DOM). However, several scholars have pointed out differences between case alternation involving the partitive and another case, typically the accusative, as in (45) and (46), on the one hand, and DOM involving optional object marking as known for example from Farsi, Turkish and Spanish (Iemmolo & Klumpp 2014). In certain cases, some terminological confusion arises: Chappell & Verstraete (2019) for example use the term DOM only for partitive/accusative alternation, while using the term ‘optional’ for cases in which a case marker can be present or absent in a particular

environment without affecting grammatical roles, although it contributes to the interpretation of the case-marked constituent. De Hoop & Malchukov (2008) distinguish between asymmetrical DOM, whereby certain objects are unmarked while others are marked, as in Spanish, and symmetrical DOM, whereby all objects are marked, but take different cases.

Typically, treatments of alternation involving partitive cases as DOM ignore that the partitive does not only alternate with the accusative, but also with the nominative: in other words, in languages in which the partitive is involved in DOM, it is also involved in differential subject marking, or DSM, as in (49) and (50) (see Luraghi & Kittilä 2014). Indeed, as discussed in Section 3.2.2, partitive elements are not limited to direct object position, and this peculiarity sets them apart from other DOM strategies, which are limited to the marking of direct objects, as in Spanish. This fact is properly highlighted only in Iemmolo (2013), who stresses that “while DOM has a strong link with either referential properties of the DO referent or information structure, as it is often used (i) to indicate a high degree of topicality of the DO, and (ii) to signal topic shifts and topic promotions in discourse..., symmetric alternations such as the one found in Finnish are employed to signal differences in verbal aspect/actionality, polarity, and quantification” (2013: 380).

In Section 3.2.2 we have seen that symmetric alternations as in Finnish determine the interpretation of the object as a total or a partial object. In the first case the object is totally affected, in the second case it is partially affected, as illustrated by examples of Finnish such as (45) and (46) and (65) (from Luraghi & Kittilä 2014: 41).

- (65) *Opettaja maala-si talo-n / talo-a*  
 teacher.NOM paint-PST.3SG house-ACC/ house-PAR  
 ‘The teacher painted the house/a part of the house.’

Examples (45) and (46) contain a verb of consumption (see the discussion in Section 3.2.2). In (65) the accusative is used when the whole house has been painted, while the partitive appears when only a part of the house has been affected by the painting event. Luraghi (this issue) shows that the same type of semantic differences are involved in the alternation between the accusative and the (partitive) genitive in Ancient Greek.

Luraghi & Kittilä (2014: 42) point out that partial affectedness is especially connected with direct objects that are incremental themes. They illustrate this with example (66).

- (66) *Vahtimestari lämmiti-i luentosali-n / luentosali-a*  
 janitor.NOM heat-PST.3SG lecture\_hall-ACC/ lecture\_hall-PAR  
 ‘The janitor heated the lecture room completely/the lecture room somewhat.’

In (66) the entity as a whole is affected, but the overall degree of affectedness varies according to which of the two cases is used. Luraghi & Kittilä observe that the accusative is used if the lecture hall has been completely heated and the temperature has reached the desired level. The partitive is used when the lecture hall has become somewhat warmer than it was, but the temperature aimed at has not yet been reached.

In Finnish, the partitive case may also appear with predicates ranking inherently lower for transitivity. Such verbs are low transitivity predicates, which do not indicate a change of state. Typical examples of verbs taking partitive objects include mental verbs or verbs of cognition and experience, as in (67) and (68).

- (67) *Lapsi rakasta-a äiti-ä-än*  
 child.NOM love-PRS.3SG mother-PAR-POSS.3SG  
 ‘The child loves his/her mother.’

- (68) *Henkilö ajattele-e kesä-ä*  
 person.NOM think-PRS.3SG summer-PAR  
 ‘A person is thinking about the summer.’

The verbs *rakastaa* (‘love’) and *ajatella* (‘think’) normally govern the partitive in Finnish. Partitive coding of the second argument may be claimed to follow from the inherently low (semantic) transitivity associated with these verbs (see Luraghi and Kittilä 2014: 43–44). The same type of verbs also shows genitive objects in several Indo-European languages in which the genitive functions as a partitive (see Luraghi, this issue, on Ancient Greek).

Finally, when the partitive or the partitive genitive is involved in DSM it may also mark a decrease in agency, as in Finnish (70) as opposed to (69) with a nominative subject (from Luraghi & Kittilä 2014: 43).

- (69) *Aino laula-a*  
 Aino.NOM sing-PRS.3SG  
 ‘Aino is singing.’
- (70) *Aino- laula-tta-a*  
 Aino-PAR sing-CAUS-PRS.3SG  
 ‘Aino feels like singing.’

While in (69) the subject referent sings willfully and on purpose, in (70) the subject referent feels an urge to sing, but is not necessarily singing. This means that

the degree of agency associated with the agent participant is lower in (70) than in (69).

#### 4. The contributions to this special issue

For this special issue we have selected a number of papers that focus on different dimensions of variation, and explore a wide variety of languages of different genetic and areal affiliation. In this way we aim to improve knowledge and understanding of how partitives arise and develop diachronically, what sort of functions they may fulfill, and how they can be described within different theoretical frameworks.

Languages discussed are by the most part languages of Europe, belonging to the Indo-European and the Uralic families, with a notable exception constituted by Kinande (Bantu). Issues tackled include dialectal and regional variation (Daniel & Ter-Avanesova), the diachronic development of partitive cases (Grünthal, Metslang & Habicht), variation among constructions involving partitive elements (Kalnača & Lokmane, Luraghi, Sleeman) as well as the peculiar extension of a hitherto undescribed partitive (Irimia & Schneider-Zioga). Contributions vary as to whether they are more or less theory oriented, and among the former they follow different theoretical orientations, ranging from Construction Grammar (Luraghi) to Generative Grammar (Sleeman, Irimia & Schneider-Zioga). Methodologies also vary, depending on the nature of the data, with a relevant part of the papers relying on elicitation from speakers (Daniel & Ter-Avanesova, Sleeman) or extraction from corpora (Kalnača & Lokmane, Metslang & Habicht, Luraghi).

Ter-Avanesova and Daniel provide an overview of the use of the second genitive (the *-u* form, available to a vast and only vaguely delimited group of 2nd declension nouns) in Russian dialects and provide case studies based on several dialectal corpora, including the Rogovatka corpus, the Malinino corpus, the Oepochka corpus and the Pustosha data base. They argue that, given the distribution observed in the dialects, evidence for the Circum-Baltic origins of the partitive uses of the second genitive may be less compelling than sometimes assumed in the areal typological literature.

Kalnača and Lokmane's contribution explores agreement variations in genitive partitive constructions in Latvian. The authors show that the morphosyntactic behavior of genitive partitive constructions in subject position regarding agreement is variable: a predicative adjective or participle may agree in number and gender either with the quantifier or with the genitive noun. Examples from

three different corpora of Latvian are extracted in order to analyze factors triggering either type of agreement.

Luraghi focuses on Ancient Greek to study the alternation between the accusative and the partitive genitive to encode the second argument. She shows that in Ancient Greek the two types of object encoding can alternate with some change-of-state verbs, alternation being viewed as connected with degrees of patient affectedness. Focusing on experiential verbs, which are typically characterized by a low degree of transitivity and do not imply a change of state of the second participant, the author takes a Construction Grammar approach and considers the effects of variation on the whole construction. Instead of concentrating on the implications of case alternation on the construal of the second participant, Luraghi argues that genitive vs. accusative marking of the object-stimulus in this case reflects on the construal of the subject-experiencer.

Grünthal discusses the emergence of the partitive case in the Uralic languages especially in the light of two north-western branches, Saamic and Finnic, and a third sub-branch, Mordvinic, located in Central Russia. Grünthal argues that the development of the Proto-Uralic ablative to Western Uralic object marking partitive takes place through three main stages. He shows that these are diversely manifested in contemporary Uralic languages and involve the maintenance of inherited features, the reanalysis of syntactic properties and the functional extension in certain Uralic branches.

Metslang and Habicht examine the variation in object case marking in written Estonian texts from the 17th to the 20th century and how this variation reflects societal and sociolinguistic factors. Estonian features a differential object marking system in which important factors influencing object case usage are aspect, quantitative boundedness of the object referent, and the polarity of the sentence. The object may appear in the partitive, the genitive or the nominative. Therefore, the acquisition of this system is difficult for non-native speakers. The authors' hypothesis is that the use of the object case in the Estonian H-variety of Germans, who formed the upper class in Estonia in the 13th–19th century, differed from the L1 use, but that during the 19th century, it approached the use of L1 Estonian speakers.

Irimia & Schneider-Zioga investigate a rarely discussed type of causative construction – a sociative causative – where the social interaction involved is that of helping. In the Bantu language Kinande, sociative causatives surface with partitive morphology. In the sociative causative construction, an event is obligatorily subdivided between causer and causee such that the causer carries out a subevent of the caused event, including sharing a part of the theme nominal. The authors argue that strictly connecting sociative partitivity to semantic partitivity of the object is not enough. They analyze the sociative causative construction as forcing

a *sharing requirement* on the eventuality. They propose that this restriction also affects the partitive object, in that it forces mapping of the object to the *parts* of the eventuality.

Within a generative perspective, Sleeman discusses syntactic constraints on the extraction of partitive pronouns, more specifically the presumed ban on extraction of partitive pronouns from adverbial measure phrases used with intransitive verbs. With the help of a Grammaticality Judgment Task, the author investigates if native speakers of Italian and Dutch accept the extraction of the partitive pronoun from adverbial measure phrases with intransitive verbs and which factors favor extraction. It is shown that the acceptance rate was higher than expected on the basis of the literature. Various explanations for the results are considered.

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