Independent Partitive (Genitive) as an isogloss of the Eastern Circum-Baltic area

1. Introduction

The syntactically dependent partitive case in Finnic and the partitive genitive case in East Slavic and Baltic area have been extensively discussed in the literature. It constitutes a firmly established feature of the Eastern part of the Circum-Baltic language area (cf. Larsson 1983; Koptjevskaia-Tamm 2001; Koptjevskaia-Tamm/Wälchli 2001: 649-669). The partitive genitive in East Slavic and Baltic exhibits functional correlations with the partitive case in the Finnic languages that "...are typologically too infrequent to be explained by a coincident parallel development." (Koptjevskaia-Tamm 2001:540f). However, much less attention has been paid to the syntactically independent correlate. The latter is however remarkable with respect to both its typologically specific functions and a certain consistency across the languages of the eastern part of the Circum-Baltic area.

From the typological point of view, the typical semantics of Case is to encode “the type of the relationships the dependent nouns bear to their heads” (Blake 1994:1-2). Differently from the “regular” cases, the function of the IP(g) pertains to such domains as aspect and quantification, referentiality and discursive prominence in East Slavic, Baltic and Finnic.

In the present paper I will discuss some specific properties of the independent partitive genitive in Baltic, East Slavic and the partitive case in Finnic that pertain to the domain of quantification and aspect.

2. Quantificational properties

One of the common innovations of Baltic, East Slavic and Finnic is that the implicit quantifier invoked by the IP(g) extended its domain of application from originally an NP-internal quantifier (D(eterminer)-quantifier) into an A(dverb)-quantifier that applies on the clause level. It becomes sensitive to the quantificational adverbs, incorporated verbal quantifiers and verbal aspect. While acknowledging language-specific differences in the quantificational value of the implicit quantifier in every particular language, I claim that there is, nevertheless, a semantic core that is common to all three language branches, and certain differences may be explained as motivated by the differences in, e.g., the aspectual organization of every language of concern. The discrepancy between the syntactic position (NP-internally) of the implicit quantifier and its domain of application (clause-level) is typologically rare, cf. the overview in Corbett (1994:202; 2000:251) where such a quantifier is said to be unattested. This makes this correlation particularly telling with regard to language contact.

To give an example, consider the temporal-transfer-reading induced by the implicit quantifier of the IP(g) (that overrides the accusative case-marking here):
The regular, canonical accusative case-marking of the objects in (1)-(3) would not induce the implication ‘for a while’. The implicit indeterminate quantifier induced by the IP(g) quantifies here the phase after the transfer event has taken place, inducing the meaning ‘the result will last a specific period of time’. This is so, because the transfer verbs (achievements) do not presuppose a (preparational) phase that could be measured by the quantifier which has to resort to the after-phase.

Another example represents the delimitative aspect (= cessative\(^1\)). The delimitatives entail that the process had been running for a while and was stopped for whatsoever reason without reaching a natural end (if such an end (telos) is presupposed by the lexical semantics of the verb at all). The typical implication here is that the action could have lasted longer and was not fully exhausted (cf. Sasse 2002:206). The delimitatives require the IP(g) marking of the direct object (instead of the structural accusative). It is only Standard Russian that allows accusative here too.

3. Conclusions

One finds a number of typologically striking correspondences across the languages of concern. Even though the IPg is an inherited category in Baltic and Slavic, most of its synchronic properties are not attested in the ancient IE languages and are thus likely to be recent innovations of Baltic and Slavic. Even more, the IPg shows a greater functional correspondence with the IP in the Finnic languages than with its etymological counterparts in the ancient IE languages. Interestingly, most of the properties not inherited from Proto-IE in Baltic and Slavic – as far as I can judge from the data available – are not inherited in Finnic either. This means that these properties were created relatively recently, and that the major part of these properties is the result of common developments in Baltic, Finnic and East Slavic.

References


\(^1\) In the Finnish tradition, cf. Huumo 2010:90


