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# Partitives and DOM

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# Partitives and DOM

- Bossong (1985) Differentielle Objekmarkierung (Iranian languages); (1982) präpositionaler Akkusativ (Romance languages)

Spanish (animacy based)

*Estoy esperando un tren/ a un camarero.*

be.PRS.1SG waiting a train/ DOM a waiter

“I’m waiting for a train/ for a waiter.”

Persian (definiteness based)

**Persian (Indo-European, Indo-Iranian)**

**a. *Hasan ketab-râ did***

Hasan book-ACC see.3SG.PST

‘Hasan saw the book.’

**b. *Hasan ketab did***

Hasan book see.3SG.PST

‘Hasan saw a book.’

(Comrie 1989: 132)

# Partitives and DOM

## Turkish (von Heusinger & Kornfilt 2005)

|       |                          |                  |                         |
|-------|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| (Ben) | <i>kitab-ı</i>           | <i>okı-du-m.</i> | definite                |
| I     | book-ACC                 | read-PAST-1SG    |                         |
|       | "I read the book."       |                  |                         |
| (Ben) | <i>bir kitap</i>         | <i>okı-du-m.</i> | non-specific indefinite |
| I     | a book                   | read-PAST-1SG    |                         |
|       | "I read a book."         |                  |                         |
| (Ben) | <i>bir kitab-ı</i>       | <i>okı-du-m.</i> | indefinite specific     |
| I     | a book-ACC               | read-PAST-1SG    |                         |
|       | "I read a certain book." |                  |                         |

## Cf. Spanish

*estoy buscando a un empleado*  
 I.am looking\_for DOM an employee  
 „I am looking for a certain employee“  
 indefinite specific

*estoy buscando (a) un empleado*  
 I.am looking\_for (DOM) an employee  
 „I am looking for an employee“  
 non-specific indefinite

# Partitives and DOM

- ▶ Differential object marking is the phenomenon whereby only a subset of direct objects are case marked depending on the semantic and/or pragmatic properties of the object referent (Iemmolo & Kluppf 2014)
- ▶ Optional case marking refers to the situation where a case marker can be present or absent in a particular environment without affecting grammatical roles (Chappel & Verstraete (2019)
- ▶ **case** → encodes the relation between a head and its dependent. Blake (1994: 198)  
“A system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads. Originally applied to inflectional systems, but sometimes used of other systems such as systems of [prepositions or] postpositions”

# Partitives and DOM

## Early explanations of DOM

- ▶ Distinguishing function (Diez 1844, Meyer Lübke 1899) → avoid ambiguity in the assignment of grammatical relations within the clause (Comrie 1989; Dixon 1979, Dixon 1994)
- ▶ Function of DOM → distinguishing the subject/agent from the direct object/patient in cases in which both participants are potential agents (animacy trigger)
- ▶ DOM assumed to reflect the marked status of definite and animate direct objects as opposed to indefinite and inanimate ones
- ▶ Inanimate and indefinite objects conceptually unmarked with respect to agents (easily distinguishable from the agents) - morphological marker on direct objects that are high in individuation iconically signals the semantically marked status of these objects with respect to objects low in individuation → case marking is thus economically motivated, as no overt marking is required when there is no need to disambiguate between the NPs

Explanation largely based on the Romance languages

# Partitives and DOM

- Cross-linguistic triggers of DOM (Witzlack-Makarevich & Seržant 2018: 6)

Table 1: Inherent semantic argument properties.

| Dimension    | Example   |
|--------------|---|
| Person       | First & Second person > Third person > (Obviative / Fourth person)<br>(cf. Dixon 1979: 85; Croft 2003: 130) |
| Animacy      | Humans > Animate non-humans (animals) > Inanimate (cf. Bossong 1991: 159; Silverstein 1976; Aissen 2003)    |
| Uniqueness   | Proper nouns > Common nouns (e.g. as part of Croft 2003: 130)   |
| Discreteness | Count nouns > Mass nouns (cf. Bossong 1991: 159)  |
| Number       | Singular vs. Plural vs. Dual  |

# Partitives and DOM

Animacy based DOM in Russian (never labelled as such!)

**Animacy and differential object marking in Old Church Slavonic** (Eckhoff 2015)

|                   |         |          |
|-------------------|---------|----------|
| сърѡштета         | вы      | члвкъ.   |
| sъręšteta         | vy      | člvkъ    |
| will-meet.PRS.2DU | you.NOM | man.NA   |
| ἀπαντήσει         | ὑμῖν    | ἄνθρωπος |
| will-meet.FUT.3SG | you.DAT | man.NOM  |

'you will meet a man'

(Mar. Mk 14:13)

|          |     |             |          |      |            |
|----------|-----|-------------|----------|------|------------|
| призваша | же  | въторицеж   | чка      |      |            |
| prizvaše | že  | vъtoricejъ  | čka      |      |            |
| called   | etc | second-time | man.GA   |      |            |
| Ἐφώνησαν | οὖν | τὸν         | ἄνθρωπον | ἐκ   | δευτέρου   |
| called   | etc | the         | man.ACC  | from | second.GEN |

'They summoned the man once more'

(Mar. Jh 9:24)

# Partitives and DOM

## Russian - singular

|            | MASCULINE<br>ANIMATE      | MASCULINE<br>INANIMATE     | FEMININE   | NEUTER                               |
|------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| NOMINATIVE | drug milyj<br>dear friend | stol visokij<br>high table | podruga milaja /<br>interesnaja kniga<br>dear friend / interesting<br>book | mesto<br>dalekoe<br>faraway<br>place |
| ACCUSATIVE | <b>druga<br/>milogo</b>   | stol visokij               | podrugu miluju<br>interesnuju knigu  | mesto<br>dalekoe                     |
| GENITIVE   | druga<br>milogo           | stola<br>visokogo          | podrugi miloj<br>interesnoj knigi  | mesto<br>dalekogo                    |

## Plural

|            | ANIMATE                                | INANIMATE   |
|------------|--|---|
| NOMINATIVE | druz'ja milye / podrug<br>milye        | stoly vysokie / interesnye knigi<br>mesta dalekye     |
| ACCUSATIVE | <b>druzej milych<br/>podrug milych</b> | stoly vysokie / interesnye knigi<br>mesta dalekye     |
| GENITIVE   | druzej milych<br>podrug milych         | stolov vysokich / interesnych knig /<br>dalekich mest |



# Partitives and DOM

## The partitive: a real case?

Typical function of morphological case: “marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads” (Blake 1994: 1) → partitive cases do not share the distribution of other case marking devices.

### Finnish: Partitive objects

- a. *Aino sö-i leivä-n*  
 Aino eat-PST.3SG bread-ACC  
 ‘Aino ate the (whole) bread.’
- b. *Aino sö-i leipä-ä*  
 Aino eat-PST.3SG bread-PAR  
 ‘Aino ate (some of the) bread.’

### Partitive subjects

- a. *naise-t tul-i-vat koti-in*  
 woman-PL come-PST-3PL home-ILL  
 ‘The women came home.’
- b. *nais-i-a tul-i koti-in*  
 woman-PL-PAR come-PST.3SG home-ILL  
 ‘Some (of the) women came home.’

Partitive subj & obj  
 in the same sentence

*Use-i-ta ihmis-i-ä odott-i satee-ssa bussi-a.*  
 Many-PAR-PL person-PAR-PL wait-PST.3SG rain-INE bus-PAR  
 ‘Many people were waiting for the bus in the rain.’

# Partitives and DOM

## IE partitive genitive

### Russian - Direct object

*Ja vypil vody*

1SG drink:PST.PFV.M.SG water:GEN

‘I drank (some) water.’

### Russian - Subject

*Nočju snega navalilo!*

night:INS snow:(M).SG.GEN piled.up:N

‘During the night, there fell piles of snow!’ (from Paykin 2014)

# Partitives and DOM

## Ancient Greek partitive genitive - Subject

1. *eisì gâr autôn kai parà basiléi tôn Perséōn*  
 be:PRS.3PL PTC DEM.GEN.PL and by king:DAT ART.GEN.PL.M Persian:GEN.PL.M  
 "There are (some) of these (sc. ants) even by the king of the Persians" (Hdt. 3.102.2);
2. *eisì dè kai tôn peri phúsin hoi toiaútēn mèn ouk epragmateúthēsan akribologían peri tās phlébas*  
 be:PRS.3SG PTC and ART.GEN.PL about nature:ACC ART.NOM.PL such:ACC PTC NEG  
 labor:AOR.3PL precision:ACC about ART.ACC.PL vein:ACC.PL  
 'There are also scientist who have not investigated the veins with so much accuracy.' (Arist. HA 513a.9)
3. *en hósoisi toû liparoû enên*  
 in INDEF.DAT.PL ART.GEN fat:GEN be:IMPF.3SG  
 'There was fat even in them (sc. the bones)' 14 (Hp. Carn. 4.6)
4. *tôn dè polemiōn ên hoùs hupospóndous apédosan*  
 ART.GEN.PL PTC enemy:GEN.PL be:IMPF.3SG REL.ACC.PL  
 under.truce:ACC.PL return:AOR.3PL  
 'And there were some of the enemy (casualties) that they returned under a truce.'

# Partitives and DOM

## Ancient Greek – Partitive genitive objects vs. accusative objects

5. *Mē pās tis lōtoio phagōn*  
 NEG how INDF.NOM lotus.GEN eat.PTCP.AOR.NOM  
*nōstoio láthētai*  
 return.GEN forget.SBJV.AOR.MID.3SG  
 'So that nobody, having eaten some lotus, may forget the return.' (Hom. Od. 9. 102)
6. *ē tón g' en póntōi phágon ikhthúes*  
 or DEM.ACC PTC in sea.DAT eat.AOR.3PL fish.NOM.PL  
 'Or in the sea, the fish have eaten him up.' (Hom. Od. 14.135)

# Partitives and DOM

## Ancient Greek – Partitive genitive second arguments and locatives

7. *epeì k' olooîo tetarpōmestha góoio*  
 when ptc dire:gen.m enjoy:pf.m/p.1pl groan:gen.m

“when we have taken our fill of dire lamenting” (Il. 23.10);

8. *philótēti trapeíomen*  
 love:DAT enjoy:AOR.MID.1PL

‘We take our joy together in love.’ (Hom. Il. 3.441).

9. *ē halòs ē epì gês*  
 or sea:gen or on land:gen

“either at sea or on land” (Od. 12.26-27)

# Partitives and DOM

Chappell & Verstraete (2019)

optional vs. alternating case marking

optional case marking refers to the situation where a case marker can be present or absent in a particular environment without affecting grammatical roles

alternating marking: instead of the presence or absence of one single case marker, alternating marking involves an alternation between two distinct case markers that does not affect grammatical role.

# Partitives and DOM

In the literature, what we call optional and alternating marking have more commonly been subsumed under a broader category of ‘differential’ marking (e.g. Bossong 1998, Aissen 2003; see also Malchukov & de Swart 2009), which also includes referent-based splits .... We believe that these three categories are best kept apart for analytical reasons, which is also why we introduce the new label ‘**alternating**’, to distinguish this category both from ‘**optional**’ and ‘**differential**’.

On the one hand, an alternation between two case markers in the same context is not just formally different from variable use of one single marker, but ... it also has a somewhat different distribution and functional motivation. On the other hand, alternating marking as defined here is also distinct from referent- and construction-based split marking, where the alternation is triggered by differences in the structure involved, i.e. different referents or different constructions. (Chappell & Verstraete 2019)

# Partitives and DOM

## Symmetric and asymmetric DOM

de Hoop & Malchukov (2008) → case marking systems obey two different and violable constraints, seen as competing motivations, namely **distinguishability and identify**.

**distinguishability** → requires case marking to disambiguate between the two core arguments of a transitive clause (de Hoop & Malchukov 2008, 584).

**identify** → serves to encode specific semantic/pragmatic information about the nominal argument in question via case marking.

→ **asymmetrical** DO encoding either triggered by **distinguishability or identify**,  
**symmetrical** DO

necessarily triggered by **identify**.



# Partitives and DOM

lemmolo 2013

- When there is a **symmetric** alternation in DO encoding, such alternation will be governed by parameters related to **verbal aspect/actionality, polarity, or quantification**;
- Conversely, **asymmetric alternations will be mostly governed by referential (i.e. semantic or information structural) properties of the DO**, such as animacy, topicality, and definiteness (i.e. identifiability/referentiality)

The aforementioned claim about the correlations of symmetrically realized DAMs with event interpretation, on the one hand, and asymmetrically realized DAMs correlating with participant interpretation, on the other, is too strong → The opposition between an overt vs. zero marker is only possible if there is no general ban on zeros in the particular domain of a language.  
(Witzlack-Makarevich & Seržant 2018: 24)

# Partitives and DOM

Latvian

In this construction, the patient argument realized with speech-act-participant personal and reflexive pronouns is obligatorily marked with the accusative case, while other NP types are marked with the nominative case in the standard language. ... Elsewhere, Latvian does not show any DAM. The debitive construction is thus the only domain in Latvian within which one finds DAM. Witzlack-Makarevich & Seržant (2018: 21)

|    |            |             |                 |                             |
|----|------------|-------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| a. | <i>Tev</i> | <i>(ir)</i> | <i>jā-ciena</i> | <i>mani/*es.</i>            |
|    | YOU.DAT    | (AUX.PRS.3) | DEB-respect     | I.ACC/*I.NOM                |
| b. | <i>Tev</i> | <i>(ir)</i> | <i>jā-ciena</i> | <i>viņš/māte/valsts.</i>    |
|    | YOU.DAT    | (AUX.PRS.3) | DEB-respect     | he.NOM/mother.NOM/state.NOM |

a. 'You have to be respectful towards me (ACC).'

b. 'You have to be respectful towards him (NOM) / [your] mother (NOM) / [the] country (NOM).' [Constructed example]

# Partitives and DOM

Alternating marking is not only rarer than optional marking, but also has somewhat different functional motivations: while definiteness and affectedness can play a role in both (though this is disputed for affectedness, see lemmolo 2011), topicality does not play a role in alternating marking. (Chappell & Verstraete 2019)

## Topicality and DOM – Italian

- (a) **A** **me** *non convince questo*  
 DOM me NEG convince.PRS.3SG this  
 “This does not convince me.”
- (b) *Ma a me colpisce una cosa ...*  
 but DOM me strike.PRS.3SG one thing  
 “But I’m struck by one thing.”
- (c) **A** **te** *non ti sopporto piú*  
 DOM you NEG CL.2SG tolerate.PRS.1SG more  
 “I can’t stand you any longer.”
- (lemmolo 21010)

# Partitives and DOM

## **Semiotic features distinguishing types of DOM**

McGregor (2006, 2010, 2013) optional marking is special among case systems because it involves a contrast between the presence and absence of a sign on semiotic grounds → has a general type of meaning that is distinct from contrasts between two different signs.

Type of meaning involved in optionality: interpersonal, relating to general cognitive principles of joint attention, i.e. prominence (“whether or not [the referent] is accorded particular attention within the frame”) and backgrounding (“whether or not [the referent] is presumed to be in the frame of joint attention”, McGregor 2013: 1157)

# Partitives and DOM

Furthermore, some of the **peculiarities that set asymmetric alternations apart from symmetric alternations are not taken into account** in their analysis. For instance, in discussing the alternation between accusative and partitive in Finnish, de Hoop & Malchukov (2008) **do not mention that the partitive case can alternate with the nominative in subject function**. As we will see below, the partitive case cross-linguistically does not share the distribution of any other case-marking device (Moravcsik 1978), for it does not indicate the dependency relation between a noun and its head, being found on subjects, DOs, and obliques (Sands & Campbell 2001: 256–269)

(Iemmolo 2013; see Luraghi 2003)

# Partitives and DOM

A few Kartvelian languages (Georgian, Mingrelian, Svan) display a symmetrical DO alternation dependent on TAM parameters. For instance, in Georgian, DOs are differently encoded depending on the TAM series of the verb. Thus, the DO is in the dative with imperfective tenses (TAM series I), while the DO occurs in the nominative with the aorist and the perfect series respectively (i.e. TAM series II and III) (iemmolò 2013: 386)

## Georgian (Kartvelian, Georgian)

|                               |                      |                 |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| <i>glex-I</i>                 | <i>tesavs</i>        | <i>simind-s</i> |
| peasant-NOM                   | 3SG.SUBJ.SOW.3SG.I   | corn-DAT        |
| 'The peasant is sowing corn.' |                      |                 |
| <i>glex-ma</i>                | <i>datesa</i>        | <i>simind-i</i> |
| peasant-ERG                   | 3SG.SUBJ.SOW.3SG.II  | corn-NOM        |
| 'The peasant sowed corn.'     |                      |                 |
| <i>glex-s</i>                 | <i>dautesavs</i>     | <i>simind-i</i> |
| peasant-DAT                   | 3SG.SUBJ-SOW.3SG.III | corn-NOM        |
| 'The peasant has sown corn.'  |                      |                 |

[HARRIS 1981: 1]

[HARRIS 1981: 1]

# Partitives and DOM

Split ergativity treated as DSM in Witzlack-Makarevich & Seržant (2018: 18)

Tense, aspect, and mood of the clause present an often discussed trigger of DAM, in particular in case of differential agent marking ... The distribution of case markers in Georgian illustrates this type of DAM. In the present, the agent argument appears in the nominative case .... In the aorist, the agent argument appears in the narrative case (sometimes also called ergative) → No mention of co-occurring DOM

Georgian (Kartvelian; Georgia; Harris 1981: 42)

- |    |                                    |                    |                |               |
|----|------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| a. | <i>Deda</i>                        | <i>bans</i>        | <i>tavis</i>   | <i>švil-s</i> |
|    | mother.NOM                         | she.bathes.him.PRS | self.GEN       | child-DAT     |
|    | 'The mother is bathing her child.' |                    |                |               |
| b. | <i>Deda-m</i>                      | <i>dabana</i>      | <i>tavis-i</i> | <i>švil-i</i> |
|    | mother-NARR                        | she.bathed.him.AOR | self.GEN-NOM   | child-NOM     |
|    | 'The mother bathed her child.'     |                    |                |               |

# Partitives and DOM

**Alternating marking** is found, once again, both for A argument and for O arguments. For A arguments this is quite rare, since... alternative markers for A are usually triggered by differences in referent or construction (Chappell & Vertraete 2019) → No mention of Balto-Finnic partitive subjects

(Nêlêmwa (Austronesian; Brill 1997: 379)

a. doi-na        ru        cacia  
 sting.TR-me    ERG.INAN    acacia

'The acacia stung me.'

b. i    tûlî    pwaxi    eli        a        kaavo  
 she dry    child    that.ANAPH    ERG.AN    Kaavo

'Kaavo dried the child.'



# Partitives and DOM

Some Polynesian languages exhibit a symmetric alternation, known as “middle object construction” (Chung 1978), which is ... more closely connected to verbal classes .... Middle object constructions involve a change in DO encoding ... whereby the DO takes oblique encoding instead of the standard accusative or absolutive case (depending on whether the languages is accusative or ergative). (Iemmolo 2013: 386)

Maori (Austronesian, Oceanic)

|           |             |           |          |           |            |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|
| <i>Ka</i> | <i>kapo</i> | <i>au</i> | <i>i</i> | <i>te</i> | <i>puu</i> |
| T/A       | snatch      | 1SG       | ACC      | the       | gun        |

‘I snatched the gun.’

|           |             |           |              |            |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------------|------------|
| <i>Ka</i> | <i>kapo</i> | <i>au</i> | <i>ki te</i> | <i>puu</i> |
| T/A       | snatch      | 1SG       | to the       | gun        |

‘I snatched at the gun.’

[BAUER 1993: 268]

# Partitives and DOM

## Cf. Ancient Greek *orégomai* + acc 'hit' / + gen 'aim at'

9. *hoppóterós*    *ke*    *phthêisin*    *orexámenos*  
 which.NOM    PTC precede.SBJV.AOR.3SG    reach.PTCP.AOR.MID.NOM  
*khróa*    *kalón*    *psaúsēi*    *d'*    *endínōn*  
 flesh.ACC    fair.ACC    touch.SBJV.PRS.3SG    PTC interior.GEN.PL  
 'Which of the two will first reach the other's fair flesh and touch the inward parts.' (Hom. Il. 23.805-806)

10. *Aías*    *d'*    *hormēthéntos*    *oréxato*    *dourì*  
 Aias.NOM PTC rush.PTCP.AOR.PASS.GEN reach.AOR.MID.3SG spear.DAT  
*phaienōi*    *Héktoros*    *all'*    *oú*    *pēi*    *khroòs*  
 bright.DAT    Hector.GEN    but    NEG PTC flesh.GEN  
*eísato*  
 reach.AOR.MID.3SG  
 'But Aias aimed with his bright spear at Hector as he rushed, yet in no wise did he reach (his) flesh.' (Hom. Il. 13.190-191)

# Partitives and DOM

## Differential Argument Marking

Any kind of situation where an argument of a predicate bearing the same generalized semantic argument role may be coded in different ways, depending on factors other than the argument role itself, and which is not licensed by diathesis alternations. (Witzlack-Makarevich & Seržant 2018: 3)

→ NO mention of the fact that, contrary to other types of DAM devices, partitives can mark both subjects and objects

# Partitives and DOM

- ▶ You have to **shoot at** him without hitting him.
- ▶ The man was **shot** in the head as he left the bar.



DOM?!

# Partitives and DOM

## Two types of Romance languages

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

Körner (1981: 154): neither objects marked by DOM, nor partitive objects can be promoted to subjects and keep their type of overt marker.

*Maria besó a Juan / \*A Juan fue besado por Maria*

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

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

PAR bread is eaten by me

“Some bread is eaten by me”

# Partitives and DOM

**Du pain** mangé par une personne donnée ne peut pas être consommé par des autres

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

“Bread eaten by a given person cannot be eaten by others”

[http://www.worldlingo.com/ma/enwiki/fr/Private\\_good](http://www.worldlingo.com/ma/enwiki/fr/Private_good)

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

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

d'urgence

of urgency

“Some people have been seen embarking on the airplane of the Russian ministry for Urgent Affairs”

<http://www.ocvidh.org/article.php?sid=1618>

# Partitives and DOM

**Distribution of partitive articles in Standard Italian** (Luraghi & Albonico 2021: 172)

|             | ABSTRACT DO | CONCRETE DO | SUBJECT | PREDICATE NOUN | PP/ADVERBIAL |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------|----------------|--------------|
| PL. INDEF.  | 534         | 401         | 112     | 130            | 98           |
| UNCOUNTABLE | 83          | 57          | 25      | -              | 7            |

Keenan (1976) Functional properties of subjects:

- independent existence
- indispensability
- presupposed or persistent reference
- definiteness
- topicality

**strong preference for the subject to be definite** related to presupposition that the referent of the subject exists

**subject is usually the discourse topic** → topic: previously introduced in discourse hence definite

# Partitives and DOM

Summing up:

Broad definition of DOM (and DAM)

- ▶ captures generalizations
- ▶ blurs distinctions between different phenomena