

# The Representation of Aspect

## 3: Telicity and Boundedness

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### 1 The syntactic representation of telicity

- Is telicity represented in the syntax? Can **atelicity** be represented?

“[...]while there may be well-formedness conditions associated with telicity (quantity DP, etc.), there should not be any which are associated with atelicity. Rather, we expect to find distinct well-formedness conditions associated with various structures which, by virtue of lacking the structure in (1), are atelic, but which are otherwise distinct.”  
(Borer, 2005, chapter 5)

- Clarke (2013) argues that telicity is not represented in the Japanese verb system (framed as Borer’s  $Asp_Q^0$  being entirely absent).

The presence/absence of quantized DPs (i.e. with and without classifiers) does not impact compatibility with time-frame adverbials:

- (1) a. Bill-wa ip-pun-de pan/ringo-o tabe-ta.  
Bill-TOP one-minute-in bread/apple-ACC eat-PAST  
“Bill ate bread/apple in one minute.” (Yoshida 2008, p. 422)
- b. Bill-wa ip-pun-de ringo hito-tsu-o tabe-ta.  
Bill-TOP one-minute-in apple one-CL-ACC eat-PAST  
“Bill ate an apple in one minute.” (Clarke 2013, p. 135)

- We’ve seen some evidence that for other contrasts (viewpoint aspect, stativity) different languages might make different choices about which pole to specify.
- Is there similar evidence concerning telicity?

### 2 Interesting Test Case: Finnish

- Finnish a very well known alternation between accusative and partitive direct objects.
- Much the same pattern of accusative/partitive alternations occurs in Estonian, though it is less often discussed directly (Craioveanu, 2014).

- (2) Finnish (Craioveanu, 2014, p. 13)
- a. Luin kirjan tunnissa.  
read.1SG book.ACC hour.INESS  
“I read the book in an hour.”
- b. \*Luin kirjaa tunnissa.  
read.1SG book.PART hour.INESS
- (3) a. Luin kirjaa tunnin (ajan).  
read.1SG book.PART hour.GEN time.GEN  
“I read the book for an hour.”
- b. \*Luin kirjan tunnin (ajan).  
read.1SG book.ACC hour.GEN time.GEN
- (4) Finnish (Kiparsky, 1998, (1))
- a. Ammu-i-n karhu-a / kah-ta karhu-a / karhu-j-a  
shoot-PAST-1SG bear-PART / two-PART bear-PART / bear-PL-PART  
“I shot at the (a) bear / at (the) two bears / at (the) bears.”
- b. Ammu-i-n karhu-n / kaksi karhu-a / karhu-t  
shoot-PAST-1SG bear-ACC / two-ACC bear-PART / bear-PL-ACC  
“I shot the (a) bear / two bears / the bears”

- Standard generalization: accusative objects occur when the predicate is telic, partitive objects otherwise (Kratzer, 2004, Borer, 2005, among many others).

- Several other factors also condition the distribution of accusative/partitive, however. The examples I discuss are drawn from Craioveanu (2014), but the Finnish facts (including viewpoint and negation) are discussed elsewhere, most accessibly in print by Kiparsky (1998).

#### Viewpoint Aspect

- Partitive case also appears when the clause is imperfective, as diagnosed by a *simultaneous* interpretation when modified by a *when*-clause:

- (5) Finnish (Craioveanu, 2014)
- a. Kun Pekka saapui, Outi söi omenaa.  
When Pekka arrive.PAST.3SG Outi eat.PAST.3SG apple.PART  
“When Pekka arrived, Outi was eating an apple.”
- b. Kun Pekka saapui, Outi söi omenan.  
When Pekka arrive.PAST.3SG Outi eat.PAST.3SG apple.ACC  
“When Pekka arrived, Outi ate an apple.”
- (6) Estonian (Craioveanu, 2014)
- a. Kui Priit saabus, Õie söi õu-na.<sup>1</sup>  
When Priit arrived.3SG Õie eat.3SG apple.PART  
“When Priit arrived, Õie was eating an apple.”
- b. Kui Priit saabus, Õie söi õuna.  
When Priit arrived.3SG Õie eat.3SG apple.ACC  
“When Priit arrived, Õie was eating an apple.”

<sup>1</sup>The mid-line dot is used by Craioveanu to indicate contrastive length that doesn’t appear in Estonian orthography.

- Interestingly: this applies even in the present tense.

Perfective viewpoint is incompatible with present tense → accusative case results in a future interpretation (as verbal perfective marking does in Russian).

(7) Finnish

- Syön omenaa.  
eat.1SG apple.PART  
“I am eating a / the apple.” OR “I will eat some of a / the apple.”
- Syön omenan.  
eat.1SG apple.ACC  
“I will eat a/the apple.”

(8) Estonian

- Söön õu-na  
eat.1SG apple.PART  
“I am eating a / the apple.” OR “I will eat some of a / the apple.”
- Söön õuna  
eat.1SG apple.ACC  
“I will eat a/the apple.”

**Polarity**

- Accusative elements also become partitive in the scope of negation.
- This includes time-span adverbials that are ordinarily marked accusative. Genitive elements (syncretic with accusative) do not show the alternation.

(9) Finnish

- Nukuin viikon.  
sleep.PAST.1SG week.ACC  
“I slept for a week.”
- En nukkunut viikkoa / viikon aikana.  
NEG.1SG sleep.PTCP week.PART / week.GEN time.ESS  
“I did not sleep for a week.”
- En nukkunut viikon aikana / viikkoon.  
NEG.1SG sleep.PTCP week.GEN time.ESS / week.ILL  
“I did [not sleep for a week].”

- It also includes direct objects, even those that have moved above the negative auxiliary, for focus or passive:

(10) Finnish

- Ammuin hirven.  
shoot.PAST.1SG moose.ACC  
“I shot a / the moose.”
- En ampunut hirveä.  
NEG.1SG1 shoot.PTCP moose.PART  
“I did not shoot a / the moose.”

- Hirveä en kyllä ampunut.  
moose.PART NEG.1SG indeed shoot.PTCP  
“It wasn’t the moose that I shot.” [spoken Finnish]
- Hirveä ei ammuttu.  
moose.PART NEG.3SG shoot.PASS.PTCP  
“The moose wasn’t shot.”

**Aside on Statives**

- According to Craioveanu, in Estonian stative verbs never occur with accusative case (they may take partitive or one of the other locative cases).
- In Finnish, by contrast, a subset of stative verbs can occur with accusative objects (except in contexts outlined above).

hear	<i>kuulla</i>
see	<i>nähdä</i>
own	<i>omistaa</i>
contain, include	<i>sisältää</i>
hold	<i>pitää</i>
cross, span	<i>ylittää</i>
weigh	<i>painaa</i>
know (fact)	<i>tietää</i>
know (person)	<i>tuntea</i>
remember	<i>muistaa</i>
believe	<i>uskoa</i>
want	<i>haluta, tahtoa</i>

- Even with these verbs, personal pronouns apparently require/strongly prefer partitive case, or involve slightly shifted interpretations.

(11) Finnish (*Craioveanu, 2014, p. 27*)

- Ymmärrän kysymyksen.  
understand.1SG question.ACC  
“I understand the question.”
- Ymmärrän sinua.  
understand.1SG 2SG.PART  
“I understand you. [i.e., as a person]”

**Towards an Analysis**

- The distribution of object case is as follows:

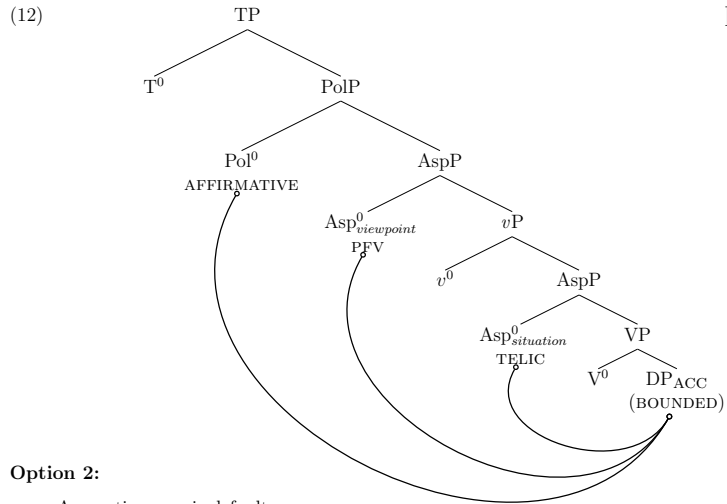
**Accusative:** occurs when the predicate is telic, the viewpoint aspect is perfective, and the clause is affirmative.

**Partitive:** occurs elsewhere.

- If partitive is default, should we specify the contexts in which accusative occurs?
- Or should we say that accusative is default, but very easily disrupted by partitive assignment?

**Option 1:**

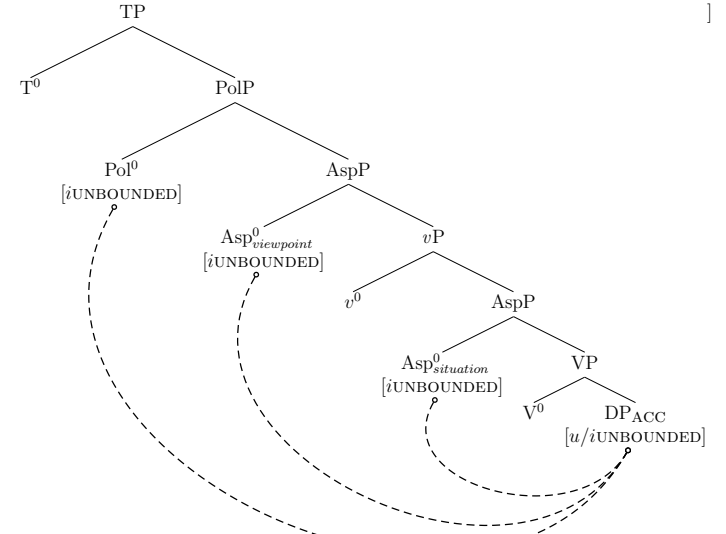
- Partitive case is default.
- Accusative case (marking telicity + perfectivity + positive) is licensed *additively*: requires a relationship with multiple higher projections. If any one relationship is disrupted, default partitive surfaces.



**Option 2:**

- Accusative case is default.
- But if any higher projection has a particular feature (call it “unbounded”), partitive case is assigned and overwrites accusative.  
(Tree on next page)
- Puzzle: can we really say that these different meanings are the same feature?
- Krifka (1992): Unified semantics of partitive case in Finnish. Imperfective/progressive and quantitatively indeterminate nominals are both *unbounded*, one of events and one of individuals.  
In the morphosyntax, we don’t want to think of this as the semantics of partitive case itself. Instead: partitive case *reflects* a single feature distributed across.
- Extending the same claim to negation? More difficult.

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- [iUNBOUNDED] has different interpretations depending on its position:
  - On Pol<sup>0</sup>: negation
  - On Asp<sup>0</sup><sub>viewpoint</sub>: imperfective
  - On Asp<sup>0</sup><sub>situation</sub>: atelic
  - Within DP: indeterminate quantity
- Implementation in terms of Upwards Agree (Wurmbrand, 2011; Zeijlstra, 2012, et seq.).
  - An **uninterpretable/unvalued feature** probes upwards in search of a checker/valuer.
  - It is licensed if it finds *any* element that can check/valve it.
  - In this analysis, it is necessary to say that if it does *not* find a checker, the derivation still converges.
  - The DP can also itself be specified as [iUNBOUNDED]—some question of where this feature would be located relative to a position associated with case.

**Questions for discussion:**

- Does this predict that *every* language should treat negation/imperfective/perfective together?
- Is there a potential problem in having bounded and unbounded heads in the same tree? Cf. Clarke on [+AT] and [-AT].

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