

Case Marking and Word Order in the Finnish Language

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In the Finnish language there are three morphological cases that are available for the core arguments. The cases are the nominative, the genitive and the partitive. These three cases can indicate both the subject and the object. Then, we should clarify the relationship between the case marking and the syntactic status of the core arguments in the Finnish language. We should also examine to what extent the linearity plays an important role, since the Finnish language is often described as a free-word-order language. Although the default interpretation of a core argument is derived from its case marking, the word order also plays an important role in the Finnish syntax.

1. Introduction

In the Finnish language there are three morphological cases that are available for the core arguments, i.e. the subject and the object. The cases are the nominative, the genitive and the partitive. It seems peculiar that not the accusative case but the genitive case is included in these three cases. This is because nouns of the Finnish language do not have an accusative form¹. At the earlier stage of the language nouns had a distinct accusative form indeed, but later the accusative and the genitive fused into the same form. This diachronic development explains the reason the object is marked in the genitive case. The genitive case, however, can indicate not only the object but also the subject. Moreover, the nominative case is also available both for the subject and for the object. It is characteristic of the Finnish language that it has a separate morphological case to indicate an argument that is quantitatively indefinite². When the referent of the subject or the object is indefinite in quantity, it should be marked in the partitive case. This means that the partitive is also the case that is available both for the subject and for the object.

As I have argued in my previous papers (2003, 2006), the distribution of these three cases indicating the core arguments can be properly explained by considering the semantic macrorole each core argument carries on in the sentence in question³. Every core argument has a distinct thematic role. The thematic roles can be arranged on a hierarchy. In typical transitive sentences one of the core arguments has a thematic role that is located at the one end of the hierarchy, i.e. the agent, while the other argument has another thematic role at the other end, i.e. the patient. The semantic macrorole comprises two members, i.e. the actor and the undergoer. Each semantic macrorole subsumes a set of thematic roles. The actor represents the thematic roles on one side of the hierarchy, including the agent. On the other hand, the undergoer represents the thematic roles on the other side, including the patient.

By utilizing the semantic macroroles the distribution of the three morphological cases can be described as follows:

- 1) The nominative is the case that is available for all the core arguments but the typical undergoer argument.
- 2) The partitive is the case that is available for all the core arguments but the typical actor argument.
- 3) The genitive is the case that is available for the typical actor argument and the typical undergoer argument.

Such a description is valuable indeed, but what is more important is to explain the way of interpreting the syntactic status of the core arguments. We should clarify the way in which each core argument marked in a particular case is interpreted as one of the grammatical relations, i.e. the subject or the object. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship between the case marking and the syntactic status of the core arguments in the Finnish language.

2. Linearity

One of the characteristics of the human language is the linearity. The human language can be divided into phonemes. The linearity means that we cannot pronounce more than one phoneme at once. The linearity is relevant not only to the phonological interpretation of an utterance but also to its syntactic interpretation. For example, in a language without any morphological devices to indicate the subject, we should resort to the linear order of arguments to specify the subject. In such a language the object is also defined by the linear order of arguments. This means that the word order of this language is fixed. Needless to say, the linear order of arguments has a crucial role to play in the syntax of this language. On the other hand, if the core arguments and the predicate can be arranged freely, the linearity has nothing to do with the syntax of this latter type of language. If the word order is entirely free, how can we detect the subject and the object? In order to say which argument is the subject, for example, we need some morphological device to be applied exclusively to the subject. To put it the other way round, the core arguments can be arranged freely, only if there is some morphological device available for determining the syntactic status of the core arguments.

The Finnish language is often described as a free-word-order language⁴. The subject can follow the predicate and the object can precede the subject and the predicate indeed, but we should emphasize that the subject before the predicate and the object after the predicate are the preferred word order of the Finnish language. Then, the question is to what extent the linearity plays an important role in the syntax of the Finnish language.

3. Morphological device vs. word order

In the Finnish language the word order of the core arguments can be inverted. For example:

- (1) *Metsästäjät kaatoivat karhun.*
 hunter-nom.pl. knock down-3.pl.p. bear-gen.sg.
 Hunters knocked down the bear.
- (2) *Karhun kaatoivat metsästäjät.*
 bear-gen.sg. knock down-3.pl.p. hunter-nom.pl.
 It is hunters who knocked down the bear.

In both of the sentences what serves as the subject is the argument marked in the nominative case. This means that the case marking can serve as a device to detect the subject. We can usually infer which argument is the subject from the meaning conveyed by the sentence indeed. But without considering the case marking we cannot determine which is the meaning of the sentences above, ‘hunters knocked down the bear’ or ‘the bear knocked down hunters’.

Then, the sentences (1)–(2) show that the case marking is decisive for the syntactic interpretation of the core arguments. However, this is not always the case. We may recall now that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the morphological cases and the core arguments in the Finnish language. We can reasonably assume that the nominative is the default marker of the subject indeed, but the nominative case can indicate also the object. Moreover, the nominative is not the sole marker of the subject. Compare the following two sentences, for example:

- (3) *Sinä luet yhden kirjan joka päivä.*
 you-nom.sg. read-2.sg.pr. one-gen.sg. book-gen.sg. every day
 You read one book each day.
- (4) *Sinun pitää lukea yksi kirja joka päivä.*
 you-gen.sg. must-3.sg.pr. read-inf. one-nom.sg. book-nom.sg. every day
 You must read one book each day.

In these sentences the case marking of the arguments is reversed. In the sentence (3) the argument preceding the predicate is in the nominative case and the argument following the predicate is in the genitive case. On the other hand, in the sentence (4) what is marked in the nominative case is the argument following the predicate and the argument preceding the predicate is marked in the genitive case. Then, we cannot determine which argument is the subject, merely by looking at the case marking.

It is definitely true that it is impossible to interpret the argument following the predicate as the semantic subject of the sentence (4). Considering the meaning, it is clear that the argument preceding the predicate is the semantic subject. But the syntactic subject does not always coincide with the semantic subject, as is known from English passive sentences. Then, the question is how we can say which argument is the syntactic subject of the sentence (4). What is important to note is that there is a difference between the predicates of these two sentences (3)–(4). While the predicate of the sentence (3) agrees in person and number with the argument preceding it, the predicate of the sentence (4) is impersonal. It is reasonable to say that the argument preceding the predicate in the sentence (3) is the syntactic subject, since

it is only the syntactic subject that can agree with the predicate. But which argument is the syntactic subject of the sentence (4)? Neither argument of the sentence (4) agrees with the predicate.

We must draw attention to the alternation of the case marking. The argument following the predicate of the sentence (3) can be regarded as the syntactic object, since in this sentence the other argument serves as the syntactic subject. As for the syntactic object of the sentence (3), the genitive marking alternates with the partitive marking as follows:

- (5) *Sinä et lue yhtä kirjaa joka päivä.*
 you-nom.sg. not-2.sg. read one-part.sg. book-part.sg. every day
 You don't read one book each day.
- (6) *Sinä luet kirjaa joka päivä.*
 you-nom.sg. read-2.sg.pr. book-part.sg. every day
 You read some book every day.

In both of the sentences (5)–(6) the object is marked in the partitive case. As for the argument following the predicate of the sentence (4), the nominative marking alternates with the partitive marking just in the same way. That is:

- (7) *Sinun ei tarvitse lukea yhtä kirjaa joka päivä.*
 you-gen.sg. not-3.sg. need read-inf. one-part.sg. book-part.sg. every day
 You need not read one book each day.
- (8) *Sinun täytyy lukea kirjaa joka päivä.*
 you-gen.sg. must-3.sg.pr. read-inf. book-part.sg. every day
 You must read some book every day.

In both of the sentences (7)–(8) the case marking changes from the nominative to the partitive. Then, it is fair to say that the argument following the predicate of the sentence (4) serves as the syntactic object. If this is the case, the other argument that precedes the predicate can be regarded as the syntactic subject.

The question is, however, how we can detect the subject and the object by just looking at the sentence (4) itself. If it is possible to determine which argument is the syntactic object without considering sentences like (7) and (8), what makes it possible? It would be probable that some coding property is relevant to the syntactic interpretation. The sentence (4) is an example of the necessitative construction⁵. This construction is a modal expression and the referent of the semantic subject is obliged to do something. Then, the inversion of the arguments is difficult to apply to this construction. This means that the relative order of the core arguments of the necessitative construction is fixed. If this is the case, it is possible to assume that the linear order of the arguments serves as a clue to the syntactic interpretation of this construction. That is to say, the core argument preceding the predicate is regarded as the syntactic subject, irrespective of the genitive marking. The other core argument, on the other hand, is interpreted as the syntactic object, even if it is marked in the nominative case.

Now we may recall that in the sentence (2) the genitive argument preceding the predicate and the nominative argument following the predicate are interpreted as the syntactic object and the syntactic subject respectively. The difference between the sentence (2) and the sentence (4) lies in their predicate. The predicate of the sentence (2) agrees in person and number with the syntactic subject, while that of the sentence (4) is always in the third person singular. Considering that it is only the nominative argument that can agree with the predicate, it is reasonable to assume that the case marking prevails over the word order in detecting the syntactic subject in sentences like (2). On the other hand, in sentences like (4) the word order has priority over the case marking when we determine which argument is the syntactic subject.

4. Impersonal predicates

As we have seen above, the relative order of the core arguments sometimes plays an important role in determining their syntactic status. However, there are sentences that have only one argument. In these sentences it is impossible to take the relative order of the core arguments into consideration. It is interesting to consider the following sentence. That is:

- (9) *Lue yksi kirja joka päivä!*
 read-2.sg.imp. one-nom.sg. book-nom.sg. every day
 Read one book each day!

This is an example of imperative sentences. Considering the meaning of the sentence, the nominative argument following the predicate must be the semantic object. Moreover, the same argument can be regarded as the syntactic object, irrespective of its nominative marking. This is because the sentence (9) has a covert syntactic subject, i.e. the second person in the singular. In fact, the predicate of imperative sentences conjugates according to its covert syntactic subject. This means that the overt argument should be regarded as the syntactic object of imperative sentences. What is important to note is that the word order of imperative sentences is fixed. Then, it seems that what is true for the necessitative construction is also true for imperative sentences. In other words, the syntactic interpretation of the argument following the predicate is determined by the very fact that it follows the predicate. The predicate of the imperative sentences agrees in person and number with the subject indeed. But the subject is not overtly expressed. This may be the reason the linear order prevails over the case marking in determining the syntactic object of imperative sentences.

However, there are many other sentences that have only one argument. The necessitative construction has two arguments. The point to observe is that the genitive argument functioning as the syntactic subject can be omitted. When the subject is omitted, the argument that is left behind can precede the predicate. Compare the following pair of sentences. That is:

- (10) *Pitää lukea yksi kirja joka päivä.*
 must-3.sg.pr. read-inf. one-nom.sg. book-nom.sg. every day
 One book must be read each day.

- (11) *Yksi kirja pitää lukea joka päivä.*
 one-nom.sg. book-nom.sg. must-3.sg.pr. read-inf. every day
 One book must be read each day.

In both of the sentences the nominative argument should be regarded as the syntactic object, since it does not agree in person and number with the predicate. The nominative argument of the sentence (11), however, does not follow the predicate unlike that of the sentences (4) and (10). Then, how can we interpret it as the syntactic object?

One possibility is to assume that a default interpretation based on the case marking of the core arguments can sometimes be cancelled. When a default interpretation should be cancelled, the cancellation first applies to the argument preceding the predicate. The nominative argument is interpreted as the syntactic subject by default indeed. But this interpretation is cancelled when the predicate does not agree in person and number with the nominative argument in question. The argument in question is re-interpreted as the syntactic object. This is the reason the nominative argument preceding the predicate is interpreted as the syntactic object in the sentence (11). In the same way, the genitive argument is interpreted as the syntactic object by default. If the predicate does not agree in person and number with any argument, however, we cannot but abandon the interpretation. Then, in the sentence (4) the genitive argument in question should be regarded as the counterpart, i.e. the subject. On the other hand, in the sentence (10) there is no core argument before the predicate. Then, we should search for the syntactic subject from the rest of the sentence, since sentences usually have the syntactic subject. However, this does not apply to sentences whose predicate is impersonal. In other words, the sole core argument following an impersonal predicate should be interpreted not as the subject but as the object.

What should be noticed here is that the sentence (9) is slightly different from the sentence (10) in the way of interpreting the syntactic status of the argument following the predicate. Also in the sentence (9) no argument is overtly expressed before the predicate indeed. But imperative sentences like (9) have a covert subject and the predicate agrees in person and number with it. Then, in the sentence (9) we need not search for the subject. On the other hand, the argument after the predicate is interpreted as the syntactic subject by default, since it is indicated in the nominative case. This interpretation, however, should be cancelled. This is because a sentence cannot have two syntactic subjects. Then, the argument in question is re-interpreted as the counterpart, i.e. the syntactic object⁶.

Let us now compare another pair of sentences:

- (12) *Juhlapäivänä suomalaiset laulavat Maamme-laulun.*
 holiday-ess.sg. Finn-nom.pl. sing-3.pl.pr. the song of 'Our country'-gen.sg.
 On holidays Finns sing the song of 'Our country'.
- (13) *Juhlapäivänä Suomessa lauletaan Maamme-laulu.*
 holiday-ess.sg. Finland-iness.sg. sing-pass.pr. the song of 'Our country'-nom.sg.
 On holidays the song of 'Our country' is sung in Finland.

In both of the sentences what serves as the semantic object is *Maamme-laulu*, the argument following the predicate. The morphological cases indicating it are, however, different from each other. In the sentence (13) it is marked in the nominative case, while in the sentence (12) it is in the genitive case. Moreover, the sentence (13) has only one core argument, while the sentence (12) has two core arguments. In the sentence (12) the argument preceding the predicate agrees in person and number with the predicate and clearly serves as the syntactic subject. Then, we can safely assume that the argument following the predicate of the sentence (12) is the syntactic object. On the other hand, in order to determine the syntactic status of the nominative argument of the sentence (13), it is helpful to compare the sentences (12)–(13) with the following sentences (14)–(15) respectively. That is:

- (14) *Jublapäivänä ruotsalaiset eivät laula Maamme-laulua.*
 holiday-ess.sg. Swede-nom.pl. not-3.pl. sing the song of ‘Our country’-part.sg.
 On holidays Swedes do not sing the song of ‘Our country’.
- (15) *Jublapäivänä Ruotsissa ei lauleta Maamme-laulua.*
 holiday-ess.sg. Sweden-iness.sg. not-3.sg. sing-pass. the song of ‘Our country’-part.sg.
 On holidays the song of ‘Our country’ is not sung in Sweden.

In the negative sentence (14) the case marking of the syntactic object alternates from the genitive to the partitive. It is important to note that the nominative marking of the sole core argument of the sentence (13) also changes into the partitive one in the negative sentence (15). This means that the nominative argument of the sentence (13) as well as the partitive argument of the sentence (15) should be regarded as the syntactic object. As for the way of detecting the syntactic object in the sentence (13), we can explain it in the same way as in the sentence (10). The sentence (13) is an example of impersonal passive sentences. In these sentences the syntactic subject is obligatorily suppressed and the predicate cannot agree in person and number with the subject. This is the reason this type of sentence is called ‘impersonal’. There is no core argument before the predicate in the sentence (13). Then, we should search for the syntactic subject from the rest of the sentence. However, this does not apply to this sentence, since the predicate is impersonal. In other words, the core argument following the predicate should be interpreted as the syntactic object.

It is worth noting that the word order of the sentence (13) can be altered as follows:

- (16) *Jublapäivänä Maamme-laulu lauletaan Suomessa.*
 holiday-ess.sg. the song of ‘Our country’-nom.sg. sing-pass.pr. Finland-iness.sg.
 On holidays the song of ‘Our country’ is sung in Finland.

In the sentence (16) the syntactic object marked in the nominative case precedes the predicate just in the same way as the syntactic object marked in the nominative case in the sentence (11) does. Then, the same observation applies not only to the sentence (11) but also to the sentence (16). The nominative argument preceding the predicate is interpreted as the syntactic subject by default. But this interpretation is cancelled, since the predicate is impersonal. The argument in question is re-interpreted as the syntactic object.

5. Intransitive subject

Now let us consider the following sentence:

- (17) *Lapset ovat hiljaisia.*
 child-nom.pl. be-3.pl.pr. quiet-part.pl.
 The children are quiet.

This sentence is an example of qualitative sentences. There is only one argument in this sentence, since the adjective following the predicate is not an argument but serves as a complement. The argument in question is marked in the nominative case. It is important to note that the sole argument of this type of sentence always agrees in person and number with the predicate and serves as the syntactic subject. The same is true of the sole argument of the following sentence. That is:

- (18) *Lapset leikkivät pihalla.*
 child-nom.pl. play-3.pl.pr. yard-adess.sg.
 The children are playing in the yard.

Also in this sentence the sole argument marked in the nominative case agrees in person and number with the intransitive predicate and functions as the syntactic subject. Unlike the subject of the sentence (17), this subject can be put after the predicate as follows:

- (19) *Pihalla leikkii lapsia.*
 yard-adess.sg. play-3.sg.pr. child-part.pl.
 In the yard some children are playing.

The point to observe is that in the sentence (19) the same argument is indicated in the partitive case and it does not agree with the predicate. As has been pointed out above, if there is no core argument before a predicate, we should search for the syntactic subject from the rest of the sentence. However, the search for the subject is cancelled when the predicate does not conjugate. Then, in the sentence (19) we should abandon it. This means that the partitive argument after the predicate cannot be regarded as the syntactic subject.

If this is the case, however, the question now arises. What function does the partitive argument of the sentence (19) carry on? It cannot serve as the syntactic object, since the predicate is intransitive. It may be helpful to compare the sentence (19) with the following existential sentence. That is:

- (20) *Pihalla on lapsia.*
 yard-adess.sg. be-3.sg.pr. child-part.pl.
 In the yard there are some children.

In this sentence the sole core argument is marked in the partitive case and it does not agree in person and number with the preceding predicate. Moreover, the predicate of this sentence is intransitive. Then, it is fair to say that the sentence (19) is not an inverted variant of the intransitive sentence (18) but is a kind of existential sentence. Opinions vary as to the syntactic

status of the sole argument of an existential sentence. However, it is possible to assume that the distinction between the subject and the object is neutralized in existential sentences⁷. This means that the partitive argument of the sentences (19)–(20) is neither the syntactic subject nor the syntactic object.

By the way, transitive sentences sometimes lack one of the two arguments. When the first person or the second person is the subject, it is recoverable from the personal ending attached to the predicate. Then, the first person subject and the second person subject are often omitted, especially in a written text. Take the following for example:

- (21) *Luet yhden kirjan joka päivä.*
 read-2.sg.pr. one-gen.sg. book-gen.sg. every day
 You read one book each day.

In this sentence only one argument is overtly expressed indeed. But the personal ending of the predicate shows that the predicate agrees in person and number with the covert subject. Then, the argument following the predicate is straightforwardly interpreted as the syntactic object.

From what has been said above it becomes clear that the sole core argument of impersonal predicates should be interpreted as the syntactic object, whether or not it follows the predicate. On the other hand, the sole core argument of imperative sentences and transitive sentences is regarded as the syntactic object because of the agreement between the predicate and the covert subject. We should not overlook, however, that there is another case where the sole core argument can be interpreted neither as the syntactic subject nor as the syntactic object. This is the case when the sentence in question describes the existential relationship between some entity and some place.

6. Partitive argument

Core arguments in the Finnish language can be marked also in the partitive case. Take the following for example:

- (22) *Tehtävät odottavat sinua.*
 task-nom.pl. wait-3.pl.pr. you-part.sg.
 Tasks are waiting for you.
- (23) *Sinua odottavat tehtävät.*
 you-part.sg. wait-3.pl.pr. task-nom.pl.
 It is tasks that are waiting for you.

These sentences correspond to the sentences (1) and (2) respectively. Both of the sentences have two arguments; one is in the nominative case and the other in the partitive case. In the sentence (23) these two arguments are reversed but their case markings remain unchanged. It is clear that the nominative argument serves as the syntactic subject, since it agrees in person and number with the predicate. Then, the partitive argument should be regarded as the syntactic object in both of the sentences. We can easily detect the syntactic subject of the sentence (22),

since the nominative argument is considered to be the syntactic subject by default. We can also detect the syntactic object of the sentence (23) without difficulty, since the partitive argument is interpreted as the syntactic object by default and this interpretation is maintained unless the predicate does not conjugate. This means that in these sentences the case marking serves as a clue to the interpretation of the core arguments.

The necessitative construction discussed above can also take an argument in the partitive case. For example:

(24) *Sinä luet kirjaa joka päivä.*
 you-nom.sg. read-2.sg.pr. book-part.sg. every day
 You read some book every day. (=6)

(25) *Sinun pitää lukea kirjaa joka päivä.*
 you-gen.sg. must-3.sg.pr. read-inf. book-part.sg. every day
 You must read some book every day. (=8)

In the sentence (25) the genitive argument clearly serves as the semantic subject, since it stands for the second person singular who obliged to read some book everyday. Comparing this sentence with the sentence (4) above, we can safely assume that the genitive argument is also the syntactic subject. Needless to say, the nominative argument of the sentence (24) functions as the syntactic subject just like that of the sentence (3). As for the syntactic interpretation of the core arguments of the sentences (24)–(25), it must be noted that the predicate of the sentence (25) is impersonal. The genitive argument preceding the predicate is interpreted as the syntactic object by default indeed. But this interpretation is cancelled, since the predicate is impersonal. Then, we can easily determine that the genitive argument of the sentence (25) is the syntactic subject. In both of the sentences (24)–(25) the argument following the predicate is indicated in the partitive case unlike the corresponding argument of the sentences (3)–(4). These partitive arguments should be interpreted as the syntactic object, since the partitive is a default marker of the object.

If there is only a partitive argument in a sentence, the syntactic status of the argument is much easier to determine. This is because the partitive argument can never serve as the syntactic subject. Take the following for example:

(26) *Pitää lukea kirjaa joka päivä.*
 must-3.sg.pr. read-inf. book-part.sg. every day
 Some book must be read every day.

(27) *Kirjaa pitää lukea joka päivä.*
 book-part.sg. must-3.sg.pr. read-inf. every day
 Some book must be read each day.

(28) *Lue kirjaa joka päivä.*
 read-2.sg.imp. book-part.sg. every day
 Read some book every day!

(29) *Suomessa puhutaan suomea.*
 Finland-iness.sg. speak-pass.pr. Finnish-part.sg.
 In Finland they speak the Finnish language.

(30) *Suomea puhutaan suomessa.*
 Finnish-part.sg. speak-pass.pr. Finland-iness.sg.
 The Finnish language is spoken in Finland.

In these sentences the sole core argument indicated in the partitive case is straightforwardly interpreted as the syntactic object by the very fact that it is marked in the partitive case. As we have already pointed out, however, the partitive argument is not always interpreted as the syntactic object. In existential sentences the partitive argument can be interpreted neither as the subject nor as the object, as is shown in the sentences (19)–(20) above.

7. Concluding remarks

From what has been said above we can conclude that in the Finnish language not only the morphological cases but also the relative order of the core arguments and the predicate serves as the clue to the syntactic interpretation of the core arguments. The syntactic interpretation of each argument can be schematized as follows:

Table 1

	Case Marking	Predicate	
		Conjugated	Not conjugated
Argument BEFORE the predicate	Nominative	Interpreted as the SUBJECT by default	Interpreted as the OBJECT
	Genitive	Interpreted as the OBJECT by default	Interpreted as the SUBJECT
	Partitive	Interpreted as the OBJECT by default	Interpreted as the OBJECT by default
	None	The personal ending indicates the covert SUBJECT	Impossible to interpret (Argument after the predicate is interpreted as the OBJECT)

Table 2

	Case Marking	Predicate	
		Conjugated	Not conjugated
Argument AFTER the predicate	Nominative	Interpreted as the SUBJECT by default	Interpreted as the OBJECT
	Genitive	Interpreted as the OBJECT by default	/
	Partitive	Interpreted as the OBJECT by default	Interpreted as the OBJECT by default

The table 1 and the table 2 show that the syntactic interpretation of a core argument is dependent on the personhood of the predicate. When the predicate agrees in person and number with the syntactic subject, the default interpretation based on the case marking is maintained. On the other hand, when the predicate does not conjugate, the default interpretation should be corrected. The partitive argument is an exception to this general principle. It is always interpreted as the syntactic object whether or not the predicate conjugates.

The word order of the Finnish language is not strictly fixed indeed. But the word order plays an important role in the Finnish syntax. The nominative before the predicate and the genitive or the partitive after the predicate are the unmarked word order of the Finnish language. Then, the nominative after the predicate, for example, indicates an unusual character of the sentence in question. In fact, many constructions, including the necessitative construction and existential sentences, have a marked word order. This point deserves explicit emphasis. The following table shows how the case marking correlates with the word order in the Finnish language. A speaker of the Finnish language generates sentences according to these patterns and a hearer understands them also according to the same patterns.

Table 3

	Case Marking	Argument AFTER the predicate	
Argument BEFORE the predicate	Nominative	Genitive or Partitive, if any	None
	Genitive	Nominative, if any	Nominative or Partitive, if any
	Partitive	Nominative, if any	None
	None	Genitive or Partitive, if any ⁸	Nominative or Partitive, if any
		Conjugated	Not conjugated
		Predicate	

Notes

- 1 The term 'accusative' is popular in the Finnish traditional grammar. The so-called accusative case is, however, identical in form with the genitive case in the singular and with the nominative case in the plural. Only the personal pronouns and an interrogative pronoun *kuka* 'who' have a distinct accusative form.
- 2 The quantitative definiteness means that the referent in question is indivisible. We should distinguish it from the qualitative definiteness. For further details of the definiteness in the Finnish language, see Chesterman (1991) and Itkonen (1980), for example.
- 3 See Van Valin (1993, 2005) for a full account of the semantic macrorole.
- 4 For a discussion of the word order of the Finnish language, see Vilkkuna (1989), for example.
- 5 In some dialects the argument preceding the predicate in the necessitative construction is indicated not in the genitive case but in the nominative case. For further details of this phenomenon, see Laitinen (1992) and Laitinen & Vilkkuna (1993), for example. On impersonal expressions of the Finnish language in general, see Laitinen (2006), for example.
- 6 In imperative sentences the predicate conjugates indeed. But the imperative form of the second person singular is identical in form with the verbal stem. Then, it is possible that the imperative predicate is considered to be impersonal when the second person singular subject is not expressed overtly. If this is the case, the nominative

marking of the object in imperative sentences like (9) may be explained more straightforwardly. It is worth noting that the object is marked in the genitive case when the referent of the subject is the third person. Take the following for example:

i) *Lukekoot toiset yhden kirjan joka päivä!*
 read-3.pl.imp. other-pl.nom. one-gen.sg. book-gen.sg. every day
 I hope others read one book each day!

- 7 For a discussion of existential sentences in the Finnish language, see Tiainen (1997), for example.
 8 In imperative sentences the argument after the predicate, if any, is marked either in the nominative case or in the partitive case. See also the note 6 above.

Abbreviations

nom.—nominative	gen.—genitive	part.—partitive	ess.—essive
iness.—inessive	adess.—adessive	sg.—singular	pl.—plural
pr.—present	p.—past	imp.—imperative	pass.—passive
inf.—infinitive			

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