

On the Tripartite System of Case Marking in the Finnish Language

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The Finnish language has a very complicated system for indicating the grammatical relations. What is involved in this case marking system are the nominative, the genitive and the partitive case. In the singular, Finnish has a tripartite system consisting of these three cases, by which two sets of oppositions can be represented at the same time. One of them is the opposition between subjects and objects, and the other is the opposition between definite and indefinite objects. The tripartite system is incomplete, however, since these three cases are not one-to-one correspondence with the grammatical relations they indicate. Moreover, it is not so infrequent that a subject and an object of the same sentence are indicated in the same case, especially in colloquial and dialectal speech. It is indeed true, however, that a subject and an object can be readily distinguished from each other on the basis of discourse information, even if they are not morphologically differentiated. This means that a differential marking of subjects and objects is not necessarily essential to the human languages.

Keywords: the Finnish language, case marking system, grammatical relations, definiteness, colloquial speech

1. Introduction

Transitive predicates take two grammatical relations, while intransitive ones only one. Needless to say, a subject should be differentiated unambiguously from an object and other oblique arguments, especially when transitive predicates are concerned, since which argument serves as a subject is crucial information for a proper syntactic interpretation. In human languages several ways are available for separating subjects from objects. It is common to indicate a subject and an object separately by using some morphological devices. Especially, the nominative and the accusative case are often employed to mark the grammatical relations. Languages utilizing the nominative and the accusative are called accusative ones, since the difference between transitive and intransitive predicates in these languages is whether or not predicates have an argument marked in the accusative case.

Finnish is one of the accusative languages in principle. It has 14 morphological cases and nominal arguments inflect according to their function in syntactic configurations. Out of 14 morphological cases it is the nominative that is employed to mark a subject. For example:

- (1) *Poika-ϕ juokse-e.*
boy-NOM.SG run-3SG.PRES
A boy is running.

This is an instance of intransitive sentences. Also in transitive sentences subjects are marked in the nominative case, and this is the reason objects cannot be marked in the nominative case. Take the following for example:

- (2) *Poika-ϕ* *tapa-si* *tyttö-n*.
 boy-NOM.SG meet-3SG.PST girl-GEN.SG
 A boy met a girl.

In this sentence the object is marked in the genitive case¹. However, it is worth while noting that the genitive case is not a sole candidate for the morphological marking of objects. In fact, they can be indicated not only in the genitive case but also in the partitive case and even in the nominative case. In other words, in Finnish the same morphological case can indicate both subjects and objects. This means that the morphological marking differentiating subjects from objects is not necessarily obligatory in Finnish.

Now a question arises. The case marking pattern of the grammatical relations in Finnish seems to be deficient to some extent at least. What is the reason the case marking pattern can be deficient, if it is vital for human languages to differentiate subjects from objects unambiguously? In this paper I will argue the case marking pattern of the grammatical relations in Finnish. Based on the argument I will show that a differential marking of subjects and objects in a consistent way is not necessarily essential to human languages, although in many languages subjects and objects are always indicated differently.

2. The morphological marking in Finnish

In the Finnish language nominal arguments including oblique ones inflect to show one of the 14 morphological cases. Two arguments of a transitive predicate are indicated differently. Thus a subject and an object can be differentiated from each other. Take the following for example:

- (3) *Sunnuntai-na* *tyttö-ϕ* *luke-e* *kirja-n*.
 Sunday-ESS.SG girl-NOM.SG read-3SG.PRES book-GEN.SG
 On Sunday the girl reads a book.

In this sentence the subject is marked in the nominative case, while the object is marked in the genitive case. However, the case marking system of Finnish is not so straightforward².

To begin with, the morphological case employed to indicate objects is not the accusative case but the genitive case. This is because the Finnish language does not have an accusative case, although it has much more morphological cases than other languages. As a matter of fact, the accusative case form does exist as far as the personal pronouns are concerned. But there are no nouns, other than the personal pronouns, that have a distinct accusative case form. It is a well-known fact that in Proto-Finnic every noun had an accusative case form distinct from a genitive one. However, the accusative ending in *-m* had merged with the genitive ending in *-n* before the Finnish language evolved from the Proto-Finnic language.

What is important to note is that the genitive is primarily the case for indicating an

adnominal relation. Examples of this are as follows:

- (4) *isä-n auto-φ / isä-n päivä-φ*
 father-GEN.SG car-NOM.SG / father-GEN.SG day-NOM.SG
 Father's car / Father's day
ruotsalais-ten kuningas-φ
 Swede-GEN.PL. king-NOM.SG
 the King of Swedes
Suome-n kansa-φ / Suomen matka-φ
 Finland-GEN.SG people-NOM.SG / Finland-GEN.SG trip-NOM.SG
 Finnish people / a trip to Finland
Helsingi-n yliopisto-φ
 Helsinki-GEN.SG university-NOM.SG
 Helsinki University

The genitive case can also indicate the subject of a non-finite predicate. Take the following for example:

- (5) *Tiedä-t-kö Niemis-ten muutta-nee-n kaupunki-in?*
 know-2SG.PRES-Q Nieminen-GEN.PL move-PST.PTCP-GEN.SG city-ILL.SG
 Do you know that Nieminens have moved to the city?

In this sentence the subject of a subordinate non-finite predicate 'to move' is marked in the genitive case. Thus the genitive is the case available not only for objects but also for subjects.

On the other hand, also the nominative case can indicate both subjects and objects. For example:

- (6a) *Lue-φ ensiksi tämä-φ kirja-φ.*
 read-2SG.IMP first this-NOM.SG book-NOM.SG
 Read this book first.
- (6b) *Sinu-n täyty-y luke-a ensiksi tämä-φ kirja-φ.*
 you-GEN.SG must-3SG.PRES read-INF first this-NOM.SG book-NOM.SG
 You must read this book first.
- (6c) *Tämä-φ kirja-φ lue-ta-an luoka-ssa ääne-en.*
 this-NOM.SG book-NOM.SG read-PASS-PRES class-INE.SG voice-ILL.SG
 This book will be read aloud in class.

(6a) is an imperative sentence. (6b) is an instance of the so-called necessitative construction. (6c) is an impersonal passive sentence. In these sentences what the nominative case indicates is not the subject but the object. What is common to these three sentences is that there appears no nominative subject. In other words, an object can be indicated in the nominative case, only when it does not co-occur with a nominative subject in the same sentence.

By the way, the genitive is one of the cases available for objects indeed, but it is not the default case for objects. In fact, the genitive marked objects are encountered rather infrequently.

It is much more often the case that objects are marked in the partitive case. Take the following for example:

(7a) *Lue-n use-i-ta kirjo-j-a sama-an aika-an.*
 read-1SG.PRES many-PL-PART book-PL-PART same-ILL.SG time-ILL.SG
 I read many books at the same time.

(7b) *Tyttö-ϕ luk-i kirja-a, kun puhelin-ϕ so-i.*
 girl-NOM.SG read-3SG.PST book-PART.SG when telephone-NOM.SG
 ring-3SG.PST
 The girl was reading a book, when the telephone rang.

(7c) *E-n luke-nut kirja-a loppu-un asti.*
 NEG-1SG read-PST.PTCP book-PART.SG end-ILL.SG to
 I did not read the book to the end.

In (7a) the referent of the object is indefinite in quantity. In (7b) the predicate taking a partitive object is in the imperfective aspect. In (7c) the predicate taking a partitive object is negated. What is common to all these cases is that the referent of the objects is only partially affected by the action designated by the predicate and therefore indefinite in quantity³.

The partitive developed from the ablative case and therefore originally meant separation from something or departure from somewhere. Later, it got to mean a part of something and the name of the case came from this usage. At this stage of the development, it had not developed yet into a grammatical case. If the Finnish language at this stage had had the accusative case, the partitive case might have not further developed. But, in fact, the accusative case was not available and this may be the reason the partitive case had come to indicate the object.

In addition, the sole argument of intransitive clauses is marked either in the nominative case or in the partitive case. This means that the partitive is not the case available exclusively for objects. As has been mentioned above, the referent of a partitive object is indefinite in quantity. On the contrary, the referent of a subject is usually definite in quantity indeed, but it is not always the case. For example:

(8) *Piha-lla leikk-i laps-i-a.*
 yard-ADE.SG play-3SG.PST child-PL-PART
 In the yard children were playing.

In this sentence the referent of the post-verbal argument is indefinite in quantity. This argument, which is marked in the partitive case, is not the object but the subject of the predicate. Then, it can be said that the partitive case sometimes indicates a subject, if its referent is indefinite in quantity.

To sum up, the Finnish language does have the case marking system that can differentiate subjects from objects, but it is very complicated. First of all, it is not a two-element system but a three-element one: the nominative, the genitive and the partitive case are available. The

nominative is basically the case for subjects, but it can also indicate objects. The same is true of the genitive case. The genitive case can also indicate both grammatical relations. Moreover, the partitive case, which is the most pervasive among these three cases, does not exclusively indicate objects, either. In other words, these three cases are not in one-to-one correspondence with the grammatical relations they indicate. Such a complicate system is a consequence of the historical development of the Finnish language. The reason the partitive case had become one of the grammatical cases was the deficient case marking system at the initial stage of the language. The language had lost the accusative case prior to this stage. What substituted the accusative case was partly the genitive case. But a considerable part of object arguments had gotten to be marked in the partitive case. This is because the partitive case, which could express partial affectedness, was a more suitable alternative to the accusative one, as a morphological case indicating objects.

3. Tripartite system of case marking

From what has been said above, it becomes clear that the correspondence between the grammatical relations and the morphological cases is not one-to-one. As for matrix transitive clauses, possible combinations of the cases indicating subjects and objects are as follows:

Table 1

		Object	Singular			Plural		
			Nominative	Genitive	Partitive	Nominative	Genitive	Partitive
Singular	Nominative	×	○	○	×	×	○	
	Genitive	○	×	○	×	×	○	
	Partitive	—	—	—	—	—	—	
	ϕ	○	×	○	×	×	○	
Plural	Nominative	×	○	○	×	×	○	
	Genitive	○	×	○	×	×	○	
	Partitive	—	—	—	—	—	—	
	ϕ	○	×	○	×	×	○	

From this table it can be said that the default case for subjects and objects are the nominative and the partitive respectively. This does not mean that the nominative is the proper case for subjects nor the partitive is for objects. As a matter of fact, the nominative case can indicate objects in subject-less clauses. The partitive case is also available not only for objects but also for post-verbal subjects of intransitive clauses.

What is important to note is, however, that a subject and an object can still be differentiated from each other by these cases, though they are not in one-to-one correspondence with either of the grammatical relations. This is because in the same sentence the case indicating a subject is usually different from that indicating an object, as is evident from the table above. It is reasonable that one particular case is used only once in one sentence, since this will save the hearer a lot of trouble in discerning a subject from an object.

We should not overlook nevertheless that the case marking of subjects and objects in colloquial or dialectal Finnish is much more complicated than is shown in the table above. It is not so exceptional in colloquial or dialectal speech that a subject and an object in one sentence are marked in the same case, especially when an object is in the plural. Take the following for example:

- (9) ¹*Iso-t* *puu-t* *sitten* ¹*miehe-t* *hakka-s*⁴.
 big-NOM.PL tree-NOM.PL then man-NOM.PL chop-3PL.PST
 Then, big trees were chopped down by men. (Palander: 239)

This is an example of Savonranta dialect⁵. In this sentence both the subject and the object are marked in the nominative plural case and the word order is OSV.

In standard Finnish we have choices between the partitive and the genitive for objects in the singular. Objects in the plural, on the other hand, are usually marked in the partitive case and such an alternative is not available. This is because the referent of plural objects is usually regarded as indefinite in quantity. But in colloquial or dialectal speech the referent of noun phrases including plural objects tends to be considered to be definite, when they are mentioned for the second time⁶. It is indeed true that the nominative marking of a plural object leads to ambiguity as to which argument is a subject or an object. But discerning a subject from an object is relatively easy, if contextual information is available from the preceding context.

As a matter of fact, in Proto-Uralic, a plural object was not indicated distinctively from a plural subject in the same sentence. Although in the Finnish language the partitive plural case is available for distinguishing plural objects from plural subjects, the partitive marking of plural objects was a later development. Therefore it is not so peculiar that plural objects are marked in the same case as plural subjects. Moreover, the nominative marking of plural objects is motivated by indicating the opposition between definite and indefinite objects. As is mentioned above, in the singular the genitive case is available for indicating quantitatively definite objects. Although the genitive plural case cannot indicate definite objects, the nominative plural case is available instead.

Indicating the opposition between definite and indefinite objects was introduced into Finnic languages only after the accusative ending **-m* and the genitive ending **-n* had merged together. The partitive ending of the Finnish language is a descendant of the Uralic ablative ending **-ta*. The partitive was adapted to the Finnish case system as the case for objects which are indefinite in quantity. Therefore, in the earlier stage of the Finnish language, objects in the singular were more often marked in the genitive case. The partitive marking of objects in the singular has become more and more frequent, but considerable number of singular objects are still marked in the genitive case. It is worth while noting that in Saamic languages the partitive has developed into the case for plural objects, while singular objects are marked in the genitive case⁷. This means that whether the referent of an object is definite or not is more relevant in the Finnish language than in Saamic ones. If this is the case, it is reasonable that the coverage of the case marking pattern reflecting the opposition between definite and indefinite objects has been extended into the plural. The problem is that there are no cases available for definite objects other than the nominative case.

First of all, the ending of the nominative plural case *-t* was originally the marker of plurality. Then, it can indicate not only subjects but also objects insofar as they are in the plural. However, this means that the distinction between subjects and objects is partially neutralized in the plural. What should be noticed here is that the analogical expansion of the distinct marking between definite and indefinite objects into the plural has increased defectiveness of the case marking system of the Finnish language.

Generally speaking, the loss of morphological distinction between subjects and objects often leads to a fixed word order, as has happened in the English language. But, according to Palander (1991), in colloquial or dialectal speech of Finnish the word order of principal elements is rather more diverse than in standard Finnish. In standard language the word order is basically SVO and any word order other than SVO will be considered to be a marked one.

The word order is at least partially determined by discourse factors. For example, when the referent of an object is known both to the speaker and to the hearer but a subject is a newly introduced element, the subject tends to follow the predicate and the word order becomes OVS. Take the following for example:

- (10) ¹*Renkaa-t* ¹*pane-vat* ¹*uko-t.* ¹*Ei-φ* *kai* *n-uo*
ring-NOM.PL settle-3SG.PRES old man-NOM.PL not-3SG perhaps PL-that
¹*nais-i-lla* ¹*pane-tta-ne.*
woman-PL-ADE settle-PASS-POT
The rings of the well are settled by old men. Perhaps they cannot be settled by women. (Palander: 242)

This is an example of Liperi dialect⁸. In this sentence the object precedes and the subject follows the predicate. Thus the word order is OVS.

On the other hand, when the referent of an object needs to be focused, the object can precede the co-occurring subject and the word order becomes OSV. This word order is not so frequent in the standard language but one can find it relatively easily in colloquial or dialectal speech. For example:

- (11) ... ¹*kaikki* ¹*kirnupiiä-t* *ja* ¹*mairo-t* *ja* ¹*kaikki* *n-e*
... all buttermilk-NOM.PL and milk-NOM.PL and all PL-it
ol-i *siälä* ¹*jua-nu.*
be-3SG.PST there drink-PST.PTCP
... they had drunk all, all of the buttermilk and all of the milk. (Palander: 241)

This is an example of Laihia dialect⁹. In this sentence the object preceding the subject is especially emphasized. But OSV word order is also possible when not a subject but an object is the topic of a sentence and the subject is involved in the rhematic part of the sentence. Take the following for example:

- (12) *No* ¹*ensin tuota*, ¹*kassaroe-ti-im* ¹*puu-t*.
 Well first well prune-PASS-PST tree-NOM.PL
 Well, trees were pruned first.
¹*Iso-t* *puu-t* ¹*sittem* ¹*miehe-t* ¹*hakka-s*.
 big-NOM.PL tree-NOM.PL then man-NOM.PL chop-3PL.PST
 Then, big trees were chopped down by the men.
¹*Iso-t* *puu-t* ¹*miehe-t* *hakka-s* ¹*naise-t*
 big-NOM.PL tree-NOM.PL man-NOM.PL chop-3PL.PST woman-NOM.PL
¹*kassaroe-φ*.
 prune-3PL.PST
 Big trees were chopped down by the men and the women pruned (small trees).
 (Palander: 239)

The second sentence is the same as the sentence (9) above. It is evident that in the last two sentences the initial noun phrase, *isot puut*, functions as the topic, considering the preceding context.

According to Palander (1991), in newspaper language OVS word order can be observable more often than in prose language. But we will encounter OVS word order still more often in colloquial or dialectal speech. In addition, SOV and OSV word order can be found in conversation. When an object precedes a subject and they are indicated in the same case, the syntactic status of the preposed object is easy to misunderstand. However, in colloquial or dialectal speech one can put a heavy accent on a postponed subject. This accent helps us to infer which argument is a subject or an object. For example, in (12) above, the second argument with a heavy accent, i.e. *miehet* 'the men', of the last sentence should be interpreted to be a subject, since it is contrasted with a noun after the first predicate, *naiset* 'the women'.

We must draw attention to the fact that the morphological opposition between subjects and objects can be sometimes neutralized even in standard Finnish. As is mentioned above, a subject of a non-finite predicate is marked in the genitive case. If a non-finite predicate has an object and it is indicated in the genitive case, it becomes that both arguments of the non-finite predicate is in the same case. For example:

- (13) *Tiedä-n* *häne-n* *teh-nee-n* *työ-n*
 know-1SG.PRES s/he-GEN.SG do-PST.PTCP-GEN.SG work-GEN.SG
sanakirja-n *kanssa*.
 dictionary-GEN.SG with
 I know that s/he did the work consulting with a dictionary.

Moreover, in relative clauses a subject and an object can be in the same case, when a relativized object is in the plural. Take the following for example:

- (14) *Miehe-t syöksy-i-vät etsi-mä-än muuri-ssa koht-i-a,*
 man-NOM.PL. rush-PST-3PL look for-3.INF-ILL wall-INE.SG spot-PL-PART
jo-t-ka puolustaja-t ol-i-vat hylän-nee-t.
 which-PL-which defender-NOM.PL be-PST-3PL abandon-PST.PTCP-PL
 The men rushed to the wall to look for the spots which the defenders had
 abandoned. (Palander: 241)

In this sentence both the subject and the object of the relative clause are marked in the nominative plural case.

On the other hand, when a possessive suffix is attached to a noun, the nominative singular, the genitive singular and the nominative plural form of it become identical with each other. The following sentences contain an instance of the nominative singular, the genitive singular and the nominative plural respectively.

- (15a) *Kaveri-ni tule-e me-i-lle tänään.*
 friend-1SG.PX come-3SG.PRES we-PL-ALL today
 My friend comes to us today.

- (15b) *Kaveri-ni vaimo- ϕ -kin tule-e me-i-lle tänään.*
 friend-1SG.PX wife-NOM.SG-PTCL come-3SG.PRES we-PL-ALL today
 Also my friend's wife come to us today.

- (15c) *Kaveri-ni tule-vat me-i-lle tänään.*
 friend-1SG.PX come-3PL.PRES we-PL-ALL today
 My friends come to us today.

Although these sentences have a noun with a possessive suffix, *kaverini*, in common, it functions differently in each of the sentences: in (15a) it is a subject in the singular, in (15b) it functions as a possessor and in (15c) it is a subject in the plural.

In addition, when an object is modified by a numeral, it cannot be distinguished from a subject on the basis of its morphological form. For example:

- (16) *Kaksi- ϕ poika-a näk-i kaksi- ϕ tyttö-ä.*
 two-NOM.SG boy-PART.SG see-3SG.PST two-NOM.SG girl-PART.SG
 Two boys meet two girls.

Strictly speaking, one cannot decide which of the two noun phrases is the subject of the sentence without considering the context.

The Finnish language has a case marking system consisting of three morphological cases. If what should be morphologically indicated is only one opposition, such a tripartite system is useless. A tripartite system can indicate two sets of oppositions. One of them is the opposition between subjects and objects and another is that between definite and indefinite objects. The Finnish case marking system is however incomplete, since the two of the three cases, the nominative and the genitive, can indicate both subjects and definite objects. The reason the tripartite system is incomplete can be at least partially attributed to the fact that the Finnish

language does not have the accusative case.

What is important to note is that the Finnish language does not have a tripartite system in the plural. There are only two cases available for indicating plural subjects and objects¹⁰. This means that the case marking system in the plural can represent only one opposition out of the two. The question is which opposition has precedence over the other. Throughout the historical development of the Finnish language the partitive case has gained more and more popularity. On the other hand, the case which specifically indicates objects has never developed. As one of the functions the partitive case fulfills is to mark indefinite objects, it is reasonable to say that the opposition between definite and indefinite objects has priority over the opposition between subjects and objects. It is indeed true that what are marked in the nominative plural case are subjects rather than definite objects. Then, it seems to be that the opposition between subjects and objects is more relevant to the case marking system in the plural. However, the mere fact that the nominative plural case can also indicate definite objects shows that the distinction between subjects and objects is underspecified at least in the plural.

Below are figures showing the 'ideal' tripartite system, the actual tripartite system in the singular and the two-element system in the plural respectively. That is:

Figure 1 'Ideal' tripartite system

	Subject	Object
Definite	Nominative	Genitive
Indefinite		Partitive

Figure 2 Actual tripartite system in the singular

	Subject	Object
Definite	Nominative Genitive	Genitive Nominative
Indefinite	(Partitive)	Partitive

Figure 3 Two-element system in the plural

	Subject	Object
Definite	Nominative Genitive ¹¹	Nominative
Indefinite	(Partitive)	Partitive

4. Conclusion

First, the Finnish language has a three-element system in the singular and the third extra element is the most prevalent. This element is the partitive case. Second, what made the development of the third extra element possible was the underdevelopment of the morphological marking system. In Finnish, the accusative case did not exist all from the beginning. Since the case employed for objects had not fixed yet, the partitive case got to indicate objects together with the genitive case. Third, such a tripartite system is suitable to

indicate two oppositions at the same time. One of them is the opposition between subjects and objects and the other is the opposition between definite and indefinite objects. In the plural, however, there are only two elements, the nominative plural and the partitive plural. Such a two-element system cannot properly represent two oppositions at the same time. Out of the two oppositions the latter has precedence over the former, since both plural subjects and plural objects can be indicated in the same case and cannot be readily distinguished from each other. Finally, in the Finnish language it is not so rare that a subject and an object of the same sentence are marked in the same case. Although such an identical marking will pose to the hearer some difficulties in interpreting the sentence, misunderstanding can be usually avoided on the basis of contextual information.

All these things make it clear that the one-to-one correspondence between each grammatical relation and each morphological marking is not necessarily essential to human languages. It is true that the grammatical relations play an important role and to differentiate subjects from objects unambiguously by some morphological marking is desirable indeed, but it is not a necessary condition for human languages to fulfill well-formedness requirements.

Notes

- 1 As we will mention below, the so-called accusative case is identical in form with the genitive case in the singular and the nominative case in the plural, as regards nominals other than personal pronouns. Then, in this paper, I regard the case form ending in *-n* not as the accusative but as the genitive singular.
- 2 For a discussion of the case marking system of the Finnish language, see, for example, Laitinen & Vilkkuna (1993), Väinikka (1993), Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001), Leino (2003), Hakulinen et al. (2004) and Sakuma (2011).
- 3 'Indefinite in quantity' means that the referent in question is divisible. We should not mix up the quantitative definiteness with the qualitative one. For further details of the definiteness in the Finnish language, see Itkonen (1980), for example.
- 4 In dialectal examples words with an accent are indicated by '1'. '11' means, on the other hand, that a word following it has a heavy accent.
- 5 Savonranta is located in Eastern Finland. It is a part of the city of Savonlinna. The language spoken there is one of the varieties of Savonian dialect.
- 6 In the Finnish language what are definite in quantity are treated alike, whether they are qualitatively definite or not. This means that the referent of a noun phrase which is qualitatively definite is also quantitatively definite, but the reverse is not always true. On the other hand, if the referent of a noun phrase is indefinite in quantity, it is usually considered to be indefinite also in quality. However, the nominative marking of secondary-mentioned indefinite objects seems to treat the noun phrase in question as qualitatively definite. This might have something to do with the frequent use of *se*, one of the demonstrative pronouns, as a virtual definite article.
- 7 For historical development of case endings in the Uralic languages, see, for example, Grünthal (2007)
- 8 Liperi is a municipality in Eastern Finland, located near the city of Joensuu. The language spoken there also belongs to Savonian dialect.
- 9 Laihia is a municipality of the Ostrobothnia region. It is located in Western Finland, near the city of Vaasa. The dialect spoken there is one of the varieties of South Ostrobothnian dialect.
- 10 Also in the plural, subjects of non-finite predicates are indicated in the genitive case. In other words, the genitive plural is a substitute for the nominative plural in non-finite clauses. However, unlike the nominative plural, it cannot indicate the object. Therefore, it may be more adequate to say that the Finnish language has a two-element system in the plural indeed but one of the elements is not the nominative but a coalition of the nominative and the genitive case.
- 11 See the note 10 above.

Abbreviations

ADE—adessive	ALL—allative	ESS—essive	GEN—genitive
ILL—illative	IMP—imperative	INE—inessive	INF—infinitive
NEG—negative	NOM—nominative	PART—partitive	PASS—passive
PL—plural	POT—potential	PRES—present	PST—past
PTCL—particle	PTCP—participle	PX—possessive suffix	Q—question
SG—singular			

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