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Austronesian Partitives[*]

1. Introduction

Although partitive constructions (such as English *nine of these people*) got some place in linguistic theories, they were not actively investigated from a typological point of view[1]. This resulted in that most conclusions on the nature and properties of partitives were based on European data. In this paper, I will make an attempt to show how non-European languages may contribute to the theory of partitive constructions.

The very term "partitive construction" (PC) is used in a number of ways in linguistic literature. I will limit myself here to analogues of the construction presented above, ignoring mass partitives (like *two cups of water*) as well as superlatives and constructions with quantifiers other than numerals (since they can presuppose partitivity themselves). Therefore, I will deal only with what was called "set partitives" by de Hoop (1998), "indirect PCs" by Vos (1999), or "elective constructions" in Russian linguistic tradition.

The central problem of this paper concerns semantic relations between the numeral constituent (NC)[2] and the embedded phrases (like *my friends* or *of my friends* in *two of my friends*) in a PC. Thus, sometimes it is claimed that the embedded (prepositional) phrase modifies the whole noun phrase's head (which is usually postulated to be null), and hence the latter is an argument of the former. However, there exists another point of view according to which the embedded NP serves as an

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[1] For some cross-linguistic theoretical studies on partitives see Hoeksema 1996, de Hoop 1998, Vos 1999.

argument of the NC. After presenting data of some Austronesian languages (Section 2), I will turn to this problem and argue for the second view (Section 3). Then I will show how the semantic structure can affect the syntactic structure (Section 4). The last section presents some other problems to be investigated.

2. Basic data

In order to evaluate different approaches to the semantics of PCs I took data of eight Austronesian languages which are listed below:

Language	Abbreviation	Area	Source
Ivatan	IVA	Philippines	Reid 1966
Kosraean	KOS	Micronesia	Good 1989
Malagasy	MLG	Madagascar	Ileana Paul (p.c.), Arakin 1963
Malay/Indonesian	MAL	Indonesian archipelago, Malay peninsula	the author's data, Waruno Mahdi (p.c.)
Tagalog	TAG	Philippines	Lina Shkarban (p.c.), Jean-Paul Potet (p.c.)
Tondano	TON	Sulawesi	Sneddon 1975
Ulithian	UL	Micronesia	Sohn & Bender 1973
Woleaian	WOL	Micronesia	Sohn 1975

No doubt, this sample is somewhat accidental. There are two reasons for this. First, the aim of the paper is not to give the whole picture of PCs in Austronesian languages. Second, it is quite difficult to find reliable data on partitives, since most grammars do not even mention these constructions. Nevertheless, this sample includes languages from different areas and hence can represent at least some variability.

Two formal patterns of PCs were observed in the languages under discussion. The first one (*non-marking pattern*) has no specific morphosyntactic means for expressing partitivity at all; hence the role of word order, as we will see in Section 4.

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[2] The term "numeral constituent" refers below either to a numeral or to its combination with a numerative (classifier, measure word etc.).

This pattern, which is illustrated below[3], is found in all of the three Micronesian languages in the sample (KOS, UL, WOL).

(1) UL (Sohn & Bender 1973: 236)
    se- male   xaamami   'one of us'
    one- CLR   1Pl:EX

(2) WOL (Sohn 1975: 206)
    se- mal   maliumwashog ka   'one of these thiefs'
    one- CLR   thief   DEM:Pl

    Other languages use the second pattern (referred to below as *marking pattern*) which contains a link morpheme introducing the embedded NP. This morpheme may be either a preposition or an (analytic) case marker, but note that it is often difficult to draw the border line between these two kinds of relators. Thus, although in IVA example (3) the link morpheme *da* seems to be a case marker (since it is placed between the plural marker and the head[4]), it is not clear whether its TAG analogue *sa* in (4) is a case marker or a preposition[5]. Finally, MLG *amy* in (5) is obviously not a case marker, because it assigns genitive case[6] to embedded NPs.

(3) IVA (Reid 1966: 105)
    qo qasa sa do   tao   'one of the men'
    T   one Pl *do*   man

(4) TAG (Jean-Paul Potet, p.c.)
    isa sa manga taumbayan   'one of the town-dwellers'
    one *sa* Pl   town-dweller

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[3] Abbreviations: ART - article, AT - actor topic (= SF?), CLR - (numeral) classifier, DEM - demonstrative, DET - determiner, EX - exclusive, GEN - genitive, LK - linker, NC - numeral constituent, NP - noun phrase, Pl - plural, PP - prepositional phrase, PST - past tense, REL - relative clause marker, SF - subject focus, Sg - singular, T - topic marker. Numbers denote persons. Square brackets refer to the fact that my glosses do not correspond to a source.

[4] Note, however, that as in most other Austronesian languages IVA plural marker is optional.

[5] See Shkarban 1995: 197-209 for a discussion of case-marking in TAG, where she argues that *sa* must be considered as a case marker. And it seems that Philippine languages generally use such case(-like) markers in PCs. For example, Sandra Chung (p.c.) made the same claim about Chamorro.

[6] But again, the MLG "genitive" exponent can be analyzed as a preposition (cf. Arakin 1963: 53).

(5) MLG (Ileana Paul, p.c.)
Nanasa lovia ny telo t- ami-n -ny lehilahy
wash:PST:AT dish DET three PST-*amy*-GEN-DET man
'Three of the men were washing dishes.'

As for semantics of these link morphemes in the languages of the sample, it seems that almost all of them have some abstract locative meaning. In this respect these languages contrast with European languages, which generally use an ablative schema[7] or a genitive schema. A noticeable exception is MAL, which has an ablative-like PC illustrated in (6):

(6) MAL
dua dari saingan besar Dell 'two of Dell's big competitors'
two from competitor big Dell

Note, however, that this construction is relatively new and presumably was borrowed either from Dutch or English. Furthermore, MAL has another PC which is more similar to those we have seen above: in (7) the embedded NP is introduced by the combination of the prepositions *di* 'in' and *antara* 'between, among'[8].

(7) MAL (Waruno Mahdi, p.c.)
dua (orang) di antara orang-orang itu 'two of those men'
two CLR in between man:Pl DEM

So far I gave basic data concerning PCs in eight Austronesian languages. In the next section we will look at some details which can be viewed as symptoms of a particular semantic structure.

3. Semantic dependency

Obviously, partitives express a certain relation between individuals. Therefore we can ask ourselves what provides this relation: an NC, an embedded NP, or an

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[7] See Koptjevskaja-Tamm (forthc.) for details.

[8] One example of the "mixed" construction has been met:

salah se- orang dari antara orang-orang muda yang...
one CLR from between man:Pl young REL
'one of the young men which...'

embedded PP (if it exists)[9], or using more formal terms, whether the NC (or its part) is a semantic argument of some embedded phrase or vice versa. The notion of "semantic argument" usually presupposes also that such an argument must be overtly expressed or covertly inferred from the context. In other words, the providing of a relation must be obligatory for a semantic head (i.e. a predicate).

I reject the possibility that it is the embedded NP that serves as a semantic predicate, since this NP apparently does not satisfy the requirement of the obligation of such a providing. So we leave ourselves with two candidates for a semantic predicate: the NC and the embedded PP. Since in some languages there is no preposition in PCs, the most plausible candidate for a predicate is the NC. This is also supported by the fact that counting presupposes the unifying of what is counted and the embedded NP can serve as such a "unifier", which is required by the numeral.

Nevertheless, in the languages with a marking pattern it seems that the PP is a locative modifier and hence it gets the whole phrase's head as its argument. But is this so obvious? As we have seen above, most partitive-marking languages in the sample use locative exponents with very abstract semantics. For instance, IVA *do*, which is used in PCs (3), may have a fairly broad range of locative meanings, as one can see from (8):

(8)   IVA (Reid 1966: 55, 139)
    a. *tomoaw*   *qo*   *tao*   *do*   *vahay*   'The man is going out of the house.'
        go.out:SF   T   man   *do*   house
    b. *mamalang*   *si*   *Juan*   *do*   *basko*   'Juan is leading it to Basco.'
        lead:SF   T   Juan   *do*   Basco

What we see here is that *do* has a very abstract meaning, which must be further specified. The same holds true for most other link morphemes used in PCs: e.g. MLG *amy* (see (5)), which can mean 'with, in, to, of, and' etc. So we can ascertain that

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[9] Theoretically, there are two other possible sources. The first one is the context, but then we can expect that the relation between the NC and the embedded NP may be other than partitive, and this is not the case. The second one is the construction itself but the PC usually exploits patterns of other constructions (in our case, locative).

languages tend to use semantically unmarked morphemes in partitives. Interestingly, these morphemes are unmarked not only in respect to the very relations they express, but also in respect to the properties of these relations. For example, TON uses the preposition *wia* in PCs:

(9)　TON (Sneddon 1975: 124)
　　　si　　esa　wia　　se　　asu -na　　　　　　　'one of his dogs'
　　　[ART] one　*wia*　　[ART] dog -3Sg

In locative constructions *wia* may be replaced by one of three other locative prepositions - depending on the degree of distance. Nevertheless, if the degree of distance is irrelevant (i.e. neutralized), usually *wia* is used (Sneddon 1975: 106).

To conclude, most of the partitive-marking languages in the sample use semantically unmarked link morphemes. Hence we may hypothesize that the relation they express must be further specified, and this could be ensured by NCs. Therefore, the embedded NP can be considered as a semantic argument of the NC. Note, however, that the latter itself does not provide the <u>partitive</u> relation; it only looks for a "unifier" of the objects being counted. So the partitive relation can be viewed as an entailment from that a (plural) individual (but not a property) is used as such a unifier[10].

This does not mean that the locative scheme has nothing in common with partitive semantics. It is likely to be considered as a possible grammaticalization source for partitives (as it can be a grammaticalization source for possessives). Moreover, it seems that abstract locative modification and filling the NC's argument slot are not mutually exclusive. The sole claim is that filling the argument slot is obligatory while modification is optional. Therefore I suggest (leaving aside a number of possible constraints) that if something can be interpreted as an argument, it is likely to be interpreted so.

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[10] Cf. Koptjevskaja-Tamm (forthc.) where she speaks about "definite quantification", and especially de Hoop 1998.

From this point of view, the only exception to the claim about abstractness of partitive link morphemes - this is again MAL - does not contradict the theory. It was shown above that in MAL prepositions with more or less concrete meanings are used. Moreover, these prepositions can be used as modifiers or higher order operators, cp. (10):

(10) MAL
      Di antara -nya ada yang sudah melunasi   utang -nya
      in between -3   exist REL PST   discharge:ACT debt -3
      'Among them, there are those who have already discharged their debts.'

We can suggest that *di antara* constructions are basically analogous of the "*among*"-constructions, which are usually not considered as PCs. Nevertheless, in (7) *di antara* is used as a partitive marker. We may suggest then that it introduces an argument and forms a modifier at the same time[11].

4. Syntactic dependency

I now turn to syntactic implications of the fact that the embedded NP is an argument of the NC in the PC. Really, why is this NP embedded while it is well known that a semantic dependent can be a syntactic head (e.g. in attribute constructions)?

Lander (2001) suggested that the quantified NP serves as an argument of the NC and proposed a theory based on that the NC always determines the syntactic category of a whole phrase in partitives but may or may not determine it in simple counting constructions (such as *two dogs*). If we assume that the head is what determines the category of the phrase then it means that an NC must be the head in a PC but can be either head or syntactic modifier in a simple counting construction. The problem is how the partitive can be differentiated from the simple construction. Partitive-marking languages use grammaticalized modifier constructions for partitives, and we can expect that this distinguishes PCs from simple constructions.

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[11] For various theoretical treatments of such constructions see e.g. Dowty 2000 and Langacker 1988.

This is indeed so, as one can see from the comparison of (3-6; 9) with (11-15) respectively:

(11)　IVA (Reid 1966: 102)
　　　qo qanem　qa　rangan　　　　　　'six spans'
　　　T　six　　[LK]　span
(12)　TAG (Lina Shkarban, p.c.)
　　　isa -ng　taumbayan　　　　　　　'one town-dweller'
　　　one -LK　town-dweller
(13)　MLG (Arakin 1963: 36)
　　　olona　vato　　　　　　　　　　'eight people'
　　　man　　eight
(14)　MAL
　　　dua　orang　pekerja　　　　　　'two workers'
　　　two　CLR　　worker
(15)　TON (Sneddon 1975: 127)
　　　n-　　dua　wale　　　　　　　　'two houses'
　　　[ART]- two　house

(Note that at least MAL and TON have alternative constructions with quantified NPs preceding NCs.)

The problem arises when PCs and simple constructions use the same morphological marking or have no formal marking at all (as in Micronesian languages). Then only one means for disambiguation remains, that is word order, which is fixed and right-branching in Micronesian languages. In UL and WOL simple constructions allow both word orders [NC NP] and [NP NC], i.e. the NC may serve either as a head or as a modifier - as it is predicted by the theory. Nevertheless, we may expect that when an ambiguity between simple and partitive readings can arise, only the second word order will be allowed. A typical instance of such a situation is where there is a (plural) demonstrative which refers to the meaning of the whole NP. As it is expected, the only possible word order is then [NP NC], since [NC NP] has been already reserved for a partitive[12]:

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[12] What is unexpected here is that the demonstrative is placed between the head and the NC. Note, however, that Sohn (1975: 184) treats such NCs as relative clauses.

(16)   WOL (Sohn 1975: 202)
       ig   ye   seli- mel   'these three fish'
       fish   DEM   three- CLR

In KOS this phenomenon seems to be fully grammaticalized in that PCs have word order [NC NP] while simple constructions have word order [NP NC] (Good 1989: 148):

(17)   KOS (Good 1989: 148)
       a. *Nga   liye   soko   kosro   ah.*   'I saw one of the dogs.'
          1Sg   saw   one   dog   DET
       b. *Kosro   soko   ah   yohk.*   'The one dog is big.'
          dog   one   DET   big

To summarize, we have found that in order to distinguish PCs and simple counting constructions, not only overt morphological means can be employed but also dependency relations expressed by word order.

5. Open ends.

We have seen that non-European (more specifically, Austronesian) languages can contribute to the theory of PCs in that here some basic properties of these constructions can be expressed more explicitly. Nevertheless, since in this paper attention was drawn only to set partitives, much data remains in the dark. This concerns the variety of structures of superlatives, some quantifiers, mass partitives etc. Another problem deals with covert partitives, that is with NPs which are interpreted as partitive but have no formal differences from simple counting constructions. Cp. (18) with (14), for instance:

(18)   MAL (Waruno Mahdi, p.c.)
       dua orang kawan-nya   'two friends of his'
       two CLR   friend- 3Sg

Possessive phrases in MAL (as in most other Austronesian languages) are not obligatory interpreted as referential. Hence they can be counted via a non-partitive construction. Nevertheless, Waruno Mahdi (p.c.) pointed that such phrases as (18) are likely to be interpreted as partitive (partly due to the existence of definite collective

numerals in MAL). In relation to such examples an important question arises. Must any language have a separate PC? Or are there languages where covert partitives cover this semantic domain? Perhaps, the absence of data on PCs in most grammars is explained by the absence of overt partitives? Hopefully, these and many other questions including those suggested above will find a place in linguistic studies.

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