

The partitive case in existential and copula clauses in Balto-Finnic

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Abstract

This paper examines a range of clauses where the main verb is ‘to be’ in the Balto-Finnic languages Estonian, Finnish, Karelian, Livonian and Veps, using mainly biblical texts. These clauses are divided into two groups, copula clauses and existential clauses. The frequency of the partitive versus nominative copula complement and existential argument were studied. In Finnish the partitive complement is frequent, while in the other languages only occasional instances have been found. In existential clauses the single argument tends to be nominative, if indivisible, and partitive, if divisible. The verb agrees in person and number with the nominative argument in Estonian, Livonian and Veps, but not in Finnish and Karelian. It never agrees with a partitive argument. In negative clauses the argument is almost always partitive. Livonian differs in having more nominative arguments, including some in negative clauses. Possessive clauses form a subgroup of existential clauses with the possessor in the adessive case (dative in Livonian). In these there are more nominative arguments than in canonical existential clauses, particularly in Livonian.

1. Introduction

This paper is part of a study comparing the use of the partitive case in the Balto-Finnic languages Estonian, Finnish, Karelian, Livonian and Veps. Here the focus is on alternation of partitive and nominative case in clauses where the main verb is ‘to be’. Bible texts were used for ease of comparison. Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians was studied for all except Veps, for which only Matthew’s gospel was available. In order to compare with Veps, Matthew’s gospel was also studied in detail in Estonian and Finnish, but isolated examples were located in the gospel in Karelian and Livonian also. Mostly modern editions have been used, but there is some reference also to earlier translations. In addition, there is reference to some other material, as well as quotations from various authors. The complete list of texts is shown at the end of the paper.

Section 2 deals with copula clauses, looking at noun phrase complements in Section 2.1 and adjectival complements in 2.2. Existential clauses with their single

argument are discussed in Section 3 and possessive clauses, which form a subgroup of existential ones, in Section 4.

2. Copula clauses

A copula clause consists of the subject, which is nominative (it can also be a clause), the copula and the complement. The copula may sometimes be omitted. The complement is very variable. It may be a noun in most of the 14 standard cases of Estonian or corresponding ones in the other languages, which vary slightly from the Estonian. The copula complement can also be an adjective, adverb, a non-finite verb (infinitive or participle), or a clause. This paper is only concerned with noun phrases and adjectives in the nominative or partitive case. It makes no difference to the case of the subject or complement whether the clause is affirmative or negative.

2.1 Noun phrase complements

2.1.1 Equational clauses

Equational clauses are those where the complement is the same entity as the subject, e.g. he is a fisherman or a good man. A subgroup of these is the identifying clause, where the meaning is unaltered if the subject and complement are reversed, e.g. this man is John. Finnish alone has a group of partitive NP complements, which are called distributive (Sademiemi 1950: 48), where both subject and complement are divisible and the scope is identical, with the quality of the complement attributed to each of the actual or imaginable parts of the subject. An example of a distributive partitive complement is quoted by Denison (1957: 211) from Mika Waltari's novel "Sinuhe":

(1;F¹) *Tuli on tulta*
 fire.NOM is fire.PART
 'Fire is fire'

(2;E) *Tuli on tuli* (NOM)

In the other languages, as shown in the Estonian example (2), such complements are nominative and semantically a partitive complement is clearly partitive, the scope of the complement being part of a possible whole.

As can be seen from Table 1, Finnish differs from the other Balto-Finnic languages in that a large number of partitive NP complements are found. Of the nominative NP complements in Finnish about 2/3 are identifying, with a singular count noun or pronoun subject. Of the 32 partitive complements nine are pronouns, mostly indefinite. In Finnish eleven of the partitive noun complements were plural, and all these clauses had a plural subject. Examples (3)-(7) show corresponding examples where only the Finnish has a partitive complement.

¹ Initials E, F etc. refer to the initial letter of the language of the example. A list of abbreviations is given at the end of the paper.

Table 1: Distribution of nominative and partitive case of NP copula complements

<i>Language</i>	<i>Nominative</i>	<i>Partitive</i>
Estonian 1989 (1Cor)	92 (96.8%)	3 (3.2%)
Finnish 1992 (1 Cor)	54 (62.8%)	32 (37.2%)
Karelian (1 Cor)	88 (98.9%)	1 (1.1%)
Livonian (1 Cor)	83 (91.2%)	8 (8.8%)
Veps (Matthew)	126 (96.2%)	5 (3.8%)
Estonian 1989 (Matthew)	103 (100%)	0
Finnish 1992 (Matthew)	84 (78.5%)	23 (21.5%)

(3;E) *nad olid ju kalurid*
 3PL.NOM be.3PL.PAST of course fisherman.PL.NOM
 ‘They were of course fishermen.’ (Matt. 4:18)

(4;F) *sillä he olivat kalastajia*
 because they were fishermen.PART

(5;K) *hüö oldih kalastajat*
 they were fishermen.NOM

(6;L) *siēpierast ku ne vol’t kalamied*
 because they were fishermen.NOM

(7;V) *hö oliba kalanikad*
 they were fishermen.NOM

While occasional plural partitive complements are found in Karelian, they are not common. Ojajärvi (1950: 26) pointed out that in Karelian the complement is nominative where Finnish would have partitive, and that this is so even in Northern Karelian, which is generally closer to Finnish than the more southern dialects. Even in some Finnish dialects the plural partitive complement is uncommon with a plural subject (Denison 1957: 206). The occasional NP partitives found in languages other than Finnish are mainly indefinite pronouns.

Kettunen (1924: 29) has several examples in Estonian with both plural and singular subjects, where the partitive meaning is prominent, as shown in (8).

(8;E) *nad pidid olema meie sugulasi*
 3PL.NOM have-to.3PL.PAST be.INF 1PL.GEN relative.PL.PART
 ‘they had to be (some of) our relatives’

An example with a singular subject comes from Nemvalts (1996: 142).

(9;E) *Peeter on meie kooli poisse*
 Peter be.3SG our school.GEN boy.PL.PART
 ‘Peter belongs to the (group of) boys of our school’

Such examples were deliberately introduced into Estonian in the 1920s by the language reformer and innovator Johannes Aavik, who was influenced by Finnish.

Such clauses are found in subsequent Estonian literature, but are much less frequent than in Finnish.

In earlier Finnish Bible texts from 1548, 1642 and even 1880, the partitive noun complement is quite unusual. Only occasional indefinite pronouns are found in the partitive. In the 1906 New Testament, however, they are present to the same extent as in modern editions. The language of the Bible is well known for being conservative, so a look at other literature is in order. Indeed, according to Toivainen (1985: 13) such examples were mentioned in von Becker's *Finsk Grammatik* (1824). Also, in the first Finnish novel *Seitsemän veljestä* by Aleksis Kivi, published in 1870, the NP partitive complement is attested, as in the following example from p.14:

(10;F) *ja olemme naimattomia miehiä*
 and be.1PL unmarried.PL.PART man.PL.PART
 'and we are unmarried men'

Example (11) shows a partitive singular abstract noun complement. In equational clauses such partitives are found only in Finnish.

(11;F) *sillä se on hänen mielestään hulluutta*
 because it.NOM is 3SG.GEN mind.SG.ELAT.3PX foolishness.SG.PART
 'because in his mind it is foolishness' (1Cor. 2:14)

Here *se* is not pleonastic, but refers to an abstract idea rather than a concrete object.

2.1.2 Non-equational clauses

In non-equational clauses the partitive noun complement has an adjectival or adverbial connotation, and in many instances a prepositional phrase or relative case could be substituted. The complement is singular and can be a count noun. Only a few examples were found in the texts, but in the linguistic literature examples can be found in all the languages. No nominative complements of this kind exist.

(12;F) *mitä mieltä olet*
 what.PART opinion.PART be.2SG
 'of what opinion are you' = 'what do you think?' (Matt. 17:25)

(13;K) *midä mieldü olet* (Matt. 17:25)

(14;V) *mittušt mel't olet* (Matt. 22:17)

Partitive complements may indicate the origin or quality of the subject.

(15;F) *sinä olet varmasti samaa joukkoa*
 2SG be.2SG certainly same.SG.PART group.SG.PART
 'you are certainly from the same group' (Matt. 26:73)

(16;K) *ühtä muamuo ollah lapsed*
 one.PART mother.PART be.3PL child.PL.NOM
 'the children are from one mother' (Ojajärvi 1950: 142)

(17;V) *hän on ĳetĳd mamad*
 he is this.PART mother.PART
 ‘he is from this mother’ (Kettunen 1943: 84)

(18;F) *hänen vuoteensa oli norsunluuta*
 her bed.NOM.3PX was ivory.PART
 ‘her bed was of ivory’
 (Denison 1957: 203, quoting Mika Waltari “Sinuhe”, p. 108)

Such examples can also be found in older texts, as shown in the following clauses (19)–(22).

(19;F) *jos me siis Jumalan sucua olemme*
 if we then God.GEN kin.SG.PART be.1PL
 ‘if then we are God’s kin’ (1642 Bible, p. 635)

(20;E²) *Minna olle Pahwli Usku*
 I be.1SG Paul.GEN religion.SG.PART
 ‘I am of Paul’s religion’ (Wastne Testament 1686, 1Cor 3:4)

(21;E) *tema on sūrt sugu*
 he is great.SG.PART family.SG.PART
 ‘he is from a noble family’ (Wiedemann 1875: 601)

(22;L) *Ni’emad umāt tūoista kaŗŗa*
 COW.PL.NOM be.3PL other.SG.PART colour.SG.PART
 ‘The cows were of another colour’
 (Larsson 1983: 62, quoting Sjögren and Wiedemann 1861: 238)

This kind of partitive complement occurs in all the Balto-Finnic languages as well as in old texts, so it is thought to go back in history to Proto-Finnic (Denison 1957: 247; Larsson 1983: 59).

2.2 Adjectival complements

Partitive adjectival complements occur in Finnish and to a very limited extent in Karelian, but not in the other languages, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: The case distribution of the adjectival phrase complement

<i>Language</i>	<i>Nominative</i>	<i>Partitive</i>
Estonian (1Cor)	66	0
Finnish (1Cor)	29 (40.3%)	43 (59.7%)
Karelian (1Cor)	69 (98.6%)	1 (1.4%)
Livonian (1Cor)	81	0
Veps (Matthew)	114	0
Estonian (Matthew)	122	0
Finnish (Matthew)	88 (69.8%)	38 (30.2%)

² Southern Estonian.

(23;F) *muutenhan teidän lapsenne*
 otherwise.EMP your.PL child.PL.NOM.3PX

olisivat epäpuhtaita
 be.3PL.COND unclean.PL.PART

‘otherwise your children would be unclean’ (1 Cor. 7: 14)

(24;K) *muitehää teidän lapset ei oldas puhtahat*
 otherwise.EMP your.PL child.PL.NOM 3PL.NEG be.COND clean.PL.NOM
 ‘otherwise your children would not be pure’

Only one partitive adjectival complement was found in the Karelian text, and here the clause has almost an existential quality.

(25;K) ... *kai mi on minus lapsellistu*
 all that.NOM is 1SG.INESS childish.PART
 ‘(When I became a man, I gave up) all that is childish in me’
 (1Cor. 13:11)

Denison (1957: 239-240) and Ojajärvi (1950: 142) both find that in Karelian adjectival partitive complements do occasionally occur, but much less frequently than in Finnish.

Schot-Saikk (1990: 44) gives an example of a difference in meaning between a partitive and nominative adjectival complement.

(26;F) *(se) on turvallista*
 it is safe.SG.PART
 (pleonastic ‘it’, which can be omitted)

(27;F) *se on turvallinen*
 it is safe.SG.NOM
 (‘it’ referring to a definite entity, e.g. car, road etc.)

Partitive adjectival complements are found in Aleksis Kivi’s “Seitsemän veljestä” (1870). Only an occasional example has been located in old Finnish texts, as reported by Denison (1957: 229). None were found in the earlier biblical texts studied. Like NP complements, they appear in the 1906 Finnish New Testament.

3. Existential clauses

Hakanen (1972: 51) defines an existential clause as one which semantically indicates the existence, the coming into existence and the cessation of existence of something generally or in a particular location in time or place, or movement to another place of existence.

Hakulinen (2004: 850) lists a number of properties which characterize the prototypical existential clause in Finnish.

1. The verb is 'to be'.
2. The theme is a location.
3. The divisible subject is partitive.
4. In a negative clause all subjects are partitive.
5. The verb does not show agreement with the subject.
6. The subject has not been mentioned previously.

The list of properties refers to the 'subject' of the existential clause. This is how both Estonian and Finnish grammars refer to the noun whose existence is predicated. There has been considerable discussion about the nature of this argument, which I prefer to call the 'existential argument'.

The Balto-Finnic literature deals mainly with Finnish and to some extent with Estonian. In Finland a debate concerning existential clauses began in the 1950s and has been summarized by Tiainen (1997). Nemvalts (1996: 18) points out that the main difference between Finnish and Estonian existential clauses is the agreement of the verb with a plural nominative (atypical) argument in Estonian. In Finnish there is usually lack of agreement. Less information is available about the other languages, and no stated criteria exist, although existential clauses do occur in all. In no language is there any verbal agreement in person or number with a partitive argument. Hakanen (1973: 56-62) gives a number of examples in different Balto-Finnic languages and points out that the basic structure is essentially the same in all. He has included the occasional nominative divisible argument in Karelian and Veps, with verbal agreement in the latter but not the former. His Livonian examples with the verb 'to be' do not include any with divisible arguments.

An example of a prototypical existential clause in Estonian is shown in (28).

(28;E) *Laual* *oli* *raamatuid.*
 table.ADESS **be.3SG.PAST** book.PL.PART
 'There were (some) books on the table.'

For less typical Finnish existential clauses Hakulinen (2004: 850) has a list which has atypical alternatives for each of the typical properties, and points out that the distinction between existential and non-existential clauses is not sharp. Huumo and Perko (1993: 399) also see existentiality as a continuum. The question arises, how many typical features are needed for a clause to be called existential. If the clause in (28) is turned around with the argument at the beginning and nominative, the verb agreeing with the subject, and the location at the end of the clause, then it is no longer existential but rather a locational copula clause, as shown in (29). If the clause-initial argument in (29) were partitive, verbal agreement would be lacking, and the clause would be existential.

(29;E) *Raamatud* *olid* *laual.*
 book.PL.NOM **be.3PL.PAST** table.ADESS
 'The books were on the table.'

Sometimes the adverbial location is omitted completely and semantically there is absolute existence. Hakulinen (2004: 855) puts these into a separate subgroup. Even if there is no adverbial theme, the verb tends to precede the argument. If it does not, there is often an added inessive form of the *-ma* infinitive of the verb ‘to be’, *olemassa* as in (42) below and similar forms in the other languages. This has a locative connotation ‘in existence’, and *olemassa* could be considered as a default locative adverbial. Hakanen (1972: 52) points out problems with the classification of clauses with *olemassa*. Siro (1974: 39) stresses that an adverbial is essential, and thinks that an underlying location is always present, but occasionally suppressed. He does not accept temporal adverbials as part of an existential clause (Siro 1974: 40), while Hakanen (1973: 13) does. The location can be an adverb, an adpositional phrase or a noun in an inherent case. Huumo and Perko (1993: 399) regard (X)VS word order as the main criterion of an existential clause, together with the existentiality of the verb, but seem to make some exceptions. According to Siro (1974: 36) the partitive subject is the most important criterion. Nemvalts (1996: 18) discusses Estonian, but Hakanen (1973) is the only one to discuss languages other than Finnish and Estonian.

For this study Hakanen’s (1972: 51) semantic definition of the existential clause was the main criterion for selection. Although verbs other than ‘to be’ are accepted by all, the verb ‘to be’ is by far the most common and for practical reasons is the only one included here. Clauses with a single partitive argument are all included. A liberal view has been taken of location, both place and time being included. Word order can be varied due to different emphasis, so if other criteria are present, an atypical word order has also been accepted. The problem of nominative divisible arguments is a greater one, but as there are no definite criteria expressed for languages other than Finnish and Estonian, such arguments have also been included if other criteria are present. Clauses with quantifiers have been excluded from the statistics. These consist either of a nominative numeral with a singular partitive complement (as shown in example (51)) or an adverb such as ‘much/many’ also with a partitive complement, singular or plural. The subgroup of possessive clauses is discussed separately in Section 4. Those results are not included in this section.

Table 3 shows the results of the present study of the case of the existential argument in the biblical texts in the five Balto-Finnic languages.

Table 3: Distribution of case of the argument in existential clauses

<i>Language</i>	<i>Nominative</i>	<i>Partitive</i>
Estonian (1Cor)	7 (23.3%)(0 neg)	23 (76.7%)(13 neg)
Finnish (1Cor)	4 (16.7%)(0 neg)	20 (83.3%)(9 neg)
Karelian (1Cor)	9 (26.5%)(0 neg)	25 (73.5%)(11 neg)
Livonian (1Cor)	23 (71.9%)(2 neg)	9 (28.1%)(7 neg)
Veps (Matthew)	25 (56.8%)(0 neg)	19 (43.2%)(13 neg)
Estonian (Matthew)	24 (66.7%)(0 neg)	12 (33.3%)(4 neg)
Finnish (Matthew)	16 (51.6%)(0 neg)	15 (48.4%)(5 neg)

There are a number of nominative arguments, more so in the gospel, most of which are singular count nouns. Among the data from the letter to the Corinthians in Finnish and Karelian there are no plural nominative arguments, and there is one in Estonian, example (32), but Livonian stands out in having five, two of which are shown in examples (30) and (41). In the gospels Finnish again has no plural nominative arguments, Estonian has two and there is one in Veps, example (31).

(30;L) *āt mitmõsuglist andõd*
 be.3PL various.PL.NOM talents.PL.NOM
 ‘there are many kinds of talents’ (1Cor. 12:4)

(31;V) *mihe teiden südäimiš oma pahad meletused?*
 why 2.PL.GEN heart.PL.INESS be.3PL bad.PL.NOM thought.PL.NOM
 ‘why are there bad thoughts in your hearts?’ (Matt. 9:4)

(32;E) *kellest on kõik asjad*
 who.ELAT be.3PL all thing.PL.NOM
 ‘from whom are all things’ (1Cor. 8:6)

Despite the nominative arguments, I have still regarded these as existential clauses, because of the word order and the existential semantics. Singular divisible arguments should also be partitive, but there are exceptions where the meaning is generic. Livonian has three which are nominative, for example (36), where other languages have partitive.

(33;E) *teie seas kuulukse olevat hoorust*
 2PL.GEN among is-heard be.EVID fornication.PART
 ‘one hears that there is fornication among you’ (1Cor. 5:1)

(34;F) *että teidän keskuudessanne on haureutta*
 that 2PL.GEN among.2PL.PX be.3SG fornication.PART

(35;K) *buite teijän keskes on kargandua*
 that 2PL.GEN among be.3SG fornication.PART

(36;L) *ku täd vail vol’li puortimi*
 that 2PL.GEN between be.EVID fornication.NOM

The theme (focus) at the beginning of the clause is canonically a location, but occasionally the existential argument is the theme, and the location comes later in the clause, but in that situation the argument must be partitive. In subordinate clauses the word order is often different, making those clauses more difficult to classify. An example is shown in (37):

(37;E) *kui olekski “jumalaid” taevas*
 if be.3SG.COND-even god.PL.PART heaven.SG.INESS
 ‘even if there were “gods” in heaven’ (1Cor. 8:5)

There are a number of examples without an adverbial theme, indicating absolute existence:

(38;E) *on taevalikke ihusid*
be.3SG heavenly.PL.PART body.PL.PART

ja maapealseid ihusid
and earthly.PL.PART body.PL.PART

‘there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies’ (1Cor. 15: 40)

(39;F) *on taivaallisia ja maallisia ruumiita*
be.3SG heavenly.PL.PART and earthly.PL.PART body.PL.PART

(40;K) *on taivahallistu dai muallistu rungua*
be.3SG heavenly.SG.PART and earthly.SG.PART body.SG.PART

(41;L) *ja āt touvilist lejad*
and be.3PL heavenly.PL.NOM body.PL.NOM

ja āt mūldalist lejad
and be.3PL earthly.PL.NOM body.PL.NOM

Contrasting with the other languages, there is a nominative argument in Livonian (41) and also in (30), with agreement of the verb. In Finnish typically the verb is always in the third person singular form, even with a nominative plural argument, but this is not so in Estonian, Livonian and Veps, where it agrees in person and number with a nominative argument, but not with a partitive. This is seen in examples (30)–(32). I have not been able to find any suitable examples among existential clauses in Karelian, but an example among Karelian possessive clauses (61) suggests that Karelian follows the Finnish pattern, and this is also supported by Hakanen’s data (1973: 56). If the argument precedes the verb and is nominative, the verb agrees in person and number even in Finnish, but the clause is then usually no longer existential. In (42) the negative auxiliary precedes the argument, while the rest of the verb follows.

(42;F) *ettei epäjumalia ole olemassa*
that-NEG.3SG false-god.PL.PART be be.INF.INESS
‘that false gods do not exist’ (1Cor. 8:4)

Negative existential clauses are said to always have a partitive argument, and Hakanen (1973: 54) says that this is the best criterion, but even here there are some exceptions. However, it is certainly the most consistent feature in my data, and the one feature that appears in the earliest writings. Even in Livonian, the argument tends to be partitive in negative clauses but there are two exceptions in the present data. The question arises, whether these should be classified as existential clauses or not. Livonian has been influenced by Latvian, where the existential argument is nominative in affirmative clauses. However, in negative clauses it is genitive (corresponding to Balto-Finnic partitive), which would tend to consolidate the negative partitive in Livonian.

(43;K) *gu kuolluzien nouzendua ei olle*
 if dead.PL.GEN resurrection.SG.PART NEG.3SG be

(44;L) *aga aži kūolōnd ylnūzīmist äb ūo*
 but if dead.PL.GEN resurrection.SG.PART NEG.3SG be
 'but if there is no resurrection of the dead' (1Cor. 15:13)

Livonian had a couple of examples of nominative arguments in negative clauses, for example the following.

(45;L) *mingi ka pagand vail äb ūo*
 which.SG.NOM even heathen.PL.GEN among NEG.3SG be
 'which is not found even among heathens' (1Cor. 5:1)

The final criterion of a prototypical existential clause, according to Hakulinen (2004: 850), is that the argument should be presented for the first time in the existential clause. This raises the question whether relative clauses can be included, because the antecedent of the relative pronoun has already been mentioned. This feature is the one that seems to be the least reliable criterion. Itkonen (1979: 80) states that where the existence of the subject is presupposed, the clause is not existential. This would appear to preclude the occurrence of a personal or demonstrative pronoun, yet these can be found in existential clauses, for example (46).

(46;E) *mind ei ole seal*
 1SG.PART NEG be there
 'I am not there' (lit. there is no me there; I don't exist there)

It is a statement about what is not there, rather than a statement about where I am not. If it were a statement about me, it would be expressed by the nominative.

When the partitive noun and adjective are non-adjacent in the clause, as in (47), the adjective is sometimes mistakenly referred to as a partitive predicate of a copular clause, especially in older literature, as in Ojajärvi (1950: 142). Hakanen (1973: 53) points out that these clauses are definitely existential.

(47;F) *armolahjoja on monenlaisia*
 talent.PL.PART be.3SG many-kind.PL.PART
 'there are talents of many kinds' (1Cor. 12:4)

The word order could be changed to that in (48). Both the noun and the adjective, whether it precedes or follows the noun, are in the partitive case and form an NP.

(48;F) *on monenlaisia armolahjoja*
 'there are many kinds of talents'

The basic pattern of existential clauses is essentially the same for all Balto-Finnic languages, with the greatest deviations occurring in Livonian. Even in the oldest Bible translations, the partitive does appear in this situation, especially in negative clauses, but existential clauses are uncommon there. The earliest Finnish New Testament translation by Agricola in 1548 and also the 1642 Bible have a few

examples, but in those times the singular partitive forms were not always distinguishable from the nominative. In Agricola's writings we find examples of the verb agreeing in number with a plural partitive argument. There is also an occasional nominative argument in a negative clause. Essentially the pattern is there, but it is not completely consistent. The Estonian New Testament of 1715 and the Bible of 1739 also have examples of partitive arguments in existential clauses, especially in negative ones.

4. Possessive clauses

A subtype of existential clauses is a possessive clause, where the possessor can also be an experiencer. Possession can be indicated in a number of different ways, but the only one that is considered here is the existential one. Some Estonian examples are shown.

(49;E) *Minul on raamat.*
 1SG.ADESS be.3SG book.SG.NOM
 'I have a/the book.'

(50;E) *Minul ei ole raamatut.*
 1SG.ADESS NEG be book.SG.PART
 'I don't have any/a/the book.'

The structure is similar to that of the existential clause, with the possessor (animate except for part-whole relationships) as the theme/location in the adessive case. Abstract possession, such as in many of the examples below, is also expressed by such a construction. Other Balto-Finnic languages, except Livonian, have similar constructions. In Livonian dative case replaces the adessive, presumably influenced by Latvian.³ The fact that the adessive is also used to indicate location 'on top of' can sometimes lead to ambiguity, as shown in (51).

(51;E) *laual on neli jalga*
 table.SG.ADESS be.3SG four.NOM foot/leg.SG.PART
 'the table has four legs' or 'there are four feet/legs on the table'

To disambiguate one may have to use a prepositional phrase *laua peal* (table.GEN on-ADESS), which cannot have a possessive meaning.

Table 4 shows the case distribution of the possessum. Clauses with quantifiers have been excluded. The most consistent finding is the partitive case in negative clauses, but Livonian again differs from the others in that there are a number of examples with a nominative possessum, despite influence from Latvian. Livonian also has the greatest proportion of nominative arguments in affirmative clauses. Examples (52)–(56) show affirmative clauses with a partitive possessum, while (57) and (58) show negative clauses in Livonian, the first with a partitive and the other with a nominative possessum.

³ Latvian has the construction of dative possessor and the verb 'to be'. In an affirmative clause the possessum is nominative, and in a negative one genitive (corresponding to Balto-Finnic partitive).

Table 4: The case of the possessum in existential possessive constructions

<i>Language</i>	<i>Nominative</i>	<i>Partitive</i>
Estonian (1Cor)	17 (36.2%)(0 neg)	30 (63.8%)(19 neg)
Finnish (1Cor)	32 (58.2%)(0 neg)	23 (41.8%)(12 neg)
Karelian (1Cor)	38 (69.1%)(0 neg)	17 (30.9%)(13 neg)
Livonian (1Cor)	55 (80.9%)(7 neg)	13 (19.1%)(10 neg)
Veps (Matthew)	27 (62.8%)(0 neg)	16 (37.2%)(9 neg)
Estonian (Matthew)	34 (66.7%)(0 neg)	17 (33.3%)(12 neg)
Finnish (Matthew)	16 (50.0%)(0 neg)	16 (50.0%)(7 neg)

(52;E) *mõnedel on vaid umbtaipu*
 some.PL.ADESS be.3SG only poor-understanding.SG.PART
 ‘some have only poor understanding’ (1Cor. 15:34)

(53;F) *jolla on tietoa*
 who.SG.ADESS be.3SG knowledge.SG.PART
 ‘who has knowledge’ (1Cor. 8:10)

(54;K) *buite teil on riidua keskenäh*
 that 2PL.ADESS be.3SG quarrel.SG.PART among.ILL
 ‘that you have quarrelling among you’ (1Cor. 1:11)

(55;L) *ku täddõn um kuodõ lēmist entš vail*
 if 2.PL.DAT be.3SG court.SG.PART/ILL going.SG.PART self.GEN between
 ‘if you have court proceedings against each other’ (1Cor. 6: 7)

(56;V) *ku teil todeks oliži uskondad*
 if 2PL.ADESS really 3SG.COND faith.SG.PART
 ‘if you really had faith’ (Matt. 17:20)

(57;L) *aga yl' neitsõd minnõn äb üo Izand käskõ*
 but about virgin.PL.GEN 1SG.DAT NEG.3SG be lord.GEN command.SG.PART
 ‘but concerning virgins I don’t have a command from the Lord’
 (1Cor. 7:25)

(58;L) *aga äb amadõn üo se tundimi*
 but NEG.3SG all.PL.DAT be this.NOM understanding.SG.NOM
 ‘but not all have this understanding’ (1Cor. 8:7)

There are also many instances of nominative divisible arguments, more so than in prototypical existential clauses. The nominative case is associated with definite and specific nouns, and is found in cases of inalienable possession. A partitive possessum in an affirmative clause is nonspecific or partial. In negative clauses the possessum should be partitive, at least in Estonian and Finnish. In the following examples, foxes’ lairs appear to be regarded as inalienable, which is expressed by the nominative case. Both the Finnish and the Karelian have the verb in the third person singular, the others in plural.

- (59;E) *rebastel on urud*
 fox.PL.ADESS be.3PL lair.PL.NOM
 ‘foxes have lairs’ (Matt. 8:20)
- (60;F) *ketuilla on luolansa*
 fox.PL.ADESS be.3SG lair.PL.NOM.3PL.PX
- (61;K) *reboloil on kolot*
 fox.PL.ADESS be.3SG lair.PL.NOM
- (62;L) *rebbistõn āt õkõd*
 fox.PL.DAT be.3PL lair.PL.NOM
- (63;V) *reboil oma urud*
 fox.PL.ADESS be.3PL lair.PL.NOM

Personal pronouns can be possessed, and in Finnish these are then in the special accusative case, which exists for personal pronouns only.

- (64;F) *niin kauan kuin minulla on sinut*
 as long as 1SG.ADESS be.3SG 2SG.ACC
 ‘as long as I have you’ (Itkonen 1979: 83)

This contrasts with the same clause in Estonian, where the nominative is used with verbal agreement.

- (65;E) *nii kaua kui minul oled sina*
 as long as 1SG.ADESS be.2SG 2SG.NOM

The accusative personal pronoun cannot occur in the prototypical existential clause, only in a possessive one. While the possessive clause is classified as a subgroup of existential clauses, there are obvious differences. The adessive is not a true location, but a possessor (or experiencer). The possessor is the logical subject and in Finnish may be the antecedent of a possessive suffix, as in example (60). In both Finnish and Estonian it can be the antecedent of a reflexive. The divisible possessum is more often in the nominative case than the argument in the prototypical existential clause, and less commonly may be so even in a negative clause. In Estonian, Livonian and Veps the verb agrees in person and number with the nominative possessum.

In Estonian and Finnish grammars the existential argument is referred to as the subject, but it is obviously different from a canonical subject, which is sentence-initial and in the nominative case, with the verb agreeing in person and number. The existential argument has object-like features, typically occurring after the verb and lacking agentivity. The nominative case can be used as an object case, and as such, it alternates with the partitive, which is always present in negative clauses. The same applies to the existential argument. Itkonen (1979: 83) states that the nominative in this situation can be regarded as the endless accusative, and Hakanen (1972: 49) refers to nominative-accusative case in this situation, rather than plain nominative. They point out the use of accusative case for Finnish personal pronouns in the possessive subgroup. Toivainen (1985: 25-26) criticizes the

labelling of the partitive argument as subject, and Wiik (1974: 19) calls it an object. Kiparsky (2001: 349) does not consider the existential argument an object for a number of reasons, and calls it a VP-internal subject. He concludes that the sole argument of an existential clause is a subject in object position. Helasvuo (1996: 355) has found that the discourse function of the existential argument is quite different from either subject or object. On p.351 she quotes Fred Karlsson (1982), who proposed the name ‘ject’, saying that in the existential argument the differences between subject and object have been neutralized.

5. Summary

The partitive complement in equational copula clauses is much more common in Finnish than in the other Balto-Finnic languages. The adjectival partitive complement is only found in Finnish and to a very limited extent in Karelian. The singular partitive complement in non-equational usage, indicating origin and quality, occurs, albeit infrequently, in all the languages as well as older texts, and hence appears to be of Proto-Finnic origin. The plural NP and adjectival partitive complement appear to have developed in Finnish mainly in the 19th century, although an occasional example appeared earlier.

Existential clauses are similar in all the Balto-Finnic languages, with the single argument typically being nominative for singular count nouns and partitive for divisible ones. In negative clauses even singular count nouns are partitive. Atypical existential clauses occur in all the languages, being most frequent in Livonian. In atypical clauses with a plural nominative argument the verb agrees in person and number in Estonian, Livonian and Veps. Possessive clauses form a subgroup of existential clauses but have more atypical features. The existential argument has features of both subject and object. Livonian differs most from the others in having fewer partitive arguments, as well as in using dative case instead of adessive for the possessor.

Texts

Estonian: New Testament 1715; Bible 1739; New Testament 1989.

Southern Estonian: New (Wastne) Testament 1686.

Finnish: New Testament (Agricola) 1548; Bible 1642; Bible 1880; New Testament 1906; Bible 1992; Kivi, Aleksis, “*Seitsemän veljestä*”, Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 2002 [1870].

Karelian: New Testament 2003 (Olonets dialect).

Livonian: New Testament 1942.

Veps: St. Matthew’s Gospel 1998

Abbreviations

1,2,3 person; ADESS adessive; COND conditional; DAT dative; E Estonian; ELAT elative; EMP emphatic clitic; EVID evidential; F Finnish; GEN genitive; ILL illative; INESS inessive; INF infinitive; K Karelian; L Livonian; NEG negative auxiliary; NOM nominative; NP noun phrase; PART partitive; PL plural; PX possessive suffix; SG singular; V Veps.

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