

Non-minimal standard change and the Finnish partitive-accusative object distinction

The direct objects of Finnish transitive verbs take either the partitive case or the accusative case. This variation is semantically conditioned (Kiparsky 1998), and previous research has uncovered a number of semantic factors that figure into the case-marking of Finnish direct objects, including quantitative determinacy and aspect. Attempts to account for the Finnish partitive-accusative object distinction by way of a single generalization (Heinämäki 1994, Kiparsky 1998, *inter alia*), despite their instructiveness, are too coarsely grained to capture the subtlety of the distinction and make some false or unclear predictions. I address this problem herein by closely examining the partitive-accusative object distinction across a subset of Finnish transitive verbs—namely, those verbs that involve an entity being physically acted on in some way ('AO verbs'). Extending Kennedy and Levin's (2008) research on degree achievements and bringing new data on verbs of contact and force exertion to the problem, I will show that the direct object of a Finnish AO verb is marked accusative if and only if it is to be understood that the theme of the event being described has undergone a *non-minimal standard change* as a result of that event. In addition to making the correct predictions, this more precise approach maintains the spirit of the boundedness-based approaches of previous research on the PA distinction, and bears on current research on affectedness.

Selected References

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