

The syntactic structure of grammaticalised partitives (pseudo-partitives)

Binominal constructions such as those in (1-2) are usually subsumed under the term “partitives,” but many researchers further differentiate between partitives proper (1) and pseudo-partitives (2) (see, e.g., Selkirk, 1977, Jackendoff, 1977, Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2001).

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|------|--------------------------------|------|---------------------------|
| (1a) | <i>a cup of the coffee</i> | (2a) | <i>a cup of coffee</i> |
| (1b) | <i>a bunch of your flowers</i> | (2b) | <i>a bunch of flowers</i> |

Pseudo-partitives could be defined as expressions referring to an amount of some substance rather than to a part/subset of a superset. The difference between partitives and pseudo-partitives is observable in many natural languages. It can be reflected syntactically in various ways (cf. Koptjevskaja-Tamm, 2001, Stickney, 2004), e.g.:

- in languages such as Swedish, Dutch and German, the second noun of the pseudo-partitive construction is not preceded by a preposition:

- (3) Dutch:
- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| a. | <i>een doos van uw heerlijke koekjes</i> | | | | | (partitive) |
| | a box of your delicious cookies | | | | ‘a box of your delicious cookies’ | |
| b. | <i>een doos koekjes</i> | | | | | (pseudo-partitive) |
| | | | | | ‘a box of cookies’ | |

- in languages such as Finnish, Armenian and Russian, the case marking of the second noun in the pseudo-partitive construction is different from the case marking of the second noun in the partitive construction:

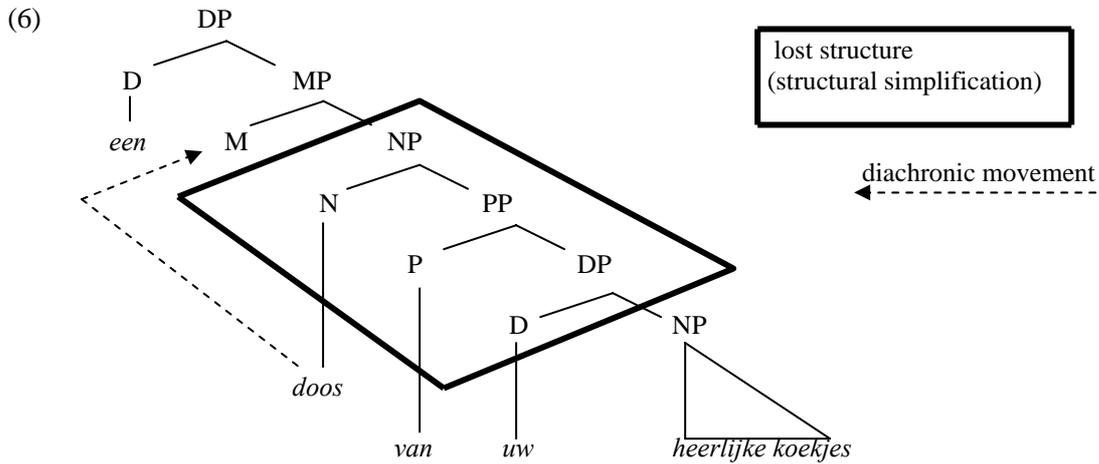
- (4) Russian:
- | | | | | | | |
|----|--------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| a. | <i>čaška</i> | <i>ètogo</i> | <i>vkusnogo</i> | <i>čaja</i> | | (partitive) |
| | cup:NOM | this:GEN | good:GEN | tea:GEN | | |
| | | | | | ‘a cup of this good tea’ | |
| b. | <i>čaška</i> | <i>čaju</i> | | | | (pseudo-partitive) |
| | cup:NOM | tea:PART | | | | |
| | | | | | ‘a cup of tea’ | |

- in languages such as Lithuanian, the partitive and pseudo-partitive constructions differ in terms of word order:

- (5) Lithuanian:
- | | | | | |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|--|------------------------------------|
| a. | <i>pieno</i> | <i>stiklinė</i> | | (partitive) |
| | milk:GEN | glass:NOM | | |
| | | | | ‘a glass for milk/a glass of milk’ |
| b. | <i>stiklinė</i> | <i>pieno</i> | | (pseudo-partitive) |
| | glass:NOM | milk:GEN | | |
| | | | | ‘a glass of milk (amount)’ |

In this paper, I argue that all the above differences can be explained by assuming that the first noun in pseudo-partitive constructions (i.e. the measure element, e.g. *cup* or *box*) is generated in a functional position above NP, labelled M(easure)P(hrase) – cf. Stickney (2004).

Diachronic data show that pseudo-partitives evolved from regular partitive phrases. The aim of this paper is to argue that the differences illustrated in (1-5) above result from the process of grammaticalisation. Roberts and Roussou (1999) suggest that grammaticalisation involves reanalysis of lexical material as functional material. This sort of reanalysis leads to structural simplification (when the lexical material is lost the structure becomes “lighter”). In the present paper, I show that a regular partitive construction consists of two separate DPs, which means that both the measure element (e.g. *cup*) and the measured element (e.g. *coffee*) are regular nouns, projecting full functional structures. On the other hand, pseudo-partitive expressions are monophrasal (they consist of one DP only). In this case, the measure element is a head in the functional complex above the measured noun, which means that, from a diachronic point of view, the measure noun must have moved from the lexical position N to the functional position M. The movement in question resulted in structural simplification. It is illustrated below – the phrase-marker in (6) shows the historical development of the Dutch pseudo-partitive expression shown in (3) above: the diachronic N-to-M movement made the structural material in the region between M and the measured N redundant. Furthermore, it has been argued that the change of status from lexical to functional might affect the case-assigning properties of the reanalysed element (cf. Rutkowski, 2002). Thus, the difference between partitives and pseudo-partitives in Russian shown in (5) does not seem to be accidental. The analysis presented here also accounts for the word order in Lithuanian (6): being a functional element, the measure noun cannot appear in postposition (unlike regular nouns). To sum up, many of the characteristics that make pseudo-partitive nouns different from regular nouns can be explained as resulting from a syntactic grammaticalisation process. Interestingly, the historical development of the elements in question seems parallel to the development of numerals (which could also be analysed as grammaticalised nouns – see Rutkowski (2002)).



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