The Finnish Accusative

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The Finnish accusative has three variants. One of these is a pronoun form similar to the English accusative. This article argues that the choice between the remaining two variants is determined based on phi-agreement and that it is often non-local. That is, the effect occurs across any number of (non-finite) clauses and exhibits long distance case assignment.

1. ACCUSATIVE CASE IN FINNISH

1.1 The three accusative variants

Finnish has four types of structural case—nominative, accusative, partitive and genitive—as well about a dozen of semantic cases (Hakulinen et al., 2004; Nelson, 1998; Nikanne, 1990; Vainikka, 1989). The Finnish accusative is presumably the most complex one, as it lacks a comprehensive description or analysis either in traditional grammar or in modern syntax, and its analysis has far-reaching ramifications for syntax, morphology and the general theory of case (or Case). It has three morphological variants: the true accusative suffix (-t or ACC(t)), the accusative lacking a suffix and thus identical to the nominative (-0 or ACC(0)), and the accusative that is homophonous with the genitive (-n or ACC(n)). An example of each is provided in (1a–c).

(1) a. Minä näin häne-t
   I saw he-ACC(t)
   ‘I saw him.’

   b. Minä näin auto-n
   I saw car-ACC(n)
   ‘I saw the car.’

   c. Minun täytyy nähä auto
   My must see car.ACC(0)
   ‘I must see the car.’

The t-accusative in (1a) emerges when the object is a pronoun (hän-et) (we consider later what happens in the plural). Kiparsky (2001) and Asudeh (2003) argue that the human pronouns in Finnish are the only DPs in Finnish that bear ‘true’ accusative Case. The same view is

If the object is non-pronominal and in the singular, then either the n-accusative (1b) or the 0-accusative (1c) emerges. The n-accusative emerges at least in standard transitive sentences with nominative subjects and agreement (1b) (we will return to a full description of the contexts in which the n-accusative occurs). However, in a number of constructions the n-accusative is not possible – consider (2–5), all grouped together based on the fact that they take the 0-accusative, and do not allow the n-accusative.

The first construction is the impersonal passive which has no overt subject and no agreement, and only the 0-accusative is possible:

(2) Sinu-t / sisko / *sisko-n löydetiin
   you-ACC(t) sister-ACC(0) sister-ACC(n) found.PASS
   pihalta
   ‘You/The sister were/was found in the (back)yard.’

The same pattern holds both in the possessive construction and in the existential construction, where the logical subject (or a fronted locative phrase) occurs in a locative case and there is no agreement on the verb olla 'be'; the possessive construction is exemplified here:

(3) Onneksi minulla on sinu-t / sisko / *sisko-n
    fortunately I.ADE have.3SG you-ACC(t) sister-ACC(0)
    *sisko-n
    sister-ACC(n)
    ‘Fortunately I have you/a sister.’

Similarly, the pattern holds in the necessive construction with genitive subject and no agreement on the verb (modal-like täytyy 'must'):

(4) Minun täytyy löytää sinu-t / sisko /
    I.GEN must.3SG find.A you-ACC(t) sister-ACC(0)
    *sisko-n
    sister-ACC(n)
    ‘I must find you/the sister.’

Finally, the imperative construction reveals the same pattern; it normally occurs without a subject:³

(5) Etsi nyt hän-et / sisko / *sisko-n!
    find now he/she-ACC(t) sister-ACC(0) *sister-ACC(n)
    ‘Find her/the sister now!’.
These constructions all lack the nominative subject and (concomitant) subject-verb agreement. These data appear to agree with the so-called Jahnsson’s Rule which states that if there is an external nominative subject, then the object must have a phonologically realized (i.e. non-zero) case ending. The Finnish n-accusative is precisely such a non-zero form of the two possible suffixes, n-form and 0-form. All the constructions above lack a nominative subject, and therefore the accusative emerges without an overt suffix. However, as we shall see, Jahnsson’s Rule turns out not to reflect all of the Finnish accusative data accurately.

Jahnsson’s generalization seems to imply that every finite sentence has only one nominative Case to assign. If it is not assigned to the grammatical subject, then it is assigned to the accusative position. One could therefore reason that what is going on in Finnish is similar to the English passive: when there is no nominative subject, the object rises to the subject position and obtains or "checks" nominative Case.

This conclusion must be resisted, however. First, recall that only singular non-pronominal DPs obtain such nominative Case, while other DPs are assigned accusative (cf. 1a–c). It is unlikely that singular non-pronominal DPs would occupy a subject position while other types of object DPs do not – and this will be shown below.

Second, in several constructions with the ‘nominative’ object listed above, it is not the case the that the subject position could be filled with the accusative DP. The possessive and necessive constructions have an overt logical subject of their own (not in nominative Case), and therefore an accusative DP could not co-occur in the subject position (nor does word order support such a view).

Third, direct evidence in favor of the conclusion that the 0-accusative is not nominative can be derived from the fact that there is no agreement with this accusative (that superficially looks like nominative) and the finite verb. Even in the Finnish passive, where the 0-accusative has been fronted, the nominative-look-alike DP does not agree with the finite verb.

Fourth, as we will show in the next section, all the various accusative objects, whether the n-accusative, 0-accusative or the unproblematic t-accusative, obey syntactic object tests in Finnish, hence they occupy the same syntactic object position.

Last but not least, we will demonstrate that Jahnsson’s generalization turns out not to be empirically correct: it (accidentally) holds in finite contexts, but cannot be maintained in various non-finite contexts. We will find that the generalization fails in both directions: the presence of the nominative DP is not required for the n-accusative to occur while the 0-accusative can occur in the presence of a nominative DP.
1.2 Object diagnostics

Before we criticize Jahnsson’s generalization in detail we will demonstrate that all three accusative suffixes are associated with the same syntactic position despite the fact that the n-accusative is homonymous with the genitive (in the singular) and that the 0-accusative is homonymous with the nominative. That is, we argue that the 0-accusative DP is not raised to the position of the grammatical subject normally associated with nominative Case.

The argument is structured as follows. First we define three unproblematic object diagnostics for Finnish, which allow us to gauge whether a given DP occurs in an object position or not. We will show that the t-accusative, n-accusative and the 0-accusative share properties with respect to these object diagnostics; hence they do not differ in their objecthood. In the second part, we show that the various accusatives are also treated similarly in terms of certain syntactic operations, such as clefting and raising.

First of all, given the completely uncontroversial status of accusative marking with human pronouns, their distribution can be used as a test for determining whether other DPs occurring in the same object position are accusatives or not. This is captured by the following test:

(6) The human pronoun test
A DP can be treated as accusative if its human pronoun equivalent occurs in overtly marked accusative case with the suffix -t.

There are two main sentence types where this test is particularly useful, namely those involving agreement between the subject and the main verb, as in (7a), and those without subject-verb agreement, as in (7b). The human pronouns hänet ’him/her’ and heidät ’them’ occur in the accusative in both types of constructions. Crucially, singular full DPs (and the inanimate pronoun se ’it’) vary between genitive -n and nominative 0-accusative.5 Note that plural accusative (full) DPs in Finnish are similar to English accusative (full) DPs in that they are homophonous between nominative and accusative (with -t suffix), regardless of the syntactic context:

(7) a. Kutsuin häne-t / heidä-t / poja-n /
   I-invited him-ACC(t) them-PL.ACC boy-ACC(-n)
   poja-t / se-n / ne
   boys-PL.ACC it-ACC(-n) them-PL.ACC
   ’I invited him/her, them, the boy, the boys, it, them (inanimate)’
b. Kutsu häne- / heidä- / poika / poja- / se / ne!
   invite.IMPER him-ACC(t)  them-PL.ACC  boy-ACC(0)  boys-PL.ACC  it-ACC(0)  them-PL.ACC
   'Invite him/her, them, the boy, the boys, it, them (inanimate)!'  

The human pronoun test thus shows that the accusative form of poika 'boy' is either pojan (7a) or poika (7b), depending on the syntactic context. Yet these DPs appear in a position which, when substituted by a pronoun, show the unambiguous t-accusative form.

Let us turn to plural full (non-pronominal) DPs where the accusative case situation is fairly straightforward. There are three possible scenarios in the plural:

(i) the DP is a human pronoun and receives the accusative -t suffix (meidät 'us', teidät 'you-pl' and heidät 'them'); (ii) the DP is not a pronoun, and it occurs with the plural -t suffix (identical to the plural nominative); and (iii) the DP is a non-human pronoun and receives neither the accusative -t nor the plural -t suffix; it occurs in the bare nominative form (there is only one DP of this type, ne 'they/them-inanimate').

As we have seen, the Finnish accusative has a variant that looks identical to the genitive case (suffix -n). In the plural, however, the genitive variant of the accusative is never possible; this results in a situation where the LDCA is found only in the singular in Finnish. This situation gives rise to the plural test relating to the accusative:

(8) The plural test
   If a plural DP occurs in the genitive case, it is clear that the DP bears true genitive case, rather than accusative.

With this test we can distinguish thematic objects of a verb that bear accusative case (that happen to look like genitive) versus those that actually bear genitive case and also happen to be objects of a verb (in e.g. certain nominalizations). Consider the following examples.6

(9) a. Minä näin Peka-n lähtemässä
    I    saw Pekka?- MA leave.MA
    'I saw Pekka leaving.'

   b. Minä näin Peka-n lähtevän
    I    saw Pekka?- VA leave.VA
    'I saw Pekka leave.'
The subject of the embedded infinitival is Pekka in both cases, and the forms of the proper name in (a) and (b) look identical: they both have the same -n suffix. Only the form of the infinitival differs: in (9a) the MA-infinitival is used, whereas in (9b) the VA-infinitival is used. The exact nature of these infinitivals is not important for the moment, only the fact that they differ in their syntactic properties. Which, if either, of these DPs occurs in true genitive Case and which, if either, occurs in genitive-look-alike n-accusative? The plural test provides the answer, as can be seen when the embedded subject DP occurs in the plural. Here are the same examples with plural DPs:

(10)  a. Minä näin laiva-t lähtemässä  
     I saw boat-PL.ACC leave.MA  
     ‘I saw the boats leaving.’

   b. Minä näin laivo-jen lähtevän  
     I saw boat-PL.GEN leave.VA  
     ‘I saw the boats leave.’

The plural test reveals that the embedded subject DP of the VA-infinitive (9b) occurs in true genitive Case, whereas the embedded subject of the MA-infinitive (9a) carries the n-accusative. Therefore we can, and must, distinguish syntactically DPs which bear the genitive-looking n-accusative and the sui generis genitive case; in particular, the n-accusative case cannot be said to emerge in a process in which the syntactic position of the object changes into that of genitive DPs. Rather, it involves a genitive suffix which is suffixed to a DP in a syntactic object position.

A third test involves partitive case, the other objective case in Finnish (not discussed in any detail in this article). The test can be formulated as follows:

(11)  The partitive test
      If an object DP alternates between partitive case (suffix -(t)A) and potential accusative case based on the (semantic) features of the verb or the sentence, we can take the potential accusative to be actual accusative case.

For example, object DPs under the scope of negation occur in partitive case in Finnish, while in the equivalent affirmative sentence the accusative emerges. Let us consider the data in (9b) and (9a) again. The following data compares these two sentences when the matrix clause is affirmative (12a, 13a) as opposed to negated (12b, 13b):
(12) a. Minä näin **Peka-n** lähtemässä
    I saw Pekka-ACC(n) leave.MA
    ‘I saw Pekka leaving.’

    b. Minä en **nähnyt Pekka-a** lähtemässä
    I not saw Pekka-PAR leave.MA
    ‘I did not see Pekka leaving.’

(13) a. Minä näin **Peka-n** lähtevän
    I saw Pekka-GEN leave.VA
    ‘I saw Pekka leave.’

    b. Minä en **nähnyt Peka-n** lähtevän
    I not saw Pekka-GEN leave.VA
    ‘I did not see Pekka leave.’

Along with the earlier plural text, the negative test also reveals that the embedded subject of the MA-infinitival is in the -n accusative and hence alternates with the partitive, whereas the embedded subject of the VA-infinitival remains in the genitive Case and does not alternate. (The pronoun test also supports this analysis of the two constructions.) A number of empirical tests show that all three accusative forms, the t-accusatives, the n-accusatives and the 0-accusatives, behave identically with respect to various syntactic processes. Here we show this for clefting, topicalization and idiom construction.

(14) Clefting:

    a. Pekka söi **leivä-n** / Se oli leipä jonka Pekka
       Pekka ate bread-ACC(n) It was bread-NOM which
       Pekka söi t
       Pekka ate t

    b. Pekan näki **hän hän** jonka Pekka
       Pekka saw him-ACC(t) It was he-NOM whom Pekka
       näki t
       saw t

    c. Pekan täytyy **syödä leipä** / Se oli
       Pekka-GEN must eat bread-ACC(-∅) It was
       leipä joka Pekan täytyy syödä t
       bread-NOM that Pekka must eat t

(15) Topicalization

    a. Pekka söi **leivä-n** / Leivä-n Pekka söi t
       Pekka ate bread-ACC(n) Bread-ACC(n), Pekka ate t
b. Pekka näki häne-t / Häne-t Pekka näki t
   Pekka saw him-ACC(t) him-ACC(t), Pekka saw t

c. Peka-n täytyy syödä leipä / Leipä
   Pekka-GEN must eat bread-ACC(0) Bread-ACC(0),
   Pekan täytyy syödä
   Pekka-GEN must eat t

(16) Idiom construction:
   a. Pekka veti herne-en nenäänsä
      Pekka pulled pea-ACC(n) into-his-nose
      Pekka was offended
   b. Kuka maksaa viulu-t
      who pays violin-PL.ACC
      Who will pay the bill?
   c. Pekan täytyy vetää herne nenäänsä
      Pekka must pull pea-ACC(0) into-his-nose
      Pekka must get offended.

The results of the diagnostic and syntactic tests are important in showing that the three morphological variants of the accusative are realizations of the same structural accusative Case. This is not an obvious result, given, for example, the tendency to think of the 0-accusative in the Finnish passive as a nominative DP (e.g. Timberlake 1975, Taraldsen 1986). The diagnostic tests themselves are clearly accurate, since the unambiguous accusative forms converge with respect to specific DPs in the postverbal position: the DPs in this position show (i) the uncontroversial accusative suffix -t when they are pronouns, and (ii) the uncontroversial suffix -t when they are in the plural; they also undergo (iii) the accusative/partitive alteration, where partitive is an uncontroversial object case. What is thus exceptional are the singular non-pronominal DPs that show different case suffixes when they occur in these same positions. Therefore we think that any explanation of the Finnish accusative pattern that relies on different syntactic positions for the variants of the accusative – such as raising or any type of syntactic movement – is not feasible.

2. RETHINKING JAHNSSON’S GENERALIZATION

2.1 Impersonal passive used as a plural form

Jahnsson’s generalization states that the 0-accusative emerges if and only if there is no nominative subject in the same clause. We have seen that
the generalization is quite successful in predicting the properties of a number of constructions in Finnish. Nevertheless, the generalization fails in both directions: there are sentences with a nominative subject which emerge together with the 0-accusative, and sentences which have the n-accusative but no nominative subject. Let us begin with the former problem.

The argument comes from the impersonal passive construction in colloquial speech. An impersonal passive in Finnish is formed by applying the passive morphology to a finite verb and suppressing the subject, while keeping the patient argument in the object position. As we pointed out earlier, the patient appears in the 0-accusative (or t-accusative) form. In colloquial speech, however, it is common to use the first person plural nominative subject together with the impersonal passive and the object:

\[(17)\] Me rakennetaan uusi talo
We.NOM build.PASS new.ACC(0) house.ACC(0)
‘we build a new house.’

This construction involves a nominative subject, a passive verb and a 0-accusative object; hence there are two nominative-looking arguments in this construction. It cannot therefore be true that it is the presence of a nominative subject which requires the appearance of the n-accusative.

Since in Finnish the matrix clause properties, such as passive morphology, may affect several object arguments downstream (Brattico, 2009, 2011), it is possible to craft a sentence with three nominative-looking arguments (18a). As shown by (18b), the two nominative-looking objects are objects by the pronoun test:

\[(18)\]
\[a.\] Me nähtiin Pekka ostamassa
We.NOM saw.PASS Pekka.ACC(0) buy.MA
uusi auto
new.ACC(0) car.ACC(0)
‘We saw Pekka buying a new car.’

\[b.\] Me nähtiin hänet voittamassa heidät
We.NOM saw.PASS him.ACC(t) win.MA them.ACC(t)
‘We saw him winning them.’

Therefore we conclude that the 0-accusative can occur together with a nominative subject, in the same clause. In fact, there is no limit on the number of nominative-looking arguments in a sentence.
2.2 Deverbal adjective phrases

Next we show that the n-accusative can occur without the presence of nominative subject. There are two relevant construction types, deverbal adjective phrases and several types of non-finite clauses. We will examine adjectives first.

In Finnish it is possible to form complex prenominal adjective phrases. One of these is a participial adjective which is formed by applying the participle suffix to an eventive verbal root. The resulting adjective inflects for tense (past, present) and may take patient arguments which appear in accusative Case, as exemplified in (36); applying the pronoun test, (19b) shows that the object of the participial adjective occurs in true accusative case. Furthermore, the adjective shares its number and case features with the noun head via concord, as shown in (19c).

\[(19) \quad \text{luun syönyt} \quad \text{koira} \]
\[
\text{bone.ACC(n) eat.VA.PAST.SG dog.SG}
\]
\['A dog that ate the bone.'\]

The adjective phrase can never contain a nominative subject. As we show later, adjective phrases are also grammatical islands which allow very little grammatical information to penetrate in and out. Yet the n-accusative is possible; hence it may appear without the presence of a nominative subject. Whether the matrix sentence has a nominative subject or not has no relevance to the n-accusative inside of the AP:

\[(20) \quad \text{a. } \text{Fido on se luun syönyt koira} \]
\[
\text{Fido.NOM is that bone.ACC(n) eat.VA.PAST dog}
\]
\['Fido is the dog that ate the bone.'\]

\[\text{b. Fidon täytyy olla se luun syönyt} \]
\[
\text{Fido.GEN must be that bone.ACC(n) eat.VA.PAST dog}
\]
\['Fido must be the dog that ate the bone.'\]

We have seen, then, that Jahnsson’s generalization does not hold – the n-accusative occurs even when the construction cannot have a nominative subject, and the 0-accusative occurs even in the presence of a nominative subject. In an attempt to determine the correct generalization for the distribution of the accusative forms, we turn to a rich, relatively unexplored source of information on accusative case, the non-finite constructions.
3. THE ACCUSATIVE IN NON-FINITE CONSTRUCTIONS

We now examine the Finnish non-finite constructions in some detail. Finnish has a number of non-finite verb forms (Hakulinen & Karlsson, 1979; Koskinen, 1998; Vainikka, 1989; Hakulinen et al., 2004), five of which will be discussed here. In addition to lacking finite verb suffixation, non-finite constructions in Finnish also lack the three markers of a finite clause: (1) a nominative subject; (2) the possibility of a negative verb (which carries full finite person/number agreement morphology in Finnish); and (3) the possibility of the auxiliary verb olla ‘be’ (Vainikka, 1989, 243). In addition, as shown in Koskinen (1998), the Finnish non-finite constructions lack a CP-level Focus Phrase. That is, non-finite constructions in Finnish appear to be reduced structures, without a CP projection and without the higher IP-level projections.

However, contrary to what we might initially expect (given the impossibility of a nominative subject) on the basis of Jahnsson’s rule, non-finite verbs allow both n-accusatives and 0-accusatives. This supports the claim that accusative realization in Finnish is in fact not controlled by the presence or absence of a nominative subject DP. We will also begin to uncover a pattern that this case suffix is associated with some type of agreement. Various authors such as (Reime, 1993; Nelson, 1998) have suggested that agreement is more relevant for accusative distribution in Finnish than nominative subjects, based on finite clauses; however, a full analysis of both finite and non-finite constructions in terms of the accusative has not been developed in previous work.

In the following, we look at several non-finite constructions one by one. Such a detailed examination is warranted because in addition to further showing that Jahnsson’s generalization cannot be correct, the data allow us to arrive at what we believe to be the correct generalization.

3.1 The temporal adjunct

We will first consider two types of adjunct (adverbial) clauses in Finnish, the temporal adjunct and the rationale adjunct. In the first of these adjunct constructions, the verb in the temporal adjunct carries the suffix -essA (ongoing aspect, ‘while Ving’, active or passive; ESSA or ESSA/PASS in the glosses) and -tUA (completed aspect, ‘after having Ved’; ESSA/PAST in the glosses). The term “temporal adjunct” was introduced in Vainikka (1989); ISK (pp.536-7) refers to this as the “temporal construction”. There is no traditional term for this construction, as it incorporates two traditional verb forms: in the present (or ongoing) aspect, it is the traditional 2nd infinitive (active or passive) in inessive case, and the past (or completed) aspect, it is the traditional past
participle in partitive case. According to ISK, the present and past forms in this construction are not exactly semantically equivalent, but for our syntactic purposes they are sufficiently equivalent. The three possible verb forms are listed in (21) together with concrete examples in (22a–c).

(21) lukiessa, luettua, lueattaessa
   read.ESSA, read.ESSA/PASS, read.ESSA/PAST
   ‘while reading’, ‘having read’, ‘while being read’

(22) a. Aika kuluu nopeasti [lukiessa hyvää kirjaa]
   time runs fast [read.ESSA good.PAR book.PAR]
   ‘Time runs fast when reading a good book.’
b. Hän meni nukkumaan [luettuaan hyvän kirjan]
   He went sleep.MA [read.ESSA/PAST good.ACC(n) book.ACC(n)]
   ‘He went to sleep after reading a good book.’
c. Aika kuluu nopeasti [luetteassa hyvää kirjaa]
   time runs fast [read.ESSA/PASS good.PAR book.PAR]
   ‘Time runs fast when a good book is being read.’

Importantly, example (23) shows that the n-accusative emerges in this construction, although there is no finite verb or nominative subject, and it does not matter what type of a main clause follows (or precedes) this adjunct (while we will see below that for certain other non-finite constructions agreement in the matrix clause matters):

(23) [Maijan löydettyä sinu-t / sisko-n / Maija.GEN find.ESSA/PAST you-ACC(t) sister-ACC(n)
   *sisko-0] meidän täytyi lähteä kotiin.
   *sister-ACC(0) we.GEN must.PAST/3SG leave.A home
   ‘After Maija found you/the sister, we had to go home’

There are three further key factors to note about the temporal adjunct construction. First, when the subject is a human pronoun, a possessive suffix is realized at the end of the verb form, as with regular possessive constructions involving a noun (24a–b).

(24) a. (minun) kirja-ni
    (my) book-Px/1SG
    ‘my book’
Second, the construction has a version of tense (or aspect) marking, given the two aspects in the active mood shown above. Third, the temporal construction is a strong island and thus WH-extraction out of the adjunct is not possible. However, while finite subject-verb agreement is lacking in the temporal construction, the possessive suffix at the end of the verb form does agree with a genitive (subject) DP (in the specifier position of the predicate). Moreover, the agreement reflected in the Px is complete: the suffix agrees with the genitive DP in all features (number and person; Finnish does not have gender agreement).

There are many reasons to think that possessive agreement in Finnish is similar to verbal agreement. Possessives have five distinct person/number forms (3rd person singular and plural share a form), and some of the forms are morphologically related (see Table 1). Furthermore, as in finite clauses, the first and second person subjects are optional; Finnish is pro-drop in first and second person, but not in third, and the pattern holds for Px’s, as well (Vainikka & Levy, 1999).

In addition to the pro-drop pattern, the Px behaves like verb agreement in the sense that it is insensitive to the thematic roles of the arguments; the Px agreement obtains between any genitive DP in the prehead position. Consider (25).

(25) hänen i esittely-nsä i
    his i introduction-Px/3SG

This expression is ambiguous in three ways. According to one interpretation, the genitive DP is interpreted as a possessive and not an Agent or Patient. The expression then means ‘his (artistic etc.) presentation’. On a second reading, the pronoun is the Agent of the predicate. In this case a reading ‘the introduction (of somebody) by him’ is obtained. Finally, the pronoun may be interpreted as a Patient which then generates the reading ‘the introduction of him (by somebody)’. What is remarkable
here is that despite the variation in interpretation, the possessive suffix agreement remains the same. The same holds for verb agreement: there is agreement between a grammatical subject and a finite verb, completely regardless of the thematic role of the grammatical subject. In both cases, we conclude that the agreement pattern is a syntactic one.

The temporal adjunct thus presents a further counterexample to Jahns-
son’s generalization since the accusative DP occurs in genitive case; the zero suffix is expected since the non-finite verb has no nominative subject and not even finite subject-verb agreement. We will propose that nominal agreement is the relevant factor in the temporal construction.

3.2 The rationale adjunct

The second non-finite adjunct construction, the rationale adjunct, con-
­sists of a non-finite verb form with the suffix -kse-, followed by an
obligatory possessive suffix (coreferential with the subject of the matrix clause). The traditional term for the verb form in this construction is the 1st infinitive, long form. In ISK, the construction is unintuitively referred to as the ‘the finite construction’. We prefer Vainikka’s (1989:311-2) term ‘the rationale adjunct’.

(26) lukeakse(-ni)... 
read.KSE-Px/1SG
‘in order (for me) to read...’

As with the temporal adjunct, the accusative object may emerge in the genitive -n form, independent of subject/verb agreement (or nominative subject) in the rationale adjunct, or independent of the matrix clause. Consider the following examples from ISK (p.895), where the matrix verb in (27a) is an imperative, and the matrix verb in (27b) is the non-agreeing necessive verb täytyy ‘must’ which shows tense marking but no subject-verb agreement; recall that these two constructions gave rise to the zero accusative in the finite clauses in Section 2:

(27) a. Paina [käynnistääksesi ohjelma-n] 
Press OK start.KSE-Px/2SG program-ACC (-n) 
‘Press OK to start the program.’
b. Maalliko-n täytyy tietää hieman taustoja 
layman-GEN must know little background 
[tajutakseen laitoksen tärkeyde-n]
understand.KSE-Px/3SG faculty-GEN importance-ACC (-n)
'The layman must know a little bit of the background in order to understand the importance of the faculty.'

The accusative object inside the rationale adjunct occurs with the genitive suffix -n even when embedded in a matrix construction that cannot have a nominative subject. Thus, the rationale adjunct constitutes another counterexample to Jansson’s generalization. However, similarly to the temporal adjunct, the verb form in the rationale adjunct carries an agreeing possessive suffix. In this construction, the Px is, in fact, obligatory.\textsuperscript{11}

The situation with the rationale construction is more complex than with the temporal construction: in addition to the -n accusative in the examples in (27), the 0-accusative is also possible in both sentences. Only the -n accusative was possible in the temporal construction. We return to a discussion of this option after considering three other constructions in Finnish that also allow the 0-accusative option. In conclusion, given the data from the two non-finite adjunct constructions, while neither a nominative subject nor finite subject-verb agreement are necessary and sufficient for the genitive -n accusative, a more general sort of agreement appears to be relevant.

3.3 The A-infinitive

When we turn to more argument-like non-finite complements, a new factor emerges: the matrix verb has the possibility of controlling the form of the accusative object of the embedded non-finite clause in three separate constructions. Such matrix verb control represents a relatively nonlocal (i.e., non-clause-bound) realization of the accusative case suffix. We will begin with the so-called A-infinitive.\textsuperscript{12}

Example (28) shows that the form of the embedded object of an A-infinitive is determined by whether the matrix clause has an agreeing verb and a nominative subject or not (Ross, 1967; Vainikka, 1989):

(28)  
a. Yritimme löytää sinut /sisko-n /try.PAST/1PL find.A you-ACC(t) sister-ACC(n)  
*sisko-0 pihalta  
*sister-ACC(0) yard-ABL  
‘We tried to find you/the sister at the (back)yard.’

b. Yritä löytää hänet /sisko /try.IMP find.A him/her-ACC(t) sister-ACC(0)  
*sisko-n pihalta!  
sister-ACC(n) yard-ABL  
‘Try to find her/the sister at the (back)yard!’
In (28a) the matrix verb carries subject-verb agreement, and the accusative object of the embedded A-infinitival verb löytää 'to find' emerges in the genitive, while in (28b) the matrix verb is an imperative verb, lacking agreement, and the genitive is not possible.

The A-infinitive is the least clause-like of the non-finite forms in Finnish in that the embedded verb does not normally have an overt subject at all, but is controlled by the matrix subject or object (see Vainikka 1989, Koskinen 1998 and ISK p.495-6 and p.893-894 for details). Recall that while the two adjunct constructions discussed above are more independent of the matrix verb (because they are adjuncts) than the A-infinitive (which is a complement), the genitive -n form of the (singular DP) accusative was found in the adjunct constructions. In striking contrast, when the A-infinitive occurs in a construction where the infinitive is independent of the matrix verb, the accusative occurs in the nominative, as in the examples in (24) (from ISK, pp. 895-6):

(29) a. *Infinitive inside the subject DP*

\[
\text{[Mahdollisuus tehdä muuttoilmoitus possibility.NOM make.A moving.announcement.ACC(0)]}
\]

... voisi jäädä käyttämättä

... could remain without-use

‘The possibility of filing a moving announcement might remain unused.’

b. *Infinitive as a complement of a noun*

Ahtisaari korosti olevansa hyvin tyytyväinen...
Ahtisaari emphasized be.VA.Px very satisfied

[tilaisuuteen tavata koko Venäjän johto]

opportunity meet.A whole Russian leadership.ACC(0)

‘Ahtisaari emphasized his satisfaction with the opportunity to meet the whole Russian leadership.’

c. *Independent infinitive interrogative*

\[
\text{[Valitako vieras] vai [oma pitkän select.A.QUEST guest.ACC(0) or own long.GEN linjan mies]?
\]

track.GEN man.ACC(0)

‘To select an outsider or one’s own man?’

That is, when the A-infinitive is independent of a matrix verb, it does not support a genitive -n suffix on the accusative DP, and when it is dependent on the matrix verb, the case form of the object of the infinitive is determined by the matrix verb. The A-infinitive itself does not carry any type of subject-verb or Px agreement, neither verbal nor nominal.
3.4 The MA-infinitive

Another argument-type non-finite clause, the MA-infinitive, behaves similarly to the A-infinitive.13 In the examples (a–b), the matrix agreement controls the accusative realization of the object DP within the embedded MA-infinitive, while example (c) (from ISK p.514) provides an example of a MA-infinitive that is independent of the matrix verb; in (c) the embedded object occurs in the nominative (although there is agreement and a nominative subject in the matrix clause) since the MA-clause in this example is not a complement of the matrix verb:

(30) a. Lähdimme hakemaan hän-et / sisko-n
    went.PAST/1PL get.MA him/her-ACC(t) sister-ACC(n)
    / *sisko-0
    *sister-ACC(0)
    ‘We went to pick her/the sister up.’

b. Lähde hakemaan häne-t / sisko-0 /
    go-IMPER get.MA him/her-ACC(t) sister-ACC(0)
    *sisko-n!
    *sister-ACC(n)
    ‘Go get her/the sister!’

c. Parhaiten runo aukeaa lukijalle
    best.ADV poem.NOM open.PRES/3SG for-reader
    [luomalla runo uudestaan]
    create.MA poem.ACC(0) again
    ‘The best way for a poem to open up to the reader is by recreating the poem’

As with the A-infinitive, a possessive suffix is not possible in the MA-construction (nor is an overt subject normally possible), and there is no tense marking.

To recap the non-finite constructions so far: within the two non-finite complements which normally occur as arguments (the A-infinitive and the MA-infinitive)—and which never allow a possessive suffix—the form of the accusative is dependent on the subject-verb agreement status of the matrix verb; in the unusual situation without a ‘controlling’ matrix verb, the 0-accusative emerges. Within the temporal adjunct and the rationale adjunct—both of which have the same Px agreement pattern as possessive DPs—the -n accusative is always possible, and this is the only form found in the temporal adjunct (and the second option with the rationale adjunct will be discussed below).
3.5 The VA-construction

We now turn to the final non-finite construction in Finnish, the participial complement or the VA-construction. This construction is the most sentence-like of the non-finite constructions in that in general an embedded finite että-clause (that-clause) can be converted to a corresponding non-finite VA-construction. This construction has four verb forms, two active and two passive (and two for each aspect/tense):

(31) a. Active, present or future
   Arvaan [pankin nosta-van korkokantaa].
   guess.1SG bank.GEN raise.VA interest.PAR
   ‘I guess the bank will raise the interest rate.’

b. Active, past
   Epäilen [sinun syö-neen luumuja] doubt.1SG you.GEN eat-VA/PAST plums.PAR
   ‘I suspect that you ate the plums.’

c. Passive, present or future
   Aavistan [korkokantaa nostetta-van].
   suspect.1SG interest.PAR raise.VA/PASS
   ‘I suspect that the interest rate will be raised.’

d. Passive, past
   Huomasin [kakkua maiste-tun].
   notice.1SG cake-PAR taste.VA/PASS/PAST
   ‘I noticed that the cake had been tasted.’

While the examples in (31) do not have a possessive suffix, this construction does allow a Px whenever the matrix subject and the embedded subject refer to the same individual:

(32) a. Sinä muistat varmaan tavannee-si
   you remember.2SG probably meet.VA/PAST-Px/2SG
   hänet aikaisemmin
   him-ACC(t) earlier
   ‘You probably remember having met him earlier.’

b. *Sinä muistat varmaan meidän
   you remember.2SG probably us.GEN
   tavannee-mme, hänet aikaisemmin
   meet.VA/PAST-Px/1PL him-ACC(t) earlier
   ‘You probably remember (that) we have met him earlier.’
c. Me kuvittelemme syö-vämme juhla-ateriaa
   we imagine eat.VA-Px/1PL feast-PAR
   ‘We imagine that we are eating a feast.’

d. *Me kuvittelemme teidän syö-vänne juhla-ateriaa
   we imagine eat.VA-Px/1PL feast-PAR
   ‘We imagine that you are eating a feast.’

These constructions thus involve some sort of long-distance agreement between the matrix and the embedded subject, common in other languages as well (Bošković, 2007; Bhatt, 2005; Polinsky, 2003; Polinsky & Postdam, 2001). Our focus here will be on the case realization of the embedded object. Given the possibility of the possessive suffixes and a tense/aspect distinction in the VA-construction, we would expect the -n accusative to emerge in the VA-construction (as it did with the temporal and rationale adjuncts). On the other hand, the VA-construction is also a complement of the matrix verb, and we might expect it to behave similarly to the A-infinitive and the MA-infinitive; in these constructions, the form of the embedded object was typically determined by the matrix verb. With the VA-construction, we thus have a conflict of sorts, and we shall now consider what actually happens with the embedded accusative in this construction. Given the “conflict” with the VA-construction, an -n suffix of the embedded accusative could arise in two ways: either because there is (nominal, Px-related) agreement in the embedded clause, or because there an agreeing matrix verb that exerts its influence on the embedded complement. When the matrix verb is an agreeing one, the genitive suffix does surface on the embedded accusative in this construction, as expected, and the 0-accusative is impossible:

\[(33) \text{Muistan} \quad \text{tavanneeni} \quad \text{häne-t} / \\
\text{remember.1SG meet.VA/PAST-Px/1SG she-ACC(t)}
\text{Maija-n} / *\text{Maija-0}
\text{joskus} \quad \text{ennen.}
\text{Maija-ACC(n)} \quad \text{Maija-ACC(0) sometime earlier}
\quad \text{‘I remember having met her/Maija sometime earlier.’}
\]

What if the matrix clause did not contain an agreeing verb? Such a situation would provide a test case for determining which of the two processes is more powerful, the local (Px) agreement or the matrix verb agreement that influences its complement clause. In order to occur at all in this construction, the embedded Px needs to be coindexed with something like a subject in the matrix clause. Nominative subjects
cannot be considered because they would involve matrix subject-verb agreement. Neither the existential construction nor the possessive construction allow the VA-construction at all since they do not take any kind of a sentential complement. The passive construction in Finnish is an impersonal one and does not have a subject DP with which the embedded Px could be coindexed. While the imperative gives rise to 2nd person agreement, given its restricted nature it is not clear whether the imperative would be a reliable test case. The remaining construction, the necesive construction, fortunately presents a test case. The genitive subject of *täytyy* 'must' can be coreferential with the embedded Px:

\[(34)\]

a. Meidän täytyy uskoa löytä-vämme häne-t
   we.GEN must.3SG believe.A find-VA-PX/1PL she-ACC(t)
   / sisko / sisko-n pihalta.
   sister-ACC(0) sister-ACC(n) yard.ABL
   ‘We must believe that we (will) find her/the sister at the (back)yard.’

b. Sinun täytyy kuvitella osta-neesi
   you.GEN must.3SG imagine-A buy-VA/PAST-Px/2SG
   hienompi sohva / hienomma-n sohva-n.
   better-ACC(0) sofa-ACC(0) better-ACC(n) sofa-ACC(n)
   ‘You must imagine that you have bought a better sofa.’

The result of this test is that both the 0-form and the -n-form of the accusative object are possible. The possibility of the n-form is tied to the local (Px, or nominal) agreement within the embedded VA-clause, but apparently the matrix verb exerts control over the embedded case form in its complement clause, as well, and allows the 0 accusative to emerge as an alternative.

Further evidence that both forms of the accusative are in fact possible is provided by the passive example in (35) (from Vilkuna 1996:298 and Vainikka 2003:251; cf. also Vainikka 1989:303-4), although an overt Px is lacking:

\[(35)\]

Uolevin väitetään [saa-van palkankorotus/
Uolevi claim.PASS get-VA rise-ACC(0)/
palkankorotuk-sen].
   rise-ACC(n)
   ‘Uolevi is claimed to get a raise’

In (35) the embedded genitive subject *Uolevi* 'Uolevi-GEN' has been raised to the matrix clause in front of the matrix (impersonal) passive verb. While Vilkuna (1996) and Löbel (1999) discuss this problem,
they do not provide a final analysis. Vainikka (2003) suggests that the variation is based on which of the verbs – the matrix or the embedded verb – has scope over the embedded object, but no independent evidence for the scope is provided.\textsuperscript{17} According to the present approach, an embedded (nominal) agreement gives rise to the -n accusative option, while the 0 accusative option would involve the lack of an agreeing verb in the matrix clause.

3.6 Summary of the data

In sum, we conclude from the data examined in the last two sections that Jahnsson’s generalization is not correct. The distribution of the 0-accusative and the n-accusative is based on something other than the presence/absence of a nominative subject. However, although Jahnsson’s generalization does not completely hold, it remains true over a significant number of constructions and therefore represents a correlation that is unlikely to be true just by random coincidence. We propose based on the data discussed so far that the n-accusative/0-accusative alternation is controlled by \textit{agreement}. This hypothesis explains at once why there is a correlation, but only a correlation, between nominative subjects and the n-accusative: agreement is often triggered by nominative subjects.

The results from the previous sections are summarized in Table 2. This table lists all the constructions investigated so far (hence all the commonly used constructions in Finnish that assign accusative case).\textsuperscript{18} There is no universal definition of "subject": in the table, "subject" is either a genitive or nominative DP that occurs in a preverbal position.
Table 2. Realization of Finnish singular full NPs in various accusative contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTRUCTION</th>
<th>SUBJECT DP</th>
<th>ϕ-AGREEMENT</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FINITE CLAUSES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>regular finite clause</td>
<td>nom</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impersonal passive</td>
<td>no (nom*)</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possessive</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>existential</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ecessive</td>
<td>gen</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imperative</td>
<td>nom**</td>
<td>number only</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NON-FINITE CLAUSES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temporal adjunct</td>
<td>gen</td>
<td>yes(Px)</td>
<td>-n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rationale adjunct</td>
<td>gen¹</td>
<td>yes(Px)</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-infinitive</td>
<td>gen</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA-infinitive</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>zero</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VA-construction</td>
<td>gen¹</td>
<td>yes(Px)</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>OTHER</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participle AP</td>
<td>(head N)</td>
<td>yes(number/case)</td>
<td>-n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Nominative subjects in colloquial speech.
** The status of the subject DP in the imperative is unclear.
† No overt genitive DP, but arguably a covert one.
‡ While allows a genitive subject, this cannot co-occur with an overt Px.

Note that the "zero" in the "accusative form" column for the A-infinitive and the MA-infinitive means that the form is the 0-accusative when the clause is in isolation; when embedded under a matrix clause, the form of the accusative is determined solely by the matrix clause.

When a finite clause exhibits subject-verb agreement on the verb, the n-accusative is realized on the (singular) accusative in the clause itself, as well as (singular) accusative objects within non-finite complements of such as finite verb, in particular the A-infinitives and the MA-infinitives which themselves do not exhibit verbal or nominal agreement. An accusative object within an adjunct non-finite clause (in particular the temporal clause), on the other hand, is not is not typically influenced by agreement from the outside of the clause – but since the temporal adjunct itself exhibits (nominal) agreement, the n-accusative emerges. The situation is similar with the rationale clause, but we will see below that it is not quite as clear-cut as with the temporal clause. The most complex case is that of the VA-construction which is both a complement of the matrix verb and itself exhibits (nominal) agreement – and we find a situation where is a competition between the two variants.

Although the participial (the deverbal adjective) construction discussed earlier does not exhibit Px agreement, it is arguable that even this construction contains some form of agreement. Example (a) is repeated
from above, but (b) shows that the participle agrees in number and case with the head noun. Note that comparable data cannot be constructed for the constructions that truly contain no agreement, such as the impersonal passive or the A- and MA-constructions.

(36) [luun syönyt] koir
    bone.ACC(n) eat.V.A.PAST.SG dog.SG
    ‘A dog that ate the bone.’

(37) [luun syöne-i-lle] koir-i-lle
    bone.ACC(n) eat.V.A.PAST.PL.ALL dog.PL.ALL
    ‘for the dogs that ate the bone’

4. CONCLUSION

We have shown that the traditional generalization about the Finnish accusative (Jansson’s generalization) is too narrow, namely that the accusative DP is realized with the (genitive) -n suffix whenever the sentence contains a nominative subject. The new generalization—which covers data from a number of finite and non-finite constructions, summarized in Table 2—is that an accusative DP is realized with the -n suffix whenever agreement is present. In addition, accusative realization is a long distance phenomenon. In the absence of agreement, the accusative DP is realized without a suffix, i.e. in the nominative.

REFERENCES


We will mostly ignore the semantic case system here. Nominative and partitive are perhaps the two most unproblematic structural cases in Finnish. Nominative is a suffixless subject case and partitive is the default object or complement case (Vainikka, 1993, 2003). Genitive is associated with various nominal constructions, but also with several verb types; we return to the genitive later.

Since Chomsky (1981), Case features have been partitioned into abstract Case features (capitalized) and morphological case features (lower-case). The latter designate concrete case suffixes that may differ somewhat from construction to construction, and from language to language, while abstract Case refers to universal syntactic features that part of the core syntax of Universal Grammar (UG) and whose surface realization may vary or may even be completely absent, as in the case of English non-pronominal DPs.

There is a possibility of an adjunct-like postverbal subject with the imperative (not possible with a finite verb). The imperative verb may carry number agreement (a unique morpheme) but no person agreement (e.g. *Lue kirja!* ‘Read the book!’ vs. *Lukekaa kirja!* ‘Read-PL the book!’)

The nominative subject need not be overtly realized in order for the -n accusative to emerge: this also holds in null subject constructions (cf. Vainikka & Levy 1999) and
in the so-called "missing person construction" involving an impersonal third person singular verb (cf. Hakulinen & Karttunen 1973 and Holmberg 2005).

5 Unless otherwise stated the data and grammaticality judgments reported here are those of the present authors, both native speakers of Finnish.

6 Finnish has a number of non-finite constructions which will be discussed in more detail below. For now, we indicate the type of non-finite verb in the gloss based on the identifying suffix on the verb, e.g. *lähtemässä* 'leave.MA', where the *-ma/mä* suffix occurs at the end of the verb stem.

7 In her detailed analysis of the non-finite constructions in Finnish, Koskinen (1998) shows that all of the Finnish non-finite constructions, whether participial or infinitival, contain a full-fledged VP projection typically embedded under non-sentential projections such as DP or AP. While we accept her structures in general, we are not committed to the strict monosemy approach that she espouses, whereby each affix has the same syntax regardless of the construction in which it occurs.

8 In addition to these two adjuncts, Finnish has a third adjunct-type non-finite clause with the suffix -*en* on the verb, as in *lukien* 'while reading'. This verb form is fairly rare in spoken language, and we will not discuss it further in this paper.

9 Even in the possessive construction, Px's only occur with human pronouns, not with full DPs (or the inanimate pronouns) except when the full DP binds an empty pronominal from outside the nominal with the Px (cf. Vainikka (1989) and Trosterud (1993) for more discussion on the Px as a Binding Theoretic (Condition A) anaphor, requiring a local antecedent), and an alternative analysis of the Finnish Px's in Toivonen (2000).

10 In addition, in the related language Saami (Lappish), both the subject-verb paradigm and the Px paradigm contain morphologically related dual forms; cf. Nelson & Manninen (2003, 19–21). Finnish does not have dual forms.

11 The obligatoriness of the Px in the rationale adjunct at least partially follows from a generalization that also holds in possessive DPs and in the temporal construction: whenever an overt 'binder' (DP) of the Px is lacking within the phrase/clause, an overt Px emerges. In the rationale adjunct construction, there is never such an overt DP—for whatever reason—and thus an overt Px occurs.

12 The traditional name of this construction is "the 1st infinitive, short form". In Vainikka (1989) and Koskinen (1998) the term -TA-infinitive was used, and ISK uses "A-infinitive", also adopted here.

13 The traditional name of this verb form is "the 3rd infinitive in inessive/elative/illative case". Vainikka (1989) first called this construction the "MA-infinitive", and this terminology has been adopted by ISK, as well. (Example forms: *luke-massallukemastallukemaan* 'reading/to read')

14 The traditional term for the two verb forms involved in this construction is "the 1st and 2nd participle". In Vainikka (1989) this construction was referred to somewhat misleadingly as "the clausal complement infinitival", and ISK refers to it as "the referative construction". We use here the term VA-construction on the basis of the overt morphological form of the non-finite verb.

15 The main exception are negative finite clauses, since—as with all the other non-finite constructions in Finnish—the negative verb cannot be expressed as a non-finite verb.

16 It should be noted, however, that the distribution of Px's in the VA-construction differs slightly as compared to a possessive DP (and the temporal and rationale adjucnts). In all four constructions, a Px emerges when the subject/possessor DP is controlled by a matrix DP. In the possessive construction the Px also emerges when there is an overt (human) pronominal possessor, while this does not happen in the VA-construction, as
can be seen in example (32b). For the purposes of accusative realization, all of these constructions behave as if they had a possessive suffix, even when a Px happens not to occur.

17 Vilkuna (1996), Löbel (1999) and Vainikka (2003) also discuss the accusative variation in the embedded version of the existential, possessive, or predicative constructions (involving the VA-construction). According to ISK (p.534–5), historically the postverbal DP behaves as an accusative object and occurs in the genitive (if singular and non-pronominal) in these constructions – all of which involve the main verb olla ‘to be’ – but nowadays the nominative is more common in these situations (ISK p.534-5).

18 The only relevant construction not covered in this paper is the adverbial construction discussed in Maling (1993) and Vainikka (2003). Since this construction does not allow human pronouns, it is very difficult to determine whether the adverbs in question carry accusative or genitive case; we leave the details of this construction to future research.