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CASE ASSIGNMENT IN THE PSEUDO-PARTITIVES OF STANDARD ALBANIAN AND ARBËRESH. A CASE FOR MICRO-VARIATION[1]

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Introduction

Pseudo-partitive constructions have always been a challenge for linguistic research since earlier studies in generative grammar (cf. Selkirk 1977, Jackendoff 1977). In this paper we deal with a specific point regarding these constructions, namely case assignment and/or case agreement between the two nouns. We do this on the empirical basis of two very near and poorly studied languages, namely standard Albanian and an Arbëresh variety spoken in Southern Italy[2]. We believe that the case assignment/sharing found in the two Albanian varieties is directly relevant to decide about general issues arising with these constructions, namely headedness and structural configuration.

The paper is organised as follows. Section 1 presents the data and highlights two different ways to realise the pseudo-partitive semantics. Section 2 briefly reviews the case system of Albanian and contrasts it with the less rich system of Arbëresh. In section 3, we observe the behaviour of the two different pseudo-partitive constructions in oblique case assigning contexts. In section 4, we concentrate on the occurrence of modifiers in these constructions, with unexpected results. In section 5, we sketch a proposal. For the sake of space, we dispense with a review of previous approaches since they are quite numerous and well known. For a recent, general discussion we refer to Vos (1999) and Stavrou (2003).

1. The data

Both Albanian and Arbëresh have two ways of expressing the part-whole or the quantity-whole relation. One way is to merge the noun referring to quantity

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2 For the Albanian data we thank Gjilda Alimhilli, Gëzim Gurga, Josif Mita, Shezai Rrokaj. The Arbëresh data come from the variety spoken at S. Nicola dell'Alto, in the province of Crotone, which is the native language of Giuseppina Turano and her family.

(6a) Mblodha një tufë lulesh
picked-1s a bunch flowers.ABL
'I picked a bunch of flowers'

(6b) Bëra një tufë lulesh
made-1s a bunch flowers.ABL
'I made a bunch of flowers'

(7a) Kam pitur një butijë verë (Arbëresh)
have-1s drunk a bottle wine
'I drunk a bottle of wine'

(7b) Kam çar një butijë verë
have-1s broken a bottle wine
'I broke a bottle of wine'

(8a) Kam mbjedhur një macë lule
have-1s picked a bunch flowers
'I picked a bunch of flowrs'

(8b) kam bon një macë lule
have-1s made a bunch flowers
'I made a bunch of flowers'

The different case morphology on N2 can be either indication of a trivial difference in case assigning by different classes of N1 or the result of a different relationship between N1 and N2. We try to investigate these two alternative analyses and argue for the second one. In particular, we will argue that in structures like (1a) displaying case-sharing between N1 and N2, a sort of syntactic compound noun is created, whereas in structures like (2a) the relation between N1 and N2 differs. In these structures, the ablative case is assigned by a functional head ABL° to its complement N2, whereas its specifier is occupied by N1 after NP-movement.

For the sake of clarity, we first give a short review of the Albanian case morphology in the following section.

2. A brief sketch on case morphology in Albanian

Albanian is a highly inflected language. Nouns are declined for number (singular and plural), gender (masculine and feminine) and case (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, ablative). Each noun in Albanian has a double form: indefinite and definite. Definite forms are obtained by agglutination of the postpositive article. We will see them in turn.

(9) illustrates the indefinite declension:

(9)

	singular	plural
NOM	(një) burrë 'a man'	(ca) burra 'some men'
ACC	(një) burrë	(ca) burra
GEN	i (një) burri	i (ca) burrave

Accusative singular is different from Nominative singular in the definite form, contrary to the indefinite declension seen in (9). Oblique cases are identical both in the singular and in the plural, differently from what was found in the indefinite plural declension in (9). The Arbëresh definite declension is identical to that of Albanian.

Albanian adjectives are obligatorily postnominal[5]. Adjectives can be divided into two different classes according to their morphological properties: pre-articulated adjectives like *i mirë* 'good' and articleless adjectives like *përtac* 'lazy'. The preposed article which characterises one class of Albanian adjectives agrees for gender, number, case and definiteness with the noun. In the indefinite declension, the adjectival article only has two forms, one for nominative singular (masc. *i*, fem (*e*) and one (*të*) for all other cases: (13)-(14):

(13) indefinite masculine

	singular	plural
NOM	një burrë **i** mire 'a good man'	ca burra **të** mirë 'some good men'
ACC	një burrë **të** mirë	ca burra **të** mire
GEN	i një burri **të** mirë	i ca burrave **të** mirë
DAT	një burri **të** mirë	ca burrave **të** mirë
ABL	një burri **të** mirë	ca burrave **të** mirë

(14) indefinite feminine

	singular	plural
NOM	një vajzë **e** mire 'a good girl'	ca vajza **të** mira 'some good girls'
ACC	një vajzë **të** mirë	ca vajzave **të** mira
GEN	i një vajze **të** mirë	i ca vajzave **të** mira
DAT	një vajze **të** mirë	ca vajzave **të** mira
ABL	një vajze **të** mirë	ca vaizash **të** mira

In Arbëresh the singular adjectival article in masculine indefinite nouns is *i*, generalised for all cases, whereas in feminine indefinite nouns the singular adjectival article is *e*, generalised for all cases. In the plural it is identical with Albanian, both in masculine and feminine nouns. Notice that the adjective may also have a suffix which distinguishes feminine (*mira*) from masculine (*mirë*) in the plural.

Albanian definite masculine declension of the adjectival articles is identical to the indefinite one in the oblique cases, and in the nominative singular, but it differs from it in the other direct cases (*e mirë*) in (15) vs. (*të mirë*) in (13):

(15) definite masculine

	singular	plural
NOM	burri **i** mire 'the good man'	burrat **e** mirë 'the good men'
ACC	burrin **e** mirë	burrat **e** mirë
GEN	i burrit **të** mirë	i burravet **të** mirë
DAT	burrit **të** mirë	burravet **të** mire
ABL	burrit **të** mirë	burravet **të** mirë

[5] Cfr. Giusti (1996), Dimitrova Vulchanova and Giusti (1998), Turano (2002).

In order to answer these questions we observe the case morphology that appears in the two types of constructions when they occur in oblique case assigning contexts. If the case on N2 remains invariable across the paradigm, we have evidence that N1 is the lexical head of the construction. If the case on N2 changes according to the case assigned to the whole construction, we show that the lexical head of the construction is not N1 but N2, or more precisely a complex constituent formed by N1 and N2. This section is devoted to presenting the data.

When Albanian pseudo-partitive constructions appear in an accusative case assigning context, the case on N2 remains the same we would find in nominative case assigning contexts or in isolation:

(19a) piva një shishe verë
drank-1s a bottle.ACC wine.DIR
'I drank a bottle of wine'

(19b) mblodha një tufë lulesh
picked-1s a bunch.ACC flowers.ABL
'I picked a bunch of flowers'

When they appear in a position where genitive or other oblique case is assigned, oblique may occur on N2 in both kinds of pseudo-partitive constructions. Consider the paradigm in (20) which displays a genitive context and the one in (21) which displays a dative context:

(20a) shija e një shisheje verë / vere
flavour-the the a bottle-GEN wine.DIR/OBL[6]
'The flavour of a bottle of wine'

(20b) aroma e një tufe lulesh
smell-the the a bunch-GEN flowers.ABL
'The smell of a bunch of flowers'

(21a) vë çdo gotë pranë një shisheje vere / *verë
put-1s every glass near a bootle.DAT of wine.OBL/*DIR
'I put every glass near a bottle of wine'

(21b) i shtie ujë një tufe lulesh
CL-DAT put-1s water a bunch.DAT flowers.ABL
'I put water to a bunch of flowers'

In the "Direct pseudo-partitive" in (20a) and (21a), we must wonder whether the oblique case displayed by N2 is the genitive/dative that percolates from N1 onto N2, or whether it is an ablative thereby obliterating the difference between

[6]The different cases appear to be related to different generations of speakers. Elder speakers prefer the Direct case while younger speakers prefer the oblique case. Our analysis, to be motivated below in the text is that no speaker spreads the oblique case of N1 onto N2. Elder speakers keep direct case on N2, while younger speakers turn the "direct pseudo partitive" into an "Ablative pseudo partitive" in oblique case assigning contexts.

(25b) ghurduri i një maci lule
smell-the the a bunch.GEN flowers.DIR
'The smell of a bunch of flowers'

(26a) voj një biker ndandiz një butije verë
put-1s a glass near a bottle.DAT wine.DIR
'I put a glass near to a bottle of wine'

(26b) voj fotografin ndandiz një maci lule
put-1s foto-the near a bunch.DAT flowers.DIR
'I put the foto near to a bunch of flowers'

Up to this point we have observed that neither Albanian nor Arbëresh display a genuine instance of case sharing between N1 and N2 in any pseudo-partitive construction. What we have seen up to now is that Arbëresh has a very generalised instance of "Direct pseudo-partitive" which can appear in any case assigning context, while Albanian presents some instability. It can realise a pseudo-partitive in two different ways. In direct case assigning contexts, the choice between the two possibilities is determined by the lexical properties of N1. In oblique case assigning contexts, the "Direct pseudo-partitive" is ruled out (with minor variation as regards the genitive, cf. the variation in (20a) and the comment in fn.6). In these cases, the "Ablative pseudo-partitive" is generalised to all kinds of N1.

We propose that all cases of "Ablative pseudo-partitives", even those generalised to those N1s that do not display this construction in direct cases, have the same structure, namely the structure that appears with nominal modifiers of the noun in cases such as (27):

(27a) një autor dramash (Albanian)
a author dramas.ABL
'An author of dramas'

(27b) një sallatë domatesh
a salad tomatos.ABL
'A tomato salad'

(27c) një triko leshi
a sweater wool.ABL
'A wollen sweater'

Notice that this pattern is also found in Arbëresh in nominal modifiers, as in (28) even if crucially not in Arbëresh pseudo-partitives:

(28a) një autor dramave (Arbëresh)
a author dramas.ABL
'An author of dramas'

(28b) një ncahat pumadori
a salad tomatos.ABL
'A tomato salad'

(31b) një tufë (*të freskëta) lulesh të freskëta
a bunch flowers.ABL fresh.ABL
'A bunch of fresh flowers'

(32a) një butij (*të kuq) verë të kuq (Arbëresh)
a bottle wine.DIR red.DIR
'A bottle of red wine'

(32b) një macë (*frishki) lule frishki
a bunch flowers.DIR. fresh.DIR
'A bunch of fresh flowers'

Despite this general parallelism, we find crucial differences between the two constructions in Albanian with respect to adjectival modification of N1. This is expected by the empirical generalization made above according to which the two pseudo-partitive structures are actually instances of different constructions.

In Albanian the modifiers of N1 may appear in two different positions. In the "Direct pseudo-partitive" the only position the adjective can occupy is after N2, as in (33). In the "Ablative pseudo-partitive", the adjective may appear either between the two nominals or after N2, as in (34). In both cases, the inflected adjective agrees with N1:

(33a) një shishe verë **e vogël**
a bottle wine small
'A small bottle of wine'

(33b) *një shishe **e vogël** verë

(34a) një tufë lulesh **e madhe**
a bunch flowers.ABL big
'A big bunch of flowers'

(34b) një tufë **e madhe** lulesh

In other Ablative structures we have the same results. An adjective following N1 can only modify and agree with N1 (35a), but an adjective following N2 can either modify and agree with N1 (35b) or with N2 (35c):

(35a) një autor **i njohur** dramash
a author.DIR famous-DIR dramas.ABL
'A famous author of dramas'

(35b) një autor dramash **i njohur**

(35c) një autor dramash **të njohura**
a author.DIR dramas.ABL famous.ABL
'An author of famous dramas'

(38a) *një shishe kjo/këtë verë (Albanian)
a bottle this.NOM/ACC wine
'A bottle of this wine'

(38b) *një shishe kjo/këtë
a bottle this.NOM/ACC

(39a) *një butij kjo/këta verë (Arbëresh)
a bottle this.NOM/ACC wine
'A bottle of this wine'

(39b) *një butij kjo
a bottle this

If referentiality is expressed in the syntax by the projection of functional heads, we expect that N2 which is subpart of the C(omplex) N(oun) cannot have such a projection, given that the CN is the syntactic compounding of two NPs. In order to project referential features on N2, Albanian and Arbëresh use the (prepositional) partitive constructions seen in (3)-(4). For example, (40)-(41) are parallel to (38)-(39):

(40a) një shishe me këtë verë (Albanian)
a bottle ME this.ACC wine
'A bottle of this wine'

(40b) një shishe me këtë
a bottle ME this.ACC

(41a) një butij me këta verë (Arbëresh)
a bottle ME this.ACC wine
'A bottle of this wine'

(41b). një butij me këta
a bottle ME this

The formation of CN in the syntax blocks any movement of N1 across a modifying adjective leaving N2 in place, as represented in (42a), which derives the ungrammaticality of (33b). Instead, CN must move as a constituent, as represented in (42b) which corresponds to the grammatical sentence in (33a). CN can also move across a modifier of N2, as represented in (42c) thereby obtaining the contrast in (31a):

(42a) *një [[$_{N1}$-shishe] X°[e vogël [[$_{CN}$ [$_{N1}$ ~~-shishe~~][$_{N2}$ verë]]]]
(42b) një [[$_{CN}$shishe verë] X° [e vogël [$_{CN}$ [$_{N1}$~~shishe~~][$_{N2}$ ~~-verë~~]]]]
(42c) një [[$_{CN}$shishe verë] X° [të kuqe [$_{CN}$ [$_{N1}$~~shishe~~][$_{N2}$ ~~-verë~~]]]]

We must assume that X° in (42) can copy the φ-features of either N1 or N2 thereby allowing the AP to agree with either of the two accordingly. However, the merging of two different functional heads copying the features of N1 and N2 is ruled out, as in (43):

As for the impossibility for the "Direct pseudo-partitive" to occur in oblique case assigning positions, let's assume, as is plausible, that the realization of oblique case morphology requires the merging inside the nominal phrase of a functional head to which Oblique case is assigned, call it K. Such a functional head is projected in a bottom-up fashion by a "regular" NP but not by a CN. In other words a CN can only realise a "default" case, while if N1 realises an oblique case it must move alone into a position in KP[8].

This is possible in Arbëresh (47a) where the "Ablative pseudo-partitive" is not available but not in Albanian (47b) which generalises the "Ablative pseudo-partitive" to all kinds of N1 in this case.

(47a) voj një biker ndandiz një butije verë / *vere (Arbëresh)
put-1s a glass near a bottle.DAT wine.DIR /*OBL
'I put a glass near to a bottle of wine'

(47b) vë çdo gotë pranë një shisheje vere / *verë (Albanian)
put-1s every glass near a bootle.DAT of wine.OBL/*DIR
'I put every glass near to a bottle of wine'

The contrast in (47) can be reduced to a general contrast in morphological richness of the nominal pattern in Albanian and Arbëresh, where the latter is less rich. We suggest that in Arbëresh the oblique case head K is "weak" in the well known sense and does not require movement of N1 into it. As a consequence, in Arbëresh, N1 can enter the numeration already inflected for oblique case and as such can be compounded with N2 in CN. This is not possible in Albanian which has "strong" inflection that triggers movement of N1 to check the case morphology.

Let us now turn to the "Ablative pseudo-partitive". We assume here that Ablative case is assigned to NP2 by a low functional head projected by N1, which we call ABL°. This is the case in all Ablative constructions which include the Albanian "Ablative pseudo partitive" and the Modification Construction in both Albanian and Arbëresh. The structure is given in (48):

(48a) një [$_{ABLP}$ [$_{NP1}$ tufë] ABL° [[$_{NP2}$ lulesh] [$_{NP1}$ ~~tufë~~]]

(48b) një [$_{ABLP}$ [$_{NP1}$ autor] ABL° [[$_{NP2}$ dramash] [$_{NP1}$ ~~autor~~]]

In (48), after merging of ABL°, NP1 moves to the left of NP2 (in SpecABLP) and obtains the observed word order. In this construction we have two separate NPs, each of which can merge its own modifiers. Let us start with the case of a modifier of NP2. In this case the modifiers build a constituent with NP2 and exclude NP1, as in (49).

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[8] This can take place by either by head movement to K or by NP movement to SpecKP. It is not crucial to decide between the two possibilities here.

6. Some conclusions

If we project our preliminary study onto a more general cross-linguistic perspective, we can observe that the pseudo-partitive semantics may be realised in the syntax with constructions that are parasitic / ambiguous with a modification relation, as in English and Italian and differently from German:

(53a) Engl.	a cup of coffee	a cup of ceramics
(53b) It.	una tazza di caffè	una tazza di ceramica
(53c) Germ.	eine Tasse Kaffee	ein Tasse aus Keramik/eine Keramiktasse

This variation is also found in the microvariation between Albanian and Arbëresh. In the latter the pseudo-partitive and the modification construction are completely differentiated, while in the former, the situation is unstable. The differentiation is only found with a subsection of container nouns and only in direct cases, with restrictions on the occurrence of modifiers, but the modification construction which is expressed with Ablative case on the modifying noun can be used to express the pseudo-partitive semantics every time the restrictions are not obeyed.

This unstable state of affairs produces a high degree of uncertainty among speakers in less idiomatic cases, such as the cases in which we add one or even two modifiers or in cases in which the pseudo partitive is itself in an oblique case assigning context. In Arbëresh the situation is perfectly stable, with the Ablative only used for modification, and the pseudo-partitive displays all the restrictions found in Albanian with no possibility of escaping them. There is nothing "deep" in this kind variation, but only the fact that the Albanian system is less stable with respect to this construction than the Arbëresh.

This brief study has a second, more theoretical goal, in that it crucially makes use of a bare phrase structure procedure to capture in a unified way the different behaviour found between the Direct and the Ablative pseudo-partitive. We believe that the parallelisms and the differences between these two constructions could not be expressed in the more traditional X-bar system, even in one of its more recent versions which distinguishes between a possible lexical vs. functional status of N1 in the spirit of van Riemsdijk's (1998), as in Vos (1999) for Germanic and Stavrou (2003) for Greek. That line of approaching the issue predicts case sharing to occur between N1 and N2 in the case N1 has functional/quantifying status. This prediction is contradicted by the data of the two Albanian variety analysed here. In these languages, the "Direct pseudo-partitive" never displays case sharing. In oblique case assigning contexts it either keeps the Direct case, as is the case of Arbëresh, or it turns into an "Ablative pseudo-partitive" as is the case of Albanian. This matter of fact shows that even the case sharing in Direct case assigning contexts is only apparent, and that the Direct case on N2 is not simply percolation of case features through a transparent N1 but possibly a default case assigned to both component of the syntactic compound noun (CN).

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Abstract

Standard Albanian and Arbëresh varieties spoken in Southern Italy have two ways of expressing the Partitive Construction. One way is to merge the noun referring to quantity and the noun referring to the substance as two adjacent nominals. The other way is to connect the quantity noun and the noun referring to the substance with the preposition *me* ("with"). The first type corresponds to a 'pseudo-partitive structure'; the second one is the 'partitive' construction. In this paper we deal with case assignment and case agreement between the two nouns of the Pseudo-Partitive construction both in Albanian and in Arbëresh.