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## Refining the typology of pseudopartitives

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The pseudopartitive construction (*a glass of water*) involves two nominals as in the true partitive construction (*a glass of that water*). In the pseudopartitive construction the dependent noun is non-specific and merely expresses the substance the head contains, measures, or quantifies. In contrast, in true partitive constructions there is, in Ilja Seržant's (2021: 885) formulation, a proportion between the quantity of the subset and the quantity of the superset, that is, taking *a glass* out of *that water* reduces the amount of *the water*. This paper seeks to contribute to the discussion on the pseudopartitive construction through four remarks that challenge conceptual and structural limitations postulated in the existing typological work. I strive for a more fine-grained understanding of the phenomenon, a necessary groundwork for future crosslinguistic study.

Maria Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2006: 220), who has worked extensively on the typology of partitives and pseudopartitives, discusses the headedness and locus of marking of the pseudopartitive constructions. She distinguishes two main strategies to mark pseudopartitives: with an explicitly marked dependent (1) and without any marking, that is, by juxtaposing the two nouns (2).

- (1) Standard Romanian
- |                    |  |           |                 |
|--------------------|--|-----------|-----------------|
| <i>un pahar</i>    |  | <i>de</i> | <i>vin</i>      |
| a glass.NOM/ACC.SG |  | PREP      | wine.NOM/ACC.SG |
- ‘a glass of wine’
- (2) Standard Albanian
- |                 |  |             |
|-----------------|--|-------------|
| <i>një gotë</i> |  | <i>verë</i> |
| a glass.NOM.SG  |  | wine.NOM.SG |
- ‘a glass of wine’

Further, based on her sample of European languages, Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2009: 335, 341–342) proposes four subtypes for explicitly marked pseudopartitives, depending on the etymological source of the marker: the separative, possessive, and separative-possessive subtypes and a subtype derived from the expression of accompaniment.

I begin the discussion of the concept of pseudopartitives by defending a definition that does not render pseudopartitives dependent of another phenomenon such as partitives. I then introduce an additional, oblique subtype of pseudopartitives and discuss a split in their marking, absent and misrepresented, respectively, in the previous research. Finally, based on a small corpus study of Welsh, I propose that an extensive crosslinguistic survey is likely to find also head marking of pseudopartitives, that is, marking on the quantifier, in addition to dependent marking and juxtaposition, the only two main strategies discussed by Koptjevskaja-Tamm. I argue that the further typologizing efforts regarding pseudopartitives should be sensitive to the type of variation demonstrated in this paper, including fine-tuning to spot head marking as a pseudopartitive strategy.

## 1. The definition of pseudopartitives must not depend on partitives

Pseudopartitive as a term exists thanks to Selkirk's (1977) paper that observes the syntactic differences between the English true partitive, for example, *a piece of this pie*, and uses like *a piece of pie*. Both constructions have two nominals, each with similar but not identical semantic characteristics, and in the English language they both employ the preposition *of*. Yet some semantic and syntactic properties of the latter, Selkirk argues, are perhaps more akin to a measure or quantifier construction in English like *much water* – rather than true partitives – meriting therefore the term *pseudopartitive*. It follows that the “partitive” in pseudopartitive does not primarily result from the semantics of the two constructions, despite their closeness, but from the fact that the marking of the two constructions is identical in the English language, making pseudopartitives look like true partitives.

Seržant (2021: 893–895) proposes a new restriction to the definition of pseudopartitives: we may talk of pseudopartitives only if there is a similarly marked partitive construction in a language. He therefore excludes, for instance, a juxtapositional strategy, since “Its only relation to partitives is based on the fact that *Glas Wein* [German; ‘glass of wine’] is a measure phrase that may be translated by a partitive-like expression in some other languages including English.” I disagree with the tenets here. It is potentially dangerous to assume that juxtapositional pseudopartitives like any pseudopartitives are

just “measure phrases”. In addition, pseudopartitives set similar semantic restrictions on the participating nouns as do real partitives, yet with the crucial difference of the substance – or superset – being specific only with the true partitives. Not much is gained by limiting the use of a term referring to a widely recognized construction type only to a subset with formal identity with another related construction.

In part, Seržant (2021: 894–895) opposes a purely semantic definition for pseudopartitives because there is evidence that sometimes pseudopartitives grammaticalize from true partitives. It is unclear to me why including constructions like *Glas Wein* in the definition of pseudopartitives would be detrimental for diachronic investigations, especially when Zimmer (2015) convincingly demonstrates that the juxtapositional strategy in German directly grammaticalizes from the partitive use of the genitive used to mark true partitives as well.

Unlike Seržant suggests, it is an unanswered empirical question to what extent pseudopartitives share properties cross-linguistically with measure or quantifier phrases. I argue that such an investigation is needed, and for that end a functional-semantic definition of pseudopartitives is needed. If true partitives deserve a Haspelmathian comparative concept (see Seržant 2021: 886), so do pseudopartitives. Admittedly, there could be available terms that do not refer to partitives (like, for instance, container constructions, see, e.g., Partee & Borschev 2012), but I feel that ship has sailed already, and pseudopartitive is the term of choice in this paper as well.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Oblique type of pseudopartitives

Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2009: 335, 341–342) argues that European pseudopartitives that have an explicitly marked dependent derive either from separative, possessive, separative-possessive, or accompanying constructions. The South Slavic Torlak varieties spoken mostly in southeastern Serbia pose a complication for this typology. Unlike most Bulgarian and Macedonian dialects, which have lost case inflection, Torlak varieties that are transitional between Serbian, on the one hand, and Bulgarian and Macedonian, on the other, preserve a limited number of case distinctions. The historical accusative singular of a frequent inflection class, the Slavic *\*ā*-stem nouns, reflected as *-u*, contrasts with the nominative singular *-a*. The case ending *-u* is used with prepositions or to mark direct objects – and pseudopartitives, consider Example (3):

1. In no way questioning the general reliability of the article, a minor note unrelated to the discussion of pseudopartitives must be made of Seržant’s example from Finnish (2021: 883, Example 4), illustrating, according to the author, the partitive case expressing hypothetical events. *Luulin hänet viisaaksi* is ungrammatical in the sense

- (3) Female ~40 yo, Timok dialect of Torlak, Trgovište<sup>2</sup>  
*čaš-a vod-u*  
 glass-NOM water-OBL  
 ‘glass of water’

Crucially, separative, possessive, and accompanying meanings are expressed through prepositional constructions, as in standard Bulgarian and standard Macedonian. Therefore, this strategy constitutes an additional, oblique type of pseudopartitives.

An additional note is needed to avoid confusion: not all South Slavic varieties with the same extremely reduced case system behave uniformly, as the Kumanovo dialect spoken in the north of Macedonia illustrates:

- (4) Kumanovo dialect (field notes of Inka Nurmi, personal communication)  
*ima šiše rakij-a*  
 there.is bottle liquor-NOM  
 ‘there’s a bottle of liquor’
- (5) Kumanovo dialect (Vidoeski 1962: 275)  
*dajte mi čašk-u rakij-u*  
 give.IMP.2PL to.me glass.OBL liquor.OBL  
 ‘give me a glass of liquor’

In Example (4), there is an existential construction in which the nominative is expected as the case of the complement ‘bottle’. While the word ‘bottle’ is underspecified regarding the nominative or accusative case, the word ‘liquor’ takes the nominative. In Example (5), on the other hand, both nouns display the oblique case, which is the expected case of the theme in a ditransitive construction in this variety. These examples show the contained substance being marked for the phrase level grammatical relation in addition to the container, but relying on juxtaposition in marking the pseudopartitive construction, as is the case with, for instance, Modern Greek (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2006: 220).<sup>3</sup>

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of the translation ‘I thought him to be wise,’ ‘him’ taking the accusative. It is true that the same sentence with ‘him’ in partitive, *häntä*, does imply that ‘he turned out not to be wise, although I thought otherwise’, but I do not know whether there is a verb in Finnish that would illustrate this distinction with the alternation between the partitive and accusative case. For a good overview of the choice of the object case with mental verbs in Finnish, see Dubois (2014: 22–28).

2. The field data have been collected as a part of the project *Nematerijalna baština timočkih govora*, led by Biljana Sikimić.

3. To my knowledge, Inka Nurmi’s observation of Kumanovo dialect adhering to this type is the only one made regarding any Slavic variety.

### 3. A split in the marking of pseudopartitives

Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001: 532–533) discusses a split in the way Finnish marks partitives: while the partitive case can be used to mark both partitive and pseudopartitive constructions, the relative is limited to partitive expressions referring to parts of a whole (e.g., ‘a piece of the cake’). Another split exists in the marking of pseudopartitives in Albanian. While Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2009: 336) classifies Albanian as having a juxtapositional pseudopartitive construction, see Example (2), Flavia Pompeo (2012: 536) claims that Albanian marks the dependent with the ablative:

- (6) Albanian (Pompeo 2012: 536)  
*një grup punëtor-ësh*  
 a group workers-ABL.PL  
 ‘a group of workers’

This confusion results merely from the fact that in the pseudopartitive construction Albanian plural nouns take what in the tradition of Albanian grammars is called the ablative, whereas the singular nouns appear in juxtaposition (Buchholz & Fiedler 1987: 415). It is not entirely clear how the ablative sits within Koptjevskaja-Tamm’s (2009: 332) typology, which is based on the “origin or other uses” of the marker. On the one hand, the *-sh* element of the ablative plural originates from the Proto-Indo-European locative plural (Orel 2000: 237–238). As a static local case, this type of etymological source is not mentioned in Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2009). On the other hand, it does have source indicating uses, for instance, with the preposition *prej* ‘from’ (Demiraj 1993: 107). Yet additionally the indefinite ablative plural is used to mark agents of passive constructions (ibid.) and in compounding: *hapëse konserv-ash* ‘can opener’ (Wahlström 2015: 103). Perhaps then this strategy best corresponds to Koptjevskaja-Tamm’s possessive-separative strategy, although these represent, at best, tangential functions of the Albanian ablative.

### 4. Can pseudopartitives be head marked?

Finnish, like English, has a productive morphological element that when attached to a noun expresses the quality of the noun as a container, illustrated in (7):

- (7) Standard Finnish (personal knowledge)  
*kupi-llinen kahvi-a*  
 cup-ful.NOM coffee-PART  
 ‘a cupful of coffee’

Such use as in (7) has not sparked, to my knowledge, calls to interpret the pseudopartitive doubly marked, that is, the marking of both the dependent (*coffee*) and the head (*cup*) for their mutual relation. This is no doubt because largely the same pseudopartitive meaning can be conveyed also without the marker, relying on the marking on the dependent, as seen in (8). However, it seems that only prototypical containers may appear without the morphological element *-llinen*, whereas a much wider set of, for instance, physical objects can be used as containers with *-llinen*.<sup>4</sup>

- (8) Standard Finnish  
*kuppi kahvi-a*  
 cup.NOM coffee-PART  
 ‘a cup of coffee’

In her classic article on head and dependent marking grammar, Johanna Nichols (1986: 58) lists four main ways in which morphology can signal syntactic dependency: 1) it may merely acknowledge the existence of a dependency, 2) it may additionally express the type of dependency (e.g., possessor/possessee), 3) it can also index lexical or inflectional categories (e.g., gender agreement with attributive adjectives), and 4) it can index properties of the head on the head itself (e.g., an adjective bearing a marker that merely identifies it as an adjective.). Of these four, number two is of interest here. Should the morphemes in (7) truly be markers of a pseudopartitive relation – or a true partitive for that matter, these constructions differ primarily semantically regarding their dependent, not the head – their independent uses should be predominantly elliptical. That is, the substance or superset contained should be definable in the context (excluding lexicalizations, cf. Finnish *lasi-llinen* ‘a glass of an alcoholic beverage’, literally ‘glassful’).

To further discuss the potential obligatoriness of such markings, let us turn to Welsh. It marks pseudopartitives with the preposition *o* ‘of’:

- (9) Welsh (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001: 558)  
*cwpanad o goffi du*  
 cup of coffee black  
 ‘a cup of black coffee’

4. I would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing out this to me. While acceptable to me, for instance, *lautanen* ‘plate’ may be a borderline case for some speakers as the container in the pseudopartitive construction without *-llinen*.

Welsh has additionally a marker *-aid* that attaches to nouns and indicates that the noun acts as a container. In fact, in Example (9), the word *cwpan* ‘cup’ has a variant of this suffix, *-ad*, although not indicated in the gloss by Koptjevskaja-Tamm.

In a mini corpus study, I investigated the collocations of the lemmas *cwpan* ‘cup’ and *gwydr* ‘glass’ in the National Corpus of Contemporary Welsh (*Corpus Cenedlaethol Cymraeg Cyfoes*, CorCenCC; Knight et al. 2020). I compared the co-occurrences of the suffixed and unsuffixed forms with a following preposition *o* and a noun denoting a substance. Both the occurrences of *o* following immediately and with one intervening word were counted, since Welsh attributive adjectives mostly follow the noun, see (9). For *cwpan* I used a randomized sample of 993 occurrences of the lemma<sup>5</sup> (frequency in the corpus: 125 per one million words). Contracted and truncated forms of *cwpanaid*, *panad* and *paned* ‘cuppa’, were counted separately. For *gwydr*, all occurrences were used, amounting to a total of 662 tokens (frequency in the corpus: 51 per one million words).

**Table 1: Suffix *-aid* in pseudopartitive expressions with nouns *cwpan* ‘cup’ and *gwydr* ‘glass’**

<i>cwpan</i> ‘cup’, 993 tokens	No suffix	Suffix <i>-aid</i>	<i>panad/paned</i>
Pseudopartitive uses with <i>o</i>	3	19	90
Other uses	545	5	331
<i>gwydr</i> ‘glass’, 662 tokens	No suffix	Suffix <i>-aid</i>	
Pseudopartitive uses with <i>o</i>	9	51	
Other uses	587	15	

The results are easily visible in Table 1: In 86% (19 out of 22) of cases, the suffix *-aid* is used in the pseudopartitive construction with the word *cwpan* ‘cup’, and in 85% (51 out of 60) of cases with the word *gwydr* ‘glass’. Additionally, the pseudopartitive use constitutes 79% (19 out of 24) of the uses of the form *cwpanaid* and 77% (51 out of 66) of *gwydraid*. Regarding these two words that are frequently involved in pseudopartitive expressions: a) the suffix *-aid* contributes to more than five out of six of all pseudopartitive expressions and b) the primary function, based on frequency, of the suffix *-aid* is to contribute to the expression of the pseudopartitive. The pseudopartitive uses of the

5. This figure includes all occurrences of the lemma, including those with word initial morphophonemic mutations. The mutated variants are counted in all figures involving *cwpan*, *cwpanaid*, *panad*, *paned*, *gwydr*, and *gwydraid* in what follows.

forms *panad* and *paned* consist of almost exclusively co-occurrences with *coffi* ‘coffee’ or *te* ‘tea’, yet they do allow intervening attributes: *paned bach o de* ‘small cup of tea’.

The status of *-aid* as either a derivative or inflectional element is complicated. In the CorCenCC (Knight et al. 2020), nouns with *-aid* are not listed consistently either as being part of the unsuffixed noun or as separate lexemes: *gwydraid* is listed as a separate lemma (and had to be retrieved therefore with a separate query), yet all uses of *cwpanaid*, with a singular exception, are listed under the lemma *cwpan*, including the truncated forms *panad* and *paned*. An interesting feature bringing the suffix *-aid* closer to inflection is that it preserves the gender of the noun to which it attaches (Morris-Jones 1913: 226). Yet the plural form, *-eidiau*, transparently has the plural marker *-au* as the final element, more typical of derivative elements perhaps.

Nevertheless, any further discussion regarding the status of the Welsh *-aid* risks being fruitless in the absence of a more thorough survey of its distribution and, crucially, productivity. Yet what this small corpus study hopefully highlights is the conceptual feasibility of head marking at least from a frequency perspective – in a fairly unexotic language in the sense of the typological studies hitherto that have been centered around Europe. Getting back to Nichols’s study, she concludes that regarding the clause level locus of marking and nominal syntax (possession, adpositional phrases, attributive phrases), Europe resorts especially predominantly to dependent marking (Nichols 1986: 100). My prediction therefore is that a crosslinguistic worldwide study is likely to find examples of both head and double marking of pseudopartitives, but only if it sets out to look for them.

## 5. Conclusions

This paper has approached the topic of pseudopartitives through minor and medium-sized remarks regarding previous studies on the subject. Any of the omissions or inaccuracies in these papers highlighted here should not be taken as questioning any major conclusion in them. What these problems do underscore, nevertheless, is the challenge of a cross-linguistic study of a minor grammatical structure, a problem partly summarized in the subtitle of Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2009): “a lot of grammar with a good portion of lexicon”. While not cited here, it is no secret that there is ample literature on the pseudopartitives within the study of formal semantics, and this is because these constructions are in no way clear cut in relation to other parts of the grammar. This complexity is reflected in the variety and variation of these structures cross-linguistically. Therefore, any variety sample – even in the confines of Europe – is bound to run into trouble if the aims are ambitious.



On the basis of what I have demonstrated here, I propose a minimum set of requirements for a questionnaire regarding a world-wide typological study of pseudopartitives: 1) The survey should include both major and minor strategies and a way to account for them in the analysis, 2) instead of a diachronic component, describe related structures (true partitives, numeral and lexical quantification) and the basic noun phrase types, 3) be aware of splits in the marking, and 4) be prepared for head and double marking.

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