

## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This thematic issue includes a selection of the papers presented at the workshop *Crosslinguistic perspectives on partitivity and related phenomena*, organized at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of Bucharest in November 2023. Starting with the late 70s, interest in the domain of partitivity has been constantly growing, giving rise to new perspectives and novel avenues of analysis. The part-whole relation represents an exceptionally complex issue, a type of complexity that is apparent at many different levels of linguistic analysis (typological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic).

Partitivity, therefore, has been the focus of extensive research over the past years within the standard generative framework. In an attempt at shedding some new light on the current analyses of (pseudo)partitive constructions at a crosslinguistic level, the papers in this thematic issue tackle the following aspects: the morpho-syntax of partitive elements (partitive articles, quantifiers, partitive case inflections, the so-called 'bare' partitives); the part-whole relation in sign languages; the typology and possible classifications of (pseudo)partitive constructions; the semantics of (pseudo)partitive constructions; the issue of silent elements present in the underlying structure of (pseudo)partitives; grammaticalization paths of nominals occupying the first slot in the binominal structure; various translation strategies for (pseudo)partitive constructions.

**Kagan**'s paper focuses on the functional structure of genitive objects in Russian and convincingly shows that, while all types of genitive objects have been claimed in the literature to denote properties, they differ in terms of their syntactic "size". Nominals that appear in Genitive of Negation and Intensional Genitive (unified under the term Irrealis Genitive) can be full DPs. In contrast, objects that appear in Partitive Genitive are bare NPs that lack the DP, QP/NumP and even the Div(ider)P(hrase) projections. Finally, genitive case is assigned especially productively to objects of verbs that contain certain prefixes, such as the accumulative *na-*. This case, which is referred to in the paper as Prefixational Genitive, is similar to Partitive Genitive in that it cannot be assigned to DPs and QPs/NumPs; however, unlike Partitive Genitive, it can be assigned to DivPs. Thus, it is shown that Russian genitive objects can be bare NPs, DivPs and full DPs.

In the next paper, **Vláškova** and **Wągiel** investigate the marking of partitivity marking in spoken and sign languages, focusing on the locative and ablative strategies. The paper extends the typology of partitive constructions by including evidence from sign languages and explores the semantic mechanism that allows locative and ablative markers to serve as both spatial and partitivity expressions. The authors report on finding a new ablative construction in Czech Sign Language, which uses the sign FROM<sup>IX</sup>-a, which in turn differs from the [high] vs. [low] position strategy found in other sign languages. A close inspection of the sign language data indicates that there is a tight semantic relationship between the spatial use of locative and directional expressions and their use as partitive markers. The authors conclude on a very promising note, namely that parthood is not a primitive notion but rather a notion that is derived from more general topological concepts.

**Bleotu** is interested in agreement with collective nouns with functional heads (such as *mulțime* ‘multitude’/ multitude) and semi-lexical heads (such as *poliție* ‘police’/ police) in English and Romanian. The author closely inspects patterns of agreement of collective nouns with functional heads (where both English and Romanian allow both singular and plural agreement) and of collective nouns with semi-lexical heads (case in which English allows both singular and plural agreement while Romanian only allows singular agreement). The study proposes a silent noun and distributional account to argue that: a. all collective nouns involve two nominals, but NP2 may be silent; b. collectives with a semi-lexical first nominal are subject to a crosslinguistic agreement parameter, such that in English, agreement is variable, while in Romanian, it is not. The paper shows that one reason for this difference relates to whether the second nominal in a collective has subject-like behavior. In English, both nominals in a collective extended projection may be subjects (the first is a DP, and the second is a bare noun). In Romanian, however, only the first nominal (DP1) can be a subject, while the second (NP2) cannot, since bare nouns typically do not function as subjects in Romanian. The author concludes that it is for this reason that in semi-lexical collective nouns, Romanian speakers realize agreement only with the subject-like DP1.

In the next paper, **Klockmann** and **Garshol** are interested in the accuracy with which Norwegian L1, English L2 learners produce subject-verb agreement in quantity pseudo-partitives, starting from the assumption that English and Norwegian show similar headedness properties for the pseudo-partitive, but unlike English, Norwegian lacks a system of verbal agreement. Collecting learner data from the Tracking Written Learner Language corpus, the authors find a subject-verb agreement error rate of 29.1%, which suggests that, despite the overlap in headedness in the two languages, learners struggle to produce agreement correctly. Cases of negative transfer are also found, mostly related to specific lexical items (*lack, pair*), which, paired with the first finding, shows that the negative transfer of some properties, such as agreement marking, may limit the positive transfer of other structures, such as headedness in pseudo-partitives.

**Westveer’s** paper focuses on gender agreement mismatches in French and German partitives, aiming primarily at proposing a novel analysis of the syntactic structure of quantified and superlative partitives. By carefully analyzing the data on gender mismatches in these two types of partitives, the author convincingly shows that, on the one hand, there is a structural difference between quantified and superlative partitives, and, on the other hand, there is a structural difference between French and German quantified partitives. The paper adopts a small clause approach to partitives involving a Predicate Phrase headed by a relator element, which spells-out as *de* in French, or triggers genitive case marking in German. While the set phrase merges as complement of this Predicative Phrase, the subset merges in its specifier position. To discriminate between quantified and superlative partitives, the paper argues that both partitive types differ in terms of the structure of the subset phrase, which is more articulate for superlative partitives.

In the next paper, **Stoicescu** focuses on Romanian bare partitives in contrast to other bare partitive constructions and shows that they share features with generalized partitives. The paper also investigates the generation of scalar implicatures by Romanian bare partitives in comparison to overt partitive structures in which the upper nominal contains a part quantificational noun. Through an experimental approach, the study finds that bare partitive constructions in Romanian give rise to scalar implicatures about half of the time

overt part noun partitive structures do, results which provide support for the Post-Gricean approach to scalar implicatures, according to which scalar implicature are not elicited easily because they come with extra computational costs. The study also shows that a second factor that lowers the rate of scalar implicature responses for bare partitives is their atelic, process interpretation.

In the next paper, **Cornilescu** tackles two Romanian partitive constructions that feature partitive DE “of”, one of which is a true partitive (*un prieten de-ai mei* / a friend DE-AL.M.PL mine / ‘a friend of mine’), while the other is a possessive partitive (*un prieten de-al meu* / a friend DE-AL.M.SG mine / ‘a friend of mine’). Starting from the frequent claim made in the literature that Romanian lacks the partitive construction, in the sense that Romanian does not use the preposition DE in the partitive construction, the paper suggests a possible explanation for the loss of DE in the proper/standard partitive construction. At the same time, the paper gives a description of the possessive partitive to show how it differs from the standard partitive in its syntax and interpretation and why the use of the singular to designate whole is justified by the properties of the construction.

**Kozlova** focuses on approximative constructions in Northern Khanty (< Khantyic < Uralic) and proposes a formal semantic analysis of this type of constructions. The paper fills the gap in the literature on approximative constructions by collecting data from Northern Khanty and providing a detailed report on pseudo-partitive constructions. The author argues that the approximative marker in Northern Khanty is able to attach to numerals and units of measurement and its distribution forms a diagnostic of pseudo-partitivity. In such constructions, the paper associates different word orders to different syntactic structures and final truth conditions. This work strives to advance both formal semantics as applied to minority language and Khantyic (and even broader – Uralic) studies, providing new typological data.

**Lena** is interested in the introduction of anchored indefinite pivots in biclausal presentational constructions in Chinese (*Qián xiē rìzi yǒu yí-ge kǎoshàng xuéxiào*. ‘A few days ago, there was one [of us] who got admitted to a school.’). Building upon semi-spontaneous spoken Chinese corpus data, the study examines linguistic strategies for anchoring indefinite pivots, their distributional frequency, and correlations with the predicate types (individual-level vs. stage-level), focusing on the functional motivations underpinning these connections. The paper shows that the prevalent pairing of individual-level predicates with anchored pivots arises from the necessity to create meaningful propositions, while also ensuring the sustained presence of the newly introduced entity in discourse. In contrast, constructions including stage-level predicates can accommodate unanchored pivots, since they express meaningful propositions independently. The study adopts a function-driven perspective and analyzes the correlations between pivot (un)anchoring and predicate preference in the light of the discourse-pragmatic functions that the biclausal construction can convey: Topic-promoting, Quantifying, Contrastive.

In the next paper, **Drăgan** focuses on collective nouns for groups of animals that occupy the first position in a pseudo-partitive structure. These nouns feature considerable semantic variation in English, ranging from garden-variety items (*a pack of wolves*, *a herd of elephants*, *a flock of geese*, etc.) to exotic coinages (*a shiver of sharks*, *an exaltation of larks*, etc.). The paper shows that the Romanian lexical inventory is by far poorer, including only standard collective nouns (*o cireadă de vaci* (‘a herd of cattle’) *o turmă de oi* (‘a flock of sheep’), *o haită de lupi* (‘a pack of wolves’)). Building on these lexical gaps, the article

explores the translation strategies rendering English collective nouns into Romanian and the syntactic patterns they generate. It is argued that the frequent lack of equivalent forms in Romanian forces translators to resort to various compensation mechanisms with both shortening and lengthening syntactic effects, though semantic implicitation appears to be the norm.

**Martinez Hernandez** tackles the syntactic behavior of partitive clitic *ne* in Catalan, in relation with unaccusative and unergative verbs. While the clitic is prescriptively restricted to subjects of unaccusatives in Catalan, the paper explores the possibility of the clitic serving as main argument of unergative verbs, as it has been noted in Italian. Starting from a thorough exploration of the Unaccusativity Hypothesis and the proposed diagnostics, the author evaluates the production and acceptability of the clitic in different contexts, through a series of experimental studies with native speakers. The results reveal that a significant number of participants accept the use of *ne* with unergative verbs. The findings support the conclusion that the distribution of the clitic may be more flexible than previously assumed. Traditional approaches to verb classification in Romance linguistics are thus challenged, paving the way to further research of the clitic cross-linguistically.

In the last paper, **Tănase-Dogaru** addresses the issue of sortal ‘unit’ classifiers that optionally combine with count and mass nouns in a structure of the type numeral + classifier + noun in non-classifier languages. The paper is an attempt at filling the gap in the literature on optional vs. mandatory unit classifiers, since no such classifiers have been previously identified for Romanian. The paper proposes that optional unit classifiers in Romanian are merged in a single extended projection where the Number Phrase can be syntactically active or inert. When the classifier is silent, the Number Phrase is syntactically active thus enabling the noun to interact with the count system. On the other hand, when the classifier is overt, the Number Phrase is inert and the lexical noun is treated as mass. At the same time, the semantic reflex of merging optional unit classifiers in the structure is the emergence of a ‘plurality of individuals’ reading to the exclusion of a ‘plurality of subkinds’ reading.

*Mihaela Tănase-Dogaru*<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Bucharest, mihaela.dogaru@lils.unibuc.ro