Case semantics constraining TAM in Finnic non-finite verbs and nominalizations

Are cases TAM markers in Finnic and how does their semantics differ from the TAM markers that are not (originally) case markers? This contribution shows how the expression of TAM is subject to language-specific constraints in the less-known variants of Finnic, and these constraints are regularly motivated by case semantics. The presentation argues that there is a need for a heuristic concept for the form elements and phenomena that are related to the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic constraints in the synchronic structures. These phenomena and form elements are referred to as "cross-categorial case".

A previous account that has addressed a related issue is Aikhenvald (2008). According to Aikhenvald (2008:565), "versatile cases" can express temporal, causal and other relationships between clauses, and aspectual and modal meanings within a clause. For instance, Aikhenvald provides examples of case on nouns and verbs in Manambu, where the objective-locative case marks a core or an oblique argument. The locative case appears on the verb as well, as on *wukemar* 'forget', adding completivity to the event structure; locative case on a verb has an interpretation of 'completely forget'.

(1)     wun [de-ke-**m**]        wukemar-e-**m**
        I he-LK-OBJ/LOC forget-LK-OBJ/LOC
        'I completely forgot him.'                              (Aikhenvald 2008:587)

Aikhenvald finds that core cases tend to express aspectual and modal meanings, while oblique cases tend to be used as clause-linkers. Versatile case comprises case on various verb forms and falls in three main types on the basis of its distributional characteristics: on verb roots, on fully or partially inflected verbs, and on non-finite verbs. Aikhenvald describes versatile case as 'chameleon morphemes' that can mark different categories and have related but also different meanings. This concept suits well for describing the case phenomena in Finnic, where, for instance, inessive case on non-finite verbs expresses aspect (progressive).

(2)     Õhus            on      *helju-ma-**s***     piparkookide  ja
        air-INE be.3S   float-M-**INE**   gingerbread-GEN.PL      and
                röstitud mandlite                    magusvürtsikas lõhn,
                roasted almond-GEN.PL               sweet and spicy scent
        kusagil         küpsetatakse  jõulusaia,
        somewhere       bake-IMPERS   Christmas cake.PTV
                jõululaatadel           pakutakse       auravat         Glühweini.
                Christmas fair-PL.ADE offer-IMPERS       steaming.PTV gluhwein.PTV
        'In the air is hanging the smell of gingerbread and roasted almonds, somewhere a
        Christmas cake is being baked, on Christmas fairs, Glühwein is offered to the
        customers.' (Estonian)

The Finnic data can help clarify some conceptual issues about these "chameleon morphemes" in Aikhenvald's account. Firstly, it is not always clear if the form in question can be referred to as case. It is not clear if this form is a morpheme. The TAM meaning constraints can be coupled with a diachronically motivated formant (*-s*), which is a part of a morpheme in modern language (*-mas*). Secondly, the Finnic data on spatial cases express primarily TAM semantics and pragmatics; they are not clause linkers despite their oblique nature. Thirdly, Aikhenvald's approach concentrates on typologically distant examples where variation cannot be observed. Some data on variation show that there are fewer differences in the semantics of the combinations of various types of non-finite or nominalized forms. Fourthly, in many languages it is not clear if the case-marked category in question is a verb or it has properties of an adjective (nominal) as well. It is not clear if versatile case can mark nouns if they are used as predicates. The languages involved are not properly tested for their category, and testing would be difficult given the choice of languages.

As a solution to these problems of the exact categories involved, a more semantics-centered and less morphology-centered take on the concept of "versatile case" can be considered. This presentation looks at the instances of spatial case and partitive in the Finnic languages (other than Finnish).

Case is a means of encoding TAM semantics in Finnic. Case penetrates into the predicate domain in all Uralic languages, most of which are characterized by rich case systems with approximately 10 members, and many have case systems of approximately 15 or 20 cases. An instance of TAM related cross-categorial case is partitive. Tveite (2002:151) analyzes the Livonian object case alternation as he telicity, closed-open situations, polarity, individuation of the object, realis-irrealis', as in (3) and (4).

(3)  jo      se um    juvvõ    tüödõ    min  jūs tiend
     because it be.3sg good.par work.par I.gen by do.2part
     'because she has done good work with me'

(4)  ta   um      ÿd           itt  jõva     tüö        min  jūrõ tiend
     she be.3sg    one.acc      emph good.acc work.acc I.gen to   do.2part
     'she has done something good to me'          (Livonian, Tveite 2004:59)

Partitive object case is an instance of cross-categorial case, since it encodes TAM semantics, but the semantics has peculiarities that are specific to the Finnic categories only, e.g., selectional constraints on the verbs that partitive-marked objects occur with. The semantics of these TAM markers in Finnic differs from the TAM markers that are not (originally) case markers, such as prefixes, which are not selective in the same way and which modify the verb meaning differently. Also, the progressive in example (1) differs from the prototypical progressives in terms of its selection restrictions; to produce the progressive continuous reading, the verb should preferably be static and the subject typically inanimate in Estonian (Metslang 1994).

This contribution targets the role of the *m*-formative forms (action nominals, non-finite verbs) in the TAM meaning. Are there any regularities in the TAM that can be read off the type of the form that the case attaches? The data are poorly tested still; note that the Karelian "partitive infinitives" are not infinitives, since they can be modified by an adjective that agrees with them in case (5).

(5)  Suurdu        keittämiä       pada          musteni.
     big.ptv       cook-m_ptv      pot[nom]      blacken-3s.pst
     'Intensive cooking made the pot turn black.' (Karelian)

Preliminary results show that the combinations with action nouns and infinitives are surprisingly similar, which may be attributed to the origin of the infinitives as action nominals.

Tentatively we propose that cross-categorial case is a morpheme (or a part of a morpheme that has been a case diachronically), marking an argument or a predicate, either predicate nominal, a non-finite verb, a verb root or an inflected verb. It marks an argument noun as well as entities of a different syntactic category (adposition, verb, adjective), a clause, or a different semantic predicate (a noun, an adjective or a verb), but crucially its characteristic is that it encodes typical predicate or utterance level semantics or it links clauses.