Telicity and the Object Case

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore through the framework of cognitive linguistics how the genitive and partitive cases in the grammatical object can construe telicity of a situation. These grammatical cases can signal telicity either directly through the correlation between a semantic GOAL and a telic point of culmination, or indirectly through a sense of indefiniteness through referential targeting and grounding. None of the languages explored are exclusive as regards one strategy or another; both strategies exist side by side.

Keywords: case, cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, differentiated object marking (DOM), object, telicity
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<thead>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
<td>First person</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Second person</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Third person</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABL</td>
<td>Ablative case</td>
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<td>ABS</td>
<td>Absolutive case</td>
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<td>ACC</td>
<td>Accusative case</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Active voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONV</td>
<td>Converb</td>
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<td>DAT</td>
<td>Dative case</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>Definite</td>
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<td>DEP</td>
<td>Dependent form</td>
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<td>DIR</td>
<td>Direct case</td>
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<td>DOM</td>
<td>Differentiated object marking</td>
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<td>DSM</td>
<td>Differentiated subject marking</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEN</td>
<td>Genitive case</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMP</td>
<td>Imperative mood</td>
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<td>IMIYA</td>
<td>-ImlyaA converb</td>
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<td>IPF</td>
<td>Imperfect tense</td>
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<td>INE</td>
<td>Inessive case</td>
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<td>LEN</td>
<td>Lenition mutation</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Masculine gender</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Neutral gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>Negation</td>
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<td>NOM</td>
<td>Nominative case</td>
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<td>NP</td>
<td>Noun phrase</td>
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<td>OBL</td>
<td>Oblique case</td>
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<td>PART</td>
<td>Partitive case</td>
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<td>PFV</td>
<td>Perfective aspect</td>
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<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural number</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>Past participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRES</td>
<td>Present tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRP</td>
<td>Present participle</td>
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<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>Past tense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Question particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SG</td>
<td>Singular number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Verbal stem</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRA</td>
<td>Transitive auxiliary</td>
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<td>VN</td>
<td>Verbal noun</td>
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1. Introduction and purpose

The aim of this paper is to describe how the semantics of the genitive and partitive case in a grammatical object affect the interpretations of telicity in a situation, presented within the framework of cognitive linguistics; this study is in other words a semantic analysis based on typological data.

Although there has been some research done on how the partitive and partitive-like cases affect the telicity of situations, most noteworthy being that of Krifka (1992) and Kiparsky (1998), the underlying semantics are not as well-documented, particularly not within cognitive linguistics. As such, the purpose of this thesis is to analyze and explain how grammatical object cases correlate to perfectivity and telicity, more precisely how SOURCE-profiled cases are used to infer atelicity and GOAL-profiled cases to suggest telicity in a situation.

Not all languages allow for this manner of case distinction, and so this study primarily focuses on the Finno-Ugric and Balto-Slavic languages, where this phenomenon is both common and consistent. Other languages will feature as well, as will other cases whose function are similar to those of the genitive and partitive case when they occur in the grammatical object. These languages and cases will not be covered to any greater extent however, as it would be well outside the scope of this thesis to address them all in the proper and thorough manner that they warrant.

The questions being treated in this thesis fall within the following:

- Are there grammatical cases that code for telicity?
- How common are these cases typologically?
- Can these cases be semantically justified?
- How do the semantics of the grammatical object affect the semantics of the situation’s verb?

This work is far from exhaustive, but there are general guidelines that can be established to allow for a fair prediction regarding grammatical case and telicity, as this thesis will
show. I will demonstrate how conceptual metaphor\(^1\) can be used to demonstrate how locationality and spatiality correspond to situational phases (i.e. the initiation, process and result of an event) as well as definiteness and boundedness of noun phrases. I will also address potential objections to the analysis wherever relevant.

The main body of data for this thesis has been provided by The Oxford Handbook of Case (Malchukov and Spencer 2009), but a large number of other sources have also been consulted. Where there is no source given, examples are to be interpreted as my original constructions, primarily regarding Finnish but also French and Irish.

1.1 Telicity and perfectivity
Telicity, which concerns the completion of the action, is a feature associated with aspectuality. It intricately relates to perfectivity, and in many languages telicity is mostly out of focus in imperfective situations. Telic situations convey the notion that the action at hand reaches an endpoint or a point of culmination after which it cannot be further exercised; that is to say, telic events cannot be said to be resumed, only repeated. Conversely, as Radden and Dirven (2007:180) put it: “atelic events can only be said to be stopped, not finished in the sense of completed”, which holds since atelic events do not have a definite endpoint.

Since this study revolves around telicity, it would apt to first consider the inherent telicity of various situation types. These were originally proposed by Vendler (1967), who argued for four major categories: states, activities, achievements and accomplishments. Their parameters are provided for in Table 1 (based on Table 18.3 in Evans and Green (2006:631)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation type</th>
<th>Static/dynamic</th>
<th>Durative/punctual</th>
<th>Telic/atelic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>static</td>
<td>durative</td>
<td>atelic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>activity</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>durative</td>
<td>atelic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievement</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>punctual</td>
<td>telic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accomplishment</td>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>durative</td>
<td>telic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) The notion of conceptual metaphor was first explored in detail by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and further investigated by Lakoff (1987).
• States concern situations that are unchanging, lengthy and without any natural point of culmination, such as ‘to know’, ‘to live’ and ‘to be’.

• Activities deal with ongoing processes such as ‘to work’, ‘to run’, or ‘to eat’, and they are, unless some goal is specified through other grammatical elements, assumed to be atelic.

• Achievements are events that transpire after an implied “build-up” phase, such as with the verb ‘to die’, which assumes a preceding period of time when the subject was dying. Since such situations focus on the consummation of the event, they are intrinsically telic and punctual.

• Accomplishments are events similar to activities, but with a pronounced endpoint, such as ‘to eat a sandwich’ or ‘to run a marathon’, and are therefore telic.

In addition to Vendler’s four situation types, there is also a situation type called acts, which deal with punctual, atelic and dynamic events such as ‘to cough’, ‘to hit’ or ‘to blink’; unlike achievements, which are similar in regards to the parameters mentioned, acts do not entail a pre-existing build-up leading towards the realization of the event.

As demonstrated by the difference between accomplishments and activities, the situation type of any event can be changed through various means, and so it is necessary to consider the endpoint of an event and know whether it is capable of being either telic or atelic; we can call this feature ambitelicty, which contrasts with inherently telic events, such as ‘to find [something/someone]’ or ‘to finish [doing something]’, and inherently atelic events, such as ‘to look for [something/someone]’. Verbs such as ‘to run’, ‘to eat’ or ‘to sing’ are ambitelic for instance; they are primarily construed as atelic on their own, i.e. when used intransitively, but they can also be construed as telic if the semantics of the direct object define some of the semantic properties of the verb; I will explain this function in section 4. As this study will show, ambitelicity is a pervasive phenomenon in the world’s languages.

Another study related to Vendler’s has been done by Croft (2012), who distinguishes between incremental themes and transitional themes, drawing on earlier

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2 Hakulinen et al. (2004) refers to this phenomenon as quasi-resultativity (fi. kvasiresultaivisuus); the term which I’ve proposed indicates the same thing.
works by Dowty (1991) and Krifka (1989). Both of these themes have four distinctions, termed MEREOLOGICAL, which concerns a transformation of parts of an argument, PROPERTY, which deals with change in the subject itself, HOLISTIC or PATH, which concerns movement or development, and REPRESENTATION-SOURCE, in which the progress lies in the representation, mental or physical, of the source. Incremental themes concern partial and progressive activity, while transitional themes concern sudden or culminating change; a few examples in English to demonstrate these themes are given in table 2 below, using the material found in Croft (2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Examples of incremental and transitional themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incremental theme</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEREOLOGICAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>PROPERTY</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOLISTIC/PATH</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>REPRESENTATION-SOURCE</td>
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</table>

As I’ve mentioned earlier, telicity is related to but not inseparable from perfectivity. Comrie (1976:18) issues the following definition, one worth keeping in mind:

*The perfective does indeed denote a complete situation, with beginning, middle, and end. The use of ‘completed’ however, puts too much emphasis on the termination on the situation, whereas the use of the perfective puts no more emphasis, necessarily, on the end of the situation than on any other part of the situation, rather all parts of the situation are presented as a single whole.*

Comrie also mentions that “completedness is at best only one of the possible meanings of a perfective form, certainly not its defining feature” (Comrie 1976:19); in other words, while telicity and perfectivity are distinct, perfectivity has a higher inclination towards telicity than imperfectivity has. A notable exception is Serbo-Croat (Browne
1993:370), where the genitive case is predominantly used with perfective verbs, with the exception for the imperfective verb *imati*, ‘to have’, which also places its object in the genitive case.

Another way of considering imperfective and perfective events is through viewing frames. Perfective events are considered with an external view, where the situation is viewed from the outside, with the beginning and end mentally visible; this is commonly the case with past episodes which are remembered as a whole, and future events which are anticipated as a complete (but not completed) episode. Imperfective events on the other hand are considered with an internal view, where the beginning and end are only implicit, as is the case with present events, where the beginning of the event lies in the past and the termination in the future. Past and future events can be viewed with an internal view as well, but present events viewed externally are very rare. States are given either an internal view and seen through a restricted viewing frame, if they are thought of as temporary with an implicit point of termination, or an infinite view, seen through a maximal viewing frame, if they are imagined to be lasting and thus lacking a conceived terminative point in time. These three time schemas are reproduced here from the original outline in Radden and Dirven (2007:178):

![Figure 1: Viewing frames and viewpoints](image)

Evans and Green (2006) offer a view somewhat different from Comrie’s (1976), maintaining that in order to be perfective, a situation would have to be telic; that is to say, there are no atelic, perfective situations. The following is a quote from Evans and Green (2006:695) on perfectivity and telicity:
Recalling Vendler’s situation type taxonomy (Table 18.3), it is clear that the perfective process is necessarily telic, because bounded events entail an endpoint, and necessarily dynamic, because perfective processes involve internal change. While some perfective processes (e.g. sneeze) are punctual, others are extended or ‘durative’ (e.g. build).

This is not entirely true; even atelic processes can be stopped prematurely to yield a perfective event. From the above explanation, we are provided with two options: one would have to subscribe either to the idea that all actions must be telicized, i.e. made telic, to be perfective, or to the idea that an event can be both atelic and perfective. If Evans and Green’s definition were true, then we would be unable to see atelic verbs in perfective contexts. Examples (1) and (2) describe contrarian perfectivity-telicity relations in French:

French:
(1)  
_\text{J}'ai \text{cherché} \ l'\text{interrupteur} \ \text{mais}
I-have/1SG look.for/PP the.switch but
_\text{je} \ \text{ne} \ \text{pouvais} \ \text{pas} \ \text{le} \ \text{trouver.}
I NEG can/IPF NEG it find
‘I looked for the light switch, but I couldn’t find it.’ (Atelic/perfective)

(2)  
_\text{Je finissais} \ \text{mon} \ \text{livre} \ \text{quand} \ \text{elle} \ \text{est} \ \text{soudainement} \ \text{arrivée.}
I finish/IPF my/M book when she is suddenly arrive/PP
‘I was finishing my book when she suddenly arrived.’ (Telic/imperative)

As we can see here, Comrie’s definition - that completeness is not a criterion for perfectivity - appears more solid than Evans and Green’s definition. For more examples of the perfectivity-telicity interplay, chapter 8 of Radden and Dirven (2007:175-99) is an ample source.
1.2 Profiles and domains

There are a few linguistic notions that will be of particular importance when dealing with the semantics in this thesis, namely that of profiles and domains.

A similar concept to bases and profiles is that of figures and grounds, working on principles in gestalt psychology (Rubin 1915 being particularly noteworthy for his work on figure-ground perception) and relates to attention rather than to conceptualization; the figure is the salient, attention-getting entity which “stands out” against the ground, such as a piece of text or a picture (figure) on a white page (ground). I will not go into it in any detail here, but I will elaborate on the idea of attention in the analysis.

Profiles and bases are explained by Langacker (2009:7) in the following wording. The bold print utilized by Langacker to emphasize key words has been retained here for the same reason.

Every expression evokes some conception - simple or complex - as the basis for its meaning. Within its conceptual base, an expression singles out a particular substructure as a kind of focus of attention. This substructure, called the profile, is the one the expression designates (its conceptual referent).

Taylor (2002:192-93) uses the concept of a hypotenuse as an example of the profile-base distinction\(^3\). The hypotenuse is the longest side of a right-angled triangle, the side opposite the right angle. In this description, attention is given to the hypotenuse, which thereby serves as the profile, set against the base derived from the triangle; one way to look at it is that it is not possible to define a hypotenuse without also mentioning the base against which it stands out. In other words, if one does not know what a triangle is or aware that there is one against which the hypotenuse can be distinguished, then the hypotenuse cannot be explained; profiles always operate in the relational sense of “the profile of what/which?”

Taylor also issues a caveat against likening the profile to a referent or referring expression, and explains that all things and relations can be profiled. In relevance to this work, it can be mentioned that verbs profile processes and temporal relations,

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\(^3\) This hypotenuse example has also been used by Langacker (1988:59) as well as Fillmore (1985)
prepositions profile atemporal relations, and clauses profile events and situations. Profiles do more than just refer to certain entities.

While the base serves as an inherent and necessary background invoked by the expression, the domain is a more generalized configuration of background knowledge used to enable conceptualization. Although everything is abstract when dealing with concepts, domains are arguably even more abstract than are bases. Using the triangle-hypotenuse example, the concepts of [TRIANGLE], [HYPOTENUSE], [RIGHT-ANGLE] and [STRAIGHT LINE] all have something in common: they each profile a certain kind of planar geometry and so they belong to the conceptual domain of planar geometry.

Another example is the concept of [FATHER]; to be a father, you need to be the father to someone (the kinship relation between the father and his children would constitute a base), but there are other concepts such as [AUNT], [MOTHER], [SISTER] and so on with which it has some commonality. These concepts are all parts of the domain of kinship (terms such as father, mother, brother and so forth are indeed referred to as kinship terms).

One very salient domain is the domain of space. Every conceivable entity occupies space in either a literal sense, such as a car parked in the street for instance, or a metaphorical one, such as having thoughts in one’s head. In extension, even an intangible thing as time can be thought of in spatial terms; one might think of one event occurring before another and as such occupying an anterior position on a timeline. The famous “arrow of time” example (that time travels in one direction from the past into the future via the present) is explained in a spatial sense and even everyday conversations about time use space in the discourse; expressions like ‘I’ll be home at five’, or ‘come see me when you’re done’ are perfectly ordinary sentences that use spatial terms to explain points in time. For the analysis of the grammatical cases in this thesis, I’ve chosen to adopt a spatial view of them, as the cases have a very real spatial sense about them, as will be evident in the data and analysis.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) described, using everyday examples, how the understanding of one conceptual domain can be used to understand another. This theory, called conceptual metaphor, has provided insight in how different ideas and concept interact with each other on a grander scale. A famous conceptual metaphor is LIFE IS A

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4 First popularized by Eddington (1928:68-75)
JOURNEY (conceptual metaphors are by convention expressed in small caps), which allows us to liken the stages of life to the stages of a journey, as in “I walked carelessly through life”, while another conceptual metaphor like STATES ARE LOCATIONS explains the locationality in stative constructions such as “the lights went from green to red” or “he slipped into a coma”.

Another concept in linguistics featured in this thesis is that of frames, through which the interplay between parts and wholes in partitive and habitive constructions will be explained. Frames can be thought of as “packets of knowledge” regarding an entity of some sort. For example, when we speak of cars, we can refer to parts of cars, like engines, tires, windscreen and so on, what cars are used for and what you can do with them, such as the transportation of people or goods, as well as anything which concerns cars, like rallying, the automotive industry, car enthusiasts, parking lots, etc. A more thorough but no less accessible account of frames (sometimes referred to as semantic or conceptual frames) is given by Evans and Greens (2006:222-230).

1.3 Definiteness and specificity
Before going over definiteness, it might be useful to familiarize oneself with the origin of the cases featured in this paper. Heine and Kuteva (2002) explored the diachronic development of certain functions from various “ancestral” cases; I have recreated, from their original illustration, the two pathways relevant to this thesis below, that is, the ablative development of the genitive (which commonly exhibits possessive, material, partitive and comparative functions as will be shown in section 3.1) and partitive cases, as well as the allative development of the accusative (which has a patient-like function, among others).

- Ablative > agent, material, comparative, partitive, possessive
- Allative > dative, patient, purpose, temporal, benefactive

This diachronic change speaks a great deal about the underlying semantics of various cases, since the original functions of an earlier case can be assumed to be retained in its derived cases, unless these functions for one reason or another have disappeared over
time. This illustration serves to provide a general line of demarcation between various cases, as the analysis will show.

The level of specificity, definiteness and individuation varies between the “ablative” and “allative” cases. The ablative-derived cases tend to signal low individuation, as opposed to the much more individualizing accusative case; the partitive case in particular tends to display low individualization, often indefiniteness, as is especially true for the Basque partitive, which is always indefinite (de Rijk 2008:289). This agrees to a high degree with Hopper and Thompson’s (1980) transitivity parameters, which show how both low individualization and low telicity co-occur with (though not necessarily correlate to) low transitivity.

The lack of individuation also applies when an object is in the plural. As a number of entities increases, ‘entities’ referring to both inanimate and animate objects, our ability to conceive each separate entity diminishes, and after a while they all become one mass of objects; an analogy of this is when we stop counting cars on the freeway and decide to settle for an mass of vehicles which we refer to as “traffic”. In other words, count nouns behave more like mass nouns when in the plural.

This phenomenon is known in gestalt psychology as the principle of proximity (Gray 2006:281) and this psychological principle is reflected in language, notably regarding which adverbials these nouns are compatible with; adverbials compatible with mass nouns are also compatible with many plural count nouns, although not with singular ones. This relation is illustrated in table 3 below, recreated from Radden and Dirven (2007:68), and though these examples are in English, this relation is found in other languages as well (for instance, French allows phrases like un défaut d’ouvriers, ‘a shortage of workers’ and un défaut d’ouvrage, ‘a shortage of labor’, but not *un défaut d’ouvrier, ‘a shortage of worker’).
Table 3: The grammatical similarity between plural count nouns and mass nouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular count nouns</th>
<th>Plural count nouns</th>
<th>Mass nouns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bounded adverbials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole car</td>
<td>*The whole cars</td>
<td>*The whole traffic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day in, day out</td>
<td>*Days in, days out</td>
<td>*Time in, time out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a bus</td>
<td>*Take buses</td>
<td>*Take transport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbounded adverbials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Full of car</td>
<td>Full of cars</td>
<td>Full of traffic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*A shortage of worker</td>
<td>A shortage of workers</td>
<td>A shortage of labor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Collect a coin</td>
<td>Collect coins</td>
<td>Collect money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definiteness plays into this theory as well; a plural number in the definite retains its individuation. As these examples (3a) and (3b) demonstrate, the partitive case makes a noun behave more like a mass noun than a count noun; this can be exemplified through Finnish. Note that the word order in Finnish is rather free, and that the syntactic variation between (3a) and (3b) here is more of a convention than a requirement.

Finnish:
(3a)  Onko täällä auto-ja?
      is-Q here car-PART/PL
   ‘Are there (any) cars here?’ (Indefinite amount; possibly infinite in number)

(3b)  Onko auto-t täällä?
      is-Q car-NOM/PL here
   ‘Are the cars here?’ (Definite amount; delimited number)

There are two primary semantic components\(^5\) that seem to trigger interpretation of limitlessness: indefiniteness and deindividuation. Plural indefinite count nouns, as well as indefinite mass nouns, are generally those that induce this interpretation. The underlying semantics concerning limitlessness (that is, without any grammatical influences such as case marking or inherent verbal telicity) can be explained as the result of either of two factors:

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\(^5\) For an accessible explanation of semantic components, see Saeed (2009:260)
• The noun is a count noun, which is plural, definite and/or specific, or
• The noun is a mass noun, which is definite and/or specific

This explanation takes into account specificity as well as definiteness, since specificity disrupts the entire process of deindividuation that unbounded entities undergo. Since specific referents are assumed to be grounded in reality, whether concretely or metaphorically, they are subsequently assumed to be of a limited amount. Consider the following two examples in English:

(4a) He ate some food before leaving.
(4b) He ate his brother’s food before leaving.

While it is clear that the food in (4a) is of an indefinite amount and as such semantically unbounded, we do not need a definite article in (4b) to know that the food is a bounded entity; the food belongs to someone, and in being specific, it is also assumed to be of a finite amount or magnitude and in extension bounded.

1.4 Innate telicity and the object case
One question that comes to mind when dealing with telicity as construed through object case is how it interacts with verbs that have inherently telic meaning. While not all languages have synthetic, inherently telic verbs like the Swedish dricka upp ‘to finish [drinking]’ or the corresponding German austrinken, a great deal of languages have the option of using verbs like ‘to finish’ or ‘to stop’ to a similar, albeit to a somewhat more ambitelic, effect.

A cogent example can be rendered in Swedish, based on examples (4a) and (4b), demonstrating how innate telicity, here with the verb att äta upp, ‘to consume [completely]’ cooperates with the bounded, specific object, but not equally well with an unbounded, unspecific and indefinite one.

(5a) Han åt upp lite mat innan han gick.
he consume/PST some food before he leave/PST
‘He finished some food before leaving.’
As (5a) shows, the telic verb *att äta upp* is here used in a rather unwieldy, but conceivable sentence; the effect of indefiniteness is that imposes atelicity on the situation, even when paired with a telic verb such as this; even if that part of food is consumed entirely, there is still, implicitly, more food to be consumed, and thus the point of culmination or *telos*, i.e. that all of the food has been consumed, is not yet reached.

It seems then that unbounded grammatical objects, i.e. those that do not have definite boundaries and thus cannot be or at the very least resists being individuated, “override” the telicity of the verb, as in examples (5a) and (5b) above and example (6) below.

Swedish:

(6)  *Jag läste ut några böcker igår.*  

*I read out a few book yesterday.*

One striking difference here is that mass nouns sound odd when used as grammatical objects to telic verbs, while plural count nouns, capable of being individuated, allow a combination with telic verbs, which often yields a reiterative reading, i.e. doing something again and again.

1.5 Previous inquiries

Krifka (1992) and Kiparsky (1998) have both looked into the relationship between object case and telicity in Finnish, and to date, their inquiries make up the standard body of research in the subject. There are some things I am going to add to their arguments, presented in the analysis in section 4.3.

Telicity has also been analyzed by Croft (2012:79-83). Much like Krifka (1992), he mentions that unbounded nouns carry an atelic construal, but provides no further
analysis into the matter. “...Of course, telicity - the existence of a result state on the $q$ dimension$^6$ - is a property of a construal of an event; for example, the mereological incremental theme of write (a letter) would not have a telic construal if it were in the Bare Plural construction (write letters)” (Croft 2012:79).

While the connection between the genitive object and atelic verbs is well documented in Slavic linguistics (Ambrazas 1997 for Lithuanian, Browne 1993 for Serbo-Croat and Timberlake 2004 for Russian to name a few examples), no real analysis has been done on the connection itself; Malchukov and Kittilä (2009) have noticed a parallel between the Russian genitive and Finnish partitive case in grammatical objects, but the study doesn’t delve any further into the topic.

Ramchand (1997) have provided an analysis of Scots-Gaelic, correlating the periphrastic, genitival object construction to atelicity and the simple form to telicity in the past tense. The ideas that her work provides have been useful, though the correlation between the genitive case and atelicity have ultimately proven irrelevant for this thesis; telicity is not determined in Scots-Gaelic through object case alone, but also requires syntactic variations in order to be valid. The following four examples illustrate this construction:

Scots-Gaelic (Ramchand 1997:37-8):

(7a) Bha Calum a’ faicinn na craoibhe
    be/PST Calum at see/VN the tree/GEN
    ‘Calum was seeing the tree.’ (Atelic)

(7b) *Bha Calum a’ faicinn a’ chraobh
    be/PST Calum at see/VN the tree/DIR
    ‘Calum was seeing the tree.’

(7c) Chunnaic Calum a’ chraobh
    see/PST Calum the tree/DIR
    ‘Calum saw the tree.’ (Telic)

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$^6$ Croft (2012) defines an event as a progression of successive, qualitative stages or states (q) over time (t); the phrase ‘q dimension’ in the quote refers to the former of these factors.
While one might easily equate these constructions with the English progressive, they do not fill the same function, as Ramchand argues, as they deal with telicity rather than perfectivity. Certain verbs, such as ciallaich, ‘to mean’, smaoinich, ‘to think’ or creid, ‘to believe’ would in English be ungrammatical with the progressive aspect in most contexts (cf. the English *I am meaning that…), but are common, even required in certain tenses, in the periphrastic forms of Scots-Gaelic.

Kratzer’s (2002) article delves deeper into the telicity of German by drawing on some parallels with Russian (a similar inquiry has been made by Filip (2000) for Russian). This study, like that of Filip’s, primarily deals with the verbal form, with prefixes in particular, rather than the grammatical object case. The reason for this is due to the lack of variation in differentiated object case marking in German, as the accusative case is the only direct object case found in the language. That said, Kratzer’s views that telic events progress towards a culmination are no less relevant when dealing with definiteness-telicity.

2. Data sources and research method

In this section I will account for my methods of data collection and analysis.

2.1 Collection of data

The predominant work in providing data is Malchukov and Spencer’s (2009) The Oxford Handbook of Case. While the work itself hasn’t made any major contribution to the data, it does point to secondary sources from which more concrete examples can be borrowed. The work also provides a typological sketch of grammatical case, which gives a general idea of what cases around the world look like and how they function. Another useful source of information is provided by Iggesen (2013) and Comrie (2013), in their typological overviews, which has given me an overview of which languages
have a significant distribution of grammatical cases, which became particularly clear when the data of both works were cross-referenced. As I mentioned in the introduction, the study primarily focuses on the genitive and partitive cases in the Balto-Slavic and Balto-Fennic languages respectively, and so peripheral data from other languages were not as rigorously investigated, but the surveys of grammatical cases done by Comrie and Iggesen are no doubt useful for future inquiries into case telicity.

A large collection of grammars, primarily of languages from the major language families, were subsequently surveyed for telic functions in grammatical case. Particularly worthwhile are the grammatical compilations put forth by Routledge, which has saved me from the trouble of having to manually look through every grammar I could find for clues to case functions relevant to this work. The compilations of editors Abondolo (1998), Comrie and Corbett (1993), and Johanson and Csató (1998) bear notable mention here, as the grammars involved in their work most closely relates to this thesis.

In these volumes, as well as in the Oxford Handbook of Case, the primary keywords I checked were *accusative, aspect, case polysemy, definiteness, direct object, genitive, partitive*, and where available, *telicity*. I also checked registers for topics relevant to this study, such as *case syncretism, polyfunctionality, case anomaly*,7 *DOM* and *DSM*, as these topics could provide more direction and/or data for this thesis.

It is necessary when compiling data in this manner to scrutinize grammatical cases for what they are; the terminology might differ from one grammar to another, and certain linguistic traditions might prefer one term over one more commonly employed in a different tradition, and so it is necessary to understand the functions of each case in order to establish which case one is actually dealing with. Another thing to keep in mind is that functions of different cases vary between languages, and so it is imperative to properly look at the grammatical cases in each language to ascertain whether or not they are relevant to the study.

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7 Case anomaly is a phenomenon where case marking varies depending on the syntactic structure; for instance, in Ik (König 2002), the subject/agent is marked with the OBL in imperative and cohortative clauses if it follows the verb, but with the NOM if it precedes the verb.
A good deal of grammars I consulted have been omitted from the data section, the reasons for which being a lack of the differentiated object marking\(^8\) (DOM) that I’ve been focusing on, or their sharing a differentiation with other languages which better illustrate the dichotomy. This omission includes many languages in Africa, the Americas and the Pacific Ocean where case marking is rather sparse (as shown by Iggesen 2013) or the object tends to have a designated, undifferentiated case with any definiteness being conveyed separately through its own dedicated markers. There are however a few languages in Africa and the Americas that were considered, notably Amharic (Gasser 1983) and Quechua (Weber 1996), even if they ultimately did not warrant further mention due to the reasons previously named.

2.2 Research Method and Analysis

After having compiled the data, I began looking at common semantic denominators in order to establish the typological functionality (comparing the functions of each case from one language to another; these functions are described in section 3) and thereby determine what their underlying semantics might look like. The criteria I was looking at are:

- What are the functions of the cases and how are the cases used?
- How do they differ from other cases?
- How are they marked?

The functions of the cases and how they are used in different languages is the first step to consider in order to identify the underlying, basic semantics. The second step is to look at how they correlate to other cases, to see whether there is some form of functional overlay between them, and to explore whether there are any distinctions where one case is used in one situation (for example the accusative case for definite noun phrases) and another in an opposite condition (the genitive case for indefinite noun phrases, for instance).

\(^8\) Differentiated object marking, or DOM, refers to the notion that a difference in case marking in the direct object corresponds to a difference in function. For a more in-depth discussion on this topic, see Malchukov and De Swart (2009).
It is also important to look at how cases are morphosyntactically marked in different circumstances, so that one does not reach faulty conclusions because of, say, case syncretism⁹; a good example is the genitive-accusative case, or n-accusative, in Finnish, which is identical to the genitive case in singular nouns, but different from it in plural nouns and pronouns in both numbers (in the former coinciding with the nominative plural, in the latter having a unique form; the accusative form in those instances is commonly called the t-accusative. Karlsson 2008:158-64 explains this distinction more in-depth). In other words, just because the cases look alike, it does not necessarily mean that they are one and the same.

After having determined which cases share the same functions, the next step was to consider what their semantics are to establish a common denominator. Looking at their functions alone does not suffice, given the difference between the cases, so a more in-depth look at different semantic factors is warranted.

The parameter that seems to be most valid is that of spatiality, since it is a basic domain to which all things belong (to a varying metaphorical degree), and since other domains or functions seemed to lack any meaning or construal that they share across the board. For instance, the accusative case is an argument case found primarily with grammatical objects, while the genitive generally isn’t; conversely, the genitive case is typically an attributive case used for modifying other nouns, whereas the accusative case isn’t. One theoretical base that provided some aid in this was the localist view (Anderson 1971 and 2009; Hjelmslev 1972), which analyzes semantics in terms of location and movement, and since this theory is compatible, or at least not conflictive, with the cognitive theories I’ve also utilized, it has proven a useful aid in decoding the semantic processes of case telicity.

Having looked into these factors, I was faced with different considerations to take into account when analyzing the cases, all of which are accounted for in the analysis section, i.e. section 4, below.

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⁹ Case syncretism is when two different grammatical cases share the same case marking. This is exemplified and explained in more detail by Baerman (2009).
3. Data

There exists a number of grammatical cases used to signal indefiniteness and in extension atelicity, as well as a number of contrasting cases that mark for the opposite. As mentioned, this thesis focuses on the genitive and partitive cases, although there are similar DOM functions to be found around the world in the ablative case in languages like Ik (König 2002 and 2009), Mordva (Zaicz 1998) and Tuvan (Harrison 2000), in the instrumental case in languages like West Greenlandic (Fortescue 1984) and Yup’ik (Jakobson 1995), and in the nominative case in such languages as Udmurt (Suihkonen 1995 and Csúcs 1998) and Tamil (Annamalai and Steever 1998). A quick illustration of these cases is given in examples (8a-c), (9a-b) and (10a-b) respectively.

Ik (König 2009:738):
(8a) *Ma-i-à bi-e lot(ɔ)ba-o.*
give-1SG-a you-DAT tobacco-ABL
‘I gave you some [of the] tobacco.’

Mordva (Zaicz 1998:208):
(8b) *Jars-an jam-do, s'ım-an vedl-₁e.*
eat-1SG/PRES soup-ABL drink-1SG/PRES water-ABL
‘I eat soup, I drink water.’

Tuvan (Harrison 2000:23):
(8c) *Šay-dan iżer men.*
tea-ABL drink/PFV 1SG
‘I’ll drink some (of the) tea.’

The ablative case is highly multifunctional in Ik, filling most of the ablative-derived functions outlined by Heine and Kuteva (2002). It designates a partitive object while other direct objects, whether they are indefinite or not, are expressed through the oblique case. In Mordva, the ablative case is used for indivisible objects, i.e. mass nouns; divisible, countable objects are expressed in the accusative case (and occasionally in the
inessive case). Tuvan uses the ablative case for partitive functions, but also uses the nominative for indefinite objects; both these cases are differentiated against the accusative case for definite objects.

**West Greenlandic (Fortescue 1984:84-6):**

(9a)  
\[ \text{Mattam-mik niri-ggu-aa} \]
\[ \text{mattak-INSTR eat-ask.to-3SG/3SG/IND} \]
\[ \text{‘He asked him to eat some mattak.’} \]

**Yup’ik (Jacobson 1995:121):**

(9b)  
\[ \text{Arnaq tanger-tuq mikelngurnek.} \]
\[ \text{woman/ABS see-3SG child/PL/INSTR} \]
\[ \text{‘The woman sees (some) children.’} \]

Yup’ik, like other Eskimo-Aleut languages, uses the instrumental case (called the ablative-modalis by Jacobson, a case filling both ablative and instrumental functions) for partitivity. Since it is an ergative language, the subject case varies depending on the transitivity of the clause; it is placed in the absolutive case in intransitive clauses (or, as we can see in (9b), transitive clauses with indefinite objects), and in the relative case in transitive clauses with a definite object (the object is posed here in the absolutive case).

**Udmurt (Csúcs 1998:297):**

(10a)  
\[ \text{Vumurt so abî-li šote majtal-ø.} \]
\[ \text{water-spirit that woman-DAT give/3SG soap-NOM} \]
\[ \text{‘The water-spirit gives that old woman (some) soap.’} \]

**Tamil (Annamalai and Steever 1998:105-7):**

(10b)  
\[ \text{Avag oru pustakam vānk-iŋ-āŋ.} \]
\[ \text{that.man/NOM one book/NOM buy-PAST-3SG/M} \]
\[ \text{‘That man bought a book.’} \]
In Dravidian languages like Tamil, the object is necessarily inanimate; animate objects always take the accusative case. As such, the nominative is rather anomalous semantically, since it differentiates between nouns which apart from animacy do not radically differ.

Unless otherwise mentioned, the genitive and partitive case is countered by the accusative case. For this reason, I’ve decided to not dedicate a whole subsection to these contrasts.

3.1 The genitive case
While the prototypical function of the genitive case is to mark for possession, it also occupies other functions that correspond to appurtenance; a general outline of functions found in genitive phrases includes the following:

- Description of a noun
- Negation
- Part of whole/partitive

Apart from these functions, many languages featuring the genitive case (Arabic (Ryding 2005), Russian (Timberlake 2004) and Turkish (Göksel and Kerslake 2005) to name a handful) use it in adpositional, numerical phrases and phrases of proportion, e.g. “some”, “half” or “all” to varying degrees, but since these phrases borrow their semantics from modifying elements, such as prepositions or numbers, and not from the semantics of the case itself, I will not give these functions any attention.

The descriptive function of the genitive is similar to the possessive function; it marks that the noun modified by the genitive pertains to the genitival noun, for instance in “the mayor of New York” or “the choirs of Vienna”; the modified nouns can be said to belong or pertain to the domain or frame of the genitive noun. Both the possessive and the descriptive function can be thought of as part-of-whole relations, though not exactly in the same sense of the partitive function, since they work on the assumption of a frame or domain whereas the partitive function operates on the notion of describing a portion of a set, which includes all possible entities of the sort designated by the genitival noun. Examples (11a-c) illustrate the descriptive quality of the genitive case.
Irish:

(11a) Tá lá geimhridh inniu.

is day winter/GEN today

‘It is a winter day today (lit. is it a day of winter today).’

(11b) An bhfuil teach adhmaid aige?

Q be/DEP house wood/GEN at/3SG/M

‘Does he own a wooden house (lit. is there a house of wood at him)?’

(11c) Tá fear an siopa ar bhóthar Corcaí.

Is man the/M shop/GEN on road/LEN Cork/GEN

‘The shopkeeper is on the road to Cork (lit. is man of the shop on road of Cork).’

The genitive case, much like the partitive case, is sometimes used in negated sentences. In languages where DOM occurs in negations, the genitive conveys a wide scope of negation, usually the idea that there is a complete lack of something, while the accusative case deals with either targeted negation, i.e. that only certain elements are negated but not all of them, or weakened negation, where the full scope of negation is diminished and so takes an accusative rather than genitive object (Timberlake 2004:322 calls this accusative function the “three-quarter accusative”). It can thus be said that the accusative case is used in negative sentences when the force of negation is undermined in some way. Examples (12a) and (12b) demonstrate the difference between the two cases in negative contexts.

Russian (Timberlake 2004:305 (12a) and 2004:322 (12b)):

(12a) Vsex cennyx zverej raspugali

All/ACC valuable/ACC animals/ACC scare.away/PST/PL sobolej počti ne ostalos’.
sable/GEN/PL almost no remain/PST/N

‘All valuable animals had been frightened off, almost no sables remained.’
(12b)  Svoi  ser'eznye  rešenija  on
        his/ACC/PL  serious/ACC/PL  decisions/ACC  he
        nikogda  ne  menjal.
        never  NEG  change/PST/M

'His serious decisions he never changed.'

The genitive case has a part-of-whole function, utilized well in Russian, and other Slavic languages such as Serbian (Hammond 2005) and Slovene (Derbyshire 1993) use the genitive in a similar fashion. In many of the Slavic languages a genitive object is also called for when dealing with non-culminating events, such as desires and wishes, fear and shame, loss and sufficiency, as well as inquiry and demands; a few examples from Timberlake (2004:317) include uskát', 'to seek, to search for', žgát', 'to await', trébovat', 'to demand', žélát', 'to desire', xotéť, 'to want', boját'zja, 'to fear', uzežát', 'to avoid'.

Timberlake does however mention some clearly telic verbs that take a genitive object, such as gostúč’, ‘to reach’ and gobút’sja, ‘to acquire, to achieve’, but he interprets them in terms of semantic tenuousness, i.e. that they signal “actual contact in the face of possible non-contact” (Timberlake 2004:317); it is possible that this semantic parameter outweighs the atelic nature of the genitive case in these occurrences. Another, atelic, verb, kasát'sja, ‘to touch on, to concern’ also falls within this semantic category, so it seems that this semantic interpretation has primacy over any telic interpretation.

Russian (Timberlake 2004:319):

(13)  Postoj sousa  voz'mi,  skazal  on,  uderživaja  ruku
       stop  sauce/GEN  take/IMP/SG  say/PST/M  he  restrain/PRP  hand
       Levina  kotoryj  ottalkival  ot  sebja  sous.
       Levin/GEN  who  push.away/PST/M  from  self  sauce/ACC

'Hold on, take some sauce, he said, restraining Levin’s hand, who had been pushing the sauce away.'
Here, in example (13), the genitive, indefinite *sousa* contrasts with the accusative *sous*. Russian has various rules regarding the usage of a genitive as opposed to an accusative object (see Timberlake 2004:316-27 for a more thorough account) but the usage presented here, that which Timberlake refers to as the partitive genitive, demonstrates the function of indefiniteness found in the genitive case.

Lithuanian (Ambrazas 1997:504):

(14a) *Išgerti* vándenį.
    drink/IMP water/ACC
    ‘Drink (all) the water.’

(14b) *Išgerti* vandeņs.
    drink/IMP water/GEN
    ‘Drink some water.’

In Lithuanian, the genitive singular is used, as seen in examples (14a) and (14b), when dealing with indefinite mass nouns, and the genitive plural when dealing with indefinite count nouns.

Serbian (Hammond 2005:120):

(15a) *Kupili* smo šećera.
    buy/PP/PL/M/ACT be/1PL sugar/GEN
    ‘We bought [have bought] some sugar.’

Serbian (Hammond 2005:133):

(15b) *Marijan* gleda televiziju.
    Marijan watch/3SG television/ACC
    ‘Marijan is watching TV.’

Serbian uses the genitive only when dealing with objects of an uncountable quantity, i.e. mass nouns, and as such there is no distinction between a genitive object and the default accusative object as far as count nouns are concerned. All in all however, the genitive
case in Serbian behaves much as we would expect of a Slavic language. Slovene, on the other hand, makes a clear distinction between the definite accusative case and the indefinite genitive case, both for mass and count noun.

Slovene (Derbyshire 1993:107):

(16a)  
\[ \text{Dàj } \text{mi } \text{krúha.}\]
\[ \text{give/IMP } \text{me } \text{bread/GEN} \]
\[ \text{‘Give me some bread.’} \]

(16b)  
\[ \text{Dàj } \text{mi } \text{krúh.}\]
\[ \text{give/IMP } \text{me/DAT } \text{bread/ACC} \]
\[ \text{‘Give me the bread.’} \]

3.2 The partitive case

The central function of the partitive case is to display indefiniteness and partitivity (the latter of which is quite obvious) as well as negation when the scope of negation extends over the entire situation, as opposed to simply negating one particular part of the situation, such as the object or predicate. In Finnish, this dichotomy of negation is found primarily in the subject, where there is an alternation between the nominative and the partitive, as illustrated in examples (17a) and (17b), while in Basque, as examples (19a) and (19b) show, the alteration is in the direct object between the partitive and absolutive case.

Finnish:

(17a)  
\[ \text{Turussa } \text{ei } \text{ole } \text{hallitusta.}\]
\[ \text{Turku/INE } \text{NEG/3SG } \text{be/STEM } \text{government/PART} \]
\[ \text{‘There is no government in Turku.’} \]

(17b)  
\[ \text{Hallitus } \text{ei } \text{ole } \text{Turussa.}\]
\[ \text{Government/NOM } \text{NEG/3SG } \text{be/STEM } \text{Turku/INE} \]
\[ \text{‘The government is not in Turku.’} \]
Though the two interpretations seem similar, there is a difference in that the first example suggests a complete lack of government in Turku, while the idea in the second example is that there is a government, but not in Turku. Thus, the first example has a wider scope of negation, while the second example more narrowly denies only the location of the government.

Typologically, the partitive case is rather uncommon, although its function is widespread across the languages of the world, commonly conveyed through analytical constructions. In Europe, only the Balto-Fennic languages and Basque have a dedicated form for this case, and it is used only in the former to convey atelicity.

Finnish:
(18a) Markko luke-e kirja-a olkkari-ssa
Markko read-3SG book-PART living.room-INE
‘Markko is reading a/the book in the living room.’

(18b) Markko luke-e kirja-n olkkari-ssa
Markko read-3SG book-ACC living.room-INE
‘Markko is reading a/the book [in its entirety] in the living room.’

The partitive case is mandatory in Finnish whenever the verb lacks a point of culmination, such as with emotional verbs like rakastaa, ‘to love’ or pelätä, ‘to fear’, and other intrinsically atelic verbs like sataa, ‘to rain’, heiluttaa, ‘to wave’ and etsiä, ‘to look for’. Ambitelic verbs, as in (18a) and (18b), make a distinction between such events, where the object NP is in the partitive case, and events where a point of culmination is reached, where the object NP is in the accusative.

In Basque, the partitive is used rather sporadically, though its core meaning concerns partiality. It is primarily used in negative constructions to negate an indefinite grammatical object, a function which is reminiscent of the Russian genitive (the subject in transitive clauses, de Rijk (2008:292) mentions, is never negated through the partitive, unlike Balto-Fennic languages). Note that in negative sentences in Basque, the absolutive cannot be indefinite.
Basque (de Rijk 2008:292):

(19a) Gaur ez d-u-t txokolate-a erosi
today not 3SG-have-1SG/TRA chocolate-ABS/SG/DEF buy/PFV
‘Today I have not bought the chocolate.’ (Definite)

(19b) Gaur ez d-u-t txokolate-rik erosi
today not 3SG-have-1SG/TRA chocolate-PART buy/PFV
‘Today I have not bought any chocolate.’ (Indefinite)

The partitive in Basque has limited use in affirmative structures. Since definiteness¹⁰ is a grammatical feature separate from case in the Basque language, and the partitive case carries no meaning of telicity, no further mention will be made here.

The partitive in Yakut, a development of the Old Turkic locative case (Johanson 1998:111), designates indefiniteness, primarily in grammatical objects and predominantly with imperatives; for definite nouns, the accusative case is used.

Yakut (Krueger 1962:82):

(20a) Eder atta aɣalŋ
young horse/PART give/IMP
‘Give me a young horse!’

(20b) Üčügey kinigete aayŋ
good book/PART read/IMP
‘Read a good book!’

Yakut also utilizes the nominative case for non-partitive indefinite objects (21a), contrasting with the accusative case used for definite direct objects (21b). An anomaly of this rule is that the accusative case can be used for indefinite, unspecific direct objects as well (21c), which is likely due to language contact, according to Stachowski and Menz (1998:430).

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¹⁰ Basque makes three distinctions of definiteness: the indefinite, the definite singular, and the definite plural.
Yakut (Stachowski and Menz 1998:430):

(21a) Bu sirge beleχ iyāmïya āspattar.

this place/DAT gift hang/IMIYA/CONV pass.by/NEG/PRES/3PL

‘They do not pass without leaving (lit. ‘hanging’) a gift.’

(21b) Kere beleɣ iyātïm.

nice gift/ACC hang/PST/1SG

‘I left a nice gift.’ (Specific)

(21c) Bu fermaya kîrсанï üösketeller.

this farm/DAT polar.fox/ACC breed/PRES/3PL

‘On this farm they breed polar foxes.’

4. Analysis

Based on the data, what can be said about the semantics of the grammatical cases, and how does it correlate to the semantics of telicity? There are two primary distinctions that can be drawn, which I’ve decided to call direct and indirect telicization. Telicization allows both a telic-to-atelic transformation and vice versa; it is generally easier to unbound situations, i.e. render them atelic, than it is to bound them, given the typically larger number of verbs incapable of completion, which include verbs of perception and cognition among others, than verbs which are necessarily telic. The two distinctions can be formulated as follows:
• **Direct telicization:** The case directly carries a function of telicity; a change of case corresponds to a change in telicity. This is not a common phenomenon from a typological standpoint, and is primarily seen in the data regarding the Balto-Fennic languages and to a somewhat more limited extent the Slavic languages.

• **Indirect telicization:** This process, while not frequent in the world’s languages, is more common than direct telicization. The grammatical case encodes definiteness, which in extension can be used to construe telicity. Slavic languages do this with the genitive-accusative distinction, Greenlandic with the instrumental-absolutive distinction, and so on.

Indirect telicization is more limited in the construal of telicity. The data shows that languages with direct telicization are free to regulate telicity regardless of definiteness, while indirect telic languages assume atelicity via indefiniteness, and as such cannot convey atelicity if the object is decidedly definite, barring of course that the verb itself is atelic.

No language investigated in this study has solely direct telicization; even the Balto-Fennic languages, which strongly feature this strategy, display a fair deal of indirect telicization. The distinction in these languages primarily concern plural nouns, as seen in examples (3a) and (3b), given the difficulty to regulate the size and/or number of singular nouns. Conversely, as with Balto-Slavic languages, even languages with a greater propensity to deal with indirect telicization have a fair deal of verbs which require a certain object case depending on the predicate’s telicity; in Lithuanian (Ambrazas 1997:486), atelic verbs like láukti, ‘to wait (for),’ ieškoti, ‘to look (for),’ trókšti, ‘to desire/to wish,’ bįjoti, ‘to be afraid (of),’ or vęngti, ‘to avoid’ invariably take a genitive object. These languages differ from the Balto-Fennic languages in that they do not offer an option between object cases in regards to telicity, but simply call for one or the other depending on the nature of the verb. They can be thought of as having a more limited direct telicization, as they do not have the DOM found in Finnish, Estonian or Karelian, for instance.

The next consideration, the major point of discussion, is whether there are any semantic properties inherent in the grammatical cases described in the data section that
relate to telicity, and whether these properties can justly be applied indiscriminately, both when dealing with direct and indirect telicity.

4.1 **SOURCE and GOAL profile**

At first it seems that the common denominator in case-telicity construal is ablative-derivation, that is to say, that grammatical cases signaling atelicity has an origin in the ablative case; like the ablative, the genitive and partitive cases can be said to profile a semantic **SOURCE**.

In the languages where the genitive or partitive case deals with atelicity, telicity is marked either through the accusative case, or through another objective\(^\text{11}\) case. As the localist view would tell us, the accusative designates the destination of an action (as Heine and Kuteva has shown, the allative, a **GOAL** profiling case, has developed to include a semantic patient, which adds further credibility to this interpretation), the entity upon which something acts, and based on the examples we’ve seen, this appears to turn out as expected. Therefore, the accusative case as a marker for telicity (in languages with direct telicization) contrasting with non-accusative cases as markers for atelicity seems sensible so far.

Based on these arguments, it is possible to illustrate this correspondence between spatial, locational phases and the temporal, verbal phases that case marking concerns. This correspondence is illustrated here in figure 2.

![Figure 2: Correspondence between spatial and verbal phases](image)

It could be thought of in terms of conceptual metaphor that **EVENTS ARE JOURNEYS**, where physical movement correlates to progression of an event; some expressions of this could be ‘I started on a journey’ versus ‘I started building a house’, ‘look how far

\(^{11}\) I use the term objective case here to mean any case which typically marks the grammatical object.
we’ve come’ versus ‘look how far we’ve gotten on [building] the house’ and ‘we finished the journey’ versus ‘we finished [building] the house’.

Another mention of this kind of localist metaphor has been provided by Croft (2001:319), adapting a visual representation by DeLancey (1982:172).

Table 4: DeLancey’s (1982:172) localist metaphor between participants, causal structure and temporal aspect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>participant deixis</th>
<th>1st/2nd person</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>3rd person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>causal structure</td>
<td>agent (initiator)</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>patient (endpoint)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>temporal aspect</td>
<td>onset (imperfective)</td>
<td>→</td>
<td>termination (perfective)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Croft explains this representation in the following words: “In the localist metaphor, one mentally starts from the speech participants, the initiator of the event, and the temporal beginning of the event, and moves away from the speech participants, towards the causal endpoint and temporal end of the event” (Croft 2001:319). Onset and termination regards telicity more than perfectivity, but all in all, this representation and localist metaphor corresponds well to the representation in figure 2 above.

All of this seems plausible in direct telicization: the metaphorical destination assigns a point of culmination, the reaching of which entails completion. To put it another way, when an event is to be construed as telic, the object case of choice is motivated by whether it profiles the semantic GOAL or not.

However, none of these considerations explain how locational or directional semantics concern telicity-through-definiteness in languages with indirect telicization. Also, the definiteness distinction is in some of these languages not merely confined to the grammatical object, and is as such a factor to consider with the grammatical subject as well, since the semantics of definiteness would have to be defined as an in-grained part of the case itself, rather than its grammatical role as the object. In order to properly make sense of the semantics of definiteness-based telicity, it becomes necessary to consider how, and to what extent, these cases deal with boundedness in nouns.

4.2 Definiteness of the object noun

The next step is to consider whether these cases have anything to do with definiteness. My first impulse was to analyze the cases on the basis of boundedness, but since these
grammatical cases exercise DOM even on singular count nouns, which are always finite in size, any consideration of boundedness wouldn’t make much sense. For that reason, definiteness seems to be a much more reliable parameter to investigate.

In the sample languages, indefinite object nouns are SOURCE profiled, while definite object nouns are GOAL profiled. It could be that this GOAL profile is analogous to a target, by which the accusative and absolutive cases can be thought of as deictic, in the sense of targeting a particular entity. This creates a demarcation which is applicable even to inherently bounded entities, such as singular count nouns. I will consider this notion in analyzing indirect telicization.

First I want to issue a caveat. This semantic analysis is necessarily defective, since it applies more or less only to direct objects; in the languages used in this study, there is no DOM in indirect objects, and few languages have any kind of differentiated subject marking (DSM). Also, the Balto-Fennic and Balto-Slavic languages, as I will demonstrate later, provide an obstacle, though not irreconcilable one, to the analysis.

After having taken into account all considerations of how to best interpret the GOAL profiling cases - either by relating them to boundedness, which fails immediately when attempting to analyze the effects of these cases on singular count nouns, or to affectedness, which is really more within the dimension of direct telicization, as we have seen (telic actions affect the object much more completely than do atelic actions, since they typically yield a result) - the most plausible, not to mention the most obvious, factor to analyze is how the GOAL profile corresponds to definiteness.

The first thought as to why objective cases like the accusative are definite while other cases like the partitive and genitive cases are indefinite is that the latter are deviations of the norm set by the objective cases: if the direct object is perceived of as being definite by default, then any contrastive variation would imply that it isn’t. This is not a very valid notion, since in many languages where there is a lack of definiteness, there is only one case for the direct object and the definiteness of a noun is open to interpretation. In some other languages, such as Irish for example, the noun is indefinite if unmarked, and made definite by the definite article. Above all, this notion is more an observation than it is a satisfactory explanation.

Another consideration was linking GOAL profiling cases to attention. Talmy (2000:257-344) has described the cognitive processes of attention and how they work in
language, and relating the grammatical cases to attention seems like a good explanation at first glance. Attention is directional; we observe things by directing attention at them, and we get attention from others by being the target of their attention. This would correspond to the GOAL profile of the accusative case, which deals with individuation and, in negative contexts, targeted negation. By directing attention at something, we individuate it, transform the entity into the figure standing out from the ground, and thereby set it apart.

What then is the objection to this idea? The main problem is that fixing attention on something and individuating it has more to do with specificity rather than definiteness. While definiteness entails specificity, the reverse is not necessarily true. We can fix cognitive, if not perceptual, attention on something without it being definite; we can for instance walk into a bookstore and tell the clerk that we’re looking for “a book by William Faulkner” with a particular title in mind. While specificity is a good tool for bounding an entity, as I’ve shown in section 1.3, it is not how the grammatical cases are used in real language.

The best place to start is to imagine the GOAL profile as analogous to referential deixis - in the sense of pointing at something or someone - which would translate into definiteness in conversation through the intermediary of grounding, i.e. that the speaker assumes that he is relaying information regarding something both he and the listener have mutual knowledge about. Such elements are definite because of every designated entity having to be individuated and mutually identifiable; even when such a designation occurs in a partitive condition, the part would have to be individuated (consider, for instance, ‘that part of the house’ or ‘the people’; even if they are of an indeterminate size or amount, they are thought of as being at least finite in dimension). As an effect, the targeted noun would be perceived as grounded, since grounding, or at least the speaker’s assumption of grounding, inevitably follows when the speaker refers to something definite. This sets a singular object count noun in the accusative case apart from such an entity posed in a non-accusative case.

This interpretation of grounding is more closely related to definiteness than is the idea of attention. Using the example of the bookstore above, there is a distinct difference between attention and grounding in that the former is internal and personal, while the latter is interpersonal; there is of course an element of attention in grounding.
as well, but the thing to remember is that attention alone will not do if we’re dealing with definiteness, since one of the most salient features of definiteness is its ability to ground an entity.

This shading between grounding and attention is exemplified in (22a) and (22b) below. As always, the square brackets signify implied information.

(22a) ‘I am looking for a [particular] book by William Faulkner’ (the speaker knows which book he is interested in, but the clerk he is asking might very well not and may be in need of more information)

(22b) ‘I am looking for the book by William Faulkner’ (the speaker presumes that the clerk knows which book he is referring to, since the definite form assumes mutual knowledge about the referent)

This sense of being targeted or singled out is plausibly a function of a GOAL profile, since targets are destinations or goals in their own right. As seen with genitive and partitive examples (12a-b), (17a-b) and (19a-b) in sections 3.1 and 3.2, the accusative and absolutive cases are used for targeted negatives with a narrow scope of negation. We humans point at things, physically or metaphorically, to single objects out from a background, and this analogy is equally available in language, as language too is a cognitive process. In the spirit of Lakoff and Johnson (1980), this analogy could be formulated as a conceptual metaphor as TARGETS ARE GOALS, where defining a goal means designating a target. Figure 3 illustrates this relationship in a more visual manner.

Figure 3: The relation between GOAL profile and referential targeting
Drawing on a degree of locationality, one could well imagine that there is a certain relation that holds between profiling a certain phase (e.g. a source, path or destination) and profiling a specific point in space and/or time.

One objection arising from this interpretation is that if the GOAL profile allows an entity, in this scenario the object noun, to be targeted and singled out, how does that explain the DSM in the Balto-Fennic and Balto-Slavic languages? The differentiation that we’ve seen between definite and indefinite object nouns in these languages is equally present in the subject noun, the difference here being between the genitive or partitive case on one hand, and the nominative case on the other. This distinction, at least in Finnish and Russian, is confined to intransitive sentences; neither Finnish nor Russian utilizes genitive/partitive cases for transitive subjects.

Finnish:

(23a) Auto-t ovat kadu-lla.
   car-NOM/PL be/PRES/3PL street-ADE
   "The cars are [parked] in the street."

(23b) Kadu-lla on auto-ja.
   street-ADE be/PRES/3SG car-PART/PL
   "There are (some) cars [parked] in the street."

A similar situation exists in the Balto-Slavic languages, primarily with existential constructions but also with other intransitive sentences, where an indefinite or partitive subject is posed in the genitive case and a definite subject in the nominative case.\(^{12}\)

Russian (Timberlake 2004:306):

(24a) … Sjuda ne donosilis’ zvuki džaza.
   Here NEG be.heard/PST/PL sound/NOM/PL jazz/GEN
   ‘… The sounds of jazz did not carry here.’

\(^{12}\) For Russian, Timberlake (2004:306) refers to the former as “essential” reference and the latter as “individuating” reference.
The first thing setting the cases apart is the directional profiling sense. The nominative case isn’t a SOURCE case in the same sense that the genitive or partitive cases are (by analogy to ablative-derivation). While it is true that the nominative often encodes an agent, an ablative-derived function, this is not its primary function; in passive clauses, the nominative is used for the patient, in experience clauses for the experiencer (i.e. a patient of a stimulus), and in settings, like “his face was dripping with sweat”, the nominative encodes the place where activity takes place, i.e. “his face”. Above all, the nominative is a subject case rather than an agentive one.

Another difference is that the partitive case and, to some (more limited) extent, the genitive case have a partitive sense; nominative bare plurals or mass nouns may be thought of as partitive in other languages, but they do not in languages with DSM. Genitive constructions essentially place two entities in a meronymical co-location, where the possessor is seen as a bigger whole of which the possessed entity is a part (one can also think of the genitive as designating a domain or frame to which the possessed entity pertains). In other words, in a phrase like “the man’s (possessor) hand (possessed)”, the hand is understood to be a part of the man, and a phrase like “part of the cheese”, the part is a smaller fraction of the larger cheese. It could be argued then that the bare genitive, when used as a subject or an object case, implies a “part” or a quantifier, and it does indeed usually translates into ‘some’ or ‘a little’ when used on its own in Balto-Slavic languages. We’ve seen a few examples of this in section 3.1, but one more example to drive the argument home couldn’t hurt:

Lithuanian (Mathiassen 1996:182):

(25) Mergaitė jiteikė svečiui gėlių.
    girl/NOM hand/PST guest/DAT flower/GEN/PL
    ‘The girl handed (some) flowers to the guest.’

13 While this is not entirely obvious in English, the Finnish equivalent juuston osa, ’part of the cheese (lit. the cheese’s part)’ is a more transparent example.
It can therefore be said that the genitive or partitive cases, which are partitive and thus of an indefinite amount, contrasts with the nominative, which is more ambiguous in definiteness and more prone to individuation. This would address the indefiniteness in the genitive/partitive subject and credibly dispute the objection.

This interpretation might seem valid for the grammatical object as well, but in light of other object cases, such as the ablative or instrumental cases, it becomes limited; while the ablative and instrumental cases evidently have partitive functions in some languages, as seen in section 3, this is not their central feature. Also, the difference of roles occupied by the nominative case in DOM and DSM further undermines the validity of this analysis. The idea of referential targeting and grounding is more consistent in these situations, given the locationality and directionality inherent in the grammatical cases.

4.3 Relation between the object case and the predicate

Now that the locationality of the cases involved with definiteness and telicity has been considered, the remaining question is how this kind of nominal semantics could influence any kind of verbal semantics. One method of justifying this is by illustrating the function of the verb as a temporal relation by analogy to the adjective or adposition as an atemporal relation.

Krifka (1992) and Kiparsky (1998) have suggested that if the object or verb is atelic, here in the context of Finnish, then the verb phrase as a whole is determined to be atelic. While this is a correct conclusion, it is however insufficient to leave it at that; we can’t really discern anything about the underlying semantics if we restrict ourselves to analyzing syntactic structure. Therefore, I would rather explain this idea using principles found in cognitive linguistics, more specifically through the concept of trajector-landmark relations. My analysis is not incompatible with Krifka’s and Kiparsky’s views, but it is a semantic rather than a syntactic consideration.

As a situation is a temporal relation between a trajector and a landmark, the effects that the landmark has on the relation in these instances are plausibly similar to the ones exerted on atemporal relations in adpositional constructions. An illustration of two competing senses of the preposition ‘on’ is shown in figure 4 below.
The different construals of the preposition ‘on’ are based on the nature of the prepositional object, or landmark; the object transfers some of its semantics onto the preposition (i.e. the atemporal relation). This would allow languages to similarly utilize object case - at their leisure it would appear, as telic construal through object case is far from a grammatical universal - to transfer the semantics of the direct object onto the verb.

This notion that the semantics of the object noun affect the semantics of the verb might seem a variation, or even a reversal, of the notion of government - that the verb controls the object; Lyons (1981:116) explains government in the following words:

*Another kind of syntactic relation - one to which traditional grammar attached particular importance - is that of dependency. This is an asymmetrical relation that holds (to use modern terminology) between a governor, or controller, and one or more dependents. For example, the verb is said to govern its object (if it has one) in one form rather than another, as the verb ‘see’, like all transitive verbs in English, governs its object in what would be traditionally described as the accusative case...*

In other words, just as the verb determines the case of the object noun (which is not necessarily how it is in languages with DOM - particularly not with indirect telicization) the semantics of the object noun affect the semantics of the predicate. If the landmark of the temporal relation, i.e. the direct object, is indefinite and thus of undetermined or undeterminable dimensions, the verb with which it interacts would equally tenuous in
magnitude; after all, an action would have to be infinite in length if there is no point in time when it is considered completed, barring of course that one stops performing the action. Therefore, it shouldn’t seem odd that the nature of the object, or landmark, would affect the nature of the predicate (or temporal relation).

5. Summary and discussion

How can this study then be summarized, and what prospects are there for future research on this topic? I will address these questions here to start a discussion on the subject of case telicity and bring the reader to contemplate the findings and how they can be elaborated on.

5.1 Summary

After having looked at previous inquiries on, or relating to the topic, and after having considered the semantics of grammatical cases on the basis of their spatiality, looking at them both from a localist as well as a cognitive viewpoint, there seemed to be a fairly clear demarcation between how they are employed. Revisiting the original questions:

- Are there grammatical cases that code for telicity?
- How common are these cases typologically?
- Can these cases be semantically justified?
- How do the semantics of the grammatical object affect the semantics of the situation’s verb?

The first three points can be summarized as follows, keeping in mind that there are two different strategies for telic construal in regards to case:
• **Direct telicization**: The object case directly marks for telicity; SOURCE profiling cases like the genitive and partitive cases are atelic/irresultative, GOAL profiling cases like the accusative and absolutive cases are telic/resultative.

• **Indirect telicization**: The object case marks for definiteness and thereby for telicity; SOURCE profiling cases are indefinite, GOAL profiling cases are definite.

Direct telicization can be explained by virtue of the correlation between locational phases (source, path and destination) and situational phases (initiation, process and result), a correlation which is clear-cut enough without having to resort to any innovative conceptual metaphors. My hypothesis is that EVENTS ARE JOURNEYS, where ‘he finished the race’ is equivalent to the telic event ‘he finished singing’. Both instances refer to the reaching of a semantic GOAL, and any lack of such a goal would correspond to a lack of telicity.

Indirect telicization operates on the notion that profiling a GOAL means assigning a referential target and therefore specifying and delimiting the object noun. This notion can be expressed metaphorically as TARGETS ARE GOALS, where targeting a particular entity means setting a goal for the action, which would then require a GOAL profiling case, such as the accusative.

No language uses solely direct telicization; Balto-Fennic languages have a great deal of DOM for direct telicization, but use indirect means as well to mark for telicity. And while some Balto-Slavic languages differentiate between definite and indefinite/partitive objects with the accusative/genitive case distinction, they do feature a number of verbs which calls for a genitive, rather than an accusative case marking. Typologically, direct telicization is not a particularly common strategy, as this work has shown, while indirect telicization is a strategy arguably more common around the world. Ultimately, these two different strategies of telicization are complementary, rather than distinctive.

As for the fourth point, there is a plausible way for the object case to influence the semantics of the predicate. Seeing the predicate as a temporal relation between a trajector, represented by the subject, and a landmark, i.e. the grammatical object, the way the semantics of the verb conforms to the semantics of the object becomes quite
conceivable. An analogy to this is found in atemporal relations, such as adpositional phrases, where the semantics of the adposition is determined by the adpositional object; the ‘on’ in ‘the ball is on the table’ is semantically different than the one in ‘the painting hangs on the wall’, and it is a similar process that takes place with temporal relations like verbs.

5.2 Discussion and further research
This thesis is far from the last word on this topic, and there are a number of ways in which to develop on the work done here. As mentioned, there are other cases than the genitive and partitive case that code for telicity, as I’ve demonstrated in the data section, and there is room for more research on how these cases, as well as other potential cases, could be used to signal atelicity. With Heine and Kuteva’s (2002) work in mind, SOURCE profiling cases such as the elative case, the possessive case and the ergative case, all related to the ablative case through one of Heine and Kuteva’s functions or another, would be possible candidates, so that is something to consider. Conversely, allative-derived, GOAL profiling, objective cases similar to the accusative or absolutive cases could be possible candidates for telic construal. As is evident by the data collected by Comrie (2013) and Iggesen (2013), there are plenty of opportunities to develop on the work done here.

The theoretical outline produced here is also subject to further scrutiny. Are there languages where the proposed atelic cases are used for telic purposes and vice versa, and are the theories proposed here still valid in those instances? Another consideration to make is whether the analysis made here can be optimized; other theoretical approaches, regardless of whether they are cognitive or not, might be more suitable for explaining the semantic processes involved in case telicity.

Another thing to investigate would be the varying degree of telicization that exists between different clause constituents: how does case telicity interact with other telic or atelic elements such as adverbs, innate verbal telicity, particles and other similar strategies? I brushed on this topic very briefly with the Swedish verb att äta upp, ‘to consume [completely]’ and the unbounded grammatical object lite mat, ‘some food’, but there is a fair deal more that can be said about this. One could, for instance, scrutinize such occurrences in different languages in which case telicity is found and
map out to which degree different strategies affect the telicity of a situation. Is an atelic case allowed in the language in question if placed in the same clause as a telic adverb, or vice versa? Which of these clause constituents take precedence over the other? These are intriguing questions that, like the other points of inquiry mentioned above, are worth investigating.
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