

**Partitive Constructions and Partitive Elements
Within and Across Language Borders in Europe**

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Introduction

Partitive Constructions and Partitive Elements

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Abstract Whereas most languages have proper partitive constructions and pseudo-partitive constructions, not all languages have partitive elements like partitive determiners, partitive pronouns and partitive case. This Introduction serves to introduce these partitive constructions and elements, to briefly discuss their diachronic evolution, their morphological and syntactic expression and their occurrence in various languages and dialects. After the presentation of this background information, the essays that are part of the volume are introduced.

Keywords Proper partitive construction. Pseudo-partitive construction. Partitive determiner. Partitive pronoun. Partitive case.

For most persons who have learned Italian or French at school, the notion ‘partitivity’ will be associated with the term ‘partitive article’. These determiners, called *articolo partitivo* in Italian and *article partitif* in French, are illustrated in (1) and (2):

(1) *Ho visto dei ragazzi.*

I.have seen ART.PART.M.PL. boys

‘I have seen boys.’

(2) *L'enfant boit du lait.*

the child drinks ART.PART.M.SG. milk

‘The child is drinking milk.’



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For the partitive article in Italian in (1) it has been proposed in the literature (Chierchia 1998; Zamparelli 2008) that it is syntactically related to an overt partitive structure as in (3), containing a subset (*alcuni* ‘some’) and a superset (*[i] ragazzi* ‘(the) boys’):

- (3) *Ho visto alcuni dei ragazzi.*
 I.have seen some of.the boys
 ‘I have seen some of the boys.’

Cardinaletti and Giusti (2016), however, argue against the establishment of a relation between *dei* in (3) and *dei* in (1). Partly based on Storto (2003), who shows that (3) implies a larger set, whereas (1) does not, Cardinaletti and Giusti analyse *dei* in (1) as the plural counterpart of the indefinite article *un* ‘a’, with the interpretation of a plural undetermined quantity. A similar analysis for the French partitive article, as in (2), although in a more sophisticated syntactic framework, has been put forth by Ihsane (2013), arguing against the analysis proposed by Kayne (1977), which is comparable to Chierchia’s (1998) analysis for Italian, with a zero quantifier instead of an overt quantifier and with the superset analysed as a PP.

Cardinaletti and Giusti’s and Ihsane’s analyses are synchronic analyses that concern the partitive article in contemporary Italian and French. In a diachronic perspective, however, it has been argued that there is indeed a relation between the partitive article and a partitive structure as in (3). Luraghi (2013) shows that the construction that gave rise to partitive articles in Italian is an overt partitive structure without an overt quantifier already attested in Late Latin, which could be used as a direct object, as shown by the example (4) from the Old Testament:

- (4) *et ipse in nobis quoniam de Spiritu suo*
 and 3SG.NOM in 1PL.ABL because from spirit.ABL POSS.3SG.ABL
dedit nobis
 give.PRF.3SG 1PL.DAT
 ‘[We know that we live in him] and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.’ (1 John 4.13)

Luraghi and Albonico (2021) argue that the construction formed by *di* plus the definite article in Old Italian had already started undergoing grammaticalisation in the direction of the Modern Italian partitive article. The newly created partitive article started out in direct object position, but soon spread to indefinite post-verbal subjects. The Late Latin construction exemplified in (4) also gave rise to partitive determiners in French, and in the same way as in Italian (Carlier 2007; Carlier, Lamiroy 2014). The notion of partition set faded

away, with the notion of a non-specified quantity remaining. As a consequence, the partitive article acquired the new property of marking indefiniteness. As in Italian, the newly created partitive article in French started out in direct object position but soon spread to indefinite post-verbal subjects, as argued in Carlier and Lamiroy (2014). In modern Italian, contrary to French, however, the partitive article is not obligatory. Seržant (2021) calls this type of partitives, those with no explicit realisation of the subset referent, “generalised partitives”, referring to their diachronic development.

The partitive structures from which partitive articles developed are called “proper partitive structures” by Giusti and Sleeman (2021), “true partitives” by Seržant (2021) and “canonical partitives” by Falco and Zamparelli (2019). In this Introduction we will use the term “proper partitives”. As Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001, 523) puts it, in this construction a part of something is taken. These constructions involve a presupposed set of items referred to by the superset noun phrase (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001), which, as such, is most often definite, as formulated in Jackendoff’s (1977, 113) Partitive Constraint. In Giusti and Sleeman’s (2021) definition of this construction, the subset may be expressed by a quantifier, as in (3), or a measure noun, as in (5).

- (5) *una tazza del tè che hai preparato*
 a cup of.the tea that you.have prepared
 ‘a cup of the tea that you have made’

In this type of partitive constructions, the superset may have a locative origin. According to Seržant (2021), the most frequent source of partitive markers are spatial adpositions (or case markers in languages that have case), such as adpositions that indicate an ablative relation ‘from, out of’, expressing the separative strategy (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001). Another strategy is the locative strategy, making use of the adposition ‘among’. A third strategy is the possessive strategy, making use of the adposition ‘of’.

This type of construction differs from the so-called pseudo-partitive construction (Selkirk 1977). According to Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001), the pseudo-partitive construction is used to specify the amount of something. In Giusti and Sleeman’s (2021) definition, pseudo-partitive constructions are instantiated by measure nouns which quantify over an indefinite mass or plurality, as in the Italian example (6) and the French example (7). With this definition, pseudo-partitive constructions can be distinguished from quantifier constructions such as ‘some books’ (Giusti 2021):

- (6) *una tazza di tè*
 ‘a cup of tea’

- (7) *une bouteille de vin*
'a bottle of wine'

Not only partitive articles have been shown to have evolved from proper partitive structures: Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001), Luraghi and Kitilä (2014) and Seržant (2021) argue that pseudo-partitives emerge from proper partitive structures as well. Separation strategies have given rise to proper partitive structures. Proper partitive structures have given rise to pseudo-partitive structures and also to partitive articles, as shown at the beginning of this Introduction.

For persons who have learned Italian or French at school, the notion 'partitivity' may also be associated with the term 'partitive pronoun'. The Italian partitive pronoun is *ne* and the French partitive pronoun is *en*. These partitive pronouns, which are rather clitics, can be used to replace each of the 'of'-phrases in (1)-(3) and (5)-(7). This is illustrated by the following examples from Italian. Sentence (8) illustrates that *ne* can replace the superset part of a proper partitive construction, as in (5), or a pseudo-partitive construction, as in (6), and (9) shows that *ne* can replace a noun phrase introduced by a partitive article, as in (1):

- (8) *Ne ho bevuto una tazza (del tè che hai*
PART.CL. I.have drunk a cup of.the tea that you.have
preparato; di tè).
made; of tea
'I have drunk a cup (of the tea that you have made; of tea)'

- (9) *Ne ho visti.*
PART.CL. I.have seen.M.PL.
'I have seen a(n undetermined) quantity of them.'

Ihsane (2013) shows that French *en* can assume the same functions as in Italian. According to Ihsane, the linguist Milner (1978) was the first to make the distinction between the two functions of the partitive pronoun for French that were illustrated in (8) for Italian. Milner calls *en* that replaces the superset of the proper partitive construction "partitive *en*" and *en* that replaces the superset of the pseudo-partitive construction, as in (7), "quantitative *en*".

In Germanic languages, partitivity is not completely expressed in the same way as in Italian and French. Whereas the proper partitive construction is expressed in the same way (although in German there may be case on the superset instead of a preposition), the expression of the pseudo-partitive construction depends on the type of Germanic language. English has an 'of'-construction (*a cup of tea*), but languages like German and Dutch do not use 'of', but juxtaposition (German: *eine*

Tasse Tee; Dutch: *een kopje thee*). Standard German and Dutch do not have a partitive determiner. They make use of bare nouns in sentences equivalent to (1) and (2). Standard Dutch has a pronoun with a partitive function. As in the case of Italian and French, a distinction has been made for Dutch between a quantitative pronoun, *er*, and a partitive pronoun, *ervan* ‘of it/of them’. Whereas in Italian and French the distinction is only a semantic one, the clitics *ne* and *en* subsuming both functions, in Dutch there may also be a formal distinction, the distinction between *er* and *ervan*. Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001) observes that the semantic borderline between the pseudo-partitive construction and the proper partitive construction is not watertight. The two questions “May I have a glass of wine?” and “May I have a glass of that wine?”, expressed by someone who points at a bottle of wine, are quasi-synonymous in this situation. The same holds for the Dutch pronoun *er*. Besides a quantitative function, cf. (10), the Dutch pronoun *er* may also have a partitive function, similar to the pronoun *ervan*, cf. (11):

- (10) *Gisteren heb ik twee boeken verkocht. Vandaag heb ik*
 yesterday have I two books sold today have I
er drie verkocht.
 PART.WK. three sold
 ‘Yesterday I have sold two books. Today I have sold three.’

- (11) *Gisteren heb ik drie boeken gekocht. Vandaag heb ik*
 yesterday have I three books bought today have I
er twee gelezen / heb ik twee ervan gelezen.
 PART.WK. two read have I two of.which read
 ‘Yesterday I have bought three books. Today I have read two of them.’

Standard German does not have a partitive/quantitative pronoun comparable to Dutch *er*. However, it is argued by Glaser (1992; 1993) that standard German may use the pronoun *welch-* to express an undefined quantity. Strobel and Glaser (2020) state that the partitive-indefinite pronoun *welch-* presumably stems from its interrogative counterpart ‘which (one)’. Both types of *welch-* are illustrated in (12):

- (12) *Nimm dir welche. Welche willst du?*
 take you WELCH- Which want you
 ‘Take some. Which ones do you want?’

Strobel and Glaser (2020) show that in modern German dialects there is quite a wide range of different syntactic means to express pronominal partitivity. One of these means is the use of null anaphora, occurring essentially in the Southwestern, primarily Alemannic, region (Glaser 1995, 69):

- (13) *I heet gɛɛrn khɛrfə, hɛdər Ø? Ja, doo sen Ø; nem dɛr Ø.*
 I would like cherries have.you Ø yes here are Ø take you Ø
 ‘I’d like some cherries, do you have any? – Yes, here are some; take some (of them).’

Another strategy mentioned by Strobel and Glaser (2020) is the use of the indefinite pronoun *ein-* ‘one’ in the Southeastern, originally Bavarian system. In other varieties of German, *ein-* is used to refer to a singular count noun, but in Bavarian it additionally may be used to refer to mass nouns and to plural entities (Glaser 1993, 107):

- (14) *Happts jō ði khafft? [Kartoffeln]*
 have.you already EIN.PL bought [potatoes]
 ‘Did you already buy some?’

Furthermore, Strobel (2017) as well as Strobel and Glaser (2020) show that in German dialects such as Central Hessian there exists a partitive pronoun *ere*, referring to plural entities, (15), and feminine singular mass nouns, (16), but that there is also a masculine and neuter singular counterpart *sen*, referring to mass nouns, (17). According to Strobel and Glaser (2020), these pronouns are mostly limited to a strip between West Central German and East Franconian.

- (15) *Hei sein ere! [Pilze]*
 here are ERE [mushrooms]
 ‘Here are some (of them)!’

- (16) *Mer hu ach Melch. Willst du ere?*
 we have also milk want you ERE
 ‘We have milk, too. Would you like some?’

- (17) *Soll eich sen holle? [Fleisch]*
 shall I SEN get [meat]
 ‘Shall I get some?’

Strobel and Glaser (2020) state that the German partitive/quantitative pronoun $(ə)r(ə)$ and the Dutch partitive/quantitative pronoun *er* are derived from third person genitive pronouns.

In non-standard Germanic varieties, not only partitive/quantitative pronouns (see also Glaser, Bart 2021a; 2021b; 2021c), but also forms similar to partitive determiners are found. Like the partitive/quantitative pronoun they are related to genitive case with a partitive function (Strobel, Glaser 2020). Strobel and Glaser (2020) give an example that occurs in Walliser and Walser German dialects, in which *deru/deschi* are genitive forms of ‘the’.

- (18) *Welleder nu deru/deschi Steina/Boone/Epfla?*
 want.you still the.GEN.PL stones/beans/apples
 'Would you like (some) more of these/such stones/beans/apples?'

Not only in German dialects partitivity may be expressed by case marking. Whereas in Romance and Germanic the partitive relation between the subset and the superset in the proper partitive structure is expressed by means of a preposition, 'of', in Armenian it is expressed by means of ablative case marking (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001, 528):

- (19) *mi gavat' ayd hamow surč-ic'*
 one cup.NOM that good coffee-ABL
 'one cup of that good coffee'

As Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001) shows, in the proper partitive construction relative case is normally used in Finnish, although under special circumstances partitive case may also be used. According to Koptjevskaja-Tamm, the partitive is rather used to indicate the quantity of a substance, the noun receiving a "kind"-interpretation, whereas the relative is rather used to indicate a part of a predefined entity:¹

- (20) *Anna minulle pala tätä hyvää kakkua.*
 give 1SG.ALL bit.NOM DEM.PART good.PART cake.PART
 'Give me a bit of this good cake.'

- (21) *Anna minulle pala tästä hyvästä kakusta.*
 give 1SG.ALL bit.NOM DEM.ELA good.ELA cake.ELA
 'Give me a bit of this good cake.'

In the pseudo-partitive construction, in Romance languages and in English the preposition 'of' is used. There are also languages in which case marking is used. One such language is Finnish, in which partitive case is used in this construction, as shown by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001, 531):

- (22) *Osta säkki perunoita!*
 buy.IMP.2SG sack.NOM potato.PART.PL
 'Buy a sack of potatoes!'

Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001) shows that Russian makes use of genitive case, both in the proper partitive construction, as in (23), and in the

¹ Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2001 does not make a distinction between the English translations of the two sentences.

pseudo-partitive construction, as in (24). Daniel (2014) as well as Ter-Avanesova and Daniel (2023) show that in the pseudo-partitive construction, some nouns can show a special form of the genitive, the so-called “second genitive”, illustrated in (25). Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001) labels this second genitive as “partitive”.

(23) *čaška etogo vkusnogo čaja*
cup.NOM DEM.GEN good.GEN tea.GEN
'a cup of this good tea'

(24) *čaška čaja*
cup.NOM tea.GEN
'a cup of tea'

(25) *čaška čajju*
cup.NOM tea.GEN2 / PART
'a cup of tea'

Whereas Italian and French make use or can make use of partitive articles to express indefiniteness with mass nouns and plural nouns, while in Germanic normally bare nouns are used, there are also languages in which partitive case is used to express an undetermined amount. Luraghi and Kittilä (2014, 19) show that, in Finnish, partitive case can be used to indicate partial objects (26), while total objects are expressed by means of the accusative (27). This illustrates the role of quantitative unboundedness in the expression by partitive case in (26) and quantitative boundedness in the expression by accusative case in (27):

(26) *Aino sö-i leipä-ä.*
Aino eat-PST.3SG bread-PART
'Aino ate (some of the) bread.'

(27) *Aino sö-i leivä-n.*
Aino eat-PST.3SG bread-ACC
'Aino ate the (whole) bread.'

Quantitative (un)boundedness may also play a role in the expression of the subject in an existential sentence, as shown by Huumo (2021), although the subject indicating a bounded quantity in (28) is in the nominative case and not in the accusative case, as in (27), whereas the subject indicating an unbounded quantity is again in the partitive case (29):

(28) *Pöydä-llä on kirja.*
table-ADE be.PRES.3SG book.NOM
'There is a book on the table.'

(29) *Pöydä-llä on kirjo-j-a.*
table-ADE be.PRES.3SG book-PL-PART
'There are books on the table.'

Huumo (2021) shows that the use of partitive case in Finnish may also be in relation to the non-culmination of the event. In (30), partitive case on the object signals a non-culminating, atelic, interpretation of the event, equivalent to progressive aspect. In (31), the accusative object signals that the event is telic and reaches its culmination. Since the verb in (31) is in the present tense, this results in a future reading with regard to the culmination, according to Huumo.

(30) *Lue-n kirja-a.*
read-PRES.1SG book-PART
'I am reading a/the book.'

(31) *Lue-n kirja-n.*
read-PRES.3SG book-ACC
'I will read a/the book (completely).'

Furthermore, Huumo (2021) shows that negation triggers the partitive:

(32) *E-n lue kirja-a.*
NEG-1SG read.CNG book-PART
'I am not reading a/the book.:', 'I will not read a/the book.'

In Italian and French, partitive articles started to be used in object position, but later also spread to other functions. However, in subject position the use of the partitive article is much more restricted than in object position, both in Modern Italian and in Modern French (Bosveld-de Smet 1998; Luraghi, Albonico 2021). In Finnish, the use of partitive case is also extending to subjects. Huumo (2003; 2018) states that in Finnish partitive subjects in most cases have an existential interpretation and occur with unaccusative verbs, as in (33), but that they are also extending to other types of verbs, such as unergative and transitive verbs. In (33), partitive case expresses indefiniteness. Definiteness in the same context is expressed by nominative case, as in (34). The examples are taken from Luraghi and Kittilä (2014):

- (33) *Nais-i-a tul-i koti-in.*
 woman-PL-PART come-PST.3SG home-ILL
 ‘Some women came home.’
- (34) *Naise-t tul-i-vat koti-in.*
 woman.NOM-PL come-PST-3PL home-ILL
 ‘The women came home.’

The alternation in (26)-(27) and (30)-(31) has been called Differential Object Marking (DOM), being associated with optional object marking in languages like Spanish, where certain types of objects are preceded by *a* (Iemmolo, Klumpp 2014). Chappell and Verstraete (2019) call the case alternation type DOM and the Spanish type Optional Case Marking. De Hoop and Malchukov (2008) call the first type symmetrical DOM, whereby all objects are marked, but take different cases, and the second type asymmetrical DOM, whereby certain objects are unmarked while others are marked. Luraghi and Kittilä (2014) show, however, that the partitive does not only alternate with the accusative, but also with the nominative and that the term Differential Object Marking is therefore not completely correct. The alternation in (28)-(29) and (33)-(34) would rather have to be called Differential Subject Marking (DSM). Object or subject case alternation to express definiteness versus indefiniteness does not only occur in Finnish. Luraghi (2023) studies the alternation between the accusative and the genitive to encode the second argument with experiential verbs in Ancient Greek. Conti and Luraghi (2014) state that in Ancient Greek, as in other Indo-European languages that allow them, partitive genitive subjects essentially occur in existential clauses with the verb ‘be’ or with unaccusative verbs. Metslang and Habicht (2023) show that in Estonian the object may appear in the partitive, the genitive or the nominative, depending on a Differential Object Marking system in which important factors influencing object case usage are aspect, quantitative boundedness of the object referent, and the polarity of the sentence.

The essays that are presented in this volume all reveal new research on aspects of partitivity that had not been researched yet, or they add new insights. While much research on partitivity in recent edited volumes has (partially) focused on Romance languages (Falco, Zamparelli 2019; Ihsane 2020; Ihsane, Stark 2020; Sleeman, Giusti 2021; Pinzin, Poletto 2022; Luraghi, Sleeman 2023; Sleeman, Tamm forthcoming), this volume contains research on languages in which the expression of partitivity has not been researched to such an extent: Uralic languages, Ukrainian, Irish Gaelic, Standard and sub-standard German, dialectal varieties of German and Belgian Dutch. The methods that are used are corpus research (digital dictionaries and databases) as well as Grammaticality Judgment Tasks and

Translation Tasks submitted to native speakers. The essays have been thematically grouped together, starting with some essays on pseudo-partitive and proper partitive constructions, followed by an essay on partitive pronouns and ending with two essays on case alternation/Differential Object Marking.

In her essay “The Indefinite Article as an Exponent for Partition”, Ellen Brandner investigates the use of the indefinite article with mass nouns in some Southern German dialects. With the help of questionnaires containing a Translation Task and a Grammaticality Judgment Task, data from Alemannic speakers were elicited. Based on the results, Ellen Brandner argues that *ein*-mass nouns are interpreted as subkinds. A fine-grained syntactic analysis is proposed.

Alexander Pfaff, in his essay “Pseudo-Partitives and Individuation: A Study on Adnominal Genitives in German”, investigates the acceptance of the use of genitive case for the juxtaposed superset in pseudo-partitive constructions in standard German. This research, executed with the help of a Grammaticality Judgment Task submitted to native speakers of German, confirms earlier research that claims that the acceptability of the use of the genitive is essentially limited to pseudo-partitives containing a plural noun preceded by an adjective, as in *eine Gruppe ausländisch-er Studenten* ‘a group (of) foreign-GEN students’. The results, however, also suggest that individuation plays an important role in the acceptance. The use of the genitive is rated much higher if the superset contains a noun referring to an individual than when it refers to food.

In her contribution “Corpus Perspectives on Some Irish Gaelic (Pseudo-)Partitives”, Dóra Póddór studies some quantificational and partitive structures in Irish Gaelic. Literature on partitivity in Irish is scarce. The data were collected on the basis of an online corpus and online dictionaries. Three constructions are investigated: quantificational constructions such as ‘a little of French’, a pseudo-partitive construction with *cuid* ‘part, portion’ and a body part, and a partitive construction with nouns functioning as personal numerals that are used for counting people, as in ‘three people/persons of children’ (= ‘three children’). The results of the research are presented in a quantitative and qualitative way.

In their essay “Possessive Partitive Strategies in Uralic: Evidence from Mari and Hungarian Quantifiers and Inflected Adpositions”, Gabriella Tóth, Kata Kubinyi and Anne Tamm analyse proper partitives in Hungarian and Mari, where possessive agreement with the superset appears on the quantifier that represents the subset or the postposition that links the subset to the superset. Hungarian and Mari differ in where the possessive suffix that indicates the number and person of the superset can or must occur in proper partitive structures.

In her essay “The Partitive Pronoun ER in Two National Varieties of Standard Dutch”, Petra Sleeman investigates the acceptance, by

native speakers of Netherlandic Dutch and Belgian Dutch, of the use of the partitive/quantitative pronoun *er* with a broad range of elliptical NP types. These include NP types for which national variation is signalled in the Dutch Reference Grammar, but also NP types not described in the sections on *er* of that grammar. The results show that the acceptance of *er* by the two groups of participants differ in various contexts, but that, in the case of variation, the variant that is preferred by the Netherlandic Dutch participants is also accepted to some extent by the Belgian Dutch participants.

Rodolfo Basile, in his contribution “‘I Am Also Found on Facebook’. Locuphoric ‘Find’-Based Strategies in Finnish Internet Corpora”, investigates the (frequency of) use of locuphoric forms (1st and 2nd person) of the existential verb *löytyä* ‘to be found’. In his digital corpus study he found that in the existential reading, locuphoric forms with this verb form are (marginally) used to signal the speaker’s or addressee’s presence on the Internet. While in this case the locuphoric forms may only be used in the nominative case, Rodolfo Basile also investigated competing constructions with the verb *löytää* ‘to find’, namely the Impersonal and the Impersonal Passive constructions, where the agent is not expressed and the patient is susceptible of nominative-partitive alternation. The corpus data revealed that accusative case on locuphoric forms was preferred in these constructions, although partitive case was not excluded.

Natalia Lehka, Lesia Chaika, Anne Tamm and Natalia Vaiss study genitive-accusative case alternation in Ukrainian, a lesser studied Slavic language, in their contribution “Ukrainian Aspect and Object Case in ukTenTen: The Partitive Genitive of Perfective Verbs and Mass Nouns”. The goal of their study is to establish the patterns of usage of the Ukrainian (partitive) genitive and accusative object. The corpus that they use is a Ukrainian corpus extracted from Sketch Engine, and it contains texts from 2020 that were collected on the Internet. The authors study the relation between case and perfective/imperfective verbs, the influence of Aktionsart-prefixes on case alternation and the relation between concrete and abstract nouns and case alternation. As expected, verbal prefixes and nominal properties matter for the emergence of partitive genitives. However, also imperfective verbs have partitive genitive objects, whereby abstract mass nouns are more frequent than concrete mass nouns, and aspect does not influence the case of abstract mass nouns.

Abbreviations and Notations

ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
ADE	adessive
ALL	allative
ART	article
CL	clitic
CNG	connegative form
DAT	dative
DEM	demonstrative
ELA	elative
GEN	genitive
ILL	illative
IMP	imperative
M	masculine
NEG	negation
NOM	nominative
PART	partitive
PL	plural
POSS	possessive
PRES	present tense
PRF	perfect
PST	past tense
SG	singular
WK	weak

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