

Translative Case in Finnish: A Force-Dynamic Account

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In Finnish, translative case is strongly associated with the notion of change (cf. e.g. Fong 2003, Matushansky 2008 and references therein). It is assigned to predicative complements of such verbs as *tulla* ‘become’ and *muuttua* ‘change’, ‘turn (into)’ (1) and to resultative phrases (2):

- (1) Toini tul-i sairaa-ksi.
 Toini.n become-past.3s ill-tra
 ‘Toini became ill.’
- (2) Ravist-i-n mato-n puhtaa-ksi.
 shake-past-1s carpet-a clean-tra
 ‘I shook a/the carpet clean.’

However, as pointed out by Fong (2003), the view that translative case entails change is challenged by its appearance on complements of such verbs as *jääda* ‘remain’ and *jättää* ‘leave’:

- (3) Matti jä-i vanha-ksi-poja-ksi.
 Matti.n remain-past.3s old-tra-boy-tra
 ‘Matti remained a bachelor.’

Thus, (3) does not entail a change. On the opposite, Matti is entailed to remain in the same state which held of him originally. One way to account for instances like (3) is by putting forward a modal analysis according to which the translative is licensed not only when an event of change actually takes place but also when it is expected (but possibly never occurs). This line of analysis is proposed by Fong (2003). Indeed, (3) is associated with an expectation that Matti would get married, plausibly with his desire to get married, which ultimately remains unfulfilled. Fong demonstrates that in this respect the translative-taking *jääda* differs from the essive-taking *pysyä*, which, too, can be translated as ‘remain’. Thus, if *jää* in (3) is substituted by *pysyi*, the sentence no longer implies that Matti desired to get married, and the predicate must appear in essive case.

However, such an analysis would mean that the translative is compatible with a change in two directions: both from P to not P and from not P to P (where P is the property denoted by the predicate). Thus, in (1), the change is from not being sick to being sick (from not P to P). In contrast, in (3), the previously expected, potential, change is from being a bachelor to not being a bachelor (from P to not P). However, if this were the case, we would expect (1) to be ambiguous. It should mean either that Toni became ill or that he recovered from sickness. Contrary to this expectation, the second reading is unavailable.

Instead, I propose that translative case-marking is sensitive not to the notion of change per se but rather to an inherent component of change: energy being exerted for the purposes of the P-state to hold. I follow Talmy’s (2000) insight that the semantics of such verbs as *stay*, *keep* and *remain* (unlike *be*) involves **force dynamics**. (Copley and Harley (2015) informally define force as “an input of energy that arises from the objects and properties in a situation.”) Roughly, with such verbs, force is entailed to be exerted in order for the situation to remain unchanged. This makes the above-listed verbs more dynamic than classical statives. To illustrate, *The ball kept (on) rolling along the green* (Talmy 2000:412) is compatible with a situation whereby the ball has a tendency to remain in place, but the tendency is overcome by an external force acting on it. Analogously, I propose, the use of *jääda* in (3) suggests that Matti has a tendency / desire to get married, but other circumstances (for instance, girls saying “No”) force him to remain in the bachelor state. In contrast, *pysyä* is purely stative. It implies no force or dynamics and is used merely to assert that no change of state took place.

