ITKONEN STRUCTURES: 50 YEARS ON

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ITKONEN STRUCTURES

Itkonen structures are nonfinite propositional complements headed by participial forms of verbs including ‘say’ and ‘think’ (Vainikka & Brattico, 2014):

Nominative and genitive case on embedded objects are generally in complementary distribution as determined by Jahnsson's Rule (Jahnsson 1871, Kiparsky 2001). However, in Itkonen structures, the cases are in free variation.

(1) **Active matrix verb, embedded existential clause**
Pekka luul-i [metsä-ssä ole-va-n **?karhu ~ karhu-n**]
Pekka.NOM think-PST [forest-INE. be-ACT.PRES-GEN **bear-?NOM~GEN**]
'Pekka thought there to be a bear in the forest'

(2) **Passive matrix verb, embedded existential clause**
Metsä-ssä luul-tiin [ole-va-n **karhu ~ ?karhu-n**]
forest-INE. think-PASS.PST [be-ACT.PRES-GEN **bear-NOM~?GEN**]
'There was thought to be a bear in the forest'

(3) **Active matrix verb, embedded predicative clause**
Pekka luul-i [Mati-n ole-va-n **sotilas ~ ?sotilaa-n**]
Pekka.NOM think-PST [Matti-GEN be-ACT.PRES-GEN **soldier-NOM~?GEN**]
'Pekka thought Matti to be a soldier'

(4) **Passive matrix verb, embedded predicative clause**
Mati-n luul-tiin [ole-va-n **sotilas ~ ??sotilaa-n**]
Matti-GEN think-PASS.PST [be-ACT.PRES-GEN **soldier-NOM~??GEN**]
'Matti was thought to be a soldier'

ITKONEN 1976, 1981

Experimental study of case variation in complex clauses:

- n=128 Finnish university student participants
- 28 forced-choice items (nominative vs. genitive-marked embedded object)
- Varied syntactic context: active/passive matrix clause + existential/predicative embedded clause

Findings and claims:

- GEN produced more under actives than passives, and in existentials than predicatives
- Context is ongoing diachronic change from genitive to nominative
- Change originated in context of matrix passive + embedded predicative
- Genitive-to-nominative change is proceeding via **syntactic analogy**

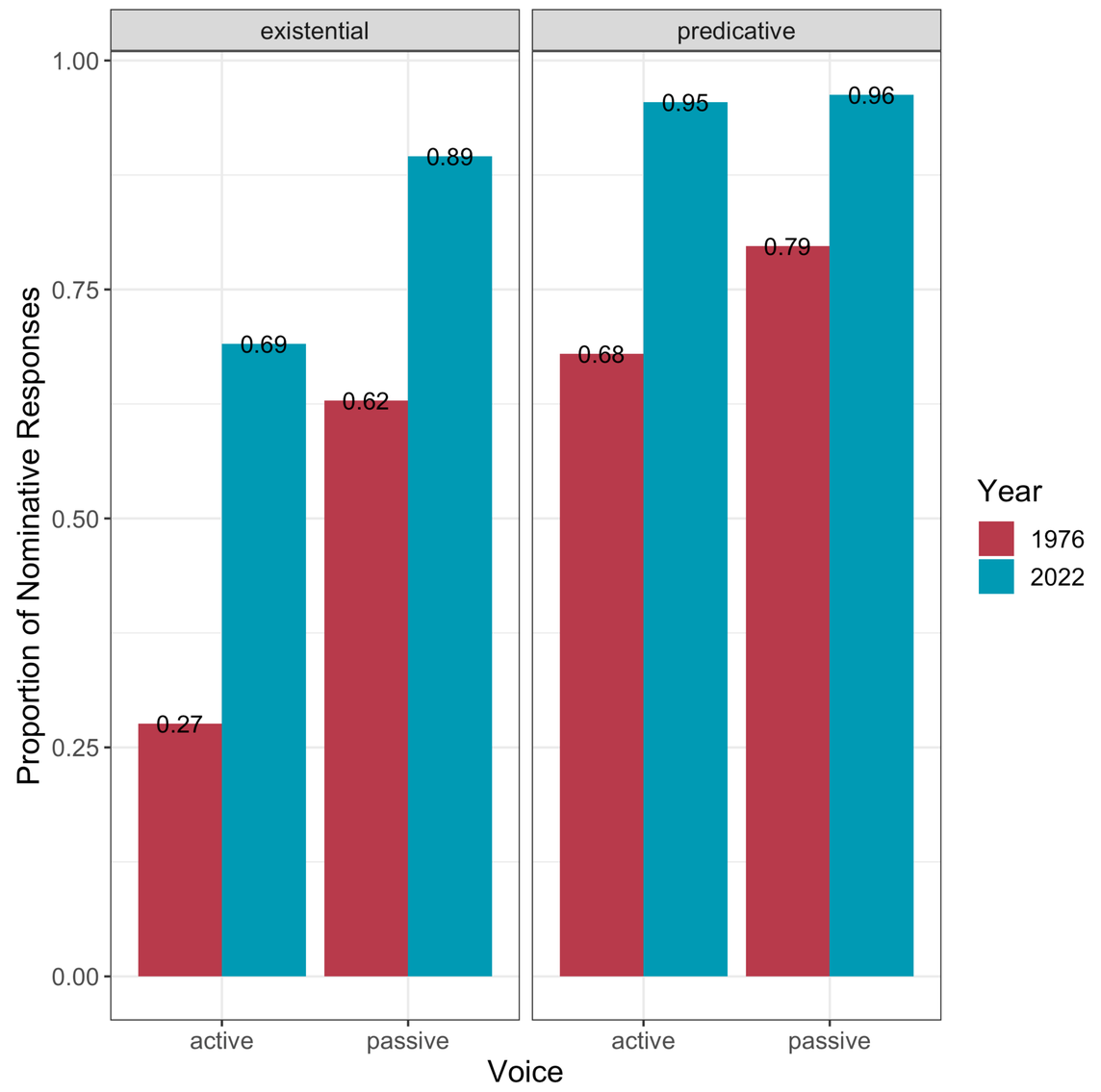
METHODOLOGY

We conducted a faithful replication & expansion of Itkonen (1976):

- n=126 participants recruited via Prolific
- 42 forced-choice items
  - **First 22:** Itkonen (1976) items in randomized order
  - **Subsequent:**
    - Additional 15 negated forms
    - 3 attention checks
    - 2 re-formulated stimuli



RESULTS



CONCLUSION

- Present-day Finnish speakers produce nominative case at higher rate in Itkonen structures than participants in Itkonen’s 1976 experiment
- Our data support claim that there is a change in progress from a preference for genitive case to a preference for nominative case
- Our data reflect implicational hierarchy proposed in Anttila & Kim (2017):
  - Change from nominative to genitive is progressing from passive predicatives to active existentials:
  - **Passive predicative >> active predicative >> passive existential >> active existential**
- Demographic information collected on our participants shows that younger people produce nominative case more, further supporting the claim that this is a change in progress.

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