Typological overview of Estonian syntax

Abstract

The paper presents a concise overview of the main syntactic features of Estonian. It deals with basic clause patterns, case marking of arguments, verbs and verb categories, non-verbal predication, word order, expression of speech acts and negation, noun phrases, p-phrases, subordinate clauses, and coordination.

1. Introduction

The Estonian language belongs to the Finno-Ugric language family, but typologically it belongs to SAE periphery. Estonian is an agglutinating language but rather fusional and analytic compared to most Finno-Ugric languages. Language contacts have contributed to the development of features that differ from the other Finno-Ugric languages. German has profoundly influenced the syntax of Standard Estonian.

The paper presents a concise overview of the main syntactic features of Estonian. It deals with basic clause patterns, case marking of arguments, verbs and verb categories, non-verbal predication, word order, expression of speech acts and negation, noun phrases, p-phrases, subordinate clauses, and coordination. The conclusion presents a list of the main features of Estonian syntax. The list of references covers the major existing publications in English; the most relevant publications on the Estonian language, though, are in Estonian.

2. Basic clause patterns

There are two basic patterns of clauses in Estonian: normal and inverted clauses (cf. also Elek 2003, 2005b). In a normal clause, the basic word order is SVX (subject - verb - non-subject). The subject is unmarked, that is, it stands in the nominative, and the verb usually agrees with the subject in person and number.

(1) transitive

\[ \text{Jaan \ eat:3SG \ soup\_part} \]

\[ \text{Jaan is eating soup.} \]

(2) intransitive

\[ \text{Jaun \ run:SG} \]

\[ \text{Jaun is running.} \]

(3) copulative

\[ \text{Jaun \ be:3SG \ engineer\_nom / ill\_nom} \]

\[ \text{Jaun is an engineer/ill.} \]

An inverted clause has the word order XVS. The clause opens not with the subject but with an adverbial or oblique, experiential clauses with an object in exceptional cases. If there is a subject-NP in the clause, it is usually indefinite. If the subject-NP is a mass noun or a count noun in the plural, quantitative indefiniteness may be optionally marked by the partitive (e.g. ex. 5. 7). In the (non-contrastive) negative clause the use of the partitive is obligatory (e.g. ex. 8). In clauses without a nominative subject the verb is always in the 3rd person singular. In the inverted clause omeni "be" is the most common verb.

The main types of inverted clauses include existential, possessive, experiential clauses, clauses of state and source-marking resultative clauses.

In existential clauses, as in (4)–(6), the clause-initial constituent is an adverbial of location (or time), and the clause performs a presentative function.

(4) Aias

\[ \text{oli:3SG \ kaavast\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{grow:1PI \ flow\_Ill.} \]

\[ \text{garden:ill.} \]

\[ \text{There were / were growing some flowers in the garden.} \]

(5) Aias

\[ \text{oli:3SG \ kaavas\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{grow:1PI \ flow\_Ill.} \]

\[ \text{garden:ill.} \]

\[ \text{There were / were growing some flowers in the garden.} \]

(6) Klaidis

\[ \text{oli:3SG \ loikus\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{glass\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{Some water was sloshing in the glass.} \]

(7) Klaidis

\[ \text{oli:3SG \ loikus\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{glass\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{Some water was sloshing in the glass.} \]

(8) Aias

\[ \text{ei \ olud:1PI \ ei \ kaavast\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{grow:1PI \ flow\_Ill.} \]

\[ \text{There were no flowers / no flowers were growing in the garden.} \]

In possessive clauses the possessor is expressed as a locative phrase. The latter is represented by the nominal in the adessive case:

(9) Jannu

\[ \text{ou \ verd.} \]

\[ \text{bros\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{Jaan has a brother.} \]

The possessor is typically animates, as in (9), but it may be also inanimate, as in Antal on

\[ \text{veti\_ill.} \]

\[ \text{The car has four wheels.} \]

Estonian makes no distinction in the expression of permanent and temporal possession.

Occasionally, possessive constructions may be formed according to the model of nominal clauses, that is, enclaving the possessor as the subject and using a special verb, such as
omas, evma ‘have’ (10). The frequency of the construction is on the increase. The pattern of the normal clause is also used to form the belong-possession, using the olenena-verb ‘belong’ (12).

(10) Jaan ombhoveb aitar.
Jaan have:3SG on PART
‘Jaan has a cat.’

(11) See auto on Jaani oma.
this car be:3SG Jaani GEN own
‘This car belongs to Jaan.’

(12) See auto kuulub Jaanile.
this car belong:3SG Jaanile.
‘This car belongs to Jaan.’

Experiential clauses can be formed according to the pattern of possessive clauses, so that the experiencer is expressed by the clause-initial oblique in the adverbial, and the ‘possessed’ state is expressed by the subject-NP, as in (13). This kind of state can be expressed also by the predicate adjectival (14).

(13) Jaanil oli / hakkas hirm.
Jaanil AD be:PART:3SG / beCOME:PART:3SG feel:GEN
‘Jaan was became afraid.’

(14) Jaanil oli / hakkas piutlik.
Jaanil AD be:PART:3SG / beCOME:PART:3SG embarrassing:GEN
‘Jaan was became embarrassed.’

The inverted clause pattern is also used in the case of some experiential verbs, in the case of some of them (e.g. meeletama ‘like’ the experiencer has to be encoded as the allative oblique (15), in others (hevattama ‘take an interest in’, häämmastama ‘amaze’, etc.) as the direct object in the partitive case (16):

(15) Jaanile meeletiivad kool.
Jaanile ALL like:3PL school:GEN
‘Jaan loves children.’

(16) Mina häämmatab see arvatus.
Mina PART interest:3SG you:GEN opinion:GEN
‘I’m interested in your opinion.’

However, most experiential verbs take a nominative experiencer, that is, the normal clause pattern, as in (17):

(17) Me armastan sind.
I love:1SG you:PART
‘I love you.’

In clauses of state the clause-initial adverbial of location or time is optional. The predicate may be nominal, as in (18, 19), or verbal (20).

(18) Väljas on kööv strong:GEN wind:GEN
outside be:3SG
‘Outside the wind is strong.’

(19) Väljas on kalme / lüheli kilmaks.
outside be:3SG cold:GEN / get:3SG cold:PART
‘It’s cold outside; it is getting cold.’

(20) Väljas mürisib.
outside thunder:3SG
‘It’s thundering outside.’

The source-marking resultative clause (Erelt 2005b) is a marginal type of the resultative clause, where not the resultant state (goal) is marked, as in the normal resultative clause (22), but an entity that changes its state (21).

(21) Poisist kassas
boy:PL grow:PART:3SG
mees.
male.
‘The boy grew into a man.’

(22) Pois kassas
boy:GEN grow:PART:3SG
mebeks.
male.
‘The boy grew into a man.’

3. Case marking of arguments

3.1. Object marking

The Estonian language has no secondary or indirect object. A direct object can be in the partitive (partial object) (23), or in the genitive or nominative (total object) (24).

(23) Lisa viis last kool.
father take:PART:3SG child:GEN:PL school:GEN
‘The father was taking the child to school.’

(24) Lisa viis lapsi/lapsed
father take:PART:3SG child:GEN:PL:NOM school:GEN
‘The father took the childchildren to school.’

In the affirmative clause the total object refers to definite quantity and the clause expresses a perfective activity. If at least one of the conditions is not met, the partitive is used, for example, clause (23) denotes an imperfective activity; the clause To õli vett je hakkas siis sõidma ‘He drank some water and then started to eat’ denotes a perfective activity but an indefinite quantity. In the negative clause only the partial object can be used, e.g. Isa ei viimsid last kooli ‘The father didn’t take the child to school’. Some verbs, such as the verbs of cognition, only take the partial object also in the affirmative, e.g. Isa armastab lapsi ‘Father loves children’.

The total object in Estonian does not express the perfective aspect as strongly as in the Finnish language, and for this reason perfective adverbs are often used along with it (see 4.1).
The total object is predominantly in the genitive. The nominative is used if the object is in the plural as is (24) or if there is (normally) no subject in the clause, and the object happens to be the most central argument in the clause, i.e. if the verb is in the imperative mood, e.g. Vi kura kooli? ‘Take the child to school’. Imperative, e.g. Laps viitakse kooli. ‘The child is taken to school’, or the de-informative (except cases where the de-informative acts also as the object), e.g. Laa üleviit kooli viis. ‘The father’s task was to take the child to school’.

Measure adverbials behave similarly to the object that in them occurs in the nominative/genitive or the partitive roughly under similar circumstances, e.g. Ta suusamis viis [nom] kilomeetreid / ühe [gen] kilomeetrit. ‘He skied five kilometres / one kilometre’ – Ta ei suusamist ilte [nart] kilomeetreid. ‘He didn’t ski not a single kilometre’; Oodasis pool [nom] kooli / lähel [gen] kooli / ‘I waited for half an hour / an hour’ – Mu ei oodanud ilte [par] minuti. ‘I didn’t wait even a minute’.

3.2. Marking of extra-thematic arguments

Extra-thematic arguments are external possessors (25, 26) or external subjects (27) in the adverbial case (cf. also KLAAS 1996).

(25) Tal on lapa heige.
    s/he/heads be,3sg child ill
    ‘Her/his child is ill.’

(26) Ema pesi lapsel aikul.
    mother washes child aged.
    ‘Mother washed the child’s feet.’

(27) Me lahak tal minua.
    I let:1sg s/he/heads go,down.
    ‘I let her/him go.’

In such cases possession can be inflexible (Mul on selg heige ‘My back hurts’) or alienable (Tal on auto karu ‘His/her car is broken’), animate (as in the previous examples) or inanimate (Autol on noks laski ‘The door of the car is open’). In some cases the subject of the embedded clause may be raised to the object or subject of the main clause (cf. 90, 91).

3.3. Comitative and instrumental

In Estonian the relationship of the comitative and the instrumental are expressed by the same comitative case (28, 29). SPÖLZ (2001) claimed that it is likely the result of the Germanic influence.

(28) Jaan lilas isage koju.
    Jaab go:xpast,3sg father:com home:ill
    ‘Jaan went home with his father.’

(29) Jaan sõib naugja liha.
    Jaan eat:3sg knife:com meat:ill
    ‘Jaan is eating meat with a knife.’

4. Verb and verb categories

4.1. Single- and multi-word verbs

In Estonian predicables can be expressed by single finite verbs and verb combinations with other words: a) verb + adverbial particle (particle verb or phrasal verb), e.g. kuulab alla ‘talks down’, joobab dra ‘drinks up’; b) verb + noun/adjunct phrase (idiomatic expression verbs), e.g. suubab aru ‘understands’, teeb kindlale ‘makes certain’; c) verb + non-finite verb, e.g. hetkub minna ‘begins to go’, sõidab minna ‘can go’, paneb käina ‘starts the engine’; d) ‘makes (the engine) run’.

Many particles are used to express performativity and have the same function as the total object case. The most common performatives are atoa ‘off, away’.

(30) Jaan sõid spa princip ale.
    Jaan go:xpast,3sg soap,can off
    ‘Jaan ate up the soap.’

It has been pointed out that performatives are used because the nominative, genitive, and partitive often coincide morphologically, caused by transition from the agglutinative type to the fusional type (OKSTITHAL 2000, MITSuong 2001). Although performatives can be found in Finnish, for example, they are much more common in Estonian. Particle verbs are considered to be translation loans from Finnish (HASSIBULATY 1990), but the internal development of the Estonian language has contributed to their frequent use.

The so-called ‘comitative’ constructions, where the manner of action is expressed by the finite verb and the action by the de-informative (31), constitute a separate group of the construction verb + non-finite verb. The manner can be expressed also by the convorb, as in (32). However, the so-called ‘comitative constructions’ are more common in Estonian.

(31) Vilja kihistes naerda.
    Vilja giggle:xpast,3sg laugh,down lit. ‘Vilja giggled to laugh.’, ‘Vilja was gigging.’

(32) Vilja nääris kihistas.
    Vilja laugh:xpast,3sg giggle:conv
    lit. ‘Vilja laughed giggling.’, ‘Vilja was gigging.’

4.2. Subject agreement

The verb (in the indicative, imperative, and optionally in the conditional) agrees with the total subject in person and number (cf. EEREK 1999), e.g. in the indicative:

(33) Ma/ni:ta sõita jõe≈tud jõkkset:jookse≈jõkset:jookset:jooksud:
    whe/you/you(he)/they run:1sg/1pl/2sg/2pl:3sg/3pl:
    ‘I am / we are / you are / (he) is / they are running.’
4.3. Tense

Estonian makes a morphological distinction between past and past-nost events. Estonian has the simple past tense, e.g. see 'did' and two compound past tenses; the latter are formed by means of the copula be and the past participle; perfect, e.g. on saanud 'has done', and pluperfect, e.g. oli saanud 'had done'. Estonian has no morphological form for the future. The verb surna 'become' has given rise to a special auxiliary verb that with the mne infinitive of the main verb expresses the future (34). It occurred already in the old written language, partly following the example of the German werden-future (cf. Metslangu 1996). The verb hukkama 'begin, start', which denotes the beginning, is also undergoing the process of becoming an auxiliary verb (35) (cf. Metslangu 1996).

(34) Elu saab see sel ske make olema.
life get:3SG there difficult:MNOM becoming
‘Life will be difficult there.’

(35) Loevad hukkama toimima need:1SG lecture:3SG start:3SG take_place:MNOM Friday:DEF
‘The lectures will start to take place on Fridays.’

4.4. Voice and generic 3rd person singular

There are two morphologically marked voices in Estonian – impersonal (instead of the actional passive) and resultative (stative) passive. The impersonal clause is subjectless: it describes an action performed by an indefinite human agent and can be derived also from intransitive clauses:

(36) Lase tahe ja lootage lemmik.
skippers and readers:PL book:PL
Someone is sitting and reading the book.

However, the total object of the impersonal clause has some features that are characteristic of the subject – it is in the nominative case and it usually opens the clause. Another characteristic feature of the proper passive is the (limited) possibility to add an agent phrase (in clauses with the nominative object), as in Vuendused on meie vágude poolt munitsi vähä. ‘The enemies were driven out of the country by our troops’.

Resultative (stative) passive clauses can be derived only from transitive active clauses. The passive clause has a subject that triggers the agreement of the olima-verb ‘be’. Passivity is morphologically indicated by the predicative-like tuld-participle.

(37) Me olima tuldastam.
we become:PL surprise:MNOM
‘We were surprised.’

Otema- auxiliary ‘be’ can occur in all the tenses (the present: Me olemas tuldastam ‘We are surprised’, the imperfect: Me olima tuldastam ‘We were surprised’, the perfect: Me olima tuldastam ‘We have been surprised’, the pluperfect: Me olima ohud tuldastam ‘We had been surprised’). It is also possible that the auxiliary is impersonalized in the case of the subject, for example, olemas tuldastam ‘(People) were surprised’. The latter circum-

stance, however, is not a clear indicator of stativity because the spoken language reveals also cases of double impersonal, as Ulis ei olud suunatud ‘The doors had not been closed’ (cf. Vihman 2004).

The impersonal is used to refer to an indefinite but usually a specific human referent. The 3rd person singular form with a zero subject can be used to refer to a generic human referent. The verb has the meaning of possibility.

(38) Seal võid tuldastada kohata lootamist poolt interessil parema
there can:3SG meet:DEF thereon:DEF interesting:PL-part more:PL-part
‘One can meet interesting people there.’

(39) Selles osas nõeld saab poole tunniga.
this:GEN work:GEN do:3SG away half:GEN hour:GEN
‘This job can be completed in half an hour.’

4.5. Modality

Possibility and necessity are expressed mainly lexically, but there are also some grammatical means. The most common partially grammaticalized modal verbs include a) võima ‘can, may’ that is used to express both non-epistemic possibility, e.g. Sina võid mind aidata ‘You can help me’ and epistemic possibility, e.g. Osutamatu või alati juhata ‘Unexpected things can always occur’; b) saama ‘can’ that expresses primarily non-epistemic possibility, e.g. Sina saan mind aidata ‘You can (are able) to help me’; and c) pidama ‘must, have to’ that expresses first and foremost non-epistemic necessity, e.g. Ma pean magama minema ‘I need to go to bed’.

Non-epistemic possibility is also expressed by the present passive participle (liv-participle). Its negative counterpart is the mas-form (mas-infinite + catative suffix).

(40) See problem on labendavat/labendamatu.
this problem be:3SG solve:PL:PART,fix:PL:PART
‘This problem can/cannot be solved.’

4.6. Evidentiality

Estonian uses two moods for expressing reported evidentiality – the quotative and the jussive (cf. Eevel 2002, Eerik et al. 2006; Metslangu & Parkalu 2002, Kehayow 2002). The quotative mood, e.g. ma tahaksin ‘I said to leave’, sa tahaksin ‘You are said to leave’ is a special evidential mood. The jussive mood, e.g. mina lahkuse ‘I should leave, I am told to leave’, sina lahkuse ‘You should leave; You are told to leave’, is rather an evidential strategy (Kehayow 2002) because the main and also original meaning of the jussive is optative (Eevel 2002, Eerik & Metslangu 2004). The ver-form of the quotative developed from the participle form of the present participle. In Estonian quotativity is expressed by some other forms, too: a) the modal verb pidama ‘must, have to’ in the imperfect form (41) (cf. Eerik 2001); b) the infinitive (42); c) only the pluperfect or the past participle (43).

(41) To pidä järjest väljendatud selle tulema.
the circumstance:PART instead week:PL past:PL part:PL
‘He is said to come here next week.’
The forms of the verb *pidada* can also express inferential evidentiality (44). The perfect forms also have implications of inferential evidentiality (45).

(44) *See pildipeab reibne olen, he nadv kanad dra viinud on, it nadvlastoiness. for being who stole the chickens
"It must have been / must be a fox who stole the chickens."

(45) *Pööse on sülle kakeleman känud,*
boy be.3SG again fight:INFN. go:PPIC
"The boy has been fighting again."

5. No verbal predication: case marking of the predicate noun

The encoding of adjectival and nominal predicates in the languages of the Circum-Baltic area has a peculiar feature, noticed recently once again by Starace (2003). Namely, in most languages of this area, including Estonian, the non-verbal predicate can be encoded in two ways — in the nominative and in some oblique cases. The oblique encoding is used to emphasize a temporary, contingent, or non-essential property or class-membership.

In Estonian double encoding occurs only in the case of the predicate noun and not in the case of the adjective, that is, in the expression of class-inclusion and not in the expression of property (cf. Erelt & Metslan 2003). In Estonian class-inclusion is expressed by the predicate noun in the nominative (46) or (47) transitive.

(46) *Kaja on Eesti suursaadik*
*inglisõna.*
*Kaja be.3SG Eestia. gen ambassador.tr* English:ADL.
"Kaja is the Estonian ambassador to Great Britain."

(47) *Kaja on Eesti suursaadikaks*
*inglisõna.*
*Kaja be.3SG Eestia. gen ambassador.tr* English:ADL.
"Kaja is the Estonian ambassador to Great Britain."

The main function of the transitive in the Finnic languages is to express the result of a process or an action. The transitive has extended to the copula clauses only in Estonian and Livonian, and only in the predicate nouns. In other Finnic languages the temporary nature of the state is expressed in the case of the copula (and some other verbs as well) by a special local case — the passive.

Unlike Finnish, the partitive predicate has a very limited occurrence in Estonian. Similarly to the transitive, the partitive is used only in the case of the predicative nouns. The substantival predicative occurs in the singular partitive in a small number of non-count nouns (e.g., liit, ‘kind’, tõug ‘breed’, klaas ‘class’, tüüp ‘type’ etc.), and shows category membership (48). The plural partitive is used in the case of count nouns and shows group inclusion (49).
7. Interrogative sentences

Polar questions are formed by means of the clause-initial interrogative particles kas (60) or ega (in negative clauses, as in [61]), verb fronting (62), or rising intonation (63). In spoken language questions can be formed also by the clause-final particle vii, which developed from the disjunctive conjunction (64) (cf. Lenkova 2001a).

(60) Kas ta tuled tõna koju?
Q you come:2sg today home:ILL

"Will you come home today?"

(61) Ega ta (ei) nalu tõna koju?
NEG you (NEG) come:NEG:IMP:IMP:2sg today home:ILL

"Don't you come home today?"

(62) On sal tõna naga?
be:3sg you:loc today time:PART

"Do you have any time today?"

(63) Se armastud mindi?
you love:3sg part

"Do you love me?"

(64) Tõ läks ari vii?
he leave:PASS:3sg away or

"Did she leave or?"

Content questions are formed by means of interrogative pronouns and pro-adverbs, which are positioned at the beginning of the sentence (WH-fronting):

(65) Kea su olete?
who you be:2sg

"Who are you?"

(66) Kahju ise lähedast?
where you:PL go:2PL

"Where are you going?"

8. Negation

Clausal negation in Estonian is expressed by means of the negative particle ei, which usually precedes the verb, e.g. (67). The particle ei is historically the 3sg form of the previous negative auxiliary.

(67) Õnni apletelit ei ilmunud.
today newspaper:PL. NEG appear:NEGPP.OBJ

"Today newspapers were not published."

Standard clausal negation is asymmetric, that is, the structure of the negative construction differs from the affirmative not only by the presence of the negative particle but in various other ways, too, first and foremost by the non-finiteness of the main verb (Mustako 2000). In Estonian the main verb does not carry inflections of the person and the number appearing in the negation form is present and in the past participle in the past (see example [67]). The other secondary modifications of standard negation include changes in case marking and word order. In a negative clause direct objects appear only in the partitive case (cf. 3.1.). In the case of the inverted type of clause the same applies to the subject (cf. 2.). The negation form of the verb may be located at the end of the clause in negative clauses (cf. 6.).

In the imperative and the passive prohibition is expressed by the partially inflected negative auxiliary dra (3sg), lõge (2pl), õpet (3pl), õpetamine (3pl) together with the imperative form of the main verb (68). Unlike the negative particle ei, the auxiliary verb dra may be separated from the main verb by other words (69).

(68) Ära tee rumahisi!
imperf make:IMP:2SG stupid:thing:PL:part

"Don't act stupid!"

(69) Ära hommige nula!
imperf tomorrow come:IMP:2SG

"Don't come tomorrow!"

In the case of constituent negation (the scope of negation is marked by emphasis and optionally by the negative particle nii) (70, 71), the particle is placed immediately before the negated constituents, whereas the verb is optionally (but in the case of negated indefinites obligatory) also in the negative form. The particle nii is also used to express negation within an infinitive clause (72).

(70) See ei ole / see on (mitte) rahul.
NEG be:NEG / it be:3sg (NEG) money but recognition

"It is not the money but recognition."

(71) Mind ei hääri (*häriri) (mitte) miski.
imperf NEG disturb:NEG (*disturb:3sg) (NEG) something

"Nothing can disturb me."

(72) Puhu teed mitte karjuda.
begin:1SG you:PL:LOC tell:NEG shout:3SG

"Don't shout please!"
9. Noun Phrase

9.1. Articles

Estonian has no definite and indefinite articles. The function of the definite article can be performed by the demonstrative pronoun see ‘this’ and of the indefinite article, first and foremost by the indefinite pronoun tik (developed from the numeral ‘one’) (Paudsalu 2001; R. Paudsalu, this volume):

(73) See eli on vaid veev ja rilemus.
this life be.3SG only trouble and misery
‘Life is only trouble and misery.’

(74) Sia pidi tikis maaja talama.
here.3SG must.press.3SG one house constr:min
‘It is said that a house will be built here.’

9.2. Position of modifiers

Most modifiers occur in the pre-noun position: a) demonstratives, e.g. see mees ‘this man’; b) adjectives, e.g. varas mees ‘old man’; c) quantifiers, e.g. kaks mees ‘two men’, kõik mehed ‘all men’; d) participles, e.g. pildistunud ‘a walking man’; e) genitives, e.g. rooma raamat ‘brother’s book’, eesti keel ‘Estonian language’; f) some oblique-case substantive modifiers, e.g. puu maaja ‘woods house’, nõukogu mänd ‘boated cap’. Post-noun substantive modifiers take the form of various kinds of adverbials, e.g. uts elumielus ‘the door to dwelling rooms’, abi buss ‘the drive to town’, vestus algupinda ‘conversation with friends’, mure lasse pitast ‘worry about children’, ugaars eluks ‘key to success’, etc.

9.3. Adjective agreement

Adjectival modifiers (including ordinals, demonstratives, and present participles) agree with their heads in case and number. In the nominative, essive, abessive, and comitative the modifier agrees only in number and remains in the genitive.

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</table>

9.4. Quantifier constructions

The behaviour of the quantifier construction is a feature that links the Finnic languages with the Slavic languages (Kontsevaaja-Tamm 2001). In Estonian most quantifiers (cardinal numerals higher than ‘one’ and many quantity nouns) reveal twofold behaviour. In the nominative case they govern their nominal complements by assigning to them the partitive case, but in the oblique cases they agree with nominals in case (75, 76). In the case of numerals the noun is in singular (75); in the case of other quantifiers count nouns are in the plural (76).

(75) kaks/kolmtee mee头脑 taks eeallall ‘two/several’

group.nom group.pl_part ‘two/several’

group.nom group.pl_part ‘two/several’

(76) hulk mehi ‘hulikal’ mee

group.nom group.pl_part ‘from a large number of men’

The other set of quantifiers, such as the numeral üks ‘one’ and the pronouns ig ‘each’, aidi ‘some’, kõik ‘all’, kumbki ‘each’ behave like adjectival modifiers and agree with the noun both in number and in all the cases.

(77) ühe/mehi/mees ‘one/some’

taks eeallall ‘to/into some’

(78) mõne/mehli/mees ‘some’

song.pl_part song.pl_part ‘to/into some’

Complete agreement is extending to quantifiers of the first type, e.g. suud võtta ‘one can take’; mitmed mehed ‘men’; mitmel metos ‘several men’.

9.5. Comparative construction

In the Estonian comparative sentence the standard of comparison is marked with the particle kui ‘than’ (particle type of comparative construction by Stassen 1983) or with the elative case (separative type):
10. P-Phrases

Estonian has both prepositional and postpositional phrases, but the postpositional phrase is more common. However, during the past century the relative frequency of the use of prepositions has risen (cf. EHRE (1994)). The vast majority of postpositions assign the genitive to the noun, e.g. laine päebe ‘on the table’, jõudude eelm ‘at Christmas’, õunatuse tümn ‘because of the accident’. Prepositions usually take the genitive, e.g. õile stiine ‘across the street’, or partitive, e.g. kiseta stiine ‘in the middle of the street’. Other cases are less frequent. Some p-positions can occur either as a preposition or a postposition, e.g. mõttu nõel = mõttu nõel ‘along the road’, vastu laene = vastu vast ‘against the table’. Most p-positions coincide with adverbs, e.g. majas õimber ‘round the house’ – õimber tegema ‘redo’ (lit. ‘make around’), pea siit ‘after work’ – pea hakkama ‘get started, set about’.

11. Complex sentence

11.1. Complement clauses

Complement clauses in Estonian include finite THAT-clauses (using et ‘that’ as the basic complementizer) (81), interrogative clauses (82, 83), participial clauses (84), de-ininitative clauses (85), and nominalizations (86).

(81) Ma enu (sedas), et ta laahab.
I know (TH.PART) that s/he leave:3SG
‘I know that he is going to leave.’

(82) Ma ei see (sedas), et ta taleh.
I NEG know.NEGV (TH.PART) if s/he come:3SG
‘I don’t know if he will come.’

(83) Ma ei see (sedas), et ta kahe ta leheb.
I NEG know.NEGV (TH.PART) where:ILL s/he go:3SG
‘I don’t know where he is going.’

(84) Ma arusti Juhan laahvat.
I think:PART-3SG Juhan.gen leave:PART
‘I thought Juhan would leave.’

(85) Ta valis lahtuda.
S/he WANTPAST:3SG
‘She wanted to leave.’

(86) Tena lakkamine tekitas segelast
S/he GEN lakkAMINE PART.PAST:3SG SEGELAST
‘Her/his departure caused confusion.’

The finite complement may be preceded by a correlative, which is usually the demonstrative pronoun see. The use of the correlative is usually optional, even in the case of subject clause extraposition, as in (86) et viga, et se haldis. ‘It is very nice that you came.’

In indirect speech the verb of the declarative complement clause is in the indicative or quotative mood (87). In indirect commands the verb of the complement clause is in the conditional or the passive if the matrix verb is a verb of saying (88). Where the matrix verb itself expresses command, the infinitive complement is used, as in (89).

(87) Jūri tilled, et Mart sõidub/tõistub vaade.
Jūri say:PART:3SG that Mart go:3SG/GO:QUOT country:ALL
‘Jūri said that Mart would go to the country.’

(88) Jūri tilled, et me lepiküme/teppigu omavatel kokku.
Jūri say:PART:3SG that we agree:CONT:3SG ourselves on
‘Jūri said that we should come to an agreement between ourselves.’

(89) Jūri käikis meid omavahel kokku lepida.
Jūri tel:PART:3SG we:PART ourselves on
‘Jūri told us to come to an agreement between ourselves.’

Reported speech is expressed in the tense in which the statement was originally made, that is, Estonian has no concord of tenses, i.e. Jūri tilled “Māri on [PRESS] haige.” Jūri said, “‘Māri is ill’ Jūri tilled, et Māri on [PRESS] haige. Jūri said that Māri is ill.”

A peculiar feature of Estonian is the use of the participle in complementation. After transitive verbs of saying, thinking, feeling, and perception (poltma ‘say’, avama ‘think’, nõudama ‘remember’, selgema ‘see’) and intransitive perception verbs (kiitama, tundma, paistma ‘see’) the finite object resp. subject clause may be replaced by the var-participle construction (the var-form being the partitive form of the present participle). At this, the subject of the subordinate clause is raised to the matrix object resp. subject position, cf. (90) and (91).

(90) Ta arustat, et sõna megad / sind magavat.
S/he think:3SG that you sleep:2SG / you:PART sleep:PART
‘S/he thinks you are sleeping.’

(91) Tundja, et sa megad / sa tundja megrevata.
S/he think:3SG that you sleep:2SG / you:PART sleep:PART
‘It seems that you are sleeping.’

In nominalized complements the underlying subject or the object stands in the genitive and functions as subject modifier (92) or object modifier (93) of the nominalized predicate. These modifiers cannot occur together in the same NP. The double genitive is avoided by presenting the underlying subject as a by-phrase (as in passive clauses) (94), i.e. by using the ergative-possessive strategy for marking the arguments in action nominal constructions (KOPIJSKIAVA-TAMMA 1993).

(92) Poisi lakkamine tekitas segelast
Boy:GEN lakkAMINE PART.PAST:3SG SEGELAST
‘The boy’s departure caused confusion.’
11.2 Adverbial clauses

Adverbial clauses are usually finite clauses. Estonian has relatively few simple (single-word) adverbial conjunctions. The adverbial meaning is usually marked by the form of the demonstrative, which is located either in the main clause (95) or in the subordinate clause (96). The most common subordinating conjunctions include the complementizer et ‘that’ in clauses of cause (95, 96), result, purpose, concession, and (resultative) manner/degree and kui ‘when, if, than, as’ in clauses of time (97), condition, and (comparative) manner/degree.

(95) Ma nagin liina vallanamist.

1 SING.IMP:3SG TOWN:GEN taking:PART
‘I saw the taking of the town.’

(96) liina vallanamine raanlane poolt

TOWN:GEN taking enemy:GEN by
‘the taking of the town by the enemy’

Converbal constructions are usually either time or manner clauses or functionally vague adverbial clauses. Historically converbs (des-foms) originated as inessive forms of the de-inifinitive. In addition to present converbs, Estonian also has analytic past converbs that consist of the converb of the olene-verb and the past participle, e.g. olles seinad ‘having done’, olles seinad ‘having been done’. Usually the olene-verb is omitted; therefore the past participle alone acts as the converb. The negative counterparts of converbal constructions are formed by the abessive form of the ma-inifinitive (ma-form):...
object of the infinitive is co-referential with the (subject or object) argument of the (intransitive or transitive) main clause, e.g. (109) see teid õtsid sinu teha ‘This job will be your responsibility’; see andris mulle raamatuid lugeda ‘He gave me a book to be read’. In the case of the ma-infinitive it is the underlying subject that is co-referential with the subject or the object of the main clause. As final adverbs the following forms of the ma-infinitive are used: the illative (109), the inessive (110), the elative (111), or the translative (112).

(109) Ta õits kaup soõme
s/he go.past.3sg home.ill.
‘s/he went home to have a meal.’

(110) Ta käiti kodas soõmas.
s/he go.past.3sg home.in
‘He went home to have a meal.’

(111) Ta ma koodast soõmar.
s/he come.past.3sg home.inl.
‘He came from home having had a meal.’

(112) Ta õits põsti, võtaanaks, et ta lahkub.
s/he stand up, emph.past.infl and he goes.
‘He stood up in order to emphasize that s/he would leave.’

The de-infinitive and the ma-infinitive in the illative, the inessive, and the elative are related to certain semantic classes of the predicate. The ma-infinitive in the translative (the form was invented at the beginning of the 20th century) is the form of the free adversative of purpose. Nominalizations are used for their main expression (113, 114) or purpose (under the same conditions as the de-infinitive) (115).

(113) Ma ootan tema saabumisena.
I wait3sg s/he.gen arrive.on.
‘I’ll wait until his arrival.’

(114) Pärise loojaanisel pilved puunaad.
sun.gen seting.3pl cloud.pl show.red past.3pl.
‘At sunset the clouds turned red.’

11.3. Relative clauses

The relative clause can be in Estonian a postnominal finite clause (115) or a prenominal participial clause (116).

(115) laps, kes natub
cart who cry.3sg
‘the child who is crying’

(116) natuva laps
cry.past cart
‘a crying child’

In the case of finite relative clauses NPs are relativized by using the relative pronoun strategy. The relative pronoun is based on an interrogative pronoun. The common relative pronouns include pro-substitutives kes ‘who’ used with animate referents and mit ‘that, which’ used with inanimates (a more detailed discussion can be found in Eesma 1995). In the case of a plural antecedent the pronouns usually occur in the singular, e.g. mehele, kel- lele [so] te meie mäitse ‘the men to whom you sold the house’. If the head noun is non-specificed, one can use the headless relative clause:

(117) kes võib ei re, ei pea ka soõma.
who work.part need don’t need.needs.Neg.Neg either eat.infl
‘The one who doesn’t work, needn’t eat either.’

Finite relative clauses make it possible to relativize the NP in any grammatical relation. Active participles can be used to relativize only the subject-NPs, as in (118) nativa laps, and passive participles only to relativize the object-NPs, as in estiliseks kasutustest kõlana- sed ‘the guests to be invited to the presentation’.

12. Coordination

The basic strategy for coordinating clauses is linking by coordinators, e.g. (118). However, juxtaposition can be used, too, e.g. (119).

(118) Pärise päevah ja lumna laevad.
sun shine.3sg and boat.pl sing.3pl.
‘The sun is shining, and the birds are singing.’

(119) Pärise päevah, linnud laevad.
sun shine.3sg and bird.pl sing.3pl.
‘The sun is shining, the birds are singing.’

A noun-phrase conjunction uses the AND-strategy as the main strategy, using the same coordinators as in the case of clause conjunction (120). Additionally the WITH-strategy is used (121) (the notions of AND- and WITH-strategies are taken from Sasseen 2000).

(120) Pois ja tärniki astunud ains.
boy and girl sit.3pl garden
‘A boy and a girl are sitting in the garden.’

(121) Juhan (koos/eller) sõbra laeks kinna.
Johan (together) friend.com leaves.3sg cinema.ill.
‘Johan with his friend went to the cinema.’

The WITH-marker takes the form of the connective case affix. The meaning of the accompaniment may be reinforced by the p-positions koos ‘together’ and ühes ‘together’, as in (122). If the first constituent of the construction is a personal pronoun, it usually stands in the plural, including also the referent of the other NP (cf. Excer 2008).

(122) Meie sõbraga liikumine kinna.
we friend.com go.past.1pl cinema.ill.
‘We with the friend (= I and my friend) went to the cinema.’
In the case of the AND-strategy, the omission of the repeated singular modifier does not make the remaining modifier a plural one, e.g., (123). Nor is the omission of the repeated singular head usually accompanied by the plurality of the remaining head, e.g., (124). The use of the plural head is not impossible, though, and shows an upward trend.

(123) valke manja ja aed
   little,SG house and garden

   'a little house and a little garden'

(124) ëest ja Soonne president kohtusid Helsinki.
   Estonian and Finnish president met in Helsinki.

The Estonian and the Finnish presidents met in Helsinki.'

13. Conclusion
Main features of Estonian syntax:

- Two basic patterns of clauses: normal and inverted clauses
- Existential clauses with clause-initial locational phrase
- 'Locative' possessive, i.e., adesive encoding of possessor
- Adesive encoding of experiencer
- Existential-like clauses of state
- Goal- and source-marking resumptive clauses
- Total and partial objects and subjects
- Nominative objects
- Adesive external possessor and external subjects
- Comitative encoding of instrumental relationship
- Phrasal verbs
- Coercive constructions
- Subject agreement
- Imperative voice
- Generic 3rd person
- Evidential mood
- Nominative and oblique encoding of predicate noun
- Flexible SVO-order with V2-tendency
- Particle-initial or verb-froniting polar questions and WH-froniting constituent questions
- Particle negation
- Lacking of articles
- Predominant use of pre-noun modifiers
- Agreement of adjectival modifiers
- Case-governing and agreeing quantifiers
- Particle and separative comparative
- Predominant use of postpositions
- Finite and non-finite complement clauses, including participial complements
- Finite and non-finite adverbial clauses, including constructions of verbs and two different infinitives
- Postnominal finite relative clauses, relative pronoun strategy; prenominal participial clauses
- AND- and WITH-coordination

References
Linguistic strategies and markedness in Estonian morphology

Abstract

Estonian has features characteristic to both agglutinative and inflectional languages. The paper outlines in more detail the standing of different morphological subsystems on the inflective–agglutinative–analytic scale and characterizes the strategies Estonian uses to express the values for some core grammatical categories. It is concluded that Estonian verbal morphology is more agglutinative than nominal and adjectival morphology. The somewhat weaker grammaticalisation of verbal morphology indicates that Estonian is not action oriented, but rather object-oriented. The well grammaticalised moods, particularly the ones expressing evidentiality and a rather weakly grammaticalised tense and missing aspect further characterises Estonian verbal morphology as conversationally rather than temporarily organized.

1. Introduction

In a broad sense, the traditional morphological typology proposed in the 19th century by Schlegel and later modified and refined by a number of linguists, is still used as a reference framework for general characterisations of the morphological makeup of languages. Yet the advancement of typological studies has clearly shown the limits of such classifications. Contemporary typologists do not try to classify the whole languages into types but rather study separate grammatical phenomena to see how these phenomena are encoded in different languages (see Croft 2005). Thus, instead of language types, typologists study linguistic types or strategies for expressing a given grammatical category.

I chose an eclectic approach for the overview: first I characterise Estonian morphology from a traditional point of view outlining its standing on the agglutinative–inflective–analytic scale. Then I proceed to a more detailed account characterising the strategies Estonian uses to express the values for some core grammatical categories. This is done from the perspective of typological markedness as developed in Croft (2003).

2. The morphological structure of Estonian

The morphological structure of words was the first basis for typological classification, known as morphological typology. The classification was proposed by Franko and August Schlegel, elaborated by Schleicher, later by Sapir et al.

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