

## A General Comparison of Estonian and Finnish

### *1. Classical morphological typology*

V. Skalička about the Uralic languages: “Predominance of the agglutinating type with an addition of the polysynthetic, inflectional, isolating and also introflective types.” The proportion of flexion is high in Estonian, Lapp, Livonian. The shortening of word-forms, gradational changes, complication of form-building and other changes during the genesis of the Estonian language in the first half of the previous millennium. Finnish has retained a larger number of old features.

- Formation of noun plurals: E agglutinating *de-* and *i-*plural (*jalga-de-s*, *ilusa-i-s*), inflecting stem plural (*jalu-s*); F agglutinating (*jala-t*, *jalo-i-ssa*).
- Case formation: E introflection (stem alternation differentiates grammatical case forms without endings: *jalg* : *jala* : *jalga*; *uba* : *oa*).
- New agglutinating morphology in Estonian: *de-*plural, *sid-*partitive in the plural, *-sse-*illative.
- In agglutinating languages, endings often consist of a separate syllable; cf. E *-st*, *-l*, *-lt* and F *-stA*, *-llA*, *-ltA* (E *jalast* – F *jalasta*).
- A large number of declination and conjugation types in Estonian (the largest in Finno-Ugric languages).
- Inflecting features: homonymy of forms and endings, which has expanded in Estonian but is restricted in Finnish. (E. *-ta-*: 1) causative, 2) passive, 3) abessive; *soovi/ta* 1) 'recommend!', 2) passive stem of 'wish' – *ei soovita* 'is not wished', 3) 'without a wish').
- Lexical homonymy: a difference in Estonian caused by the stem-vowel: *õlg* : *õla* - 'shoulder' – *õlg* : *õle* 'straw'.
- Absence of possessive suffixes and few personal endings in Estonian – isolating expression of person by means of pronouns.
- Verb forms: analytic tenses and constructions in both languages. Inflecting and analytic manifestations can be found also in IE languages (Lithuanian, Greek, etc.).
- In Finnish syntax the non-finite forms and constructions show broader use, which is characteristic of agglutinating languages.

- The number of morphemes in Estonian word-forms is limited (1–2); typical agglutinating languages reveal long word-forms with many endings.

Estonian: the agglutinating type has decreased; there is a tendency towards the inflecting and isolating types. Finnish is mainly agglutinating, but there are some features of other types (analytic constructions, a low degree of form homonymy; occasionally there is no clear-cut border between the stem and the ending: *juossut, tullut, tulee, metsään*; there are some morphemes that share a number of grammatical meanings: *katso-taan* ‘is watched’).

- **Agglutinating – inflecting**

- (1) E *sukk: suka : sukka*, F *sukka: suka-n : sukka-a*; ‘stocking’ (NOM – GEN – PRTV)
- (2) E *pesa : pesa : pesa*, F *pesä : pesä-n : pesä-ä* ‘nest’ (NOM – GEN – PRTV)
- (3) E *lampi : lampe*, F *lamppu-a : lamppu-j-a* ‘lamp’ (SG PRTV – PL PRTV)
- (4) E *pere-sid* F *perhe-i-tä* ‘family’ PL PRTV
- (5) E *tallu ~ talu-sse* ‘farm’, *perre ~ pere-sse*, F *talo-on, perhee-seen*

➤ How many morpheme boundaries can you find in the Estonian and Finnish examples?

- **Synthetic – analytic**

- (6) E *puu otsas* – F *puussa* ‘in the tree’, E *arsti juures* – F *lääkärissä* ‘at the doctor’
- (7) E *abivalmis* – F *auttavainen* ‘helpful’, E *klaasitäis* F *lasillinen* ‘ein Glasvoll’

(8a) E      Kass    lõhku-s      pesa  
           Cat    destroy-PST   nest:PRTV

(8b) F      Kissa   rikko-i      pesä-ä  
           Cat    destroy-PST   nest-PRTV  
           ‘The cat was destroying the nest’ (imperfective)

(9a) E      Kass    lõhku-s      pesa            ära  
           Cat    destroy-PST   nest:GEN      completely

(9b) F      Kissa   rikko-i      pesä-n  
           Cat    destroy-PST   nest-GEN  
           ‘The cat destroyed the nest’ (perfective)

- Which functions does the word *ära* (9a) have?

## II. Typology of syntactic structures and components

- **Word order**

SVO in both languages; V2, frame construction in Estonian – cf. D (11c), (12c).

(10a) E        Ta luge-s        **raamatu-t**  
              he read-PST    book-PRTV  
              'He was reading a book ' – imperfect

(10b) F        Hän luk-i        **kirja-a**  
              he read-PST    book-PRTV  
              'He was reading a book' – imperfect

(11a) Anna        **on**                oma    raamatu-d                **üumber tõst-nud**  
              Anna:NOM    be:PRS        her    book-PL:NOM            rearrange-PART  
              'Anna has rearranged her books'

(11b) Anna **on**                **siirtä-nyt**    kirja-nsa    toiseen paikkaan  
              Anna be:PRS        move:PART    book-3SG    other place : ILL

(11c) Anna **hat** ihre Bücher **umgestellt**

(12a) Täna **tule-b**                Anna koju  
              today come-PRS    Anna home  
              'Today Anna comes home'

(12b) Tänaän        **Anna tulee** kotiin  
              today                Anna come home

(12c) Heute **kommt** Anna nach Hause

- **No *habeo*-construction** (locative possessive construction, copulative analytic tense forms with the verb *olla* 'be'):

(13a) **Lapse-l**        **on**        õun

(13b) **Lapse-lla**    **on**        omena  
              Child-ADESS is    apple:NOM  
              'The child has an apple'

(14a) Ma    **olen**    seda                raamatu-t        **otsi-nud**  
              I    am    this:PRTV    book-PRTV    seek-PRT

(14b) Minä **olen**    **etsi-nyt**        tätä                kirja-a  
              I    am    seek-PRT    this:PRTV    book-PRTV  
              'I have sought this book'

- **Opposition 'total – partial' in Object, Subject, Adverbials (*osma*), Predicative**

- (15a) F Hän luk-i **kirja-n**  
 he read-PST book-GEN  
 'He has read the book (through)' – perfect
- (15b) E Ta luge-s **raamatu** läbi  
 he read-PRTV book:GEN through  
 'He read the book through' – perfect
- (16a) Venna-l on **hea-d** **sõbra-d**  
 brother-ADESS be:PRS good-PL:NOM friend-PL:NOM  
 'Brother has good friends'
- (16b) Venna-l on **hä-id** **sõpru**  
 brother-ADESS be:PRS good-PL:PRTV friends:PL:PRTV  
 'Brother has some good friends'
- (17a) Velje-llä on **hyvä-t** **kaveri-t**  
 brother-ADESS be:PRS good-PL:NOM friend-PL:NOM  
 'Brother has good friends'
- (17b) Velje-llä on **hyv-i-ä** **kavere-i-ta**  
 Bruder-ADESS sei:PRS gut-PL-PRTV Freund:PL-PRTV  
 'Brother has some good friends'
- (18a) Oota-si-n ka **teise** **tunni**  
 wait-PST-1SG also second:GEN hour:GEN  
 'I waited for another hour' (perfect)
- (18b) Oota-si-n juba **teis-t** **tundi**  
 wait-PST-1SG alreadysecond-PRTV hour:PRTV  
 'I had been waiting for the second hour already' (imperfect)
- (19a) Odot-i-n **toise-n-kin** **tunni-n**  
 wait-PST-1SG second-GEN-also hour-GEN  
 'I waited for another hour' (perfect)
- (19b) Odot-i-n jo **tois-ta** **tunti-a**  
 wait-PST-1SG alreadysecond-PRTV hour-PRTV  
 'I had been waiting for the second hour already' (imperfect)
- (20a) Ta on **mu** **parema-id** **sõpru**  
 he be:PRS I:GEN better-PL:PRTV friend:PL:PRTV  
 'He is one of my best friends'
- (20b) Hän on **parha-i-ta** **ystäv-i-ä-ni**  
 he be:PRS better-PL-PRTV friend-PL-PRTV-1SG

‘He is one of my best friends’

- (21a) F Suomi on **Eurooppaa**  
Finland is Europe:PRTV
- (21b) E Soome kuulu-b Euroopa-sse  
Finland belong-PRS Europe-ILL  
‘Finland belongs to Europe’

• **Predikative in the Nominative, Translative, and Essive**

- (22a) Peeter on **rõõmus**  
(22b) Petteri on iloinen  
Peeter:NOM is glad:NOM  
‘Peeter is glad’
- (23a) Peeter muutus **rõõmsa-ks**  
(23b) Petteri tuli iloise-ksi  
Peeter:NOM became glad-TRNSL  
‘Peeter became glad’
- (24a) Peeter on **õpetaja**  
(24b) Petteri on opettaja  
Peeter:NOM is teacher:NOM  
‘Peeter is a teacher’
- (25a) Peeter on külakooli-s **õpetaja-ks**  
Peeter:NOM is village school-INESS teacher-TRNSL
- (25b) Petteri on kyläkoulu-ssa **opettaja-na**  
Petteri:NOM is village school-INESS teacher-ESS  
‘Peeter is a teacher at a village school’
- (26) Peeter töötab külakooli-s **õpetaja-na**  
Peeter:NOM works village school-INESS teacher-ESS  
‘Peeter works as a teacher at a village school’

- **Expression of the aspectual meaning:** in the Object and (in Estonian) by means of the verb particle *ära jooma* – *drink up*, *ära viima* – *take away*, *läbi lugema* – *read through*.

- (27a) F Hän luk-i **kirja-n**  
he read-PST book-GEN  
‘He read the book (through)’ – perfect
- (27b) E Ta luge-s **raamatu läbi**

he read-PRTV book:GEN through  
'He read the book (through)' – perfect

- **Expression of the quotative meaning**

(28a) Maril **olevat** (QUOT) palju aega

(28b) Marilla **on** (IND) **kuulemma** (PARTIKEL) paljon aikaa

(28c) Mari **is said to have** (CONJ:PRES) a lot of time.

- **Genitive attribute before the noun:** *lapse raamat, lapsen kirja* ‘the child’s book’.

- **Quantifier constructions:** partitive government– congruence

(29) E *kolm raamatu-t* : *kolme raamatu* – F *kolme kirja-a* – *kolme-n kirja-n* ‘three books NOM : GEN’

(30) E *pudel õlu-t* : *pudeli õlle* (jaoks) / (ostis) *pudeli õlu-t* – F *pullo olut-ta* : *pullo-n olut-ta* ‘a bottle of beer NOM : GEN’

### III. The role of grammar in the language

The role of grammar is more important in Finnish

- more meanings are encoded
- grammatical devices are more grammaticalized
- diversity of forms, morphemes, and functions

**E word groups – F derivatives:**

(31) Diathesis: E *teha lasta* – F *teettää* ‘have sth made’, E *ehitada lasta* – F *rakennuttaa* ‘have sth built’;

(32) Aktionsart: E *küsida* – F *kysyä* ‘ask’, *kysellä* (iterative)

**F verb constructions:**

(33) Necessive construction: *on autettava* (‘is to help’)

Epistemic construction: *on autettavissa* (‘can be helped’)

Quasi-construction: *on nukkuvinaan* (‘is like sleeping’)

Avertive construction: *on putoamaisillaan, on pudota* (‘is almost fallen’)

Emphatic construction: *kiroilla kiroilemistaan* (‘intensively curse’)

**F multiple-component word forms:**

(34) F *aute-tta-v-i-ssa* (help–IMPS-PRT-PL-INESS), *putoa-mais-i-lla-an* (fall-INF-PL-ADESS-POSS)

### **F Opposition ‘total’– ‘partial’ in the Predikative:**

- (21a) F Suomi on Eurooppaa  
Finland is Europe:PRTV
- (21b) E Soome kuulu-b Euroopa-sse  
Finland belong-PRS Europe-ILL  
‘Finland belongs to Europe’

### **F Opposition ‘total – partial’ with various verb forms:**

- (35a) F Vasemmisto on saamassa **voito-n** Puola-n  
Lefties gain\_PROG victory-GEN Poland-GEN  
vaale-i-ssa  
elections-PL-INCESS
- (35b) E Pahempoolse-d on saamas **võitu**  
Lefties-PL gain\_PROG victory:PRTV  
Poola valimis-te-l  
Poland:GEN elections-PL-ADESS  
‘The lefties are gaining a victory at the Polish elections’

- Point out some more similarities / differences between Estonian and Finnish grammar!
- Could you point out some similarities between Estonian and Hungarian?

## ***Summing up the comparison between Estonian and Finnish grammar***

### **Differences**

#### I. Morphological typology:

- Finnish – more agglutinating, Estonian – more inflecting.
- Finnish – more synthetic; Estonian – more analytic.

#### II. The role of grammar is more important in Finnish

- more meanings are encoded
- grammatical devices are more grammaticalized
- diversity of forms, morphemes, and functions

### **Similarities**

- the systems are generally similar
- grammatical categories
- main features of declension and conjugation
- word classes
- main features of syntax
- SVO word order

- Opposition ‘total – partial‘ (alternations of the case of the object, subject, and predicative express nominal, aspectual, and existential meanings)
- expression of the aspect by means of the object noun
- absence of the *habeo*-construction (possessive construction, analytic tense forms)
- predicative in the nominative, translative, and essive
- genitive attribute before the noun

## LITERATURE

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