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## ON THE *vat*-CONSTRUCTION IN ESTONIAN

The Estonian *vat*-construction behaves as a secondary part of the sentence depending on transitive *verba sentiendi et declarandi* such as *arvama* 'think, believe', *oletama* 'suppose', *mõttelema* 'think', *aimama* 'guess', *kujutlema* 'fancy, imagine', *leidma* 'find, discover', *uskuma* 'believe', *lootma* 'hope, expect', *teadma* 'know', *taipama* 'realize', *ootama* 'wait, expect', *mäletama* 'remember', *tundma* 'feel, sense', *kartma* 'fear', *tajuma* 'perceive, sense', *mõistma* 'understand', *kuulma* 'hear', *nägema* 'see', *märkama* 'notice', *tunnistama* 'confess', *üttelema* 'say', *väitma* 'declare, argue', *vanduma* 'swear', *kaebama* 'complain', *kurtma* 'complain' and the following intransitive verbs: *näima*, *paistma*, *tunduma* 'seem, appear', *nähtuma* 'be seen, appear', *kuulduma* 'be heard, be rumoured' (cf. also Uuspõld 1969 : 33, Tauli 1980).

Like other infinitival constructions, the *vat*-construction has also been classified as standing somewhere between the clause and the noun phrase, i. e. as the product of a (partial) nominalization of an embedded clause. The description of the construction as a derivative of an embedded clause seems especially appropriate, because usually the *vat*-construction has an explicit counterpart in the form of an object-clause introduced by *et* 'that':

- (1) *Peeter arvas, et Mart ostab õunu*  
'Peeter thought that Mart would buy apples'  
→ *Peeter arvas Mardi õunu ostvat*  
'Peeter thought Mart to be buying apples'
- (2) *Näib, et ta tuleb esikohale*  
'It seems that he will come first'  
→ *Ta näib tulevat esikohale*  
'He seems to be coming first'

From E. Uuspõld (1982 : 47) this derivation has elicited the following statements:

- 1) If we transform a clause depending on a transitive verb into a *vat*-construction, the subject of the embedded clause is raised to the object of the derived sentence, while the case of the object is determined by general object rules.
- 2) If a *vat*-construction is derived from a clause depending on an intransitive verb, the subject of the embedded clause is raised to the subject of the derived sentence.

Reserving comment on the latter statement I should like to point out, however, that the former does not look quite accurate.

Let us consider the following sentences:

- (3) *Ma lootsin, et Juhan magab*  
 'I expected/hoped that Juhan was sleeping'  
 → *Ma lootsin Juhani magavat*  
 'I expected/hoped Juhan to be sleeping'
- (4) *Ma arvasin, et poiss/poisid on hoolas/hoolsad*  
 'I thought that the boy(s) was (were) diligent'  
 → *Ma arvasin poisi/poisid hoolsa/hoolsad olevat*  
 'I thought the boy(s) to be diligent'
- (5) *Ma ei lootnud, et Juhan magab*  
 'I did not expect/hope that Juhan was sleeping'  
 → *Ma ei lootnud Juhani magavat*  
 'I did not expect/hope Juhan to be sleeping'
- (6) *Ma ei arvanud, et poisid on hoolsad*  
 'I did not think that the boys were diligent'  
 → ?*Ma ei arvanud poisse hoolsad olevat*  
 'I did not think the boys to be diligent'

In sentences (3) and (4) the cases of a total object (nominative, genitive) are assigned to the raised part of the sentence, although usually the verbs *lootma* 'hope, expect' and *arvama* 'think, believe' do not take a total object:

- (7) *Ma lootsin seda/\*selle, et Juhan magab*  
 lit.: 'I hoped this (part.)/\*(gen.) that Juhan was sleeping'
- (8) *Ma arvasin seda/\*selle, et poisid on hoolsad*  
 lit.: 'I thought this (part.)/\*(gen.) that the boys were diligent'

In sentence (4) the predicative of the embedded clause continues to agree with the word form *poisid* 'boys' although the latter has been raised out of the embedded clause.

If the main verb is negated, the genitive case is indeed replaced by the partitive, in full accordance with object rules. This is more obvious in sentences without a predicative (5), whereas lack of agreement renders the acceptability of a negative sentence with a predicative a little dubious.

These circumstances point to the *vat*-sentence as occupying a somewhat intermediate position between a complex and a simple sentence. On the one hand, the subject of the embedded clause has been raised to the subordination of the verb of the principal clause thus acquiring certain characteristics of an object (a possibility of the genitive case, the replacement of the genitive or the nominative by the partitive in the case of negation). On the other hand, this raised part of the sentence retains its ties with the embedded clause still displaying certain features of the subject of the clause (independence of its case of the meaning of the main verb, the control of predicative agreement).

Consequently, E. Uuspõld's statement on the *vat*-construction depending on the transitive verbs is a little too categorical.

In her first article on the *vat*-construction E. Uuspõld has, by the way, also mentioned that there are cases where the subject-to-object raising is not complete. But she means only predicative sentences with the copula *olema* 'be', i. e. those like (4). Uuspõld comments on such sentences as follows: The genitive is directly the case of the agent-noun, i. e. the agent-noun does not depend (in the sense of subordination) on the verb of the main clause. Therefore one cannot consider the agent-noun of a *vat*-construction to be an object of the transitive verb of the main clause if the analysis starts from purely surface structure (Uuspõld 1969 : 35).

There are, however, more of such cases where the subject-to-object raising is incomplete. Moreover, the rule here seems to be partial rather than complete raising. There are actually but a few cases of the latter,

e. g. those of the personal pronouns of the 1st and 2nd persons and the reflexive pronoun *enese/enda* 'oneself'. The former two, depending on the partitive verb are always in the partitive case — only the presence of a predicative allow a genitive form here. The reflexive pronoun *enese/enda* may occur both in the genitive and in the partitive.

- (9) *Ta arvas mind/sind magavat*  
'He believed me/you (part.) to be sleeping'
- (10) *?Ta arvas mu rumala olevat*  
'He believed me (gen.) to be a fool'
- (11) *Ta arvas enese/end korraliku elu elavat*  
'He believed himself to be leading a decent life'

Sentences like the following make up a separate group:

- (12) *Ma nägin Juhanit koju tulevat*  
'I saw Juhan come home'
- (13) *Kujutlesin teda lapsi õpetavat*  
'I imagined him teaching children'

Those sentences may as well be a result of the deletion of the subject of an embedded clause, for as we know such verbs as *nägema* 'see', *kujutlema* 'imagine', etc. can take an object denoting a concrete person or thing also in a sentence without a *vat*-construction.

- (14) *Ma nägin Juhanit [Juhan tuli koju]*  
'I saw Juhan [Juhan was coming home]'
- *Ma nägin Juhanit koju tulevat*  
'I saw Juhan come home'

This is also confirmed by language history. Notably, the *vat*-form first used to be an attribute in agreement with an object noun, i. e. it went only with such verbs that could take an object denoting a concrete person or thing. Later the *vat*-form acquired more independence, so that in Modern Estonian sentences with verbs of the *nägema*, *kujutlema*-type it already behaves like an adverbial, while it can be substituted for by a *mas*-form.

- (15) *Ma nägin Juhanit koju tulevat*  
'I saw Juhan come home'
- *Ma nägin Juhanit koju tulemas*  
'I saw Juhan coming home'

In sentences with *arvama* 'think, believe', *lootma* 'hope, expect', etc. where the *vat*-construction should be regarded as a nominalization of an object clause rather than of an adverbial clause, the construction is a similar «semiobject» like the raised noun.

Next let us consider some cases with the transitive verb in the impersonal form.

- (16) *Juhan loodeti koju tulevat*  
'Juhan was expected to come home'
- (17) *Poiss/poisid arvati olevat hoolas/hoolsad*  
'The boy(s) was (were) thought to be diligent'

It seems a bit inadequate if we say that here we have the same kind of partial objectivalization of the subject of the embedded clause as in the previous case. Here the sentence element resulting from the subject-to-object raising is obligatorily topicalized, i. e. it is transferred to the sentence-initial position typical of the topic of the sentence, and the genitive is replaced by the nominative. Consequently, here we have a case of passivization. In Indo-European languages this process, as we know, leads to the formation of a new grammatical subject. In Estonian, however, this is not the rule, although in the case of compound tenses we can sometimes speak of a grammatical subject (Ereli 1979 : 46). Still, passivization is an object-to-subject-raising process in Estonian as

well, although incomplete, for both the nominative form and the position of the topic are no doubt characteristic features of a prototypical subject.

Subjectivalization is also suggested by the fact that (15) and (16) are essentially close to sentences where the *vat*-construction depends on the above-mentioned intransitive verbs *näima*, *tunduma* 'seem', *kuulduma* 'be heard, be rumoured', etc.

(17) *Juhan näib koju tulevat*

'Juhan seems to be coming home'

(18) *Ta tundub magavat*

'He seems to be sleeping'

(19) *Ta kuuldus tegevat seda vastu tahtmist*

'He was rumoured to be doing it unwillingly'

In sentences (17)–(19) the passive has found a lexical expression, the grammatical subject is irrefutably there. Note that the forms of the *-kse*-present characteristic of the verbs *näima*, *tunduma* and *kuulduma* are of the same origin as those of the impersonal. The *\*sen*-suffix is believed to have once had a medial function (Laanest 1975 : 157).

(20) *Juhan näikse koju tulevat*

'Juhan seems to be coming home'

(21) *Ta tunnukse magavat*

'He seems to be sleeping'

(22) *Ta kuulukse tegevat seda vastu tahtmist*

'He is rumoured to be doing it unwillingly'

In conclusion we can say that E. Uuspõld's statement to the effect that the formation of a *vat*-construction depending on a transitive verb consists in subject-to-object raising while the case of the object is defined by general object rules, is not quite correct. In the first place, raising does not occur with all verbs. Secondly, in the case of a personal clause the objectivalization of the embedded subject is only partial, while in the case of an impersonal sentence it is followed by a partial subjectivalization of the raised element. Thus the latter develops some features of a subject as well as those of an object and cannot therefore be fully identified with either any more.

#### LITERATURE

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МАТИ ЭРЕЛТ (Таллин)

#### О КОНСТРУКЦИИ С *-vat* В ЭСТОНСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ

Автор статьи выражает сомнение в том, что при переходе придаточного предложения, распространяющего переходные глаголы, в конструкцию с *-vat* (*Peeter arvas, et Mart ostab õunu* 'Пеэтер считал, что Март покупает яблоки' — *Peeter arvas Mardi õunu ostvat* букв. 'Пеэтер считал Марта покупающим яблоки') подлежащее придаточного предложения переходит в прямое дополнение при этом глаголе. Рассматриваемый элемент предложения имеет признаки как подлежащего, так и дополнения, поэтому его и следует считать находящимся между этими двумя категориями.