Unselected subjects and objects in Estonian resultatives

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The talk will explore Estonian resultative sentences that breach several constraints observed to hold of the well-studied and productive English resultative construction.

In particular, it has been observed that while intransitive and ambitransitive verbs may occur in resultative sentences with unselected objects, the obligatory syntactic arguments of the verb must be realised (e.g. Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004). This is not necessarily the case in Estonian resultatives. In (1), the theme argument of the verb *tilkuma* 'to drip', normally obligatorily realised as the subject, is not realised in the sentence. Instead, the subject is the patient argument of the result phrase *märjaks* 'wet-TRA'. In (2), it is the obligatory theme object of a caused motion verb that is not realised in the resultative sentence. (The examples are taken from the Estonian National Corpus but have been simplified for the sake of brevity.)

(1) *Põrand tilku-s   märja-ks.*
    floor   drip-PST.3SG   wet-TRA
    'The floor became wet as a result of water dripping onto it', lit. 'The floor dripped wet.'

(2) *Me   tõst-si-me/tassi-si-me/vii-si-me   toa   tühja-ks.*
    1PL   lift/carry/take-PST-1PL   room.GEN   empty-TRA
    'We emptied the room by lifting/carrying/taking the things out', lit. 'We lifted/carried/took the room empty.'

Example (2) also breaches the observation that if a transitive verb lexically entails that one of its obligatorily realised arguments is force recipient, the result phrase is predicated of this argument (Rappaport Hovav & Levin 2001). The caused motion verbs in (2) have a theme argument that is a force recipient and must normally be realised in the sentence, but the result phrase is not predicated of this argument.

A third observation is that the result phrase designates a state that is contingent on the properties of the main verb (Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004) or that is lexically determined by the verb as a conventionally expected result (Boas 2003). In case of (1) and (2), a location becoming wet or empty does not seem to be a strongly conventionalised result of a (caused) motion event. In sentence (3), a caused motion event (the man lifting something) causes a change-of-state event (the pitchfork handle breaking), which again does not seem a typical result of caused motion.

(3) *Mees tõst-is   hanguvarre   katki.*
    man   lift-PST.3SG   pitchfork.handle.GEN   broken
    'The pitchfork handle broke as a result of the man lifting something with the pitchfork', lit. 'The man lifted the pitchfork handle broken.'

A fourth observation is that a shared argument has parallel thematic roles in the two events expressed by a resultative sentence (Goldberg & Jackendoff 2004). This is not necessarily the case in Estonian resultatives. For instance, in (1), the subject *põrand* 'floor' is a participant in both events, but it is the patient of the becoming wet event and the goal of the dripping event.

Fifth, it has been observed that more than one result phrase cannot be predicated of the same argument in a resultative clause (e.g. Iwata 2020:493). This is possible in Estonian, as shown in (4). The examined resultatives with unselected subjects and objects may contain two result phrases that are predicated of different arguments: in (5a), the result phrase *tühjaks*

'empty-TRA' is predicated of the subject of the sentence, while the result phrase *põrandale* '
floor-ALL' is predicated of the missing theme argument of the verb. (5b) is a transitive
sentence of the same type.

(4) a. *Tass kukku-s põranda-le katki.*
       cup   fall-3SG floor-ALL   broken
       'The cup fell on the floor and broke', lit. 'The cup fell on the floor broken.'
     b. *Poisi-d pilla-si-d   telefoni   põrandale katki.*
        boy-PL drop-PST-3PL   phone.GEN floor-ALL   broken
        'The boys dropped the phone on the floor and it broke', lit. 'The boys dropped the
        phone on the floor broken.'
(5) a. *Purune-nud   kütusepaak voola-s   tänava-le   tühja-ks.*
        break-PST.PTCPL fuel.tank   flow-PST.3SG street-ALL empty-TRA
        'The broken fuel tank emptied on the street', lit. 'The broken fuel tank flew on the
        street empty.'
     b. *Ta   puista-s   kasti   põranda-le tühja-ks.*
        3SG   scatter-PST.3SG box.GEN   floor-ALL   empty-TRA
        'S/he emptied the box by scattering the contents onto the floor', lit. 'S/he scattered
        the box onto the floor empty.'

Finally, it has been observed that when a change of state verb is followed by a result
phrase, the result phrase further specifies the change described by the verb but does not
describe a second change (e.g. Iwata 2020:191). Estonian resultatives with selected as well as
unselected (6) arguments however may express two change-of-state events. In (6a), the
burning of the interior of the flat causes the flat to become empty, and in (6b) the demolishing
of the buildings on the plot causes the plot to become empty.

(6) a. *Korter põle-s   seest   täiesti   tühja-ks.*
        flat   burn-PST.3SG from.the.inside completely empty-TRA
        'The fire completely destroyed the interior of the flat', lit. 'The flat burned
        completely empty inside.'
     b. *Nad lammuta-si-d   krundi   tühja-ks.*
        3PL demolish-PST-3PL   plot.GEN   empty-TRA
        'They cleared the plot by demolishing the buildings on it', lit. 'They demolished the
        plot empty.'

The talk will list the key differences between the English and Estonian resultatives as a
basis for future theoretical analyses.

References

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