

Most abstracts introduce some complex patterns:
On the relationship between indefinite QPs and NPs in contemporary Estonian

Maarja-Liisa Pilvik, Liina Lindström, Carl Eric Simmul, Helen Plado
University of Tartu

The term *agreement* generally refers to the transfer of grammatical features from one linguistic element to another (Corbett 2006). Agreement occurs at both the sentence and phrase levels and can involve features such as person, number, gender, case, mood, definiteness, and other grammatical attributes (Haig & Forker 2018). In this study, we examine agreement in the context of Estonian quantifier phrases (QP) containing indefinite quantifiers *osa* 'some', *enamik* 'most', and *enamus* 'majority', which have acquired the quantifier function relatively recently (Lõbu 2011). In such phrases, the singular quantifier functions as the head of the phrase, while the dependent noun phrase is either in the partitive when being governed by the quantifier which is in a subject or object case (1-2) or agrees with the quantifier in other cases (3) (Metslang 2017). Unlike numeral quantifiers, which trigger singular marking on the noun (e.g., *kaks autorit* 'two authors', ex. 3), nominal singular quantifiers can also take plural complements. In usage, the quantifier phrases in question are paradigmatically intertwined with noun phrases (NP), where the quantifier agrees with the nominal head in both case and number (4). It has been suggested that QPs with a singular quantifier highlight the quantity, whereas NPs with a plural quantifier have a specifying function (Erelt & Metslang 1998: 660). However, it remains an open question whether this differentiation is also cognitively real for speakers of Estonian.

The constructions are subject to further variation. First, the dependent noun can be marked with the elative case in both phrase types (5). Second, when the QP is in the subject position, it introduces variation in number agreement at the clause level, allowing the predicate to appear in either singular or plural form (1). The choice of the predicate form depends on factors such as the quantifier used, sentence type, information structure, and whether the quantity is bounded or unbounded (Erelt 2017).

- (1) *Enamik abstrakte jõud-is ~ jõud-si-d õige-ks aja-ks.*
most.SG.NOM abstract.PL.PART arrive-IPF.3SG arrive-IPF-3PL right-SG.TR time-SG.TR
'Most abstracts arrived on time.'

- (2) *Korraldaja-d võt-si-d vastu enamiku abstrakte.*

- organizer-PL.NOM take-IPF-3PL PTCL most.SG.GEN abstract.PL.PART
 'The organizers accepted most abstracts.'
- (3) *Enamiku-l abstrakti-de-l ol-i kaks autori-t.*
 most-SG.AD abstract-PL-AD be-IPF.3SG two.SG.NOM author-SG.PART
 'Most abstracts had two authors.'
- (4) *Enamike-l abstrakti-de-l ol-i pealkirja-s koolon.*
 most-PL.AD abstract-PL-AD be-IPF.3SG title-SG.IN colon.SG.NOM
 'Most abstracts had a colon in the title.'
- (5) *Enamike-l abstrakti-de-st ol-i osa viide-te-st puudu.*
 most-PL.AD abstract-PL-EL be-IPF.3SG some.SG.NOM reference-PL-EL missing
 'Most (of the) abstracts were missing some (of the) references.'

QP-related changes have been noted in several studies and language planning sources. These include the replacement of the quantifier *enamik* 'most' with *enamus* 'majority' (Lõbu 2011; Erelt, Erelt & Ross 2020), a rise in the use of singular verb forms agreeing with subject QPs (Erelt 2000, Erelt 2019), an increasing preference for elative case in dependent nouns (Metslang 2017; Erelt, Erelt & Ross 2020), and an observed increase in plural use of the quantifiers such as *osa* 'some' and *enamik* 'most' (Erelt & Metslang 1998; Lõbu 2011; Erelt, Erelt & Ross 2020).

In this paper, we map all mentioned aspects of QP~NP variation in contemporary Estonian, drawing on data from various genres in the Estonian Reference Corpus (2023) and comparing it with the University of Tartu's speech corpora. Beyond mapping the scope of number agreement variation, we aim to analyze speakers' linguistic choices using multivariate statistical models and explore the factors driving both variation and language change.

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