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Crosslinguistic Studies of Clause Combining
The multifunctionality of conjunctions
Edited by
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Crosslinguistic Studies of Clause Combining. The multifunctionality of conjunctions
Edited by Ritva Laury

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Conjunction and sequenced actions

The Estonian complementizer and evidential particle et

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The usage patterns of the Estonian complementizer et in sequentially embedded actions show that it functions as an evidential particle. In oral as well as Internet interaction, clause-initial et attributes upcoming content to the previous speaker/writer and thereby incorporates another voice. Clause-combining with et is thus a collaborative achievement of the participants performing sequenced actions in real time. The development of this complementizer and evidential from an original deictic item most probably started in reported speech, where the recurrent repetition of et may have resulted in the incorporation of the last instance into the following clause.

1. Introduction

Grammar comes into being in everyday use, where people establish and maintain linguistic formats as solutions to recurrent communicative tasks. Some of these formats get standardized and accepted into literary language. Nevertheless, one of the key loci of the emergence of grammar is mundane interaction between people in natural settings, in which grammatical structures may be affected and motivated by factors that go far beyond those that motivate the production of monologic self-contained literary texts. The factor that is crucial in the use of the Estonian et, which is the subject of this study, is speakers' need to produce actions that match the ongoing conversational sequences. Et-turns are designed to carry out a certain type of action in specific sequential positions in talk. Their form and function are highly context-dependent. As et is a kind of conjunction/particle, this paper will deal with clause-combining in grammar as implemented in interaction.

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There are some difficulties with working on clause-combining in speech. The accumulation of knowledge about spoken varieties, and languages that are mainly used in speech, has led us to wonder whether explicit clause combiners are altogether characteristic of languages with literary traditions. The reason for this might be the heightened attention towards the sentence as the fundamental unit of language in the written varieties (Mithun 1988). In spoken interaction we have a variety of other resources for indicating that clauses belong together, such as prosody and tempo, and in face-to-face situations even bodily actions. However, in languages that have an established literary tradition, the overt clause-combining resources are available for usage even in spoken varieties. The question for these languages is instead that of what the specific communicative needs are that motivate their usage in specific patterns, both in spoken and written varieties.

Et has been characterized as a prototypical subordinator in Estonian grammars (e.g., Eerik et al. 1993: 110–112, 1995: 40). The problem of whether and to what extent subordination exists in spoken language has attracted researchers for at least a couple of decades (e.g., Matthiessen & Thompson 1988). In recent years, one of the central areas of subordination research has been complement clauses. Thompson (2002) argues convincingly against analyzing object complements as subordinate. It has also been demonstrated that many phrases that include complement-taking predicates (CTPs) such as I think, I know are used as phrases with epistemic or evidential meaning in actual conversations (Künkänen 1999; Scheibman 2000; Keeverlik 2003). In other words, they do not function as main clauses that take complements.

As part of this pattern, the complementizer that has often disappeared from the adversial usage of I think and I guess (Thompson & Mulac 1991a, b). The same is valid for informal Estonian, where the complementizer et does not occur with the particle-like usages of the items ma avan "I think", end "you know", and tahedalub "it means" (Keeverlik 2003). The complementizer is not even obligatory with the most frequent reporting verb äitl "say", where the standard variety demands an overt marking of the complement clause in indirect speech. Colloquially, a mere juxtaposition, very likely in combination with special prosody, achieves the same aim.

At the same time, a contrasting phenomenon can be found in some languages, where complementizers, or what have been described as such in grammars, are used much more widely and appear as pragmatic particles or discourse markers without the complement-taking predicates, CTPs (Suzuki 1999; Englebrecht 2003; Laury & Seppönen 2004). Estonian et is one of them. This provokes questions about how the particle and the complementizer may have developed and how they have been related to each other in the process. Even when a language has a grammaticalized category of complementation, it may be a mere part of a wider clause or action combining pattern at the discourse level. This proposition is especially plausible when the same word is used for both.

The current paper focuses on the sequential actions carried out with et in contemporary conversational Estonian, making use of the conversation analytic method (as presented, for example, in Heritage 1984) commonly used in interactional linguistics (e.g., Schegloff et al. 1996). The paper begins with a short overview of how et has been described in Estonian grammar in terms of its capacity to combine clauses into complex sentences and functioning as a complementizer. Then, the paper demonstrates how et combines actions into sequences, functioning as an evidential particle. The conjunctionparticle et makes explicit the relation between the upcoming contribution and the preceding discourse, it defines the nature of this contribution, and it even sets up a trajectory for the sequentially next action. The historical crossing point for complementizing and evidential usage most probably lies within the patterns of reported speech, which will therefore receive closer study in the second half of this paper. Synchronous conversational patterns may inform possible patterns of diachronic development.

The data for this study comes primarily from my telephone call corpus. It consists of 324 calls of two types: telemarketing calls from a big daily newspaper, and everyday calls between family members, relatives, friends, and colleagues. It includes more than ten hours of conversational language. Additional examples have been used from the publicly available Tartu corpus of Spoken Estonian (http://www.ee.utm.ee/siitl), which includes shorter excerpts of talk in a wider variety of situations. Relevant patterns have also been found in literature, newspapers, and in the interactional data on the Internet, especially in the rapid commentaries on online news. The source of data which comes from somewhere other than the primary corpus will be indicated (name of the book or the newspaper, Tartu corpus, Internet).

2. Et as a conjunction

In Estonian grammars, et is characterized as an initiator of complement clauses, which serve the grammatical role of the subject or object of a main clause (examples 1a and b respectively). Et can be used with or without the correlating word that formally fills the grammatical role of the complement in the main clause (Eerik et al. 1993: 282–287). The correlate is shown in parenthesis.

1a. Mull merestsime et as on aeg.

1b. I recalled that he was ill. Lit. "That he was ill, was reminded to me."
b. Ma kiiniiti (satac), et sa oidi huige.
I hearasan 3:na that-re must yke:1:2sa: bc:2sa ill
'I heard that you were ill.' (Erdt et al. 1993)

Additionally, the combination of clause with a correlate + et clause is used in a number of other syntactic and semantic functions, such as in adverbal clauses (a-c) and predicate clauses (d) (Erdt et al. 1993: 295–311). The correlates, which in these cases are obligatory, have also been boldfaced in the following example (2).

(2) a. Tu seisin nii, et sa niku ma et maad.
she stood:2sg so that her face":2sg seeng
'She stood in such a way that I couldn't see her face.'

b. Uks avanes sel maad, et tema vellet
door opened:2sg this extent that its between
tal nattamule yuo.
came:2sg to:be:seen head

'the door opened to the extent that a head could be seen.'

c. Vaatamata selale, et seng oli halme, et
desegarding that all:2sg:2sg
(talk) nadu (talk) (receive)
want:2sg nobody leaving

'Although it was late nobody wanted to leave.'

d. Kirjutanud on sedasi, et isuul jaab tosak
desk is so that sit:2sg stay:2sg left
kasi abua poode.
hand window:2sg toward

'the desk stands in such a way that the person's left hand will be close to the window.' (Erdt et al. 1993)

Correlates express the syntactic role of the following et-clauses. When correlates are used immediately before et, then et is most often prosodically latched to them. Some of these combinations have therefore been grammaticalized into new conjunctions. For example, the frequent usage of nii-et has resulted in a pragmatic particle nii "so", which initiates summaries and marks a move to the next conversational phase (Keeravallik 2000: 345–351). In most cases, however, the development merely involves phonological assimilation and reduction of the prosodic prominence of et, while the pragmatic meaning of the combination has remained the same as it had been for the correlate alone. Examples include nii + et > seet "because"; where even set + et alone means "because", and selle asemel-vet > selle "instead", where selle asemel means "instead" (Rennert 2005: 104). In addition, the formats setet > set and veto > sedal are regularly used as turn-initial particles in conversation.

These long-term developments suggest that the conjunctive function of et has been widespread for a considerable amount of time even in spoken language. The assimilatory patterns also suggest that et is more closely tied to the correlate than the upcoming clause, which it strongly projects. As we will see below, this is also true for its usage after reporting verbs and before reported speech. Et is prosodically latched onto the preceding reporting verbs. It is thus a conjunction that occurs with grammatically incomplete units of talk such as transitive verbs without objects, reporting verbs without the reported speech, and phrases or clauses with cataphoric correlates. Et occurs at the end of these units and its main function is to project another clause.

3. Et as an evidential

Considering the above description from the grammars, it is quite surprising to find Estonian et occurring very frequently in turn-initial clauses. All in all, I had about 1200 cases of et in my telephone corpus and in about half of these cases it was clear that et was doing something completely different from what is described in grammars based on written language. In most of the turn-initial cases of et, there is simply no main clause in relation to which the et-turn could function as a complement.

Turns initiated by et regularly put forward interpretations of or conclusions drawn from the immediately preceding speaker's speech. A case in point would be example (3), where the telemarketer M produces a candidate reason why client K cannot make any judgments on the newspaper yet.

(3) M: et liiga võleved kõigil just!

'et too short so far gone yeah

'et you've had (it) too short (a time)'

K: jaas.

'Yeah.'

The clause in line 2 is syntactically produced as a continuation of the contribution in the previous turn, partly by using the conjunction et but also by no subject
being stated. The clauses in lines 1 and 2 are overtly combined, and content-wise the one in line 1 is an expansion. This happens across the turns. And since it is K’s contribution that is expanded, she also has to confirm or disconfirm it, which she does in line 3.

In a similar example, (4), the client has said that she does not want to subscribe to the newspaper at the moment and the telemarketer continues to ask about the following year in lines 1–3. After the client’s agreement that it is too early to talk about that, the telemarketer suggests that the client subscribes to other periodicals this year (line 6). This suggestion is initiated by et and forms an independent clause. It is an inference from previous talk and serves as a possible excuse for the client’s lack of interest in subscribing to the newspaper offered. The turn in line 6 can be characterized as a B-event, which is “known to the other interlocutor B but not to the speaker A” (Labov & Fanshel 1977: 100), and therefore makes relevant a confirmation or disconfirmation by the interlocutor. In example (4), after an initial brief confirmation, the client puts forward a different reason for not subscribing to newspapers and thereby disconfirms the telemarketer’s suggestion.

---

1 M: ago järgmeha aastata,
    ‘but for next year’

2 K: no=
    ‘Well’

3 M: = vaa veel maisagi (k å s i d a.)
    ‘It’s still too early to ask.’

4 K: laka on (venti) vaa jah/rolla @tretaga. hh veel sedu. @ hh
    ‘Yeah, it’s too early to say that at the moment’

5 ago jah. jah, ni ti on.
    ‘But yeah, that’s the way things are.’

6 M: A et sel aastat kätvad nuga teisele sõnnaadest sead. =
    ‘This year you subscribe to other periodicals?’

7 K: vah. maha. kätvad asem maisagi, no ma olme pensioneemas minema k.
    ‘Yes, I have something here. You see, I am a pensioner’

8 ago mal et ole ka sõnnulad mit bh eriti.
    ‘I don’t have that many possibilities’

These turns in examples (3) and (4) are “formulations by news recipients” as Heritage and Watson (1979) called them. In both cases, the telemarketer is the recipient of information produced by the client. Formulations produced by news recipients can be crudely classified as “gists” that express the gist achieved thus far in a conversation, and “upshoots” that are inferences based on the gists of previous talk (Heritage & Watson 1979: 130). In examples (3) and (4), the et-
turns are upshoots. However, for the usage of et the distinction between gists and upshoots is not relevant. In both cases, et can be implemented: see example (5) representing a gist.

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5 The telemarketer has asked the client’s opinion about the newspaper.

1 K: jaa sõnakas en kell. (0.2) see, jah, ago voi. 4 kahe jätma, penel kansi poole
    ‘Yeah, (it) has content, but it’s annoying — you put (it) on the table’

2 kõige suur, viskud pikkal. (t) kõige suur,
    ‘(and it’s) too big, you lie down (and it’s) too big.’

3 M: et sõnulid teid ka pidan õLitama sii meie vormaad.
    ‘It’s the only thing that bothers you is our format.’

4 K: jah. /—/
    ‘Yeah.’

---

What is relevant though, is that this kind of formulation always makes one of the many possible interpretations of the previous utterance or previous conversation explicit: it is an attempt to provide a candidate reading for the preceding stretch of talk. In the above examples (3)–(5) the formulations are produced by the telemarketers, and the formulations thus aim at minimizing critique on the content of the newspaper and blaming more on the circumstances. Et-formulations are thus implemented at certain junctures in conversation for certain social or even institutional aims. This type of formulations by news recipients occasion receptions by the interlocutor(s) in the form of a confirmation or a disconfirmation (Heritage & Watson 1979: 141). The above et-turns are all followed by a turn where the client at least initially confirms the content of the formulation. The grammatical structure of combined clauses is thus created across turns in interaction. Combined clauses are the outcome of the participants performing sequenced actions in real time and they may in turn make a subsequent action relevant.

Besides formulations by news recipients, there are other conversational actions in which the content of the turn is a B-event, such as checking questions and repair initiations. Checking questions that are used to check on the correct understanding or hearing of the previous turn are also regularly put forward with a clause-initial et. A simple example (6) follows, where the news receipt ohau is implemented at the very beginning of the turn.

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6 The telemarketer has asked whether K wants to subscribe to the newspaper.

1 K: et sõnulid ni sai, sed me la. sõidame minema koha.
    ‘No, unfortunately we can’t see since we’re leaving soon.’
Checking questions may merely repeat or rephrase the main point in the previous turn, like the replacement of sõidame minema with sõidame oun, both "leave", in example (6). They may also put forward an inference from the previous talk, as in the following example (7). Here, the client has turned down the offer of an immediate subscription. In line 1, she refers to the telemarketer's offer to call back in December but the syntactic unit remains unfinished. The telemarketer, however, treats the turn as if it were a potential promise to subscribe (rather than, for example, a promise to think it over) by asking the question about the timeframe. The question is formatted as an adverbial phrase in a sentence that never happened. Et in this case does not combine clauses. It initiates an interpretive phrasal turn, the content of which has to be confirmed by its implied source, the previous speaker.

(7) 1: [tähendab] e tuleks kui võimalik on, siis me detsembris võtame üksit – 'I mean, yeah, if it's possible, then maybe in December we really' –

2: (0.6)


'Et for next year.'

The aim of checking sequences like this is to continuously achieve and update intersubjective understanding between the participants (Heritage 1984: 258–259). For the same reason, the recipient has the opportunity to overtly display misunderstandings or mishearings in mundane interaction. Some of these other- initiations of repair (Schegloff et al. 1977: 367–369) may also be carried out by et-turns. The interlocutor is then obliged to repair his utterance, depending on the type of problem indicated in the repair initiation. Et-turns that initiate repair characteristically involve a candidate understanding, thus etonce again attributes the subsequent content to the previous speaker. In example (8), the trouble source is the pronoun neid "them".

(8) The speaker E is looking for actors for her play.

1 E: [an] ma aga neid 'ei prügukugi' jagamine [ja]kume.

'And I'm looking for them like a fanatic.'

2. General next-turn repair initiations, such as what? or huh? cannot be done in an et-turn.

Et could thus be paraphrased as "(so) you mean", which looks like a possible cross-linguistic format used to carry out formulations. The Swedish så du menar(r) "so you mean" could serve as an example (Otte & Lindström 2005). In fact, my linguistics students interpreted the above et-turns as elliptical cases of object complements, where the preceding main clause such as you mean, you're suggesting or you're saying have been left unsaid. The students were highly literate and certainly influenced by prescriptive attitudes to language. 'There is no empirical justification for considering these turns elliptic. However, the students' reactions reflect the semantic-pragmatic value of turn-initial et, namely its ability to attribute the subsequent content to the previous speaker.

Clauses initiated by et are semantically paraphrases, formulations or expansions (Kervallik 2000), and when they form a turn on their own, they paraphrase, formulate or expand what the interlocutor has just been saying. The interlocutor also orients them as such, because he regularly confirms or disconfirms the content of et-initial turns, whatever the precise interactional function in this particular sequence. Schematically, the conversational sequences could be described as a three-step pattern:

1. Talk by A
2. Et-initial turn with a B-event
3. Confirmation or disconfirmation by A

Present-day speakers of Estonian are conscious of this content-attributing pattern, as can be witnessed in its usage on the Internet. The following examples are the very beginnings of online commentaries on newspaper articles. All of them paraphrase the articles or formulate candidate understandings of them. The articles thus function as the previous discourse enabling the writers to provide et-initiated contributions and readers to make sense of these.
(9) a. *Et people Tarso pele ühtegi tagastatavat kooslust.
"Et Tarso is the only missing schoolchild!"

b. *Et autonoomia peakse korral kutsatud toodetaid kaksist kord Эстонíaacha, see korral kutsatud toodetetaid kaksist kord
"Et the drivers should be disciplined by increasing the punishment for accidents!"

c. *Et siis kui parendab homoapiatise rehidade rühiga, on tegu ise teenetiku paremnemisega, aga kui taasneedditesi rehidade rühiga, siis arvab tabletit tõnu mille abitü Felixzardaka saravöö.
"If if she recovers with the help of homopathy: medicine/treatment, then she recovered by herself but if she uses ordinary medicine/treatment, then the pill helped and without it she would have dropped dead."

(Internet)

The formula ah et "news receipt + ET" has in particular become a regular means of initiating a word-by-word quote of a stretch of immediately preceding discourse. Et functions as an evidential showing that the content of the upcoming talk/text is taken from a previous speaker/writer. The quote itself can consist of

a single word (10a), a phrase (10b), or a whole clause (10c–e). Even though et ties the upcoming contribution to previous discourse, it does not only initiate (complement) clauses, as is described in grammars (cf. examples 1, 2 above). It also prefaces contributions of different length ranging from a single word (10a) to a multi-clausal sentence (9c) and in contrast to the above complementizing and correlate-based usage patterns, these contributions are not in a tight syntactic relationship with any previous clause.

(10) a. *Ah et ninguiga!
"Ah and which kind!"

b. *Ah et liitus elevalti samametele!
"Ah et from separated parent!"

c. *Ah et jeovimatidväid!
"Ah et (they) didn’t even try!"

d. *Ah et ürgu ma kauka!
"Ah et i shouldn’t be afraid!"

e. *Ah et tabib liitse anna jätumiskohvikus!
"Ah et (she) wants to open an ice-cream café in Estonia!"

(Internet)

In the argumentative context of written news comments, these exclamatory clauses regularly function as ironic or hostile openings of contradictory contributions, and the author of the original article lacks the possibility of immediate confirmation or disconfirmation of the content of the et-contribution. The schema for the implementation of et-initiated contributions in this particular activity is thus the following:

1. Text by A
2. (Ah) et-initiated contribution involving a quote or ironic candidate understanding (+ critique of A's argument)

   In contrast, conversational usage displays more cooperative implementations of et-turns and the recipient of the turn is expected to confirm or disconfirm the content. The pattern of news receipt + et also occurs in spoken language, followed by a candidate understanding of the received information, in a way similar to examples (3)–(8). In example (11), the news receipt an (Koeravallik 1999) occurs at the beginning of the turn. In line 1, P adds a comment about a casino ("ned" is an euphemism for "casino"), and after a negative evaluation from his friend, offers a possible reading or reformulation of it in line 3.

(11) 1 P: Nen ningu älgat pesa van.
"Is it a cool nest?"

2 T: Hadi väik h.
"Like a school!"

3 P: As, et to sise ei ole nagi mingit priiati a.
"As et it’s not like private."

4 T: Tmm eriti tab maan. =
"Not really."

Et thus indicates that the source of the upcoming contribution is not the current speaker herself or not only herself. It functions as an evidential, encoding how the speaker has come to know or conclude the proposition expressed in the utterance. The speaker has done so, specifically, by hearing or reading it from a previous speaker or writer. These contributions involve multiple voices, combining the voice of the previous speaker/writer and that of the current one. The evidential nature of et is furthermore revealed in instances when it occurs together with a CTP that initiates a report of somebody’s speech or thoughts. In reported speech, the voice of the current speaker and that of the reported speaker are intertwined. This usage of et is especially handy when the quote itself involves several clauses, which can all be initiated by et. In example (12) a single reporting verb and CTP, õendab "nags", occasions what could be analyzed as three consecutive object complements initiated by et.

(12) 1 S: I–I biis Karlo viinad otsa min mis sõna polela ta 6u õendab su kalla!
"Sometimes Karlo, which word was it that he always says me too!"
When the author and the principal are clear from the context, et can even be used to indicate the beginning of a quote without the CTP (such as "I said" above). In the following telephone call sequence (example 14), E is interrupted by a bystander, Kristi, who wants her to pass a message on to E's current interlocutor on the telephone. In line 1, E announces that she has been interrupted and after a long pause, she utters a news receipt uh soo, displaying that she has now received the intervening message. E's subsequent talk is formulated as a quote by the evidential et, which frames the upcoming question as originating from Kristi rather than herself. The basis of this understanding has been laid in previous events, where E in line 1 has accounted for the situation in which Kristi shouted something to her.

(14) 1 E: --/--- uh soo Kristi söödi nüald, måig sa ülikold.
     "Wait, Kristi shouted something, what did you say?" (to the side)

2 (2.2)

3 E: uh soo et, kas so luubival saad tulla.
     "Oh eh can you come on Saturday?"

4 P: en mm, teed gat üelda et ülaus saada.
     "No, y'know, to be honest, I wouldn't want to."

This practice of initiating a quote with et only can also be found in literary texts. In the following example (15), the author and the principal of the quote lõeja "found" and the circumstances of its production are clear from the previous sentence. The character referred to as "the man" in this previous sentence is re-invoked as the author and the principal of the quote in the next sentence.

(15) Kat moos aga ühes külast korralikku juukrendilid leidis, helistas to teisele
professorile, kes juh siis käsit neid olles. Et lõeja. (K. Murr “Eteenasti, Eemal” 2003, p. 60)
     "But when the man found a great art nouveau chair in a container, he called
     another professor who had wanted precisely this. Et (ka) found!"

Et initial clauses can furthermore be used for the dramatic effect of enacting the voice of the imagined audience. In an argumentative article about the Internasional Women's Day, the journalist complains about ambivalent feelings towards receiving congratulations and flowers. She then continues by producing a question and a suggestion, as if they came from her audience (example 16), using these et-initiated contributions as strategic means of dramatization in her writing. These contributions invoke other participants and achieve the enactment of an interactive scene in what is otherwise a relatively monologic communicative event.
(16) Et misi sii taheti? Et maudane & mürtsi meeste- & jaa saatepääruuki!
(K. Võrkulla: "Võised metsel", SL/Ootri.dek. 2006-03-08)
"Et what can (we) do? Et let's turn the 8th of March into a men's and
women's day!"

The voice of the audience is invoked entirely by the clause-initial et. This
is enabled by the pattern of repeats or partial repeats of other participants' con-
tributions in et-initiated turns (as was shown in example (6)). The journalist's
et-initial clauses are understood as this kind of echoing of the talk by other
participants.

In conversational sequences, the quoting capacity of the evidential et is partic-
ularly useful at moments when a participant has had problems hearing or grasping
a turn, and therefore initiates a repair with a general repair initiator, usually midaet
"what?". The producer of the problematic turn is then expected to redo the original
turn. In Estonian conversation, these redone versions of the original turn are regu-
larly prefixed by et, as shown in examples (17)–(19). Et indicates that it is as if
the current speaker is quoting his earlier self, invoking the voice of this previous
author of the original turn.

(17) 1 E: :hah, se ei ole. Ong sa homest midagi et las.
'Oh, okay, do you know anything about tomorrow.'
2 E: midaet.
'What?'
3 P: et see sa homest et las midagi.
'Et do you know anything about tomorrow?'

(18) 1 E: ja kes as ginist sõrpu mée et kordu vee.
'Listen, did you talk to our home right now'
2 (L0)
3 M: midaet.
'What?'
4 E: ja mulme aega tagast.
'A moment ago.'
5 M: liitle suvri.
'Say (that) again.'
6 E: et kes sa natake aega tagast sīgist sāl mée () kertuurnubriga vee.
'Et did you talk to our apartment number a moment ago?'

(19) 1 P: @hipot jaa, omme eite akju, age=>@
'Yeah, there is nothing tomorrow, is there?"
agenda in institutional interaction (Heritage & Sarisson 1994) or to smooth over grammatical or interactional discontinuities in the discourse (Turk 2004). The Estonian ja seems to work in a similar way. Et, in contrast, is used to produce more of the same, as it initiates different kinds of expansions of previous talk. It also has the capacity to overtly attribute the upcoming content to a previous speaker or writer. The previous speaker or writer could be herself, the interlocutor or a third person, co-present or not. This potential of et does not appear obvious in the more monologic cases where the speaker combines a whole chain of consecutive clauses with et, expanding on her own talk. Instead, we have to look at interactional sequences and find out what gets done in the interactive episodes by implementing an et-prefixed strip of talk.

We saw that by using et, the speakers invoked other voices in their talk or writing, building on participants' previous contributions. Et-prefixed strips of talk occurred in specific sequential contexts immediately after a contribution or repair-initiation by another speaker and their interactional import was to put forward a B-event or a quote. Some of them regularly made a specific type of next action relevant, a confirmation or a discontinuation. The et-turns presented in this section of the paper were thus "interactional configurations that link current to just past and just next conversational moves" (Schegloff et al. 1996: 38). Their contribution is crucially dependent on the immediately preceding discourse, and they themselves configure possibilities for future contributions. In this way, interactional sequences disclose essential features of et as an evidential.

4. The development of et and reported speech

The two disparate descriptions of et in grammars and in sequences of interaction raise the question of whether and how the usages may be related. Considering the above patterns, it is reasonable to hypothesise that a complementizer formerly used to project clauses has developed into a clause: initial and turn: initial particle in Estonian. This may have happened in those contexts in which there is no need to explain who is saying or thinking whatever is put forward in the talk that follows et, as this is clear from the context or co-text. The pattern reporting verb + et + reported speech may have developed into et + talk whose principal is not the current speaker. On the other hand, it is also possible that the evidential particle of first developed into a complementizer and conjunction in the literary language in Estonian, as happened in the closely related Finnish language (Häkkänen 2004: 136–137, Laury & Seppinen 2004). These options will now briefly be considered.

The historical development of the Finnish etä is the subject of another chapter in this volume (Laury and Seppinen). Since the functions of etä and et are reasonably similar in contemporary usage, the historical arguments put forward there are valid even for Estonian.3 The fact that in Estonian there is no trace of the lost final vowel å in any function, suggests either that there have been parallel identical internal developments in the two languages or that the wide range of functional patterns already existed before the sound change took place. Close language contact is another factor that may have enhanced parallel development.4

To start from as far back as possible, the stem e in et(ä) has been reconstructed in the Uralic protolanguage, which was supposedly spoken about 6000 BC. The meaning of the stem in this protolanguage has been claimed to be "this", i.e., tóma in Finnish (Häkkänen 2004: 136) or diter, -e in German (Räde 1986–91). There is general agreement that e was a pronominal element, but it is obviously very difficult to determine the exact nature of deictic items in a language spoken so far back in time and which was never recorded on video, something that is essential in understanding deictic activity.

The -ä component (-ää in Finnish) is a pronominal modal ending and dates from the later Balto-Finnic period (Rann 1982; Mägiste 1982–83; Häkkänen 2004: 136), which lasted until the first centuries AD. The original meaning of et(ä) has thus been claimed to be "in this way, so" (Häkkänen 1968: 64; Häkkänen 2004: 136). With this in mind, Laury and Seppinen (2004) propose three alternative ways in which the conjunction and the particle could have developed: from subjunction to particle, from particle to subjunction, and an option that the particle and the subjunction both originate from their position after verbs of speaking, where et(ä) introduced reported speech.

In current usage, it is not by any means always possible to tell the particles and conjunctions apart. Instead, different instances form a continuum from an ambiguous conjunctions via paraphrasing usage to clear evidentials. Historically, however, there seems to have been some kind of grammaticalization of a more deictic referential item into something more subjective and textad (a path outlined for English by Trabant 1982). Since the oldest Estonian literary sources

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3. Interestingly, the two languages seem to have recently become more similar in terms of et usage. During the last 15 years after Estonian re-independence and the fall of the iron curtain, there contacts between Estonians and Finns have expanded explosively. Lively cross-linguistic communication has most probably caused an increase in the frequency of clause initial et in Estonian, especially in the function of a very general conjunction, which simply indicates that the upcoming clause is a continuation of what has been said earlier. This observation is supported by the data in my corpus from 1997/98, where only younger adults use this pattern extensively. In contrast, at the present moment the usage is already widely spread in Estonian broadcast as well as among the representatives of older generations.

4. In colloquial Finnish too, etä is frequently shortened into et.
from the sixteenth century AD display et as a conjunction and complementizer (Ohashi et al. 1997), it is tempting to consider these forms as primary. In addition, in early written Finnish, the variety of conjunctive functions seems to have been wider than in present day Finnish (Häkkikinen 2004: 137). However, although these early texts were often used in a spoken form, they were not interactive, and we would not expect them to reveal conversational patterns, such as described in section 3 of this paper. Thus, the evidential particle may simply already have developed into a conjunction by the sixteenth century and never show up in written texts. Furthermore, the styles of and aims of writing have varied through history, in terms of formality and interactivity among other things, making historical comparisons difficult.

The continuum of more particle-like and more conjunction-like usage of et could easily become more polarized with the rise of literary Estonian. In the case of Finnish, it has even been suggested that the complementizer etti developed first in the literary language under the influence of the Swedish atti (Häkkikinen 2004: 136–137). At that time, Finnish and Estonian were already separate languages and the Swedish influence cannot be considered significant for Estonian to the same extent as for Finnish. Instead, the predominantly German-speaking authors of the first Estonian texts could have been imitating the German class pattern. We also know from earlier research that conjunctions in general are more characteristic of written language (Mäthtour 1988, Laury & Seppänen 2004). Due to the limitations of early historical sources we cannot therefore be sure that the evidential usage was missing in the period that the early writings date from.

If the evidential particle in fact came first, we may not have documented support for this in the case of et, but several other particles have certainly developed from deictic elements. What we do not know is whether a deictic item meaning "in this way" can develop into an initiator of reported speech and paraphrases, ending up as an evidential particle. A comprehensive overview of grammaticalization phenomena in the world's languages presents conjunctions and subparticles but not particles as possible historical outcomes of the development of deictic elements (Heine & Kuteva 2002: 106–116). On the other hand, the reason why we do not find these developments in the literature on grammaticalization may be that the action of initiating paraphrases need not always be considered a part of the grammatical structure of language. It is thus difficult to document and argue for a single path of development for the originally deictic etti into a conjunction and a particle.

However, its occurrence after verbs of reporting and before reported speech most probably constitutes a crucial stage in the development (Laury & Seppänen 2004), as both the complementizing and evidential functions are salient there. In this position, et may have become involved in the regular pattern of complementation on the one hand, and closely connected to the following clause on the other.

It may then have gained its independence from the preceding reporting CTP and become a clause-initial and turn-initial particle. There are at least two problems with this proposal, though. First, in many other documented cases, the complementizer is simply not used after CTPs (Thompson & Malac 1991: 31; Aijmer 1996; Kärikäänen 1998; Keeverik 2003), something which is also true of Estonian CTPs. Second, in Finnish & Estonian, etti(ə) usually latches prosodically to the preceding CTP. This latching has, for example, resulted in the reporting item itset, which consists of the third person imperfect form of the verb "say" and et (Hennote 2004: 516; also displayed in lines 3 and 5 in example (20) below). There is thus good reason to believe that the complementizer and evidential would rather assimilate to the preceding CTP or disappear altogether. When the reporting verb is not used, the occurrence of the prosodically non-prominent etti(ə) should be even more unlikely. Nevertheless, as we have seen, et is often used clause-initially and in contexts without the CTP.

To solve this problem, we could hypothesize an earlier state when etti(ə) was more prominent, possibly when it was used as a full pronounal-verb meaning "in this way". This could have protected etti(ə) from assimilating and disappearing. Another place to look for possible clues to the reason for its persistence could be the current patterns emerging in the production of reported speech, historically the key site for the development of clause- and turn-initial et(ə).

In some previous examples of et has already been seen to be repeated at the beginning of consecutive clauses within reported speech (examples 12–13). There is plenty of evidence of this kind of chains of reported clauses in Estonian, such as in example (20).

(20) 1 A: pähkõväral käinõ-bl. (.) õnnammas sis Kait pe-ja, (0.5) ja sis-õ
On Sunday they went to visit (her), Kais was there and Aro and

2 Aro-ja, (1.2) käinõ tiistad=et-noh (.) olj garem kiil juba almad=et
they went there, they said and so (0.8)

3 (0.8) ees=et cue-ut= no idika õige on ja niisk-e, et. (.) jõngkast kodagi et gle,
'tem and but no (she) is still sick and weak, et (.)

4 nema oli õige sis. <(1.0) õksi=et=moh, (0.5) et ega in kõhuda koll-e, they had taken (her) along. (1.0) (she) said and so (0.5) et she doesn't
't have the strength

5 õõme=et=moh jõudis õige aina pikk all palju, (0.5) õksi=et
'to walk, and so she had the strength to sit in the car so long, (0.5)

(she) said et

6 maa=et maa sõlgiti toila on-et õksi saat va (.) kutsu=ja
'I said et there is nothing to do there, et and here you can call the doctor.'

(Tartu corpus)
Let us look closer at the above excerpt. The story is about a visit by Kaie and Arno to an elderly person. The first example of reported speech starts in line 2 with üld “they said” and consists of three clauses, all of which are separately prefaced by et (lines 2–3):

\[ \text{et noh } 1 \text{ all tagas krull juba abeal} \]
\[ \text{et eko et no ikka age en ja mitl} \]
\[ \text{et } (\ldots) \text{ tõrkehant hedagil et akl} \]

The next clause is not initiated by et and does not belong to the quote; nema aik aik toam u u “they had brought her along” (at the beginning of line 4). The author of the second piece of reported speech is obscure but it is initiated by the reporting verb èts “he/she said” and includes two clauses, both prefaced by et (lines 4–5):

\[ \text{et eko te kõndida kruul et iks} \]
\[ \text{et noh isudis jutsis ikka ida} \]
\[ \text{auto põlil mit palju} \]

The reporting verb is then repeated but apparently the unit èts et “(she) said” that is abandoned and replaced by a quote from the speaker herself, ma=tsi “I said”. This launches the quote and both quoted clauses are prefaced by et (line 6):

\[ \text{et mis sääle lehe on} \]
\[ \text{et aim staar ai aga kutsuju=ja} \]

As is pointed out by Lauri and Seppänen (2004), this context of reported speech may well be the origin of the complementizer as well as the evidential pattern of et usage. Et as a complement would have developed simply as a routinization of the patterns of reporting speech with et(ka). The developmental line of the evidential would be the following: et(ka) “in this way” is first used after reporting verbs and before reported speech, then clause-initially to indicate that the report is still continuing, then as evidential initiating paraphrases and other strips of talk where the speaker is not the principal. In order for the original deictic et(ka) to acquire an evidential meaning, the development from a reported speech pattern is essential. If the complementizer and the evidential developed at the same time in a parallel way, the origin would still be this very position.

The puzzle of why et on the one hand latches onto the end of the reporting clause and on the other prefers the following (reported) clauses can actually be solved in this very context. In example (20), we see that when there is some turbulence before the reported clause, et is often repeated. Thus even if there is a pause, an inbreath, another conjunction, or a hesitation item (or, noh) after the reporting verb + et, the complementizer is repeated at the beginning of every reported clause (lines 2–3 and 4). Furthermore, et may be repeated without any other hesitation displayed in its vicinity (line 6). Example (20) is not in the least idiosyncratic with respect to consecutive repetitive uses of et. Collocations of repeated et with hesitation items, inbreaths and pauses are abundant in spoken Estonian (examples 21–25).

\[ \text{(21) P: /-/- lagasad kas nugu hirkuse tagasi tohid, hinn need nägintud et, noh et, (.)} \]
\[ \text{‘The children who came back to the church said et, noh et, (.)} \]
\[ \text{laks. (0.3) noh et, etik tegid käega ja, ja ju ikka mitu tikkja ju,} \]
\[ \text{‘It went (well) (0.3) noh et, etik tegid käega ja, ja ju ikka mitu tikkja ju,} \]
\[ \text{‘It went (well) (0.3) noh et, etik tegid käega ja, ja ju ikka mitu tikkja ju,} \]
\[ \text{(22) E: [jaa] s ma mitletin et, ja et panga nenn vajadus jõulju, ja asi kõik,} \]
\[ \text{‘And then I thought et, ja et (the) should put on the leggings and that’s all!’} \]
\[ \text{(23) T: /-/- kärep jõul tegu ek et, ja et temal et jõudud,} \]
\[ \text{‘Kärep again complained et, ja et (the workers) didn’t have time for his,} \]
\[ \text{Well, they simply didn’t have the time!’} \]
\[ \text{(24) T: /-/- me j jõutime selts võimaluse et, ja jaa et et et e m, (1.6) ja enada ä} \]
\[ \text{‘We kept this option et, ja jaa et et et e m, (1.6) ja enada ä} \]
\[ \text{‘We kept this option et, ja jaa et et et e m, (1.6) ja enada ä} \]
\[ \text{‘We kept this option et, ja jaa et et et e m, (1.6) ja enada ä} \]
\[ \text{‘We kept this option et, ja jaa et et et e m, (1.6) ja enada ä} \]

\[ \text{Ja siis on hetke mitu aegu ena hiin ja see on} \]
\[ \text{‘Here at our place but not elsewhere.’} \]
\[ \text{Ja siis on hetke mitu aegu ena hiin ja see on} \]
\[ \text{‘Here at our place but not elsewhere.’} \]
\[ \text{Ja siis on hetke mitu aegu ena hiin ja see on} \]
\[ \text{‘Here at our place but not elsewhere.’} \]

\[ \text{(25) K: et to biabunost tole skandaal tõsikitsaun, unastaja tõrkehant et noh, (0.2)} \]
\[ \text{‘He specified the details of this scandal but forgot completely et noh, (0.2)} \]
\[ \text{et: see suraanel külg mitu tõrkehant merusdet,} \]
\[ \text{‘et: see suraanel külg mitu tõrkehant merusdet,} \]
\[ \text{‘et: see suraanel külg mitu tõrkehant merusdet,} \]

Et is frequently repeated not only after reporting verbs (examples 21–23) and other transitive verbs (25), but also in positions where it initiates a clause that explains the correlate pronoun in the previous clause (24). The grammatical structures illustrated are:

- reporting verb + et (ex. 20–23); “said”, “told”, “thought”, “complained” + et
- correlate + et (ex. 24); “this” + et
- transitive verb + et (ex. 25); “forgot” + et

It seems regularly to be the case that the first instance of the repeated et is latched onto the previous utterance, often to the reporting verb. The consecutive instances, however, may or may not be incorporated into the upcoming prosodic unit (cf. examples (22) and (23) versus example (24)). There may even be a pause and an inbreath before the next clause and intonation unit is initiated (example (24)). The implementation of et in this position projects more to come, as the recipients do not initiate talk during the pauses, inbreaths, and hesitation items. All the above turns in talk are clearly grammatically incomplete after the production of et. Even though the grammatical structures used are varied, et strongly projects more talk. To be more specific, it projects at least one whole clause.
At these points of maximum grammatical control over the turn (Schegloff 1996: 93), where another clause is projected, the speakers regularly repeat the et, indicating the continuing relevance of the projection and gaining time to plan its content. They have initiated an action but postpone its completion at a syntactic juncture without the risk of losing the turn at the same time. In a way, et behaves like other common conjunctions in Estonian, je “and”, ago “but”, sone “then”, har “if”, vee “or”, all of which may easily be repeated at clause boundaries in the context of formulation problems, disturbances in speech, or simply thinking periods. Not all of them, however, regularly occur at the points of maximum grammatical control over the turn, as et does. This is why et functions as a strong projector of more talk from the speaker.

The repetitive use of et at these moments in talk production allows the first instance to become latched onto the preceding reporting verb while the consecutive ones may become more closely connected to the subsequent clause. This is exemplified in some of the above cases, such as line 4-5 in example (20) (reproduced below as example (26a)), where the first instance of et has latched onto the reporting verb and the second instance to the upcoming clause, with a hesitation item not and a pause between the two. Other similar cases include examples (22) and (23) (reproduced as (26b-c)) and merely involve insertions between the two instances.

(26a) a. a, üsset mõni, (0.5)
     'be he/she said and nothing (0.5)'
     et sone to kindida kõll-ist juua
     ‘et she does not have the strength to walk’

b. ma mõjutati et, hh
     'I thought et, hh'
     et panna need e regasidas juua.
     ‘et he should put on the leggings’

c. Kure jälle vingus et, hh
     'Kure again complained et, hh'
     et tenni et juua
     ‘et the (workers) didn’t have time for him’

Additionally, et can be repeated inside reported speech after various pragmatic particles, resulting in item sequences such as et sone et (see “yes!”), and et vet et (ver, approx. “you see”), line 1 in example (13) above). In the following example (27), there are three cases like this. Et is first repeated within a quote after the particle read “y’know” (in line 1), then after no “well” in line 2, and thirdly after a swearing particle sõda “shut” (in line 4). Even this pattern enables the latching of the second et onto the subsequent clause, as is witnessed by lines 1 and 4 in this example. The second instances of et after pragmatic particles are unstressed and non-prominent so their unambiguous attribution to either the previous or following intonation unit is problematic. The intonation-unit-final commas after these items should thus be treated with reservation.

(27) 1 P.: hh et sone, no, seistaas gusta (g) kirjanutak ka Helenile, et tead et,
     ‘(1) don’t know, anyway, I wrote to Helena et y’know et’

In contrast to conjunctions, pragmatic particles that project the type of the upcoming action are not repeatable. For example no “well”; kul “listen”; vaata “look”; and read “y’know” are produced only once per action (Keesing 2002: 53-74, 153-172, 203-221). The turn-initial evidential particle et that was described in section 3 of this paper, cannot be repeated either. It projects the upcoming talk as a candidate understanding or a quotation of the speaker’s earlier self, a new action that has not been projected in previous talk. In contrast, the conjunction et does not initiate a new action. Instead, it shows that the ongoing action has not yet terminated and is going to continue with at least one clause. Therefore the conjunction et is a powerful turn-holding device.

It is the conjunction-like character of et that enables its repetition after hesitation, insertions, turn-initial pauses and pragmatic particles. In these repetitive patterns the consecutive instances of et may have become more associated with the subsequent clause, enabling the clause-initial and eventually turn-initial usage of et. The development is based on the strong projective capacity of et which stems from the positions of maximum grammatical control after verbs of reporting, correlates, and the like, that it occupies. This projective capacity is preserved and made use of in the turn-initial evidential pattern. At the same time et has also preserved its conjunction characteristics by tying the subsequent talk to previous discourse. The evidential et can combine clauses, phrases, and words by the previous speaker with her own contribution, and initiate types of action that build on those of previous speakers in the interactive sequence.

There are a number of similarities between the conjunctional and the evidential usage of et: in both cases, et ties subsequent to previous talk and strongly projects a continuation. There are also obvious differences. In the case of complementation, et is regularly latched onto the preceding reporting verbs, at least. This has resulted in the consolidation of reporting phrases into assimilated versions, such as sõda “said”+ et → sõda “said that”. In contrast, the evidential et is prosodically
incorporated into the intonation unit that follows. The units of talk that precede the conjunction et - reporting phrases, clauses including correlates or other transitive verbs without grammatical objects - are all grammatically incomplete. In contrast, the units of talk that are produced previous to the evidential et are not as rule grammatically incomplete and thus not that strongly dependent on or tied to the continuing talk. It therefore seems that in order to explain the ability of the evidential et to form strong ties to the previous discourse, the loci to search for its origins is the reported speech. In the reported speech pattern and via repetition typical of conjunctions, et may have become connected to the following quote, report, or paraphrase of somebody else's words, ending up as a preface to these upcoming units and functioning as an evidential.

A closer look at present-day patterns in the production of reported speech thus corroborates the hypothesis that reported speech may have been the starting point of the development of the different patterns of et-usage. In this position, et displays most of the semantic and structural features that are present or reflected in both its complementizing and its evidential function.

5. Conclusion

Estonian et is used both as a complementizer/conjunction and as a clause-initial evidential particle. As an evidential, it is implemented for specific interactional purposes to indicate that it is not the current speaker at the current moment who is the principal of the proposition. In a sequence of clauses within reported speech, each clause can be initiated with et, an imagined speaker can be invoked with et, the current co-participant may be attributed meanings with et-initial turns, and the speaker can quote her previous self with et. When used immediately after another speaker's informative turn, turn-initial et could be paraphrased as "so you mean"; after a general repair-initiation by another speaker, the paraphrase of et is "I said/mean"; and during an ongoing report et could mean something like "and then you/she/he/s/we/they said/thought". In general, evidential et can be used to provide another voice in the current interaction. The principal of this contribution may be co-present or not. She may even be conjured up.

The nature of et appears lucidly in action sequences, because the function of attributing content is validated in the subsequent behavior of interlocutors, who regularly confirm or disconfirm what has been put forward in the et-turns. They thereby treat the et-turn as putting forward something that can in the first hand be confirmed by the speaker of the previous turn. To disclose this pattern, we had to focus on what the speakers are trying to achieve at any given moment in an ongoing conversational sequence. Et preaced turns achieve a specific communicative and are embedded in sequences of actions, rather than merely combining clauses or other linguistic units. Clause-combining is a by-product of the implemented actions as well as an integrated part of it. The linguistic construction of combined linguistic units, clauses among them, is in this case a mutual achievement by at least two speakers. The meaning of the et-clause, just as of many other grammatical constructions, is interactively contingent, "built over interactional time in accordance with interactional actualities" (Schedlig et al. 1996: 40). It is not possible to reduce these interactional intricacies to a straightforward way to any existing monologic pattern.

Et as an evidential particle is more frequent in interactional language use than in monologic use, not only in conversation but also in online communication with its relatively quick turn-changes. As the distinction between pragmatic particles and conjunctions is not dichotomic, clearly not in the case of et, it is difficult to see how overt clause-combining would be characteristic of literary language only. The pragmatic particle et functions among other things as a clause combiner, albeit one which combines clauses across speaker turns. On the other hand, some of the "subordinating" usages of et described in Estonian grammar and literary language (Eestl et al. 1993: 302-311; Remmelg 2005) virtually never occur in the interactional usage. Some of the patterns with correlates shown in example (2) are very rarely indeed in informal settings. Different language use domains display different patterns of et-usage.

Nevertheless, the conjunctive and evidential patterns of et-usage seem to be historically related. Both tie upcoming content to previous discourse and strongly project a continuation by the speaker. Their developmental starting point is likely to have been its positioning after a reporting verb and before a quote (Laury & Seppänen, this volume). Current conversational data shows that in this position, as well as in other cases when et as a conjunction, it is easily repeated and often collocates with perturbation, delay, hesitation and thinking periods. This explains how et could prosodically latch onto the reporting verb and at the same become attached to the upcoming (complement) clause. In the latter position, et has developed into a clause-initial and turn-initial evidential particle, preserving its semantic connection to the context in which it formerly reported others' words and thoughts.

Transcription and glossing conventions

- underlining = emphasis
- . = truncation
[ ] = overlaps
References


Clause combining, interaction, evidentiality, participation structure, and the conjunction-particle continuum

The Finnish "että"

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This paper concerns the use of the Finnish particle/conjunction että in ordinary conversation. Traditionally, että has been considered a complementizer, but we question the description of että-clauses as complement clauses. We show that uses of että range from ones where it serves as a clause linker to clear particle uses, with no clear dividing line. In terms of their pragmatic functions, though, the different uses of että are closer to each other: they all serve to create dialogicality in one way or another. Että is used by speakers to regulate participation in conversation and to index shifts in footing. We also consider the historical origin of että and suggest an alternative to the scenario where particle uses are seen as having developed from conjunction uses.

1. Introduction

This paper concerns the syntactic nature, interactional functions and historical origin of the Finnish että. Syntactically, että has been described as a complementizer which also functions as a particle. In this paper, through the analysis of an excerpt from a multi-party conversation, we will show that the syntactic integration...