Papers in Estonian
Cognitive Linguistics

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Contents

Selline kontekst on tavaliselt küsiv ning seetõttu omandab *või* siin küsipartikli funktsiooni.

Siit liikus küsipartikkel *või* edasi teistesse kontekstidesse ning praeguseks on see kasutatav kõikvõimalikes valikküsilausetes.

Selle protsessiga on kaasnenud ka teised muutused, mis on üldiselt grammatikaliseerumisprotsessile iseloomulikud (Abraham 1991, Hopper&Traugott 1993): 1) pragmaatilise tähendusrikkuse nõrgenemine; 2) süntaktilise vabaduse nõrgenemine; 3) foneetilise kuju lühenemine ja muganemine.

Tracing grammaticalization of *oota* 'wait' in Estonian conversation[1]

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Introduction

The term grammaticalization has been used to denote a kind of language change whereby something less grammatical becomes more grammatical, a more lexical unit becomes a more functional unit. The present usage of the 2nd person singular imperative of *oota* 'wait!' in Estonian seems to indicate a possible development of exactly the kind: a specific form of a full lexical verb is also used as a particle.[2]

Grammaticalization has often been treated as a coherent process with definable features leading to changes in grammar: "(---) grammaticalization is a kind of language change, subject to certain general processes and mechanisms of change, and characterized by certain consequences such as changes in grammar" (Traugott and Heine 1991:3). However, whether particles should be treated as part of grammar depends on what we mean by the term *grammar*. Heine's and Reh's definition of grammaticalization (1984: 15) is less restrictive in this respect: "with the term "grammaticalization" we refer essentially to an evolution whereby linguistic units lose in semantic complexity, pragmatic significance, syntactic freedom, and phonetic substance respectively". According to them, grammaticalization could just be seen as a complex of related or parallel processes.

Heine and Reh (1984: 16) have also suggested a tripartite classification of correlations of change: Semantic-pragmatic status, grammatical behavior, and phonological substance (Traugott and Heine 1991: 6). As to particulized usages of *oota*, all of these processes seem to apply: several semantic components of *waiting* have

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[2] A proposal to call this type of changes *pragmaticalization* rather than grammaticalization has been put forward by Erman and Kotsinas (1993:79) but the term has not attracted general acceptance.

gone lost, the particulized forms cannot generally take person and number endings or direct objects, and the form is often shortened into *ota*, *ot*, or *oot*. As will be discussed below, the processes are not necessarily finely attuned to each other, which could be seen as a further argument for considering grammaticalization a common name for correlated processes rather than a single path of evolution (Traugott and Heine 1991: 6).

This paper attempts to characterize the usage of *oota* in present-day Conversational Estonian leaving possible historical developments untouched. As Traugott and Heine (1991:1) have put it, "there is (---) disagreement about whether grammaticalization is primarily a diachronic phenomenon to be studied from a "source and pathway" perspective, or primarily a syntactic, discourse-pragmatic phenomenon, to be studied from the point of view of fluid patterns of language use across time or at a synchronically segmented moment in time". The present study subscribes for the latter standpoint, partly because of the nature of the data, but also because the observations here seem to support the idea of continuously emergent grammar, which has gained ground during the recent decades (for a classic, see P. Hopper 1987).

One of the central claims in the study of grammar as temporal, emergent, and continuously disputed, is that regularity comes out of discourse, i.e. that grammar is shaped by discourse as much as grammar shapes discourse (P. Hopper 1987: 4). In grammaticalization studies the role of discourse has been recognized for a long time (e.g. Traugott 1982: 267) but it is still not common in the field to pay much attention to factors outside the immediate linguistic context.

One caveat of not working with the interactional premises of language seems to be the by now firmly established unidirectionality hypothesis. Put forward by Traugott (1980;1982;1989) it basically states that the development of the item in the grammaticalization process goes through three functional-semantic components, from propositional (to textual) to interpersonal, and not the other way round.

What Hakulinen and Seppänen (1992: 546–547) have already noticed is the fact that when working with interactional data the interpersonal component is ever-present and not easy to separate from neither the propositional nor the textual component. It would be especially counterintuitive not to consider imperatives interpersonal – the Finnish *kato* discussed by Hakulinen and Seppänen is also origi-

nally an imperative, meaning 'look!'. Consequently, in the case of conversational *kato* and *oota* the propositional and interpersonal components should be considered intertwined from the start, and there is even a possibility for these items to acquire textual functions, which is a developmental track not predicted by the unidirectionality hypothesis.

The Estonian *oota* may not yet have developed as far as the Finnish *kato*, which is already acquiring the textual flavor of a causal connective (Hakulinen and Seppänen 1992: 533), but we can already trace a tendency to use *oota* as a topic-disjunctive particle. Neither of these items, though, seems to have made their way to the respective written language yet. Interpersonality is preserved in the textual usage of *kato* as well as in *oota* since they are both among other things used to indicate the structure of the speaker's contribution to the interlocutor(s). The present study thus supports objections to the unidirectionality hypothesis that could be suffering from written language bias, as suspected by Hakulinen and Seppänen (1992: 547).

The paper describes the usage of *oota* on a continuum of more literal to more particulized. I will start, however, by describing the item, its variants, and its frequency.

The data

The data comes from 324 naturally occurring phone conversations of two types: telemarketing calls by three telemarketers selling one of the biggest daily newspapers in Estonia during one night each (109 conversations), and everyday calls between family members, relatives, friends, and colleagues, recorded at the informants' homes. All in all there is more than 10 hours of conversational language and about 103 000 words in the corpus. The great majority of the informants seem to be speaking Common Estonian, which is the oral variety closest to the Written Standard. The corpus includes representatives of both sexes and all ages but there is somewhat more data from younger females who were my primary informants.

The item *oota*

The variants of the item according to the present database were in the order of frequency *oota* (69), *ota* (69), *ot* (57), and *oot* (11 cases). The latter never occurred alone but was either reduplicated and/or

used in combination with other variants (*oot oot* (1), *oot oot ot* (1), *oot oot ota* (1), and *oot ot ot* (5 times)). Even *ot* had a tendency to occur in combinations, (4 times as *ot ot*, and once as *ot ot ot*, *ot ot ot ot*, *ot ot ot ot ot*, and *ot ot ot ot ot ot ot*, which leaves us with 18 cases of single *ot*). So far I have not traced any functional differences between the reduplicated and non-reduplicated variants.[3]

To a great extent the difference between the transcriptional variants of *oot* and *oota* on the one hand and *ot* and *ota* on the other is of course the stress weight of the item in the intonation unit, but the length of the sounds *o* and *t* is also of importance. It is impossible to say at the present moment whether it is the weakened stress that has triggered shortening or *vice versa*. The shortening may also have to do with whether there is a whole phrase following immediately, in which case *oota* tends to be phonologically reduced and unstressed.

There is no one-to-one correspondence between semantic bleaching and phonological reduction of the form. Table 1 presents a very rough classification of the variants by their function, the division line being simply whether the interlocutor is literally expected to wait or not. (Notice that in the discussions below the meaning of the terms *literal* vs. *particulized* usage is much narrower.) Even if all the variants occur in both categories, *ota* stands out as the most frequent form of the particle. The reduced form *ot*, at the same time, seems to be far less frequent in this function.

Table 1. Variants of *oota* and their functions.[4]

	More literal	More particle-like	% of more particle-like forms
oota	43	30	43.5
ota	20	51	73.9
ot	41	15	26.3
oot	7	5	45.5
oodake	25	1	3.8

[3] Hennoste (1998:161; 2000:1365) has claimed that the reduplicated variant *otot/odot* is a question but there is no proof whatsoever for this statement neither in the present corpus nor in Hennoste's writings.

[4] It should be noticed that the overall sum of the table does not match the overall number of occurrences since some cases are ambiguous and some impossible to classify. Table 1 is thus only a very rough guideline.

The indicative imperative paradigm in Estonian involves three forms in Standard Estonian: 2SG (*oota*), 2PL (*oodake*), and 1PL (*oodakem*).[5] The latter is markedly formal and is not represented in the present corpus. *Oodake* 'wait:2PL' is represented by 26 cases, generally used literally, i.e. for making the interlocutor wait for a while: *oodake natukene* 'wait a second' (S1B13), *oodake ma küsin* 'wait, I'll ask (somebody)' (ÜA15), *oodake üks etk ma kutsun isa* 'wait a moment I'll call my father' (RA24). Once, however, it is used to get an explanation on an earlier topic: *oodake aga kui ma kolmeks kuuks tellin siis läheb sadá kolgend krooni* 'wait but if I order (it) for three months then it'll be a hundred and thirty kroons' (ÜA10). This could be treated as an argument for seeing the present usages of the verb *oota* as a case of mere polysemy since several forms seem to be behaving the same. On the other hand, the 2nd person plural form never shows up as a "pure" disjunctive particle and it is very rare indeed in the more particle-like usage. It is therefore left out of the rest of the discussion.

It would be convenient to have a single form to refer to when talking about the item, but since the usages form a continuum, it is not easy to settle for one. In one end of the continuum we have the literal usages of the imperative *oota* 'wait', and in the other end there is the conversational particle whose most frequent form is *ota* and which is not as easy to translate. For the time being, the common neutral denominator for all the cases is going to be the phonologically full form *oota*.

Frequency

The relationship between frequency of tokens in text and the emergence of grammar has been pointed out by several authors in the last decade (e.g. P. Hopper 1987; DuBois 1985; Thompson and Mulac 1991: 314), since logically, ritualization presupposes repetition (Haiman 1994). Frequency has been considered one of the three licencing conditions of grammaticalization (besides semantic suitability and salience), and the only one that actually leads to grammaticalization and hence to fixing, freezing, idiomatization, etc. (Traugott and

[5] For trascription and glossing conventions, see Appendix 1.

Heine 1991: 9). Frequency thus seems to be a decisive factor in the process of ritualization and/or grammaticalization in language.

As to *oota*, it was very frequent among verb forms in the present corpus: the phonologically full form *oota* and the shortened *ota* shared the 25–26th position. This is very high considering that there were eight forms of the verb *ole-* 'be' among the first thirty most frequent forms as well as several particulized forms (*kule* and *kuule* 'listen:IMP:2SG', *tead* 'know:2SG'; *tähendab* and *täendab* 'mean:3SG').[6] The verbs *mine-* 'go' and *tule-* 'come' were both represented by three forms in the top-frequency chart, and *saa-* 'get' by two. The two variants of *oota* were placed on a par with the expectedly frequent forms in (phone) conversations, e.g. *arvan* 'I think', *mõtsin* 'I thought', and *elistan* 'I call/I'm calling'. Furthermore, when *ot* and *oot* were added to the calculations, and phonological variants of other verbs had also been coalesced, *oota* could easily be characterized as one of the most frequent verb forms in the corpus, ranking 9th. It should thus fulfill the frequency requirement of an item that could possibly be undergoing grammaticalization.

Literal usage

We can now take a closer look at the semantic continuum of usages of *oota* where in the extreme cases the particle *ota* only seems to have a conversation structural function. We could start by looking at the most literal usage of *oota*, i.e. the cases where the addressee literally has to wait.

In phone conversations it happens that one speaker tells the other to hold on for a while (about the American English *hold on* in phone conversations, see R. Hopper 1991). Since phones are used for communication outside the actual physical surroundings of the speakers, the reasons for holding on abound: one of the speakers may have to fetch something, answer the doorbell, talk to a third person etc.

The pause induced by the need to attend to any matters outside the auditory realm of the conversation is in Estonian often introduced

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[6] In frequency calculations I have left out newspaper calls since the topic and the task at hand there were always the same, which could have skewed the frequency results of lexical items in a way that would not reflect the speakers' daily experience.

by the imperative form *oota*, sometimes combined with adverbs *üks hetk* 'one moment', *natuke* 'a little', or something of the kind. (Whenever an adverb is involved, the verb is never phonologically reduced.) The plea to wait may be followed by a clarification why the interlocutor has to continue hanging on the phone without using it for neither listening nor talking. Examples include *ota ma räägin* 'wait, I'll talk (to her)' (ÜB3), *no ota ma küsin siis kohe präegu* 'wait, I'll ask (him) straight away' (K1B11), *ota ma annan talle* 'wait, I'll pass on (the receiver) to her' (K3B1). When *oota* is used alone and followed by silence, it is most often treated as a literal order to wait.

Besides following the verb directly, the reason for holding on may succeed the pause after *oota*. In Example 1, the speaker P has proposed her good friend R to meet her later that night. R agrees but asks P to hang on the phone without any further clarification (line 1). At this point it cannot be clear for P what is going on: R has either been interrupted by something in her physical surroundings (e.g. a boiling kettle) or the action she is going to carry out during the pause is somehow relevant for what they had been talking about, i.e. the planned meeting. In either way, R is accountable for the long pause (4.8 seconds). Immediately after it, R offers a clarification in the form of a list of tasks – she has obviously been checking the calendar for her obligations for the evening, which is relevant in regard to her ability to go out with P.

(1) Going out

```
1  R:   [e::t okei] lähme (0.2) .hh oota      üks hetk hh
        that okay go:1PL            wait:IMP one moment
        Okay, let's go. Wait a second!

2  P:   [@ @ @]

3       (4.8)

4  R:   ma pidin          täna (ühele   söbrannale) kirja
        I   must:IMF:1SG today one:ALL friend:ALL  letter:GEN
        I was going to write a letter to a friend today

5       ära   kirjutama siis  lastele        sõnad   välja trükkima
        ÄRA write:INF then child:PL:ALL word:PL out   print:INF
        then print out words for the children

6       /---/
(P1A4)
```

As can be deduced from the examples above, *oota* may be used to indicate a postponement of a relevant next action (e.g. continuation of the conversation) because there is another time-consuming (and in the present corpus often partly physical) action that needs to be carried out first. The speaker may then introduce this another activity with *oota*. If it is possible to carry out the intermittent activity while still hanging on the phone, the activity may be accompanied by either a reduplicated *oota* (e.g. *ot ot ot ot ot ot ot ot* while the speaker is looking for the relevant place in a manuscript (M2BE1)), or a verbal explanation all the way through, as in Example 2.

Two friends are discussing the time for a concert rehearsal. In lines 1–4 K offers relatively vague information about it – the rehearsal is going to take place on a Saturday or a Sunday close to the Wednesday of the concert. Without acknowledging this as a new or relevant information or agreeing to turn up at the rehearsal, E starts looking in her calendar, supposedly for the exact dates. The searching activity is accompanied by a verbal explanation, initiated by *oota*: *oota ma vaatan seda kalendrit* 'wait, I'll have a look at the calendar' (line 5).

(2) Rehearsal date

1 K: [(vist)]   nimodi et   kui   on e   kolmapäv   on
          probably so   that when be:3SG Wednesday be:3SG
          Probably so that when the performance is

2   väljalaulmine siis laupäval   vist   või midagi
          performance then Saturday:ADE probably or something
          on Wednesday then on Saturday probably or something

3   niisugust (.) või pühapäval   või midagi   noh
          like that:PRT or Sunday:ADE or something NOH
          like that or on Sunday or something

4   ästi seal ligidal
          very there close
          very close

5 E: oota   ma vaatan seda   kalendrit   millal
          wait:IMP I look:1SG this:PRT calendar:PRT when
          Wait, I'll have a look at the calendar when

6   siis oleks   nagu laulmine oleks:
          then be:COND NAGU singing be:COND .
          (it) would be the singing would be

7 K: mmhm ota   ma võtan   ka oma märkmiku mh (0.3)
          MMHM wait:IMP I take:1SG too own notebook:GEN
          Uhuh. Wait I'll take my notebook too

8   ma arvan   et   põhiline [seltskond]
          I   think:1SG that major   group of people
          I think that most people
   (K3B12)

Another case of similar usage of *oota* can be found in line 7. K too takes her notebook and accompanies this activity by a verbal explanation: *ota ma võtan ka oma märkmiku* 'wait, I'll get my notebook too'. By doing this she in her turn breaks B's ongoing attempt to determine the date of the performance, which they need in order to deduce the time of the rehearsal. Only after the verbal explanation by K for the delay (that she is taking out her notebook) and a short pause (0.3 seconds) the relevant next action of retrieving precise information about the rehearsal time can go on (in line 8). It can thus be seen that the ongoing main activity of determining the time of a rehearsal comes to a standstill during the turn constructional units (TCUs)[7] preceded or initiated by *oota*.

The great majority of the literal usages of *oota* (101 out of 103) in the present corpus occur in positions initiating a pause or an alternative activity, which thus seems to be a typical placement of the item in phone conversations. In face-to-face situations there are numerous non-verbal possibilities for achieving a break in the ongoing conversation, or for indicating a need to carry out some intermittent action, but the option with *oota* can certainly be used even there.

Thinking periods and word searches

Besides carrying out an action that delays the relevant next action, the delay may also be due to the speaker being preoccupied with thinking or formulating, i.e. not immediately able to express herself. *Oota* seems to be used in extensive as well as in somewhat shorter thinking periods.

A case of extensive thinking is presented in Example 3 where P suggests that T would paint her. This suggestion is followed by a long pause (1.5 seconds) and a further extortion *okay?* by P in

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[7] *Turn constructional units* are defined in regard to possible turn completions, first by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974:702–703).

line 3. Instead of producing a relevant reply for the suggestion T diverts by initiating some kind of statement in line 5 (*ot fakt on* 'OT, the fact is'). He continues by producing three more tokens of *oota* with short pauses in between and then an account of why the conversation has been put on the hold (*ma mõtlen* 'I'm thinking'). After several restarts (*ee fakt fakt* 'the fact the fact'), another recognition of troubles with the thinking process (*((XX) ma tahtsin öelda* '(what) did I want to say'), and a token of realization or remembering (*aa*), he finally recaptures the initiated syntactic unit and finishes it by saying that he has not used any models in his work. This statement is produced as a response to P's suggestion that T would paint her, a response that was postponed by the thinking process consisting of losing and finding the thread and accompanied by pleas for P to wait.

(3) Painting

```
1   P:  /---/ s    teed       must maali
            then make:2SG I:ELA painting
            Then you'll paint me

2       (1.5)

3   P:  [nõu]s
            agree:INE
            Okay

4   T:  [aa]

5   T:  ot fakt on      oota (.)  oota (.)  oota     ma mõtlen(.)
            OT fact be:3SG wait:IMP wait:IMP wait:IMP I    think:1SG
            OT, the fact is, wait, wait, wait, I'm thinking

6       ee fakt fakt (XX) ma tahtsin        öelda    aa fakt on
            fact fact      I    want:IMF:1SG say:INF AA fact be:3SG
            The fact- (what did) I want to say, oh yeah, the fact is

7       see et ee nende:      tööde           puhul pole:     ühtegi
            this that this:PL:GEN work:PL:GEN at    be:NEG any:PRT
            that no models have been used in

8       m@od@elli k@asutatud
            model:PRT use:IMS:PPT
            these works
    (P3A8+B1)
```

Other examples of extensive thinking periods accompanied by verbal explanations include e.g. *ot ot ot ma ütlen kohe* 'OT OT OT I'll say (it) in a second' (ÜA6), *ota ma mõtlen mis teil veel on* 'OTA I'm thinking what else you have' (P1B3), *ot ot ot ot ot mai saa üldse aru*

enam 'OT OT OT OT OT I cannot understand anything any more' (P2A3).

In cases of extensive thinking the token *oota* could easily be categorized as literal since the interlocutor is expected to wait. (This has been done in Table 1.) On the other hand, the shorter the time of thinking, the weaker the literal meaning in the sense that the extent of the waiting period may become minute. (According to EKS *oota-* means to stay (behind) somewhere for a while, counting on something to arrive or happen in due course – my translation, L.K.). In the shortest cases the interlocutor is not expected to wait for more than the duration of the production of *oota* and possibly other hesitation items.

Example 4 presents a case in point. P makes the call and asks for Kaire in line 1. S says that Kaire is not at home and initiates a syntactic unit *Kaire läks* 'Kaire went', which she is unable to finish immediately. The continuation *suusatama* 'skiing' comes after several indications of hesitation: two pauses, three vocal items (*a, mh, mm*), the particle *nh*, and two tokens of *oota* (*ot, ot*). *Oota* in this word search is thus used in a line with other hesitation phenomena that indicate that the speaker is still aiming to continue and therefore the interlocutor is expected not to enter the TCU other than possibly for suggesting candidate words (Lerner 1996: 261–262).

(4) Gone skiing

```
1   P:  .h ee tere ma palun     Kairet
                 hi   I   ask:1SG KAIRE:PRT
            Hi, could I talk to Kaire, please

2   S:  Kairet     ei   ole Kaire  läks
            KAIRE:PRT NEG be  KAIRE go:IMF:3SG
            Kaire is not here, Kaire went

3       (0.7)

4   S:  a mh (.) mm ot ot (nh X) suusa<0tama 0>
                    OT OT NH    ski:INF
            OT OT NH skiing
    (P1A10)
```

Oota as a word search and/or hesitation item is of course much less frequent than e.g. pauses and relatively meaningless vocal sounds; the present corpus includes about 10 cases.

Side sequences and digressions

Besides describing one's own actions, carrying out an adjacent acti-
vity, or experiencing formulation problems, the temporary standstill
in the conversational track may be achieved with the so-called side
sequences. *Side sequence* is a term first used by Jefferson, who
characterized it as "a break in the activity (---); that is, the on-going
activity will resume" (1972: 294), and as "a subsidiary sequence"
(1972: 309–320). However, her collection only included kinds of
challenges, e.g. wisecracks and misapprehensions, which were
completely irrelevant for the ongoing action. In this paper, the term
will be extended even to non-challenging matters somewhat per-
taining to the ongoing "main" action but still bringing it first to a halt
and then to a resumption. In my database one of the most common
side sequences involve inquiries about what time, day, date etc. it is.

In Example 5, P suggests that there are two ways to proceed af-
ter the present phone call has come to an end: either she or the inter-
locutor will have to call back. In line 3, T proposes that P would do
the calling, and continues with a formulation item (*ütleme* 'let's say')
in line 4. The next TCU consists of a question about the present
weekday and is initiated by *oota*. Only after P has confirmed T's
guess of the weekday the "main" conversational sequence proceeds
by T suggesting P to give her a call on Friday, thereby demonstrating
the relevance of having to determine the present weekday in the first
place.

(5) Calling back

```
1  P:   .hh aa nd  mai   teagi   kas: e m kas      ma jätan
            now l:NEG know:GI QUES   QUES   I  leave:1SG
        I don't know now whether I'll leave
```

```
2       oma numbri     või ma elistan   teile       uuesti
        own number:GEN or I   call:1SG you:PL:ALL again
        my number or whether I'll call you back
```

```
3  T:   no ma mõtlen    et te    võiks     uuesti elistada: k h
        NO I   think:1SG that you:PL can:COND again call:INF
        Well, I think you could call (me) back
```

```
4       sis   ütleme ota täna on       täna on
        then say:1PL OTA today be:3SG today be:3SG
        Let's say OTA today it's today it's
```

```
5       teisipäev jah=
        Tuesday yes
        Tuesday, isn't it
```

```
6  P:   =jah
        yes
        Yeah
```

```
7  T:   .h ütleme  et  kui te      elistaks    reedel
            say:1PL that if   you:PL call:COND Friday:ADE
        Let's say you call me on Friday
(P8A1)
```

Naturally, side sequences are not confined to matters of dates or time
and can be quite varied. In one case the speaker starts characterizing
somebody: *ta on nisune ka:ngesti akt-* 'he is very act-' but then
breaks the characterization with a question about whether the inter-
locutor knows a third person: *ota kas sa (.) kas sa Unn Peeti mäletad*
'OTA, do you remember Unn Peet?' (K2A15). After receiving an
affirmative answer he eventually compares Unn Peet with the person
he had wanted to characterize in the first place (both of them are ap-
parently exceptionally energetic). This temporary digression from the
main topic, involving a background check with the interlocutor, is
initiated by *ota*. After the relevant background information has been
retrieved the main activity of characterization may continue.

Similarly, *oota* may initiate a disaligning argument that (tempo-
rarily) distracts the projected line of action. In example 6, L asks M
about a paper they have to read for a class and M says she has got it
(in line 1). L's following turn consists of a confirmatory question (*on
sul* 'you do?'). M, however, instead of the expected next action of
answering, introduces an argument that may undermine her initial
claim: since L is obviously in a great hurry, owing the paper but not
having it available at the very moment may qualify as not having it at
all. This disaligning argument is initiated by *oota*.

(6) The paper

```
1  M:   aa  see tekst on     küll  mul  jah
        AA this text   be:3SG KÜLL l:ADE yes
        Oh, I do have this text, yeah
```

```
2  L:   on     sul
        be:3SG you:ADE
        You do?
```

```
3  M:   oota  aga⁸ ma ei   tea   kas   ta mul  · siin  on
        OOTA but  I   NEG know QUES it  I:ADE here be:3SG
        OOTA, but I don't know if I have it here
   (M1A2)
```

Only after M finds the paper the arrangements of passing it on are made.

   In more monologic, e.g. narrative, context *oota* may initiate a digression of the same kind. An example is presented in Hennoste (2000: 2476) where Kr is asked about the end of something s/he has been telling about (line 1). Kr initiates the answer but quits the syntactic unit half-way and states that s/he cannot remember the name of the man. (At the same time, it may be an indication of the ongoing thinking process as described above.) This digression is initiated by *oota*.

(7) The name of the guy[9]

```
1  M:   a kuidas ta lõppes     =sis.
          A how   it  end:IMF:3SG then
          But how did it end?

2  Kr:  ta lõppes    sellega  =et (.) ota  ma=i    mäleta
          it  end:IMF:3SG this:COM that  OTA I   NEG remember
          It ended with- OTA I can't remember

3        mis selle    mehe     nimi  oli        [vaata see]
          what this:GEN man:GEN name be:IMF:3SG look:IMP this
          what the guy was called, you know, this
```

The present corpus also includes some more monologic digressions. *Oota* can even be used for temporary breaks in a single syntactic unit, e.g. *helista ota omme sa oled seal noh näiteks laupäeva jooksul mulle siia koju* 'call OTA tomorrow you'll be there NOH me sometimes on Saturday here at home' (K2A11). Here the verb-initial syntactic unit is interrupted by *oota*, followed by a description of a relevant background factor (*omme sa oled seal* 'tomorrow you'll be there'). After that the interrupted syntactic unit is continued by

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[8] It is interesting to notice that *oota* is relatively often either immediately preceded or followed by *aga/a* (26 times in the present corpus). They can both be used for topic disalignment but *aga/a* most probably implies more contrast with some preceding unit as it also does in the Written Standard (Palmeos 1967:14-15; Erelt et Al. 1993:278-279).

[9] The transcription of this example is according to the source.

several obliques (*laupäeva jooksul* 'during Saturday', *mulle* 'to me', and *siia koju* 'here at home').

   In these cases *oota* seems to function as an indication of the need to work something out before the interlocutors can continue their action at hand. Digressions and side sequences temporarily take the speakers to a side-track and halt the main action. Since these actions can be initiated by *oota*, we could conclude that *oota* is used as a kind of conversational stop sign.

   In this function *oota* seems to have preserved the semantic component of the imperative *oota*, which urges the addressee to stop the action at hand. On the other hand, at least in more dialogic cases, the semantic component of just hanging on or staying behind (cf. the definition in EKS) seems to have gone lost. The interlocutor is often actively involved in attending to the side sequence. Still, though, there is an expected point in the future when the "main" action will supposedly be resumed.

Repair initiations and clarification requests

We have now seen that *oota* is used as a kind of conversational stop sign in cases where the interlocutors are expected not to move on before some alternative and/or postponing activity (talking to a third person, searching, thinking, attending to the side sequence etc.) comes to an end. In addition, the stop sign quality of *oota* is used to return to or linger at something that has remained unclear.

   We can start by looking at a simple other-initiation of repair. In Example 8, R tells M that the file she needs can be drawn with the help of FTP, and continues with a question whether M is able to do that (*oskad tõmmata* 'can you draw (it)?'). In line 3, M initiates a repair about the acronym FTP that she has misheard. Her turn begins with *oota*.

(8) Drawing the file

```
1  R:   vata        on (.)   on    võimalik sealt       tõmmata:
          see:IMP:2SG be:3SG be:3SG possible there:ABL draw:INF
          You see, it's possible to draw (it)

        (0.5) ee Effteepeega (.) oskad      tõmmata
              FTP:COM         can:2SG draw:INF
          with FTP, can you draw (it)?
```

```
3  M:  ot  mis  tähendab (.)  mis  ess tee pee
       OT what mean:3SG    what s   t    p
       OT what does it mean, what s t p?
(M1A10)
```

There are numerous (25) examples of this kind of other-initiated re-
pairs beginning with *oota* in the present corpus (*ota mis suuri kir-
janikke* 'OTA what big writers' (P1A4), *ota mis ma teen* 'OTA what
will I do' (P5B10), *ota kuskohta* 'OTA where' (K1A10), *oota mis-
moodi* 'OOTA how' (RA37), *ot ot kes see nüüd on* 'OT OT who is
this' (M2AE2) etc.)

Other-initiations of repair are designed to indicate that the se-
quentially implicated next action cannot take place unless the
obstacle is taken out of the way (Schegloff et al. 1977: 379). But a
request to clarify some previously treated matter can also be a re-
source for topic development. In Example 9, a guy (T) has been
telling about his experiences at a car repair shop. He has described
how the workers get high on smog in the wintertime. Just prior to the
excerpt in Example 9 he has explained that in bigger shops there are
special tubes for sucking smog. In lines 1–2 he tells P that in this
particular shop there was smog all over the place.

(9) Inhaling smog

```
1  T:  =a seal oli:        siuke      äääh <@ paksu
       A there be:INF:3SG this kind of ugh      thick:PRT
       But there it was like ugh

2      tossu        täis @> .hhh
       smog:PRT full
       full of thick smog

3  P:  oota  sul      on    autol   mingi    probleem
       vä
       OOTA you:SG:ADE be:3SG car:ADE some kind of problem
       VÄ
       OOTA do you have a problem with your car?
(P3A8+B1)
```

T's turn in line 1 is designed as strongly evaluative – besides the
lexical means (*paks toss* 'thick smog') and a sound imitating the one
possibly produced at the place in reality (*äääh*) he also uses laughing
voice, giving P a clue of a proper evaluation of the story. In contrast,
without any reaction to the story, P asks whether T has had problems
with his car. Her turn is designed as a request for clarification for the
immediately previous topic, based on an inference from this very

topic – T has been to a repair shop and most probably has had a
reason for being there. At the same time, the turn does not follow the
normal course of actions where an evaluative contribution should be
attended to (about second assessments, see Pomerantz 1984). In-
stead, the turn in line 3 achieves a topic development. The disalig-
ning question is initiated by *oota*, again used for stopping the con-
versational action at hand. This time, though, the issue is not some
temporary time-out involving a period of waiting or doing something
else but rather a momentary U-turn in the conversational track.

Therefore, it seems fair to conclude that *oota* has here been
deprived of another meaning component, namely that of involving a
period of action or waiting that starts at the very moment and ends at
some future point in time, when the projected main action can go on.
When in the case of other-initiated repairs a return to the interrupted
action sequence is still possible, in the case of more general ques-
tions, statements, etc. about previous topics (like in Example 9), the
conversational track is most likely to have changed for good. In the
recent examples the semantic component of stopping the ongoing
conversational activity dominates in the usage of *oota*, which may
already suggest the priority of conversation structural (textual) fac-
tors over propositional ones.

Topic retrieval and change

The disaligning nature of *oota* and its usage to achieve a change in
the conversational track becomes even more clear when we look at
the cases where *oota* initiates a return to a topic that has been talked
about much earlier in the conversation, or an initiation of a new
topic.

In Example 10, the conversation is seemingly coming to an end
in lines 1–4. K and P are opening a conversational closure by
promising to hear from each other again (about the opening of clos-
ings, see Schegloff and Sacks 1973), and in line 5, K starts saying
bye (tšau). At the same time, P initiates a question about R's studies
in Oxford that they had been discussing about half an hour earlier.
Oota here works as a strong disaligning particle indicating a huge
jump from the conversational closure back to one of the earlier

topics. While breaking the closing sequence of the conversation, the *oota*-initiated turn is also an initiation of a new action sequence. [10]

(10) Oxford

```
1  K:   /---/ .h eks sis kuuleme
            EKS then hear:1PL
        Let's hear then

2  P:   <@ kule   eks siis kuuleme jah @>
            KULE EKS then hear:1PL yes
        Well, let's hear then, sure

3  K:   no okei=
        NO okay
        Okay then

4  P:   <@ =okei= @>
            okay
        Okay

5  K:   no [tš-]
        NO by-
        By-

6  P:   [oo]ta kauaks  sa     jääd     sinna    Oxfordi
        OOTA long:TRA you:SG stay:2SG there:ILL Oxford:ILL
        OOTA, how long will you stay at Oxford?
```
(P7A11+B1)

In Example 10, the topic of studying at Oxford has been treated in the same conversation and it could thus be seen as a case of topic retrieval. At the same time, on the basis of examples like this it is easy to imagine a further step of development of *oota* into a simple disaligning particle that does not necessarily have to deal with previously treated topics.

Example 11 is a case in point. The two friends have been talking about various things during their already rather long conversation. Prior to the sequence in the example they have been talking about movies. K has just told P that she has liked Monty Python before, which is why she is thinking of seeing another movie by him (lines 1–2). The next turn by P, though, initiates a completely new

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[10] Hennoste (2000:2468) explains a similar example as the speaker's wish not to finish the conversation. Since we do not have access to speakers' minds, the analysis here will be restricted to empirical matters like topic initiations. (Not speculating about the interactants' mental processes is one of the basic principles of conversation analytic method.)

topic about a common friend Helina who was supposed to receive a packet from them. This topic initiation strikes as being very abrupt since K does not get any response for her turn at all. The disaligning turn is initiated by *oota*, which here could easily be translated as *by the way* in English. As such it can also be characterized as a remembering or realization token.

(11) The packet

```
1  K:   ja   need   on      mulle ka pāris peale lāinud
        and this:PL be:3SG I:ALL KA quite please:PPT
        And I've liked these too

2       nimodi et  mulle tundub    et  noh miks mitte onju
        so     that I:ALL seem:3SG that NOH why NEG ONJU
        so that I feel like why not, you see

3  P:   .h oota  sa: Helinalt    ei   ole m saanud mingit
           OOTA you HELINA:ABL NEG be   get:PPT some:PRT
        OOTA, haven't you got any message from

4       messidžit   et  kas  ta   sai        meie
        message:PRT that QUES she  get:IMF:3SG we:GEN
        Helina about whether she has received
        paki        kätte=
        packet:GEN hand:ILL
        our packet
```
(P7A11+B1)

Disalignment can be seen to be one of the most frequent features of *oota*-usage in conversation, which is in accordance with the meaning component of stopping the ongoing activity in the original verb *oota* 'wait'. Repair initiations and clarification requests, initiations of side sequences and digressions, or topic retrievals and changes feature in 93 cases.

However, this stop sign itself does not define whether it is a right or left turn, a "no entry" or a detour that will be suggested – *oota* may merely initiate a repair or a side sequence but it may also invoke a long pause or a change in the topic of the conversation, either going back to an old one or forward to something new. It is what immediately follows *oota* that determines the way to go for the interlocutors.[11] If there is a pause, the interlocutor literally has to wait. If something else follows the conversational path and/or the activities of the interlocutors are guided by this following spate of talk.

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[11] For an opposing opinion, see Hennoste (2000:2466–2468).

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As to the semantics of the examples so far, they have all pertained one of the crucial semantic features of the imperative form of waiting, namely that of urging to stop the projected course of action. The speaker either digresses, indicates the need to figure something out before the projected action can go on, or simply breaks the course of action by proposing a new one. This semantic component of stopping could be a good reason for considering different *ootas* above merely a case of polysemy which has been said to be characteristic of the intermediate stages of grammaticalization (P. Hopper 1991: 28). The Principle of Persistence in the grammaticalization process states that "so long as it is grammatically viable some traces of the item's original lexical meanings tend to adhere to it" (P. Hopper 1991: 22). On the more advanced stages, though, the relationship tends to be opaque.

Particulized usage

The usages of *oota* that could be considered most grammaticalized, most clearly functional and least lexical do therefore not even involve the urge to stop, i.e. the cases of topic retrieval, development, or change are not accompanied by the need to stop the projected course of action. These are the cases where a sequence has come to an end and the new topically disaligned sequence is initiated by the particle *ota*.

In Example 12, P has invited T to a skating-rink and T has been insisting that he cannot even stand on skates. The lengthy persuasion sequence ends with T's strong refusal and P's explanation in lines 1–2 that she simply thought that T would have liked to join them. In line 3, T once again states that he is not able to skate, which seems to be taken for a topic closure by both participants. After a pause and a laughter syllable P then continues with a variation on the same topic initiated by *oota* – she asks whether T has any friends who could skate.

As compared to Example 8, the question in line 5 in the present example is not designed as if extra information is needed about what the talk so far has been about. P here moves on from intensely persuading T to asking for any potential company. There is also a lengthy pause before her laughter syllable, which supports the argument that the persuading sequence has come to an end. *Oota* in line 5

could therefore be analyzed as not having much to do with the actual stopping of the ongoing action.

(12) Skating

```
1   P:   /---/ ma lihsalt mõtlesin        et (0.3) et  noh
              I   simply  think:IMF:1SG that    that NOH
         I just thought that

2            äkki  sa      tahad     ka
             ÄKKI you:SG want:2SG too
             maybe you want (to come) too

3   T:   mhmh:: ei    ma kuradi    ei   oska
         MHMH  NEG I    devil:GEN NEG can
         Uhuh, no I damned can't

4        (1.4)

5   P:   @ .hhh <@ ota  sul: e        keegi sõber ka  ei   oska vä
    @>
                  OTA you:SG:GEN some friend too NEG can  VÄ
         OTA, you don't have any friends who can either, do you?
    (P2A6)
```

Even if it is not nearly straightforward what is an ended sequence and what is not, one could say that in the present corpus there were around 35 sequences that had more or less come to an end when the particle *ota* turned up. At the same time, it should be underlined that *ota* seems to be used specifically for topic retrieval, development, or change, and not for starting just any new sequence. As such it could be seen as a topical junction and carrying a more structural/textual function, while of course preserving its interpersonal function of indicating the structure of the contribution to the interlocutor(s).

Another characteristic feature of *oota* is that in this disaligning function it is very often used at the beginning of interrogative units (70 cases out of 93, or 75%). Thus, the more particle-like usages of *oota* often initiate a question to the interlocutor, thereby possibly preserving some of its original grammatical nature of addressing 2nd person. Naturally, questions are suitable means of topic development. On the other hand, there are even cases of *oota*-initiated declarative units that (re)introduce a new topic, e.g. *ota ma lugesin eile töö juures /---/* 'OTA, I read at work yesterday /---/' (P1A8) or *oota onu juba lindistab* 'OOTA the chum is recording already' (Hennoste 2000: 2468).

When used as a particle *par excellence* oota is completely de-categorized (a term designed by P. Hopper 1991: 22). It has lost or neutralized the morphological markers and syntactic privileges characteristic of the full category Verb: prototypically the particle *ota* cannot take person and number endings or direct objects, and its position as TCU-initial is almost fixed. *Ota* has also lost its ability to form a TCU on its own as the imperative form can, and it has become intonationally bonded to the rest of the TCU – *ota* hardly ever carries any significant amount of stress and is usually pronounced as an enclitic.

Conclusion

In the present paper we have moved from the more literal usages of the imperative *oota* 'wait' to the less literal ones, arriving at cases that are rather topic-disjunctive particles than waiting orders. This continuum of different kinds of usage allows itself to be described in terms of grammaticalization but it does not conform to the original unidirectionality hypothesis (as proposed by Traugott in 1980; 1982; 1989) mainly because of the interactional nature of the item and the linear nature of the model (for similar critique, see Romaine and Lange 1991; Eriksson 1995). At the same time, interaction forms the basis of any process of conventionalization within speech (Hakulinen and Seppänen 1992: 547), and interactional data should thus probably never be disregarded.

Apart from unidirectionality we could trace all of the principles of the grammaticalization process proposed by P. Hopper (1991): divergence (the imperative of *oota* still exists), specialization (singling out just one or a few forms (see the frequency data above)), persistence (some traces of the original lexical meaning adhere to many cases of the particle usage), layering (there are other possibilities for topic development in Conversational Estonian), and de-categorization (loss or neutralization of morphological and syntactic privileges of verbs). Therefore, it is not easy to see how developments of interactional particles could be excluded from what has been called the process of grammaticalization.

As compared to previous mentions of the particle *ota* in literature (Hennoste 2000: 1800-1801, 2466-2468), this paper has not been an attempt at a top-down predetermined classification of the particle but an action-based sequential account of how the item is

used in phone conversations. As such it hopefully brings some clarity into why *ota* evades the particle categories suggested by Hennoste (2000: 1777).

In present-day Conversational Estonian *oota* often seems to function as a stop sign that preannounces a break, a detour, or a right of left turn. But in its uttermost developments, like on modern freeways, you are sometimes not even urged to stop any more when taking a new junction.

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Vormi *oota* grammatikaliseerumisest eestikeelses vestluses

Leelo Keevallik

Artikkel käsitleb vormi *oota* (algselt käskiva kõneviisi ainsuse 2. isik) kasutamist partiklina tänapäeva eesti ühiskeeles, asetades selle grammatikaliseerumisteooria konteksti.

Grammatikaliseerumine hõlmab traditsiooniliselt arenguid, kus mingi vähem grammatiline üksus muutub grammatilisemaks, kandes seejuures kaotusi semantilises keerukuses, pragmaatilises tähenduses, süntaktilises vabaduses ja foneetilises koostises. *Oota* on ühiskeeles sageli lühenenud (variandid *ota, oot, ot,* lisaks reduplitseerunud kasutus) ning kleepub enkliitikuna järgneva vooruehitusüksuse külge. Partiklina ei ole tal pöördelõppe ega arvutunnuseid, samuti ei saa talle lisada sihitist ega muid laiendeid, ning ka tema algne tähendus on praktiliselt kadunud.

Samas ei allu *oota* areng nn ühesuunalisushüpoteesile, mis väidab, et grammatikaliseerumisel muutuvad propositsioonilised tähendused (tekstilisteks ja seejärel) interpersonaalseteks. Oleks kummaline mitte pidada käskusid olemuslikult interpersonaalseteks. Samas, nagu näitab nii *oota* kui ka soomekeelse *kato* areng, võivad käskiva kõneviisi vormidki omandada tekstifunktsioone: *oota* on tõenäoliselt muutumas teemavahetuspartikliks, *kato* juba arenenud põhjussidendiks.

Käesolev artikkel annab telefonivestluste materjali põhjal ülevaate *oota* kasutusest nii oma algtähenduses kui ka partiklilaadsena. *Oota* on justkui stoppmärk, millega võib sisse juhatada pausi, seletusküsimust, kõrvaljärjendit või ka teemamuutust. Algtähenduses kasutatakse *oota*-vormi telefonivestluses eelkõige vestluspartneri ootamajätmiseks seniks, kuni tehakse midagi sellist, mida telefoni juures teha ei saa. Sel juhul on *oota*l ka sageli laiendeid, nt *üks hetk, natuke.* Lisaks võib *oota* enda või sellega alustatud vooruüksuse abil saata mingit aega nõudvat tegevust: nt *oota ma vaatan seda kalendrit* või *ot ot ot ot ot ot ot* (ise otsib käsikirjas õiget kohta). Aeganõudev tegevus võib olla ka lihtsalt mõtlemine: *oota (.) oota (.) oota (.) ma mõtlen.*

Partiklilaadsemas kasutuses, kui vestluspartnerilt ei oodata enam tegelikult ootamist, esineb *oota* muuhulgas kõrvaljärjendites ja parandusalustustes. Näiteks kui vestlejad püüavad järgmise helistamise aega kokku leppida, siis üks neist katkestab oma ettepaneku poole pealt,

et küsida: *ota täna on täna on teisipäev jah.* Saades jaatava vastuse, jätkab ta ettepanekut helistada reedel. Parandusalustused puudutavad mõnd arusaamatuks jäänud elementi äsjases voorus, nt *ota mis suuri kirjanikke, ota mismoodi, ota kuskohta* jne jne.

Neil juhtudel on veel säilinud mõned *oota* algtähenduse komponendid, eelkõige käimasoleva tegevuse peatamine, aga ka ootamise lõpp-punkt, st mingi ajahetk tulevikus, mil oodatu saabub või juhtub. Kõrvaljärjendid ja parandusalustused lõppevad tagasipöördumisega algse tegevuse juurde. Kuid *oota* on kasutusel ka juhtudel, mis ei eelda tagasipöördumist ning millel ei ole seega enam lõpp-punkti.

Sellist *oota*-kasutust võib leida teemamuutustes, nii väikestes kui ka drastilistes. *Ootaga* võib alustada küsimust käimasoleva teema kohta, mis vestluse veidi rajalt kõrvale viib. Näiteks räägib noormees autotöökojas tossu kaifimisest, aga neiu küsib hoopis: *oota sul on autol mingi probleem vä.* Samas võib *oota* abil sooritada ka palju kardinaalsema teemapöörde, nt üks sõbranna räägib Monty Pythoni filmidest, aga teine küsib selle peale: *.h oota sa: Helinalt ei ole m saanud mingit messidžit et kas ta sai meie paki kätte?*

Kõige vähem algtähendusega seotud on muidugi need juhud, mil pole vaja vestluspartnerit enam peatadagi, st eelmine vestlusjärjend on lõppenud ja alles seejärel toimub teemavahetus *oota* abil. Näiteks kui on liiva jooksnud neiu püüded noormeest uisutama saada, siis pärast pausi küsib ta: *ota sul: e keegi sõber ka ei oska vä.* Sellised näited annavad alust uskuda, et meil on põhjust rääkida iseseisvast partiklist, mille sagedasim fonoloogiline vorm käesolevas korpuses on *ota.*

On Estonian core verbs[1]

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Selecting the material for study, a semantically inclined investigator of language has a choice of proceeding from the two somewhat opposed perspectives: whether to explore the linguistic expressions corresponding to a concept, or the other way round, find out what concepts are conveyed by a linguistic expression. The latter perspective is the one adopted in the current study. The subject of this paper is part of a more extensive project 'Analysis of the operators of the basic vocabulary of the Estonian language', the aim of which is to describe the functional core of the Estonian language (including, in addition to verbs, personal and demonstrative pronouns, adverbs etc.) that has received little attention so far. At the moment, our goal is to compile a list of the main operator words (cf.,Ogden 1933) used in Estonian to connect words. Below, I will focus on the so-called core verbs of Estonian, the main aim is to determine which verbs should be included in the functional core. The theoretical perspectives will be discussed that could be of help when selecting the criteria for the determination of the operators of the basic vocabulary, for example, the grammaticalization theory (Heine et al. 1991) and construction grammar (Goldberg 1995) will be examined. In the second part of the article I will attempt to define the criteria that core verbs should correspond to. In the appendix, I will present examples of the uses of the selected verbs in grammatical functions, schematic meanings and as motivators of constructions.

1. On theories and basic vocabularies

The words in basic vocabularies compiled according to frequency are usually characterized by polysemy, which, indeed, is one of the causes for their frequent occurrence in the first place. The treatment of polysemy from a cognitive perspective is characterized by the principle of the relatedness of meanings and fuzziness of boundaries