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Cognitive Linguistics

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Tracing grammaticalization of oota 'wait' in Estonian conversation

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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 this kind: a specific form of a full lexical verb is also used as a particle.1

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" (Tragott 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 (Tragott and Heine 1991: 6). As to particulated usages of oota, all of these processes seem to apply: several semantic components of waiting have

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1 The author is grateful for Bengt Nordberg and Ilona Tragel for valuable comments.

2 A proposal to call this type of changes pragmatization rather than grammaticalization has been put forward by Erman and Kotsinas (1993:79) but the term has not attracted general acceptance.
gone lost, the particularized 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 Seppäläinen (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 Seppäläinen is also originally an imperative, meaning 'look!'! Consequently, in the case of conversational kato and oota, that propositional and interpersonal components should be considered intertwined from the start, and there is even a possibility for those 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 Seppäläinen 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 interlocutors'. The present study thus supports objections to the unidirectionality hypothesis that could be suffering from written language bias, as suspected by Hakulinen and Seppäläinen (1992: 547).

The paper describes the usage of oota on a continuum of more literal to more particularized. 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 oot (1),
oot oot ota (1), and oot oot oot oot (5 times)). Even oot had a tendency
to occur in combinations, (4 times as oot, and once as oot oot oot oot oot,
oot oot oot oot, oot oot oot oot, and oot oot oot oot oot oot oot, which leaves us with 18
cases of single oot). 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. 4

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. particularized 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 oot, at the same time, seems to
be far less frequent in this function.

Table 1. Variants of oota and their functions. 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More literal</th>
<th>More particle-like</th>
<th>% of more particle-like forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>oota</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ota</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>73.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ot</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oot</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oodake</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Henneoste (1998:161; 2000:1365) has claimed that the reduplicated
variant oodake is a question but there is no proof whatsoever for this
statement neither in the present corpus nor in Henneoste'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.

Korvalik

The indicative imperative paradigm in Estonian involves three forms
in Standard Estonian: 2SG (oota), 2PL (oodake), and 1PL (oodaku).
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 nautkene 'wait a second' (S1B13), oodake ma kutsin
'wait, I'll ask (somebody)' (QA15), oodake etsi ma kutsan ise
'wait a moment I'll call my father' (RA24). Once, however, it is used
to get an explanation on an earlier topic: oodake aga lai ma kolme kaks
ksaks tellin siis la he koo kogend krooni 'wait but if I order (it)
for three months then it'll be a hundred and thirty kronus' (UA10).
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
literald usages of the imperative oota 'wait', and in the other end there
is the conversational particle whose most frequent form is oot 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 phonologi-
cally full form oota.

Frequency

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

5 For transcription and glossing conventions, see Appendix 1.)
Tracing grammaticalization of oota 'wait'

Helme (1991: 9) suggests that the frequency of the imperative form oota, sometimes combined with adverbs tõks 'one moment', natakel '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 käisin silt kahe prõega 'wait, I'll ask (him) straight away' (K1B11), ota ma avasan taile 'wait, I'll pass on (the receiver) to her' (K381). When oota is used alone and followed by silence, it is 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 for her obligations for the evening, which is relevant in regard to her ability to go out with P.

(1) Going out
1 R: [o-ot o-ot] õnnine (0.2) ihab oota Ota heak! Heak! that okay gocuPL wait/IMP one moment Okay, let's go. Wait a second
2 P: [o @ @]
3 (4.8)
4 R: mä püsin tänkel (õhuso sõbermale) kõja I must IMP-1SG today one-ALL friend:ALL letter:GEN I was going to write a letter to a friend today
5 dra kirjutamine sin lastele õigused vääru trükima APA write:IMP then ch1H:PL:ALL word:PL out print:INF then print out words for the children
6 (P1A4)

4 In frequency calculations I have left out newspaper calls since the topic and the task at hand are always the same, which could have skewed the frequency results of lexical items in a way that would not reflect the speakers' daily experience.
As can be deduced from the examples above, oota may be used to indicate a postponement of a relevant next action (e.g., conclusion 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 o ot ot o ot ot o while the speaker is looking for the relevant place in a manuscript (M:BE1)), 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 vōtan se da kalendart ‘wait, I’ll have a look at the calendar’ (line 5).

(2) Rehearsal date

1 K: [wait] gaol et ki o le ginhapve on
probably so that when be:3SG Wednesday be:3SG
probably so that when the performance it

2 vitilemerire ni le kugapve vi le midi viy
probably performance then Saturday.ADE probably or something
on Wednesday then on Saturday probably or something

3 nisagat(1) vil guda viki midigv
like that.PRT or Sunday.ADE or something NOH
like that or on Sunday or something

4 nisal legal near
very close

5 E: gona ma vōtan se da kalendart mihali
wait:IMP | look:1SG this:PRT calendar:PRT when
Wait, I’ll have a look at the calendar when

6 siles oinki rau jlagimine cleks
then be:COND.NGAI singing be:COND
(8) would be the singing would be

Kensuke

7 K: minna ona ma vōtan ka oma mārkimiku nih (0.3)
MMFM wait:IMP:1 take:1SG this own notebook:GEN
Utah. I’ll take my notebook too

8 ma gona et pālina [selnteka]
I think:1SG that major group of people
I think that most people

(K8012)

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 vōtan ka oma mārkimiku ‘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 determine 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)3 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 utterance okay? by P in

3 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 diverted by initiating some kind of statement in line 3 (or *fakta on* 'OT, the fact is'), he continues by producing three more tokens of *ota* with short pauses in between and then an account of why the conversation has been put on hold (ma *mülen* 'I’m thinking'). After several restarts (*see* *fakt fakt* 'the fact the fact'), another recognition of troubles with the thinking process (XX) ma *tahtio eiida* ('what did I want to say?'), and a token of realization or remembering (ma), 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: *i-ves leed must maail*
   Then you’ll paint me

2 [L5]

3 P: *näinä agree:INE*
   Okay

4 T: *[as]*

5 T: *ot *fakta* on *ota* (*i* *ota* *ota* *ma* *måten*)
   OT fact be-3SG work:IMP work:IMP work:IMP I think:1SG

6 *ota* *fakta* (XX) ma *tahtio* *eiida* *a* *fakt on*
   The fact what do I want to say, oh yeah, the fact is

7 *a* *a* *ee* *nende*: *töönde* *puhul* *poles*: *itteg*:
   The fact PL/GEN work:PL/GEN at be:NES any:PRF

8 *ni* *on* *ot* *na* *tied* *kausatud* *model:* *PRF*
   These works

(P3A6-B1)

Other examples of extensive thinking periods accompanied by verbal explanations include e.g. *ot* *ot* *ma* *mülen* *kho* ‘OT OT I’ll say (it) in a second’ (UA6), *ota* ma *mülen* *mis* *teil* *veeto* on ‘OTA I’m thinking what else you have’ (P1B3), *ot* *ot* *ot* *ot* *ma* *sa* *läll* *arv

(4) Gone skiing

1 P: *h* *ee* *tie* *to* *palat* *Kaire*
   Hi, could I talk to Kaire, please

2 S: *Kaire* *ai* *gie* *Kaire* *laite* *
   KAIRE:PRF NEG be KAIRE go:IMP:3SG

3 [L7]

4 S: *a* *mi* *ni* *a* *ni* *ot* (ni X) *sites* *Otana* *a* *-
   OT OT NH ski:INF

(P1A10)

Ota 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 activity, 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 ongoing 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 pertaining 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 after the present phone call has come to an end: either she or the interlocutor will have to call back. In line 3, T proposes that P would do the calling, and continues with a formulation item (attlene “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.

(6) Calling back

1 P: nih ne ni ni b i lege ku ni hae ni lege ni lege
now NENG know1 QUES QUES I leave:1SG
I don’t know now whether I’ll leave

2 gina number voo mle gisat lele gisat lele
my number:GEN or I call:1SG you:PL ALL again
my number or whether I’ll call you back

3 T: no ni mi gisat te vila
NO I think:1SG that you:PL can:COND again call:INF
Well, I think you could call me back

4 nis gisat ota lina on lina on
then say:1PL OTA today be:3SG today be:3SG
Let’s say OTA today it’s today it’s

Keelallik

6 tegistev jah
Tuesday yes
Tuesday, isn’t it

6 P: voo
yes

7 T: ni gisat el ku te elistsake regular
say:1PL that if you:PL call:COND Friday:ADE
Let’s say you call me on Friday

(PBA1)

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 nisane karvasti aks: he is very act-* but then breaks the characterization with a question about whether the interlocutor knows a third person: ota ku sa (.) kas sa Unn Peetil määstad ‘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 whom are apparently exceptionally energetic). This temporary digression from the main topic, involving a background check with the interlocutor, is initiated by oota. After the relevant background information has been retrieved the main activity of characterization may continue.

Similarly, oota may initiate a disaligning argument that temporarily 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 *sa* ‘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 kud on mne jah
AA this text be:3SG KUUL I:ADE yes
Oh, I do have this text, yeah

2 L: eee
be:3SG you:ADE
You?”
 Kesavatik

several oblique (laupetva joosta ‘during Saturday’, mule ‘to me’, and vila koja ‘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 (cokad tแนมคิสา ‘can you draw it?’). In line 3, M initiates a repair about the acronym FTP that she has misheard. Her turn begins with oota.

(6) Drawing the file

1 If: wala on () on [vkalik sella куч initializing the FTP:COM occur overseen by] see(2SG be) draw(2SG) present there:ABL draw:INF

You see, it's possible to draw (6)

(0.9):zj Efttpeppaga () gipad куч

FTP:COM can(2SG draw:INF) with FTP: can you draw (6)?

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

The transcription of this example is according to the source.
Tracing grammaticalization of oota 'wait'

There are numerous (25) examples of this kind of other-initiated repairs beginning with oota in the present corpus (ota mis suari kiranikke 'OTA what big writers' (P1A4), ota mis ma seen 'OTA what will I do' (P5B10), oota kuskohta 'OTA where' (K1A10), oota mis-xemodi 'OTA how' (RA37), et es see niido on 'OT OT who is this' (M2AE2) etc.)

Other-initiations of repair are designed to indicate that the sequentially 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 resource 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 snog in the wintertime. Just prior to the excerpt in Example 9 he has explained that in bigger shops there are special tubes for sucking snog. In lines 1–2 he tells P that in this particular shop there was snog all over the place.

(9) Inhaling snog

1 T: =a seat or: sako

A there be INF:SG this kind of sigh

But there it was like sigh

But it was like sigh

2 taspi

full of thick snog

3 P: gina-si oot: on autol minga problem

OTA you SG:ADE be:SG:ADE some kind of problem

VA

OTA do you have a problem with your car?

(P3A4B11)

T's turn in line 1 is designed as strongly evaluative - besides the lexical means (sako 'thick snog') and a sound imitating the one possibly produced at the place in reality (aadd) 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). Instead, the turn in line 3 achieves a topic development. The disaligning question is initiated by oota, again used for stopping the conversational 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 questions, 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) factors 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 closings, see Schegloff and Sacks 1973), and in line 5, K starts saying bye (bisa). At the same time, P initiates a question about K'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: 1--s-ke eko sia kugame
   EKS then hear:1PL
   Let's hear then

2 P: <@ kule eko sia kugame jah @>  
   KULE EKS then hear:1PL yes
   Well, let's hear then, sure

3 K: Kwa no chwe?
   NO okay
   Okay then

4 P: <@ zako:le @>
   okay

5 K: no [f-L]
   NO by-

6 P: [co]la buwa le Kwa sinna Oxford
   OOTA long:THA you:SG stay:SG 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

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 interlocutors' mental processes is one of the basic principles of conversation analytic method.)

(11) The packet

1 K: ja need on mulle ko pilis pape lámud
   and this.PL be:3SG I ALL:QA quite please:PPT
   And I've liked these too

2 rimodi et mulle tundub et roh mi ka nitja only
   so that I ALL seem:3SG that NO:NEG ON:JU
   so that I feel like why not, you see

3 P: h ooja sa Helinot at ile m naasul mungil
   OOTA you HELINA:AIR, NEG be get:PPT some:PRT
   OOTA, haven't you got any message from

4 messaage:PHR that quest:PHR that quest:IMF:3SG we:GEN
   Helina about whether she has received
   gah
   hello= 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 interlocutor. 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 space of talk.

11 For an opposing opinion, see Hennoste (2000:2466–2468).
As to the semantics of the examples so far, they have all preserved 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 oota 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 visible 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.

**Particulated 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 oota.

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 topical 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 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.

**Keevallik**

(12) Skating

1  P: f-- fs ti nhanchristin en (o 3) et ad
     I simply think MF:1SG that that NOH

2  akki sa tunti ha
    Anno you:SG want:SG too

3  T: mme o sa kurad ei oska
    MMHH NEG I dev:GEN NEG can
    Uhuh, no I don’t need can

4  (L4)

5  P: @...< 2...a ota sai e keegi laikhe ka ei oska vâ
    OTA you.SG:GEN some friend too NEG can VÂ
    OTA, you don’t have any friends who can either, do you?

(P2A8)

Even if it is not entirely 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 oota turned up. At the same time, it should be underlined that oota 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 function and serving a more structural/textual function, while of course preserving its interpersonal function of indicating the structure of the contribution to the interlocutors.

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 a 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 logeo ein elle tâ juares t--/ "OTA, I read at work yesterday t--" (P1A8) or oota o na jëba lindistab "OTA the chum is recording already" (Hennoste 2000: 2468).
When used as a particle _per 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 oota
cannot take person and number endings or direct objects, and its po-
sition as TCU-initial is almost fixed. Oota has also lost its ability to
form a TCU on its own as the imperative form can, and it has be-
come intonationally bonded to the rest of the TCU – oota hardly ever
carry 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 Trask 1980; 1982;
1989) mainly because of the interactional nature of the item and the
linear nature of the model (for similar critique, see Romuine and
Lange 1991; Eriksson 1990). At the same time, interaction forms the
basis of any process of conventionalization within speech (Hakulinen
and Stenius 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): diver-
genesis (the imperative of _oota_ still exists), specialization (singling
out just one or a few forms (see the frequency data above),
perseverence (some traces of the original lexical meaning adhere to
many cases of the particle usage), layering (there are other possibil-
ties for topic development in Conversational Estonian), and de-cate-
gorialization (loss or neutralization of morphological and syntactic
privileges of verbs). Therefore, it is not easy to see how develop-
ments of interactional particles could be excluded from what has
been called the process of grammaticalization.

As compared to previous mentions of the particle oota in litera-
ture (Hemmo 2002: 1800-1801, 2464-2468), 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 oota evades the particle categories suggested by Hemoote

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 innermost developments, like on modern free-
ways, you are sometimes not even urged to stop any more when
taking a new junction.

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proaches to Grammaticalization I. Focus on Theoretical and
Tracing grammaticalization of oota ‘wait’


Vormi oota grammaticaliseerumisest eestikeelesse vestluses

Leelo Keelvalik

Artikkel käsitles vormi oota (algelt kliika kasvoniini ainsuse 2. isk) kasutamist partikliina tänapäeva eesti ühikeeles, asetades selle grammaticaliseerumisteooria konteksti.

Grammaticalizeerumine hõlmab traditsiooniliselt arenguid, kus mingi vähem grammatilise üksuse muutub grammatilaemaks, kandes seisukorda semantilises kõrvalüles, pragmatsilises tähenduses, sõnadesse sõnadesse ja fonetilises koostises. Oota on ühikeeles sageli lähenemad (variantid oita, oot, etc., lisaks redupliksõnund kusast) ning ideepab ekspliitseto jaganevaa vastavustsnukuse külje. Partikliina ei ole to põhjendlive ega arvavatuseid, samuti ei tahn talle lisada mõistet ega must laenast, ning ka tema aegne tähendus on praktikalisest hakanud.

Samas ei allu oota arengu ühesoonaliselt protsessile, mis viib, et grammaticaliseerumisel muutuvad pragmatsilised tähendused (tekstfunktsioon ja sejärel) interpersonoonalsetest. Oleks kuumaline mitte pistada küsalist olenevaid informaatikaiirhinnastest. Samas, nagu näidab nii oota kui ka suumikeelne kated gareng, võivad käiska kasvoniini vormdigi omandada tekstfunktsioone: oota on ühesõnulised muutusad teemavahetuspüritiil, korduva asendatud põhjusideelits.

Käesolev artikkel annab telefonivestluse materjali põhjal ülevaate ootast kasutamist nii oma algtagenduses kui ka partikliinaasena. Oota on juhtk võimu, millega võib sisse juhtuda pane, selektiivsise on, kõrgeidest või ka teemavahetust. Algtagenduses kasutatakse oota- vormi telefonivestluse eelkõige vestlapartneri otsamimiseks sõnet, kuni teheke mitagi sellist, mida telefonis juures teha ei saa. Sel juhul on oota ka sageli hooldeid, nt tõrr, naal. Likas võib oota enda või sellega avatud vastavuse abil saata mingi aega nõudvat tegevat: nt oota ma vaastam seda kalendri või ot ot ot ot ot ot ot (t.e. see osal kõrvalkod üsnet kohta). Aegandude tegus peab vältida ka hõlmatu mõõduse: oota (-ote) oota (-ote) ja mõlema.

Partikliinaasena kasutab, kui vestlapartneri ei eelda oma tegelikult otsatmist, seejuures oota müügiasdas korraldajad ja liitumisallastetust. Näiteks kui veetud päästvad järjehitis heitluse tulemust aega kolku leppida, siis õks neist katkestab otsa ettenähe ja pole pale,
et küsida: ota sõna on sõna on teisipäev jäh. Sandes juutava vastuse, jääb see ettepanekut helistada reedel. Paraduuslikkused peavad mõned arusaamatuks jäima elementi lähtese vormiga, et ota mis suuri kirjandik, ota mu neokohas je ne.


On Estonian core verbs

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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 perspectives were 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

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