

# Partitive indefinite pronouns in experiential constructions in Estonian

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Estonian has a number of non-canonically marked experiential constructions where the experiencer is marked either with allative or adessive and the stimulus with the nominative (dative-like experiencer, as in 1) or the experiencer is marked with the partitive and the stimulus with the nominative (object-experiencer, 2). (Cf. also Lindström 2013.)

(1) Mu-**lle** meeldi-**b** see mõte.

I-ALL like-3SG this idea.NOM

'I like the idea'

(2) Me-i-**d** huvita-**vad** teie mõtte-**d**.

we-PL-PRT interest-3PL your idea-PL.NOM

'We are interested in your ideas', lit. 'Your ideas interest us'

In these constructions, the stimulus behaves as a grammatical subject, triggering agreement with the verb, as in (2).

However, with indefinite pronouns in the stimulus-subject position, often the partitive case-marking is used instead of the nominative. As a result, object-experiencer constructions may have two partitive arguments, as in (3) and (4).

(3) Kas **te-i-d** huvita-**b** **midagi sellis-t** ?

Q you-PL-PRT interest-3.SG something-PRT such-PRT

'Are you interested in something like this?'

(4) **Ne-i-d** **vägivaldse-i-d lapsi** ei huvita-**nud** mitte **midagi** .

these-PL-PRT violent-PL-PRT child-PL.PRT NEG interest- ACT.PST.PTCL not anything-PRT

'These violent children were not interested in anything'

Indefinite pronouns marked with the partitive typically occur in negative (4), interrogative (3) or conditional clauses, but are not restricted only with these contexts. In all these clauses, also nominative indefinite pronoun may occur (5).

(5) **Ne-i-d** **vägivaldse-i-d lapsi** ei huvita-**nud** mitte **miski**.

these-PL-PRT violent-PL-PRT child-PL.PRT NEG interest- ACT.PST.PTCL not anything-NOM

'These violent children were not interested in anything'

Similar phenomenon can be found in Russian where intransitive, semi-transitive or transitive non-agentive predicates ( incl. experiential predicates) may take a negative indefinite pronoun as an argument (Timberlake 2004: 307-308, ex. 6), but seems to be missing in Finnish, a close cognate language of Estonian. Moreover, both in Russian and Estonian, the extended use of partitive is restricted only to inanimate indefinite pronouns . Thus, it may be an areal phenomenon.

(6) Ego **ničego** ne interesuet. (Timberlake 2004:308)  
he-gen nothing-gen not interest.3sg

'Nothing interests him / There is nothing that interests him.'

In the presentation, I look at the predicates which may take partitive indefinite pronouns as their stimulus argument (in stead of the nominative), and the typical contexts, where they may happen. I try to clarify whether the possibility to use an indefinite partitive pronoun in the subject position is a feature of certain experiential predicates, certain constructions, or perhaps a feature of all low-transitivity verbs (since partitive subjects are common in some intransitive constructions such as existential constructions).

## References

Lindström, L. (2013). Between Finnic and Indo-European: Variation and change in the Estonian experiencer-object construction. In I. A. Seržant & L. Kulikov (Eds.), *The Diachronic Typology of Non-Canonical Subjects* (pp. 139–162). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company

Timberlake, A. (2004). *A Reference Grammar of Russian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press