Helpless or without help?

On the division of labour between derivation and case inflection in Estonian

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Adverbial noun modifiers

- Correspond to possessive (‘have’/‘lack’), locational (the place (which) is in the sun) or ascriptive clauses (the book (which) is about cats)
  - Having/lacking something: a man with blue eyes; a woman without conscience
  - Material, origin, sender, source: a ring of gold, a dog of good breed, a letter from home, a man of New York
  - Location, state: a place in the sun, a man in panic
  - Recipient, beneficiary, goal, dimension: a letter to my mother, a ticket to ride, water up to the knees
  - Subject: a book about cats
ANMs and their equivalents in (Western) Uralic languages

• Five options:
  1. Derivation: denominal adjective instead of adverbial modifier
  2. Compounding
  3. Prenominal relative (non-finite) clause with a dummy verb
  4. Case-inflected NP or AdpP following the head ("unauthentic"?)
  5. Prenominal case-inflected modifiers
Derived adjective

• Hungarian:
  Amint kijön a jó idő, sokan fognak hozzá
  a  kert-ben-i  sütö-get-és-hez
  DEF garden-INE-ADJ fry-FREQ-N-ALL
  ‘With the nice weather arriving, many people start (“get into”) (the) grilling in the garden’

• Finnish:
  sokeri-ttoma-t  ja  sokeri-llise-t  juoma-t
  sugar-ADJ.CAR-PL and sugar-ADJ-PL beverage-PL
  ‘beverages without and with sugar’
Compounding

• Finnish:

  *kissa+kirja* ‘cat book (= a book about cats)’
  *kulta+sormus* ‘gold ring’
  *rotu+koir* ‘dog of (good) breed’ (race + dog)
  *matka+lippu* “trip ticket”

• First (“modifier”) part in the nominative or (in Estonian often) in the genitive case

• Contact-induced innovation??
Compounding or modifying?

• Kont (1973): compounding in Western Uralic languages is contact-induced, more eastern Uralic languages have modifier phrases (with a noun as adjective-like modifier?!): Komi kört tuj iron road ‘railway’

• Fejes (2005): distinguishing nominative-modifier constructions from compounds is not that simple, compounding in Uralic can be an ancient phenomenon
Prenominal clause with dummy verb

• Hungarian:
  hallgassuk    a nagy halról    szóló      mesét!
  listen.IMP.1PL DEF big fish.ABL tell.PCTP.PRS story.ACC
  ‘let’s hear the story about the big fish’
	személyes adatok harmadik személynek számára
  personal data.PL third person.DAT account.ALL
  történő átadása
  happen.PCTP.PRS hand.over.NMLZ-POSS.3SG
  ‘surrendering of personal data to a third person’

  a térségben stratégiai    érdekekkel
  DEF area.INE strategy.ADJ interest.PL.COM
  rendelkező    szereplő
  dispose.PCTP.PRS actor
  ‘an actor with strategic interests in the area’
Case-inflected postnominal modifiers – less authentic...

_Eesti keele käsiraamat_: “The postnominal position of a modifier is not quite typical of Estonian and makes the sentence clumsy. Therefore, if the modifier adverb has a synonymous equivalent in the form of a prenominal modifier in the genitive case, the latter should be preferred.” (...) visioon _tulevikust_ [‘vision of future [ELA’] > _tulevikuvision_ tagatis _eduks_ [‘guarantee for success [TRSL’] > _edu tagatis_ piletid _teatrisse_ [‘tickets to theatre’ [ILL]] > _teatripiletid_ konsultant _hariduse alal_ [‘counsellor in the area of education’] > _hariduskonsultant_ [NB! NOM]
... due to problems with inflected head nouns...

• *Eesti keele käsiraamat:*

Postponed adverbial modifiers are appropriate for instance on labels (šamponon *kuivadele juustele* [ALL] ‘shampoo for dry hair’) but “clumsy” in a sentence: *pesin juuksed šamponoiga* [COM] *kuivadele juustele* ‘I washed my hair with shampoo for dry hair’ > *pesin juuksed kuivade juuste* [GEN] *šamponoiga*

(However, postnominal noun modifiers are not considered clumsy: *pesin juuksed šamponoiga “Ultra Shine”* ‘I washed my hair with the shampoo (named) U.S.’)
... but nevertheless used

- Finnish: *kuunnellaanpa satua suuresta kalasta*
  Estonian: *kuulame muinasjuttu suurest kalast*
  ‘let’s hear the story about the big fish [ELA]’

- Finnish: *henkilötietojen luovuttaminen kolmannelle osapuolelle*
  Estonian: *isikuandmete üleandmine kolmandatele isikutele*
  ‘handing over of personal data to third persons [ALL]’
Prenominal case-inflected modifiers: only in Estonian?
Erelt 2003: 113–114:

• (...) (genitivus definitivus), e.g. *eesti keel* ‘Estonian language’.
• Oblique-case pre-noun modifiers that express a property may occur in:
  – (a) the partitive, e.g. *head tõugu lehm* ‘a cow of a good breed’ (...)
    (b) inessive, e.g. *paanikas inimene* ‘panicky person’ [sic] (...)
    (c) elative, e.g. *rauast uks* ‘iron door’ (...)
    (d) adessive, e.g. *naerul suu* ‘smiling mouth’ (...)
    (e) terminative, e.g. *laeni kuusk* ‘a spruce reaching the ceiling’ (...)
    (f) abessive, e.g. *lasteta perekond* ‘childless family’ (...)
    (g) comitative, e.g. *nokaga müts* ‘beaked cap’ (...)
• “Estonian does not have relative adjectives. The genitive and oblique-case pre-noun modifiers are used instead of relative adjectives.”
“Properties”!

• state but not location: *paanikas mees* ‘man in panic’ / *kõögis mees* ‘man in the kitchen’; *naerul suu* ‘mouth in smile’ / *riiulil raamat* ‘book on the shelf’
  – expressions of state are different: *võti on lukus* ‘the key is in the lock’ – *uks on lukkus* ‘the door is locked’, *lukkus uks* ‘a locked door’

• endpoint (dimension) but not goal: *maani seelik* ‘skirt down to the ground’ / *koju kiri* ‘a letter home’, *emale kiri* ‘a letter to mother’
• material but not source, origin or subject: 
  *rauast uks ‘door of iron’ / *kalast muinasjutt ‘story about a fish’, *kodunt kiri ‘letter from home’, *emalt kiri ‘letter from mother’
No relative adjectives?

• Estonian does have cognates and counterparts to many other FU adjective derivations:
  – -tu (< PU *-ktA-mA): värvi-tu ‘colourless’
  – -kas: ande-kas ‘talented’
  – -line: värvi-line ‘coloured’
  – -ne: raud-ne ‘of iron’, sini-silm-ne ‘blue-eyed’

  (cf. Fi. väritön, lahjakas, värillinen, rautainen, sinisilmäinen...)
No *productive adjective* derivation as an alternative to ANMs?

- Derived relative adjectives are
  - lexicalized, unproductive?
  - semantically specified:
    *savi* ‘clay’: *savi-ne muld* ‘soil containing clay’, *savi-ne saabas* ‘boot stained with clay’, but instead of *savi-ne figuur* rather *savi-st [ELA] figuur* ‘a figurine (made) of clay’
    *ravi-ma-tu haigus* ‘incurable disease’ – cf. *ravi-ma-ta [ABE] haigus* ‘an illness not cured (yet)’
  - semantically abstract, generic: *ande-tu* ‘talentless, without talent’ – ?*auto-tu* ‘carless’
What happened to adjectives in Estonian?

• Reduced word-formation?
  – in comparison with Finnish, Estonian word-formation is often characterized as more compact or less grammatical

• Reduced inflectional morphology in general?

• Reduced agreement?
  – agreement of adjective modifiers is an innovation in Finnic – is the reduction of agreement in Estonian an “atavism” or a “backlash”? 
Reduced agreement

• Past participles as modifiers do not inflect in Estonian (and Livonian)

  \[\text{Sur-nud luuletaja-te ühing}\]
  \[\text{die-PTCP.PST.ACT poet-GEN.PL society}\]
  \[\text{Surma hinda küsi sur-nu-te_lt}\]
  \[\text{death.GEN price.PART ask.IMP.2SG die-PTCP.PST.ACT-PL-ABL}\]

• ‘Behind the nose’ (nina taga):
  – Modern Standard Estonian: nouns in the so-called \textit{nina taga} cases (terminative, essive, abessive, comitative) have their modifiers in the genitive: \textit{viimase piirini} ‘up to the last border’, \textit{vana autoga} ‘with an old car’
Phonological factors?

• Nurkse 1937 > Ereit 1999:
  – *syllable economy*: in dialects and in Old Written Estonian, case agreement (mostly) appears when the case ending would not increase the number of syllables (*targa-st mehe-st* ELA ‘from a wise man’) but is (often) missing where it would add a syllable (*targa mehe-le* ALL ‘to a wise man’)
  – lacking case agreement of modifiers also with Livonian datives: *tuoiz ibīzōn* other. GEN horse.DAT, *sie vanā mi’en* that(?GEN) old(?GEN) man.DAT
New type of lacking agreement

• The *nina taga* (and in dialectal and old Estonian also other) case suffixes behave syntactically like postpositions:

  *suure metsa-ni*  
  big.GEN forest(.GEN)-TERM  
  ‘up to the big forest’

  *suure metsa taga*  
  big.GEN forest.GEN behind  
  ‘behind the big forest’

• The genitive (synchronically unmarked) acts as basis for inflections and derivations!
Uninflected adjectives

• **Vaegomadussõna** [‘deficient adjective’] in Estonian grammars (cf. Viitso 2007, Erelt 2008)
  – orphaned genitive (*katoliku* ‘Catholic’) or partitive forms (*iselaadi* ‘peculiar’, “of one’s own kind”)
  – (adverb-like?) uninflectable adjectives: *väärt poiss* ‘a good boy’ (cf. *sa oled seda väärt* ‘you are worth it’), *täis* (~ *täie* GEN) *kõhuga* ‘with a full stomach’ (cf. *vala klaas täis!* ‘pour the glass full!’ – Fi. *kaada lasi täyteen* [ILL] ~ *?täydeksi* [TRSL])
  – Some uninflectable adjectives also in Finnish: *pikku pojalle* [ALL] ‘to a little boy’, *kelpo työntekijöitä* [PART.PL] ‘competent workers’
Summing up: what happened?

• Case-inflected prenominal modifiers (for states or inherent properties) have supplanted derived relative adjectives, as it seems, among all Uralic languages only in Estonian
  – because they must: (generic relative) adjective derivation is dwindling, but modifiers must nevertheless occupy the position preceding the head
  – because they can: modifier agreement is weakening (again?)
And how, or why?

• Viitso (2007: 887):
  – Prenominal ANMs “have lost their adverbial character, i.e. their connection to a verb, thanks to the loss of the participle olev [‘being’] or olnud [‘having been’]”: paanikas mees ‘in-panic man’ < *paanikas olev mees ‘man being in panic’?

• More fixed word order – less clear borders between parts of speech (cf. Hengeveld & al. 2004): prenominal modifier position becomes more important than adjectiveness?
The moral of the story

• There are morphosyntactic changes which cannot be explained by foreign influences nor general typological drifts only...
• ... and also not (only) with speculations about possible syntactic change.
• Most probably, there are numerous interacting factors at play
  – ... perhaps, among others, even the notorious avoidance of homonymy?
... sleeping furiously

värv-i-tud muna-d
colour-V-PTCP.PST.PASS egg-PL
‘coloured eggs’

värvitad muna-d
colour-CAR-PL egg-PL
‘colourless eggs’

värvita muna-d
colour-ABE egg-PL
‘eggs without colour’
Selected references


