

An infinitive by any other name: On the non-finites in Hungarian, Finnish and Estonian grammars

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ABSTRACT

Non-finite verb forms, in-between verbs and nouns and also in-between inflection and derivation, pose challenges to grammar writing. In the largely Latin-based European grammar traditions, three or four main types of non-finites are often distinguished: infinitives, participles, verbal adverbs (gerunds, converbs), and – often most closely connected to the participles but classified as derivation rather than inflection – deverbal noun derivatives. Hungarian, Finnish, and Estonian, the three Uralic state languages with a strong tradition of written cultivation, are situated at the western end of the language family and display a strong “Europeanization” also in their systems of non-finites. Yet, these systems differ greatly even from each other.

In this paper, the classification and nomenclature of non-finites in Hungarian grammars are compared with Finnish and Estonian. The Finnish grammar tradition is based on morphological substance but, failing to acknowledge the category of converbs, ends up exploiting the term “infinitive” in a way which is syntactically and semantically meaningless. The Estonian grammars vacillate between an opportunistic use of traditional European grammar terms and a simple listing of forms at a minimal level of abstraction. Hungarian grammars, in turn, present the non-finites in a way which is incompatible with other grammar traditions and is internally contradictory.

KEYWORDS

non-finites, infinitives, participles, converbs, grammar writing, Hungarian, Finnish, Estonian

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NON-FINITES IN-BETWEEN NOMINALS AND VERBS

Connected to the fundamental division of words into nouns (or “nominals”) and verbs, the fundamental division of verb forms into finites and non-finites is at the heart of European grammar traditions. The finite inflection of verbs – that is, the marking of person, tense, mood and/or aspect on the verb – not only marks the boundary between nouns and verbs but also serves as a criterion for defining a well-formed sentence. A non-finite is productively formed from a verb stem, but behaves rather like a noun, adjective or adverb. Morphologically, this can mean taking nominal inflections instead of verbal ones; in the Uralic languages, non-finites can carry not only case markers but also possessive suffixes instead of verbal person endings.

- (1) Hungarian
(neked) nem kell fél-ne-d
 2SG.DAT NEG must be.afraid-INF-POSS.2SG
 ‘you don’t need to be afraid’
- (2) Finnish
sano-t niin vain lohdutta-a-kse-si minu-a
 say-2SG so only comfort-INF-TRSL-POSS.2SG 1SG-PART
 ‘you say so only in order to comfort me’

At first sight it seems that the Uralic non-finites largely (and surprisingly nicely, as noted by Ylikoski, 2003a, 187) fit into the four major categories which have evolved in the European, largely Latin-based grammar tradition:

- (a) **infinitives**: (obligatory) arguments of modal, phasal, volitional etc. verbs;
- (b) **participles**: adjective-like modifiers of nouns;
- (c) **gerunds, gerundives, verbal adverbs** or **converbs**: free modifiers of verbs or sentences;
- (d) **deverbal nouns**, such as agent nouns or action nouns (“gerunds” in the English grammar tradition) formed from verbs.

As the examples in Table 1 show, the morphological marking of the four main types of non-finites may coincide: in English, all four types can be marked with the same suffix, German employs two distinct suffixes, while Hungarian, Finnish, and Estonian, for instance, have a different suffix for each type.

It is also well known that these types represent idealizations of prototypes rather than fixed categories. There are grey zones between them, and their borders are often crossed by grammaticalization developments. In particular, the border between deverbal nouns and participles or converbs (and with that, also the border between derivation and inflection) is often fuzzy. In Hungarian and in the Permic languages, for example, present participles (3a) are identical to agent nouns (3b), so that distinguishing these two categories is a matter of terminological convention or a question of lexicalization, while in Finnish, the suffix *-mA* forms so-called agent participles (4a), so-called infinitives (4b) and also some regular (lexicalized) deverbal nouns (4c).



Table 1. Examples of the four traditional categories of non-finites (cf. Ylikoski, 2003a, 187)

	English	German	Hungarian
participle	<i>There's a singing bird.</i>	<i>Da ist ein singender Vogel.</i>	<i>Ott van egy éneklő madár.</i>
verbal adverb / gerund(ive) / converb	<i>The bird flew off singing.</i>	<i>Der Vogel flog singend weg.</i>	<i>A madár énekelve elrepült.</i>
infinitive	<i>The bird started singing.</i>	<i>Der Vogel fing an zu singen.</i>	<i>A madár énekelni kezdett.</i>
deverbal (action) noun	<i>The singing of the birds makes me happy.</i>	<i>Das Singen der Vögel macht mich glücklich.</i>	<i>A madarak éneklése boldoggá tesz.</i>

(3) Hungarian

a. *a gyereke-i-me-t tanít-ó tanárok*
 DEF child-PL-POSS.1SG-ACC teach-PTCP.PRS teacher-PL
 'the teachers who teach my children'

b. *A jó tanít-ó tud-ja, hogy milyen a jó iskola*
 DEF good teach-AGT know-OBC.3SG COMP what.like DEF good school
 'a good teacher knows what a good school is like'

(4) Finnish

a. *maisto-i-n Peka-n juo-ma-sta olue-sta*
 taste-PST-1SG P.-GEN drink-PTCP-ELA beer-ELA
 'I took a sip from the beer which Pekka had been drinking'

b. *kiels-i-n Pekka-a juo-ma-sta olut-ta*
 forbid-PST-1SG P.-PART drink-INF-ELA beer-PART
 'I forbade Pekka to drink beer'

c. *maisto-i-n Peka-n juo-ma-sta*
 taste-PST-1SG P.-GEN drink-N-ELA
 'I took a sip from Pekka's drink'

Parallel to *gerund* or *gerundive*, the term *converb* has been regularly used in general typological literature since the 1990s. It was first created by the Finnish Altaicist G. J. Ramstedt for his Khalkha grammar (1903) and used since then especially in Altaic studies to describe adverbial non-finite verb forms which are used for subordination or coordination of whole clauses. Similarly to Standard Average European conjunctions or connectives such as 'because', 'so that', 'when' or 'after', converbs can express different semantic, temporal, causal etc. relations between the subordinated non-finite clause and the main clause, as illustrated by the following Finnish examples (Nikanne, 1997, 338, quoted in Ylikoski, 2003a, 203–204).



(5) Finnish	<i>Pekka teki rikoksen...</i>	juomalla olutta	‘by drinking beer’: MEANS
	‘Pekka committed a crime...’	juomatta olutta	‘without drinking beer’: NEGATION
		juodessaan olutta	‘while drinking beer’: CONTEMPORANEITY
	juoden olutta	‘drinking beer’: CONCOMITANCE	
	juodakseen olutta	‘in order to drink beer’: PURPOSE	
	juotuaan olutta	‘after drinking beer’: ANTERIORITY	

However, until recently the term “converb” has not been used in the school grammars of languages like Hungarian, Finnish, or Estonian.¹ In Finnish grammars, the converb examples above are classified mostly as “infinitives” (for example, *juomalla* is the adessive case form of the third or MA infinitive, *juodakseen* is the long or translative case form of the first or A infinitive) or participles (the verb form *juotuaan* in the “temporal construction” expressing anteriority is the possessive-suffixed partitive form of the passive past participle).

NON-FINITES IN THE GRAMMARS OF HUNGARIAN, FINNISH, AND ESTONIAN

The Uralic languages – as described in the important articles by Ylikoski (2003a, 2022) – typically have rich systems of non-finites. Their richness (as pointed out by Ylikoski (2022, 938–939) often correlates with the number of cases, as the converbs in particular often inflect in case. (In example 5 above, all the Finnish converb forms contain a case suffix: adessive *-lla*, abessive *-tta*, inessive *-ssa*, instructive *-n*, translative *-kse-* or partitive *-a*, some of them followed by the third-person possessive suffix *-Vn*.) In this respect, Hungarian stands out in having only one productive converb/gerund (in *-va/-ve*) as opposed to a large case system; this is partly countered by the presence of person marking on the infinitives and the fairly complex participle system.

The non-finite systems of the three major Uralic languages show essential differences, despite their common roots (materially, practically all the individual suffix elements involved represent ancient Uralic heritage) and historical parallels in their development, in particular, the indubitable strong influences of major European languages and literacy. In her brief overview of the Uralic participles, Shagal (2018) emphasizes the differences between westernmost Uralic (including Finnish, Estonian, and Hungarian) and the more eastern Uralic languages. Yet, also within this western group Hungarian participles clearly differ from the participle systems of Finnic. Within Finnic, in turn, despite the close relatedness there are clear differences between Finnish and Estonian in the formation and use of non-finites. Some of them are

¹The standard reference grammar of Estonian, *Eesti keele käsiraamat*, has in its newest edition (Erelt et al., 2020, 231) introduced *konverb* as an alternative term for *määrsõnalaadne des-vorm* (‘adverb-like *des*-form’).



shown in Table 2, based on Mantila's (1997, 17) comparison between Hungarian and Finnish but expanded to cover Estonian as well.²

All the three languages have a typical "European" infinitive. The Hungarian *ni*-infinitive, however, has a wider range of syntactic and semantic functions than the Finnic **TA*-infinitives, with various adverbial and other uses: purposive (as in (6)), "absentive" (as in (7), for the term see de Groot, 2000), complement of verbs of perception (as in (8)), etc. For many of these functions, the Finnic languages have grammaticalized a specific case form of an "infinitive" or a participle; note that the Estonian partitive form of the present participle in (8c) also figures in Estonian grammars as the "*vat*-infinitive".

- (6) a. Hungarian (Mantila, 1997, 33)

Nem játsza-ni jö-tte-m ide.
NEG play-INF come-PST-1SG here

- b. Finnish

E-n minä tänne ole leikki-mä-än tul-lut.
NEG-1SG 1SG here be.CNG play-INF-ILL come-PTCP.PST
'I didn't come here **to play**.'

- (7) a. Hungarian (de Groot, 2000, 641)

János levele-t vol-t föl-ad-ni.
J. letter-ACC be-PST(3SG) up-give-INF

- b. Estonian

Jaan ol-i kirja posti pane-ma-s.
J. be-PST(3SG) letter.PART post.ILL put-INF-INE
'John was off **posting** a letter [and therefore, he wasn't here].'

- (8) a. Hungarian (Mantila, 1997, 34–35)

A zaj erőöd-ni hallatsz-ott.
DEF noise get.stronger-INF sound.like-PST(3SG)

- b. Finnish

Melu kuulost-i voimistu-va-n.
noise sound.like-PST(3SG) get.stronger-PTCP.PRS-GEN

- c. Estonian

Müra tundu-s tugevne-va-t.
noise feel.like-PST(3SG) get.stronger-PTCP.PRS-PART
'The noise appeared **to get stronger**.'

²The table does not include the connegative form, which is used in many Uralic languages in connection with the negative auxiliary verb (as in Finnish *e-n anna* NEG-1SG give.CNG 'I don't give'); in Hungarian there is no negative auxiliary and therefore also no connegative form.



Table 2. Hungarian, Finnish, and Estonian non-finites

	Hungarian	Finnish		Estonian	
Infinitive	<i>adni</i> '(to) give'	Infinitive 1 (A-infinitive)	<i>antaa</i>	<i>da</i> -infinitive	<i>anda</i>
	<i>adn-</i> + PX (<i>adnom</i> , <i>adnod</i> ...)	"long form" of infinitive 1	translative case + PX (<i>antaakseni</i> 'so that I could give', <i>antaaksesi</i> ...)		
Gerund	<i>adva</i> <i>adván</i>	Infinitive 2 (E-infinitive)	instructive case: <i>antaen</i>		
			inessive case: <i>antaessa</i> 'while giving' <i>antaessa-</i> + PX (<i>antaessani</i> , <i>antaessasi</i> ...)	Gerund/converb	<i>andes</i>
			impersonal: <i>annettaessa</i> 'while one gives/they give'		
		Infinitive 3 (MA-infinitive)	illative: <i>antamaan</i> inessive: <i>antamassa</i> elative: <i>antamasta</i> adessive: <i>antamalla</i> abessive [negative converb]: <i>antamatta</i> 'without giving' (instructive: <i>antaman</i>)	<i>ma</i> -infinitive (supine)	[illative:] <i>andma</i> inessive: <i>andmas</i> elative: <i>andmast</i> abessive ("mata-form"): <i>andmata</i> 'without giving'
		("Infinitive 4")	<i>antaminen</i> partitive: <i>antamista</i>		
				<i>vat</i> -infinitive	<i>andvat</i>
Participles	present active: <i>adó</i> '(who is) giving'	present active: <i>antava</i> 'giving'	present passive: <i>annettava</i> 'being given, to be given'	present active: <i>andev</i>	present passive: <i>antav</i>
	past absolute: <i>adott</i> 'given'	past active: <i>antanut</i> '(who has) given'	past passive: <i>annettu</i> '(who has) been given'	past active: <i>andnud</i>	past passive: <i>antud</i>
	"igei igenév": (<i>X</i>) <i>adta</i> 'given by X'	agent participle: (<i>X</i> -GEN) <i>antama</i> 'given by X'			(agent participle: <i>X</i> -GEN <i>antud</i>)
(negative participle)	(<i>adatlan</i> 'not given')	<i>antamaton</i>		<i>andmatu</i>	

(continued)



Table 2. Continued

	Hungarian	Finnish		Estonian	
	future-necessitive: <i>adandó</i> ‘(what is) to be given’				
	(potential): <i>adható</i> ‘giveable’, NEG <i>adhatatlan</i>)				

(9) a. Hungarian

A *gépezet megszűn-t működ-ni.*
 DEF machinery cease-PST.(3SG) function-INF

b. Finnish

Koneisto lakkas-i toimi-ma-sta.
 machinery cease-PST.(3SG) function-INF-ELA
 ‘The machinery ceased to function.’

As mentioned above, as opposed to the numerous so-called infinitives in Finnic, many of which are actually verbal adverbs (converbs), Hungarian has only one productive gerund/converb with a fairly narrow and specific field of use. For those functions of the Finnic converbs which are not covered by the Hungarian *-va/-ve* converb or the *-ni*-infinitive, Hungarian often uses finite clauses. Many of the Finnish converb clauses in (5) would perhaps most idiomatically be translated into Hungarian with a subordinate finite clause (e.g. *miközben/miután sört ivott* ‘while he was/after he had been drinking beer’, *hogy ihasson sört* ‘so that he could drink beer’).

The participle systems, as mentioned above, are constructed differently. In Finnic, most participles are inherently oriented, i.e. they relativize either subjects/agents (“active participle”) or objects/patients (“passive participle”), only the negative participle corresponds to the “Eastern” context-oriented type (Fi. *syömätön mies* ‘a man who hasn’t eaten / isn’t eating / will not eat’, *syömätön ruoka* ‘food which isn’t / hasn’t been eaten’, *syömätön päivä* ‘a day on which one doesn’t eat’; see e.g. Shagal, 2018, 77–78). In Hungarian, the system resembles German (and English) in having both subject- or agent-oriented (active present) participles (*a loving husband / ein liebender Gatte / egy szerető férfi*) and absolutive (past) ones (cf. Shagal op.cit. 71). Absolutive participles relativize both objects of transitive verbs (*a forgotten umbrella / ein vergessener Regenschirm / egy elfelejtett esernyő*) and subjects of telic intransitive verbs (*a fallen leaf / ein gefallenes Blatt / egy elhullott levél*) but not of atelic ones (**a danced girl / *ein getanzttes Mädchen / *egy táncolt lány*; cf. Shagal, 2019, 78–79). However, Hungarian also deviates from the Standard Average European type in having a future-necessitive participle (*adandó* ‘(what is) to be given’); its use in the Hungarian literary language may, of course, have been supported by Latin, but functionally similar participles also occur in Mari and Udmurt (see Ylikoski, 2022, 941–943), which might indicate Turkic influence (cf. Johanson, 1998, 46).



In general, as Mantila (1997, 91–93) summarizes, the Finnish (Finnic) system is semantically more fine-grained and more grammaticalized as concerns morphosemantic features such as the expression of (relative) tense or voice, whereas the Hungarian system is semantically more flexible but syntactically more fixed. Within Finnic, in turn, Estonian shows less grammaticalization of suffix chains into semantically specific functions than Finnish. One factor explaining this difference might be that Estonian has no productive possessive suffixes and therefore no morphological person marking on converbs is possible. Estonian is also generally characterized by less use of morphology and the tendency to avoid suffix chains (see e.g. Metslang, 2009).

TERMINOLOGIES IN COMPARISON

The descriptions and labels of non-finites in Hungarian, Finnish, and Estonian grammars also display fundamental differences. In the Hungarian grammar terminology, as it was developed in the 19th century (see e.g. Jászó, 2002, 96), the main focus was on syntactic roles rather than morphology, and the Hungarian terms for the types of non-finites are based on comparing them with prototypical functions of other (major) word classes. Participles are called *melléknévi igenév*, lit. “adjectival verb-name”, because they typically act as noun modifiers, and similarly, gerunds or converbs are called *határozói igenév*, lit. “adverbial verb-name”, according to the typical role of adverbials as modifiers of verbs. What remains for the infinitives is the rather unfortunate term “nouny verb-name” (*ősnévi igenév*). Actually, the Hungarian infinitive, compared with real deverbal noun derivatives (such as action or agent nouns), has very few noun-like features: it cannot act as a head of a noun phrase with adjective modifiers, it can carry adnominal person (“possessive”) marking but no case or plural suffixes, and its uses as object- or subject-like arguments are restricted to certain verb or clause types: *szeretek (kávét) inni* ‘I love to drink (coffee)’ (cf. *szeretem a kávét* ‘I love coffee’), *aludnom kellett* ‘I had to sleep’ (“for me to sleep was necessary”, cf. *kellett a pénz* ‘the money was needed’), *gondolkodni veszélyes* ‘to think [is] dangerous’.

An even less fortunate application of this word-class analogy is the tradition of calling a subtype of past participles *igei igenév* (‘verbal verb-name’), “*az igéhez való hasonlóságuk miatt*” (‘because of their similarity to the verb’, Keszler and Lengyel, 2002, 112). These verb forms look like regular finite past-tense inflections (in the objective conjugation) and have an overt nominative subject (or the pronominal subject is present as a person suffix³). Yet, their typical function, similarly to past participles in general, is to modify nouns: *Cicero írta könyv* ‘a book written by Cicero’ (cf. *Cicero írta a könyvet* ‘Cicero wrote the book’).

The *t* suffix in the *igei igenév* is identical with the past-tense marker (which, in turn, diachronically derives from the past participle suffix), but it can also be identified with the suffix of a past participle or an action noun which had a variety of uses already in Old Hungarian (Jászó, 2002, 97–100). The personal suffix, in turn, might be interpreted either as a person suffix of the objective conjugation or as an adnominal (possessive) person suffix (since the 19th century, both interpretations have been argued for, see e.g. Nádasdi, 2011, 157). Accordingly, *Cicero írta könyv* can be analysed either as a subject-verb construction (“Cicero wrote (it), the

³In older grammars, one can find examples such as *az idéz-te-m vers* ‘the poem quoted by me’ (Tompa, 1968, 188), in which the 1SG agent is only encoded by the suffix *-m*.



book”, “the Cicero-wrote-it book”) or as structurally analogous to the head-marking attributive possession construction (“Cicero’s written book”, “a book (of) Cicero’s writing”). The latter interpretation would make the *igei igenév* a perfect parallel of the Finnic agent participle, with which the agent is also encoded like a possessor (in the genitive case). Probably inspired by the Finnish terminology, Blaskó and Riese in their practical Hungarian grammar (2018, 534–536) use the term *Agenspartizip*; however, they interpret the person endings as verbal person suffixes.

The Finnish grammar tradition is morphology-driven. The basic distinction between participles and infinitives is that participles have the complete case inflection just like regular adjectives (note that in Finnic, unlike the rest of Uralic, modifier adjectives agree with their heads), whereas infinitives are not inflected in any (productive) case or only have a limited set of case inflections. The category of infinitives in Finnish traditional school grammars⁴ has therefore come to include not only typical European infinitives, i.e. arguments of certain verb types as in (4b) and (9b) above, but also a number of converbial forms (as in (5) above), or even the modal use of the regular action noun in *-minen* labelled as “infinitive 4”. This modal use of *-minen* derivatives is obsolete in today’s language, except a few idioms, especially in connection with negation (idiomaticized expressions of the latter type occur in other European languages, too, cf. German *hat kein Sagen*).

- (10) Finnish
Tä-hän meidä-n on tyyty-minen.
 this-ILL 1PL-GEN be.3SG be.satisfied-AN
 ‘We must be satisfied (“ours is being-satisfied”) with this.’

- (11) a. Finnish
Häne-llä ei ole sano-mis-ta tä-hän asia-an.
 3SG-ADE NEG be.CNG say-AN-PART this-ILL matter-ILL
- b. Hungarian
Nincs beleszól-ás-a eb-be a dolog-ba.
 NEG.EX chip_in-AN-POSS.3SG this-ILL DEF matter-ILL
 ‘S/he has no say in this matter.’

What’s more, in traditional Finnish grammars since the mid-19th century (see Ylikoski, 2003b, 8) also a type of fairly recently grammaticalized adverbial forms, so-called propinquatives, were labelled “infinitive 5”. These adverbials, expressing that the action is about to happen (e.g. *hän on kuole-ma-is-i-lla-an* ‘s/he is about to die’), are formed from a verb stem with the suffix *mA*, followed by a derivational suffix, the plural suffix *i*, the adessive case suffix and a possessive suffix. In the most recent academic grammar of Finnish (Hakulinen et al., 2004, § 119), this form is classified as a “petrified non-finite formation” (*infiniittinen kiteymä*) or “bundle non-finite” (*nippuinfiniitti*), together with other grammaticalizations of suffix chains for certain specific adverbial functions, such as the combination of the past participle suffix, the partitive case suffix and the possessive suffix in *juo-tu-a-an* ‘after drinking’ (example (5) above). However, “bundle non-finites” built on participle suffixes were never added to the list of “infinitives”.

⁴For infinitives in the Finnish language and grammar-writing, see especially Visapää (2008).



Obviously, the terms “infinitive” and “participle” in traditional Finnish grammars were defined firstly on the basis of morphological behaviour (inflectability) and secondly on the basis of morphological substance (the presence or absence of an “infinitive” suffix).

Since the term “participle” has become a cover term for “nominal”, adjective-like and fully inflectable non-finites, Finnish grammars can easily add two further forms to the list of participles: the agent participle in *-mA* (etymologically, the same ancient nominalizer suffix as in the *MA* infinitive) and the negative participle in *-mAtOn* (see e.g. Hakulinen et al., 2004 § 122). Functionally, the former corresponds to the Hungarian *igei igenév* (*Cicero írta könyv – Ciceron kirjoittama kirja* ‘book written by Cicero’), while the Hungarian equivalent of the latter (e.g. *kirjoittamaton laki – íratlan törvény* ‘unwritten law’) is usually not treated as a participle in Hungarian grammars but simply as a deverbal adjective derivative.

In Estonian, as already mentioned above, the inflection of non-finites is more compact, as morphological person marking is not possible. Moreover, as opposed to the two case-marked E-infinitives in Finnish (one of which comes with a series of person- or impersonal-marked forms), Estonian has only one (morphologically inessive-marked) non-finite in *-des*, corresponding quite neatly to the ideal type of “gerund” in the sense of the French *gérondif*, and also to the Hungarian *-va/-ve* gerund.

While the Estonian *da*-infinitive corresponds to the Finnish A-infinitive, the system of *ma*-infinitives differs from Finnish in one minor but important detail. Like their cognates in Finnish, the Estonian *ma*-infinitives inflect in local cases forming a typical Goal-Location-Source triad of adverbial expressions.

(12) Estonian (Erelt et al., 2020, 513)

- a. *Aino läks baari kohvi joo-ma.*
 A. go.PST.3SG coffee_bar.ILL coffee.PART drink-INF.ILL
 ‘Aino went to the coffee bar **to drink** coffee.’
- b. *Aino käi-s baari-s kohvi joo-ma-s.*
 A. visit-PST.3SG coffee_bar-INE coffee.PART drink-INF-INE
 ‘Aino visited the coffee bar / spent some time in the coffee bar, **drinking** coffee.’
- c. *Aino tul-i baari-st kohvi joo-ma-st.*
 A. come-PST.3SG coffee_bar-ELA coffee.PART drink-INF-ELA
 ‘Aino came from the coffee bar, where she had been drinking coffee (“**away from drinking** coffee”).’

However, due to regular sound changes the illative form of the *ma*-infinitive has completely lost its case suffix, which may have obscured its connection with the other two members of the local-case triad. Moreover, Estonian uses this illative form in connection with one of the most central modal verbs, *pida-*: *pea-* ‘must’ (as in *Aino peab minema* ‘Aino must go’, cf. Finnish *Ainon pitää mennä*), and also in the analytic future-reference constructions with the modal verbs *pida-* and *saa-* (*saab tulema* ‘(s/he) will come’), which were quite frequent in Old Literary Estonian (see e.g. Pärismaa, 2018, with further source references). This has probably contributed to the tradition of identifying the *-ma* form with the German infinitive and adopting it as the



dictionary form of verbs (as already in the first 17th-century glossaries). The presence of two infinitives (in *-ma* and *-da*) with fairly similar functions is often mentioned as a special characteristic of Estonian, and it is also prominently present in many teaching materials of Estonian as a foreign language.

In modern Estonian grammar-writing, the terminological problem of two infinitives has often been solved by renaming the *ma*-infinitive “supine”. This term, originating in the grammar of Latin, is used in the descriptions of various languages, often to denote some kind of a purposive non-finite. The Latin supine was historically an accusative form of a verbal noun, typically referring to the goal or purpose of a motion or to foreseen future, and it can often be translated with the Finnic illative of the *ma*-infinitive:

- (13) a. Latin
Legat-i *ad Caesar-em* ***gratula-tum*** *conven-erunt*.
 ambassador-PL to Caesar-ACC congratulate-SPN convene-PERF.3PL
- b. Estonian
Saadiku-d *tul-i-d* *Caesari-t* ***õnnitle-ma***.
 ambassador-PL come-PST-3PL Caesar-PART congratulate-INF.ILL
 ‘The ambassadors came to Caesar **to congratulate** him.’

The analogy with the Latin supine, however, does not work for the other case inflections of the *ma* “infinitives”. Labelling the case-inflected *ma*-forms as “supines” – “*ma*-supine”, “*mas*-supine”, “*mast*-supine” etc. (e.g. Pajusalu and Orav, 2007) – is just as misleading as the Finnish tradition of using the label “infinitive” for converbs with “infinitive” suffixes.

From the point of view of Finnish, the term “supine” is even less adequate, due to its associations to a different grammar tradition. In Swedish grammars, the supine (13a) is a verb form which is used in the analytic past tenses (perfect and pluperfect); in most verb types but not all of them, it is identical to the past participle (13b).

- (13) Swedish
 a. *Hon ha-r* *läs-t* ~ *skriv-it* *brev-et*.
 she have-PRS read-SPN write-SPN letter-DEF.NEUT
 ‘She has read ~ written the letter.’
- b. *Brev-et* *är läs-t* ~ *skriv-et*.
 letter-DEF.NEUT is read-PTCP.PST.NEUT write-PTCP.PST.NEUT
 ‘The letter is (has been) read ~ written.’

On the basis of this analogy, Larjavaara (1995) has proposed the term “supine” for the verb form, historically the essive case form of the past participle, which is used in Eastern Finnish (Savo) dialects in analytic and negated past tenses: *on anta-n-na* (is give-PTCP.PST-ESS) ‘(s/he) has given’, *ei tul-lun-na* ‘(s/he) didn’t come’.

Modern Estonian grammars also distinguish a “*vat*-infinitive”, historically, the partitive case form of the Finnic present (active) participle in **-pA* ~ **-vA*. Like European infinitives in



general, this form occurs as the complement of perception verbs, as in (14a) and also in example (8c) above. However, as pointed out by Ylikoski (2022, 939), the very same form has also been finiticized into a free-standing quotative (14b).

- (14) Estonian (Ylikoski, 2022, 939)
- a. *Anna näi-b ela-vat söö-mata.*
 A. seem-PRS.3SG live-INF eat-CVB.NEG
 ‘Anna seems to live without eating.’
- b. *Anna ela-vat söö-mata.*
 A. live-QUOT eat-CVB.NEG
 ‘Anna, they say, lives without eating.’

As in examples (3) and (4) above, or in the case of the Hungarian *igei igenév*, diverging grammaticalization developments have created grammatical polysemy: a situation in which the same morphological substance is used in two semantically related but syntactically completely different functions.

CONCLUSIONS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS ON LOGIC AND ERGONOMY

Of the three Western Uralic state languages described above, the non-finite system of Standard Finnish is perhaps the most difficult to reconcile with the terminology of traditional European grammars: its numerous case-marked converb forms and productive suffixal person marking do not have clear counterparts in the Latin-based tradition. In traditional Finnish grammars, this problem was tackled, as described above, by redefining two basic categories on the basis of morphology instead of syntax: “participle” so as to include all non-finites of unrestricted adjective-like inflectability, and “infinitive” so as to include all remaining non-finites built on an “infinitive” suffix (*mA*, *TA*, *TE*). The problem with this approach is that the term “infinitive” loses its syntactic and semantic relevance: it is practically impossible to find a common denominator for a functionally heterogeneous group of complements and modifiers. Concerning “participles”, however, the Finnish morphology-based approach has the great asset of bringing together what belongs together also by syntactic behaviour: productive and transparent (i.e. inflectional) deverbal nominals which typically function as noun modifiers, including the agent participle and the negative participle (the latter seems to be a characteristically Uralic feature, see Ylikoski (2022, 942).

As opposed to the Finnish binary division into infinitives and participles, Estonian and Hungarian grammars build on the tripartite division based on word classes. The Estonian standard reference grammar by Erelt et al. (2020, 231) explains that non-finites can be divided into “noun-like” infinitives (*tegevusnimi*, lit. “action name”), adjective-like participles (*kesksõna*, lit. “middle-word”), and the adverb-like *des*-form or converb. Similarly, Hungarian grammars distinguish between “adjectival” (*melléknévi*), “adverbial” (*határozói*) and “noun-like” (*főnévi*) non-finites (*igenevek*). The “adjectival” and “adverbial” category labels quite neatly describe the syntactic behaviour of these forms, whereas, as explained above (in the beginning of section 3), equating infinitives in the European sense (arguments of modal, phasal etc. verbs) with nouns, as



indicated by the category labels *főnévi igenév* or *tegevusnimi*, is an unfortunate solution: infinitives behave like nouns only in a very limited sense. Actually, as pointed out by Kálmán and Molnár (2009, 108), the term *főnévi igenév* would be better suited for the action noun derivatives in *-ás/-és*.

The position of deverbals is a problem in all the three grammar traditions analysed here. Ylikoski (2003a, 188) raises the important point that deverbals in European grammar traditions (unlike the grammars of many Turkic or Caucasian languages) are usually not described as part of the inflection of verbs but as part of the word-formation system. However, their formation can be completely regular, compositional and productive: out of practically any Hungarian, Finnish, or Estonian verb a semantically transparent action noun in *-ás/-és*, *-minen* or *-mine*, respectively, can be derived. Such nouns, or their inflections, can also easily be grammaticalized for specific infinitive- or converb-like functions; for examples of the modal use of action nouns in Finnish (“infinitive 4”) and Hungarian, see (10) and (11) above. Moseley (1994, 146) in his practical grammar of Estonian characterizes the translative case form of the *-mine* action noun (which he, in accordance with the English grammar tradition, calls a “gerund”) as “a sort of infinitive of purpose”:

(15) Estonian (Moseley, 1994, 146)

See raamat on eesti keele õppi-mise-ks.
 this book is Estonian language.GEN learn-AN-TRSL
 ‘This book is for learning Estonian.’

The positioning of deverbals on the often problematic border between inflection and derivation is also connected to the traditional idea that only derivation but not inflection can change the word class of the base word (critically discussed in detail already by Haspelmath, 1996). In the Hungarian grammar tradition, the problem of wordclass-changing morphology has been solved in a somewhat idiosyncratic way: by defining the non-finites (*igenevek*, i.e. infinitives, verbal adverbs and participles) as distinct word classes and their morphological markers, accordingly, as derivational suffixes (*képző*). This is problematic in many ways. The infinitive suffix *-ni*, for instance, does not form new independent lexemes but completely productive, regular and transparent forms which should rather be classified as inflection (Kálmán and Trón, 2007, 85; Kálmán and Molnár, 2009, 107). Moreover, it is difficult to understand why the Hungarian present, past, and future participles should not belong to the same word class as their negative counterparts (cf. *írott* ~ *íratlan törvény* ‘written ~ unwritten law’), which are traditionally classified as derivatives, or how the Hungarian participles differ from “derived deverbals” based on potential forms with the suffix *-hat/-het* (*iható* ~ *ihatatlan sör* ‘drinkable ~ undrinkable beer’).

A particularly sad example of less fortunate terminology/categorization is *igei igenév* as the term for the Hungarian “agent participle”. As László Kálmán – the voice of sharp intellect, reason and integrity, whose recent passing was an irreparable loss for Hungarian linguistics – wrote on the *nyest.hu* website in 2014, this term comes with a heavy price. It is, of course, possible to distinguish these participle-like forms from past participles proper (formed with the same *-(t)* suffix), on the basis of syntactic differences. But if this rule were applied logically and consistently, then also the different case inflections of nouns (say, dative *bagoly­nak* ‘to the owl’ and ablative



bagolytól ‘from the owl’) should be treated as distinct word classes, because they also display clear differences in their syntactic behaviour. Kálmán’s final conclusion is devastating:

My answer, of course, is that the principles of traditional grammar, obscure and contradicting even each other, yet force-fed to school children, should be forgotten as soon as possible. In my opinion, any other solution is hopeless (Kálmán, 2014, my translation).

The comparison between the non-finites in Hungarian, Finnish, and Estonian grammars reveals differences not only in the systems themselves and their areal backgrounds (perhaps the best example being the “European” absolute orientation of the past participle in Hungarian) but also in the internal logic and ergonomics (in the sense of Kok, 2012) of labels and categories in (practical) grammars.

The Finnish tradition is morphologically consistent and internally logical but, from the point of view of syntax, its use of the label “infinitive” is a terminological catastrophe. Estonian grammars either aspire to compatibility with European traditions (“gerund”, “supine”, “*vat*-infinitive”) where possible, or retreat to the lowest possible level of abstraction, referring to individual forms by their substance: instead of “gerund” or “converb”, simply “*des*-form”, instead of “abessive case form of the *ma*-infinitive” (or: negative converb; cf. *söömata* ‘without eating’ in example (14)), simply “*mata*-form”. The Hungarian grammar tradition has adopted a completely different approach. The universal problem of the “in-between” character of non-finites has been tackled at a higher level of abstraction, by defining infinitives and participles as distinct word classes. This solution, however, leads to internal contradictions – besides being totally incompatible with the concepts and definitions of “word class” in Finnish, Estonian, or other European grammars. A true *hungaricum*, the traditional way of describing non-finites in Hungarian grammars, thus actually prevents grammar readers from understanding the European, Finno-Ugric, and specifically Hungarian features of the non-finite verb forms of Hungarian.

GLOSSING ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	accusative case
ADE	adessive case
AGT	agent (derivative)
AN	action noun
CNG	connegative form
COMP	complementizer
CVB	converb
DAT	dative case
DEF	definite (article)
ELA	elative case
GEN	genitive case
ILL	illative case
INE	inessive case
INF	infinitive
N	noun (derivative)



NEG	negative
NEG.EX	negative existential
NEUT	neuter gender
OBC	objective conjugation
PART	partitive case
PERF	perfect tense
PL	plural
POSS	possessive suffix
PRS	present tense
PST	past tense
PTCP	participle
QUOT	quotative
SG	singular
SPN	supine
TRSL	translative case

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