

# The UK Linguistics Olympiad 2016

## Problem 7. Estonian (20 marks)

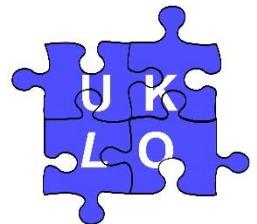
As you might expect, Estonian is the official language of Estonia, a small country in Northern Europe with somewhat over a million inhabitants. It lies just across the Baltic Sea from Finland, where the national language is closely related to Estonian; but these two languages are unrelated to the Indo-European languages that surround them such as Russian and Swedish.

The table below shows various inflected forms that an Estonian noun can take. The names of these forms aren't important, but 'genitive', 'partitive', 'nominative' and 'adessive' are examples of 'cases', comparable with the difference in English between *I* and *me* or between *we* and *us*.

	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
#	meaning	Genitive singular	Partitive singular	Adessive singular	Nominative plural	Genitive plural	Adessive plural
1	'house'	maja	maja	majal	majad	majade	majadel
2	'nest'	pesa	pesa	pesal	pesad	pesade	pesadel
3	'singer'	laulja	laulja	lauljal	lauljad	lauljate	lauljatel
4	'restaurant'	söökla	sööklat	sööklal	sööklad	sööklate	sööklatel
5	'name'	nime	nime	nimel	nimed	nimede	nimedel
6	'ice'	jää	jääd	jääl	jääd	jääde	jäädel
7	'summer'	suve	suve	suvel	suved	suvede	suvedel
8	'white'	valge	valget	valgel	valged	valgete	valgetel
9	'sister'	õe	õde	õdel	õed	õdede	õdedel
10	'road'	tee	teed	teel	teed	teede	eedel
11	'big'	suur	suurt	suurel	suured	suurte	suurtel
12	'yellow'	kollase	kollaset	kollasel	kollased	kollaste	kollastel
13	'man'	mehe	meest	mehel	mehed	meeste	meestel
14	'bean'	oa	uba	oal	oad	ubade	ubadel
15	'reason'	põhjuse	põhjust	põhjusel	põhjused	põhjuste	põhjustel
16	'story'	loo	lugu	lool	lood	lugude	lugudel
17	'island'	saare	saart	saarel	saared	saarte	saartel
18	'moon'		kuud	kuul			
19	'human'	inimese				inimeste	
20	'fish'		kala		kalad		

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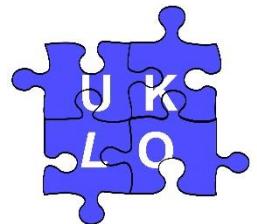


**Question 7.1:** The table contains four mistakes. Find them, and provide a correct form for each.

row+column (e.g. 1a)	incorrect form	correct form

Question 2: Fill in the blanks in the bottom three lines of the first table, repeated below for convenience:

18	'moon'		kuud	kuul			
19	'human'	inimese				inimeste	
20	'fish'		kala		kalad		



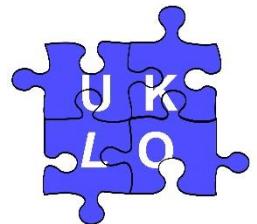
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	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
#	meaning	Genitive singular	Partitive singular	Adessive singular	Nominative plural	Genitive plural	Adessive plural
1	'house'	maja	maja	majal	majad	majade	majadel
2	'nest'	pesa	pesa	pesal	pesad	pesade	pesadel
3	'singer'	laulja	laulja	lauljal	lauljad	lauljate	lauljatel
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5	'name'	nime	nime	nimel	nimed	nimede	nimedel
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**Question 7.1:** The table contains four mistakes. Find them, and provide a correct form for each.

row+column (e.g. 1a)	incorrect form	correct form
3c	laulja	lauljat
9d	õdel	õel
11b	suur	suure
12c	kollaset	kollast

Question 2: Fill in the blanks in the bottom three lines of the first table, repeated below for convenience:

18	'moon'	kuu	kuud	kuul	kuud	kuude	kuudel
19	'human'	inimese	inimest	inimesel	inimesed	inimeste	inimestel
20	'fish'	kala	kala	kalal	kalad	kalade	kaladel

**Scoring:** One point for each completely correct word. No half marks. (max 8+12 = 20)

- Accept any order of rows in Q7.1
- Ignore accents on Estonian words
- Ignore entries in the 'row+column' column.

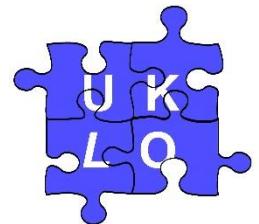
## Comment

The main point of this problem is the overall patterning in the relations between the columns.

- The first two Estonian columns (#a, b) are the basis for the remaining columns, so let's call them G (for 'genitive singular') and P (for 'partitive singular'):
  - (working backwards from the right): The forms in column #f are made by adding *tel* or *del* to the corresponding P form.
    - *t-* or *d-*? As always, try to blame it on the previous sound:
      - *t-* after a consonant
      - *d-* after a vowel
    - This is the general pattern but it's obscured by two complications:
      - a general rule refuses *tt* and *dt* to *t* and *d*. (*sööklattel*, *jäädtel*)
      - #3b *laulja* should give *lauljadel*, but in fact gives *lauljatel*, so maybe #3b is an error. Similarly, #12b *kollaset* gives *kollastel* instead of the expected *kollastel*, so maybe #12b is wrong.
  - In column #e, the forms are generally made by again adding *-te* or *-de* to P.

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- The choice between *t* and *d* follows exactly the same rules as for column #f, so let's assume that these rules are correct.
- If so, then we must be right in guessing that #3b and #12b are wrong.
- In column #d, all the forms are based very regularly on the G forms in #a, by adding *-d*. There are no complications or exceptions.
- Similarly for column #c, formed by adding *-l* to G, except that in this case there is one exception: #9c, *ödeL*. In this case, G is *öe*, so we expect *öel*. The rule is too well confirmed by other examples to be wrong, and the G form is confirmed by #9d, *öed*. So #9c must be wrong.
- We have now reached the two basic columns, #a for G and #b for P. Is one of them based on the other? The differences between them are very complicated, and if there is a rule, it must be a complicated one. BUT, fortunately, it doesn't matter! None of the questions depend on understanding how G and P are related.