

## Variation in expression of reported evidential in written Estonian

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Estonian, like other languages on the eastern coast of the Baltic sea (Livonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian), has grammaticalised evidentiality system A3 ‘reported vs everything else’ (Aikhenvald 2006, Kehayov 2008). The devices of expression vary, but as a functional category reported evidential occurs in written texts since 18<sup>th</sup> century, and in dialects (Kask 1984). In modern Estonian, in addition to the quotative mood, the indirectness of a message can be expressed by means of infinitives or participles as predicates, compound tenses, modal constructions, and adpositional constructions (Toomet 2000, Sepper 2002).

In my presentation, I examine the qualitative and quantitative variation in the use of the reported evidential in Estonian in the written language registers of the 20<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century and in new media. The analysis is usage-based, relying on material from the Reference Corpus of the University of Tartu. As expected, it turns out that different registers exhibit different means of expression of indirectals. Online communication features expressions typical of spoken language (such as the *pidama* ‘must’ construction: *pid-i ela-ma* must-PST live-SUP ‘is said to live’), while print media texts frequently employ semi-grammaticalised adpositions (*tema sõnu-l* he.GEN words-ADE ‘according to him’) as sentence adverbials, and the grammatical quotative (*ela-vat* live-QUOT ‘is said to live’) and lone participle (*ela-nud* live-PPTCP ‘was said to live’) appear primarily in fiction. Some means of expression are replacing others, the marking of the reporting is optional and relatively rare, but nevertheless the evidentiality persists and is firmly rooted in the language.

### References

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