

# Study of Estonian since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century



Andrus Saareste

The study of Estonian began to develop rapidly after the establishment of the professorships of Estonian and its kindred languages at the University of Tartu in 1919. Jaan Jõgever worked as professor of the Estonian language in 1919–1924 and Andrus Saareste in 1925–1941. The year 1920 saw the establishment of the Academic Mother Tongue Society at the University of Tartu; it organized the collection of dialect materials, published the journal *Eesti Keel* 'Estonian Language' and its proceedings. The pre-war period can be characterized by the study of the history of the Estonian language and dialects (Andrus Saareste, Lauri Kettunen, and Julius Mägiste); experimental phonetics and phonology developed in the 1930s (Paul Ariste).

During the post-war period the University of Tartu focused on the study of phonetics (Paul Ariste) and language history (Paul Ariste and Arnold Kask). In the 1960s more attention was paid to the grammar of contemporary Estonian. A team of young researchers (generative grammar group, GGG) was active at the Department of Estonian under the supervision of Huno Rätsep. They adopted modern methods and theories for the study of Estonian (structural linguistics and generative grammar).

The Institute of Language and Literature (since 1993 the Institute of the Estonian Language) was set up in 1947 for the purpose of carrying out large-scale collective projects. The institute prepared dictionaries of correct usage, an explanatory dictionary of Standard Estonian, an academic grammar of Estonian, dialect surveys and academic editions of dialect texts, onomastic studies, and began to compile a dialect dictionary. Between the 1960s and the 1980s the institute was an internationally acclaimed research centre of phonetics.

The 1990s witnessed the development of computational linguistics and language technology both at the University of Tartu and the Institute of the Estonian Language. Researchers at the University of Tartu began to create text corpora and carried out corpus-based studies of standard grammar, vocabulary, and conversation analysis; they also focused on the old written language and dialects. There is a long tradition of semantic studies. Research at the University of Tallinn has focused on sociolinguistics.

During the Second World War several well-known linguists left Estonia and continued their research abroad. In Sweden Valter Tauli became an internationally acclaimed theorist of language planning, typologist, and grammarian; Andrus Saareste compiled a large-scale thematic dictionary, and Julius Mägiste compiled an etymological dictionary. In Germany Els Oksaar carried out her internationally acclaimed studies in bilingualism, and Ilse Lehist became a well-known phonetician in the USA.

## Academic Grammars

Valter Tauli, *Eesti grammatika* I. Hääliku-, vormi- ja sõnaõpetus. Uppsala 1972; II. Lauseõpetus. Uppsala 1980.

Valter Tauli, *Standard Estonian Grammar*. Part I. Phonology, morphology, word-formation. Uppsala 1973; Part II. Syntax. Uppsala 1983.

Mati Erelt, Reet Kasik, Helle Metslang, Henno Rajandi, Kristiina Ross, Henn Saari, Kaja Tael, Silvi Vare, *Eesti keele grammatika* I. Morfoloogia, sõnamoodustus. Tallinn 1995; II. Süntaks. Lisa: Kiri. Tallinn 1993.

## Dictionaries

Andrus Saareste, *Eesti keele mõisteline sõnaraamat* I–IV. Uppsala 1958–1968; EKMS Indeks. Uppsala 1979.

Julius Mägiste, *Estnisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. Helsinki 1982–1983.

*Eesti kirjakeele seletav sõnaraamat*. I–VI. Eesti Keele Instituut. Tallinn 2009.

## Text Corpora

Text corpora of 20th-century Standard Estonian are developed at the University of Tartu

(<http://www.cl.ut.ee/korpused/>), corpus of old written Estonian

(<http://www.murre.cl.ut.ee/vakkur/>), corpus of spoken language

(<http://sysl30.psych.ut.ee/~linds/>);

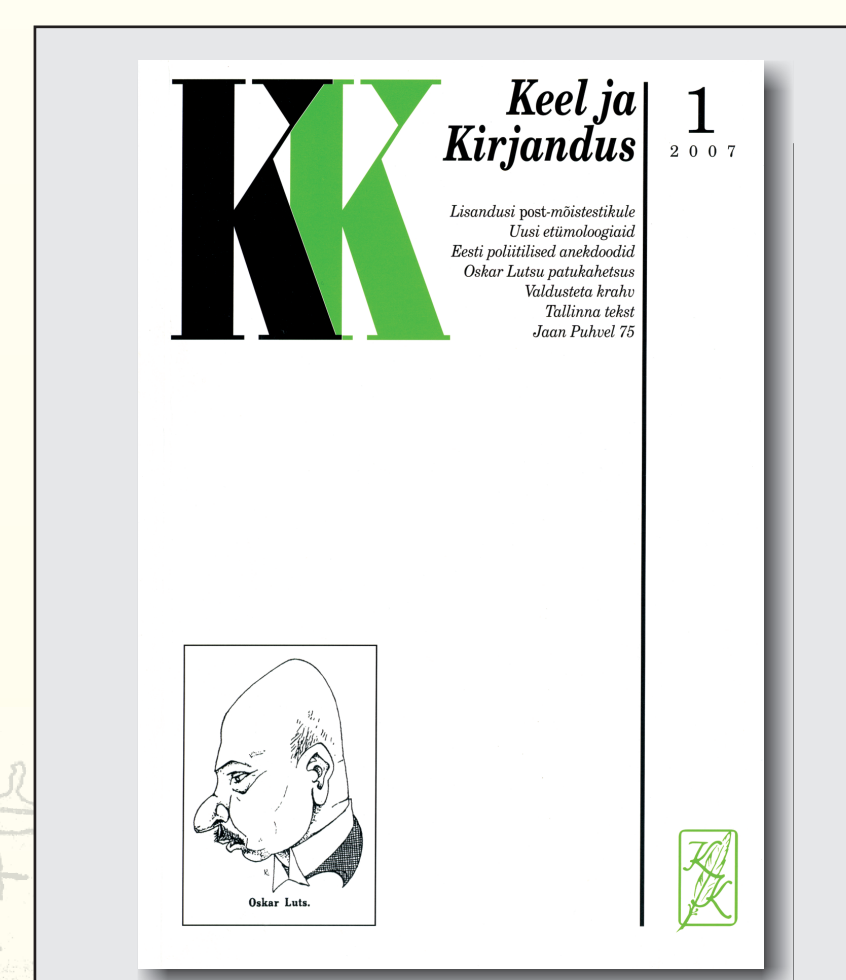
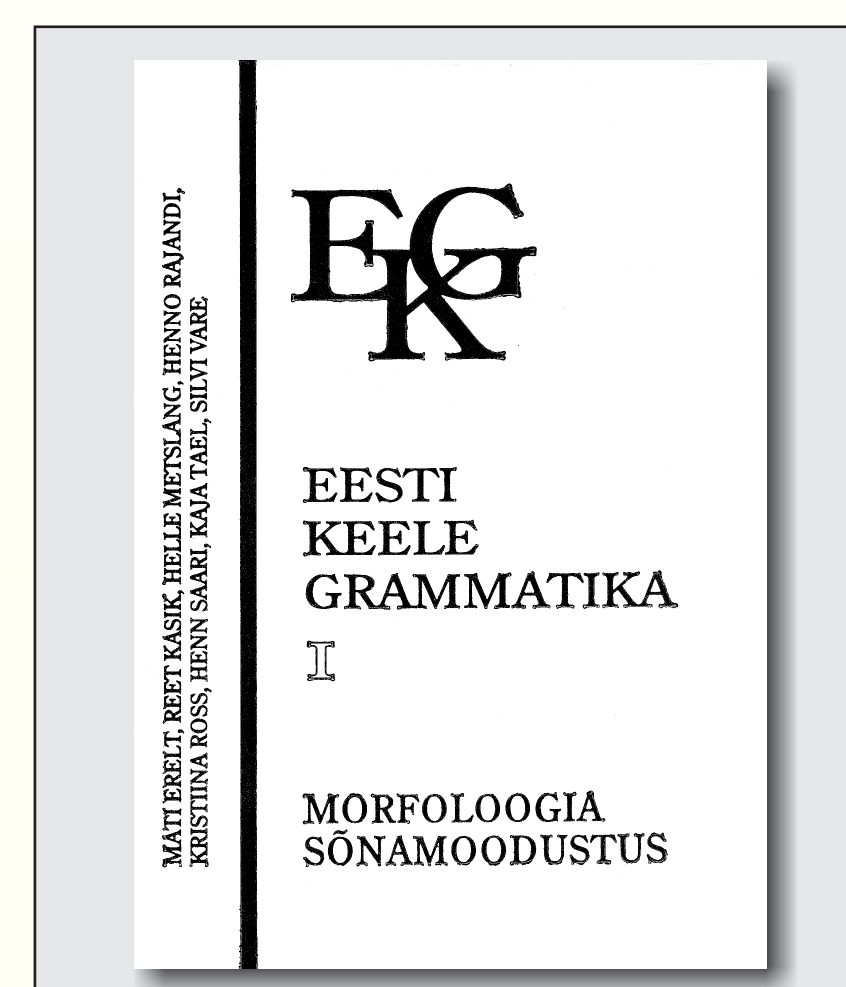
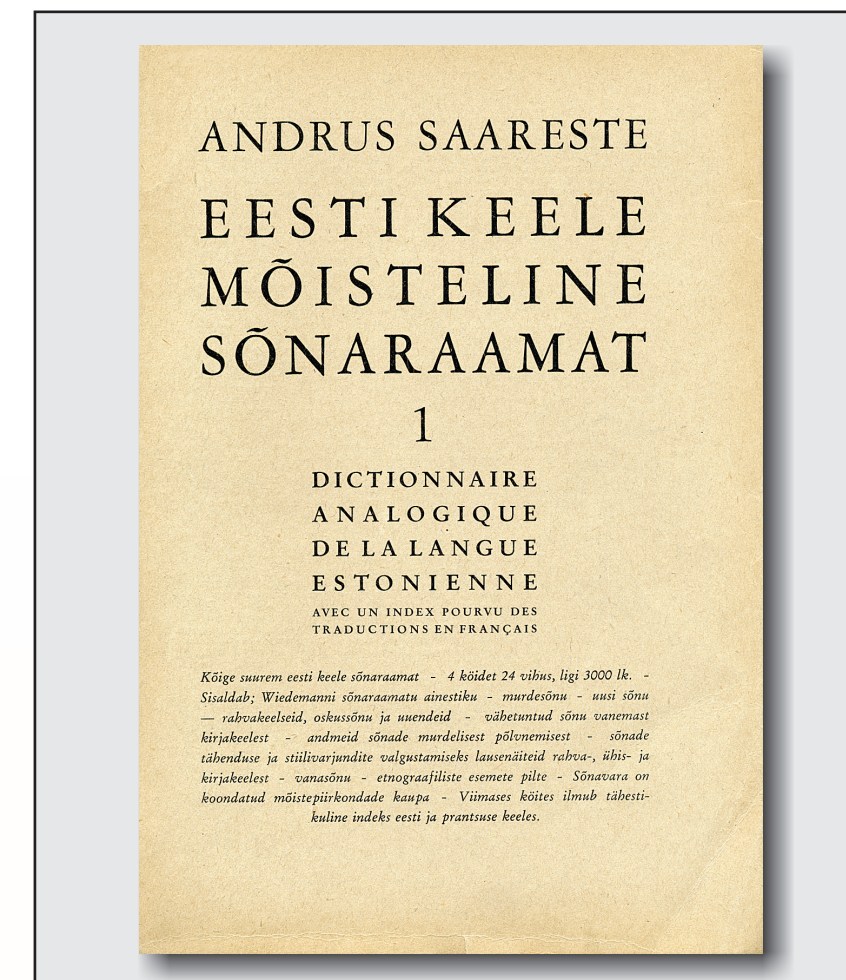
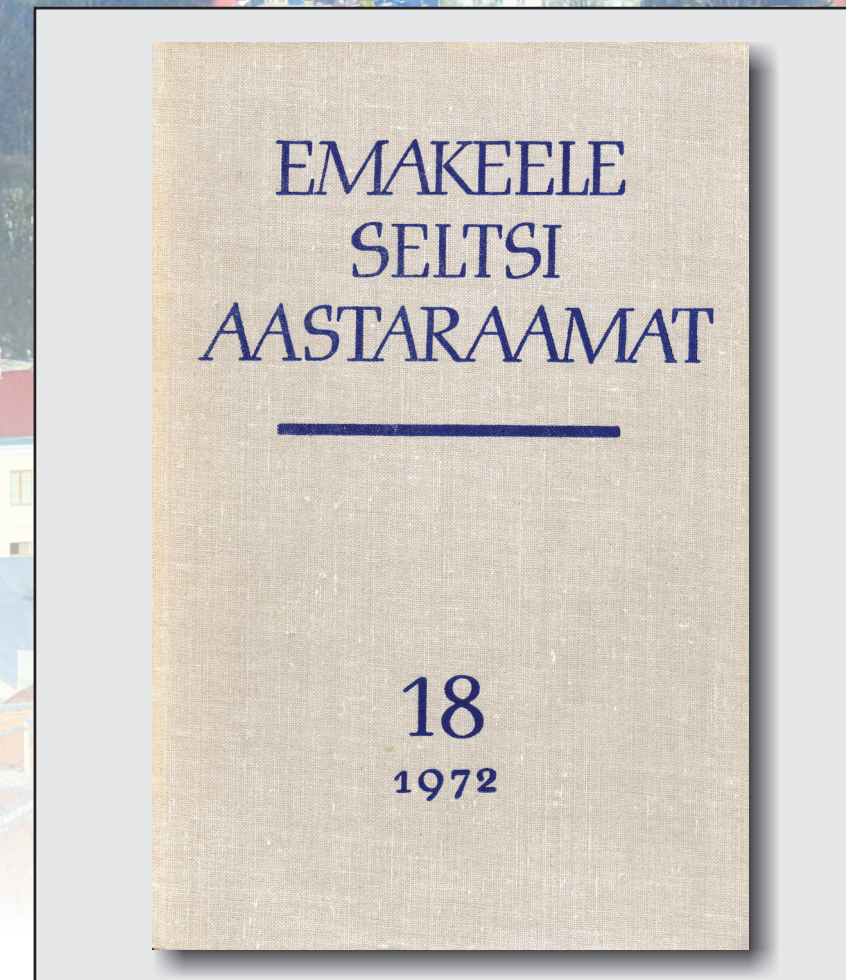
a text corpus of Estonian dialects is developed in cooperation with the Institute of the Estonian Language (<http://www.murre.ut.ee/>).

## Periodicals

Research results have been published in *Emakeele Seltsi aastaraamat* 'Yearbook of the Mother Tongue Society' (1955–), the scholarly journals *Keel ja Kirjandus* 'Language and Literature' (1958–) and *Linguistica Uralica*, and the proceedings published by the universities and the Institute of the Estonian Language.

## Scholars of the Estonian language

Andrus Saareste (1892–1964) – dialects, language history, Lauri Kettunen (1885–1963) – dialects, language history, grammar, Valter Tauli (1907–1986) – theory of language planning, grammar, typology, Julius Mägiste (1900–1978) – language history, Paul Ariste (1905–1990) – language history, phonetics, Arnold Kask (1902–1994) – language history, dialects, grammar, Mari Must (1920–2008) – dialects, Paul Alvre (1921–2008) – language history, Ilse Lehist (1922) – phonetics, Huno Rätsep (1927) – grammar, language history, Mati Hint (1937) – grammar, Tiit-Rein Viitso (1938) – grammar, language history, Mati Erelt (1941) – grammar, Haldur Ōim (1942) – semantics, computational linguistics, Helle Metslang (1950) – grammar, Karl Pajusalu (1963) – dialects, Martin Ehala (1963) – grammar, sociolinguistics.



## Handbooks on Estonian language and its investigation

Alo Raun, Andrus Saareste, *Introduction to Estonian Linguistics*. Wiesbaden 1965.

Johannes Valgma, Nikolai Rimmel, *Eesti keele grammatika* 'Estonian grammar'. Tallinn 1968.

Mati Erelt, Tiit Erelt, Kristiina Ross, *Eesti keele käsiraamat 'Handbook on Estonian'*. Tallinn 1997, 3. trükk 2007.

*Estonian Language*. Ed. by Mati Erelt. *Linguistica Uralica*. Supplementary Series. Volume 1. Tallinn 2003, 2. ed. 2007.

*Eesti keele uurimise ülevaade*. Koost. Mati Erelt. *Emakeele Seltsi aastaraamat 48 (2002)* 'An overview of Estonian language investigation' Ed. by Mati Erelt. *Emakeele Seltsi aastaraamt 48 (2002)*.

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