Colloquial Estonian

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Book Chapter

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COLLOQUIAL ESTONIAN

Leelo Keevallik

1. Introduction

The term Colloquial Estonian denotes a non-standard spoken variety of Estonian that is understood more or less in the entire speech community, and that is characteristically used in informal everyday settings. The term colloquial, although not commonly used in Estonian linguistics, is introduced here as a practical solution for this book, in which we already have included chapters on dialects and the standard (written) language.

The key features of the variety described here are non-standard, spoken, common, and informal. None of these features are easy to gauge in every single case. How common is common? Are all non-standard features used overwhelmingly in informal situations? Colloquial language is varied by nature and often includes regional features, possibly to such an extent that we have reason to talk about regional colloquial varieties. Furthermore, colloquial language use is likely to be variable in different social groups. The present chapter will not try to artificially sharpen these fuzzy edges, but rather to concentrate on the core of the present-day colloquial language.

Arguably, we can talk about developments towards a common spoken variety of Estonian from the end of the 19th century. The process is closely connected to the assimilation of dialects and the spreading of the standard, both features a reflection of the growing communication possibilities across the country (changes in the laws of mobility, building of railways, the development of traditional media). We may assume that the common spoken variety could first be tracked in more formal registers and that it included major features of the written standard.

Closeness to the written standard has for a long time been considered the preferred state-of-art for all spoken language in Estonia, especially by the general public. Common non-standard language was largely ignored, until we recently started to witness a large-scale invasion of colloquial language into public spheres, most drastically media. Therefore, in contrast to other chapters of this book, this chapter relies on a tiny research base. To avoid overgeneralization of the research results thus far, I have considered it neces-
sary to account for the data of all the reviewed studies, as well as their authors and specific research questions.

Ideally, we would avoid looking at formal settings and at invented or laboratory data. Due to the above reasons, this aim is not always attainable and, for example, in the field of prosody we have to rely on non-spontaneous or even synthesized data attained in laboratory settings. In some cases it will be necessary to include results based on somewhat more formal settings such as radio interviews or selling encounters. In this way, the following accounts of syntax and prosody probably apply for spoken usage in general, while the descriptions of phonology and morphology are more focused on non-standard non-dialectal common features, i.e. on colloquial usage.

As to the data on spoken language, there are two corpora that will often be referred to. The only publicly available one has been accumulated at the department of general linguistics in Tartu and is based on students' recordings and transcriptions (henceforth: the Tartu corpus). The majority of the 386 recordings have been made in Tartu and some speakers reveal quite strong dialectal traits. The corpus includes excerpts from phone conversations (145 in May 2000) as well as face-to-face conversations (221), dialogues as well as multi-party interaction, everyday (109) as well as institutional situations, spontaneous as well as edited speech. In May 2000 the corpus comprised 230,824 words (http://sys130.psych.ut.ee/~linds/) but most of the studies reviewed here have relied on earlier considerably smaller versions of the corpus.

The other corpus has been collected and transcribed by myself (henceforth: the LK corpus). It comprises 324 naturally occurring phone conversations of two types: telemarketing calls at a daily newspaper (109 conversations), and everyday calls recorded automatically at the informants' personal phones in Tallinn. In all, there are about 103,000 words in the corpus, which is digitized and includes whole conversations rather than excerpts.

2. Lexicon

Lexicon is certainly one of the most accessible parts of a variety – many distinctive items are obvious for the speakers themselves. The archives of the Mother Tongue Society include more than 44,000 cards with “argot” words. Nevertheless, apart from the inclusion of a considerable number of so-called everyday words in recent dictionaries (EKSS, ÖS), comprehensive studies on the lexicon of Colloquial Estonian are still lacking. The fact that the everyday spoken language usage differs from the written variety, has

1 When examples are taken from the LK corpus, only the original tape code is added at the end of the examples.
naturally not been unfamiliar to the researchers, but it has mainly led to the condemning of “errors”. Normative attitudes hindered an unprejudiced study until the resurrection of interest in slang vocabulary about a decade ago, which resulted in the records of the lexicons of at least some limited groups in society (for an overview, see Tender 1994).

2.1. The character of the lexicon

The first scholar to take a wider look at the lexicon of what he calls oral speech was Hennoste (1998, nearly identical in 2000) who attempts a general classification by introducing three new groups of words. The first is called everyday lexicon, being defined as lexicon that cannot be used in formal situations. The second is called words of spontaneous speech, not defined, but said to exist due to orality, the tempo of text production in speech, and because of rhetorical taboos in formal situations. The third class is called dialogue words, i.e. words that regulate interaction.

Everyday lexicon is characterized in contrast to public interaction and has mostly to do with taboos and emotionality. Taboos include taboo activities (keppi- ‘make love’, a denominal derivate of kepp ‘stick’), breaking interactional norms (swearing: persse ‘ass;ILL’; offences: lehm ‘cow’; expressions of rage etc.), and pejorative words (lakku- ‘drink’, lit. ‘slick’). Emotionality is expressed in augmentatives (öudne, jöle, both ‘awful’) and diminutives (primarily ke-suffix, e.g. tibuke ‘little chicken’).

Words of spontaneous speech are divided into three subgroups. Particles are used for structuring the text (ja ‘and’, aga ‘but’), they reflect the process of text production (noh ‘NOH’, kurat ‘devil’), refer to the speakers’ mental processes, indicate insecurity of knowledge (nagu, justkui, both ‘as if’), and highlight important parts of the texts (ainult ‘only’, isegi ‘even’). Other frequent groups are modal and private verbs (tuleb ‘must:3SG’, arva- ‘be of the opinion’), and general words, including verbs (ole- ‘be’, tege- ‘do’), nouns (asi ‘thing’) and pronouns (ma ‘I’, see/se ‘this’).

Dialogue words are said to comprise mainly particles and vocalizations. Phatic particles are said to direct and keep up conversation, they include responses and back-channels (jäh/jaa ‘yes’, mhmh ‘uhuh’), startings and endings of turns and topics (nii, noh, see section 2.4), and emotional commenting reactions (oi ‘oh’). Conative particles are questions (kuda ‘how’), orders and requests (noh, säh ‘here you are’), greetings (tere ‘hi’, head aega ‘good bye’), and thanks (aitäh).

The first presentation of a quantitative comparison of the lexicon of informal spoken language to other varieties, gives us statements about what
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has proved to be “more frequent” (Hennoste et al. 2000, the Tartu corpus of 52,000 words). Apparently, in contrast to formal spoken usage there were more shortenings in informal speech (e.g. in the particles aa < aha/aha, appr. ‘okay’, kule < kaule, appr. ‘listen’), more laughter, more particles (noh, onju, see section 2.4 and Table 2), more personal pronouns (1SG and 2SG), more emotive words (ah), more hedges (väist ‘maybe’), and more negation. By way of explanation, informal communication is said to be more emotional and spontaneous.

As to the origin of colloquial lexicon, students of slang have been interested in loanwords. Loog’s study on the slang words of Tallinn schoolchildren (Loog, Hein 1992) resulted in a mere 15% loans. Of these, 39% were from English (e.g. bänd ‘band’), 26% from Finnish (e.g. tossud ‘trainers (i.e. shoes)’), and 24% from Russian (e.g. morda ‘face’). The last figure is somewhat surprising considering all the effort put into teaching and propagating Russian during the Soviet years. On the other hand, it has been quite clear that Estonians in general have not considered Russian a prestigious language.

Apart from senior secondary school students’ slang, we know that musicians’ slang comprises about 39% loans, mainly from English, and criminal slang up to 45%, mainly from Russian (Tender 1994). Estonian babytalk shares almost half of its stems with Latvian, although the ways of borrowing seem to be varied, e.g. Est Lat pai ‘good (being)’ (K. Pajusalu 1996). In respect of more common language, we can notice that many relatively recent loanwords are used widely in everyday life: kreisi ‘crazy’, point ‘point’, as in “the point is”, kamm oon ‘come on’, appr. ‘don’t bullshit’, stoori ‘story’, lüuser ‘loser’, friik ‘freak’, aa laa/ala (from French à la), and numerous others.

As to other sources of lexiscon, a frequent and possibly spontaneous word-formation mechanism in colloquial language is shortening. Besides the regular (spontaneous?) shortening of long vowels and diphthongs in most function words (sis/sis ‘then’, kuikku ‘if’), and in non-first components of compounds and postpositions (väälamaa ‘foreign countries’, kodupole < kodu poole ‘towards home’), there are many cases where the colloquial variant is several syllables shorter (see Table 1). The shorter forms are often used variably with the standard ones and they are most probably recognized as colloquial, i.e. they are not really spontaneous any more.

Naturally, even petrified expressions may have a regular shorter form, e.g. ausq ő(e)/i/da, st. ausalt õelda ‘to be honest’; ses mõts et, st. selles mõttes et ‘in the sense that’. They are often even pronounced with only one prominent stress as compound words. Similarly, some shortened words show a regular tendency to latch onto other words, e.g. the negation word ei in ma ‘I’ + ei > mai, ta ‘s/he’ + ei > tai.

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Table 1. Examples of items with regular shorter variants
in Colloquial Estonian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Colloquial</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aha</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>'but', a particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>igasugused</td>
<td>-kas</td>
<td>'different (kinds of):PL'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kolmikündend</td>
<td>kolgend</td>
<td>'thirty'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kümmend</td>
<td>-(k)end/-nd, e.g. kahekündend</td>
<td>'-ty, e.g. eighty'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pension</td>
<td>pens</td>
<td>'pension'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>praktiseltt</td>
<td>praktise(t)</td>
<td>'in principle, almost'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>möötes(i)-</td>
<td>mööts(i)-</td>
<td>'think:IMF'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suhteiseltt</td>
<td>suh(t)(c)se(l)t/suht</td>
<td>'relatively'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>üitles(i)-</td>
<td>üts(i)-</td>
<td>'say:IMF'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compounding is another common way of achieving new lexical items (according to Hennoste 2000 and the Tari corpus, the most frequent means of achieving non-standard lexicon). However, the colloquial compounds are often a result of a routinization in interaction. Some candidates are suggested in Table 2, but the exact meaning of many of the resulting compounds has to wait for future research.

Table 2. Examples of routinized compounds
in Colloquial Estonian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aha + sa</td>
<td>'AH + you:SG'</td>
<td>assa</td>
<td>interjection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eks + ole</td>
<td>'EKS + be'</td>
<td>eksole</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kas + vüi</td>
<td>'QUES + or'</td>
<td>kasvüi</td>
<td>particle, appr. 'even'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kes + see</td>
<td>'who + this'</td>
<td>kesse</td>
<td>'who'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kuuled + sa</td>
<td>'listen:2SG + you:SG'</td>
<td>ku(u)leta</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mis + asi</td>
<td>'what + thing'</td>
<td>misasi</td>
<td>'what'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nii + et</td>
<td>'NII + that'</td>
<td>niet</td>
<td>summarizing particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no/noo + jaa/jah</td>
<td>'NO + yes'</td>
<td>no(o)jaa/no(o)jah</td>
<td>confirmation particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on + ju</td>
<td>'is:3SG + JU'</td>
<td>ojju</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>saad - aru</td>
<td>'understand:2SG'</td>
<td>sadaru</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table could be enlarged with numerous reduplicative items, e.g. jaja, jajah, jajaja 'yes',oototot 'O(O)T', nonoh 'NO(H)'. On the other hand, reduplication is likely to be worth considering a prolific spoken language word-formation means, as a separate category.

Other word-formation means mentioned in literature include e.g. semantic formation (kapp 'athletic guy', lit. 'cupboard'), sound-switching
(möladrama, from melodrama ‘Indian film’, comp. möla ‘meaningless talk’; Tender 1994), (euphemistic) replacing words with sounds (mine peesse, from mine persse ‘go to hell’, lit. ‘go to ass’), category change (sitt ‘shit’, noun > adjective), acronyms made into pronounceable words (tipp < TPI ‘Tallinn Technical University’; Hennoste 2000), affective gemination (jumal < jumal ‘god’), and other strengthenings (hulka < hulga ‘many’; Saareste 1927). For derivation, see section 4.3.

More generally, colloquial possibilities to carry out common verbal actions tend to be varied. For example, if we need our conversation partner to repeat what he/she just said, the polite way to do it is with kudais (palun)? ‘how (please)?’, as all Estonian mothers have repeatedly reminded their children. Colloquially, the variants include at least ah, mida, misasja, mis, mes, mäs, meh, mäh, and mh.

2.2. Slang and registers

Youth slang is among the more distinctive group varieties of most languages in modern cultures. The first Estonian youth slang dictionary is based on contemporary data from senior secondary school students in Tallinn (Loog 1991). The dictionary comprises about 7,500 words and includes information about 125 easily definable phenomena, often concerning general taboo and “youth” areas, e.g. a stupid student, cheat at an exam, make love.

Several considerably smaller slang collections have concerned the language of soldiers, university students, musicians, and criminals. No recordings have yet been involved in Estonian slang research.

To decide whether a word belongs to group slang or to general colloquial usage, we should look at the spreading of the item. Needless to say, at the moment we can only rely on intuition. Some evaluative student words collected by Tender (1984) are certainly widespread among adults, e.g. negative evaluation words ajuvaba ‘brainless’ (ajuvaba üritus ‘boring event’), mage ‘tasteless’ (mage film ‘bad movie’), nõme ‘dull’ (nõme kaju ‘dull person’), nüri ‘blunt’ (nüri koht ‘dull place’). Furthermore, Tender (2000) has pointed out that some parts of slang may be surprisingly persistent in time. He has compared collections from the 1920s and 1930s with his own contemporary ones, and found several identical names of school subjects, e.g. maťa, st. matemaatika ‘maths’; eštta, st. eesti keel ‘the Estonian language’. While they might not be used on a daily basis in the adult world, these words certainly remain part of our common language experience.

From among different registers of Colloquial Estonian, only babytalk has attracted brief attention. Ariste (1962) has noted extensive palatalization and
gemination in babytalk, as well as reduplication (\textit{aua aua} ‘dog’). K. Pajusalu (1996) has looked at the etymology of present-day babytalk and found that it has had a wide North-Estonian or all-Estonian spread. Examples include \textit{pepu} ‘bottom’, \textit{tibu} ‘chicken, small child’, and \textit{pāhh} ‘bad thing, don’t do it’.

### 2.3. Deixis and pronouns

The colloquial usage of the demonstrative pronoun \textit{see} ‘this/that’ reveals some features that suggest its development into a definite article (R. Pajusalu 1997a, 1999). On the basis of two radio programmes and one conversation between students, it has been demonstrated that besides referring to entities mentioned earlier (more demonstrative usage), \textit{see} can also refer to entities identifiable via shared knowledge or to entities only known to the speaker (more article-like usage). In Example 1, the cyclists are only definite for the speaker who has been telling about his/her trip to Malta.

(1) T: Jääb arusaamatuks, kuhu need jalgatturid veel mahuvad, sest nende jaoks eraldi teoliike pole ‘It remains unclear where the cyclists (need ‘this/that:PL’) find space, because there are no special stretches of roads for them’ (R. Pajusalu 1997a: 161)

In addition, \textit{see} is sometimes interchangeable with \textit{tema}–\textit{ta} ‘he/she’, although it has generally been assumed that \textit{see} refers to inanimate and \textit{tema}–\textit{ta} to animate referents. R. Pajusalu (1995, 1997b) looked at 500 utterances from radio interviews (and at a similar amount of newspaper data). She demonstrated that the more “physical” the object, the more likely it was to be referred to as \textit{ta}, and on the contrary, the more “event-like” the entity, the more likely it was to be referred to as \textit{see}. An example (2) of an inanimate physical object referred to by \textit{ta} follows. All the bold \textit{tas} refer to the painting.

(2) 1 A: ja ma ei püüle pildide juures kaua ‘And I don’t torture myself with the pictures for too long’ 
2 B: tähendab selles mõistes (,) et sa teed \textit{ta} valmis ja jääd rahule ‘You mean, you make her ready and feel satisfied’
3 A: \textit{[ma teen \textit{ta} valmis no ja sis ma (,) noh mul on juba teised käsil ja ja kui \textit{ta} on kehva eks ma viskan \textit{ta} minema ‘I make her ready and then I have some others going already and if she is bad, then I’ll probably throw her away}’ (R. Pajusalu 1995: 88)

There are actually two different systems of demonstrative pronouns in spoken Estonian, as people from Southern Estonia use the distal \textit{too} in addition
to see where the distinction is necessary. On the other hand, too is also used in the standard language, e.g. in narrative contexts as references to non-main characters, i.e. not to the most recent grammatical subjects (R. Pajusalu 1996a, 1997b).

Another characteristic pronominal feature of Colloquial Estonian is the specific usage of mingi 'some/any kind of'. Besides being an indefinite pronoun and reinforcing negation similar to the written standard (e.g. pole mingit kahlust ‘there is absolutely no doubt’, mingit ‘some/any kind of:PRT’), it shows that the following number is an approximation (e.g. mingi nelikend aastat ‘about forty years’). Furthermore, it is used for presenting referential NPs as indefinite ones and for de-concretization of non-referential NPs (R. Pajusalu 2000a, the Tartu corpus). For example, if little is known about the entity, it may be de-concretized by mingi as in Example 3.

(3) A: ei ma ütlen tal on mingi: laps juba: ‘No, I’m saying she has got a child already’ (R. Pajusalu 2000a: 93)

Indefiniteness may also be expressed by üks ‘one’. It may mean ‘about’ (üks kaheksakümmend kilo liha ‘about eighty kilos of meat’), but it may also introduce an indefinite inanimate object (ah on üks multifilm jälle ‘well, it’s a cartoon again’), or a new referent in a narrative opening (mõtle meil üks=ee öde käis õö=m Taanis suvel ‘you know, one of our nurses was in Denmark last summer’). Üks and mingi are often interchangeable, but mingi indicates a greater degree of vagueness and implies total unfamiliarity even for the speaker as opposed to mere presumed unidentifiability by the hearer in üks (R. Pajusalu 2000b). Neither of them, however, can be seen as a strong candidate for becoming an indefinite article yet because of their relatively low frequency.

2.4. Particles

Although many modalizing, focusing, hedging, intensifying, etc. particles are not unfamiliar in the written language, there is probably a difference in the frequency of usage. Besides, particles used especially for interactive purposes are likely to be marginalized in the written standard.

Until recently, particles were often mocked because of their salience and high frequency. They have been called names and exaggerated examples have been invented to ridicule their usage. The first serious attempt to study them in Estonian linguistics was made by Metslang (1985), who looked at the widespread nagu ‘like, as if’. She showed that it could be used for hedging,
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e.g. for politeness modalization (her examples are invented: See sai oleks nagu natuke nätseks jäänuud ‘This bun seems to have remained somewhat doughy’). She also mentions that nagu may have group symbolic value for the young and that it is used in hesitations, but these functions were not regarded as legitimate at the time.

In spoken Estonian, the no/noo/noh/n/nh/nonoh particle is by far the most frequent, forming about 0.3% of all the lexical items in the LK corpus, and about 0.2% of the Tartu corpus. Therefore, the particle has also attracted considerable attention (Loog 1992, Hennoste 1994, 2000, 2001), but since it is undoubtedly one of the most demanding particles to describe, we cannot even be sure yet that it is actually not a complex of particles with (somewhat) differing functions.

So far, it has been suggested that noh reflects the process of text production, i.e. it belongs to “the inner monologue” of the speaker (Hennoste 1994). It may be part of a formulation (see Example 4).

(4) K: /---/ see eeldab? (...) noh=kõrgemat nagu mõtlemistset inimeselt ka. ‘this presupposes (...) NOH higher level of thinking from the person’ (Hennoste 1994: 18)

In a later account based on the Tartu corpus, Hennoste (2000, 2001) calls noh an editing particle and no a junction particle, but apart from noh being involved in formulation, their functions seem to be largely identical. Both are said to mark contrast, thematic change, transition to background information, or clarification, and to initiate dispreferred turns. In agreeing turns, they are claimed to indicate reservation.

A couple of studies have focused on the interactional analysis of particles. The particle ahah/ahaa/aahah/ah/aa functions as a change-of-state and a realization token (Keevallik 1999a, the LK corpus). Speaker orientation to ahah as a change-of-information-state token could be demonstrated by the following example.

(5) M – telemarketer, K – somebody at the client’s place
1 M: aloo (. ) kas Mai Kaaro ‘Hello, is this Mai Kaaro?’
2 K: a ei ole kodus praegu ‘He is not at home at the moment’
3 M: ma räägin Tallinnast Eesti Öhtulehest ‘I’m calling you from Tallinn, from EÖ’
4 K: jah ‘Yes’
5 M: teema nimel oli tellitud sii kakskümmend päeva meie Öhtulehete ‘Ö has been subscribed to in his name’
6 K: ahah ‘AHAH’
7 M: kas olete: kurgis ‘Are you familiar with that’ (S1A12)
After the telemarketer has introduced herself and announced that the person who is not at home has subscribed to a newspaper, K answers *ahah* in line 6. This answer is treated by M as indicating that the previous information was new to K, since in line 7 she asks about M’s familiarity with the fact of subscribing.

The particle *et* (a subjunction and complementizer in the written standard, appr. ‘that’) seems to be spreading in the function that could generally be formulated as attributing meanings (Keevallik 2000, the LK corpus) but may further be developing into a more general conjunction. A case of attributing meanings to the interlocutor is presented in Example 6. The client K, who has had an introductory subscription, is evasive about what he thinks of the newspaper in line 1. In line 2, the telemarketer M proposes a clarification for why K lacks an opinion — that he has had the paper for too short a time.

(6) 1 K: e:i:: oska praegu midagi oelda ‘At the moment (I) cannot say anything’
   2 M: et liiga vaihe veel käänd jah ‘ET (you’ve) had it for too short (a time)’
   3 K: jaa ‘Yes’ (S1A16)

In case of attributions to the interlocutor, the latter is always expected to agree or disagree in the following turn, which effectively demonstrates that *et*-turns really are interpretations of, or guesses at, what the interlocutor may have meant.

Another particle that we are already beginning to understand is *nii* (appr. ‘so’). It has been shown to function as a topic closer and opener (R. Pajusalu 1996b, 1999), and more widely as a transition marker from one (conversational) action to another. The particle *nii et/ niet* is used to initiate a conclusion from, and/or summary of, the talk thus far, and as a transition marker from one conversational phase to another (Keevallik 2000).

Among Estonian particles there are several original verb forms, e.g. *kuele/kule* (‘listen:IMP’) and *tähendab/tändab/tähemb/täemb/tämb* (‘mean:3SG’). *Oota/oot/oot/ot* (‘wait:IMP’) has been shown to function as a kind of conversational stop sign (Keevallik 2001a). It initiates pauses, alternative activities, thinking periods and word searches, digressions (even clause-internally), repairs and clarification requests — all of which require a period of temporary “time out” for the projected course of action. Furthermore, in some cases the form *ota* seems to have grammaticalized into a topic-disjunctive particle.

A brief description of many Estonian particles from a more discourse-analytic perspective can be found in Hennoste (2000). He says, for example, that *mhmh* (appr. ‘uhuh’) shows that the person is listening and is distancing himself in a wide sense (from the conversation, from the topic, from the
viewpoint, from taking the turn) and that it can be used as a reaction to a received answer. An example of the latter follows.

(7) 1 T: jah nii-ct pšdutesite kõvasti. (0.5) ‘Okay, so you had a wild party’
2 H: noo=nagu sõnipäevale kohane. ‘Well, as appropriate for a birthday’
3 T: mbhm? ‘MHMH’ (Hennoste 2000: 1792)

Among other things, Hennoste states that jah ‘yes’ is a confirmation or agreement particle or a so-called editing particle used for initiating and finishing a repair sequence. Ei ‘no’ shows that the speaker does not agree with the previous one.

3. Phonology

Unfortunately, not much has been established concerning non-standard pronunciation and the prosodic features of connected speech. The only experimental phonetic study dealing with the quality of sounds in colloquial language is by Pajupuu (2001). She has shown that compared to prosodically prominent vowels produced in laboratory settings, the high and mid-high vowels (i, ii, u, and õ, o respectively) are lower in conversation, while the back vowels u and o are considerably fronted.

3.1. Phonological features

At the present moment there seem to be three major ways of retrieving information about non-standard and non-dialectal pronunciation in Estonian. There are orthoepic studies and their complaints about ‘errors’, e.g. Kraut (1994) and Liivaku (1998) criticize the pronunciation on TV and Laugaste (1974) scrutinizes Estonian on the theatre stage. Secondly, several linguists have briefly mentioned features that they have observed in the speech community and would consider colloquial or wrong. In contrast to mostly personal observations by the linguists themselves, Laugaste (1964) summarizes the studies by senior secondary school students on ‘language errors’ among their friends. Thirdly, we could attain data by working with the recordings of the existing corpora. So far, the transcription of the Tartu corpus marks the phonetic-phonological divergences only sporadically (summarized in Hennoste 2000), and the LK corpus marks only a limited number of features, albeit regularly.

Since the work with recordings still remains to be done and no single author has yet claimed comprehensiveness with regard to observations, we
can only hope that the accumulated list of features mentioned by at least two authors gives us a fuller and less haphazard picture than the accounts so far (Table 3).

### Table 3. Observed non-standard/colloquial phonology


#### 3.1. Single short vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e ~ i</td>
<td>esimeses, roheline, üttes 'first:INS, green, say:IMF:3SG'</td>
<td>esimeses, rohiline, üttes</td>
<td>S52d L64 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e ~ ä</td>
<td>uue, lähe, vähe, enam, eraldi 'new:GEN, go, little, any more, separately'</td>
<td>mai, lähi, vähi, änam, äraldi</td>
<td>A39d+ S52d L64 L74d+ P92+ K94 K98 P97 100 HK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i ~ e</td>
<td>taltrik, teenendab, lollim 'plate, serve:3SG, stupid:COMP'</td>
<td>taltrik, teenendab, lollim</td>
<td>A39d+ S52d K94 100 HK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o ~ u / unstressed syllables</td>
<td>auto, šokolaad, kilo 'car, chocolate, kilogram'</td>
<td>auto, Šokolaad, kilo</td>
<td>L64 100 HK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ä ~ e / _r</td>
<td>pïrst, pärïs, pïralt 'after, real, at the disposal'</td>
<td>pïrst, pïris, pïralt</td>
<td>A39d L64 K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ü ~ ô / _h</td>
<td>üheksa, pïhappëv, pïha 'nine, Sunday, holy'</td>
<td>üheksa, pïhappëv, pïha</td>
<td>A39d L74d K94 K98 E00 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V fronting / j_</td>
<td>jami, jagama, jöön, just 'thirst, divide, obstinacy, exactly'</td>
<td>jami, jagama, jöön, jüst</td>
<td>A39d+ S52d L64 P92r K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V ~ 0 / C_C in unstressed syll.</td>
<td>tahavad, kaheksi, kopikad 'want:3PL, twosome, copeck:PL'</td>
<td>tahavad, kaheksi, kopikad</td>
<td>L64 R00 HK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.2. Long vowels and diphthongs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ðö ~ ðe</td>
<td>põöasas, võöoras 'bush, strange(r)'</td>
<td>põöasas, võöoras</td>
<td>A39 S52d L64d P97 K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ūü ~ üi</td>
<td>nüüid, küünil, sÜidata 'now, candle, light:INF'</td>
<td>nüüid, küünil, sÜidata</td>
<td>A39 S52d L64 P97 K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ao ~ au</td>
<td>kaob, tuob 'disappear:3SG, beat:3SG'</td>
<td>kaob, tuob</td>
<td>L74 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ea ~ ia ~ åa</td>
<td>vead, rea, team 'mistake:PL/pull:2SG, line:GEN, know:1SG'</td>
<td>viad, ri, tiän</td>
<td>A39d L64 P92r K98 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ca ~ åä</td>
<td>sädma, tädä 'arrange, know:INF'</td>
<td>sädma, tääda</td>
<td>S52d L64 HK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ci ~ c</td>
<td>teie, setise 'you:PL:ALL, seven'</td>
<td>teie, setise</td>
<td>S52d, K94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oa ~ ua</td>
<td>toas, noad 'room:INS, knife:PL'</td>
<td>toas, noad</td>
<td>A39d L64 K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oo ~ ue</td>
<td>toed, loemö 'support:PL, read:1PL'</td>
<td>toed, loemö</td>
<td>A39d 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öi ~ ei</td>
<td>lõikara, köik 'cut:INF, all'</td>
<td>leikara, keik</td>
<td>A39d 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>äc ~ åä</td>
<td>päev, nüed, käes 'day, see:2SG, hand:INS'</td>
<td>päav, nääd, kääs</td>
<td>A39 S52 L64 L74d K94 K98d 100 HK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>åc ~ åä</td>
<td>päev, päevik 'day, diary'</td>
<td>päev, päevik</td>
<td>A39 S52d L64 K98 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>åö ~ äü</td>
<td>nüod, taume 'face:PL, hammer:1PL'</td>
<td>nüod, taume</td>
<td>L64 98d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öc ~ ôö</td>
<td>ëelda, kõetud 'say:INF, heat:IPS:PPT'</td>
<td>ëelda, kõetud</td>
<td>A39 L74d K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>öc, öä ~ üe, ûa</td>
<td>ëeldud, ëlab 'say:IPS:PPT, cut:3SG'</td>
<td>ëeldud, ëlab</td>
<td>A39d 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi ~ V+</td>
<td>möostan, kuidagi, müdugi 'understand:1SG, somehow, of course'</td>
<td>möostan, küdagi, müdugi</td>
<td>K98 HK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3. Consonants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>h, d~0 / C(C)</td>
<td>number, kelder, annud</td>
<td>nummer, keller, annud</td>
<td>L64 H00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 ~ p, d / t / C_C</td>
<td>künład, hamster, valss</td>
<td>küündlad, hampster, valss</td>
<td>L64 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f~ w/hv</td>
<td>foto, film, telefoon</td>
<td>foto, film, telefoon</td>
<td>A39 V50 L64 K98 E00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hv ~ ff</td>
<td>kohv, rahvas, kahvel</td>
<td>koff, raffas, kaffel</td>
<td>A39td V50 L64 L74td K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h ~ 0 / V_V</td>
<td>kaheksa, igaks juhniks</td>
<td>kaeksa, igaks juks</td>
<td>L98 E00 H00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h ~ 0 / #_</td>
<td>hall, hotelli, hea</td>
<td>all, ootelli, ea</td>
<td>A39 L64 P97 H00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lj ~ Π</td>
<td>väljas, palju, naljakas</td>
<td>väljas, palju, nal'jakas</td>
<td>A39 S52 L64 K98 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s ~ ss</td>
<td>jännesed, öösel</td>
<td>jännessed, öössel</td>
<td>L64 K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ə, ɔ ~ s</td>
<td>finiš, tušš, loož</td>
<td>finis, tuss, loos</td>
<td>L64 K98 P97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t ~ 0 / C_C</td>
<td>tahtsid, lihsalt, juskui</td>
<td>taksid, lihsalt, juskui</td>
<td>K98 E00 H00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initial stops in compounds</td>
<td>ettepoole, allkirja</td>
<td>ettepoole/ettebole, allkirja</td>
<td>A39 A65 K94 K98 I98 H00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4. Quantity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q3 ~ Q2</td>
<td>v‘äike, p‘ehme, s‘nda</td>
<td>väike, pehme, anda</td>
<td>A39 L64 L74 N78b P92r K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 ~ Q3</td>
<td>palju, saunas, ahnete</td>
<td>p’alju, s’aunas, ’ahnete</td>
<td>A39 L64 L74td P92r I98d K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 ~ Q1</td>
<td>Tallinnas, homnik, sõnikukunnik “Tallinn:INS, morning, dunghill”</td>
<td>Tallinas, omik, sõnikuhunik</td>
<td>L64 K98 H00 R00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1 ~ Q2</td>
<td>koridor, samet, vasak ‘hall, velvet, left’</td>
<td>korridor, sammet, vassak</td>
<td>L64 K98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are obviously numerous problems when compiling such an overview of a complicated, varying and changing phenomenon. To start with, the standardization decisions may have an impact on what could be considered colloquial. For example, only a decade ago the forms hää 'good' and pää 'head' would have been considered non-standard with merely the counterparts hea and pea accredited (ea ~ aa in Table 3.2). At the moment, these particular variants are accepted in the standard, while others with the same varying feature are not.

Many standardized features have been varying with non-standard ones so widely and for such a long time that it is rather doubtful whether the non-standard forms would generally be experienced as colloquial. An example could be the long and overlong quantity of põhjas 'reason' (standard Q3) and otsus 'decision' (standard Q2), not included in the above table. The ambition of the author has been to exclude from this chapter non-standard features that are very unlikely to be experienced as colloquial.

Nevertheless, there are several features in the above tables that would probably not be evaluated as extremely colloquial by the speakers. Forms like annud (Table 3.3) and öheksa (3.1) are quite likely show up in more formal settings without strong connotations attributed to them. At the same time, some of the items have acquired an almost symbolic value of colloquial or non-standard speech, e.g. taldek (Table 3.1). The majority of the items could be placed in between these two extremes and the speakers are probably aware of them to a different extent, partly depending on whether the choice is categorical or gradual. Social variation should not be discarded either.

The only thoroughly studied phonological feature of everyday spoken Estonian is the variation of word-initial h (Cui 1999, Table 3.3). It is nowadays clearly connected to the formality of the situation: in formal settings h is almost always pronounced as appropriate according to the written standard. In informal situations, the variation (63% of the 1376 forms with h) is co-influenced by the phonological context, the frequency of the word, and the educational level of the speaker.

It has not been the aim here to account for the origin of the features. We could merely mention that while many features have been dialectal or regional in a traditional sense, some of them have been claimed to be specific to Tallinn (marked by id after the author code in Table 3; single d marks the authors who have considered the feature dialectal, and d+ indicates that only some forms with this feature have been considered dialectal). The main problem of determining colloquiality vs. regionality is that we often lack empirical knowledge about the present spreading of these features, not to mention their potential frequency differences in various parts of the country. For example, it is quite likely that vowel fronting after the glide j is more frequent...
in Western Estonia (Table 3.3). K. Pajusalu (1992) has gauged that some of the features in the tables are regional (marked by r after the author code). However, features characterized as dialectal by all the authors (e.g. kaiv, st. kaev 'well'; veike, st. vääke 'small') have been excluded altogether from Table 3 in order to focus it – as far as possible – on the supposedly common features.

Finally, there are many differences from standard pronunciation that only pertain to a single word or a couple of words, and they should therefore probably not be treated as systematic phonological differences from the standard. At the same time, many of these words are extremely frequent and most probably easily recognizable for the speakers as colloquial. Some obvious examples are given below (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Colloquial</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eile</td>
<td>eila</td>
<td>'yesterday'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kudios</td>
<td>kuuda(s)</td>
<td>'how'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niikui</td>
<td>ni(i)gu</td>
<td>'like, as if'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pliit</td>
<td>plita</td>
<td>'stove'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus</td>
<td>plusse</td>
<td>'blouse'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pole, poid</td>
<td>pöle/pööl, pööd</td>
<td>'is not'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>praegu</td>
<td>präegu/präiigu/präegu/präega/präega etc.</td>
<td>'at the moment'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vastu</td>
<td>vasta</td>
<td>'against'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ohtu</td>
<td>ohta</td>
<td>'evening'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ära</td>
<td>ää</td>
<td>'NEG:IMP', perfective particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>üles</td>
<td>ülesse</td>
<td>'up'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should also be pointed out that the above tables do not generally account for the pronunciation of foreign words and names, which has otherwise attracted much attention from Estonian linguists. Correct pronunciation of all foreign words, including non-native diphthongs and consonant clusters exactly as in writing, has been considered a high-status marker in Estonian society. Consequently, a lower status of the speaker may be traced by his/her replacement of foreign sounds f, s, and z (see Table 3.3).

Finally, there are two sounds in Colloquial Estonian that are not found in the standard. Firstly, the laryngeal stop in negative back-channels (mqmm/äqää/öqöö/eqää where q marks a laryngeal stop), which is not included in phonetic/phonological standards because of its limited and very specific usage in conversational items; secondly, neutralized vowels occur in colloquial language, especially regularly in back-channels.

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3.2. Intonation

The only empirical knowledge we have about Estonian prosody in casual settings is based on the speech of three informants. The results show that in pre-pausal position, the unstressed second syllable of a disyllabic sequence and the stressed first syllable in Q3 are lengthened (Krull 1997). In addition, temporal differences between quantity degrees, especially syllabic ratios, were sometimes even enhanced when compared to data reported from laboratory speech. At the same time, the typical F0 contours for Q2 and Q3 were not preserved (Krull 1993, Engstrand, Krull 1994).

As to the prosodic properties of larger units than words, we have to rely on experimental or tightly controlled data, and on impressionistic judgements. According to popular belief, Estonian intonation is monotonous and meaningless. The general impression of the prevailing terminal fall has found support in several experimental studies (Vende 1973, Pajupuu 1990, 2003). At the same time, the contours do not coincide. While statements and at least some questions with question words seem to fall all the way, other questions, exclamations, and sentences with lists may involve considerable rises and higher pitch on focused words (Vende 1973, Lippus et al. 1977). Asu and Nolan (2001) have shown that there is a categorical phonological choice for the speakers to mark a particular question intonationally by using an upstep or not.

Probably the most compact presentation of pitch contours as perceived by Estonians can still be found in Vende (1982). The study involved 100 subjects and 228 synthesized stimuli of a monosyllabic word ('saab 'get / receive / become / be able to:3SG') with varying pitch peak, initial and final pitch of the vowel, and the temporal distance of the turning-point from the onset of the vowel.

As we can see from the graph, questions and exclamations have a higher turning point pitch than statements and incompletes, while exclamations and statements have a lower final pitch than the other two categories.

One of the problematic assumptions of the Estonian studies on intonation, is the belief that there is a direct mapping between the meaning and/or properties of the sentence and the acoustic dimensions of pitch (e.g. Miikla et al. 2000). These assumptions do not allow for relatively independent intonational patterns used as a resource in interaction. An attempt to avoid direct mapping has been made by Asu (2001) who has established a mediating level of categories of four intonational pitch accents (a fall, a fall with an “upstep”, a low nucleus, and a rise). The latter occurs sporadically in questions, e.g. *Ja kus on siis Tunli?* ‘So where is Tunli then?’, and since it has been a common belief among Estonian linguists that a rise is not characteristic...
of Estonian, Asu hypothesizes that a rising intonation may be a foreign feature spreading among younger people.

At the same time, when looking at intonation in informal conversations, a terminal rise does not seem to be too rare. In a brief perceptual pilot study of 385 intonation units (defined after DuBois) in a casual phone conversation between two sisters, there were 33 terminal rises which might indicate that there is a genuine rising intonational pattern in (Colloquial?) Estonian, possibly used for urging the other interactant to continue, answer, or the like. An example of the common back-channel "mhmh" follows, supported by a graph of its characteristic contour, rising in this case from 300 to more than 350 Hz.

(8) 1 L: mhmh niet põ-sõhimõtselt pärast nelja sa oled Mustakal onju= 'Uhuh, so in principle you are going to be at Mustakas after four, aren't you'
       E: =mhmh? 'Uhuh' (M1AE8)
4. Morphology

4.1. Inflection

In the field of colloquial morphology we have to rely mainly on observations and error analysis. Specific features are probably not too numerous, since morphological digressions in usage have constantly been under scrutiny (see e.g. Hint 1978b, 1979, 1980a, 1980b) and have often resulted in adjustments of the standard. However, the relation between colloquial and standard language is by no means uncomplicated.

Many standard forms are lacking in colloquial usage, e.g. the synthetic conditional and quotative forms in the past tense (tulnusin 'come:COND:1SG come:PPT') and many short plural and superlative forms (st. põlles 'field:PL:ADS', mustim 'black:SUP'). Some standard forms seem to have become archaic, e.g. 1st person plural imperative forms with the ending gem/kem, especially in negation (ärgem 'NEG:IMP:1SG come:IMP:1SG'). In some cases, the standard form may be very infrequent in common spoken usage, e.g. coll. ohtlikut, st. ohtlikku 'dangerous:PRT'; coll. kontserdite, st. kontsertide 'concert:PL:GEN'.

On the other hand, standardization may have sometimes resulted in the dominance of the legitimate form even in spoken usage. For at least half a century, the correct inflection of the word mõlema 'both:GEN' has required the stem vowel a, while in common usage the stem vowel has been i (e.g. mõlemite 'both:ALL', mõlemist 'both:ELT'). At present, in the LK corpus, only the a-stem is represented (with 20 occurrences).

Naturally, the standard and non-standard forms may exist in variation. This has happened with the past participle, where the standard ending nud is in variation with nd, d or 0, e.g. eland, st. elanud 'live:PPT'; seist, st. seisnud 'stand:PPT'; and, st. andnud 'give:PPT'. On the basis of 50 hours of candid recordings of non-dialect speakers in various settings (3229 forms), it has been shown that the three most influential factors in the choice of the form are stress weight, formality of the situation, and voicedness of the preceding segment (Keevallik 1994, 1996). Similarly, the comparative of some bisyllabic stems ending in a varies, e.g. vääräm, st. väärem 'wrong:COMP', and the standard formation is not used productively by the youngest generation any more (K. Pajusalu 1995).

In order to trace the differences from the standard that may be experienced as colloquial, a table has been compiled over more divergent inflectional features noticed by at least two linguists. One of the most interesting sources in this regard is T. Erelt's overview of the questions posed to the public language counsellor at the Institute of the Estonian Language in 1995–1998 (Erelt 2000). These questions may give us hints of which standard fea-
tures the general public considers unnatural and/or where the colloquial option has not been felt to be “correct”.

Table 5. Observed non-standard/colloquial inflectional morphology

Based on Aavik 1950 (V50), Saareste 1952 (S52), Langaste 1964 (L64), 1974 (L74), Hint 1978a (N78), K. Pajusalu 1992 (P92), 1997 (P97), Kraut et al. 1998 (K98), Liivaku 1998 (L98), Ots 1998 (O98), Hennoste 2000 (H00), T. Erelt 2000 (R00), Kerge 2000 (E00), the LK corpus (Lk).

5.1. Noun inflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Observed</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>more general PRT:SG ending d/t</td>
<td>omu, celnõu, õunbrikku 'uncle, project, envelope'</td>
<td>omu, celnõud, õunbrikku</td>
<td>L64 198 K98 R00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more general PRT:PL ending si</td>
<td>laudu, nõgusid, ametisid 'table, face, profession'</td>
<td>laudasi, nõgusi, ametisid</td>
<td>S52d L64 L74 P92r P97 H00 E00 R00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different stem in PRT:SG</td>
<td>suhkrut, meetrit, liitrit 'sugar, metre, litre'</td>
<td>suhkur, meetert, liitert</td>
<td>V50 S52d L64 K98 R00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRT:PL a</td>
<td>kive, käsi, poisse 'stone, hand, boy'</td>
<td>kiva, käsi, poissa</td>
<td>L64 S52d P97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM:SG= GEN:SG</td>
<td>kohv, valli, kehv 'coffee:NOM, loud:NOM, bad:NOM'</td>
<td>kohvi, valju, kehva</td>
<td>L64 K98 E00 R00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analogical NOM:SG and PRT:PL</td>
<td>küüns, lääks, kaasi 'nail:NOM, West:NOM, lock:PL:PRT'</td>
<td>küün, lään, kaani</td>
<td>S52 L64 N78 P92r K98 E00 R00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>analogical NOM:SG</td>
<td>palitu, osuti 'coat:NOM, hand (of a clock):NOM'</td>
<td>palit, osut</td>
<td>S52 K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da-stem</td>
<td>nüüri, vilut, mõrut 'blunt:GEN, chilly:PRT, bitter:ABL'</td>
<td>nüüda, viludat, mõrudalt</td>
<td>L64 N78 T98 K98 R00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>short ILL:SG</td>
<td>voodisse, teatrisse, keldrisse 'bed, theatre, cellar'</td>
<td>voodi, teatri, keldri</td>
<td>L64 K98 H00 R00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILL:SG without d</td>
<td>meelde, juurde, keeldde 'mind, to/towards, language'</td>
<td>meele, juure, keele</td>
<td>S52 P92r P97 H00 LK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INS:SG in the strong grade</td>
<td>vannis, jala, näljas 'bath, leg, hunger'</td>
<td>v'annis, j'algas, n'algas</td>
<td>S52 L64 P92r K98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different inflection</td>
<td>albumit, portsjonite 'album:PRT, portion:PL:GEN'</td>
<td>albumi, portsjonide</td>
<td>L64 K98 R00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like in the case of phonology, regional and social variation of these features is still unknown, as is the extent to which speakers are conscious of them, i.e. their actual degree of colloquiality. While some of the features probably go unnoticed in everyday interaction, others such as the a-plural (Table 5.1) and (s)ivad-imperfect (5.2) are highly (stylistically, regionally) marked, and the forms kiūn and kaani (Table 5.1) are even likely to attract corrections by observant academics. Features that are very unlikely to be experienced as colloquial have been left out of the tables, e.g. inflecting both parts of a compound as in eluksajaks, st. eluajaks ‘lifetime:TRA’.

Several morphological features only pertain to a single word or a couple of words and should thus not be counted as general morphological differences (see Table 6 for examples).
Table 6. Some inflectionally divergent word forms and words with divergent inflection in Colloquial Estonian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Colloquial</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>joosta, joostud, joostakse etc.</td>
<td>jooksta, jookstud, jookstakse etc.</td>
<td>'run:INF, PPT:IPS, IPS:PR'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>julgenud, julgetakse etc.</td>
<td>julenud, julgetakse etc.</td>
<td>'dare:PPT, IPS:PR'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juus, juuste etc.</td>
<td>juaks, juakse etc.</td>
<td>'hair:NOM, GEN:PL'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>koju</td>
<td>kodu, kottu</td>
<td>'home:ILL'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toostud</td>
<td>lasnud</td>
<td>'let:PPT'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>osa (inimesi), osa (inimeste) etc.</td>
<td>osad (inimesed), osade (inimeste)</td>
<td>'some (people):NOM, GEN'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>töötad, töötamud etc.</td>
<td>töödata, töödamud etc.</td>
<td>'work:INF, PPT'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>väähi, vääki, vähkide etc.</td>
<td>vähja, vähja, vähjade etc.</td>
<td>'beer:GEN, PRT, GEN:PL'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>õlle, õlut, õlled etc.</td>
<td>õlu, õlu, õlade etc.</td>
<td>'beer:GEN, PRT, GEN:PL'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can see that in several instances the colloquial language strives towards a greater regularity through the analogy in a grammatical paradigm, e.g. si-partitive (Table 5.1), or in an inflectional paradigm of a word, e.g. the forms jookstud ‘run:IPS:PPT’, and õlu ‘beer:GEN’ (Table 6). It may also happen that the logic of the standard does not apply colloquially, i.e. in the case of double superlatives, colloquial usage seems rather to rely on redundancy (e.g. kõige silmapaistvaim ‘most outstanding’, Table 5.1).

4.2. Some inflectional tendencies

Verbal person and number endings tend to be lost in the conditional mood and in 1st person plural negative imperative forms with ärme ‘NEG:IMP:1PL’, e.g. ma oleks pro ma oleksin ‘I be:COND pro 1 be:COND:1SG’, ärme sõõ pro ärme sõõme ‘let’s not eat pro eat:1PL’. While endless conditional forms are also acknowledged in the standard, it is still believed that there are especially few endings in colloquial language, whereas the two options actually seem to occur equally often (the LK corpus). Since the endless imperative forms are not introduced in the standard yet, they are probably perceived to be more markedly informal. In addition, in colloquial usage there is primarily one verb that sometimes loses its personal ending in the imperfect, namely mõtle- ‘think’. It is used for reporting thoughts in the construction N mõits et ‘N think:IMF that’ (4 times in 1SG in the LK corpus, once in 3SG).
Among adjectives, there are a couple of items that are used without case and number endings in contrast to the standard. Examples include igast ‘different’ and kõiksugu ‘all kinds of’, e.g. in igast üritustele, st. igasugustele üritustele ‘different vs. different:PL:ALL event:PL:ALL’; kõiksugu asju, st. kõiksuguseid asju ‘all kinds of vs. all kinds of:PL:RT things:PL:RT’. At the same time, these two words have already shortened into what could probably be seen as independent incongruent items in colloquial language.

The only grammatical category studied systematically in spoken usage is quotative, where in formal situations forms with the standard verbal ending -vat prevail. In informal situations pluperfect and the imperfect of the verb pida- ‘must’ in combination with ma-infinitive are more common (Toomet 2000, the Tartu corpus and special interviews).

(9)  A. hh noo tähendab taksojuht oll talle mingisugust sida keeranud ‘Well, the taxi driver had fucked with him in some way’, pluperfect
B. Raudla riägitakse=et ju et pidi esimese kooli direktoriks saama ‘(They) say that Raudla will become the director of the school number one’, pidi ‘must:IMF:3SG’ + ma-infinitive (Toomet 2000: 252)

Finally, it could be noted that the construction sai ‘get:IMF:3SG’ + impersonal participle is used to talk about 1” person in Colloquial Estonian. In the following example, P is describing what had happened at the camp she had just arrived from. The constructions are boldfaced.

(10) 1 P: =kolm päeva: jutti niimodi kõiksugu mai tsasasju sai tehtud oö läbi üikse: mitte magatud ja ‘Three days in a row like that, all kinds of I don’t know what things we/I did (lit. ‘were done’), we/I didn’t sleep (lit. ‘it was not slept’) and’
2 V: mhmh= ‘Uhuh’
3 P: =saunast käidud ja: õ (.) saunast lännuci üpatud ja ‘we/I went (lit. ‘it was gone’) to the sauna and we/I jumped (lit. ‘it was jumped’) into the snow and’ (P8B4)

4.3. Derivation

Most of the studies available have focused on the derivation of slang lexicon. The following table is a summary of the more frequent nominal suffixes in Tallinn youth slang and in oral speech (the latter according to Hennoste 2000), while an attempt has been made to provide more widespread, i.e. colloquial examples.
### Table 7. Frequent nominal derivative suffixes in slang and oral speech

Based on Kaplinski 1985 (N85), Tomingas 1986 (T86), Loog 1991 (G91), Loog, Hein 1992 (G92), Tender 1994 (D94), 2000 (D00), Hennoste 2000 (H00).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Translation (approximate)</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>pruta, mobla</td>
<td>pruut, mobiiltelefon</td>
<td>'girlfriend, cellular phone'</td>
<td>T86 G91 G92 D94 D00 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ar</td>
<td>prükkar, lespar</td>
<td>Ø, lesbi</td>
<td>'homeless, lesbian'</td>
<td>G91 G92 D94 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>lope, pralle</td>
<td>Ø, Ø</td>
<td>'easy, party'</td>
<td>G91 D94 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>er</td>
<td>krammer, mikker</td>
<td>grammofon, mikrofon</td>
<td>'gramophone, microphone'</td>
<td>G91 D94 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>õbi, krobi</td>
<td>õpetaja, Ø</td>
<td>'teacher, old person'</td>
<td>G91 D94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ka</td>
<td>naiksa, telka</td>
<td>naine, televiisor</td>
<td>'woman, TV-set'</td>
<td>G91 D94 D00 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kas</td>
<td>radikas, pohmakas</td>
<td>radiator, Ø</td>
<td>'heater, hangover'</td>
<td>N85 T86 G91 G92 D94 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ku</td>
<td>telku, venku</td>
<td>televiisor, venelane</td>
<td>'TV-set, a Russian'</td>
<td>G91 D94 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unn</td>
<td>labrum, orgum</td>
<td>Ø, organiseerimine</td>
<td>'party, organisation'</td>
<td>G91 D94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ps</td>
<td>limps, Nõmps</td>
<td>limonaad, Nõmme</td>
<td>'soft drink, a part of Tallinn'</td>
<td>G91 G92 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>kous, koks</td>
<td>kodu, kokteil</td>
<td>'home, cocktail'</td>
<td>T86 G91 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t</td>
<td>kilt, vant</td>
<td>kilometre, venelane</td>
<td>'kilometre, a Russian'</td>
<td>G91 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ts</td>
<td>kints, kolgats</td>
<td>kino, Ø</td>
<td>'cinema, tall person'</td>
<td>G91 T86 H00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u</td>
<td>spiku, mersu</td>
<td>spikker, Mercedes</td>
<td>'cheating aid, Mercedes'</td>
<td>T86 G91 H00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the 7 sources provide any statistics, although many state that *kas* is the absolute leader in terms of frequency and productivity. The authors seem to concentrate on non-standard suffixes (*a, ka, ku, unn, s, ps, i*), and derivations with divergent (slang / colloquial) stems. Some suffixes derive words in a different way in slang / colloquial language, e.g. the suffix *i* derives words for gadgets in the standard and words for persons in slang / colloquial language. Often the mechanisms of derivation, shortening, and/or gemination result in words of two inflectional types: words with Q2 and no grade alternation (e.g. *pralle* 'party'), and words with Q3 and weakening grade alternation (e.g. *vant* 'a Russian'; Kerge 1990, Hennoste 2000).
5. Colloquial Estonian

None of the authors have discovered a comparable amount of verbal and adverbal suffixes in their data. According to Hennoste (2000) the frequent verb suffixes used to derive colloquial stems are i, ta and ise, e.g. ropsi- 'vomit', moluta- 'do nothing', möllise- 'argue, talk too much'. It is not said how frequency is judged in this study. Some other suffixes that may prove to be reasonably productive are tse (nilbitse- 'be rude'), sta (lähusta- 'cause a mess'), and rda (sibberda- 'roam'). In addition, Kasik (2000) has traced a new trend of a-derivation in newly loaned verbal stems, e.g. šoppi-/šoppa- 'shop' and surf-/surfa- 'surf', which opens up the language system for new verbs with strengthening grade alternation.

A couple of adverbs occur with special suffixes in colloquial language, e.g. ks in muideks ‘by the way’, st in praegust/praegast/präägast ‘at the moment’, ki/gi in tätisagi ‘quite’, and the combination of the latter (muidegist ‘of course’, jällegist ‘again’). Somewhat distinctively, the standard adverb natuke(ne) ‘a little bit’ may occur in what seems to be the genitive, e.g. natukese palju ‘a little bit too much’. The only more productive colloquial suffix seems to be s(a), as in nats(a) < natuke, veits(a) < veidi, both ‘a little bit’.

The colloquial suffix (s)a seems to occur even in adjectives (e.g. prosta < Russ prostoi ‘primitive’ and in positive evaluation words kihva < kihvi lit. ‘poison’, änka/änks < äge lit. ‘impetuous’) as well as s (sünkis < sünge ‘positive evaluation’, lit. ‘gloomy’), ns (tibens-tobens < tipp-topp, lahens < lahe, both ‘positive evaluation’). The standard kas occurs with colloquial stems (opakas, väärakas, both ‘stupid’).

5. Syntax

5.1. Word order

Estonian word order has been claimed to be free, with different orders merely reflecting pragmatic differences. However, studies of spoken language reveal strong tendencies of at least SV and VO. Võõk (1990) was the first scholar to include some radio and conversation data in her graduation thesis. On the basis of 117 sentences she arrived at 82% SO, 69% SV, and 65% VO (in the written language at least SV and VS occur almost equally often; Tael 1988). A pilot study of the order of S, V, and O in a 20-minute casual conversation from the LK corpus suggested that there might be an even stronger basic word order in conversational Estonian – SV comprised 82%, and VO 76%. Since only grammatical S was taken into account, VS order was mostly explainable in terms of pragmatic factors; it was common in possessive and interrogative clauses, and clauses with predicate locatives.
In spoken narratives, subjectless and verb-initial clauses seem to be much more frequent than in the written language (43% vs. 28%, and 31% vs. 18%). These clauses appeared to be most frequent in complications and resolutions of the narrative, probably because the actor remained the same for a while (Lindström 2000). An example follows with the verbs boldfaced.

(11) N: ostis siis viimase suure triikimislaua, (.) tuli koju, oli lopp õnnes, pakkis lahti, pani üles, 'He/she bought the last large ironing table, came home, was very happy, opened the package, put (it) up' VO,VA,VA,VA,VA

(Lindström 2000: 197)

5.2. Questions

In colloquial language, questions may be formed quite differently from the standard: For example, a tag or the specific question intonation may be used in otherwise declarative clauses (see section 3.2) and besides the standard clause-initial particle kas in yes-no questions there are numerous clause-final particles. In a comprehensive study based on plays, children’s literature, tourist phrase collections, and own inventions, Metslang (1981) mentions many question particles used in tag-questions (e.g. eks ole, ega ju, jah, ah, clause-final mis, all meaning appr. ‘isn’t it’).

Obviously, questioning means vary in differing sequential positions in conversations. For example, second position repair initiations include interrogative means that do not locate the problem (e.g. mis ‘what’, jah ‘yes’), questions that locate the problem item with the help of a question word or a repetition with or without a particle (ah tänava pääl ‘AH in the street?’, ei olnud jah ‘It wasn’t JAH’), and candidate understandings (Strandson 2001). An example of the latter follows, in line 2 speaker C wonders whether the condolences were sent to the sons.

(12) 1 A: täna ma- tän olid matused. eilses lehes oli pilt ka sest emast=a. (0.8) pojad peredega avaldavad kaasturmet. (0.5) ‘The funerals were today. There was a photo in the paper yesterday, sons with families send their condolences’

2 C: poegadele p(h)eredega=vä. ‘To sons with families VÄ?’

3 A: ei, pojad peredega. ‘No, sons with families.’ (Henneste 2001: 182)

The question in this example is formulated with the help of the very frequent question-final particle või/või/võe/ve/vei/väi/väi/võ ‘or’ in spoken (Colloquial) Estonian, most commonly vä.

The conjunction või seems to have developed into a marker for self-initiation of repair as well as a sentence-final particle used in other-initiations
of repair (as in Example 12). On the basis of the latter it has become a general sentence-final interrogative particle (Lindström 2001, the Tartu corpus, 397 sentences with final võt and its variants).

5.3. Other syntactic constructions

Several linguists have pointed out single syntactic constructions that seem to be characteristic of spoken Estonian. For example, divergent (colloquial?) word order in Ei ta tule sul Tartu ühtki ‘He won’t come to Tartu’ with the negation word placed initially (Kerge 2000), the construction VS + küll ‘KÜLL’ (teen ma küll ‘I’ll do (it)’) to express strong irony in youth slang (Loog, Hein 1992), general spoken language features such as dislocations (muna noh see siia asemele tuleks leida midagi muud ‘egg, well, we should replace it with something’) and double bind structures (no sa räägid täitsa rumalusi ajad praegu suust välja lit. ‘you are talking complete rubbish is coming out of your mouth now’; Vöik 1990, Hennoste 2001), reformulations and insertions (Hennoste 2001), syntactic reduplication (Keevallik 2001b). The latter is used to carry out specific actions in certain sequential positions, i.e. in second pair parts of ritualized exchanges, in confirmative/disconfirmative or agreeing/disagreeing actions, and in repeated actions. An example of confirming a supposition follows.

(13) 1 M: @ egs Kadri vist ei ole ‘Kadri isn’t there, I guess’
2 V: ei gle ei ole ‘No, she isn’t’ (M1B4)

5.4. Temporal adverbs

Numerals and some time adverbials show a tendency to be uninflected as temporal adverbs in Colloquial Estonian. For example, üritus toimus viies august pro üritus toimus viidendal augustil ‘the event took place on the fifth of August, fifth:NOM august:NOM pro fifth:ADS august:ADS’, õhtu tulen koju pro õhtul tulen koju ‘at night I(‘ll) come home, night:NOM/GEN pro night:ADS’. Some time adverbs have a special non-adessive form: tuli õise meile pro tuli õisele meile ‘came to our place at night, night pro night:ADS’. The interrogative time pronouns kunas ‘when’ and millal/millas ‘when’ can also be used without case endings as kuna and milla.
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6. Communication patterns
6.1. Conversational sequences

When talking about spoken language and its usage in interaction, the norms and practices of behaviour cannot be ignored. The first Estonian study on interactional sequencing was a Gricean look at checking dialogue (used when something has remained unclear for an interactor) and planning dialogue (used to influence further communication, e.g. asking for permission to carry out an interactive step) in fiction (R. Pajusalu 1990). For example, the manner of carrying out an interactive step may often be subject to checking dialogue (e.g. anger in Example 14).

(14) 1 B: Halloo?! ‘Hello’

From a conversation analytic viewpoint, Rääbis (2000) has looked at 120 phone call openings, 86 of them institutional. She showed that the members of the Estonian speech community rarely introduce themselves at home. In 72% of the cases the answerer only produced a short response to the summons (most frequently halloo/hallo/haloo/halo). At institutional phones self-presentation is naturally much more common but not exclusive. Compared to the American phone call openings the Estonian ones have the opposite order between presentations and greetings – in Estonian conversations greetings come first. Furthermore, how-are-you sequences are by no means as common in Estonian as in American calls and they are not reciprocal. An example follows (15) of an opening where all the sequences are represented, and no turn includes parts of several sequences.

(15) 1 V: kuulen ‘I’m listening’
2 H: mt=.hh e tere päevast. ‘Hello’, lit. ‘good day’
3 V: tere? ‘Hello’
3 H: Einar Mattias ja Tiritamm siinpool. (0.5) ‘Einar Mattias and T here’
4 V: jah (0.5) ‘Yes’
4 H: e saate präegu vestelda. ‘Can you talk at the moment?’
4 V: ee jaa? (.) ma: kuulen teid? ‘Yes, I’m listening to you’ (Rääbis 2000: 417)

In the above example, 1 marks the response to the summons, 2 the greeting sequence (in American openings in the third position), 3 the presentation/recognition sequence (in American openings in the second position), and 4 the clarification sequence (how-are-you sequences and/or question sequences about the present situation).
In another conversation study, Rääbis and Vellerind's (2000) main contribution is pointing out that selling negotiations are not as neutral as other institutional conversations, since the sellers' aim is to be friendly with the clients. The authors show that Estonian sellers use colloquial language (e.g. oled siruli ‘you are sick’, lit. ‘lying flat’) and exaggerated emotional reactions (e.g. suurepärane ‘great’) to achieve this aim.

6.2. Politeness patterns

Single human beings may be addressed either in singular or plural, the latter being the “polite” variant. Other possibilities include 3SG forms, usually in combination with honorifics häära ‘Mr’, proua ‘Mrs’, and preili ‘Miss’, as well as 1PL forms with their motherly tone. Generic means and impersonal mood may be used to avoid any personal reference, even for reasons of politeness.

The usage of the single and plural address forms in Estonian (sina/sa ‘you:SG’, teielte ‘you:PL’, and the respective verb endings) has been studied in the form of a questionnaire among 8–9, 14–15, and 17–18 year old informants (Keevallik 1999b). The address system was shown to be primarily symmetrical and not dependent on hierarchic factors other than probably age. Children and very old people are commonly addressed in the singular but otherwise the choice of an address form seems to depend on solidarity/distance estimations. The system is rigid – the pattern established can usually be changed for strategic reasons only, e.g. when the teacher wants to express irony towards an inattentive student by saying Kas ma võiks teid segada? ‘May I disturb you:PL?’.

As the sphere of singular is clearly widening in the speech community and young people seem to lead the change, it was quite surprising that only 20% of the informants supported its general usage.

6.3. Cross-cultural comparisons

Sometimes the practices of a speech community can better be outlined in comparison with other communities and cultures.

A comparative look at live radio broadcasts in Estonia and Finland (Pajupuu 1995) revealed that the time-patterns of these conversations were very different. The Finnish dialogue was generally slower (Estonians said 152 words per minute and Finns 114), Finnish speakers’ turns and pauses were longer, and they talked less simultaneously.
Compared to Canadians, Estonians have been demonstrated to be less likely to introduce conversations, less likely to attribute negative characteristics to untalkative people or to feel uncomfortable with silences in conversations with family members. Estonians appeared more tolerant of silence both in conversations with friends and strangers, while they were also more likely to believe in solving interpersonal problems through talking (Kivik 1998, questionnaires).

Apart from the above, lay observations such as Estonians’ scarce eye contact, facial expression, and gestures, our dislike for excessive touching and inability to react to non-verbal signals, have not yet been subject to actual studies. A classification of pointing and referring gestures has been worked out on the basis of arranged task-oriented conversations (Tenjes 1996, 2001).

Excerpts from two cross-linguistic conversations between Estonian and Russian teenagers are described in Hennoste and Vihalemm (1998). The informants’ task was to speak in Estonian (sometimes on pre-determined topics), but regardless of that, there was a lot of dynamic language switching in the conversations since the Estonian subjects also had some proficiency in Russian. The authors observed that the Russian subjects were generally passive: topic focus was changed by the Estonians, who also collaborated better; Russians were not able to use particles adequately, and talked associatively without connecting their thoughts. The same authors (Hennoste, Vihalemm 1999) have also classified the communication strategies used by Russians speaking Estonian – speakers of L2 may avoid certain topics, postpone or abandon their turns, and reformulate, mumble, make literal translations, circumlocute etc. because they are not competent enough.

From a developmental perspective, Tulviste has studied interaction between Estonian mothers and children in contrast to Swedish and American pairs. She has found that Estonian mothers regulated their 2-year-olds’ behaviour significantly more often, and more frequently with imperatives than other mothers. At the same time, Estonian mothers prompted children’s conversational participation less often than others (Junefelt, Tulviste 1997). Estonian children are thus expected to talk less, and prompting does not become more frequent even in the pairs with 4-year-olds, 6-year-olds, and teenagers (Tulviste 1998). Estonian mothers give more direct comments than indirect ones, and the socialization of verbal politeness in the form of saying please and thank you comes apparently later than e.g. in the Japanese culture (Tulviste 1995).
7. Summary

There is no doubt that many of the features presented here will eventually fail to match all the criteria for colloquiality listed in the introduction, i.e. non-standard, spoken, common, and informal. In some cases we have had to rely on results that are valid rather in more formal settings or may prove to be regionally and socially limited. Still, for the time being they may help us to approach the variety we were interested in.

Out of the four criteria of Colloquial Estonian, the standard vs. nonstandard features have been subject to wider interest in the relatively abundant research on standardization (see chapter IV). Even certain dialectal vs. common features have been touched upon in these studies, although not so often from the point of view of spreading but rather as more or less suitable for the standard. The growing corpora should soon provide us with more adequate information on present-day spreading of linguistic features. Only after we have arrived at a solid ground as far as the spreading goes, can we start drawing serious conclusions about the dialectal/regional origin of Colloquial Estonian and its regional variation.

At the same time, research on spoken vs. written and informal vs. formal language is very new and apart from the general quantitative information on the occurrence of various items, requires new and different methods. This is by no means a problem of Estonian linguistics only, but e.g. the inclusion of prosody in accounting for linguistic units is an absolute necessity when working with spoken (interactional) language. Another important matter of fact is the production of language in real time, which prohibits us from analysing a bird's eye view of the language. These factors are most crucial as regards colloquial syntax, which is why we still have so few results in that area.

The chapter has reviewed studies with widely differing aims such as to correct language errors, to synthesize recognizable pitch contours, and to characterize Tallinn slang lexicon. On the other hand, we have been able to include statistical results from a couple of spoken language variables, take a look at a systematic analysis of phone-call openings, a possible development of an article in Spoken Estonian, etc. This conglomeration represents the state of the art in the study of Colloquial Estonian.
Transcription conventions

- underlining - stress or emphasis
- truncation
- [ ] - overlaps
- = - latching or continuation of the same speaker across intervening lines, in the Tartu corpus even latching words
- (0.5) - pause length in tenths of a second
- () - micropause
- (...) - a longer pause in the Tartu corpus
- : - lengthening of a sound
- @ - a laughter syllable
- hh - breathing out
- /—/ - something has been left out from the same turn in the example
- , ? - used either as in the written standard (some authors) or for intonation (the Tartu corpus) or not at all (the LK corpus)

Glossing conventions

(The level of detail differs as judged relevant for the discussion.)

- ARL ablative
- ADS adessive
- ALL allative
- COMP comparative
- COND conditional
- ELT elative
- F0 fundamental frequency
- GEN genitive
- ILL illative
- IMF imperfect
- IMP imperative
- INF infinitive
- INS inessive
- IPS impersonal
- NEG negation (particles ei, ära)
- NOM nominative
- NP noun phrase
- O object
- PPT past participle
- PR present
- PL plural
- S subject
- SG singular
- SUP superlative (inflectional)
- TRA translative
- V verb
- Q1, Q2, Q3 the quantities
- 1, 2, 3 person
- / — alternative translations
- , — overlong quantity
- - palatalization
- - separates the abbreviations of grammatical categories
- (not) the item is lacking in the original
- other
- capital
- letters
- untranslatable particle

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