Is there secondary stress in Estonian?
Eva Liina Asu & Pärtel Lippus
University of Tartu

Phonological rules of stress placement in Estonian and other Finnic languages are on the whole relatively clear. In Estonian, the primary stress in native words is fixed on the word-initial syllable. The placement of secondary stresses is determined by morphological constraints but typically coincides with odd-numbered syllables.

The phonetic correlates of stress, in particular that of secondary stress, have not been studied in depth for Estonian. This paper investigates various possible correlates of secondary stress in words with five and six CV syllables in read and spontaneous speech. The results show that the secondary stressed syllable is not phonetically distinct from the unstressed syllables in secondary stressed feet that do not display the same patterns between the syllables as the primary stressed feet. These findings call into question the concept of secondary stress.