

Gender Differences in Spoken Estonian: Exploring Politeness Markers

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As social norms often differ by gender, it is expected that men and women perceive politeness differently. Observations suggest that women tend to be more polite, as femininity is traditionally associated with softness and compliance. Women also often make more effort to participate in conversations. (Fishman, 1983) Key studies of the differences in politeness strategies between men and women demonstrate that, compared to men, women are more likely to use pragmatic particles, negative-politeness strategies, the subjunctive mood, a higher number of compliments and apologies, and facilitative tag questions (e.g. Berryman-Fink & Wilcox, 1980; Edelsky, 1976). Later quantitative studies in English and other languages confirm these findings (e.g. Gauthier, 2017; Senkina et al., 2017; Siregar et al., 2023). In Estonian linguistics, attention so far has focused primarily on the study of politeness markers and their use in various contexts (e.g. Haavel, 2019; Lindström, 2009; Pajusalu et al., 2010). However, it has not yet been studied how gender norms influence the selection of politeness markers. The aim of the planned study is to identify and describe gender differences in the use of politeness markers in the spoken language of native Estonian speakers, as well as to compare the findings with the results established for other languages. Along with gender, age will be taken into account as an additional factor. Special attention will be paid to teenage speech, as it is assumed that gender differences are less pronounced in this group than among adult speakers. The data for the study will be drawn from multiple corpora, including teenage speech and adults' everyday dialogues. The methodology will involve corpus analysis with automated text processing in Python and statistical evaluation. The poster will present the research design, methodological approach, and expected outcomes. Although the analysis has not yet been completed, the project aims to contribute to Estonian linguistics and provide a basis for further research in variational linguistics.

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