

HISTORY OF STANDARD ESTONIAN

1. Oldest period of the written language from the 13th to the 16th century. The first extant texts are mainly manuscripts. The spelling varies considerably and follows either German or Polish examples.

The first Estonian-language phrases were recorded in the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia in the first half of the 13th century, e.g. *Laula! Laula! Pappi* 'sing, priest'; *Maga magamas* 'sleep, sleeping'.

Starting with the 16th century North Estonian and South Estonian written languages or the languages of Tallinn and Tartu developed separately. Eleven fragmentary pages have survived from the first extant printed text, the Catechism by Simon Wanradt and Johann Koell (1535).

The language of Tallinn is represented by the Kullamaa manuscript (1524–1532), which includes some Catholic prayers and a confession of faith, some proper names, and one sentence. A few judicial manuscripts have also preserved.

The language of Tartu is represented by Jesuical texts by Johannes Ambrosius Velterus and Laurentius Boierus; the professional certificate of Sigismund Awerbach, an eye specialist.

2. Period of church literature with uneven spelling in the 17th century.

The first bulkier and widespread ecclesiastical publications. The spelling varies following High German as an example. Estonian-language occasional poetry cultivated by Germans (e.g. Reiner Brocmann, Heinrich Göseken, Georg Salemann).

Some more important texts in the language of Tallinn:

1600–1606 39 manuscript sermons by Georg Müller, Assistant Pastor of the Church of the Holy Spirit in Tallinn.

1632–1638, 1641–1649 Hand- vnd Haußbuch, an influential church handbook by Heinrich Stahl in four parts, his collection of sermons *Leyen Spiegel* in two parts.

The first grammars of the Estonian language- intended to familiarize pastors with the Estonian language:

1637 *Anführung zu der Estnischen Sprach* by Heinrich Stahl – a language guide with a small German-Estonian dictionary.

1660 *Manuductio ad Linguam Oesthonicam, Anführung Zur Öhstnischen Sprache* by Heinrich Göseken.

1693 *Grammatica Esthonica*, a language guide by Johann Hornung, which summarized the principles of a spelling reform initiated by Bengt Gottfried Forselius in the 1680s and laid the foundation of the first consistent spelling, the so-called **old spelling**. This spelling was used until the last quarter of the 19th century.

Some more important texts in the language of Tartu:

1622 *Agenda Parva*, Catholic handbook.

1632 Lutheran church handbook by Joachim Rossihnius.

1648 *Observationes grammaticae circa linguam Esthonicam*, a grammar of South Estonian by Johannes Gutsclaff.

1686 *Meije Issanda Jesusse Kristusse Wasne Testament* 'New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ, a translation of the New Testament which is the first fully Estonian-language work.

3. Period of old spelling from the 18th century to the last quarter of the 19th century. The 18th century witnessed the emergence of the ecclesiastical book language. Some secular reading material was published in the first half of the 19th century. Herder-style mother tongue ideology prevailed – a language is the manifestation of the unique spirit of a people, and as such it is worth studying and development. In the first half of the 19th century efforts were made to establish a common standard language; the standard language of Tartu declines.

Some more important texts in the language of Tallinn:

1715 New Testament.

1739 the first complete Estonian-language Bible *esimene eestikeelne täispiibel Piibli Ramat, se on keik se Jummal Sanna* 'Bible Book, It Is all the Word of God' which established the tradition of ecclesiastical written language.

Beginning of semi-secular narrative literature: 1740 *Wiis head jutto Ühhe Öppetaja ja usklikko Tallopoia wahhel* 'Five good stories between a minister and a religious peasant'. Guides and moralizing books carrying the Enlightenment ideas, e.g. August Wilhelm Hupel's weekly *Lühhike õppetus* 'Short guide' (1766–1767).

1782 *Juttud ja Teggud* 'stories and deeds' by Friedrich Wilhelm Willmann and *Üks Kaunis Jutto- ja Öppetusse-Ramat* 'A nice storybook and guide' by Friedrich Gustav Arwelius.

1821–1823; 1825 *Marahwa Näddala-Leht* 'Rural people's weekly', published by Otto Wilhelm Masing.

1813–1832 *Beiträge zur genauern Kenntniß der ehstnischen Sprache* 'Contributions to the precise knowledge of the Estonian language' a journal published by Johann Heinrich Rosenplänter that was devoted to issues of the Estonian language and culture.

1838 establishment of the Learned Estonian Society – a cultural society that brought together Estophiles.

More important language guides:

1732 *Kurtzgefaßte Anweisung Zur Ehstnischen Sprache* by Anton Thor Helle – a grammar with a dictionary and Estonian-language text examples.

Ehstnische Sprachlehre für beide Hauptdialekte, a grammar and dictionary by August Wilhelm Hupel (1st edition 1780; 2nd supplemented edition 1818).

4. Entrenchment of the new spelling until the 1840s–1870s and the development of the standard language until the beginning of the 20th century

During this period the description and standardization of Estonian starts to follow the Finnish example. The new spelling, which was fixed by Eduard Ahrens, becomes established in the 1870s. Estonians strive for a civilized and versatile Standard Estonian by enriching the vocabulary. There are now more Estonian intellectuals who write in Estonian. Educational literature and fiction are published. Also, explanatory and bilingual dictionaries are published, e.g. *Ehstnisch-deutsches Wörterbuch* (1869) by Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann.

In 1857–1861 *Kalevipoeg* 'Kalev's son' by F.R.Kreutzwald was published. The 1905 collection of writings of the Young Estonia group was a breakthrough between the old and the contemporary standard language; it included a programmatic article by Johannes Aavik entitled *Eesti kirjakeele täiendamise abinõuudest* 'Concerning the measures of supplementing Standard Estonian'. Spread of the common North Estonian standard language.

Grammars and language treatments:

1843 (1st edition), 1853 (2nd edition with syntax) – *Grammatik der Ehstnischen Sprache Revalschen Dialektes*, a language guide by Eduard Ahrens that explains the advantages of the new Finnish-style spelling.

1875 *Grammatik der ehstnischen Sprache* by Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann – scholarly descriptive grammar of the Estonian language.

1879 Mihkel Veske's *Eesti keele healte õpetus ja kirjutuse wiis* 'Guide and writing of Estonian sounds' – the first systematic treatment of degrees of quantity.

1884 *Eesti keele Grammatik* 'Estonian grammar' by Karl August Hermann – the first grammar of the Estonian language written in Estonian.

1872 – the first official meeting of the Society of Estonian Literati which supports the new spelling. Estonian authors begin to deal with the planning of the standard language. 1844 the first book using the new spelling is published – *Toomas Westen, Lapo rahwa uso ärataja Norra maal* 'Toomas Westen, revivalist of the religion of the Lapp people in Norway' by Gustav Heinrich Schüdlöffel.

1888 Jakob Hurt launches the campaign for the collection of folk poetry.

Study of the history of the standard language.

The University of Tartu has been the most important research centre since the beginning of the 19th century. The old written language was studied by professors Jaan Jõgever, Andrus Saareste, Julius Mägiste, Arnold Kask, Paul Ariste, Paul Alvre, and Huno Rätsep. At present there is a research team of the old written language at the University of Tartu (Küllī Habicht, Valve-Liivi Kingisepp, Jaak Peebo, Pille Penjam, Külli Prillop, and Kristel Ress). Its aim is to set up electronic resources on the basis of old texts and dictionaries and to study the vocabulary and grammar of the old. Another important centre is the Institute of the Estonian Language in Tallinn, where a research team under the supervision of Kristiina Ross is creating a historical concordance of the translation of the Bible into Estonian and studies the history of translating the Bible.



Text example from the catechism by Wanradt and Koell (1535)



Text example from H. Stahl's (1673) language guide.



Text example from J. Hornung's (1693) language guide.



Text example from A. Thor Helle's (1732) language guide.



Text example from A.W.Hupel's (1780) 1st ed. language guide.



The old website of Tartu University standard language task group.

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Publications of Estonian Mother Tongue Society No 72. Tallinn, 1999.

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Online addresses

Corpus of the old written language <http://www.murre.ut.ee/vakkur/Korpused/korpused.htm>

Historical concordance of the translation of the Bible into Estonian <http://www.eki.ee/piibel/>

Digital text collection of the older Estonian literature <http://www.utlib.ee/ekollekt/eeva>

Rec Book of Estonian publications <http://www.nlib.ee/PunaneRaamat>

Dictionary by Salomo Heinrich Vestring <http://www.folklore.ee/~kriku/VESTRING/index.htm>

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