

# Estonian academic text

A systematic overview of the current evidence-based knowledge

Helen Hint ([helen.hint@ut.ee](mailto:helen.hint@ut.ee))

Djuddah Leijen ([djuddah.leijen@ut.ee](mailto:djuddah.leijen@ut.ee))

Anni Jürine

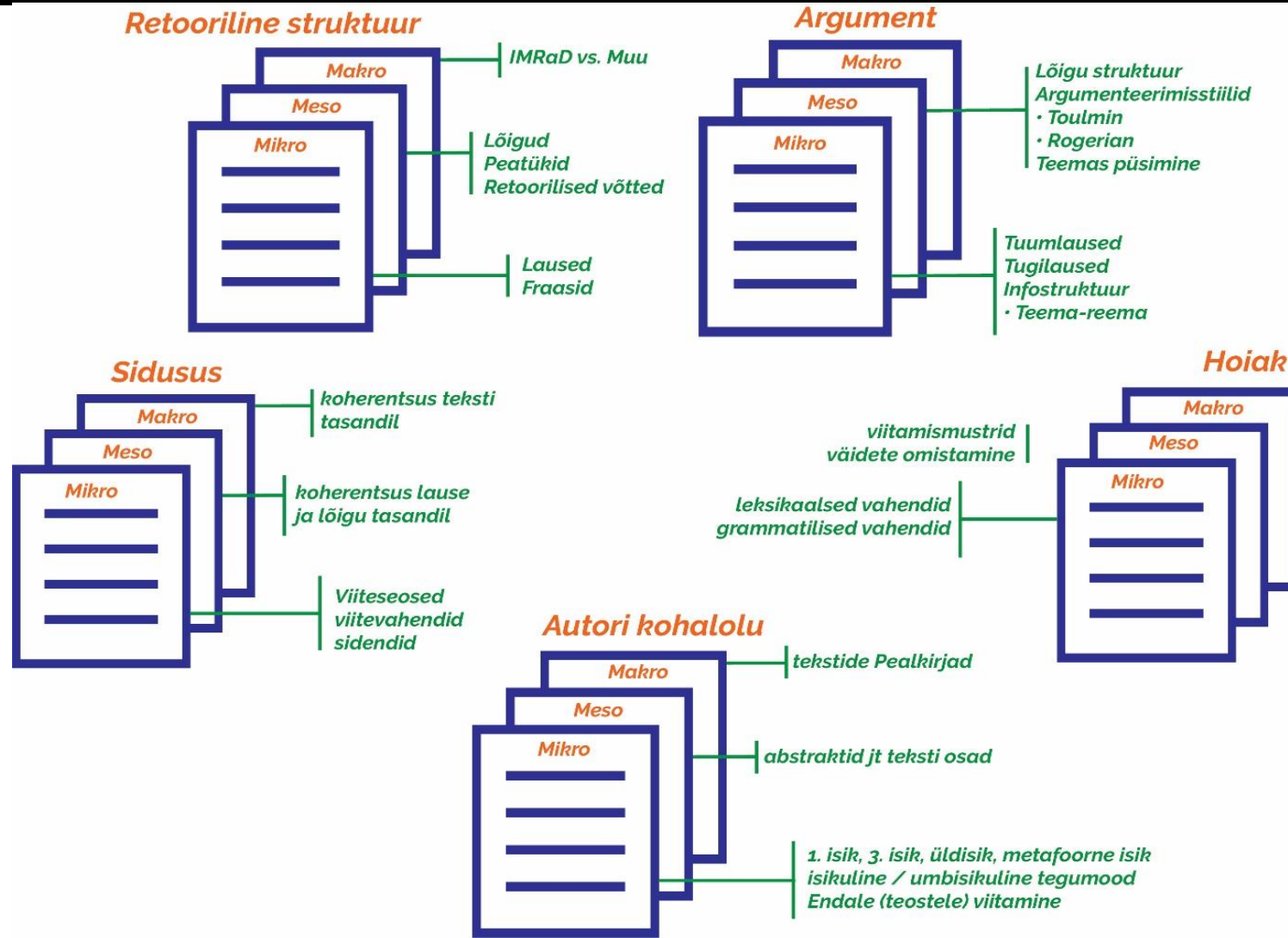
# Introduction

- Academic texts
  - Students' texts written for learning in university context
  - Professional researchers' text for communicating their research results
- How to **define** a writing tradition?
- How to **model** a writing tradition?
- What do we know about them?
  - Anglo-American writing tradition
  - Continental writing tradition
  - **Estonian writing tradition**

# Writing tradition model

- Five features
  - Argumentation
  - Rhetorical structure
  - Stance
  - Authorial presence
  - Coherence
- Three levels
  - Macro level (whole text)
  - Meso level (paragraph)
  - Micro level (sentence)
- Combination of top down + bottom up approaches

# Writing tradition model



# Method: literature review

- First step: systematic literature review did not yield (much) relevant data
  - PRISMA model (Moher et al. 2009)
- Second step: extended literature review in local journals, edited volumes etc.
- Third step: thorough review of the works by relevant authors and their co-authors
- Altogether, 42 published articles, PhD and MA theses were reviewed

# Estonian context

- Linguistic text analysis and readability studies
  - e.g. frequency of parts of speech (Mikk 1997), sentence length (Mikk 2008), nominalizations (Kerge 2002) , LIX index (Puksand 2004)
- Estonian as a language of research: its vitality and reinforcement
  - e.g. Nemvalts (2011, 2013, 2020); Kapanen et al. (2012); Roosalu et al. (2014)
- Practical pedagogic approaches
  - Action research perspective to writing process (e.g., Org 2019; Reinsalu et al. 2019; Hint et al. 2020; Hint and Jürine 2021)
  - State examination essays (e.g. Lepajõe 2011; Kaldjärv 2014)

=> How to **systematize** the existing knowledge in the perspective of the writing tradition model?

# Argument in Estonian

- Argument patterns in academic texts not studied
- State examination essay ('kirjand') as the most investigated argumentative genre
  - Formal approaches to argument structure (Kaldjärv 2008, 2014; Lepajõe 2002)
  - Functional approach and how the argument construes the addressee's perception (Lepajõe 2011)
  - Overall assessment: arguments are rather poorly construed in the texts written by upper secondary school students

# Rhetorical structure (RS) in Estonian

- RS in state examination essays
  - Introductions (beginnings) and conclusions (endings) as the mandatory building parts in 'kirjand' (Lepajõe 2011; based on Halliday's functional grammar)
  - Introductions seem to include more rhetorical means than conclusions
- RS in research articles (RA) as academic texts
  - Move and step analysis of RA abstracts (Šmidt 2020)
    - Social sciences: 4 obligatory moves - introduction + aim + method&sample + results
    - Humanities: 3 obligatory moves - introduction + method&sample + results

# Rhetorical structure (RS) in Estonian

- Estonian academic phrasebank – *Akadeemiliste väljendite varamu* teadustekst.ut.ee (Jürine 2019)
  - Theoretically built based on the move and step analysis (i.e., on RS)

# Stance in Estonian

- Hennoste (2012) has looked at the functions of epistemic stance in spoken language (focus on questions)
  - Stance as a scalar phenomenon
- Stance in Estonian academic texts?



# Authorial presence in Estonian

- Traditional (?) view: impersonality of academic text (Kasik 2007; Hirsjärvi et al. 2005)
- Means of expressing the author in introductions of MA theses (Reinsalu 2017)
  - Impersonal constructions; 1<sup>st</sup> person SG and PL; 3<sup>rd</sup> person (*'autori hinnangul on tulemused intrigeerivad'*); metaphoric person (*'siinne uurimus selgitab'*); generic person (*'tulemusi võib seletada ...'*)
  - Disciplinary differences: hard sciences prefer impersonal, soft sciences have more 1<sup>st</sup> person forms

# Authorial presence in Estonian

- The functions of 1st person (*'mina-isik'*) in literature studies BA theses (Kook 2020)
  - 1st person is most often used for the functions that contain lower level of responsibility (e.g., author as the architect and author as the representative)
- The means – implicit and explicit – of expressing the author across different parts of MA theses (Lemendik 2021)
  - 1<sup>st</sup> person forms are the most frequent means of expressing the author
  - The 'other' category most frequent among implicit means
  - Differences in different parts of the theses

# Coherence in Estonian

- ‘Sidusus’: coherence (between sentences) and cohesion (between entities)
- Referential devices and other means of coherence in Estonian academic text not yet analysed
- Cohesion patterns in ‘kirjand’ (Lepajõe 2011)
  - Pronoun use (e.g. see ‘this’)
  - Avoiding word repetitions seems to be difficult
- Coherence patterns in ‘kirjand’ (Lepajõe 2011)
  - Very brief analysis of linking words

# In sum

- Current knowledge about Estonian academic text is scattered and covers various perspectives and theoretical approaches
- Much of the research focuses on argumentative text in general, and is not specific to academic texts
- We still lack a uniform understanding about Estonian (academic) writing tradition
- Expected outcome of the bwrite project:
  - Describe Estonian academic text as a whole, and not focus only on individual aspects
  - Use big corpus data and machine learning techniques for that purpose

# Thank you

Bwrite | Academic Writing in the Baltic States: Rhetorical Structures through culture(s) and languages EMP475 project is funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants and Norway Grants.