

Computer Assisted Estonian Language Learning

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Abstract

This presentation focuses on computer-assisted learning of Estonian, a less taught language, belonging to the Finno-Ugric language family. This presentation offers a broader analysis of Internet-based language learning, considering both the positive and the negative aspects of such a learning method. This presentation will also discuss the special linguistic characteristics of Estonian that make its learning and teaching via Internet different from teaching and learning of the other languages - when developing learning materials and e-courses, in addition to general didactic principles one should consider the grammatical structure and other characteristics of a specific language.

Impulses for this presentation came from a course "Estonian course for beginners" that started in the University of Tartu in autumn 2010, and from other courses opened in spring 2011 and in 2012. The idea to create these courses came from developing on-line learning materials intended for self-learners in the framework of international project ONENESS (On-line less used and less taught language course). These one-year teacher-assisted courses are intended for adult learners at the beginner level (A1) and are based on English. On all the courses the students gain introductory knowledge of Estonian and develop active skills in Estonian. Courses activities are structured around access to online resources and communication via social media (Skype). This provides the learners of Estonian with the flexibility of performing drill and practice tasks at one's own pace as well as communicating and cooperating extensively through a computer.

This presentation also shortly discusses the attitude of the students towards the computer assisted Estonian courses. Data was collected via a questionnaire survey.