

Reported discourse and quotative uses of *mingi* ‘some’ and *nagu* ‘like’ in adolescent spoken Estonian

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Abstract

European languages are known for having developed ‘new quotative’ strategies consisting of etymologically non-reportative markers like similative/comparative adpositions (e.g. Eng. *like*, Ru. *tipa* ‘like’), demonstratives (Ger. *so*), and quantifiers (Eng. *all*, Swe. *ba(ra)* ‘just, only’) (Buchstaller & van Alphen 2012: xiv). Colloquial Estonian (Finnic branch; Uralic) shows evidence of a similar development in online communication (Teptiuk 2019: 273–277) and spoken language (Kängsepp et al. 2022), employing lexical sources found in other European languages (e.g. similative *nagu* in [1]). Additionally, a lexical source not previously discussed in the literature is also used in quotative constructions, namely, the indefinite pronoun *mingi* ‘some [kind of]’ in (2).

Estonian (Kängsepp et al. 2022)

(1) *ja siis ma ol-i-n nagu* oh my god *nii* creepy
and then 1SG be-PST-1SG like INTERJ so creepy
‘and then **I was like** oh my god, so creepy’

(2) *esimese päeva õhtu-l läh-me mingi tere*
first:GEN day:GEN evening-ADE go-PRS.1PL some.kind.of hello
Maarika
PN

‘On the first evening, we could go [and be] like hi, Maarika!’

Although new quotative strategies in colloquial written Estonian have been investigated in previous studies, there are no systematic attempts to approach this topic in oral speech. This study addresses this gap and describes quotative strategies used in colloquial spoken Estonian, with a focus on the quotative use of the similative marker *nagu* ‘like’ and the indefinite pronoun *mingi* ‘some [kind of]’. We use data from the spoken corpus from the Teen Speak in Estonia project (Koreinik et al., in press). It consists of self-recorded oral conversations between two

or more speakers aged 10–18. We use two data samples: the first includes all instances of reported discourse observed in ten representative recordings (470 examples, ~8 hours). The second sample was obtained by extracting all uses of *mingi* and *nagu* from the spoken corpus (79 transcribed recordings, total duration ~59 hours) and taking a random sample balanced for age and gender of the speakers for both markers. This yielded 1068 observations of *nagu* and 1083 observations of *mingi*, of which 8% and 6%, respectively, were quotative uses.

We first present a concise overview of quotative constructions observed in the first data sample, including conventional strategies with speech or mental verbs, new quotatives, and ‘defenestration’ where the quotative construction is formally unrepresented (Spronck 2017). Second, we use the two data samples and concentrate on the quotative uses of *nagu* and *mingi*. On the formal side, we focus on the morphosyntactic contexts of the markers and check for their combination with other markers within a quotative strategy. On the functional side, we investigate how these markers are used with different types of reported discourse: in quotations (Reporter ≠ Reported Speaker) and self-quotations (Reporter = Reported Speaker), and the possibility of introducing reported thought or non-verbal demonstrations, as well as reported speech. Finally, we discuss attitudinal meanings expressed by the markers, while presenting reported discourse, and possible connections to their non-reportative functions.

References

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