

# THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE GIFTEDNESS DISCOURSE IN THE MEDIA TEXTS OF HISTORICAL AND DIGITAL TIMES

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**Abstract.** The aim of the study is to describe and explicate, using critical text analysis, how the socially weighty discourse of giftedness has been constructed historically and how it manifests in the media texts of the digital era. The diachronic analysis is based on the media texts of the 1890s–1990s stored in the Corpus of Standard Estonian, while the synchronic analysis applies to texts found in Delfi.ee. The results highlight the main media discourses dealing with giftedness, the relevant terms and expressions, and the social relations and meanings brought up in the media in connection with the topic. The study reveals that through history, the giftedness discourse has been subject to changes and, constructed with specific linguistic means, it plays an important role in modern social arrangements.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis, ideology, social interaction, media language, Estonian

## 1. Background and problem statement

The topic of giftedness as handled in speech and writing, and the words thereby used, are becoming ever more topical not only for research but also for a wider public aspect. Throughout history, giftedness has been regarded as a key sustainability factor for countries, peoples and communities (Simonton 2009: 911, Ziegler 2009: 1510, Shavinina 2013: 55). In the modern globalized world, giftedness is more and more emphasized in the context of small nation sustainability (EA 2012, Mazzoli Smith 2014).

Historically, giftedness has mostly been understood as human intellectual ability (Kaufman, Sternberg 2008: 72–73, Simonton 2009: 906). Nowadays giftedness is

regarded as a system of personal characteristics and external factors, in which an important role is played by processes of human development (Feldman 2000, Gagné 2004). Some authors (Mudrak 2011: 200, Hymer 2014: 8) understand giftedness as a social construct; according to James Borland (2005: 3) it was not before the 1910s that the term acquired its modern meaning, i.e. not before a combination of socio-cultural and socio-political factors rendered the construct beneficial to society. Today, the topic of giftedness is often associated with creativity, ethical norms and the importance of self-regulation (Sternberg, Davidson 2005). At a recent ECHA (European Council for High Ability) conference, giftedness was defined as high ability in one or more areas of life. Giftedness is usually found in an individual whose personality traits include perfectionism, achievement motivation and task commitment. Also, giftedness is often associated with cognitive processes and socio-cultural environment factors such as participation in special talent groups, peer relations and teacher support. (ECHA 2014)

In the latest studies, the environment of the gifted is considered important (e.g. Gagné 2004). However, little attention is given to the media, which is, after all, an essential component of this environment. Mutual relations of the gifted and the media have been investigated by Radford (1998), who focuses on the British press coverage of prodigies. A brief study of the media discussion on giftedness and gifted children has been done in Finland (Laine 2010).

The focus of the present study is on how and with what lexical means the discourse of giftedness has been constructed in Estonian media texts of historical times and of the modern digital era and what social meanings are thereby brought up.

Research questions are:

- 1) What were the lexical means used to construct the historical discourse of giftedness and what social relations and meanings were brought up in that connection in the media texts of the time?
- 2) What are the lexical means used to construct the historical discourse of giftedness in the modern digital era and what social relations and meanings are brought up in that connection in modern media texts?

In the study, two text sets have been used to analyse the meanings constructed through the press coverage of giftedness: the diachronic view is based on the media texts drawn from the Corpus of Standard Estonian<sup>1</sup>, while the synchronic view is based on the media texts found with the help of Delfi.ee<sup>2</sup>, which is the oldest and biggest web portal in Estonia.

## 2. Material and method

The historical texts analysed come from the Corpus of Standard Estonian, which covers media texts from the 1890s–1990s.<sup>3</sup> The search words used were the strings *ande* and *anne*<sup>4</sup>, which transparently refer to the phenomenon studied (*anne* 'talent', *andekus* 'giftedness'), and the strings *geenius*, *geniaal*, *intelligent*, *talent*, which are contained in the most frequent linguistic expressions referring to the research phenomenon in giftedness studies. As a result, 175 texts touching on giftedness were

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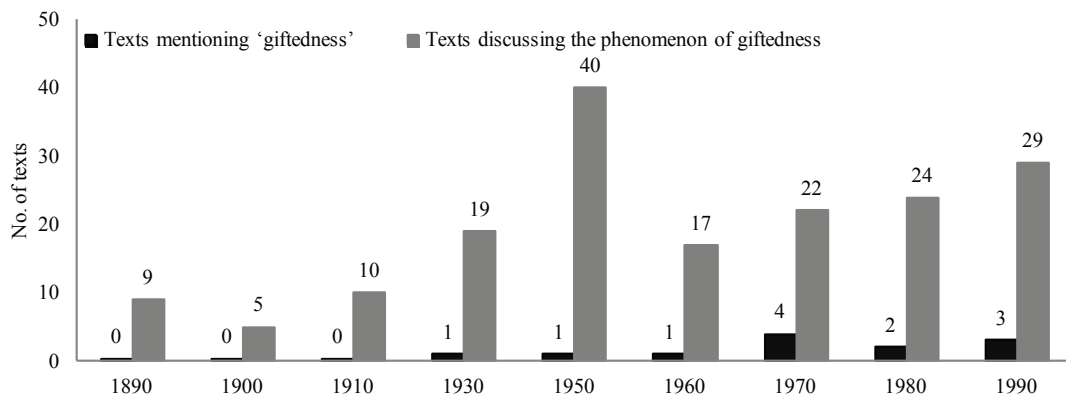
<sup>1</sup> Corpus of Standard Estonian 1890s–1990s, <http://www.cl.ut.ee/korpused/baaskorpus/> (9.9.2014).

<sup>2</sup> Delfi.ee, <http://otsing.delfi.ee/i.php?lang=et&p=n&q=andekus> (30.8.2014).

<sup>3</sup> As the referenced corpus lacks texts of the 1920s and 1940s part of the research material was found with the help of the analytical bibliographic database of Estonian press, <http://www2.kirmus.ee/biblioserver/index2.php> (6.8.2014).

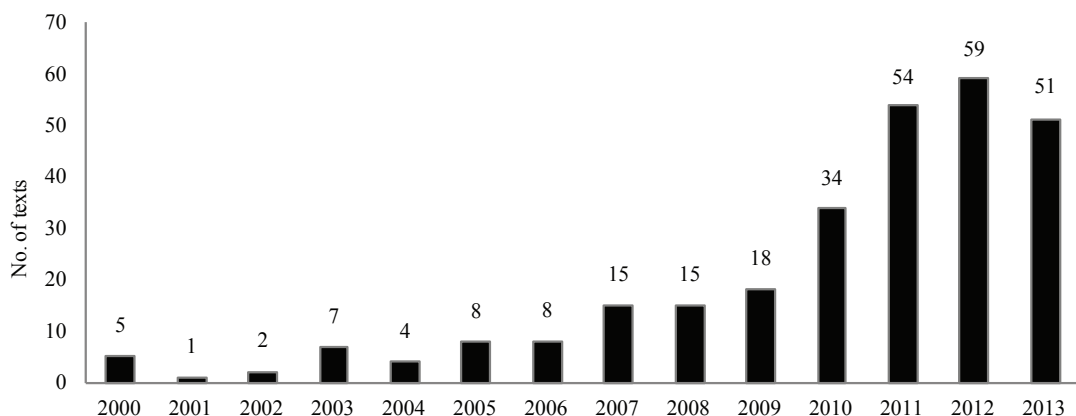
<sup>4</sup> The word *anne* 'talent, gift' was only used in the context of giftedness, not in the sense of donation (*annetus*) or edition (*väljaanne*).

found (Figure 1). Subsequently, qualitative analysis was used on the list of 175 to dismiss those texts whose original source was unknown or where the context of the research phenomenon was unclear. As a result, 146 historical texts were selected for close investigation.



**Figure 1.** Historical texts (1890s–1990s) mentioning giftedness and discussing the phenomenon, stored in the Corpus of Standard Estonian

The modern digital era is understood as the current period since the beginning of the 21st century, characterized by an extensive advance of the Internet. The digital media texts analysed were found using the web portal Delfi.ee (Figure 2). One of the reasons behind the choice was that the portal offers the relevant texts for free. So it can be assumed that those articles will reach a wider audience than print media or online paid articles, thus making a major influence on public opinion, including the general ideas of giftedness (see McQuail 2003). Due to the great number of modern texts, synchronic analysis was confined to those directly referring to giftedness as a phenomenon, using the term *andekus* as reference. As a search word, the term gave 279 texts.



**Figure 2.** Digital media texts mentioning giftedness (portal Delfi.ee from 2000–2013)

As the aim of the present study is not to compare two eras, but to describe, using qualitative methods, the content of the concept of giftedness and the contexts characteristic of the coverage of the phenomenon the volumes of the texts representing the two periods need not be equal or even comparable.

There are various ways to study the attitudes and meanings concerning social phenomena, of which case studies and phenomenography are perhaps the most widespread approaches; some other authors have concentrated on the meanings propagated by the media (Cohen et al. 2007, cf. Richardson 2007). The phenomenon of giftedness has been analysed in a lot of case studies (e.g. Mudrak 2011, Mazzoli et al. 2012); the few studies available on the media coverage of the phenomenon are based on a qualitative content analysis of texts (Radford 1998, Laine 2010). In the present study, critical discourse analysis (CDA) was preferred as this is a method allowing to bring out social agreements and meanings manifested in linguistic choices.

CDA has been discussed by several theoreticians (e.g. Wodak 1998, Rogers 2004, Richardson 2007, Wodak, Meyer 2009). The method has mainly been criticized for lack of system and for insufficient transparency (Cohen et al. 2007: 391, Breeze 2011). Fairclough (2001: 92–93), however, has managed to provide CDA with a definite structure, the systematic nature of which attracted my preference. The approach addresses the linguistic meanings of texts, which are used to represent reality and to establish social relations, while the unit of analysis is a full text. This enables the analysis to move on from word and sentence levels to address relations between passages in order to see which topics are highlighted and which ones remain in the background.

Fairclough's (2001: 21–22) critical text analysis consists of three steps: 1) text description; 2) interpretation of the relationship between the text and act of communication, and 3) analysis of the relationship between the text and its social context. Here we can see one of the advantages of Fairclough's structured analysis. In the context of my own study, micro-level linguistic analysis can answer that part of my research question which concerns the lexical structuring of texts dealing with giftedness. This stage of analysis involves a description, in terms of vocabulary, grammar and text structure, of the linguistic choices made when writing on giftedness. Simultaneous interpretation addresses the meanings created by those choices in each particular text and the influence of those meanings on the available context. Social analysis, which addresses the macro level, helps to find out what meanings and social relations are constructed in the society when giftedness is at issue and how they are highlighted. In terms of the present study it means that wordings are tried to be explained from the ideological trends of the time.

Language use in the media is always ideological, reflecting hidden power relations (Fairclough 2001: 41, Foucault 2005: 11). Linguistic choices can reveal the attitudes and values that play a key role in constructing the understandings naturalised in different eras, thus becoming a benchmark of social and cultural evaluation (Dijk 2005: 94). One of the aims of my study is to highlight those power relations as manifested in the socially weighty discourse of giftedness, which has sometimes even been classified as a mainstream discourse (cf. Schultz 2005: 117). The principle of open markets, for example, which is one of the main features of the dominant neoliberal ideology, stands on the ideas of individualism, freedom and competition (Fairclough 2010: 11, Gilbert 2013: 9–10). The question whether this idea is spreading into texts on the gifted and giftedness and what linguistic means are used to construct the relevant relations is one of the interests of the present study.

### 3. Theoretical framework

The definition of giftedness was briefly covered in the Problem statement above. Sepp (2010) has given a longer Estonian overview of the theories of giftedness (which is whence my search words for the historical texts were drawn). According to Sepp, the current treatment of giftedness in the social and educational paradigm bears strongly on the theory launched by Gardner (1983) in his “Frames of Mind”<sup>5</sup>. He classified abilities and skills and pointed out different domains of giftedness. Later, the multiple intelligences suggested by Gardner have been added to by several theorists (e.g. Shavinina 2013). The idea of eugenics reflected in some historical treatments of giftedness, was introduced by Galton in his “Hereditary Genius” (Olari 2011, cf. Galton 1869: 336–340), who laid a foundation to the 19th-century studies of giftedness.

The main context of the present study is a critical approach to texts and society, which analyses the relations between the language use of individuals or institutions and power, concentrating on the roles of discourses in the reproduction of power relations (Richardson 2007: 1, Dijk 2005: 22). For the present study, critical discourse analysis (which is a rather widespread approach, e.g. Rogers 2004, Richardson 2007, Aava 2011, Hodge 2012, Holzscheiter 2014) works both as a method and a theoretical framework.

Etymologically the term ‘discourse’ originates in the Latin verb *discurrere*, which in a direct sense means ‘running back and forth’, but in a figurative sense it means ‘interaction of messages between two or more participants’ (Hodge 2012: 4). Hence, social interaction is one of the main characteristic features of discourse. Although many studies put an equal sign between *text* and *discourse*, interpreting discourse as a text in its context (Dijk 2005: 231), discourse means more than that (Wodak, Krzyzanowski 2008: 4–10 ff.). Foucault (1972, 2005: 11) associates discourse with power and ideology. Bringing together a text, the language use in the text, and the power represented by the latter Foucault defines discourse as a language use which simultaneously reflects and constructs the social world. Fairclough (2010: 3, 59), however, regards discourse as a system of which texts only make up a part, while the whole discourse is mainly about the creation of social reality and the construction of meanings. Holzscheiter (2014: 144) summarizes the ideas of modern discourse research, stating that discourse is a space where intersubjective meanings are created, held and changed, thereby constructing the reality around us (see also Richardson 2007: 21–24). Hence, the giftedness discourse is a space of thoughts and media, which manifests itself in texts; it is a communicative system where, on the one hand, the concept of giftedness is reflected in a way characteristic to the era, while on the other hand the same concept is being constructed by establishing its connections with a certain set of other discourses. This way, giftedness as a social construct that keeps reflecting the reality and simultaneously creating it.

Traditionally, discourse studies are based on the constructionist idea, arguing that the constructions of the social world depend, on the one hand, on language and our interpretations, and on the other hand, on an inter-subjective dimension containing definite models of reflection manifested in a discourse (cf. Holzscheiter 2014: 145). While usually inter-subjectivity is a term referring to a semantic space

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<sup>5</sup> In the first edition (1983) of his “Frames of Mind” Gardner mentions seven modules, while later (2006) he has written of nine different types of intelligence (Sepp 2010).

constructed in the context of human interaction, in media discourse it rather means a space of thinking formed by common ideological beliefs, which according to Richardson (2007: 19) results from an ongoing dialogue between language and society. The ideologies shimmering through media texts may be more or less well hidden (Kasik 2008: 18). Whether someone is called gifted in the media is usually a signal of community attitudes, shared by the author, towards giftedness and the gifted. This signal, in turn, has a formative influence on those attitudes.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Construction of the giftedness discourse in historical media texts

As revealed by analysis, giftedness was an issue in Estonian media texts of as early as the 1890s. Four of the nine relevant texts found in the corpus as representative of that particular decade (Figure 1) refer to God as the source of the gift of talent<sup>6</sup> (Examples 1, 2), while in four texts skills and abilities are pointed out as prerequisites for the manifestation of the gifts (1, 3).

- (1) *Imeilusal ja kaunil wõimsal helil tõi kunstnik kuus kunstlaulu kuuldawale, milles igasühes nii Loojalt kingitud talent kui hoolega haritud osawus selgesti nähtavale ilmus.* (AJA1890\vir0105)  
‘With a voice of power and beauty the artist delivered six art-songs, each revealing both God-given talent and a carefully cultivated skill.’
- (2) *Tähendamata ei wõi meie ometi mitte jätta, mis imekallist armu ja annet Jumal selle Eesti wennale on taganud.* (AJA1890\pos1001)  
‘We can hardly overlook the wondrous grace and talent lavished by God on this Estonian brother of ours.’
- (3) *Meil ei ole kaupmehe andeid ja meie oleme nii kaswatatud, et meie äri- asjadest ei mõista õiget lugu pidada.* (AJA1890\ole0301)  
‘We lack the talents of a merchant, neither has business been an important part of our upbringing.’

Table 1 summarizes the discourses of giftedness, manifested in historical media texts and mainly differing by the lexical means used, as well as their construction.

**Table 1.** Major discourses of giftedness found in historical media texts

Discourse focus	Topics and metaphors
Divinity	Biblical message; talent as a gift of God
Heredity	Hereditary premises
Eugenics	‘Breeding’ by making the gifted marry their peers; untalented means inferior
Development	Industry and cultivation of innate abilities, environmental influences on development → environmental discourse
Environment	Environment surrounding gifted people, environmental factors

In the 1890s the divinity discourse seems to have dominated, while with the turn of the century the topics of heredity and eugenics rose to the fore (4, 5).

<sup>6</sup> As in English the term *giftedness* refers to a gift of God, the Estonian *talent* originates in the biblical parable (Mt 25, 14–30).

- (4) *Kahe meie tuntud kirjaniku lapsed omavad silmapaistvalt teistest kõrgemaid ja oluliselt häid vaimuandeid.* (PM 20.5.1934)  
 ‘The children of two prominent Estonian writers are remarkably more gifted than the rest.’
- (5) *Mitte ainult üksikud ei erine üksteisest omade vaimiliste omaduste ja andekuse poolest, vaid et selles suhtes erinevad ka oluliselt tõud ja rahvad .. Inglise rahvas on kõige paremate vaimiliste omadustega.* (Ibid.)  
 ‘Differences in mental abilities and giftedness run not only between individuals but also between races and peoples .. The English have the best mental abilities.’

The line drawn between the two last mentioned discourses is rather arbitrary. Still, I used it in order to call attention to the idea of ‘breeding’ that began spreading in Estonia at the previous turn of century, while its credibility amounted to the establishment of a Chair of Eugenics at the University of Tartu in 1939 (Olari 2001). Such discourse construction shows that even at that time giftedness was a powerful ideological instrument to classify and select not only individuals but also whole nations and ethnicities (5).

The developmental discourse was constructed by speaking of natural prerequisites (6) and talent cultivation (1, 7). In the texts, mention was made of the development of individual talents (1 – *carefully cultivated skill*, 7 – *guidance appropriate to each separate actor*) as well as of a supportive environment necessary for talent development (7 – *good schooling and individual guidance*).

- (6) *.. loodus oli teda ilusate ja mitmekesiste annetega selle elukutse jaoks ehtinud.* (AJA1910\pm0359)  
 ‘.. nature had adorned her with various beautiful talents necessary for the trade.’
- (7) *Ei wõi ütelda, et “Wanemuise” näitlejate seas anderikkaid jõudusid rohkem oleks .. Aga hea kool ja iga üksiku näitleja kohane juhatus on see, mis “Wanemuiselasi” “Estonialastest” hea tüki kõrgemale on suutnud tõsta.* (AJA1910\wi0301)  
 ‘There are hardly more of talented actors at the “Wanemuine” theatre than .. Yet, it is good schooling and individual guidance offered to each single actor that has managed to raise this theatre a good deal higher than “Estonia”.’

Part of the developmental discourse can be classified under the environmental discourse where certain environmental factors supporting talent development are pointed out, such as school and education (7), family (8), money (8 – a talent cannot be cultivated without financial support) and society in general (3, 6). The instrumental approach manifested in the environmental discourse – a talent is someone to bring riches and fame to a private film studio (9) – was a reflection of the prevalent beliefs of the time.

- (8) *Kuna minu nooremad wennad omal ajal edasiõppimist ei saanud jätkata, sest et perekonna jõud minu toetamiseks ära kulus, siis oli soow, et nemad oma jõudu annete ja huwide kohaselt kasuliku töö pääle saaks kulutada.* (AJA1910\pm0311)

‘As my younger brothers had not been able to continue their studies in their time, because all of the family support was spent on myself, there was a wish that they could spend their energy on a useful job according to their talents and interests.’

- (9) *Metro-Goldwyn-Mayeri reshissöör Harry Raps oli saabunud New-Yorki otsima uusi talente ja awastas Billie. .. Stuidiole ei meeldinud Billie Cassini nimi. Billie muudeti ..* (AJA1930\paewa11)

‘Harry Raps, who was a director at MGM Studios had arrived in New York in search of new talents – and there he discovered Billie. .. The Studios disliked the name of Billie Cassin. Billie was changed into ..’

- (10) *Esmakordselt avanes [sotsialismi tingimustes] vaba tee rahva talentide õitsenguks ..* (AJA1950\rho268)

‘[Under socialist conditions,] for the first time the road was open for the talents of a free nation to flourish ..’

The discourses not included in Table 1 are those of gender (11 – *a woman genius*) and success (12 – *famous overnight*), which are associated with the modern neoliberal worldview, but were relatively less prevalent. Yet it is here that an interesting bridge to the modern discourse of giftedness can be observed (see Tables 2, 3).

- (11) *.. vaieldi selle üle, kas naisterahvas võib suurvaimuks saada.* (AJA1910\pl002)

‘The discussion was about whether a woman could ever become a genius.’

- (12) *Proua Bori sai üleöö kuulsaks oma muusikaliste löökpaladega.* (UUS\uus019)

‘Mrs. Bori became famous overnight with her musical hits.’

Noticeably, the historical discourses of giftedness were constructed not only in terms of the origin of the concept, but also using such elements as skills, abilities, or environmental factors, which are equally typical of the modern scientific discourse.

## 4.2. Construction of the giftedness discourse in the media texts of the digital era

The texts of the digital era use neoliberal rhetoric to emphasize the elite, winner’s, business and money discourses; also, neoliberal terms are found in the educational discourse (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Major discourses of giftedness in the media texts of the digital era

Discourse focus	Topics and metaphors
Elite	Being part of the social elite, elitist education for the gifted → educational discourse
Education	Giftedness as a criterion for admission to elite schools, giftedness as a social divisor, gifted = excellent student; giftedness as a special educational need
Winner	A winner-take-all model of the society, <sup>7</sup> i.e. achievement and success according to neoliberal ideology; the peak metaphor
Business	Free market economy with its rules – the gifted are bought and sold at market price like any other goods
Money	Poverty as an inhibitor of talent development; Riches achievable by the gifted

<sup>7</sup> Robert Frank and Philip Cook have described a winner-take-all society, where only the first and best were worth something (Frank 2001). They also launched the term ‘winner’s discourse’.



For the media of the 2000s, giftedness was strongly associated with belonging to the social elite (13–17).

- (13) *Eliitkoolid on geniaalsed. Mida varem andekad lapsed üles leitakse ja kokku pannakse, seda parem.* (8.1.2014)<sup>8</sup>  
'Elite schools are an ingenious invention. The earlier they find the gifted children and bring them together, the better.'
- (14) *Andekate õpilaste ja paremate õpetajate koondumine eliitkoolidesse suurendab veelgi hariduslikku lõhet.* (26.8.2013)  
'The concentration of gifted students and better teachers in elite schools contributes even more to the educational divide.'
- (15) *Meil on prestiižsed hoopis nn eliitkoolid .. kus lapsevanem peab oma kukrut kergitama .. Parema hariduse eeldus on [eliitkoolis antav] kõrgem stardipakk ja nii mängib rolli sünnipärane andekus.* (8.4.2011)  
'In our country prestige rather belongs to the so-called elite schools .. , where parents have got to shell out .. A higher starting block [received from an elite school] is a prerequisite for better education [to follow] and this is where innate giftedness comes in.'
- (16) *Elitaarsetes õpivad ränkadel katsetel välja sõelatud oivikud.* (18.4.2011)  
'The elite [schools] are filled with excellent students screened out by really tough tests.'
- (17) *25-aastase Adam Frayne'i andekus golfis on viinud teda Suurbritannia kuningannaga teed jooma.* (19.10.2005)  
'The talent of the 25-year-old Adam Frayne in golf has taken him to a cup of tea with the Queen of Great Britain.'

The elite discourse consists of two kinds of texts. Part of them use the metaphor of an elite school to describe an educational institution for advanced studies (15 – *higher starting block for [further] education*), where parents are expected to pay (*to shell out*), while competition is emphasized as the ultimate value (16: the metaphoric expression *screened out by tests*). There are arguments for (13) as well as against the gifted to be attending elite schools (14). All this is evidence to the elite discourse being intertwined with the educational one. At the same time the elite discourse is concerned with the social elite at large, as its rhetoric is constructing giftedness as a privilege providing admission to the top of the society (17 – *a cup of tea with the Queen*).

A new rhetoric in the educational discourse refers to giftedness as a special need. Here, too, we meet pro- and contra-attitudes to such association (the rhetorical exclamation of (18) *vs.* (19) – *special need as a learning difficulty*).

- (18) *Lapsevanemad arvavad, et andekamad lapsed vajaksid rohkem tähelepanu. Andekus on ka ju erivajadus!* (20.6.2010)  
'Parents believe that more gifted children should get more attention. Is giftedness also not a special need?'
- (19) *Erivajadust ollakse ühiskonnas harjunud tõlgendama kui ajutist või püsivat õpiraskust.* (15.11.2013)  
'A special need is traditionally interpreted as a temporary or permanent learning difficulty.'

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<sup>8</sup> All examples in this chapter have been found in Delfi.ee and thus they are referenced by date only.

Example 19, according to which discourse 'special need' (*erivajadus*) refers to mental disability rather than to extraordinary ability, was corroborated by texts stating, on the one hand, that giftedness is indeed a special need, but on the other hand, when it came to creating the necessary learning conditions for children with special needs, the talk was confined to the facilities facilitating movement and psychiatric services, which are hardly necessary for most of the gifted (cf. 20).

- (20) *Koolide kordategemisel arvestatakse asjaoluga, et erivajadustega õpilastele oleksid tagatud kõik vajalikud teenused ning sellele vastav ruumikeskkond. (17.12.2009)*  
'When schools are fixed up, care will be taken to ensure all necessary conditions and the appropriate interior environment for pupils with special needs.'

Neoliberal rhetoric allows to differentiate between winner's, business and money discourses. The winner's discourse (21) reflects a winner-take-all model of society. The peak metaphor was the main means to emphasize the neoliberalist idea of winning as the ultimate value (22).

- (21) *"Eesti otsib superstaari 2008" võitjaks on andekas Jana Kask, kes vaid 16-aastasena võitis tunnustava tiitli, plaadilepingu ja suure auhinna- raha. (9.6.2008)*  
'The Estonian Idol 2008 is the talented Jana Kask, who at her early age of 16 has now won the title, a record deal and a solid prize money.'
- (22) *Urmo Aava on tõusnud kiiresti maailma ralliässade sekka .. ta suudab tänu oma töökusele ja andekusele tõusta järgmise eestlasena ka WRC sarjas tippteigijate hulka. (22.8.2007)*  
'Urmo Aava has made a quick rise to the top of world rally aces .. Owing to his diligence and talent he can well be the next Estonian to rise to the top performers in the WRC series as well.'
- (23) *Andekuse kriteeriumiks pakkusid eliitkoolide juhid maakondlikel olümpiaadidel heade tulemuste saavutamise. (3.8.2009)*  
'According to the directors of elite schools, good results at county olympiads should be used as a talent criterion.'

Similar lexical choices were characteristic of educational texts touching on giftedness. Good and winning results were the criterion for talent assessment and recognition (23).

It is hard to draw a clear line between business and money discourses. The business discourse is distinctive for using business vocabulary. However, business vocabulary is also used in that part of the money discourse where giftedness is referred to as a means to earning good money (25, 26).

- (24) *2007. aastal leidis Vetteli toonane meeskond BMW, et noor sakslane pole kaugeltki nii andekas ja kiire .. ja lasi tal poole hooaja pealt minna Toro Rossosse. Juba 2009. aastaks oli Red Bull Vetteli endale ostnud. (27.11.2012)*  
'In 2007 the BMW, which was then Vettel's team, developed an impression that the young German was by far not talented or speedy enough ..

and they let him go, in the middle of a season, to Toro Rosso. By 2009 Red Bull had bought him over.’

Example (24) demonstrates how giftedness will become decisive in whether a person is still in the picture or suppressed to the background (*the BMW let him go*). The expression *bought over* refers to the talent as a good sold and bought at free market prices. The ‘price’ of the talented ‘good’ depends on its amount of giftedness. The texts have ceased to deal with prerequisites or abilities, because position in the business world has taken over.

In (25) irony is used (*giftedness depends on the time of day*) to make another reference to neoliberal values as the quoted message (of a cabinet minister) is about the situation where gifted physicians were leaving state health care for private practices in quest of higher income, which was a widespread problem of the time.

(25) “*Arstid töötavad nii era- kui riigimeditsiinis samaaegu, aga erasüsteemis tuleb nende anne paremini esile.*” [tsitaat tervishoiuministrilt] .. *Keskhaiglas sõltub andekus kellaajast. Näiteks dr Szirko on kolmapäeviti kella kaheteistkümnest kaheni andetum ja kella kahest poole kaheksani andekam.* (25.4.1997)<sup>9</sup>

“Physicians work parallelly in private and public medicine, yet the private system gives them more prominence.” [quote from the Minister of Public Health] .. In our Central Hospital giftedness depends on the time of day. On Wednesdays, for example, Dr. Szirko is less gifted from noon to 2 p.m. and more gifted from 2 to 7.30 p.m.’

The money discourse occurs in two contexts, on the one hand, treating giftedness as a means to making money (25, 26) and on the other hand, describing the gifted as a needy layer of society for their lack of financial support (27 *non-existent practising conditions*).

(26) *Adam Frayne alustas karjääri koos selliste noorte golfikuulsustega nagu Justin Rose, kes täna teenib ligikaudu 22 miljonit Eesti krooni aastas.* (19.10.2005)

‘Adam Frayne started his career together with such famous young golfers as Justin Rose, whose annual income today equals nearly 22 million Estonian kroons.’

(27) *Võttes arvesse koduseid, juba teist hooaega olematuid harjutamistingimusi, võib tulemused suures osas kirjutada poiste andekuse arvele.* (30.4.2008)

‘Considering the non-existent conditions for practising at home, continuing for a second season, the boys’ achievements can largely be accounted for by their own giftedness.’

Thus, the texts belonging to the money discourse emphasize not only the preconditions and achievements of the gifted, but also, if not mainly, the sums of money which can either be earned using giftedness or, vice versa, which are lacking from the amount necessary for best results.

<sup>9</sup> Delfi.ee was founded in 1999, but the search also retrieved three texts representing 1997 and 1996.

By way of conclusion, the relevant texts of the digital era are rather diverse as, besides the discourses just described, the gender and success discourses continue to be active; in addition, some elements of the discourses of divinity, heredity and eugenics keep popping up here and there.

## 5. Conclusions and discussion

During my analysis of the relevant texts from the 1890s to the present day I pinpointed the ideologies, main domains and vessels of giftedness. Those markers enabled a periodization of the media coverage of giftedness (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Ideologies, main domains and vessels of giftedness as revealed in the construction of the giftedness discourse

Diachronic construction of giftedness					Construction of giftedness in the digital era
Decades	1890s–1910s	1930s	1950s–1980s	1990s	2000s
Ideology	Liberalism: talent or giftedness as a means to profit	Eugenics: talent is hereditary, important for the continuation of race	Socialism: Soviet system as the best environment for talent development	Early neo-liberalism: giftedness contributes to a person's value	Neoliberalism: giftedness as the property of a product, a basis for success
Vessel of talent	individual – adult	intellectuals, people, nation	collective, individual – head of state	people	individual – child; additional metonymical use – animals, home appliances etc.
Major domains	classical music, arts	arts, sciences	politics, industry	banking, enterprise	sports, politics, pop music

Reflection of the dominant ideologies in the printed press around the turn of the 20th century brought out liberal values, which saw giftedness as an object of profit (Example 9). The advance of neoliberalism added concrete profit numbers and the linguistic choices included economic and business rhetoric (Examples 22, 24, 26). Although the historical texts reflecting liberal ideology were not numerous, they create an essential bridge between the texts from the early periods of two centuries.

The idea of 'breeding' manifested in the media of the 1930s (Example 5) is rarely found today, mainly occurring in the modern elite discourse (Examples 13, 15). True, browsing the digital media, I noticed a discussion on how to improve the giftedness of peoples and nations ("*Hiinas hakatakse lapsi geenide põhjal paika panema*" / 'In China children are beginning to be sorted by genes', 6.9.2009).

The socialism of the 1950s brought a rise in the coverage of the genius of the heads of state and, consequently, a considerable rise in the number of texts on giftedness (Figure 1). The ruling regime was described as the best possible environment for the life and development of the gifted (Example 10). None of the analysed texts of the digital era referred to the gifts of any modern head of state.

In the 1990s, which was the initial phase of neoliberalism the business discourse highlighted the individual and his values. Giftedness was also attributed to those who possessed the abilities and prerequisites necessary for entrepreneurship as soon as the Iron Curtain had been removed (hence the metaphor of a 'waffle sellers' generation' (*vahvliküpsetajate põlvkond*) in Lakk's "Mart Kalmu ..", EE 16.1.2002). In the media of the 2000s, however, those values have changed, notably, giftedness as a value of a person has come to signify, first and foremost, the value of a good for sale.

The list of the main walks of life associated with giftedness has also changed over time. Despite the relatively small amount of the relevant texts available for each decade a qualitative analysis enables the conclusion that different stages of history also differ in what domains are more prestigious than the rest and are thus made prominent by association with giftedness. A largely similar conclusion has been arrived at in another study of giftedness and media, stating that the people having certain gifts get more coverage than the vessels of some others (Laine 2010: 73). Speaking of multiple intelligences, students of giftedness emphasize only some walks of life, mainly seeing the gifted among those active in arts, music or sciences (Gardner 1983, Gagné 2004). Besides the last mentioned studies the present results on the business discourse and the domain of enterprise, can be compared with the speculations by Shavinina (2013: 55, 57), who pays considerable attention to giftedness and talent in enterprise or business. Focusing on creativity and innovation Shavinina emphasizes that while creativity in general is associated with generation of ideas that innovators try implementing, the gifted are the one group of society which can do both. This way the gifted are attributed with a very important social position. Thus, on the one hand, giftedness has a vital role in the sustainability of nations and societies, as pointed out in the introduction of the article (Simonton 2009, Ziegler 2009), on the other hand, our results suggest that in the conditions of free market economy a gifted person has come to be seen as a good with a definite price.

The other major discourse of the digital era is the elite discourse addressed by Simonton (2009: 906). He is one of the few who takes a critical approach to the available theories of giftedness, pointing out that giftedness meant elitism already for Galton. This confirms my own findings as well as the observations of some other authors to the effect that giftedness is a social construct signifying belonging to a certain social group (cf. Mudrak 2011).

In view of social values an important conclusion of the study reads that in the digital era, giftedness has become a vehicle of neoliberal ideology which emphasizes success as an ultimate value and victory as an ultimate goal. Success and achievement were also emphasized at the ECHA conference, stating that "the victories of the gifted are usually won at prestigious contests" (Fülöp 2014).

The study indicates that the tradition of using the gifted as an instrument of power is nothing new. It has even been seen so profitable for national economy that 'breeding' was discussed as a means to improve the people's genetic code. The study also revealed that the discourse of giftedness, which historically used to be constructed on the basis of the concept of 'adult', have undergone a change. Notably, in the modern digital era most of the persons referred to as gifted are children, while the talents and gifts of adults clearly remain in the background. Note that

most of the relevant research, both historical and modern, address giftedness in children (Kaufman, Sternberg 2008, ECHA 2014), whereas giftedness in adults seems to interest but a few (e.g. Shavinina 2013). According to Laine (2010), who has studied the media coverage of gifted children, the discussion of a gifted child in Finland could be broader and more comprehensive. The present study indicates that although Estonian media addresses most different aspects of gifted children, there is no discussion on the conception of giftedness as a whole.

In the light of the above conclusions, the discourse of giftedness has changed over time, concerning the gifted person (or, figuratively, even object), the relevant domains where giftedness is seen manifested, and the salient values. However, the phenomenon of giftedness has been important in maintaining and describing social agreements and relations both in the historical texts and in the texts of the modern digital era. The present study is a part of a comprehensive framework study with an aim to survey how the concept of giftedness is constructed in the print media of various cultures in order to find out what enlivens and what inhibits public media discussion on the essence of giftedness and also, to describe the relevant discourses constructed in different linguistic environments. At the same time it is necessary to extend the studying of the construction of the concept of giftedness here in Estonia, by supplementing the reported results on media texts with the experience and ideas of those who are in direct contact with the gifted, i.e. teachers, parents etc., as well as of those responsible for educational policies.

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# ANDEKUSE DISKURSUSE KEELELINE KONSTRUEERIMINE AJALOOLISTES JA DIGIAJASTU MEEDIA TEKSTIDES

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Uuringu eesmärk on kirjeldada ja selgitada, kuidas on ajalooliselt konstrueeritud andekuse diskursust ja millisena see avaldub tänase digiajastu meediatekstides. Kriitilise diskursuseanalüüsi abil selgitatakse, kuidas ja milliste leksikaalsete vahenditega andekust konstrueeritakse ning millised sotsiaalsed tähendused see läbi esile tõusevad.

Uuringus ilmnes, et teatud valdkonnad on läbi ajaloo olnud teistest oluliselt prestiižsemad ja andekuse mõiste kaudu esile tõstetud, ka võimu instrumentidena on andekaid läbi ajaloo ära kasutatud. Digiajastul on andekus muutunud uusliberalismile omase, edukust ülimalt väärtusena rõhutava, ideoloogia kandjaks. Selgus, et digiajastul kajastatakse andekatena ülekaalukalt lapsi, nii jääb täiskasvanu oma andekusega tagaplaanile. Kokkuvõttes näitab uuring, et andekuse diskursus on läbi ajaloo muutunud ja teema mängib kindla keelekasutuse najal konstrueerituna tänapäevastes ühiskondlikes kokkulepetes olulist rolli.

**Võtmesõnad:** kriitiline diskursuseanalüüs, ideoloogia, sotsiaalne interaktsioon, meediakeel, eesti keel