

## SYNTAX MISTAKES IN GRADUATES' ESSAYS OF VILNIUS COUNTY

### *Summary*

This article analyses the essays written by 238 graduates who were studying at Vilnius County schools teaching in minority languages and in the Lithuanian language.

Three types of syntax mistakes, such as the use of declensions, prepositives and postpositives, as well as wrong sentence structures, have been found in the essays of the state school-leaving Lithuanian Language and Literature Examination 2014 taken at Vilnius County minorities and Lithuanian schools. The data analysis shows that non-native speakers make by one-third more mistakes than native speakers.

The group of major mistakes includes non-use of double declensions. This type of mistakes were mostly found in the native speaking graduates' papers and its reason could be that it is a more commonly used way of expression.

Students of both types of schools use a locative case in a wrong way: essays of minority graduates contain more mistakes of a locative case with a time reference, while the graduates of Lithuanian schools make more internal locative case mistakes, e.g. *vardan* (for the sake of). Non-native speakers largely exceed native speakers by the wrong use of an accusative case instead of a negation genitive in their essays.

The second group of syntax errors is a wrong sentence structure. A prevailing mistake of this type is the incorrect use of adverbial participles. These mistakes are made by the graduates from both minority and Lithuanian schools. The nature of the mistakes and their proportion show that the reason may be the same – misunderstanding of an adverbial participle meaning and its use when expressing a secondary action of the same agent in personal sentences where an adverbial participle or a gerund should be used.

Unlike native speakers, most likely due to the impact of the Russian language, non-native speaking graduates' essays largely contain the construction *kad* with an infinite (so that) to express a purpose.

The third type of mistakes specific to all essays is the incorrect use of prepositives and postpositives. As a result of the impact of the Russian language, a major part of the mistakes found in the essays of minority students is the incorrect use of the constructions

with the prepositives *pas* (at) and *į* (to). Lithuanian school graduates mistakenly use postpositives *dėka* (thanks to) and *pagalba* (with the help of).

The results show that the expressions translated from the Russian language have been found in the essays of both native and non-native speaking graduates. It is apparently impacted by the language used in the family and the people around, as well as media where written and spoken texts contain mistakes typical to the ones found in the essays.

KEY WORDS: syntax mistakes, cases, prepositions, postpositions, participles, structural defects in sentences.

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