

BASIC LITHUANIAN LANGUAGE GUIDES

(GENRE CHARACTERISTICS)

Summary

The functioning of standard language norms is affected to a significant degree by various advice to language users. The language practice publications that feature such advice on a systematic basis fall within the genre of language guides. In Lithuania, the first language guide appeared in early 20th century. The three most prominent guides were published in different periods of political life and standard language development in Lithuania: *Kalbos Patarėjas* was issued in 1939, *Kalbos Praktikos Patarimai*, in 1976 and in 1985, and *Kalbos Patarimai*, in 2002–2013.

The article addresses the genre characteristics of these language guides that are described in their introductory parts. Reliance is made on comparable studies of language guides conducted abroad (cf. Straaijer 2015; Ebner 2016; Straaijer 2018; Tieken-Boon van Ostade 2020).

The importance of the study and the conclusions made in the article is three-fold: (1) they give relevance to the issues covered by language guides, a subject that has not been scrutinised in any kind of detail in Lithuania yet, because research has so far been focusing on the history of their preparation and the content of language advice rather than the characteristics of the genre; (2) they offer data on the structural elements of language guides, which is important in the light of updating modern-day language advice; (3) an in-depth scrutiny of Lithuanian language guides would open up possibilities for conducting further comparable studies within the international context of this kind of research.

The genre characteristics of the three Lithuanian language guides in question mirror the genre characteristics of European language guides that have been in existence for centuries; furthermore, they constitute the most significant structured legacy of advice on the usage of the standard Lithuanian language. Their origins and nature were the product of the different standardisation goals that emerged during different phases of standard language development, the different political circumstances, and the shifting needs of the public. The introductory parts of the Lithuanian language guides in question describe, to a greater or lesser extent, the following elements of contents: (1) the goal, purpose, and objectives of the publication, (2) the audience; (3) the object (the language varieties, its domains of usage and functional styles), (4) theoretical principles of standardisation of language phenomena; (6) the principles of data selection and presentation.

The introductory parts of the language guides covered in the article only cast a light on a small segment of the entire context of their preparation, yet they offer some insights into the characteristics and development of the genre per se, as well as into the shift in the norms of the standard language, the development of its functional styles, the functional differentiation of means of linguistic expression, and the evolution of the theory of standardisation of the standard language.

KEYWORDS: standard language, standardization, usage guide, language advice, prescriptive linguistics.

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