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MAPPING THE POSITION OF LITHUANIAN IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

ALFRED BAMMESBERGER
Catholic University of Eichstätt

Age

In what may be termed "linguistic folklore," Lithuanian is often called "the oldest language of Europe." One may well wonder what this can possibly mean. The adjectives "old" and "young" are of course concerned with "age." We measure the "age" of human beings from the day of their birth to the final hour, when the essential life functions come to a halt. In modern times, human beings may live for seventy, eighty, ninety, perhaps a hundred years. We measure the age of buildings normally from the time of their inception to the period of their decay. But the "age" of a language can obviously not be measured in this way. Human beings pick up a language from their surroundings: this means that the language necessarily exists before they are born, and the death of an individual does not affect the status of the language that he or she spoke during his or her lifetime.

We evidently face enormous difficulties if we want to give details about the "age" of a language. But some indications are possible even so. An example will be used to illustrate the difficulties and the possibilities.

English

The history of English may serve as a case in point. Every student and, of course, every speaker of English is aware of the fact that Shakespeare's English is different from the English used around the world today. Shakespeare's writings date from around the year 1600. Differences are of many kinds. When Polonius asks Hamlet: "What do you read my lord?" (*Hamlet* II, 2) it is clear that the modern usage of saying "what are you reading?" was not generally established in Shakespeare's time: Hamlet is holding a book in his hand and, of course, in twentieth-century English, Polonius would use the progressive form if he inquired about Hamlet's reading.

But no doubt the English language is "older" than the four hundred and forty years that separate Shakespeare's birth in 1564 from the present. Geoffrey Chaucer died in 1400, and his famous *Canterbury Tales* give a strong indication that the English language stretches further back. The first two lines of the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* read as follows:

*Whan that April with his shoures soote
the droughte of March hath perced to the roote*

("when April with his sweet showers
has pierced the drought of March down to the root")

Geoffrey Chaucer was born around the year 1340 and certainly did not "invent" the English language in any accepted sense of the term: English had been around for quite some time. Students of English philology are familiar with the term "Old English," and here we definitely enter a different world.

Whereas Chaucer's "Middle English," as it is traditionally called, can be read by a speaker of present-day English with some effort, Old English is not immediately accessible. Old English requires special study. Old English is very different from the English we are used to. The first three lines of the famous epic poem *Beowulf* (to be dated perhaps to the eighth century) will illustrate the point:

Hwæt we Gardena in geardagum
Theodcyninga thrytn gefrunon
hu tha æthlingas ellen fremedon.

("We have indeed heard of the strength of folk kings in the former days of the Spear-Danes; how noblemen then performed actions of valor".)

In the case of English, we have rather clear information on its historical development. The Venerable Bede tells us in his famous *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* (finished in 732 A.D.), as will be further elaborated below in the section on "History". The first written documentation of English is available from around the year 700 A.D. This gives us a time-span of around 1,300 years over which we can follow the documentary history of English.

But there are languages whose history is documented over much longer time spans. In the case of Greek we can trace back the earliest documentation to the middle of the second millennium B.C.: Mycenaean archives give us glimpses of what Greek was like around 1,500 B.C. Although in the early stages the documentation is certainly not rich and by no means always easy to interpret, we can still say that there is an uninterrupted flow of documents of more or less 3,500 years for the Greek spoken presently in Greece. In this rather primitive way of counting, we may maintain that English is perhaps 1,300 years old, Greek is then 3,500 years old.

Lithuanian

How does Lithuanian compare with this? The unambiguous answer must be: very modestly. Written documentation of Lithuanian hardly stretches further back than Shakespeare's period. The earliest printed book in Lithuanian is *Catechismvsa prasty szadei, Makslas skaitima raschta yr giesmes del kriksczianistes bei del berneliu iaunu nauiey sugulditas* by Martynas Mažvydas. This 79-page book was published in Königsberg in 1547. There are a few minor texts that antedate this work, but the written documentation of Lithuanian does not go further back than the sixteenth century. In Lithuania, publication of books in Lithuanian was prohibited in the Tsarist period from 1864 onwards. Only from 1904 onis there an uninterrupted flow of publications in Lithuanian both at home and worldwide.

What then about Lithuanian being the "oldest language of Europe"? In this rather simplified way of speaking, the statement is certainly not acceptable. But there is a very important core of truth in it, and we will be concerned with it in the following paragraphs. We will try to map the position of Lithuanian in past centuries and above all in the twenty-first century. The focus will be on the grammatical structure of Lithuanian. In this way, it will be possible to emphasize the unique position Lithuanian has occupied in linguistic research so far; it may also be demonstrated where points of interest for future research lie.

Evidently, the system of counting indicated above for English and Greek, allowing English 1,300 years and Greek 3,500 years of age, is somehow completely flawed. There must be something fundamentally wrong with this approach.

Language

Before we can continue here, we must first of all define what we mean by "language". No generally accepted definition is available, but what the American linguist Edgar H. Sturtevant wrote in his book entitled *An Introduction to Linguistic Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947) may still serve as a useful starting point:

A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which members of a social group cooperate and interact, (p. 2)

Every word of this definition would deserve in-depth analysis.

But what is perhaps particularly noteworthy in this definition is that writing is not mentioned at all. There is no doubt that writing is a most important cultural invention in the history of mankind. But it must be emphasized that a language still exists even if it is not written. Many languages have no tradition of writing. And, of course, many languages died out long before any system of writing was devised.

History

This observation opens up totally new aspects, and these new aspects are of major importance in assessing the historical position of Lithuanian.

As a manifestation of the social group that uses it, every separate language has its history; and this history can be followed up. If we take up again the case of English, a few further indications can be provided.

Our first written documentation of Old English occurs around the year 700 A.D. But, if we look closely, we soon find out that the language existed before the inception of writing, which is what we expect anyway. What we learn about the so-called "Dark Age" is intriguing and certainly not to be trusted completely; but some truth is likely to lie behind the accounts provided by the Venerable Bede in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. According to these sources, tribes from the area of present-day Germany and Denmark, perhaps also the Netherlands, settled in Britain

in the fifth century. Whether they had been invited by Celtic inhabitants of Britain may well be doubted. But the question is not of immediate importance.

What is of the utmost importance in our context is the fact that Old English is an immigrant language in Britain: Germanic dialects were brought to Britain from some time in the fifth century onwards, and these Germanic dialects are the basis of what we call Old English, and in the further course of development, of the English spoken worldwide today. We get here one glimpse of what we may term "historical grammar". But we can go further.

Comparison

Human beings compare everything. Counting is of course the most obvious manifestation of comparing: if we say that "five" apples are more than "two," "three," or "four" apples we are clearly establishing a scale of comparison according to quantity. We also compare according to quality if we say some apples are "sweeter" or "tastier" than others. But comparison is also used in linguistics, and here it has a special function.

Of course, comparison can in no way imply superiority or inferiority when applied to languages: there are no languages that are better or worse than others. A linguistic system that serves the communicative needs and purposes of a social group, as provided in Sturtevant's definition quoted above, is a language: any language is in itself a fully viable vehicle of communication. If we want to compare languages, the term "comparison" must have a very special sense, and this will be outlined in the following paragraph.

Indo-European

With respect to languages, there is a very long tradition of what one may call speculation about the origin of languages and the relationship obtaining between separate languages.

Greek philosophers were aware of the fact that human language is subject to change in the course of time. But only from the nineteenth century onwards did scholars develop a truly scientific approach to language change and its description. During the Middle Ages various suggestions had been put forward with regard to language development, but religious prejudices frequently stood in the way of a correct understanding of historical processes. Thus one widespread view was that all languages somehow descended from Hebrew.

Then in his justly famous Anniversary Discourse of 2 February 1786 (published in *Asiatick Researches* 1, 415-431 [1788]), the English Judge Sir William Jones contended that Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin stem from a "common source, which perhaps no longer exists" and surmised that Germanic and Celtic derive from the same source "though blended with a very different idiom." Sir William Jones, a classically trained student of law, was at the same time a visionary. He can rightly be called the father of comparative grammar. Comparative grammar allows us to go far beyond the period for which historical reconstruction of linguistic systems is possible. Only towards the final decades of the eighteenth century was enough material available for a completely new approach to language relationship to develop and ultimately gain general acceptance. The major breakthrough was possible when Sanskrit and more languages of the Near East became available for scholarly study.

Our knowledge of comparative Indo-European grammar is codified in one of the major works that appeared in the first quarter of the twentieth century: Karl Brugmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen: Vergleichende haul-, Stammbildungs- und Ftexions-lehre der indogermanischen Sprachen* (Strassburg: Trübner, 1897-1916). We also have a shorter compendium: Karl Brugmann, *Kurze vergleichende Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1902). That Karl Brugmann (1849-1919) was also an outstanding scholar on Baltic and Lithuanian is worth mentioning in particular.

That Indo-European studies have undergone far-reaching changes in the post-Brugmannian era must be emphasized, however. Above all, the discovery of languages and language groups like Anatolian (Hittite) and Tocharian in the first decades of the twentieth century entailed major changes in the interpretation of Proto-Indo-European. Baltic studies play a major role in this context, as can be seen from works like V. Mažiulis, *Baltų ir kitų indo-europiečių kalbų santykiai* (Vilnius: Mintis, 1970). Maziulis also gives numerous references to additional literature on these problems.

Pre-Indo-European

Indo-European languages are spoken over an area stretching from India in the Far East all the way to Iceland in the extreme west. It is clear that the spread must have started from a reasonably small area that we call the "homeland" of Indo-European. Where this homeland was is not agreed upon. It is likely, however, that the homeland of Indo-European is not to be sought in Europe. A region in the Near East is probably the area from which Indo-European spread. But this means that Indo-European languages were carried to Europe by invading settlers.

Traces of non-Indo-European languages are found in Europe. Some pockets of non-Indo-European languages still exist in Europe. Most notable is Basque, since no languages related to Basque have been found. A further very important group of non-Indo-European languages is Finno-Ugric, a prominent member of which is Estonian spoken in Estonia. But the following paragraphs will be concerned with Indo-European languages only and with the position of Lithuanian in particular.

Germanic

Comparative linguistics is concerned with genetically related languages, and "genetically related" means that the

languages in question are the continuation of common ancestors. We simplify the representation normally by using the image of the genetic tree: a given proto-language L splits up into two languages: L1 and L2. If at any early stage L1 and L2 can be considered dialects, it is totally possible that in the course of time they will become mutually unintelligible, and then we will term them separate languages. If we consider Germanic as one language, L, then English and German can be termed L1 and L2. At first, L1 and L2 were dialects; but in the course of time, English and German have become totally separate linguistic systems.

But comparative grammar can analyze the underlying common features in structure. Comparative grammar is primarily concerned with deep-seated agreements in the structure of the languages concerned. In the case of English and German, the agreement in the formation of the preterite seen in bind ~ bound - binden ~ band, love ~ loved - lieben ~ liebte is strong evidence of a common underlying linguistic pattern. Cognate languages like English and German exhibit agreements in their grammatical structure that cannot be due to chance or accident. It is certainly not individual lexical items that are of relevance here, because these can be borrowed from one language to another. What is decisive is the underlying structural agreement, which can only be the result of common inheritance.

Baltic

Apart from minor pieces of information (such as place-names and onomastics in general), our sources are reasonably rich for basically three individual Baltic languages, which we term Old Prussian, Lithuanian, and Latvian. Old Prussian, the westernmost of the threesome, is extinct and available only in written documents. Lithuanian and Latvian are spoken in Lithuania and Latvia and of course also in the diaspora. The descriptive grammar of these languages is highly advanced. A very reliable account of Comparative Baltic Grammar is available in C. S. Stang, *Vergleichende Grammatik der baltischen Sprachen* (Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1966): C. S. Stang (1900-1977) could draw on a lifetime of research in Baltic and Slavic when he wrote this book.

A modern and very competent account of Baltic in a wider context is available in the splendid book *Le lingue baltiche* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1997) by the outstanding Italian linguist Pietro U. Dini. The work was translated into Lithuanian and published under the title *Baltų kalbos. Lyginamoji istorija* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2000). This is a splendid achievement.

Change

Languages change continuously throughout their history. A language that does not change is a "dead" language. Thus, since classical Latin does not evolve any further, we call it a "dead" language. Latin is not picked up by any child around the world as the first language taught by parents and peers. Latin is a medium of scholarly communication, but not of regular everyday life. Although change is normally not noticed by speakers, there is no doubt that languages constantly undergo changes. But only from a certain perspective of distance can the changes really be observed.

Regularity

A major tenet of linguistic research is the regularity of sound change. A few examples must suffice to illustrate the principles of historical phonology. Where we find voiceless stops in Latin, etymologically related words in Germanic usually exhibit voiceless spirants. Thus the *t* of Latin *tres* 'three' appears as a spirant in English *three*, the *p* of Latin *pater* 'father' is reflected by *f*- in English *father*, and the *k* of Latin *centum* 'hundred' is continued as */h-/* in English *hundred*. There are of course many complications to these simple rules. Thus the medial *-t-* of Latin *frater* 'brother' is continued as a spirant in English *brother*, which is what we expect. If we turn to the word for 'father', we seem to have the same development. But in fact the story is much more complicated, because in Old English the word for 'father' was *fæder* with a voiced stop in place of the expected spirant, and the spirant in *father* is secondary. The general development of Indo-European stops to Germanic spirants is covered by what has been termed Grimm's law; and exceptions of the type seen in OE *fæder*, with */d/* instead of an expected spirant, are dealt with by Verner's law. The main point to be made here is that sound changes work regularly, even if in individual cases it may be difficult to uncover the rules obtaining.

Analogy

But in many individual cases, it is obvious that a later form cannot be considered the linear continuation of a corresponding earlier form. Thus Old English had a paradigm *helpan* ~ *healp* ~ *hulpon* ~ *holpen* clearly corresponding to German *helfen* ~ *half* ~ *geholfen* and thus establishing the fact that the verb originally belonged to the category of strong verbs. But in Modern English the preterite of help is helped. Evidently, the originally strong preterite was replaced by a formation according to the productive weak verbs. This development we ascribe to analogy. Regular development according to sound laws can be contravened by development according to analogy. Analogical development is always an innovation in a linguistic system, by which some apparent irregularity is leveled out.

Examples

In the following two sections, the paradigms of a Lithuanian substantive and a Lithuanian verb will be given. Although, of course, no complete comparative material can be provided here, a few indications will be supplied in order to show the status and, above all, the importance of the Lithuanian morphological system within the context of Proto-Indo-European reconstruction.

vilkas

Present-day Lithuanian distinguishes seven cases in active use. Of the three numbers the dual (meaning 'two entities') is

rather rare; for this reason, only singular and plural will be quoted. The substantive *vilkas* 'wolf' goes back to a reconstructed form Indo-European **wlk^wos* (*//* in interconsonantal position had the function of a vowel), which has cognates in a number of individual IE languages, such as Sanskrit *vrkas*, Greek *lúkos*, Latin *lupus*, and English *wolf*.

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	<i>vīlkaš</i>	<i>vīlkaĩ</i>
Vocative	<i>vīlke</i>	<i>vīlkaĩ</i>
Genitive	<i>vīlko</i>	<i>vīlkũ</i>
Dative	<i>vīlkui</i>	<i>vīlkáms</i>
Accusative	<i>vīlką</i>	<i>vīlkùs</i>
Instrumental	<i>vīlkù</i>	<i>vīlkaĩš</i>
Locative	<i>vīlkè</i>	<i>vīlkuosè</i>

Only a few forms will be singled out to show the position of Lithuanian within the system of comparative Indo-European grammar.

Perhaps the most interesting forms from the comparative angle are the nominative and the vocative of the singular, because they both represent the underlying forms with almost no changes. For the vocative we reconstruct an ending **-e*, and this is immediately available in Lithuanian *vīlk-e*. For the nominative, we reconstruct a form ending in *-os* (compare Greek *lukos*), and this form is immediately available in Lithuanian *-as* (with the regular sound change of *-o-* > *-a-*). The accusative of the singular can be reconstructed as ending in **-om* leading to **-an* in common Baltic and ultimately to *-ą* in Lithuanian (*-ą* shows that the *-a* was formerly nasalized). The nominative of the plural in *-ai* represents an innovation against the original ending IE *ōs* (probably to be analyzed as consisting of the thematic vowel *-o-* followed by the plural marker *-es*, and **-o-es* led to **-ōs* by contraction); the Lithuanian ending *-ai* is reminiscent of Greek *-oi* in *lúkoi* 'wolves' but the development was certainly carried through independently and may have different motivations. A particularly interesting ending is that of the locative of the plural. We may assume that originally the marker for the locative of the plural was **-su*, which would follow the thematic vowel *-o-*, but already Sanskrit *vrkesu* shows an innovation in this respect. In Lithuanian the thematic vowel *-o-* > *-a-* was replaced by *-uo-*, which was the earlier form of *-us* in the accusative plural, and the marker for the locative of the singular, namely *-e*, replaced the final vowel of *-su*. The historical development of a form like *vīlkuosè* is thus rather complex.

vesti

Whereas the nominal system of Lithuanian can be considered to be very archaic indeed, the verbal system does not immediately correspond to what has traditionally been reconstructed for Indo-European.

		present	preterite	future
singular	1st person	<i>vedù</i>	<i>vedžiaũ</i>	<i>vèsiu</i>
	2nd person	<i>vedì</i>	<i>vedėĩ</i>	<i>vèsi</i>
	3rd person	<i>vėda</i>	<i>vėdė</i>	<i>vès</i>
plural	1st person	<i>vėdame</i>	<i>vėdėme</i>	<i>vèsime</i>
	2nd person	<i>vėdate</i>	<i>vėdėte</i>	<i>vèsite</i>
	3rd person	<i>vėda</i>	<i>vėdė</i>	<i>vès</i>

The infinitive *vèsti* 'to lead' points back to a fr'-stem derived from, the root IE **wedh-* 'to lead': in a starting-point **wedh-ti* the dentals were assimilated, and **wetti-* led to *vesti* in Lithuanian by regular sound change.

The present of *vèsti* belongs to the so-called thematic type. In this category, the person markers followed a verbal stem consisting of root + thematic vowel. The analysis is clearly available in 1st plural *vedame*, because this form is to be analyzed as root *ved-* + thematic vowel *-a-* (going back to IE *-o-*) + person maker *-me*. Apart from further interesting points, at least two facts must be mentioned here. First, it may be mentioned that the thematic vowel was originally *-e-* in some forms, but in Lithuanian *-a-* was generalized. What is particularly noteworthy is the peculiarity that for the 3rd person only one form is available, which functions both for the singular and the plural. This is actually to be observed in all verbal forms of Lithuanian. The preterite and the future are largely due to innovations in Baltic, but of course there were starting-points available in Indo-European on which these innovations are based.

The verbal system of Lithuanian differs considerably from what we traditionally reconstruct for Proto-Indo-European. It is not easy to give an explanation for this peculiarity. It is worth pointing out, however, that the verbal system of Lithuanian and of Baltic is a very characteristic feature of that language group.

Syntax

With regard to word order it is to be expected that Lithuanian allows a certain amount of flexibility because relationships obtaining between a given subject and the respective objects can be expressed by morphology. The strict word-order patterns of Modern English are not to be expected in Lithuanian.

One special point about Lithuanian syntax may be mentioned here: A negated verb requires the genitive. We may say: *aš esu namie* 'I am at home.' But the negation would be: *manęs nėra* 'I am not (at home).' Here *manęs* is the genitive of *as*, literally *manęs nėra* means something like 'of me there is not.' We can say *mes turime geras draugas*, and this means 'we have good friends.' But if the verb of this clause is negated then the object *gerus draugus* must be in the genitive: *gerų draugų mes neturime* 'we don't have (any) good friends.' A corresponding rule can be observed in Slavic languages like Russian.

Present

The spread of English since Shakespeare's period is breath-taking. We can safely assume that in the early seventeenth century English was more or less comparable to French, German, Spanish, Italian, and other European languages with regard to the number of speakers using these languages regularly. Due to the settlement of the North American continent and later on of Australia and New Zealand, the number of speakers of English increased enormously. Although no reliable estimates are available, the number of persons whose first language is English may well be over 600 million. The number of second-language speakers of English cannot be indicated in any way.

In contrast, in this respect the position of Lithuanian has been rather stable for several centuries. Research on Baltic in general and on Lithuanian in particular is codified in a number of outstanding works. In addition to the textbooks mentioned above, it is particularly important to draw attention to the following works written in Lithuanian: Zigmantas Zinkevičius, *Lietuvių kalbos istorija* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1984-1995) in six volumes plus one volume of indices, and Zigmantas Zinkevičius, *Lietuvių kalbos istorinė gramatika* (Vilnius: Mokslas, 1980-1981) in two volumes.

Baltic and Lithuanian linguistic material is fully taken into consideration in the major etymological dictionaries. Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Bern: Francke, 1959) is perhaps the most important source of information in this respect. For Lithuanian, we have the excellent *Litauisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* in two volumes, begun by Ernst Fraenkel (1881-1957), continued by Wilhelm Wissmann (1899-1967), and ultimately brought to its conclusion by Erich Hofmann (1895-1982); published in two volumes the work is 1,558 pages long (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962-1965).

Future

In linguistics, as in many other fields of human life, it is unwise to make predictions about what the future may hold. All too often a prognosis may turn out to be based on an insufficient empirical basis, and the prediction becomes worthless. But in our context two conclusions are certainly indicated.

The first point concerns English: English is a killer language. Once a stage is reached that allows the further spread of a language the development can no longer be stopped or even retarded. English is now the world language in the sense that communication in that language can be carried on worldwide. In this respect, the further spread of English is undeniable, and this will certainly lead to the ouster of a number of languages. The second point concerns Lithuanian: Lithuanian is certain to stay. There are absolutely no indications that Lithuanian could lose in either its number of speakers or in the prestige that it has among its users. We can confidently assert that Lithuanian will hold its position in the twenty-first century.

Autobiography

A scholar's work is always closely connected with the data of his life. Therefore a few indications about myself may be in order here. Born in 1938 in Munich, I took up philological studies at the University of Munich in 1958 and passed the first state examination in 1962. In the years immediately following, I was active as a teacher but tried at the same time to continue scholarly work. My main teacher in Indo-European linguistics was Wilhelm Wissmann (1899-1967) at Munich University. Wissmann continued the tradition established in Berlin by Wilhelm Schulze, certainly one of the greatest scholars in Indo-European.

An interruption in teaching was possible in 1963 when I managed to gain a stipend at Yale University. At Yale, I was taught by such outstanding scholars as Bernard Bloch, Warren Cowgill, Stanley Insler, and Konstantin Reichardt. I also carried on research on my dissertation. In 1964, I returned to Germany after having been awarded an M.A. in Linguistics from Yale University. I finished my doctorate in 1965. At that time, I was a full-time teacher of English and French in various secondary schools in Bavaria. In 1968, I took up the post of an assistant in Professor Oswald Szemerényi's Institute for General and Indo-European Linguistics at Freiburg University. Some time before his death my teacher, Professor Wissmann, had suggested that I should investigate Baltic abstract formations. The book was finalized around 1970 and was the basis for my Habilitation at Freiburg University. From 1973 until the present, I have held various positions mainly in English Linguistics. First, I worked at Freiburg University, but in 1978 I was offered a post in the newly established Catholic

University of Eichstätt, which I ultimately accepted in 1980. I also taught at the Universities of Saarbrücken and Münster. Although offered positions in Würzburg (1988) and finally Freiburg (1989), I decided to stay in Eichstätt.

Schmalstieg

In the field of Baltic linguistics it was of course imperative for me to learn as much as possible of the actual languages. Apart from purely philological work, I also wanted to achieve a certain amount of fluency in Lithuanian; and in the long run, I think I can say that I was moderately successful. In this context, I wish to mention one book that was particularly useful to me. The book in question is *An Introduction to Modern Lithuanian* (New York: Franciscan Fathers Press, 1966) by Leonardas Dambriūnas, Antanas Klimas and William R. Schmalstieg. This volume of 457 pages appeared in 1966. I acquired a copy of the beautiful tome soon after its publication, and it has been my constant and dear companion for almost four decades.

The *Introduction to Modern Lithuanian* was certainly a major source of information for me. The book provided just about everything I needed at the time: Apart from the exercises in the forty lessons, the book offers a splendid synchronic account of Lithuanian grammar, which helped me a lot in understanding the structure of the language. That the work is very useful and highly reliable I pointed out in a short review published in the journal *Indogermanische Forschungen*, vol. 73 (1968), p. 272. Over the years, I used the book again and again, both when I needed information on Lithuanian and when I was privileged to teach the language in university courses. I have never had contact with Leonardas Dambriūnas, but I am most happy to note that Professor Klimas has at all stages taken a very keen interest in my work and has helped me in many respects.

What I owe to Professor William Schmalstieg can hardly be expressed in words. We first met in the seventies when Bill was spending a sabbatical at Freiburg University, where I had taken up a job as Professor Szemerényi's assistant in the Institute for General and Comparative Linguistics. Bill has been a major support for my work for over thirty years by now, and I certainly look forward to many more years of productive contacts. I think I own practically all of Bill's book publications, and of course I also own a large number of article offprints that he gave me over the years. I have also reviewed some of his works. To my mind, Bill Schmalstieg can truly be called the Dean of Baltic Studies in the United States. With regard to *An Introduction to Modern Lithuanian*, I can emphatically say that for me the book has become much more than what the title indicates: The volume was and of course still is an *An Introduction to Lithuania*. For many years now, Bill Schmalstieg and his wife Emily have been dear friends for my wife Anneliese and myself. We hope that this excellent personal (and professional) relationship will continue in the decades to come.

Independence

For a number of reasons, it was not possible for me to go to Lithuania in the sixties of the twentieth century when such a trip would have been most useful. The major reason was clearly that from 1962 onwards I was active as a teacher in various positions; therefore, a prolonged absence could not be envisaged. But a further important reason was that I felt no urge whatsoever to travel to a country under communist rule. I had heard all sorts of stories about the harassment that a foreigner could be exposed to in Lithuania.

I was raised in what was then called the Federal Republic of Germany and have at all stages firmly believed in the principles of democracy. Of course a democratically ruled republic has to face many problems, and I have always been aware of these problems. But I never wished to experience life in a communist country at first hand.

Life changed dramatically in the closing years of the eighties of the twentieth century. Since 1990 Germany is again one united republic, and of course we are very grateful for that. We now speak of Germany tout court. But the year 1990 brought also the proclamation of Renewal of the Independence of Lithuania on March 11. From that date onwards, Lithuania has been a free and independent state. Although the diplomatic recognition went rather slowly in the beginning, ultimately the process picked up speed, and of course for many years now Lithuania has been recognized internationally. Its integration into NATO and the European Community are logical further steps in this development.

Enciklopedija

The final years of the twentieth century saw the publication of a number of outstanding works in Lithuania. One of the most considerable achievements is certainly the publication of an Encyclopaedia in Lithuanian: *Lietuvių kalbos enciklopedija* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 1999). The volume of 745 pages was prepared by Vytautas Ambrazas, Aleksas Girdenis, Kazys Morkūnas, Algirdas Sabaliauskas, Vincas Urbutis, Adelė Valeckienė, and Aleksandras Vanagas. It provides exhaustive information on all aspects of research in Lithuanian and Baltic. It is particularly noteworthy that the *Enciklopedija* also offers reliable information on all scholars who did research in Baltic linguistics.

Abroad

Research in Lithuanian linguistics is highly developed in Lithuania. Outside of Lithuania we must unfortunately note a decline of interest in this field. Whereas research and teaching are still carried on with vigor in the United States of America and some notable achievements can be reported from various countries like Italy, it is not to be doubted that budget cuts have hurt research work in so-called "minor" fields above all in a country like Germany. The rigid budget policy applied in recent years has been detrimental to the development of research in some branches of philology, and Baltic studies is one of those hit particularly severely. It is desirable that further research be carried on. Although Germany played a leading role in the investigation of comparative Indo-European grammar and Baltic linguistics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

there is a danger that the present financial climate will slow down research in these fields. It is to be hoped that this is only a temporary crisis.

Baltistik

I tried to gather a group of scholars here in Eichstätt in the nineties of the twentieth century in order to establish what may be called the state of the art in Baltic studies. I gratefully acknowledge that Jochen D. Range and Rainer Eckert were extremely helpful in bringing together a sizable group of outstanding scholars - not only established scholars, but also younger persons interested in various aspects of Baltic studies. The papers read here in November 1995 led to lively discussion, and in due course I was able to publish a volume of proceedings: *Baltistik: Aufgaben und Methoden* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1998). This volume of 455 pages truly offers a panorama of Baltic studies in the final decades of the twentieth century. In order to give an idea of the material contained in the tome, it may suffice to enumerate the authors of the individual papers (in alphabetical order): Maria Teresa Ademollo Gagliano, Saulius Ambrazas, Alfred Bam-mesberger, Gertrud Bense, Elvira-J. Bukevičiūtė, Ojārs Bušs, Paola Cotticelli-Kurras, Pietro U. Dini, Vincentas Drotvinas, Rainer Eckert, Wolfram Euler, Giovanni Gobber, Frank Heberlein, Magdalene Huelmann, Janina Jakelaitytė, Simas Karaliunas, Liane Klein, Frederik Kortlandt, Rosemarie Liihr, Guido Michelini, Nikolai Mikhailov, Oswald Panagl, Baldur Panzer, Alessandro Parenti, Jochen D. Range, Alber-tas Rosinas, Bernfried Schlerath, William R. Schmalstieg, Friedrich Scholz, Loredana Serafini Amato, Wojciech Smo-czynski, Pēteris Vanags, and Zigmas Zinkevičius. In the volume the material has been grouped thematically: *Baltic, Old Prussian, Lithuanian, Latvian, General Issues*.

The twenty-first century

Lithuanian has certainly gained in prestige: it is again a language of diplomacy, of politics and all other important aspects of public life. But what is certainly much more important is the place of Lithuanian in linguistic research: Together with Latvian, Lithuanian is still the major source for information on Baltic and, in this context, also on Indo-European comparative grammar.

The position of Lithuanian in the twenty-first century can certainly be called "strong" and "stable". There is no imminent danger for the language: the number of speakers is reasonably high, the status of the language is firmly established, and the scholarly achievements in the investigation of the language are impressive and promising for the future. Language death will continue in our century, in all likelihood it will become more dramatic than it was in the twentieth century. The development is primarily due to the spread and expansion of English.

The good thing in this situation is that a language like Lithuanian is likely to hold its position. Lithuanian has about the right number of speakers both in the homeland and in the diaspora to resist any temptation of adopting English as the regular medium of communication. With regard to "age" Lithuanian has no higher claim than English, German, Russian, Polish, Latvian or any other Indo-European language presently spoken in Europe. It is very possible that some presently spoken non-Indo-European languages existed in Europe before the arrival of speakers of Indo-European; their age would thus be higher in terms of actual years.

With reference to Lithuanian, it is certainly preferable to stress the archaic features in the grammatical structure of the language. There are many opportunities for further development. In the Europe of the twenty-first century Lithuanian will hold a firm position.

Valedictory

According to currently applied regulations, I will have to retire statutorily from the Chair of English Linguistics at the Catholic University of Eichstätt in 2006. I assume that this will not lead to major changes in my everyday life. I hope to be able to continue scholarly work after retirement from the Chair, and I will also carry on teaching. I have no intention of taking up any totally new and different kind of work. Of course I hope that the everyday rush and stress of full time work will be less than it is now. I will no longer have to sit in on endless committee meetings and faculty councils, but will continue scholarly work as long as my health allows.

The great Lithuanian scholar Zigmas Zinkevičius, whose work was of enormous importance for my own research and whom I deeply admire both as a scholar and as a politician, wrote a wonderful autobiography entitled *Prie lituanistikos židinio* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopediju. leidybos institutas, 1999). I hope I am allowed to apply the final four words of his autobiography to myself as well: *Dirbsiu, kol Dievas leis* (p. 518).