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On the Orthography of Georg Elger's *Evangelien und Episteln*

B. Christophe (Jena)

The present article deals with the orthographical peculiarities found in the Gospel translation by Georg Elger, an Old Latvian text from the time about 1640.This text exists in two different versions: a printed version, which appeared in Vilnius in 1671 and a manuscript version, which was edited by Draviņš in Lund in 1961 (Index, Lund 1976). The present work is based on the manuscript version. In the introduction, the author makes some general considerations about the linguistic status of the Old Latvian texts, with special attention to Elger's Gospel translation. Then follows a systematic treatment of the representation of vocalism and consonantism in Elger's text, where each form found there is compared with the corresponding form in Modern Standard Latvian. At the end, the question of the so-called "Polish" orthography in Latvian is treated and some historical background is given.

Res Balticae 8, 2002, pp. 131-150.

TWO TYPES OF STANDARD LANGUAGE HISTORY IN EUROPE*

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1. The ideas of John H. Fisher's book *The Emergence of Standard English* (1996, see also my review on this book in *Archivum Lithuanicum* 1, 1999:247-257) was an important additional impulse for me to research different types of standard language history in Europe. Fisher claims:

> [...] language is standardized by government and business rather than by literary usage (Fisher 1996:9);
>
> [...] in no case does [...] early ecclesiastical writing represent the tradition from which modern vernacular standards emerged. [...] standard languages emerge from government and business, not from magic and ceremony (Fisher 1996:69).

Except for the government and business Fisher seems to have ignored other possibilities for a standard language to emerge.

In his book *Eloquence and Power. The Rise of Language Standards and Standard Languages* (1987) John E. Joseph gives some hints as to *usual* and *unusual* standard languages:

> the standard is usually associated with upper-class speech, but in Iceland the prestigious dialects upon which the standard is based were

* This article grew out of a paper that I delivered at The Henry Sweet Society Annual Colloquium, at the University of Edinburgh, September 22, 2000. Here I wish to express my gratitude to the participants of the colloquium, who helped me to improve the first draft of my paper: John E. Joseph, Andrew R. Linn, Nicola McLelland, Jim Miller, Marijka J. van der Wal, Pēteris Vanags. I also want to use this opportunity to thank The Paul Salmon-Pieter Verburg Memorial Fund for the annual bursary awarded to me for the year 2000.

> originally those of lower-class rural speakers [...]. The Icelandic case is unusual only in that prestige was at a given moment defined by Romantic notions of racial purity rather than by the usual class—capital hierarchies of post-Renaissance Western culture (Joseph 1987:58-59)

Joseph hints that the *usual* type of standard language is the one which is associated with upper-class speech and with class-capital hierarchies of post-Renaissance Western culture, but not with the Romantic movement and not with rural speakers.

In this article I will argue that there might be at least two *usual* types of standard language history in Europe.

2. Stages of Standard Language History. Einar Haugen in 1966 introduced his division of history of a standard language into four aspects: (1) *selection of norm*, (2) *codification of form*, (3) *elaboration of function*, and (4) *acceptance by the community* (Haugen 1972:252).

Haugen's theory is relatively widely accepted among Western linguists, i.e. 'standardologists'. However, some insubstantial deviations and slightly different interpretations of it can occur. For instance, Dick Leith transformed Haugen's *aspects* to *stages* and changed their order: (1) selection, (2) acceptance, (3) elaboration, and (4) codification (Leith 1983:32). Thus, Leith moved *acceptance* from the fourth position in Haugen's theory to the second and interpreted it slightly different. For him acceptance meant only initial acceptance of a dialect by some individuals but not necessarily by the majority of a speech community.

James Milroy and Lesley Milroy gave yet another interpretation of Haugen's theory in 1987:

> We prefer to consider these stages as stages of *implementation* of the standard rather than as aspects of standardisation itself (Milroy and Milroy 1987:27-28)

The Milroys seem to prefer term *stage* instead of aspect. Certainly according to them *implementation* means the history of a

shaping standard, of a standard before it acquires all the characteristics that are essential to the standard language.

There are many more linguists who base themselves on Haugen's *aspects* in their works: Marijke van der Wal (1992; 2001), Joseph (1987) and others. Ultimately, in order to demonstrate the popularity of Haugen's ideas it suffices to refer to the book by Anthony R. Lodge *French: from Dialect to Standard* (Lodge 1993:26 etc.). Lodge has analyzed the history of standard French in accordance with Haugen's four aspects of standardization. And on top of that—the book was translated from the English original into French and published in 1997 (Lodge 1997).

It can additionally be remarked that sometimes there are attempts made to describe some other stages of standard language development, but usually they are less persuasive. Cf. George Tomas' proposed stages: "(1) minimal standardisation, (2) pre-standardisation, (3) standardisation proper and (4) post-standardisation" (Tomas 1991:116). His stages are neither sufficiently argued nor substantial. It is not clear what particularities of the standard one has to discern.

Thus, I will also base myself on Haugen's theory, especially on the first aspect of the *dialect (norm) selection* for a standard. I dare to refer to it as the symbolical beginning of the evolution or development of a standard language.

3. Types of Standard Language History. I begin with two typical standard languages, which I believe can represent two different types of standard language history in Europe according to the epoch of dialect selection for any particular standard. The languages that I have chosen are English and Lithuanian.

3. 1. Type One: English, Early Selection. Scholars generally agree that English standard emerged around the end of the fourteenth century or in the fifteenth. Malcolm Richardson wrote that King Henry V was, if not the father, at least the step-father of

Chancery English (Richardson 1980:741). Richardson tries to prove that the English Signet letters of King Henry V laid the foundation for the beginning of Chancery English on August 5, 1417, when the first letter was written.

Fisher claims that:

> The essential characteristics of Modern written English were determined by the practice of the clerks in Chancery and communicated throughout England by professional scribes writing in Chancery script and under the influence of Chancery idiom (Fisher 1996:64)

Fisher believes that the first English printer, William Caxton, was not responsible for the dialect selection for standard English:

> Caxton's place in the history of the development of standard written English must be regarded as that of a transmitter rather than an innovator (Fisher 1996:128-129)

The Milroys also think that:

> The variety he [Caxton] decided to use had already achieved some prominence [...]. This variety is the basis of modern Standard English (Milroy, Milroy 1987:33)

All in all it seems obvious that the selection of a dialect for Standard English according to the preponderant majority of scholars is to be found in the fifteenth century. This means the period of the Renaissance. I suggest calling the languages which had chosen their dialects for the standard during the Renaissance *early dialect selection* standard languages.

3. 2. Type Two: Lithuanian, Late Selection. Lithuanian standard, however, developed under very different conditions. Many scholars relate the time of dialect selection for the Lithuanian standard to the Lithuanian newspaper *Aušra* (Dawn). Petras Jonikas writes that the southern part of the West Highland dialect became the obvious basis [for Standard Lithuanian] in the first national Lithuanian newspaper *Aušra,* which was published in Prussia (1883–1886) and intended for all Lithuanians (Jonikas 1987:293). Zigmas Zinkevičius thinks similarly, that the year 1883 (the date

when the first national newspaper was published) is accepted as the significant step, which essentially meant the beginning of the Lithuanian standard language (Zinkevičius 1990:5). A slightly different time, however, is distinguished by Jonas Palionis:

> From the beginning of the nineteenth century [...] in the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania the very concept of the Standard Written Lithuanian becomes evident. We see that the process of domination of one (West Highland) dialect takes place slowly (not yet completely) in the usage of the written language (Palionis 1995:165)

In any case, everybody agrees that the dialect for the Lithuanian standard was selected in the nineteenth century. In European culture this means during the period of Romanticism or even Neo-Romanticism. Thus, Lithuanian can be labeled as a *late dialect selection* standard. And it is not related to upper-class speech (rather to rural speakers); it is not related to government and business (rather to literary avant-garde scholarship).

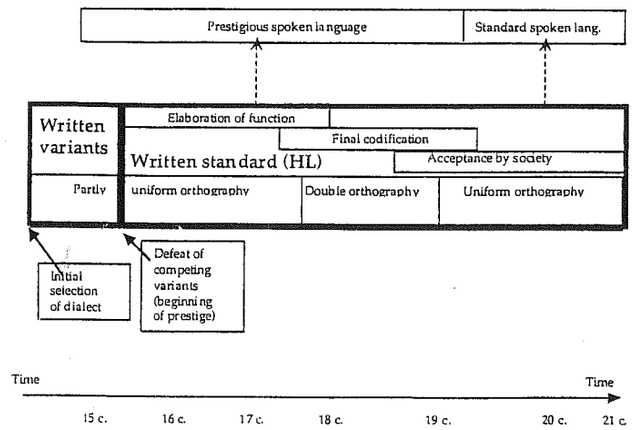

Figure 1: English type: early selection

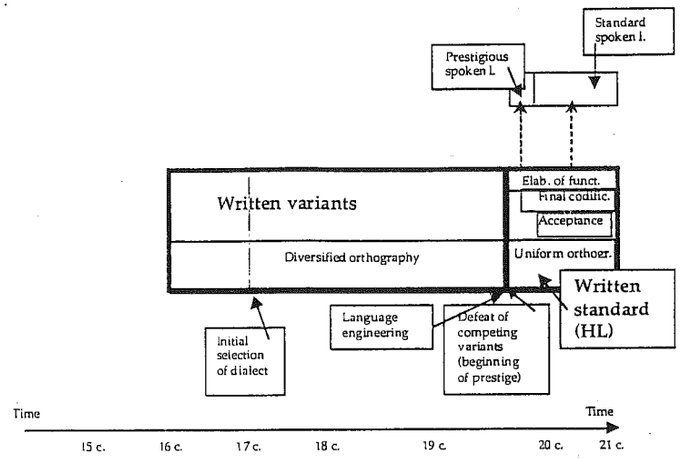

Figure 2: Lithuanian type: late selection

4. Many other European languages can be attributed to these two types: *early* dialect selection during the period of the Renaissance (e.g. English) and *late* dialect selection during Romanticism and slightly later (e.g. Lithuanian). Some pertinent examples to demonstrate this would be:

4. 1. Early Dialect Selection Standard Languages:

Danish (the sixteenth century; cf. Haugen 1976:324-325),

Dutch (the latter half of the sixteen century and the beginning of the seventeenth century; cf. van Marle 1997:14, van der Wal 1992: 121-123; 2001),

French (between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, the King's French effectively replaced Latin as the language of government and the law; cf. Lodge 1993:104, Fisher 1996:71),

German (between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries; cf. C. J. Wells 1985:187, Fisher 1996:77-78),

Italian (from the end of the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries; cf. Migliorini 1984:139, 273, Maiden 1995:10, Fisher 1996:80),

Polish (from the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries; cf. Walczak 1999:115; Milewski 1969:376, Urbańczyk 1985:111),

Spanish (from the thirteenth century; Fisher 1996:74-75),

Swedish (the sixteenth century; cf. Haugen 1976:41).

4. 2. Late Dialect Selection Standard Languages:

Belorussian (between the beginning of the twentieth century and the fourth decade; Wexler 1974:213-214, 308, 310),

Bulgarian (second half of the nineteenth century; Venediktov 1978:246-268, Venediktov 1990: 163-170),

Croatian (late eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century; Hadrovics 1985:133, Wilson 1970:300-301, Banac 1984:228-231, Katičić 1984:275),

Czech (late eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century; with the possibility of interpreting it differently, see chapter seven of this article "Exceptions and Inconsistencies"; cf. also Shirokhova, Neshchimenko 1978:9, 27),

Estonian (the second half of the nineteenth century; Kurman 1968:28, 34, 38),

Faroese (the second half of the nineteenth century; Kloss 1978:243-244; Haugen 1976:332, Linn 1998:108, 111-116),

Finnish (the second half of the nineteenth century; Venckutė 2000: 248-249),

Latvian (the second half of the nineteenth century; though with a possibility to interpret it differently; see chapter seven of this article "Exceptions and Inconsistencies"; cf. also Ozols 1967:508-509, Rūķe-Draviņa 1977:109),

Nynorsk (New Norwegian) (the second half of the nineteenth century; Steblin-Komenskij 1977:103; Haugen 1976:332; Linn 1997:95-97; Linn 1998:101-104),

Rumanian (the second half of the nineteenth century; Close 1974:31-32),

Serbian (the first half and the middle of the nineteenth century; Wilson 1970:306, 389, Katičić 1984:290),

Slovak (the middle of the nineteenth century, Smirnov 1978:148–149, 156),

Slovene (the first half and the middle of the nineteenth century; Lencek 1984:311-313, Plotnikova 1978:337, 350, 353),

Ukrainian (the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century; Wexler 1974:40-41, 70-71, 308).

These two lists are not exhaustive, though it can be assumed that many other European languages would fall under one or the other category.

However, these are only tendencies, not laws. "Every generalization we can make yields a counter example" (Joseph 1987:58). Some exceptions are described in chapter seven ("Exceptions and Inconsistencies") of this article.

5. Other features. Having discerned the two types of standard language history in Europe according to the period of dialect selection, it is essential to refer to different features for both types, which supply additional arguments for such a typology.

5. 1. Dominant and Dominated Languages (Superposition). It seems that *early* dialect selection languages differ from those of late selection by being *dominant* in their territories, while late selection languages are mostly dominated by other languages during the Renaissance period. In other words, at that time and afterwards some languages were superposed upon others; they had higher prestige. Superposed languages can be labeled as high (H) in contrast to low (L) languages which they dominate and which have significantly weaker prestige (cf. Joseph 1987:48-49). Ronald Wardhaugh lists such important factors in achieving language dominance, as towns and cities (they dominate the surrounding rural areas), conquest, political control, religion, historic factors, economic factors (Wardhaugh 1987:6-11).

In the history of European standard languages the tendency is obvious: late dialect selection languages were dominated by other superposed languages and had insufficient cultural and political strength to develop their own standard language during the Renaissance. Thus, *Lithuanian* was dominated by Polish, *Belorussian* by Church Slavonic and Russian, *Bulgarian* by Church Slavonic and Turkish, *Croatian* by Hungarian, *Czech* by German, *Estonian* by German, *Faroese* by Danish, *Finnish* by Swedish, *Latvian* by German, *Rumanian* by Greek, *Serbian* by Church Slavonic and Turkish, German, *Slovak* by German and Hungarian, *Slovene* by German, *Ukrainian* by Church Slavonic and Russian. During the Renaissance some of them (like Belorussian or Ukrainian) might even be conceived only as dialects of other languages (Russian) but not as separate linguistic unity.

5. 2. Circumstantial versus Engineered Development. John E. Joseph writes:

> [...] 'life cycle' of the standard, starting with its successful emergence from the pool of candidate dialects for standardization, an emergence which may depend largely on circumstantial factors but may also be engineered by partisans of the successful dialect. Engineering involves putting the dialect to use in the prestigious functions of a standard language [...] (Joseph 1987:23)

It is obvious that both circumstantial factors and engineering are present in the emergence of a standard. But it also seems obvious that scholars tend to link the emergence of the early selection standards mostly to circumstances: first of all to the administration and to the most powerful social class in a society (cf. quotes from Fisher and Joseph at the very beginning of this article). This is a predominantly circumstantial emergence.

On the other hand, specialists researching late dialect selection language history tend to emphasize importance of the codifying linguistic and other literary works—grammars, dictionaries etc. Thus, they pay much more tribute to personality/ies and the

engineered (conscious) aspect of the emergence. Scholars of particular languages assume that those works codified the languages or they had the strongest impact on codification. Here I attempt to give certain examples of such works of late selection languages: *Lithuanian*—Jonas Jablonskis' Grammar in 1901 (cf. Palionis 1995:234-235), *Czech*—Dobrovsky's Grammar in 1809 (cf. Shirokhova, Neshchimenko 1978:26), *Estonian*—K. A. Hermann's Grammar in 1884 (cf. Kurman 1968:42), *Faroese*—Venzel Ulrik Hammershaimb's Grammars in 1854 and especially in 1891 (cf. Kloss 1978:243-244, Linn 1998:108, 111-116), *Nynorsk (New Norwegian)*—Ivar Aasen's Grammars in 1848 and especially in 1864 (Linn 1997:95–97; Linn 1998:94, 101-104), *Serbian*—Vuk Stefanović Karadzić's Grammar in 1814, Dictionary in 1818, folk songs in 1814-1815 (cf. Wilson 1970:98-113, 114-130; Katičić 1984:287-290), *Slovak*—Ljudovit Štúr's Grammar in 1846 (cf. Smirnov 1978:139 etc.), *Slovenian*—Jernej Kopitar's Grammar in 1809 (Plotnikova 1978:338, 345-348).

5. 3. Spoken Standard Model. Joseph had insight into old Greek language:

> With the first alphabet, the first systematic thought about language, grammar, and the koine, Greek in the Alexandrian period became the prototype for the standard language (Joseph 1997:50)

Thus, Greek was a type of standard that was created first and was original, having no model to imitate. The next standard language to develop in Europe was Latin, which accepted standard Greek as a model. Latin was the only standardized language in Western Europe (in the east and south Orthodox Europe there was Old Church Slavonic as well) during all the Middle Ages and partly during the Renaissance. Latin was a prototype for early dialect selection languages to imitate.

But Latin was only a written standard language with no common norms for pronunciation, possessed no spoken standard. Therefore *early* dialect selection languages shaped their standards

first of all according to the written model. For some centuries afterwards early selection languages did not even develop the idea of standard spoken language, the spoken equivalent of the written standard. It took some centuries for early dialect selection languages to come up with the idea of spoken standard—around the eighteenth century or even later. Having a written standard during several centuries speech societies of those languages gradually turned their concept of prestigious speech to spoken standard language.

Consequently, when the *late* selection languages shaped their standard languages, the model (prototype) they had was very different. By then early selection languages had acquired something similar to two different linguistic strata: written standard and spoken standard. Thus, late selection languages had a double prototype facing them. That is why in most cases the late dialect selection languages began shaping their spoken standards soon after they conceived the very existence of a written standard of their own, which was not the case with early dialect selection languages. The time gap for late selection languages is to be measured in decades rather than centuries (as in the case of early selection languages). Late selection languages had much more complete (elaborated) models to imitate.

Although my article concerns two types of standard language history, three more could be discerned, at least five: (1) Greek (original standard), (2) Latin and Old Church Slavonic written standards (imitation of Greek), (3) early dialect selection languages (imitation of written Latin standard), (4) late dialect selection languages (imitation of both written and spoken standards of early dialect selection languages), (5) recently developed and developing new standards (this type is not discussed in my article).

5. 4. Codification and orthography. It was not only the spoken standard that was imitated by the languages of late selection. At that time (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) early dialect

selection standards were almost full-scale standard languages: first of all they possessed codified grammatical norms and unified orthography. Or at the very least the speech societies of those languages began to conceive of grammar and orthography as uniform.

This conception also penetrated the standards newly forming in the nineteenth century. Thus, engineers of late selection languages borrowed not only the idea that a standard language has to have two forms—written and spoken—but also that it had to have stable, uniform forms with no fluctuation in grammar and orthography. Instead of having a standard with only partly uniform grammatical and orthographic norms and tolerance for such fluctuation for several centuries (as in early selection), almost at once there was a comprehension that standard had to be uniform and no variation was welcome or tolerated.

I can even see that dialects for the late selection languages were chosen and their standards started developing approximately at the time, when early selection languages went through the stage of final codification of written norms and also of introduction of the spoken standard. The models ultimately became uniform and attained spoken standard variety. This helped late selection languages to go through the stages of codification, uniformity of grammar and orthography and to introduce spoken standard very rapidly: dozens of times more quickly than their models did. The relationship of these aspects can be seen in the figures 1 and 2.

5. 5. The Relationship Between Written and Spoken Standards. Standard languages of *late* dialect selection today usually have a much "closer" relationship between written and spoken standard. People who use late selection standard languages basically think they write as they speak. But this attitude is much more rarely noticeable among *early* dialect selection language users: they are very often well aware of different inconveniences

that the difference in writing and speech cause (cf. English, French).

Early selection languages had a comparatively long period of their written standard development until the spoken equivalent was shaped. This gap between the two standard varieties allowed much more time for the prestigious spoken language to digress from the written standard. On the other hand, the lack of this long gap in the late selection languages did not permit spoken standard to deviate so clearly from its written counterpart.

5. 6. Exact dialect. Also, *early* dialect selection standards (this should be self-evident) were based on more ancient dialects, on ones which have changed greatly since. Thus, scholars of early selection languages have many more problems in drawing conclusions as to which concrete dialect forms the foundation of their standard (cf. English, Polish). In most cases these dialects have changed radically and, therefore, it is hazardous to make judgements about them according to their modern dialectal equivalents. On the other hand, late selection languages still have traditional dialects that have changed relatively little; therefore, the dialectal basis chosen for a standard usually does not require any special proof.

6. Different features of the two types that were singled out above can be generalized as follows. Usual (average) *early dialect selection standard language* was not dominated by other language/s; it had its dialect chosen in the late Middle Ages and/or Renaissance period (its dialect selection occurred quite circumstantially), its model for imitation was only the written standard language (not the spoken one), it reached its final codification of grammar and orthography stage after several centuries (the eighteenth or nineteenth century); it had also developed spoken standard quite late, approximately at the same time when its norms were finally codified; its present users have a relatively clear idea of the

difference in their orthography and pronunciation; and scholars still have discussions in defining the exact dialect/s that was/were laid in the foundation of the standard.

Usual *late dialect selection standard language* was dominated by other language/s in the Renaissance period. Ultimately it chose the dialectal basis in the late eighteenth or nineteenth century (the period of Romanticism or later), it went through comparatively intensive engineering; it imitated a double model of standard: written and spoken; it codified its grammar and orthography quickly (in a matter of decades) after the dialect for standard was selected, it had a parallel development of the spoken standard that makes most of its present users think they speak as they write, and scholars do not usually have to discuss its exact dialect foundation, as it is quite obvious (cf. figure 1 and 2).

Both types are quite ubiquitous and usual in the history of European standard language. Fisher's attitude that "standard languages emerge from government and business" and Joseph's that "the standard is usually associated with upper-class speeches" are true if we are speaking about early dialect selection languages, but not about late ones. Let me give only one example here: in the epoch of the Renaissance a Chancery language existed in Lithuania, but as time went by it helped shape languages other than Lithuanian: Ukrainian and Belorussian (not their standards yet). And there was no Lithuanian Chancery at all when the Lithuanian standard emerged, and there were no government people and no upper-classes that would make their preferences about standard Lithuanian known. Conversely: there was a prohibition that took place to publish anything in Lithuanian (=Latin) letters (=alphabet) during 1864-1905, so that the standardizers had to smuggle Lithuanian books and newspapers into Lithuania (which was ruled by Russia at that time) from abroad.

7. Exceptions and Inconsistencies. But there are also *unusual* languages among both types. Some of the histories are difficult to interpret in terms of these two types.

For example, Czech. The dialect for it was chosen in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (cf. Shirokova, Neshchimenko 1978:9, 27), though its evolution has been overshadowed by the superposed German language since 1620. Czech was standardized then only at the beginning of the nineteenth century; a conscious return to the written language of sixteenth century literature was made (Shirokhova, Neshchimenko 1978:26-27). Thus, though dialect for the standard theoretically remained unchanged during the nineteenth century, it still was not obvious which dialect would be chosen for the Czech standard. This means that there was no standard accepted yet (before Dobrovsky's grammar in 1809). Therefore, we can attribute Czech to the languages of *late dialect selection*, however, this will only be partialy true. The change in the political situation, which pushed Czech from a freely developing language position to a dominated one in the beginning of the seventeenth century, confused the issue of which type the Czech language should be attributed: early or late dialect selection.

I would see a similar though slightly different exception in the Latvian standard. Latvian was dominated by German ever since the thirteenth century; it was not allotted any span of time for independent development, which is different from the beginning of the Czech standard in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Latvian, however, also does not seem to switch dialects in the nineteenth century. It has adhered to the dialect of the writings that appeared in the period of the Renaissance (the Reformation). On the other hand, there was another dialect used for writing since the beginning of the eighteenth century (Ozols 1967:508-509), and finally the Latvian standard was shaped only in the nineteenth century (Ozols 1967:508-509, Rūķe-Draviņa 1977:109).

Extensive language engineering took place at that time. The statement that Latvians kept the same dialect, which was mostly used since the sixteenth century, rather resembles a coincidence than a rule in the European history of standard languages.

And the last exception I intend to mention here is Italian. It is obvious that it is a language of early dialect selection, which took place at the very beginning of the *Rinascimento*. However, vast territorial differences, loose relations among separate parts of Italy made Italians have a quite hectic *questione della lingua*, a discussion on dialect selection up to the nineteenth century.

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Two Types of Standard Language History in Europe
G. Subačius (Vilnius & Chicago)

In this article I argue that there might be at least two *usual* types of standard language history in Europe: *early* dialect selection during the period of the Renaissance (e.g. English) and *late* dialect selection during Romanticism and slightly later (e.g. Lithuanian). To early dialect selection languages *Danish, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish* and others can be attributed. Languages like *Belorussian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Estonian, Faroese, Finnish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Nynorsk, Serbian, Slovak, Slovene, Ukrainian* and others constitute the type of late dialect selection standard languages. *Early* dialect selection languages differ from those of late selection by being *dominant* in their territories during the Renaissance period. Scholars tend to link the emergence of the early selection standards mostly to the political, historical, social conditions of the time. However, they also tend to emphasize the importance of codifying linguistic and other literary works—grammars, dictionaries etc. for the emergence of late dialect selection standards. Early dialect selection languages usually had as a model only the written pattern of standard Latin. On the other hand, late dialect selection languages had a double prototype to imitate: written standard and spoken standard. Engineers of late selection languages borrowed not only the idea that a standard language has to have two forms—written and spoken—but also that it had to have stable, uniform forms with no fluctuation in grammar and orthography. Instead of having a standard with only partly uniform grammatical and orthographic norms and tolerance for such fluctuation for several centuries (as in early selection), almost at once there was a comprehension that standard had to be uniform and no variation was welcome or tolerated. There are some exceptions to these tendencies, e.g. Czech, Italian, Latvian. But it is possible to interpret these as deviations because of different than usual historical conditions (by their being dominated for a shorter period, by their having politically heterogeneous territory, or only by happenstance).

Res Balticae 8, 2002, pp. 151-168.

DIE WERKE VON AUGUST BIELENSTEIN — EINE BEDEUTENDE QUELLE DER INDOEUROPÄISTIK DES 19. JAHRHUNDERTS

SARMA KĻAVIŅA
Riga

Der Pastor August Bielenstein ist am 4. März 1826 in Jelgava (Mitau) geboren, er starb 1907 nach vielen langen Jahren glücklichen Lebens. In seinem Leben hat er unwahrscheinlich viel für die Erforschung der lettischen Sprache, Folklore, Ortsnamen, Burgen, Ethnographie und des Altertums geleistet. Vierundfünfzig Jahre seines Lebens, vom Jahre 1853 an, war er in der Lettisch-literärischen Gesellschaft, in der sogenannten Gesellschaft für Lettenfreunde in Riga und Jelgava tätig, einunddreißig Jahre (1864-1895) war er deren Präsident. *Die Lettenfreunde* waren deutsche Pastoren aus Kurzeme (Kurland) und Vidzeme (südliches Livland), später gehörten dazu auch Pastoren, Literaten und andere gebildete Leute lettischer Nationalität. Was diese Gesellschaft in den hundert Jahren ihrer Tätigkeit (1824-1924) geleistet hat und wie die Beziehungen zwischen den Deutschen und Letten waren, können wir dem Buch von Āronu Matīss entnehmen (Āronu Matīss 1929).

In seiner Biographie schreibt A. Bielenstein: "Wir erfuhren damals den öffentlichen Vorwurf, daß wir (die Lettisch-literärische Gesellschaft) das lettische Volk und seine Sprache nur als ein Forschungsobjekt ansähen und das Resultat unserer Forschungen der internationalen Wissenschaft darböten, aber nicht des lettischen Volks Kenntnisse, Bildung und geistiges Wohlergehen förderten... Ich muß es ja anerkennen, daß meine Person besonders für die internationale Wissenschaft hat arbeiten wollen, aber ich bin mit ganzer Energie zugleich dafür eingetreten, daß unsre Gesellschaft