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Lithuanian

A Comprehensive Grammar

Meilutė Ramonienė, Joana Pribušauskaitė,
Jogilė Teresa Ramonaitė and Loreta Vilkiene



Lithuanian

Lithuanian: A Comprehensive Grammar is a complete reference guide to modern Lithuanian grammar. It includes detailed treatment of all grammatical structures and parts of speech, and their semantic and grammatical categories: gender, number, case of nouns, adjectives, numerals and pronouns; degree of comparison of adjectives and adverbs; tense, mood, person, transitivity, aspect and voice of verbs.

The morphology chapters describe the formation, inflection and use of the different forms of every part of speech. Under syntax the syntactic relations and types of sentences, the expression of questions and negation, comparison, word order and interpolation are described. All grammatical phenomena are illustrated with examples from the modern language. Descriptions of phonetics and accentuation as well as orthography and punctuation are also included.

Lithuanian: A Comprehensive Grammar is an essential reference for learners and users of Lithuanian. It is suitable for independent study and use in schools, colleges, universities and adult classes of all types.

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 **Meilutė Ramonienė,
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Jogilė Teresa Ramonaitė
and Loreta Vilkienė**

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Preface

The aim of this book is to describe the grammar structure and use of modern Lithuanian in English for those who study Lithuanian as a foreign language. We did attempt to write a text understandable also to non-linguists, people who do not necessarily know linguistic terminology or are not familiar with grammar theory. However, it is not a simple task describing the structure of such a morphologically complex language as Lithuanian, so it was not possible to avoid linguistic terminology completely. That is why we also provide a glossary of linguistic terms that, we hope, will help the reader to understand the text of the grammar.

In this book we essentially followed the Lithuanian grammar tradition, classification and theoretical approaches. This grammar is a grammar of modern standard written Lithuanian. However, where the grammatical forms differ substantially in spoken language, dialects or colloquial use, we inserted comments about that. We translated the examples of Lithuanian language into English. In those cases where it is too complicated to translate exactly, the meaning is explained in brackets. The single words given as examples have the accent marked, whereas the sentences are not accented. We chose to present it this way because in normal orthographic practice the accents are not marked in standard everyday Lithuanian. Moreover, in the real language use not every word in a sentence has an accent and the actual sentence accentuation often depends mostly on the speaker. Also, the accentuation is varied due to the influence of dialects and other reasons.

We are four authors of this book. Meilutė Ramonienė wrote the introduction and the chapters on nouns, adjectives, numerals and

prepositions. Joana Pribušauskaitė wrote the chapters on simple and composite sentences, questions, negation, comparison, word order, direct and indirect speech, interpolation, phonetics, accentuation and punctuation and has also prepared the tables at the end of the book. Loreta Vilkienė wrote the chapters on adverbs, conjunctions, particles, interjections, onomatopoeic words and orthography. Jogilė Teresa Ramonaitė wrote the chapter on verbs and translated the entire text into English. The text of the whole book was reviewed by all of us.

We hope that *Lithuanian: A Comprehensive Grammar* will be useful to those who study Lithuanian, that it will help to comprehend the complex grammatical structure of our language and its contemporary use.

The authors

Introduction

The Lithuanian language

Lithuanian is the state language of the Republic of Lithuania that is used by nearly three million inhabitants of Lithuania. Also, more than one million Lithuanians live in various other countries, and many of them know and use Lithuanian in various domains of their life. Lithuanian is being learned by many foreigners who want to get to know and/or to be able to talk to people who speak Lithuanian.

Understanding the Lithuanian grammatical structure is always important for linguists, specialists of Indo-European languages. That is because Lithuanian is considered to be one of the most conservative living Indo-European languages, often compared to dead languages like Latin, Ancient Greek and Sanskrit. Lithuanian, together with Latvian, constitutes the Baltic languages group and are the only two living East Baltic languages. Other East Baltic languages – Semigallian and Selonian – are extinct. All West Baltic languages – Old Prussian, Yotvingian, Curonian and Galindian – are also dead. Old Prussian stands out among them because it has written records.

The first written book in Lithuanian was published in 1547 in Königsberg, in Prussia. At the time Lithuanian was used in two countries: the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Duchy of Prussia. That first book is a Catechism, written by Martynas Mažvydas (~1510–1563). Together with a Lutheran catechism the book contains a primer, a hymnal and a preface in both Lithuanian and Latin. The first book to be published in the Grand Duchy

of Lithuania was the catechism of Mykalojus Daukša (?-1613), published in 1595. The first Lithuanian grammar was written in Latin by Daniel Klein (1609–1666) and published in 1653, also in Königsberg. The first Lithuanian dictionary *Dictionarium trium linguarum* (i.e. Latin-Polish-Lithuanian) was written and published in Vilnius by Konstantinas Sirvydas (1579–1631) around 1620. The most extensive dictionary is *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas*, consisting of 20 volumes. The initiator of this dictionary is Kazimieras Būga (1879–1924), who started to collect material for its preparation in 1902. The first fascicle of this dictionary was published in 1924. Many Lithuanian linguists have worked and contributed to this dictionary. The 20th volume of the dictionary was prepared and published by the Institute of the Lithuanian language in 2002. Since 2005, there is also an online version: www.lkz.lt/.

Standard Lithuanian is relatively young, just slightly more than 100 years old. Standard written language norms were codified for the first time in a Lithuanian grammar of Jonas Jablonskis in 1901. The linguist Jonas Jablonskis (1860–1930) is considered the father of standard Lithuanian. Standard Lithuanian is based on South-West Aukštaitian dialect.

Lithuanian became a state language for the first time in 1922 in the independent Republic of Lithuania, that existed from 1918 till 1940. In the Soviet years (1940–1990) the functions of Lithuanian were limited. It was greatly influenced by the Russian that dominated in many public domains, e.g. administration, transportation system, army, etc. In 1988, during Perestroika (starting from 1985), Lithuanian was proclaimed a state language for the second time – even though the country was still part of the Soviet Union. Since the reestablishment of independence of Lithuania in 1990, Lithuanian as a state language is used in all spheres of life.

Lithuanian dialects

Lithuania has many dialects. Traditionally two dialects – Aukštaitian and Žemaitian – are distinguished. They differ in many linguistic features. Often the speakers of the dialects consider them separate languages and sometimes they are described as such.

Dialect classification is based on the differences of the vowel system. Aukštaitian and Žemaitian have many subdialects and regional varieties of their own.

Aukštaitian dialects are divided further into three groups: West Aukštaitian, South Aukštaitian and East Aukštaitian, according to the pronunciation of semi-diphthongs *an*, *am*, *en*, *em* and nasal *q* and *ę*. West Aukštaitian pronounces these sounds as in the standard language, South Aukštaitian *an*, *am*, *en*, *em* do not change but *q* and *ę* change into long *ū* and *y* (e.g., *žqsis* ‘goose’ is pronounced *žūsis*, *tręšia* ‘fertilize’ is pronounced *tryšia*), whereas East Aukštaitian changes both the semi-diphthongs and the vowels (e.g., *kamþas* ‘corner’ is pronounced *kumþas*, *žqsis* ‘goose’ is pronounced *žūsis*, *menkas* ‘scarce’ is pronounced *minkas*, *tręšia* ‘fertilize’ is pronounced *tryšia*).

Žemaitian dialects are also divided into three groups: West Žemaitian, North Žemaitian and South Žemaitian. The groups are distinguished according to the pronunciation of long diphthongs *ie* and *uo*. West Žemaitian changes them into *é* and *o* (e.g., *pienas* ‘milk’ > *péns*, *duona* ‘bread’ > *dona*), North Žemaitian changes them into *ei*, *ou* (e.g., *pienas* > *peins*, *duona* > *douna*), and South Žemaitian into long *y*, *ū* (e.g., *pienas* > *pyns*, *duona* > *dūna*). These dialect groups are further divided into smaller subdialects.

At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of 21st century, the Lithuanian dialects experienced great change, mostly because of internal regional migration, the emergence of new dialect variants and the loss of vitality of some dialects. Dialects are also influenced by the standard language. Dialects are used more by people who live in rural areas and smaller towns. In cities dialects are sometimes used by those who have migrated from dialectal areas and maintain their native dialect.

Abbreviations and symbols

Acc.	accusative
adj.	adjective
Dat.	dative
fem.	feminine
Gen.	genitive
Instr.	instrumental
lit.	literally
Loc.	locative
masc.	masculine
neutr.	neuter
Nom.	nominative
part.	participle
pl.	plural
sg.	singular
Voc.	vocative
>	changes into
<	comes from



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Chapter I

Phonetics

There are 32 letters in the Lithuanian alphabet: 12 letters denote vowels; 20 letters denote consonants. Some sounds are represented by combinations of two letters. Lithuanian uses the Latin alphabet, with some auxiliary marks are added above or below the letter to denote certain sounds.

I.1 Lithuanian alphabet

Letter	Sound	Approximate English equivalent	Examples
A, a	[a], [a:]	up, father	tàvo 'your', vākara 'evening'
Ą, ą	[a:]	father	rýta 'in the morning', ąžuolas 'oak', šąla 'freezes'
B, b	[b], [b.]	boss, baby	baĩgti 'to finish', nebĩjo 'is not afraid'
C, c	[ts], [ts.]	ants, tsetse	cùkrus 'sugar', citrinà 'lemon'
Č, č	[tʃ], [tʃ.]	child, chip	čaižūs 'sharp (sound)', kačiū 'of cats'
D, d	[d], [d.]	indeed	daūg 'many', dīdelis 'big'

E, e	[ɛ], [e], [æ:]	pet, every, man	pelē 'mouse', nēšti 'to carry', mētras 'meter', mēnas 'art'
Ē, ē	[æ:]	cat	tēsinys 'sequel', tavēs 'of you', tēvas 'thin'
É, è	[e:]	(Irish) age	gélē 'flower', kélé 'raised'
F, f	[f], [f̥]	fool, fit	filosòfas 'philosopher'
G, g	[g], [g̊]	goose, guilty	gālas 'end', girià 'forest'
H, h	[h], [h̥]	behind, his	hālē 'hall', hìmnas 'anthem'
I, i	[i]	it	likì mas 'destiny'
Ī, ī	[i:]	deed	mēdĭ 'tree (Acc.)', ĭ spūdis 'impression', grĭžti 'to return'
Y, y	[i:]	deed	mylėti 'to love', ýda 'flaw', knỹgà 'book (Acc.)'
J, j	[j]	yes	jáunas 'young', gĩrioje 'in the forest'
K, k	[k], [k̥]	cool, key	kāras 'war', kitòks 'of another kind'
L, l	[l], [l̥]	belt, least	lābas 'good', lēkti 'to hurtle'
M, m	[m], [m̥]	mother, meet	mamà 'mom', méilé 'love'
N, n	[n], [n̥]	nose, neat	nósis 'nose', knygà 'book'
O, o	[o:], [ɔ]	bought, got	norėti 'to want', óras 'weather', keliōnē 'trip', filològas 'philologist'
P, p	[p], [p̥]	port, pit (not aspirated)	paupỹs 'riverside'
R, r	[r], [r̥]	tongue-trilled like in Italian	raĩdē 'letter', kairē 'left'

S, s	[s], [s _ɨ]	so, sit	sōdas 'garden', síela 'soul'
Š, š	[ʃ], [ʃ _ɨ]	sharp, ship	šókti 'to dance', šỹpsena 'smile'
T, t	[t], [t _ɨ]	top, tip (not aspirated)	tetà 'aunt'
U, u	[u]	put	pùsė 'half', eĩsiu 'I will go'
U̯, u̯	[u:]	pool	siũsti 'to send', mēdžiu̯ 'of trees'
Ū, ū	[u:]	pool	súnūs 'sons', rūgštis 'acid'
V, v	[v], [v _ɨ]	voice, vain	svajōnė 'dream', viltis 'hope'
Z, z	[z], [z _ɨ]	zoo, zeal	zuĩkis 'hare', ziřzia 'whimpers'
Ž, ž	[ʒ], [ʒ _ɨ]	measure, vision	žolė 'grass', žėmė 'soil, earth'

Some sounds are written using two letters:

Ch, ch	[x], [x _ɨ]	(Scottish) loch	chòras 'choir', cechė 'in the workshop'
Dz, dz	[dz], [dz _ɨ]	demands	dzinguliũkai 'bells, chimes', dzũkai (ethnographic group)
Dž, dž	[dʒ], [dʒ _ɨ]	joke, jet	džáulis 'joule', mēdžiai 'trees'

N.B. The following letters are put together in dictionaries and alphabetic lists: **a** and **ą**; **e**, **ę** and **ė**; **i**, **y** and **į**; **u**, **ū** and **ų**. Digraph **ch** is put separately, whereas **dz** and **dž** are put together with **d**.

1.2 Vowels

Modern Lithuanian has 12 vowels: [a:], [a], [ɛ], [æ:], [e:], [e], [i:], [i], [o:], [ɔ], [u:], [u]. Vowels constitute the basis of a syllable, either on their own or in diphthongs, made from two vowels or a vowel and a sonant consonant.

1.2.1 Depending on the duration of the pronunciation vowels are distinguished into **long** and **short**. The pronunciation norm of standard Lithuanian is that vowels maintain their length or shortness both when they are accented and when they are not accented, except for vowels denoted by letters *a* and *e*, which lengthen when accented. The actual use differs from the norm: due to dialects and influence of other languages, especially in the speech of city-dwellers the accented short vowels are lengthened, and the un-accented long vowels are shortened. However, the difference of long and short vowels in general is present.

1.2.1.1 Letters *a*, *e*, *į*, *y*, *u*, *ū* denote vowels [a:], [æ:], [i:], [u:] and in the standard language should always be pronounced **long**, both accented and not: *sąskaitą* (Acc. sg.) ‘bill’, *lęšiù* (Instr. sg.) ‘lens’, *tįluma* (Instr. sg.), *tylumà* (Nom. sg.) ‘silence’, *dūmų* (Gen. pl.) ‘smoke’.

Even though long [i:] can be written with two different letters *į*, *y*, and [u:] is written with *u* and *ū*, these different letters are only a historical relic. Now those sounds do not differ (the auxiliary sign is called ‘nosinė’ in Lithuanian, it comes from the word ‘nasal’, which indicates that the sounds used to be nasal vowels in the past).

1.2.1.2 Letter *o* denotes vowel [o:], which in Lithuanian words and old loanwords is always long (both accented and not): *brólis* (Nom. sg.) ‘brother’, *tvorōs* (Gen. sg.) ‘fence’, *Jōnas* (Nom. sg. of male name). The same letter is used to denote the short [ɔ], found in international words: *filològas* ‘philologist’, *metronòmas* ‘metronome’.

1.2.1.3 Letter *ė* that denotes vowel [e:] in Lithuanian words and old loanwords is also always long (both accented and not): *vėjas* ‘wind’, *lėkė* ‘hurtled’, *plėšikas* ‘robber’.

1.2.1.4 Letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *u* denote **short** vowels. Vowels denoted by letters *į*, *u* remain short both when accented and not accented:

visas ‘whole’, *kiti* ‘others’, *bùkas* ‘obtuse’, *kártu* ‘together’, *sau-sumà* ‘dryland’.

Vowels denoted by letters *a*, *e* usually lengthen when accented, but remain short in the following cases:

- (a) in word endings: *mamà*, *dideliamè* *miestè*, *gražiàs gèlès* (see 21.2);
- (b) in possessive pronouns: *màno*, *tàvo*, *sàvo*;
- (c) in monosyllabic words: *àš*, *tà*, *tàs*, *pàts*, *kàs*, *bèt*, *nès*, *kàd*, *tàd*, *mât*, *nà*, *nèt*;
- (d) in verb prefixes: *ap-*, *at-*, *pa-*, *pra-*, *ne-*, *be-*, *te-*, *nebe-*, *tebe-*: *àpneša*, *àtveža*, *pàkelia*, *pràdeda*, *nèkalba*, *tèveda*, *nebèveža*, *tebèkalba* (see 21.3.2);
- (e) in adjective degree suffixes: *-èsnis*, *-èsnè*: *vyrèsnis*, *jaunèsnè*, *gražèsnis*, *gerèsnè* (see 3.3.1);
- (f) in masculine nominative singular of definite forms: *linksmàsis*, *antràsis*, *savàsis*, *esamàsis*, *būtàsis*, *būsimàsis* (see 21.2.2);
- (g) in two-syllable infinitives and forms that are made from them: *ràsti*, *ràsdamas*, *ràsdavau*, *ràsiu*, *ràsčiau*, *ràsk*, *ràsčiau*, *nèšti*, *nèšdamas*, *nèštum*, *nèšk*, *nèšiu* (except for passive future participle, there it lengthens: *ràstas*, *nèštas*);
- (h) in onomatopoeic words of weaker action and verbs made from them: *kràpšt*, *stràkt*, *tèkšt*, *trèpt*, etc., *kràpštelėti*, *stràksime*, *tèkštelėti*, *trèpsime* (see 12.1); and
- (i) in new words of non-Lithuanian origin: *mètras*, *logopedù* (Instr. sg.), *poèzija*, *geomètrija*;

In modern use the accented short vowels can be lengthened.

1.2.2 When pronouncing some vowels, the tongue moves to the front, whereas when pronouncing others, it moves to the back. Depending on the position of the tongue **front** and **back** vowels are distinguished. Knowing this is important for practical reasons because vowels have an effect on consonants that precede them in words. Thus, consonants that precede front vowels are palatalized (softened), whereas those that precede back vowels are not palatalized.

1.2.2.1 Front vowels [ɛ], [æ:], [e:], [e], [i:], [i] are denoted by letters *e*, *ę*, *ė*, *i*, *į*, *y*. A consonant or consonant group preceding these vowels is palatalized (softened): *greĩti*, *lietĩngi*, *silpnĩ*.

1.2.2.2 Back vowels [a:], [a], [o:], [o], [u:], [u] are denoted by letters *a*, *ą*, *o*, *u*, *ũ*, *ų*. Consonants preceding these vowels are not palatalized (softened): *namãĩ*, *móku*, *protũ*.

1.3 Diphthongs

Lithuanian has various diphthongs. They can consist only of vowels or of vowels and certain consonants (semi-diphthongs).

1.3.1 Diphthongs consist of two vowels that are not pronounced as separate sounds, but one sound smoothly passes into the other. Diphthong as a whole is the basis of a syllable. In an accented syllable they can be pronounced stressing more the first or the second component. Some of them are more merged (*ie, uo*), others are less merged (*au, ai, ei, ui*). There is also a third kind that is found only in words of non-Lithuanian origin. Diphthongs are always the basis of a long syllable.

1.3.1.1 There are two merged diphthongs: *ie, uo*. They are pronounced in a way that makes it difficult to distinguish the separate components: *pienas, lieka, duona, tuoj*. They should be pronounced clearly both in accented and in non-accented positions; however, in the spoken language the non-accented ones are often pronounced as *è, o*: *pienas – penēlis* (should be: *pienēlis*), *púodas – podēlis* (should be: *puodēlis*). Academics consider these diphthongs to be vowels of varying height (and not the merger of two vowels).

1.3.1.2 Both vowels of the compound diphthongs *au, ai, ei, ui* are clearly distinguishable in accented and in non-accented positions: *láukia, saúsas, lauktùvès, láimè, dáiną, dairýtis, léisti, eĩti, ùiti, muĩlas, muiliúkas*.

1.3.1.3 New diphthongs *eu, oi, ou* are found in words of non-Lithuanian origin: *Europà, farmacèutas, bòileris, klòunas*.

1.3.2 Semi-diphthongs consist of short vowels *a, e, i, u* and sonant consonants *l, m, n, r*. There are 16 of them: *al, am, an, ar, el, em, en, er, il, im, in, ir, ul, um, un, ur*. As a whole they are the basis of a syllable. For the accented syllable, either the first or the second component can be stressed: *báltas, lángas, arklýs, pélkè, lémpa, leñkti, peřka, pĩlnas, imĩti, riñkti, piřkti, pũlti, stũmti, sunkùs, puřvas*.

1.4 Consonants

In modern Lithuanian consonants are denoted by 20 separate letters *b, c, č, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, š, t, v, z, ž* and three

combinations of two letters *ch, dz, dž*. Consonants *f, h, ch* are found only in words of non-Lithuanian origin.

Some of them are sonant (denoted by letters *l, m, n, r* and *v, j*), others are not sonant. The latter form pairs depending on whether the vocal cords are used in pronouncing them. They can be voiced (denoted by letters *b, d, g, z, ž, h, dz, dž*) or voiceless (denoted by letters *p, t, k, s, š, ch, c, č, f*).

All Lithuanian consonants, except for [j], which is always soft, can be **soft** and **hard**. Besides, in the flow of speech they are affected by regressive **assimilation**, i.e. they mimic some characteristic of the following consonants.

1.4.1 **Softening** of consonants, or palatalization, is characteristic to Lithuanian. This means that when pronouncing some consonants, the middle of the tongue is raised towards the palate. Consonants can be palatalized and non-palatalized, in other words can be soft and hard. This is an important characteristic because this performs distinctive function, i.e. distinguishes meaning of words, e.g. *gabùs* (Nom. m. sg.) [gabùs] – *gabiùs* (Acc. m. pl.) [gab_ɨùs], *brangùs* (Nom. m. sg.) [brangùs] – *brangiùs* (Acc. m. pl.) [brang_ɨùs].

In writing, the palatalization is denoted by the letter *i*, which is also called **soft sign** (palatalization sign) (e.g. in words *gabi_ius* and *brangi_ius*).

N.B. In that case, the letter *i* does not denote a sound but only marks the palatalization of the consonant.

Consonants can be soft, pronounced palatalized, and this softness is not marked specifically in writing in the following cases:

- (a) when they precede front vowels, long and short [ɛ], [æ:], [e:], [e], [i:], [i]: *miel_i, gėl_i*;
- (b) when they precede other soft consonants: *priek_is, žvilg_isniais, sriub_a*.

If a soft consonant precedes the back vowel, its softness is denoted by the letter *i*. And this happens when form endings, that start with the back vowel, are added to the stable part of the word (stem) that ends with a soft consonant, for instance:

Nom. *peil_i* -is > Gen. *peil_i* +i (indicator of softness) +-o (genitive ending) = *peil_io*

Nom. *gat_j v_j -ė* > Gen. *gat_j v_j +i* (indicator of softness) *+ -ų*
(genitive ending) = *gātvių*

N.B. Soft consonants *d* and *t* preceding back vowels become affricative sounds [tʃ_j] and [dʒ_j] that in writing are denoted by letters *č*, *dž*: *mėdis* > *mėdžiu*, *arti* > *arčiaũ*, *mātė* > *mačiaũ*.

1.4.2 When there are more consonants next to each other, a regressive **assimilation** occurs, i.e. they lose some feature in order to mimic the consonants that follow:

- (a) voiced consonants [b], [d], [g], [z], [ʒ] preceding voiceless [p], [t], [k], [s], [ʃ] become voiceless: *dirbti* [pronounced *dirpti*], *baigti* [*baikt̪i*], *zirzti* [*ziršt̪i*], *vežti* [*vèšt̪i*], *užpylė* [*ušp̪ylė*] and *džiaugsmas* [*džiaũksmas*];
- (b) voiceless consonants [p], [t], [k], [s], [ʃ] preceding voiced [b], [d], [g], [z], [ʒ] become voiced: *pusbrolis* [*p̪usbrolis*], *vesdamas* [*vèzd̪amas*], *laukdamas* [*l̪aukd̪amas*];
- (c) consonant [s] preceding [tʃ] becomes [ʃ] *pėsčias* [*p̪èščias*], *vesčiau* [*vèščiau*];
- (d) consonant [z] preceding [dʒ] becomes [ʒ]; *pavyzdžiui* [*p̪āv̪yžd̪žiui*];
- (e) in case [s], [ʃ], [z], [ʒ] are next to each other, only the one last consonant is pronounced: *užsienis* [*ùsienis*], *užšaukė* [*ùšauk̪ė*], *pusžiemis* [*p̪ùžiemis*].

When two identical consonants come together in the flow of speech, only one is pronounced: *pusseserė* [*p̪ùseser̪ė*], *perrašyti* [*p̪érašyti*], *užžėlė* [*užž̪ėlė*].

The voiced consonants become voiceless when they occur at the end of the word: *kad* [*k̪at̪*], *niekad* [*nièk̪at̪*] and *visat* [*vis̪at̪*].

Chapter 2

Nouns

Nouns are words that express names of objects, people, phenomena, characteristics and actions. They are classified into proper and common nouns. Lithuanian nouns have two genders: masculine or feminine and they are inflected for number and case. Some grammatical forms can be related with meaning, for example, names of males are of masculine gender and female of feminine gender. Names of uncountable nouns are not inflected for number.

2.1 Proper nouns

Proper nouns express the individual name of a person, animal, place, institution, holiday or publication, e.g. *Jūnas* [person's name], *Mārgis* [dog's name], *Vilnius* [name of city], *Anglija* 'England', *Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas* 'Vytautas Magnus University', *Kalėdos* 'Christmas', „*Odisėja*“ 'Odyssey'. Proper nouns usually are not inflected for number. Many place names in Lithuanian have only the singular form, e.g. *Baltija* 'Baltic sea', *Dunajus* 'Danube', *Europa* 'Europe', *Kaukāzas* 'Caucasus', *Londonas* 'London'. Others have only the plural form, e.g. *Atėnai* 'Athens', *Alpės* 'The Alps', *Filipinai* 'Philippines'. Proper names are written with a capital letter.

2.2 Common nouns

Common nouns mean concrete or abstract things. Concrete nouns are names of objects, people, material and similar, i.e. what is touchable or possible to see, e.g. *vyras* 'man', *moteris* 'woman',

gātvė ‘street’, *stālas* ‘table’, *miltai* ‘flour’, *pìenas* ‘milk’, *žirklės* ‘scissors’, *nāmas* ‘house’, *knygá* ‘book’, *sviestas* ‘butter’, *sultys* ‘juice’. Abstract nouns denominate abstract concepts, such as quality, action and abstract ideas, e.g. *gėris* ‘good(ness)’, *šilumà* ‘warmth’, *bėgimas* ‘(the) running’, *laimė* ‘happiness’, *mėilė* ‘love’.

2.3 Gender: masculine, feminine

Lithuanian nouns are of **masculine** or **feminine** gender. The names of people and some animals have a motivated gender: masculine nouns are names of male people and animals, whereas feminine nouns are names of female people and animals. The gender of inanimate things and some animals is not motivated. Nouns of different genders have different endings.

2.3.1 Masculine gender

Endings of masculine gender nouns are *-(i)as*, *-is*, *-ys*, *-(i)us*, *-uo*:

tėvas ‘father’
kėlias ‘road’
brólis ‘brother’
traukinỹs ‘train’
vaĩsius ‘fruit’
akmuõ ‘stone’

The types with endings *-(i)as*, *-is* are dominant, those with *-ys* are infrequent, whereas those with *-(i)us*, *-uo* are rather rare.

The ending *-is* can be of either masculine or feminine gender; however, the declension of masculine and feminine words in the *-is* is different. Most of the masculine nouns that end in *-is*, in the genitive case have the ending *-io*: *brólis* > *brólio* ‘brother’ (Nom.-Gen.), *triũšis* > *triũšio* ‘rabbit’ (Nom.-Gen.) (see 2.5.1). Some of them have *-ies* in the genitive, e.g. *dantìs* ‘tooth’, *debesìs* ‘cloud’, *vagìs* ‘thief’, *žvèrìs* ‘beast’ (see 2.5.1.6).

The masculine gender is indicated by adjectival words, e.g. *jũodas* *debesìs* ‘black cloud’.

Exception: there is one noun ending in *-uo* that is not masculine but feminine: *sesuõ* ‘sister’.

2.3.2 Feminine gender

Gender:
masculine,
feminine

Endings of feminine nouns are *-(i)a*, *-ė*, *-is*:

mótina ‘mother’
vyšnià ‘cherry’
gātvė ‘street’
akìs ‘eye’

The types with endings *-a* and *-ė* are dominant, whereas those with *-ia* and *-is* are less frequent. Feminine nouns with *-is* have *-ies* in the genitive case (see 2.5.1.6).

akìs > *akiė̃s* ‘eye’ (Nom.-Gen.)
pilìs > *piliė̃s* ‘castle’ (Nom.-Gen.)

There are only two feminine nouns with the ending *-i*: *martì* and *patì* (see 2.5.1.5).

One noun with the ending *-ė* *duktė̃*, declined like *sesuõ* (see 2.5.1.2).

2.3.3 Foreign loan words

Lithuanian has nouns that have come from other languages. The majority of those nouns have the same grammatical characteristics as the Lithuanian words. Their masculine or feminine gender is indicated by the same endings; for instance, words like *bánkas* ‘bank’, *diktántas* ‘dictation’, *interválas* ‘interval’, *stìlius* ‘style’, *tráktorius* ‘tractor’ and alike are of masculine gender, whereas words like *integrácija* ‘integration’, *baktèrija* ‘bacteria’, *bázė* ‘basis’, *galèrija* ‘gallery’, *tablètė* ‘tablet’, *fũnkcija* ‘function’ and alike are of feminine gender. However, there are such words that have endings uncommon to Lithuanian nouns *-o*, *-u*, *-i*. They are not inflected, e.g. *bistrò* ‘bistro’, *interviũ* ‘interview’, *taksi* ‘taxi’, *kupė̃* ‘(train) compartment’. Their gender is indicated by adjectival words, e.g. *māžas bistrò* ‘small bistro’, *įdomũs interviũ* ‘interesting interview’, *naūjas taksi* ‘new taxi’.

Such nouns with endings *-o*, *-u*, *-i* are of masculine gender.

Some nouns of non-Lithuanian origin with the ending *-ė*, e.g. *ateljė̃* ‘atelier’ *fojė̃* ‘foyer’ are of feminine gender but they are not

declined. Their gender is indicated by the adjective, e.g. *naujà ateljė* ‘new atelier’, *puošni fojė* ‘gorgeous foyer’.

2.3.4 Names of people

Names of people have a motivated gender: names of men are always masculine, and names of women are always feminine. Many names of people make pairs that only differ in ending and indicate a different sex of the person, e.g.

kāsininkas m. – *kāsininkė* f. ‘cashier’
keleivis m. – *keleivė* f. ‘passenger’
kompozitorius m. – *kompozitorė* f. ‘composer’
kvailys m. – *kvailė* f. ‘fool’
ministras m. – *ministrė* f. ‘minister’
mokinys m. – *mokinė* f. ‘pupil’
senėlis m. – *senėlė* f. ‘grandfather-grandmother’
studeñtas m. – *studeñtė* f. ‘student’
valdovas m. – *valdovė* f. ‘monarch’
veikėjas m. – *veikėja* f. ‘agent’

When generalizing, talking about men and women together, the masculine gender is used, e.g. *keleiviai* ‘passengers’, *studeñtai* ‘students’.

Names of men and women according to profession, job, kinship, place of origin or residence and alike can be formed with suffixes and prefixes from different words (see 2.7.12; 2.7.2.3).

2.3.4.1 Some names of people that make pairs according to biological sex have different word stems:

berniukas ‘boy’ – *mergaitė* ‘girl’
brólis ‘brother’ – *sesuo* ‘sister’
dėdė ‘uncle’ – *tetą* ‘aunt’
sūnūs ‘son’ – *duktė* ‘daughter’
tėvas ‘father’ – *mótina* ‘mother’
výras ‘man’ – *móteris* ‘woman’
výras ‘husband’ – *žmoną* ‘wife’

2.3.4.2 In Lithuanian there is a group of nouns that can mean either male or female persons. Usually, these words denote

people for a negative feature. The majority of these nouns have an ending *-a*:

akìplēša ‘squirt, aleck’, *garbétroška* ‘greedy for honours’, *kváiša* ‘dumbo, nutcase’, *naktibalda* ‘night-walker’, *plevéša* ‘playboy, Jack-the-lad’, *príešgina* ‘contrarian’, *válkata* ‘vagrant, vagabond’

The gender for such nouns in a sentence is shown by adjectival words, e.g.:

Tas vaikinas tikras akiplēša. ‘That lad is a real squirt.’
Mergaitė buvo baisi nenuorama. ‘The girl was a real terror.’

There are some masculine nouns that mean male persons and have endings *-a* and *-ė*, e.g. *vaidilà* ‘pagan priest’, *dėdė* ‘uncle’, male surnames *Noreikà*, *Krėvė*.

2.3.5 Names of animals also sometimes have a motivated gender. Similarly to persons, they constitute pairs that differ in ending:

bríedis m. – *bríedė* f. ‘male elk – female elk’
liūtas m. – *liūtė* f. ‘lion – lioness’
tigras m. – *tigrė* f. ‘tiger – tigress’
vilkas m. – *vilkė* f. ‘wolf – she-wolf’

Names of animals of different sex can be formed with suffixes (see 2.7.1.7).

2.3.5.1 Names of animals of male and female sex can also be words of different stems:

arkl̥ys – *kumėlė* ‘horse – mare’
jautis – *kárvė* ‘ox – cow’
šuō – *kalė* ‘dog – bitch’
vištà – *gaidỹs* ‘hen – cock’

2.3.5.2 When talking about the same animals in a **generalized** manner, one noun is used to name animals of both sexes, either masculine or feminine:

Mano sesuo labai myli arklius. ‘My sister loves horses a lot.’
Ūkininkai turėjo daug avių. ‘The farmers had a lot of sheep.’

2.3.5.3 The young of animals are usually called by masculine nouns:

ančiukas ‘duckling’, *ėriukas* ‘lamb’, *kačiukas* ‘kitten’, *paršiukas* ‘piglet’, *šuniukas* ‘puppy’, *viščiukas* ‘chicken’, *veršiukas* ‘calf’

2.4 Number

Lithuanian nouns that mean countable things are inflected for number. In standard Lithuanian there are two numbers: **singular and plural**. In some dialects an archaic dual form is used that the standard does not have anymore. Most concrete nouns, that denominate countable things, are inflected for number. Singular and plural forms differ in endings:

- as > -ai *nāmas* ‘house’ *namāi* ‘houses’
- ias > -iai *kēlias* ‘road’ *keliai* ‘roads’
- is (-io) > -iai *brólis* ‘brother’ *bróliai* ‘brothers’
- ys > -iai *traukinỹs* ‘train’ *traukiniai* ‘trains’
- a > -os *knygà* ‘book’ *knỹgos* ‘books’
- ia > -ios *vyšnià* ‘cherry’ *vỹšnios* ‘cherries’
- ė > -ės *gėlė* ‘flower’ *gėlės* ‘flowers’
- is (-ies) > -ys *dantìs* ‘tooth’ *dañtys* ‘teeth’
- us > -ūs *tuřgus* ‘market’ *tuřgūs* ‘markets’
- ius > *iai skaičius* ‘number’ *skaičiai* ‘numbers’
- uo > -(en)ys *akmuō* ‘stone’ *akmenys* ‘stones’
- uo > -(er)ys *sesuō* ‘sister’ *sēserys* ‘sisters’

2.4.1 There are some nouns that, even though they mean **countable** things, have only one form: **plural**. They are usually names of things that consist of more than one part, e.g.:

akiniai ‘glasses’, *karōliai* ‘necklace’, *kėlnės* ‘trousers’, *kópėčios* ‘ladder’, *marškiniai* ‘shirt’, *skalbiniai* ‘laundry’, *smėgenys* ‘brain’, *svarstỹklės* ‘scale, balance’, *vārtai* ‘gate’, *žirklės* ‘scissors’

If there is more than one object being described, plural numerals (see 5.1.2) are used:

dvejì vārtai ‘two gates’, *peñkerios dūrys* ‘five doors’, *trejì kailiniai* ‘three fur coats’, *septynerì marškiniai* ‘seven shirts’, *kėtverios žirklės* ‘four scissors’

In colloquial speech often this rule is not obeyed and plain numerals (see 5.1.1) are used.

2.4.2 Nouns that denominate uncountable things are not inflected for number, they usually have the form of only one number, **only singular** or **only plural**.

2.4.2.1 Collective nouns only have singular form:

augaliĵà ‘vegetation’, *aukštúomenė* ‘high society’, *gyvūniĵà* ‘animal life’, *intelligentiĵà* ‘intelligentsia’, *jauniĵas* ‘youth’, *liáudis* ‘people, folk’, *vargúomenė* ‘underclass’, *visúomenė* ‘society’

2.4.2.2 Names of **abstractions** are not inflected for number, they have either the singular or the plural form. The majority of abstractions have only singular:

baltumas ‘whiteness’, *bėgimas* ‘running’, *būtis* ‘being, existence’, *drąsa* ‘courage’, *elgesys* ‘behaviour’, *grožis* ‘beauty’, *laimė* ‘happiness’, *mėilė* ‘love’

Names of some complex actions that usually involve more than one agent have only plural form:

derýbos ‘negotiation’, *riáušės* ‘riot’, *rinkimai* ‘elections’, *vedýbos* ‘marriage’

2.4.2.3 Names of **holidays**, rituals and certain periods only have the plural form:

Kalėdos ‘Christmas’, *Velykos* ‘Easter’, *vestuvės* ‘wedding’, *krikštýnos* ‘christening, baptism’, *išvakarės* ‘eve’

2.4.2.4 Collections of **things** have only the plural form:

arbątpinigiai ‘tip’, *atsiminimai* ‘memoires’, *pajamos* ‘income’, *sántaupos* ‘savings’

2.4.2.5 Names of **material** have either singular or plural forms. The majority have only singular:

arbatà ‘tea’, *cùkrus* ‘sugar’, *šokolādas* ‘chocolate’, *áuksas* ‘gold’, *smėlis* ‘sand’, *sniėgas* ‘snow’, *deguonis* ‘oxygen’

Some names of material have only the plural form:

dažai ‘paint’, *kliaĩ* ‘glue’, *miltai* ‘flour’, *riebalai* ‘fat, grease’

2.4.2.6 Names of **illnesses** have only one number, either singular or plural.

Only singular: *grìpas* ‘influenza’, *anginà* ‘tonsillitis’, *slogà* ‘cold’

Only plural: *niežai* ‘scabies’, *raupaĩ* ‘smallpox’, *tymai* ‘measles’

2.4.2.7 The names of the **points of the compass** are not inflected for number. *šiaurė* ‘North’ only has the singular form, whereas *pietūs* ‘South’, *rytai* ‘East’, *vakarai* ‘West’ only have the plural form.

2.4.2.8 **Proper nouns** – names of people and places – are usually not inflected for number. They usually have a singular form and some names of places have only the plural form.

Singular: names of people *Onà, Pėtras*, names of places *Lietuvà* ‘Lithuania’, *Parỹzius* ‘Paris’

Plural: names of places *Atėnai* ‘Athens’, *Drũskininkai* [town in Lithuania]

Names of people can be used in the plural form if more than one person with the same name are being talked about, e.g.:

Mũsų klasėje yra du Jonai. ‘There are two Jonai (Johns) in our class.’

Surnames can be used in the plural form if they indicate more people with the same surname or a family:

Visi jų giminės yra Kazlauskai. ‘All of their relatives are Kazlauskai.’
Šiais metais į giminių susitikimą atvyko Jonas ir Vida Kubiliai.
 ‘This year Jonas and Vida Kubiliai came to the relatives’ reunion.’

2.4.2.9 Sometimes nouns, that normally are used only in the singular form, are being expressed in the plural. This happens when the word is being used with some unusual meaning; for instance, a noun meaning a substance is used to indicate not the substance itself but a kind, e.g.:

Druskininkų mineraliniai vandenys yra žinomi ne tik Lietuvoje.
 ‘The mineral waters of Druskininkai are known not only in Lithuania.’

When an abstract noun becomes a concrete one or when using it one wants to emphasize intensity or great quantity, it can be used not in the singular but in the plural form, e.g.:

Šią vasarą buvo neįprasti karščiai. ‘This summer there was unusual heat [lit. heats].’

Senelį kankino baisūs skausmai. ‘Grandfather was tormented by terrible pain [lit. pains].’

2.4.2.10 Some nouns that can be inflected for number are used in the plural form more frequently than in the singular, such as names of grain, berries, vegetables or other, e.g.:

rugiai ‘rye’, *kviečiai* ‘wheat’, *aviėtės* ‘raspberries’, *brāškės* ‘strawberries’, *būlvės* ‘potatoes’, *mōrkos* ‘carrots’, *kruōpos* ‘grits’, *grybai* ‘mushrooms’, *plaukai* ‘hair’, *dūlkės* ‘dust’, *pinigai* ‘money’

Mes labai mėgstame braškes. ‘We really like strawberries.’
Šiame restorane visada yra bulvių patiekalai. ‘This restaurant always has potato dishes.’
Nušluostyk nuo lentynos dulkes. ‘Clean the dust off the shelf.’

2.4.2.11 The plural form rather than singular is used for those names of objects that constitute a pair:

batai ‘shoes’, *dvyniai* ‘twins’, *pīrštinės* ‘gloves’, *slidės* ‘skis’, *ūsai* ‘moustache’

2.4.2.12 In Lithuanian there are nouns that have different meanings in the singular and in the plural forms:

lėdas ‘ice’ – *ledai* ‘ice cream’
nāmas ‘house’ – *namai* ‘home’
mėtas ‘season, time’ – *mėtai* ‘year’

Dabar pavojinga vaikščioti ant ežero ledo. ‘It is dangerous to walk on the ice of the lake now.’
Ar tu mėgsti ledus? ‘Do you like ice cream?’
Namas bus baigtas pavasarį. ‘The house will be finished in spring.’
Šitie namai visada pilni žmonių. ‘This home is always full of people.’
Dabar lemtingų sprendimų metas. ‘This is the time of fateful decisions.’
Kitais metais jie vėl atvyks į svečius. ‘Next year they will come to visit again.’

2.4.2.13 In academic language **singular** can be used with the scope to emphasize the unit as species, type:

Veiksmožodis yra kalbos dalis, reiškianti veiksmą. ‘Verb is a part of speech that expresses action.’
Baltasis gandra yra gandrinių (Ciconiidae) šeimos paukštis. ‘The white stork is a bird in a stork family (Ciconiidae).’

2.5 Case

Most of Lithuanian nouns are inflected for case. Case forms show various relationships of nouns with other words. In the standard language there are six cases that show such relationships:

Nominative
Genitive
Dative
Accusative
Instrumental
Locative

Lithuanian also has a vocative case that does not show a relationship between words but indicates usually a person or an animal that is being spoken to. In grammars it is sometimes listed as the seventh case. Some dialects have one more locative case: illative, that sometimes is used also when speaking the standard language. With genitive, accusative and instrumental prepositions are used as well.

2.5.1 Declension types

The most frequent declension types are masculine nouns ending in *-(i)as*, *-is*, *-ys*, and feminine nouns ending in *-a* and *-ė*. Nouns ending in *-is* (genitive *-ies*), *-(i)us*, *-uo* are used less frequently. In the colloquial language they tend to transit to more frequent types.

Declension of masculine nouns ending in *-(i)as*, *-is*, *-ys*, *-(i)us*:

<i>Singular</i>				
Nom.	-(i) as <i>stālas, kēlias</i> 'table', 'road'	-is <i>brólis</i> 'brother'	-ys <i>traukinỹs</i> 'train'	-(i)us <i>sūnūs, ámžius</i> 'son', 'age'
Gen.	-(i)o <i>stālo, kēlio</i> <i>brólio</i> <i>tráukinio</i>			-(i)aus <i>sūnaūs, ámžiaus</i>
Dat.	-(i)ui <i>stālui, kēliui</i> <i>bróliui</i> <i>tráukiniui</i> <i>sūnui, ámžiui</i>			

Acc.	-(i)q <i>stāiq, kēliq</i>	-j <i>brólj tráukinj</i>	-(i)u <i>sūnu, ámžiu</i>
Instr.	<i>stalù, keliù</i>	-(i)u <i>bróliu tráukiniu</i>	-(i)umi <i>sūnumí, ámžiumi</i>
Loc.	-e, -yje <i>stalè, kelyjè</i>	-yje <i>brólyje traukinyjè</i>	-(i)uje <i>sūnujè, ámžiuje</i>

Non-suffixed nouns ending in *-jas* have contiguous forms of locative ending in *-yje* and *-uje*, e.g. *véjas* > *véjyje/véjuje*, *kraūjas* > *kraūjyje/kraūjuje*

Plural			
Nom.	-(i)ai <i>stalai, keliai</i>	bróliai <i>traukiniai</i>	-ūs, iai <i>sūnūs, ámžiai</i>
Gen.	-(i)u <i>stalū, keliū</i>	bróliu <i>traukiniū</i>	sūnū, ámžiu
Dat.	-(i)ams <i>staláms, keliáms</i>	bróliams <i>traukiniáms</i>	-ums, iams <i>sūnums, ámžiams</i>
Acc.	-(i)us <i>stalūs, keliūs</i>	brólius <i>tráukinius</i>	sūnus, ámžius
Instr.	-(i)ais <i>stalaiš, keliaiš</i>	bróliais <i>traukiniaiš</i>	-umis, -iais <i>sūnumiš, ámžiais</i>
Loc.	-(i)uose <i>staluosè, keliuosè</i>	bróliuose <i>traukiniuosè</i>	sūnuosè, ámžiuosè

The noun *žmogùs* ‘man, person’ is declined in a particular way. Its singular is declined according to the type ending in *-us*, whereas the plural *žmónèš* is declined according to the type ending in *-è* (see 2.5.1.4).

2.5.1.2 Nouns ending in *-uo* are usually masculine and one word, *sesuõ* ‘sister’, is feminine. They are declined according to the same *-uo* declension type. Feminine noun *duktē* ‘daughter’ is exceptionally declined according to the same type. In all cases except singular nominative a formant, *-en-* is inserted in masculine

nouns and a formant *-er-* in feminine nouns. Nouns of this type are declined as follows:

<i>Singular</i>		
Nom.	-uo, -é	
	<i>vanduō</i> 'water'	<i>sesuō, duktĕ</i> 'sister', 'daughter'
Gen.	-en-s <i>vandenš</i>	-er-s <i>sesešs, duktešs</i>
Dat.	-en-iui <i>vādeniui</i>	-er-iai <i>sēseriai, dūkteriai</i>
Acc.	-en-ĭ <i>vādenĭ</i>	-er-ĭ <i>sēserĭ, dūkterĭ</i>
Instr.	-en-iu <i>vādeniu</i>	-er-imi <i>seserimĭ, dukterimĭ</i>
Loc.	-en-yje <i>vādenyĵĕ</i>	-er-yje <i>seseryĵĕ, dukteryĵĕ</i>

<i>Plural</i>		
Nom.	-en-ys <i>vādenys</i>	-er-ys <i>sēserys, dūkterys</i>
Gen.	-en-ų <i>vādenų</i>	-er-ų <i>seserų, dukterų</i>
Dat.	-en-ims <i>vādenĭms</i>	-er-ims <i>seserĭms, dukterĭms</i>
Acc.	-en-is <i>vādenis</i>	-er-is <i>sēsēris, dūkteris</i>
Instr.	-en-imis <i>vādenimĭs</i>	-er-imis <i>seserimĭs, dukterimĭs</i>
Loc.	-en-yse <i>vādenysĕ</i>	-er-yse <i>seserysĕ, dukteryĵĕ</i>

2.5.1.3 Nouns ending in *-(i)us, -uo* are by far less frequent than nouns with other endings; therefore, words with these endings often

converge with more frequent types, e.g. *sūnūs* > *sūnūs* and *sūnāĩ*, *sūnūms* and *sūnāms*, *tuŗgus* > *tuŗgūs* and *tuŗgai*, *tuŗgums* and *tuŗgams*.

2.5.1.4 Declension of feminine nouns ending in *-(i)a* and *-ē*:

Singular		
Nom.	-(i)a , <i>rankà, vřšnià</i> 'hand', 'cherry'	-ē <i>ùpē</i> 'river'
Gen.	-(i)os <i>rańkos, vřšnios</i>	-ēs <i>ùpēs</i>
Dat.	-(i)ai <i>rańkai, vřšniai</i>	-ei <i>ùpei</i>
Acc.	-(i)q <i>rańkq, vřšniq</i>	-ę <i>ùpę</i>
Instr.	-(i)a <i>rankà, vřšnià</i>	-e <i>upē</i>
Loc.	-(i)oje <i>rańkoje, vřšnioje</i>	-ėje <i>ùpėje</i>

Plural		
Nom.	-(i)os <i>rańkos, vřšnios</i>	-ēs <i>ùpēs</i>
Gen.	-(i)u <i>rańku, vřšniu</i>	-iu <i>ùpiu</i>
Dat.	-(i)oms <i>rańkoms, vřšnioms</i>	-ėms <i>ùpėms</i>
Acc.	-(i)as <i>rankàs, vřšniàs</i>	-es <i>upēs</i>
Instr.	-(i)omis <i>rańkomis, vřšniomis</i>	-ėmis <i>ùpėmis</i>
Loc.	-(i)ose <i>rańkose, vřšniose</i>	-ėse <i>ùpėse</i>

Other words ending in *-(i)a* are declined the same way as nouns ending in *-(i)a* and *-ē*, even though they can be both of masculine