

## Bare interrogative-indefinites in Lithuanian

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Indefinite pronouns in Lithuanian are interrogative-based, in the sense that formally they are complexes of interrogative pronouns and markers of indefiniteness. It has been generally assumed that diachronically indefinites are derived from interrogatives (cf. Haspelmath 1997, Bhat 2004). One of the arguments is that in many languages (and Lithuanian is not an exception) interrogatives can be used as indefinites.

In this paper I analyze the indefinite meanings (as delineated in Haspelmath 1997) which the interrogative pronouns can have in different contexts. Most of the interrogative pronouns can be used in the irrealis non-specific function, e.g., *Gal kas (= kas nors) padės jaunai mergaitei?* (Will anybody help a young girl?), *Eidamas pasiimk kokią lazda šunims atsiginti* (When you go, take a stick to protect yourself from dogs).

Some of the bare interrogative-indefinites can also occur in other contexts: specific unknown (*Man tai kas pasakė*. Somebody told me that.), direct negation (*Be ko sugrižo namie*. I came back home without anything), free-choice (*Tai ne kas norės apsiimti*. Not just anybody will want to undertake this). However, certain interrogatives, such as e.g. *kodėl* 'why' cannot be used as indefinites at all.

Some of the indefinite functions attributed to interrogative pronouns by the Dictionary of Lithuanian Language (LKZ, [www.lkz.lt](http://www.lkz.lt)) do not seem to be attested in contemporary speech. For instance, LKZ gives a free-choice meaning for *kur* 'where', but I could not find such examples in the corpora and on the Internet.

Usually bare interrogative-indefinites inherit the meanings of the respective interrogatives (i.e. *kas* 'who' is linked with person/thing), but sometimes they can have absolutely different meanings, e.g.: *Jis nuėjo pievon dar kur prieš saulės tekėjimą!* (*kur*=kažkada in [www.lkz.lt](http://www.lkz.lt) He went out into the field already some time (lit. where) before sunrise).

In Haspelmath (1997:172-173) it is shown that bare interrogative-indefinites can be found in affirmative sentences with non-specific referents, in questions, conditional clauses, imperative and future/uncertain statements. The Lithuanian data prove that this is directly linked to the possible meanings of the analyzed pronouns, though there are some problematic contexts.

The main perspective of analyzing bare interrogative-indefinites is concerned with diachronic research. Such an analysis could determine with which frequency these pronouns are used, whether and in which direction this frequency changed, and how their functions were evolving.

### References

Bhat, D.N.S. (2004) *Pronouns*. Oxford University Press.

Haspelmath, Martin (1997) *Indefinite pronouns*. Oxford University Press.

The Dictionary of Lithuanian Language (Lietuvių kalbos žodynas, [www.lkz.lt](http://www.lkz.lt))