


Directions of research on institutional language consulting: A comprehensive overview

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Abstract: This text provides a comprehensive overview of international research on institutional language consulting, a field that remains underrepresented in linguistic scholarship. It identifies two main strands in the literature: theoretical approaches to norms and codification in consulting contexts, including the analysis of consulting strategies, and empirical studies analyzing user inquiries and consultant responses. The review highlights the diversity of consulting practices across countries and institutions, including the use of corpora, digital tools, and public databases. Key topics discussed include evaluation criteria, the role of norms and codification, levels of linguistic awareness among users, and the relationship between communication channels and associated text types. Further sections explore the organization of consulting data into searchable databases, the application of Language Management Theory, and the integration of language technology into consulting workflows. The review concludes by outlining current research gaps and future directions, emphasizing the need for greater international visibility and more systematic documentation of consulting practices.

Key words: language consulting; institutional practices; Language Management Theory; corpora; normative spelling; codification; evaluation criteria

Forschungsrichtungen zur institutionellen Sprachberatung: Eine umfassende Übersicht

Zusammenfassung: Der vorliegende Überblick fasst den internationalen Forschungsstand zur institutionellen Sprachberatung zusammen, einem bislang wenig beachteten Feld der Linguistik. In der Fachliteratur lassen sich zwei Hauptströmungen identifizieren: theoretische Ansätze zu Normen und Kodifizierung im Kontext der Beratung (einschließlich der Analyse von Beratungsstrategien) sowie empirische Studien, die Nutzeranfragen und Beraterantworten untersuchen. Der Überblick hebt die Vielfalt der Beratungspraktiken in verschiedenen Ländern und Institutionen hervor, unter Berücksichtigung des Einsatzes von Korpora, digitalen Werkzeugen und öffentlichen Datenbanken. Zu den zentralen Themen gehören Bewertungskriterien, die Rolle von Normen und Kodifizierung, das Sprachbewusstsein der Nutzer sowie der Zusammenhang zwischen Kommunikationskanälen und den damit verbundenen Textsorten. Weitere Abschnitte widmen sich der Strukturierung von Beratungsdaten in durchsuchbaren Datenbanken, der Anwendung der Sprachmanagementtheorie (Language Management Theory) sowie der Integration von Sprachtechnologien in den Arbeitsablauf der Sprachberatung. Abschließend werden Forschungslücken und künftige Perspektiven aufgezeigt, insbesondere der Bedarf an internationaler Sichtbarkeit und an einer systematischeren Dokumentation von Beratungspraktiken.

Schlagwörter: Sprachberatung; institutionelle Praktiken; Sprachmanagementtheorie; Korpora; Rechtschreibnorm; Kodifizierung; Bewertungskriterien

1. Introduction

The large number of language consulting services and the high proportion of speakers who turn to them indicate that such metalinguistic activities play a role in social practices (Scholze-Stubenrecht 1991: 182; Riegel 2007: 38–41; Ludányi 2020). The significance of language consulting services is further reflected in the fact that their operation, role, and practices are the subject of numerous scholarly analyses from various disciplinary perspectives.

However, the existence and societal role of institutionalized language consulting are closely tied to specific linguistic cultures, particularly those in Central and Eastern Europe and the German-language sphere. These regions share a long-standing tradition of language cultivation, often referred to as *Sprachpflege* in German (Greule & Ahlvers-Liebel 1986). This tradition has fostered a persistent public expectation for expert guidance on “correct” usage, supported by an extensive network of organizations dedicated to promoting linguistic culture (Bickes & Trabold 1994). Within the framework of Language Management Theory (LMT), as observed by Neustupný and Nekvapil (2003), these activities are conceptualized as ‘organized language management’. The institutional backing in these areas varies. While the Central and Eastern European contexts typically rely on state-funded academies or national research institutes, the German-speaking world presents a hybrid model. Historically, it was shaped by a high degree of centralization, and today it continues to be defined by influential private publishers and semi-official societies that maintain a high level of institutional authority (Jacob & Schwinn 2019). Although certain areas (most notably orthography) are regulated by intergovernmental bodies, general linguistic guidance remains the domain of these diverse institutional actors.

In contrast, in most English-speaking contexts, such centralized authorities have been historically absent. As Cameron (1995) demonstrates in her theory of ‘verbal hygiene’, the urge to regulate language is universal, yet in Anglophone cultures, this authority is decentralized. Instead of a national institute, linguistic guidance is provided by a variety of commercial and professional actors, such as publishers of prestige dictionaries, style guides (e.g., *The Chicago Manual of Style*), and media organizations (Milroy & Milroy 1999). Consequently, the functions that a Central European speaker would seek from an institutional consulting service are, in the English-speaking world, typically absorbed by editorial departments or community-driven online platforms. The institutionalized services discussed in this article, therefore, represent a specific manifestation of language management that emerges in environments where linguistic norms are centrally codified and publicly mediated.

Given these regional specificities, it is essential to analyze the existing body of research through a transparent and structured approach. Therefore, this article presents literature on language consulting through a simplified application of the systematic literature review method (W1; W2; Jakab & P. Tóth 2023: 81–83).¹

¹ This article builds on and significantly expands Chapter III of the author’s Hungarian-language habilitation thesis (Ludányi 2023). At the time of the original research, large language models (LLMs) were not yet

1.1. *Aim and research question of the literature review*

The aim of this article is to explore how the topic of institutional language consulting is examined in international scholarly literature. To the best of the author's knowledge, no such comprehensive review has been published to date; therefore, this study serves to demonstrate that language consulting is a legitimate field of scientific inquiry with an increasingly diverse discourse. The central research question is: What are the dominant research directions and analytical perspectives in the study of institutional language consulting, and how is the relationship between consulting practice and linguistic research conceptualized in these works? By mapping these trends, the overview aims to identify whether consulting is treated as an object of theoretical study, a source of empirical data, or a field for technological application. To ensure a coherent analysis, the review specifically focuses on the German and Central European academic traditions. While influential institutional models exist in other linguistic cultures, such as the Romance languages, they operate within different socio-historical frameworks (Lodge 1993; Del Valle 2013). This study prioritizes the German and Central European sphere because these regions share an intertwined theoretical lineage, which provides the primary conceptual basis for the literature analyzed here.

1.2. *Data collection protocol and selection criteria*

The international literature on language consulting was explored primarily through English and German keywords (“language consulting/counselling/advice/advisory”, “Sprachberatung”) in Google Scholar (W3) and ResearchGate (W4). The choice of English is justified by its status as the global language of science, while German was included because of the long-standing tradition of *Sprachberatung* in German-speaking countries, where language consulting has developed into a well-defined academic sub-discipline with a robust theoretical background. This region has produced foundational theoretical works, including key edited volumes (e.g., Biere & Hoberg 1995) and the first comprehensive monograph on the subject (Riegel 2007), establishing language consulting as a well-defined academic sub-discipline. These works demonstrate that the German-speaking academic sphere provides the essential historical and theoretical basis for the field. While the author acknowledges the significance of other major institutional traditions, such as the French or Spanish models, the scope of the present review is primarily focused on the developmental trajectories and research trends most prevalent in the Central European and Germanic academic spheres. To supplement these searches, the snowball method was applied to identify further relevant studies. While this text does not aim for a comprehensive, systematic coverage of all national language literatures, this approach ensured a broader international perspective by including significant

widely used in academic research. The author recognized that, precisely because the academic value of literature reviews of this kind may diminish with the growing use of AI-based tools, it is timely to publish this carefully compiled and manually constructed review as a standalone contribution.

works in languages such as Czech or Slovenian. From the results, publications focusing on institutional language consulting or research based on consulting data were selected. For works in languages not spoken by the author, English abstracts and DeepL translations (W5) were used for comprehension.² While the core review was conducted in 2022–2023, more recent studies were also analyzed using AI-based tools like NotebookLM (W6) to support accuracy.

One challenge in data collection was the limited online availability of certain works. Where possible, volumes were purchased in electronic format, or authors were contacted via email to request manuscripts. Access to earlier German-language scholarship remains partially restricted by the lack of systematic digitization of older conference proceedings and local journals.

The volume of international literature specifically addressing institutional language consulting is not substantial. Within the broader body of works examining language consulting from various perspectives, two main categories can be distinguished:

- (1) Studies aiming to establish the theoretical foundations of language consulting.
- (2) Studies presenting the operation of specific institutions or language consulting services, typically based on the analysis of submitted questions and responses.

However, since the theoretical foundations of language consulting and the criteria for evaluating linguistic phenomena are often grounded in the practices of specific institutions, the distinction between these two categories remains fluid and difficult to define precisely. It is more appropriate to view the literature as forming a continuum, with theoretical and comprehensive works at one end and empirical studies focused on consulting practice at the other. Within the latter category, this overview distinguishes between praxeological studies and application-oriented research. The former critically examine the processes and social dynamics of institutional consulting. The latter focuses on solving specific language problems or developing language technology support, such as natural language processing (NLP) tools, databases, and AI-driven solutions for practitioners. The international literature is presented below along this continuum, progressing from theoretical frameworks toward empirical analyses of consulting data and technological applications.

2. Overview of international literature on language consulting

2.1. *Theoretical foundations and recent syntheses of language consulting*

The theoretical consolidation of language consulting as a scientific discipline is primarily documented in comprehensive works that represent the foundational “anchors”

² At the time of the primary data collection, large language models (LLMs) were not yet as widely integrated into academic workflows as they are today. Currently, such tools significantly facilitate the preparation of literature reviews by supporting the comprehension of source texts in diverse languages.

of the field. The most comprehensive treatment of the topic of language consulting is found in Mareike Riegel's PhD thesis (2007) titled *Language Consulting in the Context of Language Cultivation and in Relation to Reference Works: With Special Attention to the Language Consulting Service of Wissen Media Verlag*.³ Riegel's work moved the discourse beyond mere practical advice by providing a systematic linguistic analysis of the relationship between consulting, linguistic norms, and reference works. She established that consulting is not just a service but a bridge between rigid codification and situational language use, addressing a significant research gap by examining the methodology of formulating advisory responses and the criteria for evaluating linguistic phenomena.

Building upon this established tradition, more recent comprehensive works have emerged to address the changing landscape of the discipline. While Dvořáková (2024a) and Ludányi (forthcoming)⁴ represent newer, language-specific syntheses in the Czech and Hungarian contexts, they follow Riegel's tradition of providing a holistic, monographic overview rather than focusing on isolated case studies. These recent works extend the theoretical reach of the field by integrating contemporary frameworks such as conversation analysis and Language Management Theory. While the German-language literature (Riegel 2007) remains the most accessible entry point for international scholars, these recent Czech and Hungarian monographs demonstrate the field's evolution into a multi-dimensional and technology-supported discipline.

2.2. Evaluation criteria in language consulting

The question of which evaluation criteria linguists apply in language consulting is central to the thematic volume edited by Biere and Hoberg (1995), based on a symposium held at the Institute for the German Language⁵ in 1992. The volume explores both the goals of language consulting and the methodological principles guiding advisory practices, including the institutional and communicative frameworks in which advice is given.

In his introductory study, Hoberg (1995) distinguishes between two types of language users: those who consider themselves proficient in both spoken and written language, and the majority who are aware of their deviations from standard norms, especially in normative spelling. The latter group tends to seek linguistic guidance through training, manuals, and consulting services. Hoberg also identifies two types of consultants: those who rigidly adhere to traditional norms, and those who aim to justify norms through

³ The original German is *Sprachberatung im Kontext von Sprachpflege und im Verhältnis zu Nachschlagewerken: Unter besonderer Beachtung der Sprachberatungsstelle des Wissen Media Verlages*.

⁴ The reference refers to the forthcoming monograph version of the author's habilitation thesis. At the time of writing, the manuscript is under publication.

⁵ The Institute for the German Language is today officially known as The Leibniz Institute for the German Language (IDS). Located in Mannheim, it serves as the central scientific institution for the documentation and research of the German language in its contemporary and more recent historical forms.

rational, context-sensitive approaches. This latter category aligns with the concept of “democratic language consulting” (Žaucer & Marušič 2009), an approach that moves away from simple “servicing” or binary (correct/incorrect) prescriptions. Instead, it focuses on educating users and strengthening their linguistic confidence by providing arguments, explaining social implications, and leaving the final decision to the speaker. Hoberg emphasizes the lack of collaboration between professionals in language consulting and those in language education, despite the potential benefits of such cooperation. Hoberg argues that the general public is largely unaware of the roles of linguists, educators, and consultants, partly due to limited public engagement by experts. Initiatives such as the selection of the “Unwort des Jahres” (‘Non-Word’ of the Year)⁶ and the “Medienpreis für Sprachkultur” (Media Award for Linguistic Culture) are seen as efforts to raise linguistic awareness. Hoberg highlights the media’s role in shaping public discourse on language norms and calls for linguistically informed journalists in editorial offices.

Greule (1995) conceptualizes language consulting as a distinct form of language cultivation, positioned between mass-media-based efforts and formal education. Drawing on the Prague School’s framework, he describes consulting as a personalized yet indirect mode of linguistic support, typically delivered via written or telephone communication. Written consultations tend to be more detailed and allow for clearer articulation of linguistic concerns. He emphasizes that effective language consulting must be contextually relevant, scientifically grounded, and responsive to the communicative goals of the inquirer. These principles require both linguistic expertise and empirical awareness of language use and norm evolution. Greule also addresses the tension between normative expectations and linguistic flexibility, arguing that language consultants should not only offer guidance but also explain their reasoning, thereby equipping users with the tools they need to navigate future uncertainties. His evaluation framework considers the nature of language consulting, the medium used, the user’s linguistic context, and the institutional background of the service. Ultimately, Greule advocates for a methodologically robust approach grounded in real language consultation data, which can inform and refine the practice of language consulting.

Scholze-Stubenrecht (1995) examines the evaluative criteria used by the Duden language consulting service, which operates both as a publisher of reference works and as a public consulting service. While dictionaries and grammars offer general guidance, the dynamic nature of language requires personalized advice, especially in cases not covered by codified norms. The service functions within a commercial framework, offering free consultations that also promote its publications. User feedback is systematically incorporated into future editions, ensuring responsiveness to linguistic change. Consultants evaluate linguistic phenomena based on norm conformity, user context,

⁶ *Unwort des Jahres* is an annual German initiative that highlights a word or expression considered socially harmful, discriminatory, or misleading, with the aim of promoting critical reflection on public language use.

clarity and standardization, research-informed practice, and professional linguistic competence. While explanations are typically concise, consultants do provide detailed reasoning when necessary, especially in specialized domains where professional usage may diverge from general norms. Drawing on examples from *Richtiges und gutes Deutsch* (Correct and Good German),⁷ Scholze-Stubenrecht illustrates how principles like clarity and linguistic economy guide evaluations. The Duden service aims to balance prescriptive norms with practical, context-sensitive advice, reflecting both linguistic expertise and user expectations.

Ulla Fix (1995), whose work primarily focuses on text linguistics, proposes a comprehensive model of linguistic evaluation that accounts for all aspects of communication. She argues that traditional approaches to evaluation are often fragmented, situationally insensitive, and overly focused on isolated textual units rather than the text as a whole. Moreover, evaluation is not merely a post-hoc activity but an ongoing process embedded in communicative interaction. Fix introduces a model of text-type knowledge that treats text types⁸ as condensed, communicatively functional representations of broader knowledge domains. Text types serve both as action guides and as frameworks for reflection, enabling speakers to shape texts appropriately and adhere to norms. In this view, familiarity with text types is both a prerequisite and a goal of language consulting. She emphasizes that developing valid evaluation criteria for consulting requires detailed descriptions of text types, an area that remains underdeveloped. Adequacy criteria vary in relevance depending on the text type, and their application must be context-sensitive.

A recent study by Dvořáková (2022), conducted at the Language Consulting Centre of the Czech Language Institute (Czech Academy of Sciences), contributes to the discussion on evaluation criteria in language consulting. Although consultants aim for maximum objectivity in their responses, subjective elements do occasionally appear. Dvořáková's research investigates the reasons behind such subjectivity, applying conversation analysis to 63 recorded phone consultations. The findings reveal that subjective expressions are not arbitrary; they occur at specific points in the advisory discourse and serve distinct functions. Subjectivity tends to appear when: (1) consultants offer preliminary solutions before verifying them with reliable sources (e.g., "I think *viz* 'see' is slightly more common, I'll look for some relevant examples"); (2) they apply general rules to specific cases (e.g., choosing between two variants: "I would go with..., depending on the meaning");

⁷ The German title *Richtiges und gutes Deutsch* is commonly used in the literature to refer to the Duden volume that focuses on resolving typical linguistic uncertainties (Hennig et al. 2021). It provides alphabetically organized entries addressing orthographic, grammatical, and stylistic issues. In addition to individual entries, it includes overview articles on topics such as punctuation and capitalization. The volume is part of the broader Duden reference series, which also includes the official orthography and grammar of the German language.

⁸ In the original German text, Fix uses the term *Textmuster* ('text pattern'). In the German specialized literature, the terms and definitions of *Texttyp*, *Textsorte*, and *Textmuster* are not standardized (see Heinemann 2000). In this study, the term *text type* is used in a general sense, subsuming these terms with nuanced differences in interpretation.

(3) they acknowledge the limitations of their response (e.g., “the manuals don’t explicitly cover this, but I would omit punctuation”). Beyond these patterns, consultants also draw on personal experience to support their recommendations. Dvořáková concludes that such subjective elements do not contradict the principle of objectivity. Rather, they signal the complexity of linguistic evaluation and caution users against interpreting the advice as absolute truth.

A noteworthy initiative in this context is the TELMER project, a collaboration between the Czech Language Institute (Czech Academy of Sciences) and the Institute of the Estonian Language. The project aims to foster cooperation among language consulting institutions across countries and to develop universally applicable standards and practices, including evaluation criteria, for language consulting (W7).

2.3. *Norm, codification and language consulting*

The role of linguistic norms and codification is central to understanding the practice of language consulting. The examination of underlying norms and their codification provides crucial insight into how authority, expertise, and prescriptiveness are constructed within consulting interactions.

Riegel’s previously cited monographic study (2007: 33–36) also addresses the relationship between language consulting and linguistic norms, arguing that consulting inherently presupposes the existence of a norm. Drawing on Höhne (1991), she emphasizes that advice should reflect both actual usage and the communicative context; an approach that contrasts with the more prescriptive practice of the Duden consulting service (Scholze-Stubenrecht 1991, 1995). In this framework, a distinction can be made between the norm as an intersubjective, albeit idealized construct (cf. Lanstyák 2018), and codification, which represents the formal recording of these norms in reference works. This distinction leads to a central dilemma: how should consultants proceed when actual usage diverges from the codified norms found in dictionaries and grammars? Large corpora, already available online by 2007, offer a way to bridge this gap by providing empirical data for consulting. Beyond linguistic reality and context, Riegel identifies two further factors: situational appropriateness and linguistic intuition. The latter, defined as emotionally grounded knowledge shaped by experience, may guide consultants in cases where reference materials and corpora fall short. While some scholars argue that linguists should not rely on intuition, Riegel contends that in consulting, it can be necessary and valid. Ultimately, she highlights the tension between descriptive linguistic principles and the normative expectations of users, who often seek clear, prescriptive answers. Consultants must navigate between linguistic norms, real usage, context, intuition, and user expectations, making language consulting a complex and multifaceted task.

The operational strategies of language consulting services are closely linked to the nature of their institutional authority. In the Bulgarian model, the service derives its power from a 1950 government decree, granting it official legal authority and binding codification status, where consultants even serve as expert witnesses in court cases (Uhlířová

& Tomov 2008). Conversely, the Czech model discussed by Mžourková (2024) illustrates a system where authority is rooted in academic prestige rather than legal compulsion. In this framework, the consultant acts as a mediator whose primary goal is to facilitate dialogue between linguists and the general public. A similar approach is characteristic of the Hungarian model; while consultants represent the authority of their respective institutions, they increasingly avoid authoritative dictates in favor of research-backed arguments and a discursive, participatory relationship with users (Ludányi & Domonkosi 2023). A distinct contrast is provided by the commercial model (e.g., Duden), where authority is rooted in market success and the reputation of reference works. As discussed in Section 2.2 regarding Scholze-Stubenrecht's (1995) findings, in this framework, consulting often functions as a marketing tool to promote publications by providing personalized advice alongside codified norms.

Klosa (2010) examines the relationship between linguistic norms and codification based on inquiries received by the Duden editorial team's language consulting service, which handles approximately 200 phone calls daily and 35–40 letters weekly. She argues that despite the need for stability, codified norms must remain flexible to reflect ongoing language change. One example involves difficulties native speakers face in forming past tense verb forms, the dilemma being whether to apply regular or irregular conjugation. Consultants typically begin by consulting dictionaries, but these often lack sufficient detail. They then turn to descriptive grammars and usage manuals, which better capture variation and norm shifts. Corpus data from the Institute for the German Language (IDS) also supports their evaluations.

Hennig and Koch (2016) analyze user interactions on *Grammatikfragen.de* (W8), a formerly active public online forum, where users submitted grammar questions that were answered by linguistic experts. Their study, based on 610 questions from February 2015, explores how everyday speakers engage with codification processes and what expectations they hold regarding language norms. The most frequent question type concerned syntax (32.5%), although this high proportion is primarily due to the authors' methodological decision to categorize all inquiries regarding syntagmatic relations, such as prepositional government and subject-verb congruence, under syntax rather than assigning them to specific parts of speech (Hennig & Koch 2016: 184). Questions were categorized into four types: (1) genuine variation, where multiple forms coexist (e.g., competing adjective inflections), (2) individual errors, where one form is clearly ungrammatical, (3) variation across language varieties, such as written vs. spoken standard, and (4) complexity issues. This final category refers to language problems that arise from intricate syntactic structures, making it difficult for users to distinguish between genuine variation and individual errors. These linguistic uncertainties typically arise in syntactically dense contexts and would likely not occur in simpler sentence structures. Users often sought clear normative judgments, reflecting a desire for definitive answers. However, consultants aimed to present recommendations rather than prescriptive rules, encouraging users to make informed choices. Despite this, feedback revealed a persistent binary perception of “correct vs. incorrect” forms. The authors also examined user

responses to expert answers, which were generally sparse and respectful, reinforcing the perception of the forum as an authoritative space. Feedback ranged from gratitude and follow-up questions to occasional disagreement or correction, indicating limited but meaningful user engagement. Further analysis grouped questions by user intent: seeking confirmation of a preferred form, requesting neutral evaluation of multiple variants, asking for judgment on a single questionable form (with or without prior user assessment), requesting information, typically related to grammar tasks, which were excluded from codification analysis. Overall, the study concludes that *Grammatikfragen.de* functioned as a codification platform, with users viewing consultants not only as norm authorities but also as interpreters of linguistic variation. The forum's structure enabled indirect public participation in codification processes.

However, this digital participation is not limited to expert-led forums; the broader online environment has also enabled the emergence of alternative, non-professional sources of authority. As Paveau (2011) argues, the distinction between linguists and non-linguists is not a simple binary but a continuum of linguistic involvement. A comparable approach is taken by Jakab (forthcoming), who distinguishes between “institutional” and “everyday” language consulting, while emphasizing that these are flexible, scalar categories based on the prototype principle. According to Jakab, “everyday” consulting (such as online forums or Facebook groups) is characterized by a lack of scientific monitoring and theoretical grounding. This connects her framework to the findings of Žaucer and Marušič (2009), who, in their analysis of lay forums such as *Al' prav se piše...?* (Is it written correctly...?), identify these platforms as frequently linguistically naive and characterized by an intolerant, unjustifiably prescriptive tone. The proliferation of such interpretations leads to a form of codification plurality (Dovalil 2018: 2). This situation occurs where conflicting or competing versions of language rules coexist online often undermining the perceived exclusivity of central authority. While lay interpretations frequently align with official norms, their decentralized nature and often rigid prescriptivism can create a fragmented normative environment. This fragmented digital environment was a key catalyst for modernizing official services in several countries, most notably in Slovenia (Dobrovoljc et al. 2020: 15).

Accordingly, Lengar Verovnik and Dobrovoljc (2022) examine the revision process of the Slovenian normative language guide (Dobrovoljc et al. 2022), particularly its orthographic component, within the framework of Language Management Theory (Jernudd & Neustupný 1987). The revision, ongoing since 2013, emphasizes the principle of “flexible stability” rooted in Prague School linguistics. The initial phase involved a systematic review of existing orthographic literature, critique of current rules, and analysis of corpora and other linguistic data. Adopting a bottom-up approach, the authors stress the importance of incorporating speaker perspectives, especially through feedback collected by the Fran Ramovš Institute's language consulting service. This service originated from user responses to the 2001 normative guide, which invited feedback via email. The volume of responses led to the establishment of a formal consulting unit in 2012, which now publishes questions and answers online, including on the searchable Fran portal (W9)

since 2014. The consulting service benefits both users and linguists: it offers timely, accessible support and compensates for gaps in reference materials, while also providing empirical data for revising the normative guide. Key insights include identifying under-represented orthographic areas, tracking emerging issues, and evaluating which rules require updating or remain adequate. The authors conclude that digital communication enables real-time validation of linguistic decisions and facilitates inclusive, data-driven norm development.

Building on the revision process of the Slovenian normative guide discussed by Lengar Verovnik and Dobrovoljc (2022), Vranjek Ošlak (2023) investigates the role of language consulting in addressing normative gaps within Slovenian standard language resources, focusing on the online normative guide hosted on the Fran portal. The study highlights how consulting activities complement existing reference materials, especially where codification is incomplete or ambiguous. The Slovenian guide comprises three components: *Pravopis 8.0* (normative rules, Dobrovoljc et al. 2022), *ePravopis* (online orthographic dictionary, Černivec et al. 2023), and *Pravopisne kategorije* (commentary on codification changes, Dobrovoljc et al. 2023). The consulting service interprets and supplements these resources, bridging gaps and facilitating user understanding. The author classifies normative dilemmas – points of uncertainty in standard usage – into two main types: (1) interpretation issues, where rules exist but are unclear or contradictory, often due to complex punctuation norms or inconsistent dictionary entries, and (2) unaddressed issues, where no guidance is available, typically involving neologisms or foreign terms. – In both cases, consultants provide explanations, examples, and practical advice, while feeding user feedback into ongoing updates of *ePravopis*. The consulting process aligns with the first stages of language management: noting, evaluating, and resolving deviations; and supports cyclical standardization efforts. The study concludes that the Slovenian consulting service plays a central role in norm development, acting as interpreter, mediator, and feedback channel. Its responsiveness to real-time user input enables more coherent, user-friendly, and adaptable normative resources than traditional static guides.

In Germany, the language consulting services operated by publishers primarily engaged in producing linguistic reference works (such as Duden and Wissen⁹) also play a significant role in orthographic codification. This is because these publishers' consulting services delegate representatives to the intergovernmental body responsible for overseeing and standardizing German orthography, the Council for German Orthography (W11). As a result, updates to orthographic rules are made in accordance with language users' needs, for example, by clarifying rule formulations or replacing existing examples (Riegel 2007: 48).

⁹ Based on online searches, the language consulting service of Wissen Media Verlag no longer appears to be active. It is also absent from the updated member list of the Council for German Orthography (Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung) as of October 2025 (W10). Among publisher-based consulting services, Duden remains a member of the council.

2.4. *Language consulting and levels of linguistic awareness*

Another highly promising yet largely unexplored research direction concerns the levels of linguistic awareness involved in language consulting. As far as current research indicates, this aspect has been systematically addressed by only one scholar. Woldt (2010) examines questions submitted to and responses given by the Czech Language Institute's consulting center to explore how linguistic awareness manifests itself in both lay users and consultants. She distinguishes linguistic awareness from related concepts such as intuition, attitude, and reflection, and applies Leibniz's model of cognition to describe different levels of linguistic knowledge: from vague recognition to scientifically adequate understanding.

She identifies three functional levels of linguistic knowledge: (1) structural knowledge of the language system, (2) pragmatic knowledge of usage, (3) awareness of language's social-symbolic function. While the first two levels are commonly reflected in consulting interactions, the third is largely absent, which Woldt attributes to the practical focus of language consulting. Empirically, she categorizes user questions into three types: choosing between variants, confirming correctness, and open-ended inquiries. Users often express normative assumptions, expecting definitive answers and viewing linguistic norms as fixed and universally binding. Consultants, however, tend to offer recommendations rather than prescriptive judgments. Their responses are typically longer, argument-based, and grounded in codified norms, corpus data, and historical usage. They favor terms like "appropriate" or "acceptable" over "correct," reflecting a shift toward context-sensitive adequacy.

Woldt summarizes consultants' view of correctness as: (A) linked to codification, (B) dependent on context, (C) based on actual usage, (D) not governed by logic. She also analyzes linguistic differences in user and consultant discourse. Consultants use more metalinguistic terminology and avoid normative statements, favoring advisory expressions such as "we recommend..." or "it is preferable to...". Overall, their approach reflects a move from rigid normativity toward pragmatic, usage-based guidance.

2.5. *Channels and associated text types in language consulting*

Research on the channels and text types of language consulting represents a promising yet still relatively underexplored area. While the practical relevance of these communication modes is evident, as they shape both the interaction between consultants and clients and the linguistic form of advice itself, systematic analyses remain limited. A few notable studies, however, have addressed this dimension, among them the already cited monograph by Riegel (2007: 36–38), who discusses three primary channels of language consulting: postal letters, telephone calls, and emails. Each medium influences the nature of the interaction and the structure of the discourse. Postal letters are typically sent by highly motivated users who invest time and effort in formulating their questions. These inquiries tend to be well-structured and reflective, aiding consultants in understanding the linguistic issue. The tangible nature of the response and the possibility of rereading it are advantages, though time delays and users' hesitation due to fear of making

errors may be drawbacks. Telephone consultations offer immediacy and interactivity, allowing users to request clarification in real time. However, they may be less precise, as users often struggle to articulate their questions clearly. Consultants face time pressure and limited opportunity for in-depth analysis, and the lack of a written record may hinder retention. Email consulting combines the advantages of both: it allows quick contact and detailed written responses. It reduces users' inhibitions and enables consultants to provide well-researched answers. Riegel sees email as a middle ground between the depth of postal letters and the immediacy of phone calls. From a text-typological perspective, each channel generates distinct discourse structures. Email responses follow a consistent format: formal greeting, quoted question, structured answer with typographic markers, and a closing formula. The tone is neutral and explanatory, occasionally adapted to the social context of the inquiry (e.g., humorous or cautious responses depending on the situation).

In her case study, Uhlířová (2002) examines how staff at the Czech Language Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences used electronic mail, a relatively new form of communication in the early 2000s, in their language consulting practice. Analyzing a corpus of over 3,000 emails received between 1999 and 2000, she describes the linguistic and stylistic features of email-based language consulting discourse. The results show that both the inquiry emails and the responses tend to be relatively short. The writers of inquiry emails strive to follow the norms of written Czech (which correlates with the fact that most questions concern issues in written registers, such as spelling and grammar). The emails frequently contain singular or plural first-person pronouns and verb forms, and syntactically, they are characterized by a predominance of coordinate clauses. Due to their nature, inquiry emails typically include interrogative sentences and various modal verbs, modifiers, and multi-word phrases (e.g., "I think," "I suppose," "I believe," "I'm not sure," "maybe," etc.). The study also addresses the superstructure of the email as a text type in language consulting. It presents typical forms of address, the variety of formulations used to pose questions, common closing phrases, and types of signatures. Uhlířová then analyzes the properties of the consulting discourse, highlighting its dialogic nature. She notes that those who contact the language consulting center do not represent the entire Czech-speaking population. Rather, they are typically individuals who use Czech as a professional tool – translators, journalists, editors, secretaries – and therefore take an active interest in the norms of written Czech. As a broader reflection, the author points out that the emails received by the consulting center provide valuable linguistic and sociolinguistic data about the current state of the Czech language, the linguistic challenges speakers face when producing written texts, and their language attitudes. Telephone interactions are less rigid, typically consisting of greeting, problem description, response, and farewell. Consultants may provide additional clarification only upon request, as lengthy explanations may be difficult to process orally. Overall, language consulting is a complex social activity involving multiple, interrelated text types. Consultants tend to avoid normative statements, favoring advisory expressions such as "we recommend..." or "it is preferable to...", reflecting a shift toward usage-based, context-sensitive guidance.

2.6. Possibilities for organizing language consulting data into databases

Language consulting institutions often archive and systematize the knowledge accumulated over time, creating searchable databases. As Uhlířová (1997) notes, the Czech Language Institute began digitally archiving questions and answers in the early 1990s.¹⁰ By the end of 1996, the database contained 1,400 records, including letters, faxes, selected phone calls, and in-person consultations. In addition to technical and bibliographic metadata (e.g., date, names, addresses), it included sociological data (e.g., occupation), keyword-based descriptions of linguistic problems and solutions, and occasionally pragmatic context (e.g., motivations, attitudes, emotions). Uhlířová used the database to compile detailed statistics on question types and their distribution. Most inquiries concerned spelling (25.76%) and vocabulary (28.43%), often involving loanwords from English in domains like computing, banking, commerce, and management. Linguistic research views language consulting as a dialogue between linguists and the public, where both roles are essential but distinct. While users seek advice, linguists gain insights into current usage and speaker attitudes. These spontaneous data, unlike survey responses, are initiated by speakers themselves, making them valuable for sociolinguistic analysis. However, consulting data are not without limitations: they reflect only the subset of speakers who actively seek help and may not represent the entire speech community (Uhlířová 1997: 83).

2.7. Language Management Theory in language consulting

Language Management Theory (Jernudd & Neustupný 1987) provides a particularly suitable theoretical framework for the analysis of language consulting. Both domains share a central conceptual focus on the notion of the language problem: in LMT, this concept is key to understanding how speakers note, evaluate, and attempt to manage deviations from perceived norms, while in language consulting it similarly underlies the interaction between users and experts. Since it is the users themselves who identify and articulate linguistic problems in consulting contexts, the phenomenon also aligns closely with the bottom-up perspective emphasized in LMT (Nekvapil & Sherman 2015).

Prošek (2020) applies LMT to the Czech Language Institute's consulting practice, analyzing a database of recorded and annotated phone calls since 2013. He categorizes inquiries based on user intent, response type, and complexity, linking these to specific types of linguistic problems and consulting dialogue structures. Even seemingly simple questions may require complex management processes, illustrating LMT's practical relevance.

Similarly, Beneš et al. (2018) explore the challenges consultants face during interactions and how consulting data can support codification and resource development.

¹⁰ For a contemporary overview of Czech resources, it is important to mention *Internetová jazyková příručka* (Online Handbook of Czech, W13), as well as the extensive collection of further electronic dictionaries and linguistic databases accessible via the official portal of the Czech Language Institute (W14).

Using LMT, they examine how users perceive deviations from norms and how these perceptions shape their linguistic behavior. The study highlights three types of language management: pre-, post-, and during interaction (Nekvapil & Sherman 2009), and maps them onto consulting processes. The authors detail how stages of the LMT cycle (noting, evaluation, adjustment design, implementation, post-implementation) manifest in language consulting. Understanding how users note problems and implement advice can enhance consulting services and inform the development of linguistic tools and normative guides.

Jernudd (2018) analyzes inquiries submitted to two Swedish institutions – Språkrådet and Terminologiecentrum¹¹ – within the framework of Language Management Theory, highlighting how consulting reflects and shapes language norms (see Section 2.9.2).

Ludányi and Domonkosi (2023) use LMT to analyze the Hungarian Language Consulting Service (LCS), which at the time of writing operated as part of the HUN-REN Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics.¹² Their study positions the LCS as a key interface between micro-level language problem detection by speakers and macro-level institutional responses. Drawing on a decade of email inquiries (2012–2022), they show that over 80% of questions concern normative spelling, reflecting its high prestige in Hungarian society. The authors highlight how the LCS supports organized language management through tools such as *Helyesírási tanácsadó portál* (Hungarian Spelling Advisory Portal, W15) and corpus-based analysis. Consulting practices are described as data-driven and discursive, with consultants offering both practical recommendations and scientific explanations. The study also addresses the role of language ideologies, particularly expertism (Lanstyák 2016), in shaping consulting strategies. Consultants are shown to balance normative expectations with user needs, often proposing flexible, multi-path solutions to complex issues. As previously discussed in the context of evaluation criteria (see Section 2.2), this approach exemplifies the “democratic language consulting” model (Žaucer & Marušič 2009), where the adjustment design does not stem from a position of authority but functions as a discursive partnership. By outlining the social and stylistic implications of variants the consultant provides the necessary socio-linguistic data, while ultimately leaving the final micro-management decision to the speaker.

¹¹ The work of Terminologiecentrum (The Swedish Centre for Terminology) was later taken over by Språkrådet (The Language Council of Sweden), and the centre now operates as part of that institution, and the centre now operates as part of that institution.

¹² The institutional background of the Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics (known as the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences until 2019), where the Hungarian Language Consulting Service operates, is somewhat complex due to recent structural changes in the Hungarian research system. In 2019, all research institutes and centres were separated from the Academy and placed under a newly created umbrella organization, which has since been renamed several times, most recently in 2023, when it became known as the Hungarian Research Network (HUN-REN). In 2023, before the HUN-REN designation could become widely established internationally, four institutes for research in the humanities, including the Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics, were transferred from HUN-REN to Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), one of the few remaining state-run universities in Hungary. As a result, in international publications presenting the work of the Hungarian Language Consulting Service, the name of the institution may vary depending on how it was officially designated in a given year.

The LCS thus serves as a crucial link between language users and the codifying institution, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, while also contributing to the development of linguistic resources.¹³

Kopecký (2022) focuses on language ideologies in consulting, building on Beneš et al. (2018) and Prošek (2020). He treats consulting interactions as complex LMT processes involving both micro- and macro-level management. His study examines over 320 recorded phone consultations (2016–2018) using ethnomethodological conversation analysis (Sidnell & Stivers 2013), focusing on cases where disagreement or conflict arises between users and consultants. The analysis reveals differing interests: consultants aim to meet public demand, maintain institutional authority, and collect research data, while users seek answers aligned with their own linguistic preferences. Conflicts often emerge when users expect confirmation of their idiolectal choices, which may clash with consultants' adherence to Prague School principles (Havránek 1932; Daneš 1987; cf. Neustupný & Nekvapil 2003). Argumentation plays a key role in resolving such disagreements. Kopecký shows how participants use various strategies to persuade one another, shaped by underlying language ideologies that influence both reasoning and response.

2.8. *Language technology support in language consulting*

Recent developments in natural language processing (NLP) have opened up new possibilities for supporting language consulting at multiple levels. On the one hand, NLP-based tools can assist language users directly, for example, through automated spell checkers. On the other hand, such tools also enhance the work of language consultants. A study by Zajíc et al. (2019) provides a clear example of how speech diarization can serve dual purposes in language consulting. This process, which involves the automated partitioning of an audio stream into segments according to speaker identity to determine who spoke when, allows for the efficient transcription of telephone consultations. Such transcriptions support the work of the consultants themselves, while the creation of a searchable database ultimately benefits language users. Their project focused on diarizing phone consultations at the Czech Language Institute, aiming to publish these interactions in a searchable database using an automatic speech processing system developed at the University of West Bohemia. Processing older mono-channel recordings from 2013–2016 presented technical challenges, particularly with speaker identification, although the relatively small number of consultants made this task manageable.

Hlaváčková et al. (2022) introduce an online Czech language checker developed in collaboration with several academic and technological institutions. Similarly to the

¹³ In Hungary, the official body responsible for maintaining and updating the normative spelling rules is a committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS), not the ELTE Research Centre for Linguistics or its Language Consulting Service. However, there is a close connection between these institutions, as several members of the LCS team, including the author of this review, are also members of the relevant HAS committee.

Hungarian Spelling Advisory Portal (W15), the tool uses rule-based modules to detect and correct errors in punctuation, agreement, grammar, typography, and other linguistic issues. It integrates various linguistic resources, including morphological databases, spelling dictionaries, collocation lists, neologism collections, and user-generated data. The system processes input text through multiple stages: typographic correction, tokenization, morphological analysis, and rule-based evaluation. Errors are flagged with explanations and links to relevant entries in the online usage manual. Despite its sophistication, the tool has limitations in handling context-dependent issues such as capitalization, punctuation between adjectives, compound adjectives, and subject-verb agreement in complex constructions. Challenges include false positives and missed errors, which vary depending on user expectations. While general users prefer minimal alerts, professionals (e.g., editors) expect comprehensive feedback. Despite these limitations, the tool is widely used and valued for its ability to support spelling, grammar, typography, and even stylistic refinement.

Although both Van de Velde and Zenner (2010) and Ludányi (2024) present studies that rely on corpus-based methods and language technology tools, their primary focus is not on the technological infrastructure itself, but rather on how corpus data inform linguistic evaluation and consulting strategies. While these studies were initially intended to be discussed elsewhere, their methodological reliance on language technology makes them relevant to the present section and justifies their inclusion here. Van de Velde and Zenner (2010) examine the evaluation of neologisms in language consulting, focusing on the English-derived Flemish slang verb *pimpen* ('to decorate in a flashy style'). At the time, corpus-based consulting was uncommon, and advisors often relied on intuition. Their corpus analysis shows that *pimpen* appears in high-prestige registers (e.g., political speech, educators' language), suggesting that such usage contexts should inform its normative assessment. Continuing the focus on corpus-based approaches, Ludányi (2024) examines how corpus data are used in the Hungarian Language Consulting Service (LCS) to support language problem management. Based on a dataset of approximately 10,000 email inquiries, the study identifies 124 cases where consultants relied on corpus queries, primarily for complex language use issues such as lexical variation, suffixation, or meaning-related questions. In contrast, corpus data were rarely used for spelling problems, which constitute the bulk of inquiries that the LCS receives. The study highlights that corpus use becomes essential when codification is absent or inconsistent, especially in the case of new loanwords or compound spelling. A detailed case study illustrates how corpus-based strategies support data-driven, user-oriented consulting practices.

A pioneering study by Vranjek Ošlak (2025) investigates the effectiveness of generative AI, specifically ChatGPT-4, as a language consultant for Slovenian. Through an experiment involving 30 real-world inquiries, the researcher found that while AI excels at mimicking the professional tone and structure of human experts, it frequently suffers from hallucinations and terminological inaccuracies, often providing literal translations from English. The study concludes that AI is currently unsuitable as a standalone tool

for end-users, but it shows great promise as a “draft generator” to support human consultants by increasing efficiency in handling routine linguistic queries.

2.9. *Overview of institutional consulting practices*

As noted earlier, a substantial part of the literature on language consulting focuses on the practices of specific institutions that provide such services. This subsection offers an overview of representative institutional case studies.

In her dissertation, Riegel (2007) provides a detailed account of the language consulting practices at Wissen Media Verlag, also known as the Wahrig language consulting service, which was still active at the time.¹⁴ (The name “Wahrig” refers to the brand name of the complete dictionary series published by Wissen Media Verlag, formerly Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag.) Back then, the service operated within a commercial framework, offering expert advice while promoting the publisher’s reference works. User feedback not only supported product development but also contributed to customer retention and informal marketing. The consulting team consisted of permanent staff, including Riegel herself, supported by contract-based student assistants. The service functioned semi-independently, with periodic meetings to align on orthographic updates and internal recommendations. Riegel outlines the qualifications expected of consultants: linguistic expertise, stylistic sensitivity, familiarity with historical languages, and strong memory and multitasking skills. Consultants had to retrieve previous answers, use reference tools efficiently, and adapt quickly to simultaneous inquiries via phone and email. Personal traits such as patience, friendliness, and a constructive attitude toward debate were also emphasized. Inquirers’ data were collected via an online form, revealing that most inquiries came from professionals working with language including translators, editors and journalists. Questions and responses were archived with the CueCards software. An analysis of over 26,000 email inquiries (1998–2006) identified 17 categories, with spelling (37.6%) and grammar (23.1%) being the most frequent. The high volume of spelling questions was linked to the recent orthographic reform. Email inquiries allowed for detailed responses, while phone consultations required more immediate, conversational handling. Riegel notes that consultants aimed to provide scientifically grounded, stylistically polished answers. When multiple solutions existed, one was typically recommended with justification, reflecting users’ desire for clarity. Consultants were trained to maintain control of phone conversations, manage difficult interactions, and ensure a respectful tone throughout.

Jernudd (2018) analyzes question types submitted to two Swedish institutions: The Language Council of Sweden (Språkrådet) and The Swedish Centre for Terminology (Terminologiceentrum). Unlike other studies where the author is affiliated with the institution

¹⁴ The publisher, Wissen Media Verlag, has since ceased to exist. No information about the language consulting service could be found on the website of Wahrig (W12), the company that continues to publish the reference works, suggesting that the service is no longer active.

(e.g., Riegel 2007), Jernudd approaches the material as an independent researcher. From a sample of 350 email inquiries received by Språkrådet in March 2013, Jernudd identifies several categories: detailed explanations of specific words (15%), spelling issues (22%), prepositions (7%), noun/adjective usage (15%), verb-related questions, requests for evaluation of linguistic products (4%), and miscellaneous topics. Surprisingly, few questions concerned English or other foreign words, contrasting with earlier findings (Andersson 2000). For the 79 inquiries received by the Terminologiceentrum, Jernudd establishes the following categories: meaning of specific terms, differences between variants, requests for Swedish equivalents of foreign terms, issues with “Swenglish” hybrid terms, and other questions, including etymology and definition phrasing. Requests for English translations of Swedish terms were excluded from the analysis.

A recent empirical study by Zilgalve (2025) highlights the practices of the Latvian Language Agency, which serves as the central regulatory authority for language policy and consulting in Latvia. The service manages a significant volume of interactions, handling roughly 800 phone calls and 1,200 emails monthly. Analyzing a sample of inquiries, Zilgalve found that word inflection (25%), particularly the complex declension of proper names and surnames, is the most frequent area of concern for users. Other common topics include lexical units, language style, and orthography. The study concludes that while language democratization is evident across all levels of education and media, standardization and formal norms remain highly relevant to Latvian speakers in the 21st century.

2.9.1. *Comparative studies*

Comparative analyses of language consulting practices are uncommon; only two known studies contrast Czech consulting with other national models: Bulgarian and Slovenian.

2.9.1.1. Czech and Bulgarian language consulting

Uhlířová and Tomov (2008) compare the structure, functions, and challenges of the Czech and Bulgarian language consulting services. Both operate as the sole official advisory bodies in their countries, embedded within academic institutions, and share similar historical roots and goals: responding to public inquiries and promoting linguistic awareness. By 2008, both services had begun offering email consultations, with Prague handling nearly 10,000 inquiries in 2007. Spelling issues were the most frequent topic, especially in Bulgaria, where the Cyrillic transcription of Latin-based loanwords posed difficulties. Key differences include service accessibility, user demand, and legal authority. At the time of writing (2008), the Czech service operated informally and free of charge (except for written expert opinions), while the Bulgarian service charged fees and held official codification authority. Bulgarian consultants could act as court experts, and their orthographic recommendations were legally binding in official contexts. In contrast, Czech consultants explicitly disclaimed such authority. Overall, the Bulgarian service was more institutionalized and legally regulated, whereas the Czech model emphasized advisory support with a more flexible approach to codification.

2.9.1.2. Czech and Slovenian language consulting

Mžourková (2024) compares the Czech and Slovenian language consulting services, highlighting strong parallels in inquiry types and consultant roles. The Czech center, established in 1936 and officially forming part of the Czech Language Institute since 1946, primarily handles phone consultations, with written expert opinions provided for complex cases. The Slovenian service was formalized in 2012, evolving from email-based support following the publication of *Slovenski pravopis* (Toporišič 2001), the normative guide for Slovenian, released in 2001, and has operated exclusively via online forms since 2016. Both institutions maintain public databases of answered questions: 13,481 entries for Czech (2019) and 3,639 for Slovenian (2012). User feedback is continuously integrated into the development of online usage manuals. Most users are highly educated professionals seeking advice for work-related language issues. Common topics include spelling (especially capitalization and punctuation), morphology, and word formation. Both services act as mediators between linguists and the public, offering detailed explanations and up-to-date linguistic insights not yet codified in dictionaries. Mžourková emphasizes the mutual benefits: users receive expert guidance, while researchers gain valuable data for resource development and linguistic analysis.

2.10. *Research based on language consulting data*

This section presents empirical studies that do not focus on language consulting as a practice in itself, but rather use the data generated by language consulting services as a basis for linguistic research. These datasets, typically consisting of archived user inquiries and consultant responses, offer a unique window into real-life language use and metalinguistic reflection. Because the questions originate from actual language users seeking guidance, the material enables a wide range of research approaches and topics. As this section will demonstrate, consulting archives have been used to investigate, among other things, forms of address, linguistic politeness, feminine noun forms and pronouns, pronunciation issues, and onomastic questions. The diversity of inquiries allows for both qualitative and quantitative analyses, making language consulting data a rich and versatile resource for exploring linguistic phenomena and the social dimensions of language.

Dvořáková and Martinkovičová (2019) analyze 984 emails sent to the Czech Language Institute (2007–2010) to explore problematic areas in Czech address forms. Using a corpus-driven approach, they identify frequent issues such as vocative formation for certain surnames, the use of nominative in formal address (e.g., *Mr.* + surname), punctuation in greetings, and how to address individuals by academic title or profession. Gendered address forms, especially for women, also pose challenges, including the declension of foreign surnames and addressing multiple recipients. These findings complement existing resources like the online handbook of Czech, *Internetová jazyková příručka* (W13). Building on similar concerns, Domonkosi and Ludányi (2023) examine how linguistic politeness issues are addressed in the Hungarian Language Consulting Service. Based

on a corpus of approximately 10,000 emails, they analyze 51 inquiries tagged for politeness-related content, primarily concerning forms of address, greetings, and T/V distinctions. The study shows that such questions are typically framed as requests for normative guidance, reflecting users' desire for authoritative confirmation. However, the consultants' responses aim to provide nuanced, context-sensitive advice, balancing linguistic expertise with an understanding of social norms, community expectations, and the inquirer's communicative intentions. The authors interpret these interactions as politeness metadiscourses, shaped by both folk-theoretic and expert ideologies, and argue that politeness consulting requires a complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic awareness.

Michelizza and Ledinek (2022) examine questions submitted to the Slovenian consulting service regarding feminine noun forms and pronouns. Using data from the Fran portal, they identify two main issues: missing feminine forms in dictionaries and inconsistent usage. The study highlights users' strong norm-oriented attitudes and familiarity with reference materials, showing that even in such inquiries, the "correct vs. incorrect" mindset remains dominant.

Tomov (2023) investigates pronunciation-related inquiries submitted to the Bulgarian Language Institute's consulting service. Using data from emails (since 2013) and publicly available phone consultations from the past four years, he identifies types of pronunciation issues via keyword searches. While most inquiries concern spelling, grammar, and vocabulary, pronunciation questions are rare, accounting for only about 1% monthly. This reflects the stricter codification and higher prestige of orthographic norms compared to pronunciation, which leads users to seek guidance more often on spelling.

Onomastic inquiries, questions related to proper names, also form a distinct and increasingly visible subset of language consulting. As shown in studies by Štěpánová (2022, 2023, 2024) and Laansalu (2024), such questions often concern the spelling, pronunciation, declension, or acceptability of personal names, place names, and foreign proper names. These inquiries frequently reflect users' uncertainty about correctness, and often involve tensions between linguistic, cultural, and legal norms. In the Czech and Estonian contexts, name-related consulting is supported by institutional expertise and public databases, and in some cases, such as in Estonia, the consulting body also serves as an official onomastic authority. The interdisciplinary nature of these inquiries, requiring knowledge of linguistics, law, and cultural conventions, highlights the complexity of name consulting within institutional language services.

3. Summary: research areas and tasks in institutional language consulting

The literature reviewed in this article demonstrates that institutional language consulting has evolved from a practical service into a complex, multidimensional field of research. By applying the framework of Language Management Theory, it becomes clear that consulting is not merely an isolated advisory activity but a structured form of

organized language management where theoretical, empirical, and technological perspectives converge. Specifically, institutional language consulting acts as a vital interface that connects the micro- and macro-levels of language management, mediating between simple (individual) and organized (institutional) forms of linguistic intervention (Kimura & Fairbrother 2020). This position allows consulting services to translate individual linguistic uncertainties into broader sociolinguistic patterns and institutional norms.

This review has identified two primary, yet increasingly intersecting, research strands. The first focuses on the theoretical foundations of consulting, particularly the relationship between linguistic norms and codification. The second strand is empirical, centered on the analysis of user inquiries and consultant responses. The synthesis of these two approaches is crucial for understanding how institutional ‘expert’ knowledge interacts with ‘everyday’ linguistic uncertainties. As this article has shown, the gap between these two strands is increasingly bridged by data-driven analyses of consulting discourse.

A central task for future research is to bridge the gap between theoretical norms and actual consulting practice by clarifying the evaluative criteria consultants employ. As Woldt (2010) demonstrates, there is often a significant discrepancy in linguistic awareness between users and experts; however, the underlying language ideologies that drive these differences remain insufficiently explored. Examining the relationship between consulting, linguistic norms, and codification is therefore not only a descriptive task but also an ideological one, as it reveals how institutional authority is maintained or challenged during the advisory process.

Recent work increasingly applies Language Management Theory, especially in Central European contexts such as the Czech and Slovenian scholarship. However, a significant gap remains in the medium-specific text-typological and pragmatic analysis of consulting discourse. Future research should focus on how the interactional structure of consulting changes across different communication channels, such as email, telephone, and online forms, as each medium imposes different constraints on the advice-giving process. While notable progress has been made in national contexts, specifically Jakab’s (2023) study on Hungarian data and Dvořáková’s (2024a, 2024b) analyses of Czech-language interactions, these contributions are currently available only in their respective national languages. Making such findings accessible in English would be highly beneficial, as it would allow the international scholarly community to compare how different linguistic cultures manage the pragmatics of consulting in the digital age.

Beyond the analysis of discourse, there is a pressing need for more transparent documentation of the technological infrastructure supporting language consulting. While many institutions maintain searchable databases of inquiries and responses, detailed methodological descriptions of these systems’ structure and design remain scarce. This lack of documentation also extends to broader technological support, such as online portals, usage manuals, and automated writing tools. Since the linguistic and technical foundations of these systems are rarely publicized, a clear priority for future research is to provide a comprehensive account of how these digital tools are developed and how they mediate language management processes.

Finally, while several studies have documented institutional practices, many consulting services worldwide remain invisible in the scholarly literature. This is particularly true for services operating outside academic institutions, which often lack the platform to share their expertise. Greater international visibility and the inclusion of these undocumented practices are essential steps for the field. By expanding research coverage and fostering cross-cultural comparisons, institutional language consulting can establish itself as a prominent, theoretically grounded, and well-defined discipline within international linguistics.

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