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INTERNETO ANGLŲ KALBOS ĮTAKA KEIČIANT INTERNETO LIETUVIŲ KALBOS KULTŪRĄ

The Influence of Internet English
on the Language Culture of Internet Lithuanian

SUMMARY

The article focuses on how Internet English shapes Internet Lithuanian, fostering the acquisition of new cultural features in the Internet Lithuanian language. The theoretical overview deals with research on the Internet language and online communities. The research focuses on the newly-acquired specific cultural features that are in play in the Internet Lithuanian language, such as the increasing preference to be less reserved and more expressive when signifying one's current state of mind. The article carries out the research of a number of popular social networks, blog sites, and forums of the Internet. Due to the sheer vastness of the cyberspace, openness and freedom of communication, anonymity, and blurred lines between the different languages and cultures, it is difficult to accurately discern and describe all of the possible ways of how the Internet English language influences the new cultural features of the Internet Lithuanian language. The analysis of a number of examples reflecting the sudden transition from the primary Lithuanian language to the secondary English language reveals the more frequent and elaborate use of a certain type of irony, satire, sarcasm, Western and American humour, and memetic phrases of mainstream Internet culture origin that are considered to be associated with the Internet English language (and also the English language in general). These observations suggest the idea that, to certain Lithuanian-speaking Internet users, the English language is associated with the modern Western and American culture and acts as a tool of absorbing, approving of, replicating, and spreading its various elements in their messages, proving its immense significance and power to many speakers of the Lithuanian language.

SANTRAUKA

Šiame straipsnyje tiriama, kaip interneto anglų kalba, skatindama įgyti naujų kultūrinių bruožų, formuoja interneto lietuvių kalbą. Straipsnio teorinės literatūros apžvalgoje nagrinėjama, apžvelgiama ir aptariama mokslinė medžiaga apie internetą, interneto kalbą, virtualiosios erdvės bendruomenes, jų bendravimo

KEY WORDS: Internet English language, Internet Lithuanian language, language influence, social networks.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: interneto anglų kalba, interneto lietuvių kalba, kalbos įtaka, socialiniai tinklai.

būdą, jų įtaką viena kitai ir pagrindines, su kalbos įtakos tyrinėjimu susijusias idėjas. Analitinėje šio darbo dalyje apžvelgiama keletas atrinktų pavyzdžių, kurie iliustruoja aptartas, su svarstoma tema susijusias mintis. Šios dvi pagrindinės straipsnio dalys atskleidžia tam tikrų, interneto lietuvių kalboje funkcionuojančių ir naujai įgytų kultūrinių bruožų paplitimą. Vienas tokių bruožų – didesnis polinkis būti atviresniam ir ekspresyvesniam bendravimo metu reiškiant patiriamas nuotaikas ir proto būklę.

Dėl kibernetinės erdvės dydžio, atvirumo, bendravimo laisvės, anonimiškumo ir nykstančių ribų tarp skirtingų kalbų ir kultūrų kyla sunkumų norint tiksliai išskirti ir apibūdinti visus galimus būdus, kaip interneto anglų kalba gali paveikti naujų interneto lietuvių kalbos kultūrinių bruožų susidarymą. Straipsnyje atliekama keleto staigų perėjimą iš pirminės lietuvių kalbos į antrinę anglų kalbą iliustruojančių pavyzdžių analizė atskleidžia dažnesnį ir sudėtingesnį tam tikros rūšies, su internetine anglų kalba (taip pat ir anglų kalba apskritai) susijusios ironijos, satyros, sarkazmo, vakarietiško ir amerikietiško humoro ir memetinių populiariosios interneto kultūros kilmės frazių vartojimą. Šios pastabos skatina manyti, kad kai kuriems lietuviakalbiams interneto vartotojams anglų kalba yra susijusi su šiuolaikine vakarietiška ir amerikietiška kultūra ir veikia kaip priemonė, leidžianti perimti, pritari, kartoti ir skleisti įvairius minėtų kultūrų elementus jų parašytose žinutėse, o tai įrodo didžiulę šios kalbos reikšmę ir galią tokiems interneto vartotojams.

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, globalisation has greatly increased the circulation and interconnectivity of information, people, and the material goods between the different countries, nations, and regions of the world. Such an improved process has occurred in the fields of economics, politics, technology, media, culture, etc. and resulted in the constant further maintenance and development of their subdivisions and the groundwork associated with them all in order to foster such links. In addition to this, *“multiculturalism has increased, and there is improved individual access to cultural diversity as a result of greater international travel and tourism, alongside increased migration”*¹, in such a way denoting an ever increasing number of situations where the need to use languages other than one’s mother tongue rises considerably.

These multilingual communicative situations occur not only in ‘real life’, but also on the Internet as well, seeing that

the availability of the modern technologies made communication between people considerably faster, cheaper, simpler, and overall much more advantageous than ever before. Due to its significance, the function of such technologies *“has been much discussed in connection with the globalization of discourse”* with the English language being the prime example of such a process, seeing that it *“can no longer be said to be “owned” by its inner circle native speakers”*², therefore gaining a much more relevant status.

Speaking of the English language in particular, it is widely accepted, that it is *“nowadays the world’s lingua franca, just as Latin once was”*, making it *“the language of globalization”*, seeing that it boasts an impressive estimated number of speakers ranging *“between 470 million to over a billion, depending on how proficiency is defined”*³. In addition to this, the English language is the most commonly learned second language of the world and is not only *“fast becoming the world’s leading in-*

ternational language”, but also “the most frequently used language [,] if the population of countries where English is an official language is considered”. Such status of this language is absolutely justified, seeing that, “in today’s world, there is an increasing need for an international language”⁴ and its inherent characteristics make it especially suitable for this task.

From a cultural perspective, the English language is influential because it “remained the international language of science” for a long time and, in combination with modern technology, “English (or rather American English) has become the language of the Internet” and the use of this language there is one of the numerous different reasons why “American popular culture has spread all over the world”. Another meaningful catalyst for this spread is the characteristics and environment of the Internet, which enables the features of this culture to be “globally consumed and reproduced”, eventually making them more or less visible not only offline, but also online. With their wide extent, reputation, and worldwide popularity, “American products and myths have become the most desired icons of American popular culture” and due to the fact that American

popular culture is “skilfully advertised and perfectly appealing to mass audiences”, it successfully spreads to “the centre world through high-tech media”, eventually leading to a situation when “American tastes are manifest in fashion, music, movies, television shows, recreation, and even fast food”⁵.

Because of these meaningful characteristics, in this work, the Internet English language has been chosen as a specimen of a language functioning as an influencing force in the formation and acquisition of new cultural features in the Internet Lithuanian language. The investigation of how the Internet English language promotes the procurement of new cultural features and thus alters the Internet Lithuanian language is done by analysing, examining, and discoursing about the Internet, Internet language, online communities, their communication, and how they affect each other, reviewing the fundamental ideas behind the study of language influence, analysing the selected number of examples accompanying and illustrating these ideas, and revealing the particular cultural features acquired from Internet English and employed in the Internet Lithuanian language when communicating.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGES IN THE CYBERSPACE

The aspect of language influence is also of high relevance here, as the dominating status of the English language “leads to the mixing of languages and other types of influence”, resulting in a “steady stream of loan words from English into other languages that have become incorporated into the morphology and phonology of the receiving

language”. This phenomenon is also seen in the other levels of language as well, such as words, phrases, and their meanings, “even if this may go unnoticed and does not create the same type of problem for the language user” and may be traced back to the specific function of this language as “the standard-bearer of cultural dominance”

in domains like *“business world, the entertainment industry, television and music, sport, science, and more recently the Internet”*, where its influence is commonly thought as *“perhaps the most obvious”*.

In the cyberspace, the English language is used by speakers of other languages not only when mentioning *“the usual brand names, Hollywood film titles and other tokens of Western pop culture”*, but also *““ordinary English words””* even though the latter ones have corresponding words in their first/native languages, as such words are used *“to achieve certain pragmatic functions such as being rebellious, showing off one’s global identity, or obfuscating everyday meanings of words in computer mediated communication”*. In situations of such specific use, the English language, then, is *“instrumentalized as a resource for one’s native tongue”*⁶, revealing another function of this flexible language to be easily adapted to the various needs of the speakers of other languages. However, all of this influence of the English language does not remain uncontested, as it is often viewed as *“a threat to the continual existence of the language and culture of nations with smaller numbers of speakers”*⁷. Because of this, certain countries *“seek to establish protectionist barriers to maintain their own “cultural distinctiveness”*⁸, reflecting a range of different attitudes towards this phenomenon.

In linguistics, the influence one language has over another one is usually investigated *“with reference to borrowing”*, which is a term that specifies *“both the process of incorporation of units from another language and its result”*. Such units involve word stems, (loan)words, phrases, etc. and include *“aspects of linguistic*

structures like phonetics and/or phonology, morphology and lexical semantics” and it is lexis in particular where these borrowings are *“more noticeable when they make their way into a language”*⁹. The concept of language influence is also applied to the research of code-switching and code-mixing as well, seeing that such *“cross-linguistic interaction during bilingual language production results from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously acquired”*, inspiring studies on the influence one language can have on another language that are *“supporting the view that cross-linguistic influences are bidirectional”*¹⁰, suggesting the idea that languages are interrelated in much more ways and in much closer way than is often thought, but leaving an open question as to what extent it can happen. Anyhow, such a close bond between languages is even more accentuated on the Internet, and due to the current stage of globalisation and the vigorous spread of the Western and American culture worldwide, the communicative means such as code-switching and code-mixing make it possible to observe the traces of the process of a more influential and pervasive culture affecting the smaller and more passive one reflected in the language of people interacting in the cyberspace, in this case, various Lithuanian people communicating with each other on the various Webpages of the Internet.

The subject of the influence major languages of the world have on smaller ones in the cyberspace is interesting to numerous different scientific disciplines. This is due to the way the externally-motivated attributes of online environ-

ment are able to swiftly incite the mainstream acquisition of new cultural features and guarantee their spread in such online variations of the smaller languages, making this phenomenon interesting not only to the social sciences, but also the formal ones as well. Seeing that it occurs on a rather large scale in numerous languages and lacks academic attention, this paper is devoted to the review of the often interdisciplinary and mostly recent theoretical scientific material related to this topic, with Internet English language and its capability to influence the Internet Lithuanian language into establishing new cultural features being its main focus.

While language influence is mostly a linguistic topic, the researchers of other disciplines also analyse it and investigate its various aspects, such as situations, when the English language is paired with media and viewed as capable of impacting the cultural globalisation and identity formation¹¹; the destructive power of language when communication occurring online is able to push certain young people into suicide and self-harm practices¹²; how the communication habits on the Internet influence European journalism¹³; Internet memes as language influencers¹⁴; the analysis of English as a lingua franca and the cultures associated with its use¹⁵; the English language and how its use is associated with progress and development¹⁶; how the English language improves information retrieval on the Internet when used besides another language¹⁷; how the English language impacts the behaviours and lifestyle of tertiary level students¹⁸; the English language as a source of loanwords

and other linguistic elements¹⁹. The wide scope of this subject and the ongoing process of cultures and languages influencing each other proves to be a worthy undertaking due to its capacity of providing unique information on the relationship between languages and the people who speak them.

The methodology of this paper is comprised of the research methods that concentrate on the principles of the selection of examples reflecting the influence Internet English language has on Internet Lithuanian language and the principles of their analysis. Such examples of language influence have been collected from the currently globally very popular and widely used social networks of the Internet, such as “Facebook” and “Twitter” and also considerably smaller Webpages of the Lithuanian-speaking part of the Internet, such as the personal blog site “Medonis.lt” and one branch of the official discussion forums of the browser-based massively multiplayer online real-time strategy game “Tavian: Legends” discussing the multiplayer online battle arena video game “League of Legends” as an off-topic subject. These selected examples are presented as they were originally found on their respective Webpages – unedited and containing various inherent grammatical, semantic, and other deviations, what reveals their unique nature. The screenshots of these messages are also included in this paper together with their formatted textual counterparts. The conventional names of the memes are taken from “Know Your Meme”²⁰ – a relatively well-known Website which attempts to chronicle Internet memes and other related online phenom-

ena. All of the examples are divided into three separate groups comprised of two examples according to the method of language swapping discussed in this paper. Each of the grouped examples is then analysed with the aim to indicate a specific new cultural linguistic habit ac-

quired from the Internet English language and used in the Internet Lithuanian language, denote its significance, specify their role in the text they accompany, and make further possible observations. Lastly, the conclusions of this research are drawn at the end of this paper.

INTERNET ENGLISH AS A FORCE INFLUENCING THE CULTURAL FEATURES OF INTERNET LITHUANIAN

When speaking of the influence of Internet English language in the acquisition of new cultural features in internet Lithuanian language, it is best to start from the basic concepts, such as the Internet. The earliest iteration of the Internet is known as "ARPANET", which "came online at the end of the 1960s, as a result of work in the scientific and military fields" in the United States of America and eventually "culminated in the release of the Microsoft Corporation's Windows 98, in June of 1998, thereby completing the shift to a commercially-based Internet"²¹, ultimately making it available to an increasing number of people from all around the world, as its availability grew and is still growing bigger globally as time goes by. As it became increasingly more complex, grew larger in its capacity and user number, and the various volumes and types of information its users uploaded there, the cyberspace became a specialised depository which "contains a large amount of data relevant to essentially all domains of human activity: art, education, travel, science, politics, business, etc."²², the purposes of which encompass entertainment, service provision, communication, education, research, development, etc. In addition to this, the constantly-

increasing number of Internet users put a considerable amount of effort to transform the Internet according to their numerous needs, with the possibility to upload, store, access, and share various information being only a few of them. In the course of time, these changes helped to transform the computer "from a tool for information processing and display to a tool for information processing and communication"²³. Because of them, the Internet was gradually perceived as "both a technological and a social phenomenon"²⁴.

Seeing that communication is a social human behaviour that includes the transfer of information and the establishment of understanding via the use of specific common symbols²⁵, and that the Internet made this process much more convenient and often more efficient, the further development of the Internet relied on improving the mentioned communal and communicational aspects even more, thus leading it to the current era of "Web 2.0" – "a term coined by O'Reilly Media in 2004 to describe a second generation of the web", which "describes more user participation, social interaction and collaboration with the use of blogs, wikis, social networking and folksonomies [(the practice of categorizing content through

tags)]]”²⁶. Such opportunities provided by the second generation of the Internet are suitable to meet the numerous significant needs of humans of social belonging, esteem, and sometimes self actualisation (as defined by Abraham Maslow in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs²⁷), seeing that “every human being needs to feel a sense of worth and respect (status) and a sense of belonging and acceptance (solidarity)”, with them being recognised as the “basic mental health needs”²⁸.

The Internet is a global phenomenon, able “to connect individuals and groups who can be geographically, culturally and linguistically far apart” and such interconnectedness renders it a relevant platform “for the dissemination and appropriation of cultural flows”, such as “popular cultural fads of an ephemeral nature” and also includes “the capacity of these flows to mediate and display lifestyles and identity options to which individuals and groups around the globe can subscribe”. Therefore, due to its capacity to function as “a powerful mediator of images of cultural globalization”, the Internet “now influences the life projects of more people than ever before”²⁹. One of the many reasons of its prevalence and status of one of the most relevant means of communication is the ease to preserve a high level of anonymity, since “cyber-space strips away signifiers such as clothes, age, gender and ethnicity” and also because “individuals are able to create alternate identities” which “[allow] people to escape prejudices, fears and repression experienced IRL (‘in real life’)”³⁰.

When in communities, most of their members tend to interact with the other members or resources of such community in numerous ways, seeing that they

are constantly expressing “the kinds of strong emotional and social bonds associated with local community, sharing the resources of stories and information, enjoying their time together online and working toward common goals”³¹. Such communities are formed in a varying number of members, with ones being tiny and operating in the same venue, while the other ones huge and encompassing multiple different Webpages and even platforms. While the circumstances of their formation and operation are also very various, one thing is for certain – all of them originate due to the need to be among more than two people, seeing that “community emerges where the cumulative impact of interactions among individuals adds value above the level of pairwise interactions”. The interactions provided by more than two people communicating together include “exchange of information and advice, social support, mutual help and provision and receipt of services” and have an undeniable accumulative effect of “creating trust among network members, shared history and language and known expectations about behaviours that support the community in its common goals”³².

The functionality of the Internet allows the use of hashtags and metadata to search for “the values people are sharing about both daily minutiae [...] and about important world events” and makes it possible to “track the kinds of communities that form as people rally around shared concerns”³³. The members of such communities are of various ages, genders, ethnicities, statuses, backgrounds, experiences, competences, etc., but all of them tend to “share a common passion and language about that passion”, “contribute to the [...] community in many different ways”,

and “discover things that even experts did not know”, since “there is ample status and bonding for everyone”³⁴, removing many of the impairments preventing such productivity in the first place. All of this definitely changes the ways humans communicate and how they view others and themselves, seeing that with the coming of the various Internet discussion forums, online chatrooms, social networks, blogs, e-mails, etc. and the interactions between them “also came different identities, bodies and types of messages that changes the nature of communication and culture”³⁵.

Their communicational interactions are known as “computer-mediated communication” (CMC) which is “an umbrella term for any form of data exchange across two or more networked computers, such as e-mail, web chat and instant messaging”, which are not necessarily text-based only, as these modes may also include sound, graphics, video, etc., and tend to function in two different transmission settings – one being quasi-synchronous and the other one being asynchronous. In the western world and by the majority of its people, it is now regarded as “an ordinary means of everyday communication”, used for “private, semi-private as well as professional purposes”³⁶. It is most distinct from other forms of communication due to “a plethora of linguistic performances in CMC which are not easily classified into the traditional categories of speech and writing”. When considering the various exchanges of online communities, it is most often observed that numerous texts “differ from conventional writing and exhibit resemblances with speech, albeit their graphical realisation”³⁷.

According to P. Gardner-Chloros, “numerous linguists have pointed out that most of the world is plurilingual” and that “most of [the] plurilingual speakers mix their languages in various ways in their daily lives”³⁸. According to scholar D. M. Velliaris, most of the bilingual or multilingual speakers are “often involved in what looks like an effortless switch between the two [or more] languages they speak”³⁹. Because of the masses of people meeting there, the Internet is a multilingual place and there are so many languages currently in use online that there is “no single method developed to date [that] can accurately represent the linguistic situation on the internet”⁴⁰. In addition to this, because the Internet is known for its translocality in combining both the local and the global, it directly influences various online practices, including language and thus, the translocality of language practices means that “Internet users often find it a motivated and meaningful option to draw on resources provided by more than one language”⁴¹. J. K. Androutsopoulos refers to Internet multilingualism as “networked multilingualism”, which “is a cover term for multilingual practices that are shaped by two interrelated processes: being networked, i.e. digitally connected to other individuals and groups, and being in the network, i.e. embedded in the global digital mediascape of the web”⁴². The analysis of the aspects of Internet multilingualism “can refer to the practices of multilingual Internet users and the ways in which they draw on resources provided by more languages than one in their CMC”⁴³.

Seeing that multilingualism is so prevalent online, so are its other related phenomena, such as code-switching,

which is a linguistic process that occurs “when a speaker alternates between two or more languages or language varieties, in the context of a single conversation”. For example, plurilingual speakers, who know more than one language, “sometimes use elements of two or more languages when conversing with each other”. In its essence, code-switching “is the use of more than one linguistic variety in a manner consistent with the syntax and phonology of the language”⁴⁴. L. Isurin, D. Winford, and K. De Bot notice, that code-switching is situation-dependent, as it can occur “within the same conversational turn or when there is a shift to a different register brought about by changes in setting, interlocutor, conversational goals and other social factors”⁴⁵. It still remains a rather mysterious phenomenon, as not much is known about “bilinguals’ movement along the language mode continuum in their everyday life”, there is a lack of “a clear understanding of what factors or mechanisms motivate, trigger, or constrain code-switching”, and it is not known “what cognitive costs it entails”⁴⁶. When analysing subjects such as the influence of Internet English language in the acquisition of new cultural features in internet Lithuanian language via the lens of code-switching, it can provide a more elaborate comprehension of the nature of the various possible online environments, user interactions that take place there, possible modes of communication, and diverse possibility of social activities and practices^{47, 48}, as seen in the analyses of the following two examples featuring code-switching:

1. <https://twitter.com/TaureanGyal/status/954102601368338433>

♥Lady Akihime Sanada 女王 @TaureanGyal: „@13_nerijus laba Tik norėjau pasakyti, kad tu kalbi angliškai TOBULAI! Tsg **PERFECT, like srsly**. Nesustok kurti **video**, tau gerai sekasi!!! (tbh nesu girdėjus žmogaus iš musiškių, kuris kalbėtų taip gerai. **You are like a native speaker**)”

2. <http://www.medonis.lt/2017/02/15/366/>

Rokas Medonis: „Empatiškiausia tauta ever“

Each of the two examples reflect speakers of the Lithuanian language, who have considerable knowledge of the English language and the culture surrounding its usage in order to produce messages which possess a constant use of emphasis in a number of ways by using emoji and capital letters, with single English words or separate phrases disrupting the flow of Lithuanian and making the overall presentation of the message more reminiscent of Internet English texts in their varied stylistics, as seen in (1.). Here, the use of English language insertions in a mostly Lithuanian text reflects the choice of the author to express solidarity, acknowledge the relevance of the international viewerbase, and stress the authenticity and quality of the aspect of spoken English language in particular, seeing that the person the author refers to produces video content targeted towards the English-speaking audience, therefore the English language used in this supportive message and clamorous and generous compliments makes it much more impactful and even proper in a peculiar way. Similar conventions of thought expression can be observed outside of social networks as well, seeing that, in (2.), the use of the

English adverb 'ever' at the end of the title functions as a way of reinforcing the statement written in Lithuanian, seeing that this word gives away and also emphasises the stinging sarcasm in this title of this blog post discussing the author's observations on the lack of empathy he often observes in fellow Lithuanians.

Similar to code-switching is code-mixing. While code-switching includes the mixing of two separate languages with their own corresponding grammatical systems by using words, phrases, and sentences and often goes beyond sentence margins of the same speech event, code-mixing "is the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses from a cooperative activity where the participants, in order to infer what is intended, must reconcile what they hear with what they understand"⁴⁹. As seen in these two examples below, code-mixing is also capable of denoting the influence the English language has on the Lithuanian language:

3. https://www.facebook.com/keulerule/posts/1962356534052164?comment_id=1962364960717988&comment_tracking_g=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R6%22%7D

Kęstutis Baltaduonis: „bažnytkaimio *peasant'ų* ašaros“

4. <https://wbb.forum.travian.com/thread/86727-lol-league-of-legends/?postID=5800522#post5800522>

Rokas 2000_LT: „*OP, išcarrinau mačą grynai vien splitpushindamas*. Esmė, kad turėjom Lux, kuri buvo afk visą mačą nuo pradžių, tai Rengaras ėjo mid, ir užfeedino Katą neblogai, aš irgi tope bšk pafeedinau prieš Vladą. Bottomas gerai laikės, bet

kadangi Yorickas negalėjo wardų nupirkt, tai buvo nugankinti nemažai. Ant galo, kai pradėjo mus kapoti, dėjau tp i topą, nupushinau bšk, dar Rengaras bandė užlaikyt juos Tai taip daugmaž pushindavau top, kol jie kažkur prigaudinėjo mus. Dar Rengaras eidavo 1x5 desperatiškai nuimt kokią Katą, nes sakė „w can't win“, bet poto įtikinom jį nepasi-duot. Paskui nukirtau inhibito turreta, tai su ashe nuėmėm, numušėm abu nexuso turretus, td mus pagavo ir nukillino. Dar Rengaras bandė kelis backdoorus padaryt su savo ult, bet jie turėjo pink wardų tai nieko neišėjo. Poto dar vienas su tp backdoorinau, bet nuėmė mane kai Nexusui liko 80 hp Tada jie pradėjo panikuot, ir tryse ėjo pushint mūsų bot, bet mes juos pagavom, td sugavom likusius, padarėm ace, likom tik aš su Ashe ir užbaigėm.“

The two examples presented above contain numerous English words that are modified by adding certain elements of the Lithuanian language so as to make them more 'domestic' as well as more accurate and vivid. In (3.), the author of this "Facebook" comment expresses his discontent about the opinion expressed by a certain person, presented in screenshot form by a "Facebook" page poster. He uses a 'Lithuanised' English noun "peasant" with a Lithuanian plural genitive case noun ending "ų" in order to produce a more striking and detailed mental image of the type of people he is talking about with the intention to degrade them. Meanwhile, in (4.), an enthusiastic player of the multiplayer online battle arena video game "League of Legends" tells a story of one of his successful team matches to the other local forum members of this game with the fundamental aim to create and foster group identity and to, perhaps, also

share his experiences, express friendliness, and attempt to impress them. He peppers his post with around 19 cases of code-mixing (indicated in **bold**) and other abbreviated English words and phrases (indicated with an underline), where the numerous single nouns and verbs are located and function within their respective sentences, which are dominated by the Lithuanian language, written in a highly-informal, hasty, and spontaneous manner corresponding with the conventions of communications of that environment, and found in a Website where the Lithuanian language is the main language shared between its members due to its setting and localisation and, unlike social networks, the chance of interaction with international users is much lower in general. It can be assumed, that in these two cases, while limited by certain grammatical principles but incited by sociopsychological motivations, such means are used instead of the purely Lithuanian ones simply because the words of the Lithuanian language alone are not enough to properly express their thoughts.

The online interactions of users operating in various communities entails not only the prevalence of multilingualism or the principles they foster, seeing that the way how a multi-user community employs language “signifies not only what it believes but also how it thinks” and functions as “a mission statement [...] to a corporation, in that the language it speaks tells something of how that community views the world”. In the way they speak, they may also express their beliefs in a more aggressive tone, as they “will also make judgments of the world around it and that

these judgments will be reflected in its language” and thus provide ideas for outsiders to “make judgments”⁵⁰. Some of them go even further by using common language as a basis for the formation of a specific slang the community is familiar with. In addition to this, communities are also influenced by the larger trends of mainstream Internet culture, namely the meme culture.

Meme culture is a result of the various activities of the countless different communities, subcultures, and groups present on the numerous Websites on the Internet. Psychologist Susan Blackmore provides insight into the topic, stating, that the concept of a ‘meme’ was first mentioned in 1976 by the established ethologist, zoologist, and evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his best-selling book “*The Selfish Gene*”, as he “popularised the increasingly influential view that evolution is best understood in terms of the competition between genes” and the term ‘meme’ is described as a replicator – “a noun which conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation”, with its examples being “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches” – simply anything “which are spread by one person copying another”, “stored in human brains (or books or inventions)”, and “passed on by imitation”⁵¹.

In the environment of the Internet and for its users, ‘Internet meme’ is a specific tag “commonly applied to describe the propagation of items such as jokes, rumors, videos, and websites from person to person via the Internet”. While the central feature of Internet memes is “their sparking of user-created derivatives articulated as paro-

dies, remixes, or mashups”, there is another fundamental attribute of intertextuality, where memes “often relate to each other in complex, creative, and surprising ways”⁵². Memes have “a grammatical or a lexical meaning” and, at the same time, stress the idea, that they are “transmitted by language”, and are in no way a “unit of imitation”. Moreover, while memes are “the meanings of words, morphemes and grammatical categories”, the existence of the subject of memetics, known as “the linguistically informed study of the replication and propagation of memes and of entire constellations of memes”⁵³ enables their in-depth analysis. A more simple analysis of the following two examples is carried out below:

5. https://www.facebook.com/ZiniasklaidosPerlai/photos/a.259532727473366/1233406966752599/?type=3&comment_id=1233447100081919&reply_comment_id=1233900053369957&comment_tracking=%7B%22tn%22%3A%22R%22%7D

Martynas Serksnys: „#kqveikti | 1. Nežiūri lnk | 2. Eini į feisbuką | 3. Randi postą apie lnk ir komentuoji, kaip nežiūri lnk | 4. ??? | 5. Profit“

6. <https://twitter.com/GabrieleIzabele/status/241652061769453568>

Izabele @GabrieleIzabele: „Zinot ka as pasakysiu: *Haters gonna hate, potatoes gonna*

potate ;) (sita fakta jau senei suvokiau,... – Būtent :) <http://ask.fm/a/37dqjcbgbi>“

These two aforementioned examples are exceptional, as they reflect meme usage in computer-mediated-communication and demonstrate the will of the authors to conform to the mainstream Internet meme culture and reflect their knowledge of it, as some of them are used more often than others and are sometimes even individually modified to create original, contextually-appropriate derivations. In all of these examples, a specific meme format is adapted quite accurately and even in a similar fashion and according to specific standards to make them valid and legitimate, with (5.) following a strict formation of the message and shaping it into a list (as seen in the “???? PROFIT!!!!” meme⁵⁴) and (6.) crowning the momentous part of the message with a concluding phrase “*haters gonna hate*” (as seen in the “*Haters Gonna Hate*” meme⁵⁵). Some of them also include the creation of their own derivatives and the customisation of the meme to fit their own communicational needs, like the custom phrase “*potatoes gonna potate*” written after the memetic one in (6.), reflecting not only the willingness to follow the specific rules behind meme use, but also creativity in extending its meaning in relation to the context of the message.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Acquired from Internet English language and acting as an influencing force to Internet Lithuanian language, in their essence, the new cultural features mostly

encompass the process of Lithuanian-speaking Internet users writing smaller or larger parts of their Lithuanian messages in English, which then generally act

as either insertions of words, phrases, or even sentences that originally belong to a different language or comprise an entirely new hybrid structure that is based in the conventions of the English grammar, but with added elements of Lithuanian grammar, eventually creating a 'Lithuanised' variant of that English replacement. In both of these observed cases, this is done with an aim to make a more or less elaborate reference to the English language, which, as discussed, is strongly associated with the 'main' language of science, modern technologies, computers, the Internet, and, of course, the mainstream popular Internet meme culture as well – all undoubtedly having roots in the Western and American culture, carrying its elements, and successfully disseminating them worldwide. To be more exact, these are the concepts that are relevant in today's world and often regarded as prestigious, popular, and influential, leading many interlocutors to want to replicate their certain aspects in their expressions. In a more linguistic sense, such additions to Lithuanian text seem to enrich the linguistic repertoire of the speakers, are a perfect means to express their linguistic personalities, function as a peculiar tool to identify like-minded individuals, and

often signifies solidarity, friendliness, support, and similar positive feelings.

2. These newly-gained cultural features of writing in Internet Lithuanian language, such as the tendency to be less reserved and more expressive and eloquent in using a kind of irony, satire, sarcasm, Western and American humour, and memetic phrases of mainstream Internet culture origin that are endemic to the Internet English language and doing so more frequently and in more elaborate ways. These trends reflect the current general tendency of Lithuanian-speaking Internet users to approve of, absorb, and replicate the various elements of the modern Western and American culture by often resorting to the use of English – the language associated with this culture in the first place, and also to conform to the constantly-shifting numerous conventions of the mainstream popular Internet culture.

3. Whether these aforementioned cultural features are only temporal or long-lasting, and whether they are more of an influence of the modern (Internet) English language or the Western and American culture in general is up to further debate and closer research into the specifics of this subject.

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