

Development of Lithuanian dialects in the active Baltic-Slavic contact zone: Signs of the decay of morphological structure

Lietuviešu dialektu attīstība aktīvajā baltu-slāvu saskarsmes zonā: morfoloģiskās struktūras sabrukšanas pazīmes

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This article presents sociolinguistic research of the Southern Aukštaitian subdialect of Lithuanian spoken on both sides of the border between Southeastern Lithuania and Northwestern Belarus. It should be noted that the Lithuanian dialect no longer forms a homogeneous area, as it is losing out to Belarusian, which is called *po prostu* in the studied areas. When the Lithuanian dialect lost its function, many Lithuanian speakers switched to the Belarusian dialect alone. The change of languages in the same areas over two or three generations has led to a very close relationship between the languages. The object of the investigation is two linguistic borderland areas: the first one includes 17 points of the southeastern borderland of Lithuania from *Atlas of the Lithuanian Language (LKA)* and the second one is comprised of four points, which constitute the continuation of Southern Aukštaitian beyond the borders of Lithuania. The material covers almost seven decades, from the second half of the 20th century to the second decade of the 21st century. The aim of the study is to analyse the most important changes in the morphological system of the Southern Aukštaitian dialect used in the two areas. The article analyses the changes of contact origin, which have occurred in the Lithuanian language systems of nouns and verbs at the morphological level. Due to constant interaction with Slavic languages, the Lithuanian dialect has undergone complex degenerative changes in its grammatical structure. The language processes are analysed using the apparent-time method (Labov 1963): the current language of three generations of informants is studied and compared.

Keywords: Southern Aukštaitian subdialect of Lithuanian; local Belarusian dialect *po prostu*; interference at morphological level; language contacts.

Introduction

The main aim of this study is to reveal the essential aspects of the interference between the Lithuanian language and the Belarusian language at the morphological level in the speech of Lithuanian-speaking indigenous inhabitants of the southeastern part

of Lithuania (Šalčininkai district) and the Lithuanian islands in Belarus (Varanavas district, Bel. *Varanava*).

Linguistic processes are dealt with in the Labovian term “apparent time” (Labov 1963, 207–309; 1975, 199–228): the current language of several generations of informants is investigated and compared, which makes it possible to directly observe and record linguistic changes over a certain period of time, from the youth of the oldest informants to the present. It should be considered that all the informants fluently spoke two or more languages interchangeably and could easily switch between them in a conversation.

The author analyses the current borrowing space of two languages functioning in the area based on contemporary dialectological material from the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. The main aim of this study is to reveal the most prominent aspects of the interference between the local Belarusian language varieties and the passively used Lithuanian language.

Specifically, the paper discusses the morphological borrowings of contact origin in the endangered Lithuanian language. One of the last signs of the decline of the Lithuanian language described here is the emergence of the borrowing asymmetry: words start to move more and more easily in only one direction, i.e. into Lithuanian, while other elements of the Lithuanian language become increasingly less adapted.

1. Study area and its inhabitants

Until the second half of the 20th century, the Lithuanian language spoken in the study area was the Southern Aukštaitian subdialect. From a geolinguistic point of view, the historical, linguistic and socio-cultural contexts of the two peripheral regions in both Lithuania and Belarus were identical or very similar until 1990 (cf. Buchaveckas 1992; Garšva, Grumadienė 1993; Zinkevičius 1993; Gaučas 2004; Chekman 2017c, 206–227; Tuomienė 2023, 34–49).

One region is the Southeastern Lithuanian border region with Belarus, encompassing most of the Šalčininkai district, while the other region is situated in Northwestern Belarus, mainly in the Varanavas district.

It was only after 1990, when Lithuania regained its independence, that these two formerly contiguous territories were *de facto* separated by a state border, as the Lithuanian–Belarusian border was not an issue during the Soviet period or before (Čekmonas, Grumadienė 1993, 132–136; Stravinskienė 2010, 42–51; Tuomienė 2023, 50–62 etc.).

On the Lithuanian side, there are 17 points, all in the Šalčininkai district. Of these, 10 points belong to the Southern Aukštaitian subdialect: Rūdninkai (LKA 634), Gudeliai (LKA 650), Šalčininkėliai (LKA 651), Kuršiai (LKA 664), Kaniūkai (LKA 665), Šalčininkai (LKA 666), Vėžionys (LKA 680), Eišiškės (LKA 681), Butrimony (LKA 682), and Daugidony (LKA 691). The remaining seven points are attributed to the Eastern Aukštaitian subdialect: Maciučiai (LKA 670), Miežionys (LKA 669), Daulėnai (LKA 668), Dailidės (LKA 667), Kurmelionys (LKA 652), Tabariškės (LKA 637),

Jašiūnai (LKA 635). It is worth noting that there were many people who understood Lithuanian but struggled to speak it or no longer spoke it in the points of Šalčininkai (LKA 666), Kaniūkai (LKA 665), Dailidės (LKA 667), Daulėnai (LKA 668), Miežionys (LKA 669), Maciučiai (LKA 670), and Vėžionys (LKA 680).

The second study area is a continuation of the Southern Aukštaitian subdialect beyond the Lithuanian border, consisting of several Lithuanian islands about 60–70 km to the south and southeast. About 100 years ago there were four Lithuanian dialectological atlas points in the Varanavas area, which were still alive back then and therefore linguistically significant: Varanavas (Bel. *Voranava*), Nevaišiai (Bel. *Niavoshy*) and Asava (Bel. *Asava*) (LKA 806); Nočia (Bel. *Nacha*) (LKA 807); Rodūnia (Bel. *Radunj*), Plikiai (Bel. *Pliki*) (LKA 808); Pelesa (Bel. *Peliasa*) (LKA 809). Until the end of the 20th century, only remains of the Lithuanian language were still preserved in the villages along the line from Benekainiai (Bel. *Beniakoni*) to Armoniškės (Bel. *Germanishki*) on both banks of the Žižma (Bel. *Zhyzhma*) river (Tuomienė 2008, 16–35; Trumpa 2008, 11–34; Tuomienė 2010b, 11–15).

2. Object and methodological background of the study

The research object described in this article is the process of the disappearance of the Southern Aukštaitian Lithuanian subdialect in Southeastern Lithuania, Šalčininkai district, and Northwestern Belarus, Varanavas district. This process is taking place through increasingly intensive borrowing from the Belarusian language, the result of which is most accurately described by Dressler's (1988, 184–192) term “language death”.

This article reflects the analysis of the observed results of language contact in the Lithuanian noun and verb systems and usage. When listening to linguistic audio recordings, it was noticed that the gender of nouns in the Lithuanian dialect of bilingual people is confused (cf. Tuomienė 2010b, 56–59). Lithuanian words often receive an unusual Belarusian ending. For example, abstract nouns can be used with both masculine and feminine endings due to the mixing of word formation types in the Lithuanian dialect. Parallel forms of verbs, semantic values, etc. are used (see more Tuomienė 2014, 82–104).

Changes in the morphological system of the studied parts of speech are analysed using the sociolinguistic methodology of the *apparent-time* (Labov 1963, 207–309; 1975, 199–228): the current living, spoken language of several generations of informants is studied and compared. The chosen method of language analysis enables revealing the reasons for the results of the language change process that took place over a longer period, describing them and predicting the possible further course of changes.

The sociolinguistic *apparent-time hypothesis* states that the diversity of language associated with different age groups suggests that people represent variations in the language of their time, but they are observed now. This means that if the language differences identified during the research are characteristic of people of various ages, it is possible to suspect and investigate ongoing language changes (cf. Urnėžiūtė 1998, 131–140; Tuomienė 2006b, 161–172; 2022, 238–265; Kalėdienė 2015, 213–216 etc.).

The study distinguishes three generations according to the way of speaking: the oldest (60–95 years and older), the middle (40–59 years), and the youngest (18–39 years) (cf. Tuomienė 2008, 38–45; 2023, 15–21; Meiliūnaitė, Mikulėnienė 2014, 125). The generation of younger residents is considered conditional, as little linguistic and sociolinguistic data have been collected about this generation.

The chosen observation time method allows us to observe the transformations and changes of the language now, i.e. the extinction of one language. All the collected data were analysed, i.e. all variations of language diversification with “exceptions” and “non-systematic” facts. The research material consisted of audio recordings from the above mentioned 21 LKA points on both sides of the Lithuanian–Belarusian border. Audio recordings were made in all 17 border points of Southeastern Lithuania (70 hours of recordings in total). The texts were recorded in two different periods: in 1964–1990, 34 hours of audio recordings were made in the Lithuanian subdialect. Meanwhile, in 2011–2013, 36 hours of audio recordings were collected from the Šalčininkai district points: 31 hours in local Slavic languages and 17 hours in the Lithuanian subdialect and a non-literary version of Lithuanian. On the Lithuanian islands of Belarus, live speech data were also collected in several stages (a total of 96 hours of recordings). In 1995–2007, 58 hours of spoken Lithuanian texts were recorded and in 2011–2017, 34 hours of texts were collected: 9 hours in the Lithuanian subdialect and 25 hours in local Belarusian and Polish languages. Besides, 4 hours of recordings were made in Russian and literary Belarusian. A total of 89 multilingual respondents of the older, middle and younger generations were interviewed and/or recorded. The total volume of language audio recordings is more than 166 hours.

3. Grammatical impoverishment of the Lithuanian language against the background of the loss of functions

The uniqueness of this study lies primarily in its attempt to investigate and describe how, from the second half of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, the Lithuanian language has undergone a linguistic transformation in all the study areas, gradually losing its basic functions as it has been pushed out of public life and replaced by other languages (Vidugiris 1983, 46–61; Čekmonas 2017, 61–107; Tuomienė 2023, 50–62, 136–145).

The linguistic and sociolinguistic situation in the region under study has been identified by researchers as an area of intense contact and mass borrowing (cf. Chekman 2017b, 387–415). More intensive borrowing process in one of the contact languages is the result of very strong cultural and even social pressures exerted by the users of the other language, which, in turn, leads to particularly pronounced structural changes in the receiving language. The exerted pressure can be so great and pervasive that the whole structure of the other language is eventually taken over (cf. Tuomienė 2020, 192–207). In such cases, the borrowing is not random or spontaneous, which is why the concept of interference is appropriate here: like light waves in physics, linguistic phenomena in linguistics add up to produce a certain amount (cf. Weinreich 1953).

Linguistic interference occurs when bilingual speakers increasingly repeat elements of foreign languages in their mother tongue, eventually leading to the use of these languages as substitutes for their mother tongue. This is how Weinreich (1979, 64–71) described this interference: he argued that when two languages are used interchangeably, there are instances of intermixing, which occurs when elements of the other language, which a person both knows and speaks, penetrate, i.e. are incorporated, into the language of the same person.

4. Expression of the convergence of morphological system in the Lithuanian dialect

Long-term bilingualism and multilingualism in the spoken languages under study have given rise to a phenomenon known as language levelling, i.e. when several languages are spoken without any of them being “pure”, correct, elaborate, and rich. Levelling is equivalent to mirroring, which means that what is expressed in one language is also expressed in another language, i.e. the elements of a language are brought into grammatical alignment with each other, not according to the rules of one’s own language, but according to the rules of the foreign language, which are becoming more and more established (see Chekman 2017a, 443–461 for more on this). The results of the mixing are especially obvious at the morphological level.

4.1. Variation in the gender of nouns: Mixing of word formation types

This chapter uses data from the Lithuanian colloquial system of the study region to show what is changing or has already changed in the category of noun gender. Some of the changes are more typical of the language of the middle generation, but similar changes have been observed in the audio recordings of older speakers. It should be noted that in all cases, the catalyst for the variation in the gender of nouns is language contact and bilingualism (the variation is between masculine and feminine within the speech of the same informants). It should be stressed that in the local variety of Belarusian, noun genders and corresponding endings are well preserved.

Some typical suffixes, such as *-imas*, *-umas* (*-a*), *-ystė* (*-ysta*), *-ybė* (*-yba*), *-lė*, and the ending *-ė*, which refer to the names of actions, possessors of qualities, and names of places, are used in a chaotic way by some of the informants, alternating between the masculine and the feminine gender (see more Tuomienė 2010b, 56–61). It could be argued that the rules of Lithuanian word formation are also sometimes ignored, i.e., these people have increasingly less understanding of, let alone respect for, the clear structure of word formation (cf. Dressleris 1994, 85).

Obviously, they already find it difficult to associate the derived words with the base words, because these words are used with different suffixes in the same story or even in the same sentence (1), e.g.:

- (1) Lithuanian
- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. <i>baisum-as</i> / <i>baisum-a</i>
awfulness.M/horrors.F
'awfulness'</p> <p>b. <i>ramum-a</i> / <i>ramum-as</i>
serenity.F/calmness.M
'serenity'</p> <p>c. <i>rūgštum-a</i> / <i>rūgštum-as</i>
acidity.F/sourness.M
'acidity'</p> | <p>d. <i>sausum-a</i> / <i>sausum-as</i>
aridity.F/dryness.M
'drought'</p> <p>e. <i>tamsum-a</i> / <i>tamsum-as</i> /
<i>tamsyb-ė</i>
darkness.F/blackness./
twilight.F
'twilight'</p> |
|--|--|

Notably, all the above examples are attested in one or the other Lithuanian dialect or in the standard Lithuanian language (Ambrazas 2000, 22–24), but their use is strictly correlated: if a form of one gender is used, the other one will not be used, and in the material under study the forms are used interchangeably, i.e., in one gender as well as another (cf. LKA III, 36–37, map. No. 32–33).

In the Lithuanian subdialects under analysis, these suffixes are also very frequent, but they are already added even to those words where other suffixes are usually used in other dialects and in standard Lithuanian (2), e.g.:

- (2) Lithuanian
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>baisum-as</i> / <i>baim-ė</i>
<i>mani jima baisumas, kas in</i>
<i>svieto daros</i> 'I'm scared of
what's going on in the world'
awfulness.M/fear.F
'fear'</p> <p>b. <i>sausum-as</i> / <i>sausr-a</i>
<i>visų vasarų tokys sausumas</i>
'such a drought all summer'
dryness.M/draught.F
'draught'</p> | <p>c. <i>gēr-yb-ė</i> / <i>ger-um-as</i>
<i>iš tokio žmogaus gėrybės</i>
<i>nelauk</i> 'don't expect kindness
from such a man'
goodies.F/kindness.M
'kindness'</p> |
|---|--|

It has been observed that due to the influence of the local Belarusian language, the noun patterns change in the Lithuanian language, both in the Šalčininkai area (Vėžionys, Didžiosios Sėlos, Kalesninkai) and on the Lithuanian islands in Belarus (Asava, Nočia, Rodūnia, Ramaškonys), because the ending of the nouns is adapted according to the Belarusian ending of the word.

For example, in several places (Kalesninkai, Nočia, Ramaškonys) some abstracts are recorded in the feminine, as it is customary in Lithuanian, but since the Belarusian equivalents are in the masculine, it is quite possible for a speaker of any given generation to use the masculine instead of the feminine gender when speaking in Lithuanian, e.g.:

- (3) Lithuanian
- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. <i>apgau-l-ė</i> / <i>apgav-im-as</i>
deceit.F/cheating.M
'deception'</p> | <p>b. <i>baim-ė</i> / <i>bais-um-as</i>
fear.F/awfulness.M
'fear'</p> |
|---|---|

In contrast to the Lithuanian language, Belarusian has several abstracts of the opposite gender to the Lithuanian ones, and this is probably why, especially in the middle generation, the Lithuanian informants often use the feminine forms, e.g.:

- (4) Belarusian
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>hlybin-ia</i>
acorns.F
'depth'</p> <p>b. <i>krasat-a</i>
beauty.F
'beauty'</p> <p>c. <i>zloscj-θ</i>
anger.F, wrath.F
'fury'</p> | <p>d. <i>kislat-a</i>
sourness.F, acidity.F
'sourness'</p> <p>e. <i>cemnot-a</i>
darkness.F, gloominess.F
'darkness'</p> |
|---|--|
- (5) Lithuanian
- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. <i>gražum-a</i>
beauty.F
'beauty'</p> <p>b. <i>rūgštum-a</i>
sourness.F
'sourness'</p> | <p>c. <i>tamsum-a</i>
darkness.F
'darkness'</p> <p>d. <i>švarum-a</i>
cleanliness.F, purity.F
'cleanliness'</p> |
|--|---|

Derivatives with *-umas*, *-uma* also abound in other nouns (cf. Ambrazas 2000, 23). The examples with varying suffixes and endings of nouns also show that different types of derivation have converged in the Southern Aukštaitian subdialects of the region under study, as well as in the adjacent large-area dialects.

A rather long list of words we have collected shows a similar pattern of gender variation as in the case of suffixal nouns, especially the middle generation tends to use some suffixal nouns, which are usually feminine, in the masculine as well as in the feminine, e.g.:

- (6) Lithuanian
- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. <i>ažuvej-a</i> / <i>ažuvej-is</i>
shelter.F/refuge.M
'refuge'</p> <p>b. <i>apinastr-is</i> / <i>apinastr-ė</i>
horse halter.M/harness.F
'halters'</p> | <p>c. <i>papeč-ė</i> / <i>papeč-ys</i>
under the stove.F./after
the ovens.M
'storage drawer'</p> <p>d. <i>pavakar-ė</i> / <i>pavakar-ys</i>
afternoon.F/early evening.M
'afternoon'</p> |
|--|---|

There are instances of such diversification elsewhere (cf. LKA III, 36–37, map No. 32–33). The other cases of these prefixed nouns also retain the endings of the chosen gender. One reason for the use of the two adjacent forms may be the mixing of noun stems.

Although, especially in the case of the middle generation, there does not seem to be a difference which ending to use (cf. Tuomienė 2010b, 83–84): feminine *-ė*, *-(i)a*, or masculine *-is*, *-ys*, the choice of the ending seems to be more and more influenced by the gender of the word in the local Belarusian language. Based on the examples discussed above, it can be assumed that bilinguals tend to use nouns of the same, rather than different, gender in both Lithuanian and Belarusian languages.

Belarusian is the main language of the younger generation, which is why it usually becomes the main language of communication in the family (Tuomienė 2010b, 58). It should be noted that in colloquial situations, when seeking similarity in another language, the most similar form is used, i.e. a formant is chosen from the Lithuanian dialect that not only corresponds to the meaning but, more importantly, satisfies the condition discussed above that the genders of the two languages be as similar as possible so that there is no, or hardly any, apparent grammatical difference.

The diversification of the gender of nouns sometimes leads to an inconsistency in the gender of adjectives, pronouns, less frequently numerals, and very rarely verbal participles with the noun's gender (usually those whose gender is indicated by the context rather than the ending) (cf. Tuomienė 2010b, 58–60). Descriptive words used by the middle generation are sometimes not related to the gender of the noun, so their endings are not matched in gender, e.g.:

- (7) Lithuanian
- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. <i>šaknės per stori</i>
 roots.F too thick.M
 'thick roots'</p> | <p>b. <i>dainavom dainas visokius</i>
 we sang different.M songs.F
 'various songs'</p> |
|---|---|

The inability to combine nouns and adjectives in the same sentence is associated with a loss of language sense and the merging of several systems. It should be noted that in the language of the same informants in Belarus, adjectives are grammatically correctly combined with nouns, e.g.:

- (8) Belarusian
- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. <i>vialik-aja trav-a</i>
 big.F grass.F
 'high grass'</p> | <p>c. <i>toustae dreva</i>
 thick.N tree.N
 'large woody tree'</p> |
| <p>b. <i>smachny jablyk</i>
 delicious.M apple.M
 'tasty apple'</p> | |

The variation in the gender of nouns can also be explained by extra-linguistic reasons. Firstly, it has to do with the degree of bilingualism: the more one language is spoken, the more borrowings, quotations and citations appear in the other, more passively spoken language. The middle generation, compared to the older generation, uses much more grammatically processed lexical borrowings adapted to Slavic, such as (9).

- (9) Lithuanian
- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. <i>arklio kapitai</i>
horse's hooves (Bel. <i>kapity</i>)
'hooves'</p> <p>b. <i>kmūra ateina</i>
cloud is coming (Bel. <i>kmara</i>)
'cloud'</p> | <p>c. <i>skobos sopa</i>
my ribs ache (Bel. <i>skaby</i>)
'ribs'</p> |
|--|--|

Common Baltic and Slavic words and derivatives, also commonly found in other Lithuanian dialects, are used more often by the older generation, (10):

- (10) Lithuanian
- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. <i>lancūgas</i>
chain (Bel. <i>lancug</i>)
'chain'</p> <p>b. <i>sirata</i>
orphan (Bel. <i>sirota</i>)
'foundling'</p> | <p>c. <i>prūdas</i>
pond (Bel. <i>prud</i>)
'pond'</p> |
|--|--|

The diversification of noun families can also be explained by extralinguistic reasons. These reasons are primarily related to the degree of bilingualism: the more only one language is used, the more loanwords and limes appear in the second, more passively used language. Compared to the older generation, the middle generation of informants uses more lexical borrowings, grammatically adapted to the Lithuanian language system, but retaining the Slavic language.

4.2. Changes of noun forms in the category of number

Some uncountable nouns, both *singularia tantum* and *pluralia tantum*, are used slightly differently in the language of the younger informants than in the whole of the Southeastern Aukštaitian region, as *singularia tantum* nouns take the plural form, e.g.:

- (11) Lithuanian
- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. <i>koki šimet karšciai,</i>
<i>cik prakaitai bėga</i>
how hot it is this year,
only sweats.PL is
pouring
'sweating'</p> <p>b. <i>kas gerai sulaiko kraujus</i>
that which holds the bloods.
PL well
'blood'</p> | <p>c. <i>gripai puola</i>
the flues.PL have struck
'flue'</p> <p>d. <i>kur auksai paslėpta</i>
where the golds.PL are
hidden
'gold'</p> |
|---|---|

Conversely, *pluralia tantum* nouns are sometimes used in the singular form:

(12) Lithuanian

a. *pridėk pilnų **ėdzių** šieno*
load the manger.SG full
of hay
'manger'

b. *tėvai jam padarė **išleistuvę***
his parents gave him
a prom.SG
'prom'

c. *palikau prie kupetos **šakę***
I left a pitchfork.SG by
the haystack
'pitchfork'

Similar cases of plural nouns being used in the singular form for stylistic purposes occur in almost all Lithuanian dialects (for more examples see Zinkevičius 1966, 214–215).

The use of some uncountable nouns in the Lithuanian language of the middle generation is influenced by the Belarusian dialect. There are not many such words. Most often, confusion arises when the same nouns in Belarusian do not correspond to the same Lithuanian nouns in number, when words or their compounds are used figuratively or with a new shade of meaning. Sometimes, these nouns take unusual forms in speech. For example, in Belarusian, Lithuanian *singulare tantum* nouns can take a plural form:

(13) Belarusian

a. *krasata / krasoty*
beauty.SG / beauties.PL
'beauty'

b. *vysota / vysoty*
height.SG / heights.PL
'height'

When speaking in Lithuanian, especially in the case of code-switching, informants may use analogous forms side by side.

The plural nouns, which have been found in the vernacular in very small numbers, have been altered due to the confusion of the masculine and feminine endings of the nouns, just as in other subdialects, where the same occurs, due to the mixing of the stems or, when the word acquires a figurative meaning, e.g.:

(14) Lithuanian

a. *kelin(i)-**ai***
trousers.M
'trousers'

b. *rog-(i)-**ai***
sledge.M
'sledge'

c. *laidotuv(i)-**ai***
funeral.M
'funeral'

d. *durp(i)-**ai***
peat.M
'peat'

Thus, there are three cases of variation related to the category of number:

- 1) the complete disappearance of the grammatical category of the double number;
- 2) the substitution of uncountable nouns with countable ones;
- 3) the number of nouns in Lithuanian is determined by the number of nouns in Belarusian.

4.3. The effects of language interaction in the noun conjugation system

Nouns of some stems are more stable than others. Wurzel (1984, 129) describes stable flexion classes, as follows: “Stable flexion classes are those flexion classes whose paradigms follow the implicature pattern of a paradigm structure condition that is exclusively valid or dominant for words with the relevant extra-morphological properties”. Conversely, “unstable flexion classes are those whose paradigms follow a different implicational pattern that does not conform to the dominant conditions of the paradigm structure” (Wurzel op. cit., 130). Wurzel (op. cit., 129–131) also points out that stable flexion classes have no or weakly represented additional flexion classes, whereas unstable flexion classes have strongly represented additional flexion classes.

In the language under study, the latter stems vary in both the older and younger generations and are intertwined and obsolete. Changes in the system of derivation itself are related not only to the productivity of the stems and their mixing, to the phonetic adaptation of the individual relations, but also to the disintegration of the subdialect, which is strongly influenced by extralinguistic factors (Grumadienė 1994, 98).

The new borrowings are both masculine and feminine, but because they pass in only one direction, i.e. from the dominant Belarusian language to the disappearing Lithuanian language, this means that they bring the grammatical gender category to the Lithuanian language from the Belarusian language, e.g.:

(15) Lithuanian

a. <i>apalonikas</i> cufflink.M 'cufflinks'	d. <i>lusterkas</i> mirror.M 'mirror'
b. <i>abojai</i> wallpaper.M 'wall cladding'	e. <i>krotas</i> mole.M 'mole'
c. <i>dzivanas</i> sofa.M 'sofa'	f. <i>patopas</i> flood.M 'deluge'

However, these extraneous words are not always phonetically and morphologically adapted, especially in the language of the middle generation (cf. Kardelis 1999, 39–48).

The proliferation of occasionalism is rightly regarded as one of the features of the language's decline (Dressleris 1994, 84), as they irreversibly displace the old Lithuanian lexical clade in the studied dialects. The speed of this process depends on the specific needs of the informant and the ability to communicate in Lithuanian.

5. Innovations in verb conjugation

An interesting and perhaps the least studied part of speech is the verb. The article aims to present the most important innovative phenomena of the verb system of Lithuanian-speaking people in the vicinity of Šalčininkai and Varanavas related to the interaction

of languages. In other words, to analyse the features of the verb that change most rapidly under bilingualism. The peculiarities of verbs and their use in the speech of speakers of various ages are examined.

The past frequent tense of verbs is a relatively late phenomenon in Lithuanian and is not found in all Lithuanian dialects (see Zinkevičius 1966, 356–359; Palionis 1967, 135–136; Zinkevičius 1987, 216–218). In most of the area of the Lithuanian language (in the entire Aukštaitian dialect and in the closer Žemaitian subdialects, as well as in the standard language), the 3rd person forms are used, consisting of the verb stem infinitive and the suffix *-dav-*. The accented position of the infinitive is retained.

5.1. Forms of the past frequent tense of the verb

In the Southern Aukštaitian subdialect, the past frequent tense of the verb is rarely used or not used at all. Usually, the past simple tense (PST) is used, with its forms repeated or strengthened by certain adverbs *dažnai*, *tankiai* ‘often’, particle *vis* ‘again’ (Tuomienė 2014, 92–93), for example:

(16) Lithuanian

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. <i>sunkiai dzirbom vis dzirbom</i>
we worked.PST hard all
the time and kept
working.PST
‘used to work’</p> | <p>b. <i>vaikai man lakštus rašė</i>
my children wrote me
letters.PST
‘used to write’</p> |
|--|---|

Another way of expressing multiplicity is verbs with the suffixes *-inėti*, *-dinėti* or *-dyti*, which have intensive and iterative meanings (see Kaukienė 1994, 218–224), e.g.:

(17) Lithuanian

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. <i>aš pats patikdžiau karves</i>
I used to meet.PST frequent
the cows myself
‘used to meet’</p> | <p>c. <i>sūnus vis atvažiuodzinėjo</i>
the son kept coming.PST past
frequent regularly
‘kept coming’</p> |
| <p>b. <i>anys ateidzinėjo ir viską padzedzinėjo</i>
he used to come PST frequ-
ent and used to help.PST
frequent to do everything
‘used to come’; ‘used to help’</p> | |

However, verbs with the suffix *-dinėti* or *-dyti* are often used to denote not so much repetitive as prolonged periods of time, e.g.:

(18) Lithuanian

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. <i>burokus rasso-dzinėj-au</i>
I have planted.PST.PFV all
the beets
‘I have planted each beet’</p> | <p>b. <i>lietus susrink-dzinėj-a</i>
the rain has gathered.PST.
PFV
‘is gathering’</p> |
|---|---|

In the subdialects under study, a particularly frequent use of the 3rd person form was observed as an interjection, a kind of interlude when talking about frequent events in the past. This usage is typical of all Lithuanian dialects.

This interlude is also a common form of the frequent past tense in the studied subdialects. However, as mentioned above, the 3rd person forms of the past frequent tense are extremely rare in the whole area of the Southern Aukštaitian subdialect (cf. Tuomienė 2014, 93).

Moreover, the Belarusian word ‘*byvalo*’ ‘used to be’ is quite lively and is often encountered in the local Belarusian dialect as well, e.g.:

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| (19) | Lithuanian | Belarusian |
| | a. <i>kada tai, būdavo, mes prikepam grikinių blynų</i> | <i>kalisci, byvalo, my napiachom gryčannyh blynou</i> |
| | in the old days, we used to make .PST frequent buckwheat pancakes
‘it really was’ | |
| | b. <i>suveina, būdavo, jaunimas, visi dainuoja</i> | <i>zbirajacca, byvalo, moladz, use spiavajuc</i> |
| | the youth used to gather .PST and sing together
‘it really was’ | |

Thus, comparing the examples of two more actively or more passively used local dialects, it can be assumed that the local Belarusian dialect encourages the informants to use the 3rd person form of the verb more often when talking in Lithuanian about frequently recurring events in the past.

This is one of the cases when the representatives of the dialects, who communicate less and less in Lithuanian in their everyday life, start to consider the Belarusian language as their means of expression, easily incorporating it into their language. An increasing number of these representatives simply translate their thoughts or individual sentences from Belarusian, in other words, express their Belarusian thoughts in Lithuanian words (see Grinaveckienė 1997, 185–195; Grumadienė 2005, 42; Tuomienė 2006b, 161–172; 2006a, 80–86; 2010a, 223–234).

5.2. Reflexive verbs

In the usage of the studied verbs, the first thing that catches the eye is the intensified usage of semantic calques and the growing layer of literal translations, which has emerged because of the expansion of the Lithuanian-Belarusian unilateral bilingualism. These linguistic phenomena can be described as the purest products of the finally developed late bilingualism.

Reflexive verbs are usually made with the reflexive affix *-si*, used without the vowel *i*, which is dropped as a semantically and functionally irrelevant element (cf. LKA III 105; Zinkevičius 1966, 331; Leskauskaitė 2006, 396–397). In the Lithuanian dialects under study, there are cases when the reflexive affix of the prefixed verb (often with the negative *ne-*) is placed at the end, as in Slavic languages (cf. Tuomienė 2014, 94–95), e.g.:

- (20) Lithuanian Belarusian
- a. *anas ilgai nežėninasi* *jon dougo ne zhenicca*
for a long time he is not getting married.PRST.REFL
'is not getting married'
- b. *man lygiai nepjaunasi* *mne rouna ne rezhacca*
I don't get lucky in cutting.PRST.REFL
'can't cut straight'
- c. *šiandien man negalvojasi* *sennia mne ne dumajacca*
today I'm having trouble in thinking.PRST.REFL
'it is not easy to think'

The influence of the Belarusian language can probably be explained by one or another meaning of the verb forms, which corresponds to the Belarusian one, but no longer has the same meaning as in Lithuanian, e.g.:

- (21) Lithuanian Belarusian
- a. *aš kat ra(s)siverkiau* *ja tak rasplakalsia*
I have cried.PST.REFL so hard
'cry for a long time'
- b. *kepasi* *vypekajacca*
is stinging.PRST.REFL (for nettles)
'is fried'

From the examples above, we can observe a tendency for more and more "copies" of the local Belarusian dialect to be found in the Lithuanian subdialects under study. In other words, the unchanged form of the word is transferred into Lithuanian, and the root of the Lithuanian word is chosen to match the Belarusian one (Tuomiene 2006a, 83–84).

Conclusions

1. The influence of the Belarusian dialect is more intense for the following categories of nouns in the Lithuanian dialect, especially of the middle generation:
 - 1.1. the diversification of gender is obtained by using the internal means of the Lithuanian language: due to the mixing of the types of derivation, the derivatives of the most common suffixes *-imas*, *-umas (-a)*, *-ystė (-ysta)*, *-ybė (-yba)*, *-lė*, as well as the derivatives of the ending *-ė*, which are used to denote the name of the action, of the possessor of the feature, and of the name of the place (the abstract of a verb and of a nominative word), are used with the ending in the masculine as well as in the feminine gender;
 - 1.2. the rules of Lithuanian word formation are disregarded; the choice of the noun ending is often determined by the gender of the word with the same meaning in the Belarusian vernacular;
 - 1.3. the use of different word endings in the same sentence is linked to the loss of the sense of language or to the fusion of several systems: the middle

generation uses many lexical borrowings whose grammatical form is modified to match the Lithuanian language system but retains the principles of the original Belarusian language.

2. Due to constant interaction with Slavic languages, the Lithuanian dialect has undergone complex structural changes. It is easy to see a new and rich layer of Slavic deposits – conjugated verb forms, semantic calques, etc.:
 - 2.1. the past frequent tense, which refers to frequent events in the past, is expressed by adding the 3rd person form *būdavo* (used to be). This is one of the cases when the means of expression of the Belarusian language are taken for granted and easily incorporated into the Lithuanian language;
 - 2.2. the suffix of the prefixed verb (usually with the negative *ne-*) is placed at the end, as in Slavic languages; the Belarusian meaning of the suffixed forms of individual verbs is taken over;
 - 2.3. several verb prefixes are used in a way that is foreign to the Lithuanian language.

Abbreviations

Bel.	Belarusian
F	feminine
LKA	Lietuvių kalbos atlasas
M	masculine
N	neuter
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
PST	past
PRST	present
REFL	reflexive
SG	singular

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Kopsavilkums

Šajā publikācijā aplūkoti sociolingvistikas pētījumi saistībā ar dienvidu augstienes lietuviešu dialektu, kurā runā Dienvidaustrumu Lietuvas un Ziemeļrietumu Baltkrievijas robežas abās pusēs. Tur lietuviešu dialekts vairs neveido viendabīgu areālu, savas kā ikdienā lietojamas valodas pozīcijas zaudējot baltkrievu valodai jeb pašu vietējo iedzīvotāju dēvētajai *po prostu*. Pēc tam, kad lietuviešu dialekts pilnībā zaudējis savas kā ikdienas valodas pamatfunkcijas, vairākums lietuviešu valodā runājošo iedzīvotāju pilnībā pārgājuši baltkrievu dialektā. Valodu apmaiņa vienā un tajā pašā jomā divu vai trīs paaudžu garumā ir radījusi ļoti ciešas valodu saites. Pētījuma objekts ir divas lingvistiskās robežjoslas: pirmajā iekļauti 17 Dienvidaustrumu Lietuvas lietuviešu valodas atlanta (LKA) robežpunkti, otrajā – četri punkti, veidojot dienvidaustrumu valodas turpinājumu ārpus Lietuvas valsts robežas. Materiāls aptver gandrīz 70 gadus garu pētījumu no 20. gs. otrās puses līdz 21. gs. 20. gadiem. Pētījuma mērķis ir analizēt svarīgākās izmaiņas šajā areālā dienvidu aukštaišu dialekta morfoloģiskajā sistēmā. Publikācijā pētītas lietuviešu valodas kontaktcelmu sistēmas morfoloģiskā līmeņa izmaiņas lietvārdu, darbības vārdu un vietniekvārdu sistēmā. Pastāvīgā mijiedarbībā ar slāvu valodām lietuviešu dialekts ir piedzīvojis sarežģītas deģeneratīvas izmaiņas gramatiskajā struktūrā. Valodas procesi analizēti, izmantojot šķietamā laika metodi (Labov 1963): pētīta un salīdzināta trīs informantu paaudžu pašreizējā valoda.

Atslēgvārdi: lietuviešu valodas dienvidu aukštaišu izloksne; vietējais baltkrievu dialekts *po prostu*; traucējumi morfoloģiskajā līmenī; valodu kontakti.



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