

Diversity of attitudes to English in non-professional public discourse: A focus on Lithuania

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An analysis of the narratives people tell about English as a global language in the local context of Lithuania

Introduction

This paper stems from the ongoing debate on the changing role and status of English in different parts of the world, with a special interest in the socio-historical background of a post-Soviet country. The international status of English has given rise to different reactions among speakers, ranging from attraction to resentment (cf. Onysko, 2009: 34). These reactions are expressed in public online discourse, which provides a rich resource of empirical evidence to study public attitudes and language ideologies. Digital media offers an especially important strategic site to disseminate ideologies and shape public opinions. This paper analyses the spectrum of discourses operating within Lithuanian digital media to perpetuate attitudes towards English and the values associated with it.

For the purposes of this study, a distinction is drawn between professional and non-professional discourse, since the study aims to reveal how non-linguists (or non-professionals), as opposed to linguists and language policy makers (or professionals), view English. The main focus here is on the attitudes of laypeople, such as ordinary readers of news portals, socially active citizens, journalists, bloggers, writers, and other private individuals who are not acting as professional linguists or institutional authorities in public discourse. To be able to determine whether the tendencies observed among non-professionals are typical of them only, the study resorts to the previous research on professional discourses conducted by Lithuanian linguists (e.g. Vaicekauskienė, 2010; Tamaševičius, 2011; Baločkaitė, 2014). Previous studies show that language policies in Lithuania (maintained by The

State Commission of the Lithuanian Language), and discourses about them, are strongly underpinned by protectionist ideologies. In professional discourses produced by Lithuanian linguists, the central theme is purism, which is closely related to national feeling (see, for instance, Baločkaitė, 2014).

To show how the phenomenon of Englishisation is framed in public discourse in Lithuania by non-professionals, this investigation sets the following objectives: (1) to explore the narratives constructed in public debates about English by different social actors and identify the dominant patterns of their argumentation; (2) to identify if the power of English is associated in public discourse with any



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specific domains of its usage, e.g. academic settings or science. The present research is thus a cross-section of discursive practices of different social actors, which takes into account the narratives people tell about English as a global language in the local context of Lithuania.

Global English and the local context of Lithuania

The length and scope of this paper do not allow for a thorough discussion of people's attitudes regarding the influence of English, but the most dominating approaches can be summed up in terms of two major trends. In the conservative approach, the competing prominence of English is perceived as a threat to local languages and cultural diversity (e.g. Krauss, 1992; Fishman, 1998; Phillipson, 1992, 1998, 2008; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). In contrast, the liberal, postmodernist approach is based on the belief that language contacts should be treated as a natural phenomenon and proposes to view English as a resource (e.g. Pennycook, 2006; Danet & Herring, 2007).

Attitudes to English have been studied rather extensively in the Nordic countries (e.g. Thøgersen, 2004, 2010; Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2008; Linn, 2010a; Sandøy & Kristiansen, 2010; Piechnik, 2014; Boyd & Palviainen, 2015). They have also received attention in some other European countries (e.g. Onysko, 2009; Tatioka, 2015; Walsh, 2015; Deneire, 2015), in countries outside Europe (e.g. Yoo, 2005; Yim, 2007; Lee, 2010; Ashraf & Tsegay, 2016; Gao, 2005), and in some post-communist countries (e.g. Gvelesiani & Tvaltvaдзе, 2014; Wei & Kolko, 2005; Soler-Carbonell, 2011; Soler-Carbonell & Karaoglu, 2015; Soler-Carbonell & Gallego-Balsà, 2016). More extensive research on attitudes to English in the Baltic States only started recently (e.g. Soler-Carbonell, 2011; Soler-Carbonell & Karaoglu, 2015), but in general such research is still lacking.

The Baltic countries can be a revealing research site since they experienced dramatic transformations in language use and language policies in different historical periods (Ozolins, 1999: 6); they can also help to capture the full complexity of the status of English in Europe and beyond. Lithuania, as a country, can be paradigmatic as a nation-state, a post-Soviet state, and a country with a long history of colonisation (see Gerner & Hedlund, 1993; Smith, 1994; Norgaard, 1996). After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the balance of power between English and other languages in Lithuania changed.

The importance of Russian diminished, whereas English became the main foreign language, and its dominance keeps increasing, especially after the country's accession to the EU.

Methodological framework: new media as a new empirical resource for studying attitudes

Traditionally, attitudes to languages have been studied through questionnaires, interviews, and the experimental matched guise technique, as well as autobiographic and fictional accounts. Attitudes expressed in public debates by language users themselves have been studied to a much more limited extent (e.g. Deneire, 2015), but such data can yield important results.

Different media, both printed and electronic, often become ideological battlegrounds where competing discourses are reproduced and disseminated by different social actors. An especially effective battleground for public debates has been offered by electronic media, which are even better equipped than printed media and which allow for even more diversity in opinion and a lesser degree of control. In printed media, voices can be more easily included or excluded, whereas in electronic settings every individual can voice his/her opinion on important issues in a public dialogue.

With the appearance of social networks and online communication as a platform for expressing public opinions, we now have the possibility to study public attitudes to important issues by resorting to online public discourses. With these advances in digital media, citizens in post-communist countries have become more actively involved in the construction of a civil society; that society has become much more dialogic thanks to the convenient tools offered by digital media for sharing and posting information, commenting promptly on any issue, maintaining relationships, community building, and many other options that enhance dialogism on digital media (for a more detailed survey, see McAllister-Spooner, 2009).

Unsurprisingly, in the era of digital media, the influence of traditional newspapers has declined. More and varied voices, which were previously unheard, can now be heard as competing voices (see Linn, 2010b), with a broader variety of perspectives brought in. Non-specialist discourses have become of special importance, and relationships between institutional and non-institutional social actors have started to change, since non-specialist discourses now tend to put more pressure on institutional bodies.

The attitudes expressed by non-professionals in digital media can be treated as ‘the voice of the ordinary language user’ (Linn, 2010b: 115) and thus can be viewed as ‘the voice from below’ (ibid.). Such voices from below are often in conflict with those of linguists and language planners, who, to use Linn’s terminology, are commonly ‘very firmly voices from above, the official voice, the voice of authority’ or ‘the planning voice’ (2010b: 116). As Linn (2010b) observes in his analysis of competing multilayered voices in Norwegian language politics, the notion of ‘voices’ is of special importance in language planning. Language planning from above is often met with objection from below, and more varied voices eventually start changing approaches to language planning through ‘enforced dialogue’ (Linn 2010b: 118). Linn notes that ‘[t]he voice from above, the voice of the language manager, must constantly seek to mimic what it has heard of the voice from below’ (2010b: 126).

For studying argumentation strategies used to support different attitudes to English in digital media, the present analysis applies the framework adopted from Reisigl and Wodak (2001), which was proposed for critical analysis of racism and discrimination but can also be successfully applied when analysing other socially sensitive phenomena. Following Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 44), critical discourse analysis needs to take into account referential and predicational strategies, argumentation, and perspectivisation. To limit the scope of this paper, the main focus is laid here on argumentation strategies, or *topoi*.

Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 74–75) define *topoi* as content-related warrants or ‘conclusion rules’, which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion or standpoint. Through these quasi-rational arguments, attitudes to people or social phenomena are justified (ibid.). For example, discriminatory discourse against immigrants is often grounded on the *topos of advantage* or *usefulness*, which can be paraphrased through the following conditional: ‘if an action under a specific relevant point of view will

be useful, then one should perform it (e.g. usefulness of “*guest workers*” for a national economy)’ (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: 75).

Data

In this paper, the analysis of public attitudes to English is based on three categories of online texts on the topic of English: texts published on regional and national news portals, blog posts, and comments written in response to these texts (see Table 1). These text categories have been selected to represent different social actors (or ‘voices’) and different levels of formality, expecting that news portals will represent the most formal public stance, and comments will express the most immediate community attitudes. Texts in news portals are mainly written by journalists, intellectuals, and some politicians; blogs mostly gather the opinions of intellectual and socially active citizens; and in comments, the widest array of community attitudes is expressed. The very possibility to post comments in digital media allows people to participate more actively in public discourse, express a larger diversity of opinions, and extend the public sphere from physical forums to electronic ones. Reader comments both contribute to a topic and provide insight into how those readers view the topic.

To retrieve on-line articles on the topic of English, the search item ‘anglų kalba’ (‘the English language’) was used. Texts written on this topic appeared in three blogs and four news portals – three major national portals (*Delfi*, www.delfi.lt; *Lrytas*, www.lrytas.lt; and *15min*, www.15min.lt), and the regional portal *Kdiena* (www.kdiena.lt). The database covers the period from 2011 to 2015; it consists of 132 texts on news portals and blogs, and 481 comments, and amounts to a total of 89,957 words.

The largest dataset in this study is that of texts written for national news portals (100 texts, which comprise 49,553 words). The largest number of

Table 1: Composition of the dataset

	Number of texts	Number of words	Number of comments	Number of words
National news portals	100	49,553	132	7,210
Regional news portals	25	11,839	126	4,389
Blog posts	7	4,766	223	12,200
Total:	132	66,158	481	23,799

comments was collected from blogs (223 texts, which make up 12,200 words). A comment here is defined as a single textual unit in the comments section written by a certain author in response to the text published on the news portal or blog.

As Table 1 shows, the number of comments on news portals is lower than in blogs, which is due to the technical restrictions applied to readers' access to comments in news portals. Since all the texts were collected retrospectively from a fixed period in the past, only the most recent comments on news portals could be retrieved. The unequal size of datasets, however, does not affect the present analysis since the main focus is on the content analysis of public discourses rather than the distribution of comments.

Argumentation strategies in public discourses about English

The main topoi relied upon when expressing positive or negative attitudes to English include two major schemes: 'English is an opportunity' (neoliberal approach) vs. 'English is a threat' (conservative approach). The dominance of these topoi in the current study depends on the author's social role and the media where these perspectives are expressed; see Tables 2 and 3, which represent the most dominant topoi in the dataset.

While few texts on news portals and in blog posts express resentment against English, and even fewer represent it as a threat, these two argumentation schemes, unexpectedly, are more dominant in comments on news portals.

These topoi will be discussed further in this paper in greater detail.

(a) English as an opportunity

The topos of English as an opportunity clearly dominates in the public discourse of non-specialists; it is especially prominent in the articles published on news portals and rather extensive in readers' comments. This argumentation scheme consists of several argumentation lines: (a) English is represented as a commodity in such domains as politics, business, professional career, the tourism sector, and to some extent culture; (b) English is associated with prestige; (c) lack of English language knowledge is a limitation and a shameful quality; (d) English offers western mentality and worldview.

English is often perceived as an obligatory professional skill, a basic requirement, a necessity in

Table 2: Argumentation schemes in TEXTS published on news portals and blogs

Topoi	News Portals						Blogs			
	Delfi		Lrytas		15 min		Kdiena			
	Number of texts	%	Number of texts	%	Number of texts	%	Number of texts	%		
Opportunity	24	52%	18	62%	15	60%	17	68%	3	43%
Resentment against EN	1	2%	4	14%	–	–	–	–	1	14%
Threat	–	–	–	–	3	12%	2	8%	–	–
Direct confrontation between approaches	1	2%	1	3%	1	4%	1	4%	–	–
Educational issues	15	32%	7	24%	11	44%	9	36%	1	14%

Table 3: Argumentation schemes in COMMENTS

Topoi	News portals		Blogs		Total	%
	Number of texts	%	Number of texts	%		
Opportunity	22	9%	13	6%	35	7%
English spread is natural	15	6%	4	2%	19	4%
Resentment against EN	37	14%	1	0.4%	38	8%
Threat	25	10%	–	–	25	5%
Puristic attitudes	13	5%	25	11%	38	8%
Language as an ideological tool	5	2%	6	3%	11	2%
Educational issues	8	3%	18	8%	26	5%
Official language policies are unacceptable	1	–	24	11%	25	5%
Community as experts	1	0.4%	137	61%	138	29%

the job market, and thus a commodity. It is also seen as an important vehicle when disseminating culture: translations of the most outstanding theatre performances and literary works are promoted as a high achievement. Commentators who argue for English as an opportunity often ground their discourse on economic and political arguments. It is referred to as an aspiration for the civilization and the language of innovation.

In a number of articles on news portals devoted to the direct clash between the Language Commission and Vilnius Municipality, English is seen as an important asset in the tourism sector. The conflict, which developed after the Language Commission rejected the request to put up bilingual Lithuanian-English signs in airport buses in Vilnius, instigated heated public debates. The city mayor refers to the conflict as ‘the anecdote of the day’ and comments on it in the following way:

1 Jų [VLKK] turbūt toks darbas – nepritarti. O mūsų darbas – padaryti. Tai ir padarysim. (lrytas.lt, 02/09/2015)
[Their work [[the work of the Language Commission]] is perhaps to prohibit things. And our job is to do things. So we’ll just do it.]

Such a non-conformist approach is an interesting example of informal language planning in a highly normative and formalized context. As such, it could be analysed together with some other controversial decisions of the mayor in Vilnius (e.g. putting up bilingual street signs in some streets).

However, what matters here is the argumentation line used in this text, which is marked by an uncompromising tone and a high degree of categoricity. The mayor directly undermines the authority of the official language planners in an unmitigated, straightforward, and challenging tone, thus taking away the language planning monopoly from the commission.

The importance of English is reasserted by the authors of news articles and the commentators by judging, criticising or even ridiculing the lack of English language competence. Linguistic incompetence is described as a shameful quality and a serious limitation:

2 Nemokantys anglų kalbos ministrai darys gėdą Lietuvai (delfi.lt, 26/11/2012)
[Ministers who do not know English will bring shame on Lithuania]

Authors who are derogatory about English language competence often resort to irony and humour.

One of the major Lithuanian news portals launched the project ‘Kalbėk drąsiai’ [Eng. ‘Speak Boldly’], which aimed to encourage people to speak English without having fear of making errors. The present research shows that public speeches or interviews in English given by famous Lithuanians provoked debates about the quality of their spoken English language, and provided an opportunity for the general public to become their critics. Public judgments of linguistic competence are an

interesting social development, which shows that non-specialists are gaining increasingly more power in digital media and have removed the monopoly of authority from professionals.

More important arguments as to why English is positively viewed are that it offers a different outlook, cultural, political and ideological framework, and western mentality. Lack of English knowledge in politics is sometimes associated with an agriculturist mentality, or what one journalist calls ‘the ploughman’s’ mentality (delfi.lt, 07/08/2015). Foreign languages, including English, are argued as being able to ‘open doors’, ‘broaden the outlook’, ‘improve mental skills’, and ‘help to develop native language competence’. This reasoning often resorts to scientific research to provide (quasi-)rational arguments.

Language is often ideologised and politicised by drawing on the opposition between Russian and English, two languages representing two contrasting worlds with different values and associations. In public discourse, language thus gains symbolic power. Especially in more radical approaches, a lack of English language knowledge is considered to be an important factor in predetermining social and cultural segregation and ideological manipulations:

3 Anglų kalbos mokymas turėtų būti nacionalinio saugumo prioritetas, ir ne kaip švietimo dalis, o kaip skiepas nuo vatnikų ideologijos. Labai sunku žmogų atpratinti nuo rusiškų kanalų žiūrėjimo, kai rusų kalba yra vienintelė, kurią jis moka. Viską reikia daryti kartu – ir atjunginėti rusiškų kanalus, ir mokyti Vakarų kalbų, kad tie žmonės turėtų ką žiūrėti. Ir uždrausti angliškų filmų dubliavimą. (delfi.lt, 10/02/2016)

[English language teaching should be a priority of our national security, and not just a part of education, but as a vaccine against the pro-Kremlin ideology. It is very difficult to wean people from viewing Russian channels when the Russian language is the only one they know. Everything needs to be done simultaneously: we need to disconnect Russian channels and teach western languages so that these people have something to watch. And to prohibit dubbing English films.]

This is an example of the provocative style of some bloggers and journalists, who often employ exaggeration and emotional language to strengthen their arguments and instigate discussion. Language competence in such texts is viewed as a socio-cultural and political issue and thus is perceived as an integral part of cultural literacy.

Political reasoning is also relied upon when explaining the actions and policies of Lithuanian language policy makers:

4 Neabejotinas kalbos Gestapo kvailumas mūsų šalyje remiasi dažniausiai tuo, kad devyni iš dešimties normintojų moka vienintelę užsienio kalbą – ir ta kalba yra rusų. (delfi.lt, 10/02/2016) [The undoubted stupidity of the language Gestapo in our country most commonly stems from the fact that nine out of ten language policy makers know a single foreign language, and this language is Russian.]

Such uncompromising rhetoric employs direct, loaded, and categorical referential strategies and heavy intensification to refer to language policy makers. In blogs, they are called pejorative names (‘kalbajobai’, in English ‘language screwers’), and their regulations are criticised for being too rigid.

In some comments, the regulations of the commission are referred to as ‘tragicomedy’, ‘genocide of Lithuanian’, and ‘paranoia’. Military rhetoric, with allusions to Islam, is pervasive: the Language Commission is often referred to as ‘Taliban’ or ‘Sharia’.

(b) English as a threat and a cause for resentment

In conservative public discourses on news portals, if English is not described as a threat and destructive power, it is viewed at least as a challenge. It is argued that English causes some type of deficit and its overuse is treated as a feature of provincial mentality. In such argumentation schemes, authors frequently focus on the destructive power of anglicisms. English is referred to as an immigrant; in some texts, anglicisms are metaphorically represented as a liquid penetrating Lithuanian:

5 ... anglų kalba seniai be jokių kliūčių ir bausmių įsileista ir į žiniasklaidą, ir į oficialius valstybės raštus. Didžiųjų kalbos klaidų sąrašas yra naivus, jei ne juokingas dalykas prieš į kalbą įsisunkusį nuobodų, monotonišką, vertimų gimdomą angliškų klišių kisielių. (lrytas.lt, 12/09/2014)

[Already a while ago, English was let in without any obstacles or penalties into the media and official state documents. The list of major language errors is a naive, if not a funny thing against the tedious and monotonous pulp of English clichés born in translations and soaked in the language.]

In such purist texts, anglicisms are said to be destroying Lithuanian synonyms; they are

described as a sticky substance that is difficult to get rid of. In fact, English borrowings entering Lithuanian are considered to be the most threatening aspect of English and metaphorically are represented as weeds taking root in Lithuanian. Stigmatized borrowings are often related to specific domains such as scientific language, business, and youth language. When discussing the effects of English on Lithuanian, parallels are drawn between present-day globalization and the Soviet period with the widespread use of Russian.

In some texts on news portals, hostility to English is expressed by drawing on the opposition between English and other non-official languages, such as Polish:

6 ... kodėl šalyje, kurioje nėra net 1 procento anglakalbių, tiek daug angliškų užrašų? Kodėl statome naujus kvartalus angliškais pavadinimais, tačiau piktinamės, kai autobuso vairuotojas Vilniaus rajone užsirašo maršruto pavadinimą lietuviškai ir apačioje – lenkiškai? Ar tai ne dvigubi standartai? Kodėl anglų kalba taip dažnai gali nepaisyti valstybinės kalbos įstatymo, o lenkų – negali? (delfi.lt, 07/04/2014)
[... why in a country where there is not even 1 per cent of English-speaking people, are there so many English signs? Why do we build new neighbourhoods with English names, but resent it when the bus driver in Vilnius district puts up a bilingual Lithuanian-Polish sign indicating the bus route? Are these not double standards? Why can English override the state language law so often, and Polish cannot?]

The argument here is built on the idea of ungrounded inequality between English and other non-official languages.

The arguments based on scare tactics tend to resort to military rhetoric, e.g. it is argued that Lithuanians take a defensive position and are experiencing threats from the English language. Metaphoric language used to talk about English sometimes represents it as a cancerous disease. In one interview, a well-known philologist, poet, and translator refers to ‘the flourishing use of English syntax in [Lithuanian] as language cancer’ (15min.lt; 25/04/2013). This metaphor of cancer and the imagery of English as weeds, poison, liquid, and a pest are based on the perception of English as an unstoppable, harmful, and dangerous entity that causes language deterioration (cf. Onysko, 2009). Such metaphors were pervasive in professional discourse in the Soviet period, which was often based on the argumentation scheme ‘language deterioration is caused by

external (foreign language) influences’ (Tamaševičius, 2011).

Contrary to initial expectations, in comments there is a large variety of arguments employed to justify hostility to English. In some comments, English is conceptualised as a language forced on people or an alien language representing an alien culture. Anglicisms are labelled as ‘idiocy’, ‘rubbish’, and associated with incomprehensible language; they are said to penetrate into the country and ‘pollute’ the Lithuanian language and linguistic urban landscapes. To express strong resentment against anglicisms, suggestive physical imagery is used to describe it (e.g. ‘mane vent verčia’, in English ‘I find it nauseating’). Interestingly, even on a cooking blog, a debate on some English borrowings used as culinary terms evolved, and the purist stance is taken by rejecting the use of anglicisms in favour of Lithuanian equivalents.

When expressing resistance to English in comments, pseudo-arguments are often based on the overgeneralization that in other countries not all people speak foreign languages and thus we do not need to speak them either. Such comments often rely on aggressive rhetoric and contain universal claims.

Commentators, reasoning that English is a threat, draw parallels between Russian and English and view both as languages of power, which need to be resisted. Those who use English as a foreign language are pejoratively addressed as ‘arse-lickers’ and are said to have no self-respect; the necessity to speak English is associated with humiliation:

7 net nesiruosiu siknos laizyt kitakalbiam, gyvenu lietuvoje ir kas nori bendraut su manim – tiktai mano gimtąja kalba .. ateina y darba ir sneka savo nesamones pauksciu kalba – ka , man 30 kalbu mokintis ???? Nx , ju salyse mes nesnekam lietuviškai , Tai ir jie tegu laužo liezuvy (kdiena.lt, comments, 26/09/2014)
[I’m not going to lick the arse of foreigners. I live in Lithuania, and if someone wishes to communicate with me – use my native language. They come to work and speak nonsense in their bird language – what, shall I learn 30 languages???? F***, in their home countries we don’t speak Lithuanian, so let them twist their tongues as well]

Radical viewpoints receive considerable opposition from neoliberal commentators, but still negative opinions outweigh the comments where English is treated as an opportunity, which was an unexpected finding.

(c) Debating English with regard to educational issues

English language teaching is generally a topical issue in Lithuania, but in public online debates it receives limited consideration (receiving more prominence on only some news portals) and even less attention in blogs or comments. In the texts that focus on English language teaching, the following issues are salient: (a) the English school graduation exam, (b) innovative teaching resources and methodologies, and (c) teaching English to some specific social groups (i.e. deaf people and imprisoned people). The debates on state exams are often highly emotional; however, they do not express attitudes to English per se, but instead focus largely on the way the exams are organized.

(d) Community as experts

In as many as 61% of the comments, people offer some practically applicable insights and act as experts (similarly to bloggers), e.g. they point to the need to have subtitles for English films instead of dubbing them, and make suggestions as to how certain linguistic items or books need to be translated and which aspects of English should be taught in schools.

Conclusion

The results of this research suggest that linguistic attitudes strongly depend on the discourse community. The attitudes in news portals considerably diverge from professional linguists' discourses and those disseminated in public comments. Non-academic discourses on news portals favour neoliberal attitudes to English. Linguists' discourses, meanwhile, exploit emotionally loaded metaphoric language (e.g. Vaicekauskienė, 2010; Tamaševičius, 2011; Baločkaitė, 2014). Interestingly, commentators tend to exaggerate professional attitudes, adopt extremist rhetoric, and employ a highly expressive style. In Nordic countries, in contrast, as Onysko (2009) observes, linguists' discourses are usually unemotional, descriptive, and strive for objectivity, and non-academic opinions favour more concrete physical imagery and a more emotional tone.

Active civic participation of non-specialists in public online debates has started changing the repertoire and dominance of linguists' discourses. The discourses of resentment and English as a threat have been countered by those who promote a reconciling and less essentialist view. The changes in the attitudes to foreign language influences are closely related to the processes of democratization

in a relatively young state; changing linguistic attitudes reflect ongoing societal developments. Language as a resource dominates in neoliberal contexts where the nation-state has decreased in importance and 'language skills have become commodities which can be measured and quantified' (Boyd & Palviainen, 2015: 65).

Interestingly, though new discursive practices have emerged in digital public discourses, a large proportion of discursive output focusing on the domineering position of English in Lithuania is still based on reproducing pre-existing ideologies, many of which are part of the Soviet legacy. Old ideologies are appropriated and recycled to serve the purposes of the new socio-historical context. These discursive practices refer to the myths deeply rooted in the collective memory of Lithuanians, which is especially dominant in online comments. National-romanticist rhetoric, which permeates professional linguists' discourse, however, is not that pervasive in the discourse of non-specialists.

Continuous sensitivity to the role of a national language seems to make an impact on the attitudes towards English, as long as the country is in a state of insecurity and lacks self-confidence. Anxieties concerning the issues of language, national identity, and citizenship lead to resistance against English as a threat to the purity and the very existence of a national language. This can also explain the surprisingly large number of commentators who express pro-purism sentiments and opinions grounded on the purist ideology forged in the colonial period: this is characteristic of younger nations (cf. Thøgersen, 2010). Aggressive anti-English and pro-Lithuanian discourses common in online comments can be seen as a manifestation of 'local linguistic imperialism' (Thøgersen, 2010: 322).

The active participation of non-professionals in public discourse suggests that greater attention should be paid to bottom-up agency. More liberal discourse participants are challenging the generally acknowledged official ideologies. The more active civic participation of a larger variety of discourse participants in the public sphere can have an effect on bottom-up development as opposed to top-down planning. Thøgersen, whose research shows that attitudes to English influx can be treated as 'an emblem of social group membership', suggests that if, for instance, the elites in the Faroes and Norway 'do not support a purist policy, or ... if purist discourse is associated with low status, it would be hard to imagine a long-term future for it' (2004: 37). Similarly, the non-purist standpoints of many intellectual and socially active citizens

(including some politicians) in Lithuanian media can be expected to instigate a reconciling dialogue with pro-purist policy makers. Attitudes expressed by non-professionals in public discourse may trigger changes in official language planning and may introduce more flexibility to it.

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