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CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF LITHUANIAN YIDDISH

Summary. The term "Lithuanian" Yiddish popularly refers to the dialectal varieties of the Yiddish Language which were spoken not only in today's Republic of Lithuanian, but also in northern Poland and most of Belarus. This variety is known in Yiddish dialectological studies as Northwestern Yiddish. This article reviews two main facts of Northwestern ("Lithuanian") Yiddish: the vocalism of the accented syllable and the two-gender system. The former is introduced using Weinreich's system, a combined synchronic-diachronic approach which allows a quick overall comparison among all Yiddish varieties. The linguistic data support the hypothesis, already put forth in my 2005 doctoral dissertation, of a double substrate in Lithuanian Yiddish: a Judeo-Slavonic and a Judeo-Lithuanian substrate. After a quick overview of the (historical) geographical extension of Lithuanian Yiddish (sect. 1), Max Weinreich's "diaphonemic" system is introduced, and applied to Lithuanian Yiddish (sect. 2.1). Sect. 2.2 presents some examples of Lithuanian Yiddish. These examples show the most interesting facts which characterize the Lithuanian variant of the Yiddish language as opposed to the other variants. Although the Standard Yiddish phonological system is based on the Lithuanian Yiddish one, there is an interesting difference, namely, the increased frequency of the diphthong *ej* which corresponds to Standard Yiddish *oj* in words with diaphonemes 42 and 44. This could also point to the influence of the Lithuanian language, where *ei* is a frequent diphthong, and *oi* is almost absent. Sect. 2.3 reviews the hypothesis of a Judeo-Slavonic influence in Lithuanian, which caused the loss of vowel length opposition. The two-gender system of Lithuanian Yiddish and the hypothesis of a Judeo-Lithuanian substrate is presented in sect. 3, and, finally, sect. 4 closes the article with some final observations.

Keywords. Lithuanian Yiddish, Judeo-Slavonic, Judeo-Lithuanian, dialectology, diaphoneme, historical phonology.

Introduction

The Yiddish term *lite*, though it can be used to refer to the Lithuanian state of today, generally indicates the geographical extension comprehending today's Lithuania and (most of) Belarus, and the Polish region of Białystok[1]. The borders of the larger *lite* are also the borders of the North-Western Yiddish

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[1]   We can say *tif lite*, lit. "Deep Lithuania," to refer unambiguosly to the present-day Lithuanian state. Belarus was traditionally called *raysn*, today rather *vaysrusland*.

dialectal area – this dialect is known traditionally as *litvisher yidish*, that is, "Lithuanian Yiddish[2]." A substantial Jewish migration to *lite* could begin after Grand Duke Vytautas issued his 1388 Privilege to the Jewish Community in Brest[3]. This migration took to Lithuania the Jewish-German dialects which developed as Lithuanian Yiddish. But Jewish communities in Lithuania must have existed before 1388: according to Lewin (2000), "the first Jewish settlers in Lithuania – merchants from southeastern Europe – seem to have arrived in the twelfth century." What language did they speak? A hypothesis put forth in Zamblera (2007) is that there could have been two groups of pre-Yiddish Jewish communities in the Grand Duchy, one speaking (Judeo-) East-Slavonic, the other (Judeo-) Lithuanian. The Judeo-Slavonic hypothesis is not new, cf. Wexler (1991), Kleiner and Svetozarova (2000). The Judeo-Lithuanian hypothesis is almost a logical consequence of the former: if there were Slavonic-speaking Jewish communities in the Grand Duchy, there could as well have existed Baltic-speaking ones[4]. There is some linguistic evidence, which will be briefly reviewed in this article.

These hypothetical pre-Yiddish communities were rapidly assimilated linguistically by the Yiddish-speaking newcomers, and Lithuania became one of the main centres of Yiddish culture: after the Lublin Union of 1569 recognized the right of non (ethnic) Lithuanians to settle in the countryside and to own land, Jewish communities could be formed in small towns, and the typical Yiddish-speaking *shtetl* culture began to develop in *lite*, and thrived till the Holocaust.

As far as the major cities are concerned, the cultural importance of Vilnius, both in religious and secular culture, grew to such an extent that the standard, literary Yiddish pronunciation (the one that is taught today in Yiddish courses) is based on Lithuanian Yiddish[5], particularly in its Vilnius variant, though there are two important features of Lithuanian pronunciation which have not been accepted in the standard, and are marked as dialectal. These are the so-called *shabesdiker loshn*[6] and the diphthong /ej/ in correspondence of the Yiddish diaphonemes[7] O_2

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[2] The South-Western Yiddish dialect is known as *poylisher yidish*, that is, Polish Yiddish.

[3] In 1507, the Privilege was extended to the whole of Grand Duchy. Cf. Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė, 2002, p. 57-64.

[4] The Baltic-speaking territory must have been much more extended in the 14th century than it is today, covering, for example, much of today's Belarus. Cf. Dini (1997), Zinkevičius (1984-1995). Slavonic dialects have gradually diffused northwards at the expense of Lithuanian. The process has continued until recently: in northern Belarus there are still (or there were until some years ago) Lithuanian dialectal islands; while in some parts of Southeastern Lithuania Slavonic dialects have superseded a previously spoken Lithuanian dialect. Cf. Zinkevicius (1993).

[5] Cf. Katz, 1998.

[6] *shabesdiker loshn* consists in a confusion of the phoneme /š/ with /s/ (both are realized as /s/), and /ž/ with /z/, both realized as /z/. There are parallels in both Polish (so-called *mazurzenie*, Stieber, 1973) and Lithuanian dialects (Zinkevičius, 1966, p. 147-148). The name *shabesdiker loshn* means "Shabbat language" and is ironic: in Hebrew, to speak a "Shabbat Hebrew" *ivrit shel shabbath* means to use a very high register, using also the rules of the classical language which are normally disregarded in common speech.

[7] The use of the concept of "diaphoneme" in Yiddish dialectology is reviewed in sec. 2.1.

and O_4. The latter characteristics is still typical of Lithuanian Yiddish, and is still used by native people which have learnt Yiddish by their parents, as the present author has verified in Kaunas as late as October 2012.

As the various Yiddish dialects differ mainly in their tonic-syllable vowel systems, in the remaining of this article we shall first of all briefly review the system of Lithuanian Yiddish. This will also be useful as an introduction for the reader not acquainted with Max Weinreich's "diaphonemes," which are a very effective system for describing a set of "dialects" or closely related languages whose differences are found mainly in the phonological system. It was developed purposely for Yiddish dialectology, but it could be very useful in describing dialects with a similar situation (e.g., the Italian ones). After the overview of Lithuanian Yiddish vocalism, whose main characteristics (the loss of quantity opposition) is generally ascribed to the effect of language-contact with Slavonic, we will briefly mention the main morphological feature of Lithuanian Yiddish, the Lithuanian-like two-gender system (all other dialects, as well as Standard Yiddish, have also the neuter gender, like German), and consider the possibility of a Lithuanian substrate.

The accented vowel system of Lithuanian Yiddish

The vowel diaphonemes

Sapir (1915), a milestone in Yiddish linguistics, gives an account of the historical development of the phonetic system of Yiddish from its Middle High German ancestor. More recently, a very interesting approach has emerged in Yiddish dialectology. This system, developed by Max Weinreich[8] (1960, 1973, cf. also Katz 1983, 1988) describes the tonic vocalism of the Yiddish dialects using a system of *diaphonemes*, represented with capital letters (A, E, I, O, U) and a subscribed index. These diaphonemes, as Weinreich (1977) says, are "algebraic symbols" which summarize phonemic oppositions with different dialectal realization but a common (Proto-Yiddish) source. The numerical indexes have the following meaning:

1: Original short vowel;
2: Original long vowel (that is, long in the Middle High German or Hebrew-Aramaic source for that word);
3: Original short vowel in an open syllable, which gets generally lengthened in Yiddish and patterns with 2;
4: Diphthong, that is, vowel followed by semivowel *i* or *u* ;
5: This index is used only for diaphoneme E, to distinguish an open (ε) and a closed E, which pattern differently in some dialects.

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[8] The great Yiddish scholar, born in (today's) Latvia, founded the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in 1925, in his Vilnius apartment. The YIVO was moved to New York in 1938.

So, for example, O_1 means "original short *o*", while I_3 means "original short i in open syllable, which has been lengthened and patterns with original long i." Giving a *diachronic* interpretation to the diaphonemes, we can consider the following as a hypothesis of the Proto-Yiddish tonic vowel system:

The hypothetical Proto-Yiddish vowel system

	1	2	3	4	5
A	ă	ā	ă > ā	ăj	
E	ĕ	ē	ĕ > ē	ĕj	ĕ (ε)
I	ĭ	ī	ĭ > ī	əj	
O	ŏ	ō	ŏ > ō	ŏu	
U	ŭ	ū	ŭ > ū	əu	

Describing a variety of Yiddish, for example, Standard Yiddish, we can write "*oj* /U_4," meaning the diphthong /oj/ of the Standard Yiddish phonological system which stems from Proto-Yiddish *əu (U_4), while Standard Yiddish "*oj*/ O_2," indistinguishable from the former from both a phonological and a phonetic point of view, stems from Proto-Yiddish *ō (O_2)[9]. Lithuanian Yiddish also has "oj /U_4," but responds with *ej* to O_2 and O_4, which are both *oj* in Standard Yiddish.

There is also a more practical system to relate a phonemic entity (vowel or diphthong) of a Yiddish variety to the diaphoneme it represents: we assign a number to each diaphoneme (1=A, 2=E, 3=I, 4=O, 5=U), and write, for example, oj_{54} for "*oj* /U_4," e_{42} for "*ej* /O_2." In oj_{54}, for example, the first number of the index (5) stands for the diaphoneme U; the second number (4), for the structural features described above (diphthongized).

1. Thus, to say that Standard Yiddish has the diphthong $oj_{42/44/54}$ means that:
2. Standard Yiddish has the diphthong /oj/;
3. This diphthong has three different Proto-Yiddish sources:
   A. 42 (diaphoneme O_2, that is, Proto-Yiddish ō),
   B. 44 (diaphoneme O_4, that is, original diphthong ŏu),
   C. 54 (diaphoneme U_4, which is original diphthong əu).;
3. The three different /oj/ are systematically related to the three outcomes of O_2, O_4, and U_4 in all the other Yiddish varieties.

In this way, we can give a very compact description of the (accented) vocalic system of every Yiddish dialect, which is at the same time synchronic and diachronic, and relates each described variety, in a systematic way, to all the other. Let us look, for example, at the phonemic systems of, respectively, Standard,

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[9] /oj/ is written *oy* in YIVO transcription, which has become traditional when Yiddish is written in Latin letters. In dialectological studies, however, it is common to represent the semivowel with the grapheme <j>.

Lithuanian and Polish Yiddish. The Standard Yiddish system is almost identical to the Lithuanian Yiddish variety, while the Polish system is vastly different (preserving more phonemic opposition from an earlier stage of the language), as the following tables show[10]:

Table 2

The phonological system of Standard Yiddish

$i_{31/32}$			$u_{51/52}$
$ej_{22/24}$			
	$\varepsilon_{21/25}$	$\mathfrak{c}_{12/13/41}$	$\mathfrak{c}\,j_{42/44/54}$
	a_{11}	aj_{34}	

Table 3

The phonological system of Lithuanian Yiddish

$i_{31/32}$			$u_{51/52}$
$ej_{22/24/42/44}$			
	$\varepsilon_{21/25}$	$\mathfrak{c}_{12/13/41}$	$\mathfrak{c}\,j_{54}$
	a_{11}	aj_{34}	

Table 4

The phonological system of Polish Yiddish

$\bar{\imath}_{32/52}$	$i_{31/51}$			$\bar{u}/u_{12/13}$
ej_{25}				$\bar{o}/ou_{54}$
	ε_{21}		$\mathfrak{c}_{41}$	$\mathfrak{c}\,j_{42/44}$
		a_{11}		
		$\bar{a}_{34}$		
		$aj_{22/24}$		

Examples of Lithuanian Yiddish

The following tables show some examples of Lithuanian Yiddish, taken from Sapir (1915)[11]:

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[10] Katz, 1983, p. 1029-1034.

[11] I have maintained Sapir's transcription, writing however j for the semivowel in the diphthongs aj, ej, oj, as is today generally done in Yiddish dialect description, cf. Katz (1983). I have also added the diaphoneme. In the "English" column, the meaning of the Yiddish item is given, which is not necessarily the same as the M.H.G. meaning.

Diaphoneme A in Lithuanian Yiddish

	Lith. Yiddish	M.H.G.	Diaphoneme	Lith. Yiddish realization	English
1	gast	gast	A_1	a_{11}	guest
2	maxn	machen	A_1	a_{11}	make
3	harts	hërze	A_1	a_{11}	heart
4	tog	tac (gen. tages)	A_3	o_{13}	day
5	tot	stat	A_3	o_{13}	town
6	gırotn	gerāten	A_2	o_{12}	saved
7	do	dā	A_2	o_{12}	here

Table 5 shows the diaphoneme A, which generally continues a M.H.G. *a*. In example 3, however, Yiddish has A_1 in correspondence to M.H.G. *ë*, as is generally the case before r+consonant (in other contexts, the normal reflex of M.H.G. *ë* is E_1).

In examples 4 and 5, we find the diaphoneme A_3 (realized as /o/ in Lithuanian Yiddish, but, for example, as /u/ in Polish Yiddish) in correspondence to MHG short *a*, in a closed syllable[12]. *All* known Yiddish dialects show A_3 in these two words. As Katz (1982, xvii) explains, "the Germanic component of Yiddish is not congruous with any one German dialect, while each Yiddish dialect remains systematically relatable to any other Yiddish dialect." In the case of the exceptional tA_3g instead of the expected tA_1g, Sapir explains that this probably happened because of an analogical leveling in the paradigm: both dative singular and nominative plural were *tage* in M.H.G., and in these forms short *a* regularly corresponds to the Yiddish diaphoneme A_3 because of the open syllable[13].

Table 6 shows the reflexes of M.H.G. short *e*. Before a tautosyllabic n, E_1 is ej_{11} in Lithuanian Yiddish.

Diaphoneme E in Lithuanian Yiddish

8	lext	slëht	E_1	e_{11}	ugly
9	mentš	mensche	E_1	e_{11}	man, person
10	ejnikl	enikel	E_3	e_{13}	grandson
11	brejngen	brengen (dial.)	E_1	ej_{11}	bring

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[12] Recall that A_3 corresponds to an etymological short *a* in an *open* syllable.

[13] As for Yiddish final *-g* in *tog*, versus M.H.G. *tac* with final *-c*, Sapir explains it also as an analogical development due to paradigm levelling, and not as a failure to desonorize a final *-g*. As Sapir acutely observes (1915, p. 255-256), "that this explanation is correct as indicated by such words as *op* 'away' (M.H.G. *abe*), where no paradigmatic levelling could take place and where final *b* became *p*, according to regular German phonetic law."

To the M.H.G. rounded vowels *ü* and *iu*, Yiddish responds with and I_1 and I_{12}, which represent also original *i* and, respectively, *ī*, as table 7 shows:

Table 7

Diaphoneme I in Lithuanian Yiddish

12	blind	blint	I_1	i_{31}	blind
13	mil	mül	I_1	i_{31}	mill
14	tsajt	zīt	I_2	aj_{32}	time
15	majz	miuse	I_2	aj_{32}	mice

Short M.H.G. *o* and *u* remain in Lithuanian Yiddish, as we can see from the examples in Table 8:

Table 8

Diaphonemes O_1 and U_1 in Lithuanian Yiddish

16	dort	dort	O_1	o_{41}	there
17	vortsl	wurzel	O_1	o_{41}	root
18	shtub	stube	U_1	u_{51}	house

The diphthong /ej/ in Lithuanian Yiddish: Sapir (1921, p. 194) comments about "good evidence to show that there are general phonetic drifts toward particular sounds," exemplifying with Modern Greek, where "the vowel i is the historical resultant of no less than ten etymologically distinct vowels (long and short) and diphthongs of the classical speech of Athens." Lithuanian Yiddish exemplifies this kind of "drift" towards the diphthong *ej*[14], which corresponds to four diaphonemes and to many more M.H.G. distinct phonemes (Table 9):

Table 9

Different origins of the Lithuanian Yiddish diphthong *ei*

19	tejn	stēn	E_2	ej_{22}	stone
20	šnej	snē	E_2	ej_{22}	snow
21	klejn	klein	E_4	ej_{24}	small
22	brejt	breit	E_4	ej_{24}	bread
23	brejt	brōt	O_2	ej_{42}	broad
24	ejvn	oven	O_3	ej_{33}	oven
25	grejs	grōz	O_2	ej_{42}	big
26	bejm	boum	O_4	ej_{44}	tree
27	ejg	ouge	O_4	ej_{44}	eye

Finally, Lithuanian Yiddish has *oj* in correspondence of a M.H.G. long *ū*, which become diphthongized in Yiddish (U_4), as Table 10 shows:

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[14] And perhaps this has some relation to the frequency of the diphthong *ei* in Lithuanian.

Table 10

Diaphoneme U_4 in Lithuanian Yiddish

28	hojz	hūs	U_4	oj_{54}	house
29	mojz	mūs	U_4	oj_{54}	mouse
30	mojl	mūl	U_4	oj_{54}	mouth
31	hojt	hūt	U_4	oj_{54}	skin

As we have seen, Standard Yiddish also has oj_{54}, as well as oj_{42} (M.H.G. $\bar{o}$) and oj_{44} (M.H.G. *ou*). In this way, as Birnbaum (1979, pp. 100-101) observes, Standard Yiddish merges two phonemes that Yiddish dialects keep distinct. The same has happened in Modern German where both M.H.G. $\bar{u}$ and *ou* have become *au*, as shown in Table 11 (I have written *oj* as *oy* in Standard Yiddish, following the standard transcription):

Table 11

Standard Yiddish and German vs. Yiddish dialects

Modern German	Standard Yiddish	Polish Yiddish	Lithuanian Yiddish	M.H.G.	Diaphoneme	English
Haus	hoyz	houz	hojz	hūs	U_4	house
Baum	boym	bojm	bejm	boum	O_4	tree
Taub	toyb	toub	tojb	tūb	U_4	dove
taub	toyb	tojb	tejb	toub	O_4	deaf

The loss of vocalic quantity: the Judeo-Slavonic hypothesis

According to Wexler (1991), the Yiddish language was originated by the superposition of a Germanic superstrate on a Slavonic (Sorabian) substrate. Judeo-German speaking Jews, moving towards Eastern Europe, merged with a pre-existing local Jewish population, which spoke some form of (Judeo-) Slavonic. The newcomers soon became the overwhelming majority, thus assimilating linguistically the local community, which learned (Judeo-) German with their Slavonic "accent." If Wexler's hypothesis is correct[15], we can speak not generally of a Slavonic "influence" on Yiddish, but, more precisely, of a Slavonic *substrate.*

In Zamblera (2005, 2007), I tried to adapt Wexler's hypothesis to the linguistic reality of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Moving to *lite*, Judeo-German speaker come into contact with speakers of both Baltic (Lithuanian) and Slavonic languages (especially East-Slavonic). Kleiner and Svetozarova (2000) ascribe the loss of vocalic length in Lithuanian Yiddish to an East-Slavonic influence[16].

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[15] Cf. also Jacobs, 2005, p. 8.

[16] In this connection it is interesting to observe that Polish Yiddish preserves phonemic vowel length, and Polish still had it in the 15th century, cf. Stieber, 1973, p. 71.

Now, loss of phonemic length seems a typical effect of substrate: the phonological system of the (Slavonic) mother tongue influences the way in which the sounds of the acquired language are perceived. This means that Yiddish (Judeo-German dialects) was *learned* by Slavonic-speaking people, and these could only be local Jews. Alternatively, in order to explain a phonological influence of this kind, we should admit that Jews moving to Slavonic-speaking countries massively learned the local language, to such an extent that their Germanic speech resented their influx.

In *lite*, however, not only Slavonic, but also Baltic (Lithuanian) was spoken. As far as the loss of vowel length is concerned, a Lithuanian influence is excluded – it should have rather had the effect of preserving vowel length. An effect of Lithuanian influence, as we have seen before, could be seen in the frequency of the diphthong /ej/ in Lithuanian Yiddish, which also represents diaphonemes O_2 and O_4 (in other dialect /oj/; in the Lithuanian language, /ei/ is common, /oi/ is almost absent). However, a very clear example of the Lithuanian influence could be seen in the morphology, in the two-gender system of Lithuanian Yiddish.

The two-gender system and the Judeo-Lithuanian hypothesis

Standard Yiddish, and most Yiddish dialects for that matter, has a three-gender system. Lithuanian Yiddish has a two-gender system; substantives which are neuter in Standard Yiddish appear as masculine or feminine. Cf. some examples, where the gender of the corresponding Lithuanian substantive has been indicated (all these nouns are neuter in Standard and Polish Yiddish):

Table 12

Some Lithuanian Yiddish reflexes of Standard Yiddish neuter nouns

Yiddish	Gender (Lith. Yid.)	Lithuanian	English
yingl	m.	berniukas (m.)	little boy
meydl	f.	mergaitė (f.)	little girl
kind	m.	vaikas (m.)	child
vayb	f.	moteris (f.)	woman
vaser	f.	vanduo (m.)	water
broyt	f.	duona (f.)	bread
lebn	f.	gyvenimas (m.)	life

The two gender-system of Lithuanian Yiddish has an internal structural coherence: substantives which belong to the neuter gender in other varieties of Yiddish do not simply "become" of the same gender of the corresponding Lithuanian substantive, as the (very few) examples above suffice to show (moreover, the above cases in which the gender *is* the same are suspect on

semantic grounds). The two genders are distributed according to an internal semantic restructuring of the gender system, as explained in Jacobs (2001). I have used the word "becomes" between quotes because we need not assume that these substantives were originally neuter in Lithuanian Yiddish, and at a later stage *lost* their neuter gender to become either masculine or feminine. It is possible that such substantives have *never* been neuter in Lithuanian Yiddish, that is, that since the very beginning the Yiddish spoken in *lite* has had a two-gender system.

Again, this could make sense if, after Yiddish was brought in *lite* by Jewish emigrants from outside, it was *learned* by Lithuanian-speaking people. And this can only make sense if those Lithuanian-speaking people were local Jews already settled in Lithuania, which assimilated to the Yiddish-speaking majority and learned Yiddish with only two genders *from the very beginning*. This particular morphological feature of the local (and, possibly, prestige) community could have spread to *lite* as a whole, as well as the vocalic system without phonemic length could have spread from the speech of the ex-Judeo-Slavonic speakers. In sum, the hypothesis put forth in Zamblera (2007) is that Lithuanian Yiddish could have been formed on a double substrate: Jewish-Slavonic and Jewish-Lithuanian[17].

Two final observations

Lemchenas (1970) is a very important study which the author presents a wealth of Lithuanian borrowings in the local dialectal Yiddish. Could at least some of these words, instead of being borrowings, have remained in the speech of Lithuanian Jews from a Judeo-Lithuanian substrate? If this be the case, such lexical items should show a phonological structure going back to the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. A thorough examination of Lemchenas' material from this point of view could shed new light on the matter, and prove to be important for Lithuanian dialectology too.

There is another important thing to do in for linguists with interests in Yiddish: Lithuanian Yiddish is not yet a dead language. There are still people, mostly in Vilnius and Kaunas, who have learnt Yiddish from their parents of Jewish-Lithuanian descent, and, having not attended any Jewish school (there being no more in Lithuania in the Soviet period), speak dialectal Lithuanian Yiddish. A documentation of their speech, the last echoes of what was once a thriving European language, is imperative before it is too late.

The great linguist Edward Sapir, whose name is often cited in this article, was the first-class grammarian of languages which would have passed away without

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[17] Perhaps it is a related fact that some Slavonic dialects originated on a Lithuanian substratum also show loss of neuter gender. There is a vast literature on these cases, reviewed in Zamblera (2005).

being recorded (an outstanding example is his 1922 Takelma grammar). May this be an example for us to work for the preservation of an important Lithuanian heritage[18].

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[18] Though this is another theme, there is an interesting observation about Sapir's 1922 Takelma grammar (written in 1911 as his doctoral dissertation, with Franz Boas as an advisor). Takelma has a prosodic system very similar to that of Lithuanian: length opposition in vowels, a free accent independent of length, and a system of two intonations in the long vowels, ascending and descending (cf. Sapir, 1922, p. 15-22). Sapir explicitly chose to represent the intonation as in Lithuanian, writing ´ for the *falling*, and ˜ for the *rising* intonation. Later scholars who analyzed Sapir's Takelma material (e.g., Hymes, 1990) have generally departed from Sapir's Lithuanian-like usage.

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LIETUVIŲ JIDIŠ KALBOS KULTŪRINĖ IR LINGVISTINĖ ANALIZĖ

Santrauka. „Lietuviškąja" jidiš kalba buvo kalbama ne tik Lietuvos Respublikos teritorijoje, bet ir šiaurės Lenkijos bei didžiausioje Baltarusijos dalyje. Jidiš dialektologijos literatūroje minėtose teritorijose jidiš kalba vadinama „šiaurės–rytų jidiš". Šiame straipsnyje apžvelgiami du pagrindiniai šiaurės–vakarų („Lietuvos") jidiš kalbos reiškiniai: kirčiuoto skiemens vokalizmas ir dviejų giminių sistema. Vokalizmas aptariamas remiantis Maxo Weinreicho diafonemomis, dėl kurių galima sujungti sinchroninį ir diachroninį aprašymą ir palyginti visų jidiš kalbos šnektų duomenis. Šios išvados remia hipotezę apie dvigubą substratą šiaurės–vakarų jidiš kalboje – žydų–slavų ir žydų–lietuvių. Hipotezė buvo iškelta 2005 m. autoriaus daktaro disertacijoje. Po trumpos šiaurės–vakarų jidiš tarmės apimties apžvalgos, pristatomos prie šiaurės–vakarų jidiš tarmės pritaikytos M. Weinreicho diafonemos, aptariami Lietuvos jidiš kalbos pavyzdžiai, kurie rodo pagrindinius reiškinius, skiriančius Lietuvos jidiš tarmę nuo kitų kalbos šnektų. Nors standartinė jidiš kalbos fonologinė sistema remiasi Lietuvos jidiš pagrindu, esminis skirtumas (t. y. didesnis dvigarsio ej svoris, kurį atitinka įprastas oj tarimas, kai dvigarsiai atstovauja 42 ir 44 diafonemoms) galėtų rodyti dar vieną lietuvių kalbos įtakos atvejį. Mat Lietuvių kalboje dvigarsis ei yra dažnas, oi – labai retas.
Minėtasis balsių ilgumo opozicijų netekimas jidiš kalboje tradiciškai aiškinamas remiantis slavų kalbų įtakos hipoteze. Pabaigoje pateikiama dviejų giminių sistema ir žydų–lietuvių substrato hipotezė ir apibendrinamosios pastabos.

Pagrindinės sąvokos. Lietuvos jidiš, judėjų-slavų, judėjų-Lietuvos, dialektologija, diafonema, istorinė fonologija.