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MULTILINGUALISM IN LITHUANIAN CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE

Abstract. Multilingualism and multiculturalism have always been phenomena present in folklore. Since the last decades of the 20th century, due to changes in lifestyle influenced by factors such as globalization, intense migration, development of social media, and information technologies, manifestations of multilingualism and multiculturalism have become even more noticeable and, in consequence, are becoming an important feature of contemporary folkloric creation. Focusing on a few genres, namely, counting-out rhymes, games, horror stories and horror verses, this article presents and discusses manifestations of multilingualism in Lithuanian children's folklore. The following are the main research questions that the present study aims to investigate: How does multilingualism manifest in children's folklore and what functions does it perform? How do children adopt and transmit folklore, i.e. how do they adopt and creatively reinterpret texts and plots, namely, forms and contents from other languages? Which foreign languages have major impact on Lithuanian children's folklore? The methodology of the research consists of analytical descriptive and comparative analyses. The research has shown that Lithuanian children's folklore is dynamic and open to other languages and cultures. Children are attracted by linguistic play and feel comfortable with texts containing foreign or unknown words. In Lithuanian folklore, two major influences can be traced: Russian influence, particularly from World War II until the beginning of the 21st century, and influence from English-speaking countries, beginning in the 1990s and continuing to the present. Children translate folklore, sometimes word for word, adapt foreign texts, plots, traditions, take over certain genres, or integrate separate words or phrases from other languages into Lithuanian folklore.

Keywords: counting-out rhymes; games; horror stories; horror verses; Lithuanian children's folklore; multilingualism.

Introduction

Multilingualism and multiculturalism have always been phenomena present in folklore because folklore, by its nature, is at the same time both global and local. It does not respect boundaries between states and spreads among culturally diverse communities speaking different languages. Even though it is bound to tradition, folklore is also dynamic, as variation is "one of the key characteristics of folklore" that "guarantees that folklore phenomena are adjusted to the contemporary world" (Babič & Voolaid, 2019, p. 1). Since

the last decades of the 20th century, due to changes in lifestyle influenced by factors such as globalization, intense migration, development of social media, and information technologies, manifestations of multilingualism and multiculturalism have become even more noticeable and, in consequence, are becoming an important feature of contemporary folkloric creation.

Multilingual folkloric texts can be found both in traditional, i.e. that of ancient origin, and contemporary children's folkloric creation. The present study focuses on a few children's folklore genres, such as counting-out rhymes (Lith. *skaičiuotės*), children's games (Lith. *žaidimai*), horror stories (Lith. *šiurpės*), and horror verses (Lith. *siaubaraštukai*). Some of these genres, for instance, counting-out rhymes or horror stories are widely known in the whole world and others, for instance, some games are popular in smaller children's groups.

The majority of the texts analysed in this article are from the Archive of Ethnology and Folklore (hereafter referred to as VDU ER) at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, Lithuania. This archive, compiled between 1993 and 2024, contains the largest collection of children's folklore in the country. Most of these texts were recorded by researchers, teachers, and students from the Department of Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Humanities at Vytautas Magnus University. The first number and, if necessary, the second number following the abbreviation VDU ER, denote the file, while the final number indicates the narrative's position within it. The analysis includes approximately 1,000 examples of Lithuanian children's folklore from the four mentioned genres. Within this body of folklore, the search specifically focused on examples reflecting multilingualism (the use of foreign languages) and multiculturalism, i.e., children's folklore from other countries and in other languages. Selected examples of texts from different genres help to reveal the variety of ways in which multilingualism manifests in children's folklore.

It is also important to acknowledge certain limitations of the present study. In future research, it would be beneficial to conduct a broader analysis of multilingualism by examining a wider range of genres within Lithuanian children's folklore, such as riddles, teasing rhymes, anecdotes, and so forth. This expanded analysis could help to identify which genres are most receptive to multilingual influences and determine the reasons for this receptivity.

Literature Review

Even though, in folklore, multilingualism most often intertwines with multiculturalism, this article primarily focuses on the concept of multilingualism which has already been quite well studied by literary and translation scholars (e.g. Deganutti, 2022; Dembeck, 2017; Eidukevičienė & Aurylaitė, 2023; Taylor-Batty & Dembeck, 2023) but has not received much attention from folklorists yet. To date, folklorists have provided only sporadic insights into the use of foreign words, phrases or texts in the study of various aspects of different folklore genres. For instance, in the issue of the journal *Traditiones* dedicated to multilingualism in folklore and aiming at "revealing and interpreting cross-linguistic song connections in their contextual settings", Marija Klobčar (2023), Hana Urbancová (2023), Marjeta Pisk (2023) and other researchers focus on song and music practices in multilingual communities, settled especially in linguistic borderlands. In her article on multilingual songbooks in Slovakia, Urbancová states that "multilingual songbooks point to a culture of multilingual singing, which existed alongside a dynamically developing culture of national singing in the 19th century" and points out to changes in tradition that depend on a variety of factors including cultural and linguistic environment by stating that "the coexistence of languages and the structure of the repertoire changed along with the functions of singing in contemporary society, the given social milieu, and the lives of individual" (2023, p. 40). In her book on riddles, Annikki Kaivola-Bregenhøj (2001) also provides interesting examples from multilingual societies. Through an illustrative example of a joking riddle from India recorded in English and containing one Hindi word, she demonstrates how "individual words, phrases and even expressions from the vernaculars are readily incorporated into conversational English" (Kaivola-Bregenhøj, 2001, p. 60). The researcher further states that "this is a phenomenon no doubt familiar in other bi- or multilingual communities; the Swedish-speaking Finns, for example, season their spoken language with expressions taken from Finnish that readily present themselves as being more appropriate or topical" (p. 60).

Different traces of multilingualism, such as integrating separate words or phrases from other languages into Lithuanian folklore, the phenomena of

borrowing folkloric texts by translating them from other languages, or adopting entire folklore genres from linguistically diverse communities, have been detected by Lithuanian folklorists (e.g. Anglickienė et al., 2013; Macijauskaitė-Bonda et al., 2021). However, this paper is the first attempt to analyse multilingualism in Lithuanian children's folklore.

Research Methodology

Drawing on theoretical propositions about literary multilingualism by Marianna Deganutti (2022), Till Dembeck (2017) and others, this article seeks to discuss various manifestations of multilingualism in Lithuanian children's folklore. The key research questions addressed in this study are: How does multilingualism manifest in children's folklore and what functions does it perform? How do children adopt and transmit folklore, i.e. how do they adopt and creatively reinterpret texts and plots, namely, forms and contents from other languages? Which foreign languages have major impact on Lithuanian children's folklore? However, to undertake an analysis of multilingual manifestations in children's folklore, first and foremost it is essential to delineate the criteria for folkloric texts to be classified as multilingual. We will consider as multilingual:

1. Texts that are in a foreign language or languages, i.e., when a folkloric text in a foreign language is recorded in Lithuania.
2. Texts that have foreign insertions, i.e., individual foreign language lexemes and word combinations or phrases integrated into the Lithuanian folkloric text.
3. Texts that are known in more than one language, i.e., word-for-word translations or very similar folkloric texts known in Lithuanian and other languages.

When it comes to the analysis of manifest forms of multilingualism in children's folklore, it is important to bear in mind that such folkloric texts include different degree of correctness (deviations from the norm depend on the foreign language competence of the child and on motivation in the text)

(see Helmich, 2016, pp. 30–32). Children generally tend to place more importance on linguistic play, particularly focusing on sound and rhythm, rather than on grammar or the meaning of the text. In some cases, children may not even recognize that they are using multilingual folkloric texts, as texts containing nonsense words or texts that are non-completely understandable are not an obstacle to use them for play. Discussing the boundaries of literary multilingualism, Deganutti uses the term "latent multilingualism", defined as "the presence of languages in a text even when they are not immediately perceptible" (Deganutti, 2022, p. 1). In children's folklore, just like in literary texts, both openly expressed, and more hidden forms of multilingualism can be found. Children adapt foreign folkloric texts, plots, traditions, take over certain genres, translate folklore, sometimes, word-for-word, or integrate separate words or phrases from other languages into Lithuanian folklore. However, in many cases, foreign texts or foreign insertions are not perceived as such by children playing with peers.

"Foreign" and Multilingual Texts of Counting-out Rhymes

Interesting examples of how Lithuanian children use, adopt or create texts in other languages are found in counting-out rhymes. As the main function of the counting-out rhyme is to start a game by determining who gets an undesirable role, its most important feature is good rhythm, not meaning. Therefore, as folklorists note, children enjoy linguistic play and the usage of nonsense words, and they do not mind counting-out in "a foreign way" (Anglickienė et al., 2013, pp. 63–77). Observations in the field by Jurgita Macijauskaitė-Bonda, the author of this article whose children are bilingual clearly support this principle; once her children were counting-out in Lithuanian before playing with Italian children in Italy, and, another time, in Lithuania, they were playing with Lithuanian friends and the group was joined by a child of Lithuanian origin living in the USA who used a counting-out rhyme in English. In both cases, the counting-out rhymes were unknown to all players and were not in the language spoken by the majority, however, all children accepted the results of the counting-out as unbiased and objective without questioning their "validity".

Lithuanian counting-out rhymes can be divided into two major groups: 1) texts composed of nonsense words that often remind words in foreign languages, and 2) texts composed of meaningful words and phrases, although various intermediate categories can be distinguished. Counting-out rhymes composed of nonsense words have been documented since the 19th century, when the collection of these texts began (see Bolton, 1888, pp. 43–51; Anglickienė et al., 2013, p. 21). "Eeny, meeny", which can be spelled in various ways, is the most popular type in English-speaking countries, Lithuania, and many other places. Similar-sounding nonsense syllables can be easily recognized in different languages. As early as the 19th century, Henry Carrington Bolton provided numerous examples of this rhyme from all over the world (1888, pp. 45–48). The "Eeny, meeny" type did not lose its popularity throughout the 20th century and is still in use today. The following examples in Lithuanian (1 and 2), English (3), Polish (4) and Ukrainian (5) that sound like collections of incomprehensible words demonstrate how even completely nonsense texts can be taken over from one language to another and can be shared by children of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

(1) *Eni meni diki daki / Urbi turbi šmiki šmaki*. (VDU ER 1264/127)
(2) *Eni meni mani mau / Leci lece aci gaaauuu*. (VDU ER 2089/2196)
(3) *Eeny, meeny, tipsy tee, / Deali, dahlia, dominee, / Hatcha, patcha, dominatcha* (Bronner, 1888, p. 240).
(4) *Ene due like fake / Torba borba ósme smake / Eus deus kosmateus / Imorele baks!* (VDU ER 2755/1/19)
(5) *<…> Эни, бени, рики, таки, /Турба, урба, синтибряки, /Эус, бэус, краснобэус, Бац!* (VDU ER 2755/15/21)

Rhythmically composed lines of incomprehensible words can also be extended by adding meaningful text in any language, usually with comic content (6 and 7). As Brian Sutton-Smith points out, "younger children will enjoy the nonsense of sounds, but by seven or so years, children in their riddling are showing increasing interest in word meanings and their proper categorization, as well as using words in a social way as in teasing rhymes and pranks" (1999, p. 142).

(6) *Eni beni, / Diki daki, / Urbi šurbi, / Šmiki šmaki, / Aus baus bus medaus, / Stora boba kiaulę pjaus.*[1] (VDU ER 2061/25)

(7) *Ėni, kėni, / Šmiki šmaki, / Orbi, sorbi, / Viki baki, / Aus maus bus medaus, / Tave kiškis šaus!*[2] (VDU ER 2066/13)

Such counting-out rhymes sound like mysterious charms or spells. Different researchers identify, embedded among the nonsense words, relics of ancient charms, Latin liturgy, Catholic, Muslim, or Hebrew prayers, magic formulas and even secret passwords of the Freemasons (Bolton, 1888, pp. 35–44; Виноградов, 1930). Children have always enjoyed secretly visiting places they are not allowed to enter and, in doing so, likely heard prayers or other words that sounded strange and mysterious to them. Consequently, these words entered folk rhymes and spread among children. In Lithuanian versions, words and phrases from German, Yiddish, Polish, Russian, Latin and some other languages can be found. For example, phrases "Urbi turbi" (1), "Urbi šurbi" (6), "Orbi sorbi" (7) can be traced to "Urbi et Orbi" – "to the city [of Rome] and to the world" – denoting a papal address and apostolic blessing given by the pope on certain solemn occasions, like Easter and Christmas.

In Lithuania, from the 20th century to the present, folklorists have recorded counting-out rhymes that contain lexis similar to that of German (8, 9), Russian (8, 9), and Polish (9). As children who use these texts generally lack proficiency in foreign languages and focus more on rhythm than on meaning, foreign words may become distorted:

(8) *Lepi lepi lepi in der lepi in der haus / In der haus haus haus in der haus, / O mani mani mani makarončiki / Čiki drai, / Čiki drai drai drai čiki drai.* (VDU ER 1829/1)

(9) *Ėgi tiki ura / Abal pabal domina / Yki chyki gramatyki / Eni kleini / Zabus zeini / Pies!* (VDU ER 564/4)

[1] Meaningful words in the last two lines translate into English as: "there will be honey, / A fat lady will butcher a hog". All translations from Lithuanian and other languages into English, unless otherwise stated, are by the authors of the chapter.

[2] Meaningful words in the last two lines translate into English as: "there will be honey, / The hare will shoot you".

Lithuanian folklorists occasionally record entire texts in foreign languages, such as the following example in German (10). However, such instances are relatively rare, with the notable exception of the Lithuanian-Russian version of rock-paper-scissors:

(10) *Eine kleine Miki Maus / Trog sich seine Hose aus. / Trog sich wida [wieder] an, / Und du bist dran!* (VDU ER 2068/9a)

Despite the fact that many children and young people in Lithuania today are not well-versed in Russian, folkloric texts in Russian are still in use. For instance, one of the most popular counting-out rhymes among Lithuanian children, particularly during the 1990's and 2000's was "Po morskomu raz dva tri"—a variant of rock-paper-scissors that translates from Russian into English as "In the marine way, one two three." Lithuanian children tend to distort Russian words, combine two or three words into one, and often extend the phrase by adding humorous endings in Lithuanian (12, 13). These additions frequently contain vulgar or obscene language (13):

(11) *Pamazgomu razvati.* (VDU ER 2068/10)
(12) *Pamarskomu raz dva tri, ir jūreivis nuplukdys*.[3] (VDU ER 2068/12)
(13) *Pamarskomu raz dva try, šiko boba pajūry, vienas papas vandeny, kitas papas šuliny.*[4] (VDU ER 1923 / 29)

Another variant of this counting-out rhyme known in Lithuania is "Vas-ki-či", which derives from Chinese and is pronounced as vas·kee·chee. It is analogous to "one two three", i.e., "raz-dva-tri" in Russian. Iona and Peter Opie, writing about the linguistic variation in this rock-paper-scissors game, point out that many of the chants imitate Chinese (Opie, 1969, p. 26). This variant of counting-out, described by the Ming dynasty writer Xie Zhaozhe (1567–1624) dates back to around the 2nd century AD and was known as "shoushiling", which translates from Chinese as "the three who fear each

[3] In the marine way one two three, and the sailor will carry away.
[4] In the marine way one two three, an old woman shitted by the seaside, one tit in the water, the other tit in the well.

other". During the 17th century, the game of rock-paper-scissors was introduced to Japan. Subsequently, in the early 20th century, increased interaction between Japan and Western countries facilitated the dissemination of this hand game to English-speaking nations, notably gaining popularity in the United States. Shortly thereafter, it also spread to Europe (Ferro, 2016). Emilija Jacevičienė speculates that, given the game's extensive history, it was not until the 1990s that it was introduced to Lithuania (Jacevičienė, 2024, pp. 43–44). After reviewing Wikipedia articles in 64 languages and examining 40 entries across various topics on Reddit, no chant similar to "vas-ki-či" was found. This suggests that it is a purely Lithuanian variant, possibly an imitation of the Chinese language, as Opies have noted (Jacevičienė, 2024, p. 45). Different Lithuanian cities and regions use their own variants. For example, in Vilnius and the eastern Lithuania area, the "Vas-ki-či" variant is more widespread, whereas children in Kaunas, Klaipėda and central and western Lithuania are more likely to count using a variant in Russian, albeit with slight distortion: "Pa marskomu ras dva try".

It is also noteworthy that although the words of this counting-out rhyme or game have remained popular for several decades in Lithuania, the accompanying movements have changed. During the Soviet period, children would indicate a number by bending their fingers and counting the unbent fingers until one child was counted out. Nowadays, a different method involving the game of rock-paper-scissors in which the more "powerful" object is declared the winner, has become popular. This method was adopted from English-speaking countries. Moreover, in recent decades, a new element has been added to the list of objects in Lithuania —the well— which has not been documented in children's games from other nations (Jacevičienė, 2024, p. 45). This demonstrates how children are creatively adopting games and their terminology from other cultures and modifying them according to the same unwritten but well-understood rules.

Creative Adaptation of Game Texts in Foreign Languages

Numerous representative examples of children creatively adopting texts from other languages can be found in games. It is important to note that

while playing, children primarily focus on the game itself, with the words serving as a supplementary element that enhances linguistic play. For this reason, during the Soviet period (from the 1950s to the 1980s), when Lithuanian children adopted certain Russian games, they often incorporated the original Russian text without translating it. Such texts are typically rhythmic and poetic and, therefore, difficult to translate.

As an example, let us analyse the popular Ali Baba game, which was well-known not only in Lithuania but also in other Soviet republics during the Soviet era. It is played in two groups, employing dialogue (14–17). With the final words of the game, a child from the opposing team is called out. The child must run towards the opposing team, which stands firmly holding hands, and attempt to break through their line. If successful, the child selects one member from the opposing team and brings them back to their own team. If unsuccessful, the child remains with the opposing team. The game continues until all the children are gathered on one side. The meaning of the text in this game is not very important to the children because the most enjoyable part of the game is running and demonstrating their physical strength. Laima Anglickienė, the author of this article, recalls her childhood experience in the 1980s when she played the game "Ali Baba" with other children, and a neighbour commented that "the Russian game" was inappropriate for Lithuanian children. As Anglickienė remembers, at that time she did not understand what the neighbour referred to and what the latter meant by "the Russian game" as Anglickienė and the other children did not identify it as a foreign game at all.

The game "Ali Baba" was very popular during the Soviet era and, like all games, had its own variations within Russia itself (14, 15):

(14) - *Али-Баба!*
- *О чем слуга?*
- *Пятого, десятого, Петю нам сюда!*[5] (VDU ER 2746/93/3)

[5] It translates from Russian into English as: "- Ali Baba! / - What do you need a servant for? / - Fifth, tenth, bring Petya here!". Ali Baba is a fictional character, the hero of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," a very popular tale during the Soviet era and one of the best-known stories in The Thousand and One Nights.

(15) - *Али-Баба!*
- *На что слуга?*
- *Починять рукава!*
- *На чьи бока?*
- *Пятого-десятого, Ивана к нам сюда!*[6] (VDU ER 2746/93/4)

In some instances, Lithuanian children, while playing this game, would use relatively accurate and clearly understandable Russian words (16). However, the words were more often distorted to maintain a rhythm suitable for chanting (17).

(16) - *Ali baba!*
- *Začem sluga?*
- *Čiris piatava disiatava [vardas] k nam siuda.*[7] (VDU ER 1294/4)

(17) - *Skalim-baba / Kalim-baba!*
- *Začem sluga?*
- *Na petu disiatu [vardas] nam siudatu.* (VDU ER 2746/93/5)

In some games, only the words from another language are used, while the game rules are changed to those of other games already familiar to the children. This is the case with the game "Sim-sim-fonija" described below. For Russian children, it is a test of endurance (18), whereas for Lithuanian children, it is a game of reaction (19).

(18) Russian variant: *Кони-кони-кони / мы сидели на балконе / чай пили, чашки били / по-турецки говорили: / "чаби, чаляби, чаляби-чаби-чаби" / мы набрали в рот воды / и сказали всем: "замри!"*[8]

[6] It translates from Russian into English as: "- Ali Baba! / - What do you need a servant for? / - To mend my sleeves! / - On whose sides? / - Fifth to tenth, bring Ivan here!"
[7] Both texts (15, 16) translate from Russian into English as: "- Ali Baba! / - What do you need a servant for? / - Fifth, tenth, bring [child's name] here!"
[8] It translates from Russian into English as: ""Konny-konny-konny / we were sitting on the balcony / drinking tea, clinking cups / speaking in Turkish: / 'chabi, chalyabi, chalyabi-chabi-chabi' / we filled our mouths with water / and told everyone: 'Freeze!'"

Endurance Game: Upon saying the words, players must remain still and not move. The first player to move receives a flick to the forehead from the other participants. (VDU ER 2746/93/6)

(19) Lithuanian variant: *Sim-sim-fonija / Sidiela na balkone ja / Čai pili, rožki (ložki) bili, / Po turecki govoroli, / Čiaba čiriaba / Čiriaba čiaba či / Anuka zamolči. / Po ulicam ušila / Balšije krokodila, / Ana ana ana / Zelionaja byla.*[9]

Reaction Game: The game is played in a circle, with participants clapping their hands. The player who receives a clap on their hand at the final syllable must quickly retract their hand. If they fail to do so and their hand is clapped again, they lose and are eliminated from the game. (VDU ER 2746/93/7)

Folklorists have also recorded cases when only words or rules of a game were adapted, as, for example, in the case of a clapping reaction game "Sim-sim-fonija" (19) or "Am amary amary" with English-like words (20).

(20) *Am amary amary to fliori, / Amari amari / Tiki tomba tiki tomba / Van – tu - try (One- two – three)!* (VDU ER 2746/93/8)

An even more intriguing example is found in Žemaitija (Samogitia), a region of Lithuania, where the traditional Shrove Tuesday (Lith. *Užgavėnės*) custom of visiting neighbours in masks persisted even during the Soviet era. It is noteworthy that over time this tradition shifted from adults to children, who, dressed in costumes, would visit their neighbours and, after greeting them, ask for gifts. During the Soviet period, these children's requests were made in a blend of Russian and Lithuanian (more precisely, in the local Samogitian dialect) (21):

[9] It translates from Russian into English as: "Sim-sim-fonija / I was sitting on the balcony / Drinking tea, clinking horns (spoons), / Speaking in Turkish, / Chaba chiriaba / Chiriaba chaba chi / Quiet now. / Through the streets walked / Large crocodiles, / Ana ana ana / (It) was green."

(21) *Sašenka Mašenka* [Rus.]
Dobryj dobryj molodec, [Rus.]
Šakar makar duok ragaišį, [Lith.]
kur matušė vakar maišė. [Lith.]
Jeigu blynai nemaišyti, [Lith.]
Prašom pinigus skaityti [Lith.].[10] (VDU ER 2746/93/9)

Indeed, the idea of a "foreign" greeting in another language, aligned with an old tradition. Historically, during Shrove Tuesday, masqueraders visiting homes would impersonate people of different nationalities (such as Jews, Romani, Hungarians); they would mimic their language and manner of speaking to amuse those around them. Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s, children creatively adopted the linguistic style of traditional Lithuanian Shrove Tuesday masqueraders and incorporated words from Russian, a language they knew, into their performances.

Taking over Folklore Genres

Not only individual games, texts, and plots can be adopted from other countries and linguistic environments, but entire genres can also be taken over. For instance, consider horror verses (Lit. *siaubaraštukai*, referred to as "sadistic verses" in Russia). These are short, rhymed texts, usually dactylic couplets or quatrains, distinguished by their unique humour and destructive themes. The main characters are often children in dangerous situations, frequently a young boy or girl, or children inflicting harm on adults (Anglickienė et al., 2013, p. 126). Horror verses appeared in Russia around the late 1970s, quickly spreading and becoming one of the most popular genres of contemporary Russian schoolchildren's folklore. By the end of the 20th century, examples of these "sadistic verses" had reached Lithuania. However, they did not gain widespread popularity at that time, with only a few texts circulating in Russian.

[10] Sashenka Mashenka (Rus.) / Good, good young man, (Rus.) / Give us a *ragaišis* (homemade baked from baked from rye flour with the addition of boiled potatoes or barley flour), (Lith.) / That mother mixed yesterday. (Lith.) / If the pancakes are not mixed, (Lith.) / Please count out the money. (Lith.)

Among these were two classic couplets about a little boy who finds a machine gun or an assault rifle and tries it out in his village or kindergarten (22) (Anglickienė et al., 2013, p. 129).

(22) *Маленький мальчик нашёл пулемёт –*
Больше в деревне никто не живёт.
Маленький мальчик нашёл автомат –
В братской могиле лежит детский сад.[11]
(Чередникова 1995, p. 72)

In the first decade of the 21st century, particularly with the launch of the monthly magazine Flintas in 2003, aimed at boys aged 8-13, horror verses gained popularity in Lithuania. The magazine included a section called "Siaubaraštukai," featuring translated, adapted, or newly created horror verses. The magazine's authors would present the first two lines of a scary rhyme and encourage children to complete it, subsequently publishing some of the best submissions (Anglickienė et al., 2013, pp. 129–130). Around that time, horror verses also entered the virtual space, captivating adults, teenagers, and young people who appreciated dark humour. Consequently, two distinct periods of the existence of horror verses in Lithuania can be identified. The first verses appeared around the same time as in Russia, during the 1980s and early 1990s, but at that time, they were primarily known to Russian children living in Lithuania and their Lithuanian peers who interacted with them. In the early 21st century, there was a resurgence of interest in horror verses in Lithuania. These verses began to be created in Lithuanian, and new variants were translated from Russian (Anglickienė et al., 2013, p. 130). In the example provided (23), the inclusion of a Russian plumber's name clearly signifies a literal translation of the rhyme from Russian. In analogous couplets in Russian, children are depicted playing "Gestapo" and "sadists" (Anglickienė et al., 2013, p. 136).

[11] It translates from Russian into English as: A little boy found a machine gun – / No one in the village lives anymore. A little boy found an assault rifle / The kindergarten lies in a mass grave.

(23) *Žaidė rūsy vaikai polikliniką*
Mirė gimdydamas santechnikas Nilinas.[12] (VDU ER 2250/11)

Another representative example to consider is horror stories, known as "šiurpės" in Lithuanian. These are defined as terrifying narratives with destructive content, typically culminating in death, and are told by children aged 6 to 12. Although such texts had been known in other countries for several centuries, in Lithuania, horror stories became widespread in the second half of the 20th century, following World War II. Lithuanian children adopted this tradition from Russian children. After WWII, when Lithuania was occupied by Soviet Union, Lithuanian children often participated in various camps and gatherings, and those from mixed families spent their holidays in other Soviet republics, where they shared horror stories with each other. Their communication was in Russian. As a result, many horror stories told by children several decades ago are translations of Russian stories and, consequently, a significant number of modern horror story plots closely resemble their Russian counterparts (Anglickienė, 2009). Nowadays, translations of horror stories from other, especially English-speaking countries, are increasingly spreading across the Internet. As a result, the plots and character names often change. For instance, the popular character "The Queen of Spades" (Lith. *Pikų dama*), known from the Russian tradition (24), is frequently replaced by figures such as Bloody Marry (25), Candyman, or Slender Man, which are more popular in Western Europe. The rapid adoption of new plots and characters through the global virtual world can be exemplified by the rise in popularity of the Slender Man character. Originating as an internet meme in 2009, Slender Man has since been developed worldwide into not only a frightening figure of horror stories (Blank & McNeil, 2018, pp. 3-4) but also a well-recognized icon in popular culture. The character appears in various narratives, including both folklore and original works such as video games and films. Today, Lithuanian children are also well-acquainted with Slender Man.

[12] It translates from Russian into English as: Children were playing clinic in the basement / Plumber Nilin died during childbirth.

(24) *Kartą buvo mergaitė, kurios vardo dabar jau niekas neatsimena. Ji labai mėgdavo pasiimti iš spintos mamos kortas ir jas dėlioti. Mergaitė kortas sudėdavo kartais kryžiaus forma, kartais apvaliai, o tada bandydavo atspėti, kokią ateitį jos pranašauja. Mama, pamačiusi dukrą besiburiančią, labai supykdavo, atimdavo kortas ir drausdavo jas net liesti, sakydavo, kad ateis Pikų damos juodoji ranka. Tačiau vieną naktį mergaitė nebeištkentė ir užsimanė sužinoti, ką vėl pasakys jai kortos. Ji pasiėmė žvakę, susirado kortas ir nuėjo tyliai į tualetą. Tada užsidegė žvakę, susidėliojo kortas ir pradėjo jas žiūrėti. Tik staiga žvakė užgeso, mergaitė atsisuko ir pamatė, kaip iš tualeto sklinda šviesiai žalia šviesa ir lenda juodoji Pikų damos ranka, ant kurios buvo užmauti trys didelis žiedai. Ranka griebė mergaitę už kaklo ir ją pasmaugė.* (VDU ER 1731/61)

Once there was a girl whose name no one remembers now. She loved to take her mother's cards from the cupboard and lay them out. Sometimes, she would lay the cards out in the shape of a cross, sometimes in a circle, and then she would try to guess what future they predicted. When her mother saw her daughter telling fortunes, she would get very angry, take the cards away, and forbid her from even touching them, saying that the Black Hand of the Queen of Spades would come. However, one night the girl couldn't resist and wanted to know what the cards would tell her again. She took a candle, found the cards, and quietly went to the bathroom. She lit the candle, arranged the cards, and began to look at them. Suddenly, the candle went out, the girl turned around, and saw a light green glow coming from the bathroom and the Black Hand of the Queen of Spades emerging, with three large rings on it. The hand grabbed the girl by the neck and strangled her.

(25) *Ten [buvo] kruvinoji Marija. Ten kaip buvo šeima ir po visą pasaulį plito kiaulių liga. Ir ten Marijai buvo atsitikusi tokia nelaimė, ją užpuolė ta kiaulių liga. Tada ją nuvežė greitai gydytojai, jai pririšo varpelį ir palaidojo gyvą. Ir jos visa šeima sapnavo, kad jos varpelis skamba, o jeigu varpelis skamba, tai reiškia, reikia ją jau atkasti, reiškia, jinai jau normali, nesusirgusi. Jos šeima sapnavo, kad jisai skamba ir jos*

neatkasė. Ir paskui, kad ją vadina Meri kažkaip tai ten. Ir sako, ten reikia uždegti tris raudonas žvakes ir reikia prie veidrodžio atsisėsti ir jinai [Meri] visada prie veidrodžio laukia ir jinai, jos dvasia visada prie veidrodžio su šituo su peiliu. Mano draugei buvo vieną kartą taip atsitikę, jinai kažkokį slaptažodį pasakė ir jos vos nenužudė ta Meri. (VDU 1966/17)

There was Bloody Maria. There was a family, and a swine flu pandemic spread across the world. And then a misfortune befell Maria—she was struck by that swine flu. The doctors quickly took her, tied a bell to her, and buried her alive. Her entire family dreamt that her bell was ringing, and if the bell rings, it means they need to dig her up because it means she has turned normal again, that she is no longer sick. Her family dreamt that the bell was ringing but they did not dig her up. Afterwards, she was called Mary or something like that. And they say you need to light three red candles and sit in front of a mirror, and she [Mary] always waits by the mirror, her spirit always there with a knife. This once happened to my friend; she said some password and Mary almost killed her.

It is noteworthy that over the past two decades, horror stories have been disseminated not only orally but also in written form through various blogs on the Internet. In virtual communities, they are often accompanied by eerie images, and the most popular narratives are adapted into films. Horror stories currently have a new format on the internet, familiar to today's youth as creepypasta. Creepypasta stories can be defined as horror-related legends or scary tales that have been copied and pasted around the Internet. This global phenomenon of telling scary stories live on YouTube or other channels has been adopted by children and youth in Lithuania as well. For example, Greta Orech narrates creepypasta in Lithuanian on her channel, "Creepypasta / Istorijos Iš Pasaulio - YouTube," inspired by examples from children and youth in other countries.

Let us present another example of intercultural communication through the transmission of tradition, this time involving non-textual elements. In Lithuania, during the Soviet period, particularly in the 1980’s and 1990’s, girls

enjoyed creating the so called "secrets" (Lith. *sekretas / sigretas*) (26). As Russian folklorist Maria Osorina notes, this tradition was documented in Russia as early as the 1910s and 1920s. (Осорина, 2010, pp. 172–173). The tradition, retaining the Russian name for the game, spread among Lithuanian children after World War II. To create a "secret," one needed a piece of glass or the bottom of a bottle. Girls would place the glass on the ground and arrange a composition underneath it using grasses, leaves, flowers, colourful candy wrappers, silver foil, feathers, dried insects, and butterflies, among other items. Occasionally, paper notes containing messages about significant secrets or first love would also be hidden. Typically, a girl would have several such "secrets," which she would visit and update from time to time. These "secrets" were shown only to close friends and were often sought out by boys aiming to destroy them. An angry friend could also ruin a "secret." The tradition began to wane after 1990, and today, it is no longer known among girls.

(26) (VDU ER 2746/93/10)

In summary, the cross-cultural transmission of folkloric traditions illustrates the fluidity and adaptability of folklore. The adoption and adaptation of horror verses, horror stories and "secrets" in Lithuania reflect broader trends

of cultural exchange, where elements from Russian and other traditions have been integrated into local practices. Today, these traditions continue to evolve, influenced by global media and the internet, demonstrating the dynamic nature of folklore in a modern context.

Conclusions

The obtained research results have revealed that Lithuanian children's folklore is highly dynamic and open to multilingual and multicultural influences. Children demonstrate a playful approach to language and are particularly drawn to linguistic play which is a significant aspect of their interaction with multilingual folklore. Children are drawn by the playful and rhythmic qualities of foreign words and phrases, often treating them as whimsical rather than focusing on their semantic content. This phenomenon is evident across various genres, especially counting-out rhymes and games, where such multilingual elements are seamlessly integrated.

The present study highlights two major linguistic influences on Lithuanian children's folklore: Russian and English. Russian influence has been predominant from the post-World War II era (when Lithuania was part of the Soviet Union from 1944 to 1989) to the early 21st century, while English has gained prominence since the 1990s, when Lithuania declared its independence and turned towards the West. These influences manifest through direct translations, adaptations of foreign texts, and the integration of foreign lexemes into Lithuanian folklore. It is also noteworthy that, despite the decline in the popularity of the Russian language and its diminished presence among children and youth today, certain folklore texts continue to be recited in Russian.

The increased visibility of multilingualism in contemporary folklore can be attributed to globalization, migration, and the proliferation of digital media. These factors have facilitated the exchange of cultural and linguistic elements, allowing children to encounter and integrate foreign folkloric traditions into their own practices. Examples of horror stories illustrate how, within a multilingual and multicultural environment, the plots of folklore narratives

can migrate from one cultural or linguistic context to another, and how characters can be easily replaced by others.

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DAUGIAKALBYSTĖ LIETUVIŲ VAIKŲ FOLKLORE

Anotacija. Daugiakalbystė folklore nėra naujas reiškinys. Tai integrali vaikų folklorinės kūrybos dalis, nes daugiakalbystės ir daugiakultūriškumo apraiškų galime rasti tiek ir tradiciniame, tiek ir šiuolaikiniame vaikų folklore. Šio straipsnio tikslas – pristatyti ir išanalizuoti daugiakalbystės apraiškas lietuvių vaikų folklore. Analizei pasitelkiami keli tautosakos žanrai: skaičiuotės, žaidimai, šiurpės, siaubaraštukai ir kt. Pagrindiniai tyrimo klausimai: Kaip daugiakalbystė pasireiškia vaikų folklore ir kokias funkcijas ji atlieka? Kaip vaikai priima ir kūrybiškai interpretuoja folkloro tekstus ir siužetus, t. y. jų formas ir turinį, paimtus iš kitų kalbų ir kultūrų? Kokios užsienio kalbos labiausiai veikia lietuvių vaikų folklorą? Tyrimo metodai – analitinis aprašomasis ir lyginamasis. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad lietuvių vaikų folkloras yra dinamiškas ir atviras kitoms kalboms bei kultūroms. Vaikus traukia lingvistiniai žaidimai ir žaisdami jie be jokio diskomforto gali vartoti tekstus, kuriuose yra svetimų arba nežinomų žodžių. Po Antrojo pasaulinio karo iki XXI a. pradžios lietuvių vaikų folklorą veikė rusų kalba ir kultūra, o nuo 1990-ųjų iki dabar stebima anglakalbių šalių įtaka. Žaisdami vaikai gali vartoti ir visiškai neverstus kitakalbius tekstus, tik nemokėdami užsienio kalbų dažnai jų žodžius iškraipo. Vaikai taip pat nesunkiai adaptuoja kitakalbius tekstus, nesuprantamus žodžius „sulietuvindami" ar prijungdami prie jų kitų jiems žinomų tų pačių žanrų lietuviškų kūrinių dalis (pavyzdžiui, skaičiuočių ar kai kurių žaidimų atvejais). Kai kurie žanrai, jų siužetai ir personažai perimami ir pažodžiui (šiurpių ir siaubaraštukų). Bet visas šis daugiakalbis ir daugiakultūris folkloras puikiausiai adaptuojamas pagal atitinkamų folkloro žanrų kūrimo taisykles ir darniai integruojamas į Lietuvos vaikų folklorą.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: daugiakalbystė; lietuvių vaikų folkloras; skaičiuotės; siaubaraštukai; šiurpės; žaidimai.