

DIFFICULTIES IN ACQUIRING LITHUANIAN GRAMMATICAL
FEATURES IN AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING ENVIRONMENT*Summary*

Despite the increasing number of studies on the specifics of Lithuanian spoken by expats, there's still a lack of more extensive, large-scale research on the peculiarities of the Lithuanian language obtained in an environment where a different language is spoken. To that end, we conducted a study aimed at identifying the lexical and grammatical features of the Lithuanian language as they're acquired in an English-speaking environment. The material was collected in four Lithuanian language schools based in London from 100 children aged 4-9. All of the children lived in London and attended private Lithuanian schools (~3-6 hours per week), learned their native language from their parents, were born in the United Kingdom, or moved there at the age of 1. During the experiment, the participants were asked to produce a narrative using a set of six pictures (Hickmann 2003; Gagarina *et al.* 2012). The narratives were recorded using a voice recorder, transcribed and morphologically annotated for an automatic analysis of narrative language using CHILDES (MacWhinney 2000) software. This study is the first to focus on the native language of children living in a bilingual environment, its productivity, lexical diversity, morphology, and syntax. The present article discusses several grammatical aspects of the Lithuanian language acquired as the mother tongue in an English-speaking environment – changes in inflection, as well as differential object marking, coordination and control, which often cause difficulties to children.

An analysis of the material showed that the Lithuanian language inflection system of bilingual children can be acquired appropriately, regardless of the fact that in some children, the process may take as many as five or six years. Both younger and older children tend to simplify inflection, which leads them to inflect non-productive paradigm or less usual nouns in accordance with productive paradigms. An analysis of grammatical forms showed that children had acquired flexion that denotes a number, masculine and feminine nouns and cases, although even older children (7-8 years of age) still struggle with choosing the morphological form of a dependent word(s) in accordance with the main word. An analysis of inflection control showed that the accusative case used with transitive verbs to express a direct object is often exchanged for the nominative, genitive or other cases. The use of prepositions and prepositional constructions is distinguished in that nouns that go with

prepositions aren't always expressed with the cases that those prepositions are used with; even though prepositional constructions are often grammatically correct, the choice of prepositions is often wrong; oftentimes, in prepositional preposition *į* [to] constructions the preposition *į* is not used to denote direction. An analysis of differential object marking showed that objects denoted with the negative *ne-* with transitive verbs is often expressed not in the genitive, but in the accusative case.

KEY WORDS: language acquisition, bilingualism, narrative production, child language

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