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Swearing

in the Nordic Countries

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SPROGNÆVNETS KONFERENCESERIE 2

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Historical swearing

Introduction

Swearing research has traditionally suffered from neglect. Perhaps due to the controversial and taboo nature of such language use, linguists have not taken swearing seriously, resulting in a lack of academic research. In recent years, however, as language aggression and swearword usage has become recognised as a legitimate research area, more linguists have investigated the area. But this research has primarily been on swearing in the English-speaking parts of the world, whereas research on swearing in the Nordic languages is still sparse.

Nevertheless, a few researchers have investigated swearwords in the Nordic countries, which is why a network for researchers of swearwords in Scandinavia was established in 2010. The name of this research network is SwiSca – an abbreviation of "Swearing in Scandinavia". The aim of this research network is, first and foremost, to unite these Nordic researchers and benefit from the linguistic and cultural similarities we have in the Nordic countries, and to share research results, definitions of swearing and references to publications on swearing research.

Another purpose of the research network is to mutually inform each other about relevant conferences and, in the future, raise funds for Nordic research projects on swearing and compare swearword usage in the Nordic countries.

The members of the network come from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Lithuania.

From Denmark:
- Marianne Rathje (University of Southern Denmark)

From Norway:
- Eli-Marie Drange (University of Agder)
- Ruth Vatvedt Fjeld (University of Oslo)
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Giedrius Tamaševičius

Five decades of swearing on air in Lithuania

ABSTRACT

This article seeks to find an answer to the question of whether it is true that today there is much more swearing on radio and television, as the media would have us believe. Material relevant for the research was selected from texts used in the Corpus of Lithuanian Broadcast Media *(1960–2011), which consists of about 60 hours (approx. 350,000 words) of speech and covers three talk-based genre groups: news broadcasts, documentaries and talk shows. The texts in the corpus are divided into three periods, distinguished according to the main changes that took place in the media that likely had a determining influence on changes in language use. The research confirmed that in the programs examined, instances of swearing in the Soviet period (1960–1987) were mainly one-off events, or associated with a particular artistic function, or especially rare examples of spontaneous, emotional language. With the increase in live, unscripted speaking programs in the transitional period (1988–1992), there was more space for emotional speaking and swearword use, and significantly more religious swearwords. Generalising the last period (1993–2011), it could be said that the research conducted did not confirm the opinion offered by some linguists and the media regarding the degeneration and vulgarisation of language in media. Even though there are relatively more swearwords being used now than in the Soviet period, it is mainly diabolic swearwords that dominate, which have been tolerated in public use for some time already, or celestial swearwords, which are not even considered swearwords in the Lithuanian research tradition.*

Introduction

In recent years the informalisation of communication on radio and television has received a significant amount of attention in the Lithuanian press. Among the first to speak out on this in public were the linguists, in 2006, who are consistently concerned with the quality

of public language. They were angered not only by the "incorrect" language used by program hosts, but also by the fact that in modern programs "everything is possible – slang, all sorts of obscene language, language you'd use in the kitchen or garage, and intonation usually reserved for the private home" (Pupkis 2006: 10, my translation). However, journalists have become even more concerned over the increase in swearing on air. Many articles featuring very telling titles have appeared recently in the press: "Obscenities on television"; "The Top Ten Dance final: Tears and swearing"; "Television scandal: Swearing live on air – just a friendly warning?"; "Would fines reduce the frequency of swearing on television?" These kinds of discussions arising in Lithuanian press create the impression that on modern television, swearing has become a frequent phenomenon, giving rise to major ethical problems. In response to this phenomenon, this article seeks to find an answer to the question: Is it true that today there is much more swearing on radio and television, as the public opinion expressed by the media would have us believe? Material relevant for the research was selected from texts used in the *Corpus of Lithuanian Broadcast Media* (1960–2011), which consists of about 60 hours (approx. 350,000 words) of orthographically transcribed speech and covers three talk-based genre groups: news broadcasts, documentaries and talk shows.[1] The corpus does not include fictional programs, programs for children and some other types of programs. The texts in the corpus are divided into three periods, distinguished according to the main changes that took place in the media that likely had a determining influence on changes in language use – the Soviet period (1960–1987), the transitional period (1988–1992), and the contemporary period (1993–2011). The beginning of the first time line (1960) is connected with the wider spread of television in Lithuania. The year 1988 was selected as the onset of the transitional period because in that year the first of the new generation of TV programs was launched. The start of the contemporary period (1993) is marked by the launch of the first commercial television channel (TELE-3) (Nevinskaitė 2012: 47). Although the *Corpus of Lithuanian Broadcast Media* was released quite recently, several publications based on this data have already been published. One of them presents some observations on the public sphere and its participants in Lithuania

(Nevinskaitė 2012), and another covers the changes in public speech during different periods (Girčienė & Tamaševičius 2012). Based on the corpus, a so-called *laughter talk* study was conducted, which examined the frequency and functions of laughter during the past five decades (Aleksandravičiūtė & Vaicekauskienė 2012). A more comprehensive overview of the features of broadcast media during these periods and the research already conducted along these lines will be covered when the results of this study are presented.

The results of the research presented here will address the following: 1) What types of swearing (of the religious, scatological, sexual activity or mother (family) theme) were used in the three periods; 2) The contexts of this swearing (who swears how and during what programs); 3) The functions of this swearing (expletives, emotional discharge, emphasising the meaning of an expression).

Before presenting the research data and results, I shall give a brief account of a relevant theme in the hitherto scanty research on swearing in Lithuania. In the abovementioned press publications, the public use of foreign (usually Russian or English) swearwords is the greatest concern, while traditional Lithuanian diabolic and celestial swearwords (*velnias* [devil], *perkūnas žino* [thunder knows] etc.) rarely get a mention, or are presented as alternatives suited for the expression of emotions in public. Thus, the question most often asked is not just whether one or another swearword was used at a proper time and place, but also about what words and sayings should be classified as swearing. This topic shall also be discussed further in this article by looking at the tradition of defining swearing in Lithuanian research.

Regarding definition

The few studies on swearing that have been conducted in the past are inseparable from dialectological research material, be it data collected in the Lithuanian language dictionary or in text collections of various dialects (Jasiūnaitė 2007; Zabarskaitė 2009). Perhaps because traditionally, the swearwords recorded in these sources were mainly of interest to folklore researchers in Lithuania, rather than linguists, it is in a collection of folklore texts that the first definition of swearing was presented, almost half a century ago: "Swearing – a formulaic

expression of dissatisfaction or wishing someone harm, comprising words carrying a demonic, sacrilegious, obscene or otherwise offensive meaning" (Grigas 1968: 65, my translation). We could say that in Lithuanian language research, it is precisely this definition that has served as the point of reference from which decisions have been made as to what constitutes swearing, and what doesn't. Jasiūnaitė, one of the main researchers in this field, can be credited with distinguishing the main types of Lithuanian swearwords: writing about the formulaic swearwords used by Samogitians (who speak a western Lithuanian dialect), she distinguished them from pejoratives, or words of a negative connotation, usually used to describe an individual (e.g. *rupūžė* [toad], *žaltys* [snake]). Depending on the swearing formula structure, there are the *go to* variety (usually containing the words *go to...* in the formula) (e.g. *eik tu po šimto nelabųjų* [may you go to 100 devils]) and the damnation or threatening variety of swearwords (e.g. *kad jus perkūnas sudaužytų* [may thunder smash you to pieces]) (Jasiūnaitė 2007: 257, 260). Speaking about the extension of this definition, it is important to mention Zabarskaitė's observation that swearwords "are not always voiced to display a negative response to a certain reality, but sometimes people swear wanting to express strong 'overheated' emotions (e.g., in response to something unexpected, to express strong astonishment, even a sudden success, etc.)" (Zabarskaitė 2009: 101, my translation). Partly in opposition to the above definition, the latter approach stresses that swearing is not absolutely associated only with expressions of dissatisfaction. Confirmation of the basis for this approach also lies in a recently conducted study on young people's language that revealed that those Russian swearwords that raise the most "concern" in society are in fact quite often used by young people even in a neutral context (Vyšniauskienė 2012).

At this point, it is also important to discuss another aspect of the Lithuanian tradition: the treatment of celestial swearing. Regardless of the fact that a sizeable portion of traditional Lithuanian phraseology and folklore texts refer to such powers as the god of thunder *Perkūnas*, utterances mentioning God and the saints are not held to be swearwords and are discussed separately from swearing and formulaic swearing, baselessly ignoring that the matter here is the same kind of taboo as in diabolic swearing.[2] At this point it would be worth reminding readers that Lithuania is traditionally held to be a Christian country where almost 80 percent of the population belongs to the Catholic Church. So at least part of this segment of the population even today are aware of the teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which explains that "the second commandment forbids the abuse of God's name, i.e., every improper use of the names of God, Jesus Christ, but also of the Virgin Mary and all the saints" (Cathechism 2146). That is why I can rather boldly claim that not only from a cultural history approach, but also due to the sensibilities of a significant part of the population, swearwords today should include both traditional words and sayings identified as diabolic swearing, as well as references to God or the saints in the expression of profane emotions. This will allow me to take a much broader outlook over this lexical field, much broader than has been applied up until now according to the Lithuanian tradition, i.e. avoiding the subjective taboo assessment of one or another swearword, keeping it beyond the historical level. In this view I will follow the Nordic tradition of research, where a swearword is defined according to its relations to specific taboos in language culture – such as words that are not understood literally and used to express emotions or attitudes (Rathje 2008: 117); religious swearing is treated not just as an expression of contemporary society's relationship with religion, but also as a cultural ballast (a part of heritage) embraced from earlier epochs (Hasund 2006).

The data

While conducting the research, swearwords were searched for using two methods: scanning the corpus for the main words used in swearwords (such as *velnias* [devil], *dievas* [god], *pragaras* [hell], *perkūnas* [thunder], *šūdas* [shit]). To ensure that each swearword would be counted, reading the complete transcript and coding the existing swearwords was of some help.

First of all, it should be mentioned that swearwords that had appeared in programs that were included in the corpus were used rarely during all periods (see Table 1). As was expected, not a single swearword was used during news programs. The same kind of results

was found in a study of radio and television language in Denmark (Rathje 2009).

Table 1. Dynamics of use (average per 10,000 words).

	1960–1987	1988–1992	1993–2010	Total (by genre)
Talk shows	0.2	1.6	1.9	1.4
Documentaries	0.7	0.6	0.1	0.3
News programmes	0	0	0	0
Total (by period)	0.9	2.2	2	1.8
Number of words in the corpus	87,900 words	68,200 words	186,700 words	342,700 words

Swearing in documentaries can be used only in the form of pre-planned citations or as an element of spontaneous speech. This is obvious in a number of programs, where a pre-prepared text (story-telling) arranged off-screen dominates, yet where inserts of spontaneous speech of a somewhat longer duration than in news programs are possible. As was expected, the greatest usage was found to be in talk show programs where the communication is spontaneous (the exception being the Soviet period). If we consider programs from all genres, the transitional and current periods also stood out. Similar results were gained in laughter research of the same corpus that revealed the steady increase of laughter frequency in mediated discourse through time. "This may be interpreted as an indicator of a general transition from transactional to interactional, often spontaneous communication and may be partly explained by developments in broadcast media themselves and by the evolving genre of talk shows" (Aleksandravičiūtė & Vaicekauskienė 2012). Obviously, this explanation applies to swearing on air as well. Further in the article, we shall take a qualitative look at swearing on air in different periods, also describing how this is connected to the main features of and changes in the media during each period.

1960–1987: The first damnation

In societies such as Soviet Lithuania, television and radio served as aides in ideological indoctrination processes and in the formation of the new person – *homo sovieticus*. The informative, propagandistic and educational programs that dominated at the time had to feature only standard, correct language (the official standard), which was characterised by pathetics, moralising, and maintaining a significant distance from the audience. Keeping in mind the fact that spontaneous, informal speech fragments were especially rare in these programs, it is understandable that swearing there would have been almost unthinkable. This is confirmed by the fact that swearwords were used in programs on only eight occasions. The first instances that could indeed be categorised as swearing on air were heard during a radio program in 1965, though not during a spontaneous conversation but in a citation. During a report on the commemoration of victims of World War II (TV documentary *Pirčiupių paminėjimas*, 1965) poems were read in which threatening swearwords were directed at war criminals:

> Neišvydo vaikučiai lopšinės, tik motinų raudą liepsnoj, **telydi visur prakeikimas** žmogžudžius žemėj visoj!
> [The children never heard a lullaby, only their mother's sobbing by the fire, **may** all those murderers **be damned** for ever more on this land!]

and

> **Būkit motinų prakeikti** už nekaltą kraują **tegu maras jus**, prakeikti nuo žemelės **rauja**!
> [**May you be damned by your mothers** for innocent blood, **may you be plagued**, damned from the face of this earth!]

Other examples from this period are not related to the use of swearwords in traditional association with the expression of negative emotions. There was only one event in this period when the traditional Lithuanian swearword *kad [tave] Perkūnas [nutrenktų]* [may Thunder strike you down] was heard on air. This is a relic of pagan Lithuanian religion – addressing the god of thunder. These words were used behind the scenes in a discharge of good emotions at the very end of a documentary on beer-making traditions (TV documentary *Alum lijo*, 1965).

In Soviet society, religion was persecuted, and in the public space it was criticised or ignored. It was required that the word *dievas* [god] be written un-capitalised in all texts. A catch-phrase heard during a program from the Soviet era reflects this ideological attitude: "People of Soviet Lithuania don't need help either from God or from the devil. They trust in their own power and the friendship of their Soviet brother nations" (TV documentary *Aš, Vytautas Alseika*, 1972). Regardless of the nature of the totalitarian Soviet society or the state-wide installation of atheism, celestial swearwords, much like all the early religious phraseology, was not eliminated from use or classified as terminology that should be avoided. In Lithuania, compound words related to religion were used in fictional literature and remained in place in phraseology and other dictionaries, usually labelled as colloquial. Both diabolic and celestial swearing were classified as a valuable part of folklore that was collected and researched in Soviet Lithuania. Soviet ideology interpreted the legacy of religious swearwords as a sign of a "healthy" materialistic worldview of the Lithuanian people – alleging that the advanced Lithuanians had not believed in religious superstitions since ancient times, which is why they saw nothing wrong with using God's name in vain. This was how Grigas, the author of the first definition of a Lithuanian swearword, explained the celestial swearwords phenomenon in a collection of anti-clerical folklore texts (Grigas 1963: 352–353). In our corpus, one of the more common celestial swearwords was heard during the show *Studentai, studentai* (1975) about a young student and popular musician Simas Babravičius:

> Ta prasme, kad mes galim mąstyt, bet galim iki tam_tikros ribos reikšt savo iniciatyvą ir mąstyt; **neduok dieve**, kits bemąstydams gali ir iki kažkur tai dasimąstyt.
> [What I mean is, we are allowed to think, but we can express our initiative and think to a certain degree; **god forbid**, someone could be thinking and thinking and who knows what they'd think of.]

You could say that "god forbid" sounds strange coming from someone representing a Socialist youth organisation, yet we should keep in mind the toleration of precisely these sorts of profane religious swearwords throughout Soviet society that was mentioned earlier. Used in this excerpt to add emphasis to the statement, this swearword also serves as an indicator of spontaneous, live speech. Another version of the English "god forbid", *gink dieve*, was taken from a program from 1987 (talk show *Kūrybos vakaras*). It was used in a citation made by a popular actor at the time, Valentinas Masalskis, when recalling his childhood and retelling his grandmother's sentence:

> Ir ir atsimenu net tokių, kad mano bobutė sakydavo tėvui, ten jeigu aš už dvejetą ar ką, man tėvas už ausų patampydavo, tai būtinai jinai sakydavo, kad netampyk tik, **gink dieve**, netampyk už ausų jam, **gink dieve**.
> [And, and I remember even cases when my granny would say to father, if I got a 2 at school or something, my father would pull at my ears, then she would definitely say to him, just don't do it, **god forbid**, don't pull him by the ears, **god forbid**.]

In both the cases mentioned here, "god forbid" is used to emphasise the statement being said, and also serves as evidence of swearing and informality in media from that period, albeit limited and rare. Regardless of the fact that it was mainly representatives of the so-called "common people" that appeared on the television and radio programs of the time (mass media in those days was called "the tribune of workers and milkmaids"), almost all of the swearwords from this period were spoken not by them but by the more educated participants: in these cases, a student and an actor. Meanwhile, in the particularly "low brow" entertainment program *Alum lijo*, not a single episode of swearing occurred throughout the entire show, but the expression *kad tave Perkūnas nutrenktų* [may thunder strike you down] was deliberately inserted at the very end of the program. We can only guess why this happened, since compared to the use of informal lexis in this period, it is precisely the more educated speakers that stand out (Tamaševičius 2013). This paradox can be explained by the fact that program hosts who had the status of a media personality or expert also had more freedom in those days and were able to speak more spontaneously and liberally.

1988–1993: The first invocation of the devil

The transitional period from 1988 to 1993 was characterised by an outburst of freedom in the media. It was especially unique: the state of television programming was in flux and reflected the social and political transformations taking place, and it was also the beginning of an era of qualitatively new types of programs. A study of language from television programs of this period found that an innovation occurred at this time: television discovered real, unsimulated conversation; the efforts of hosts to communicate more informally became evident, there were endeavours to "avoid the old clichés", and there were attempts to depart from the prevailing prepared monologue to a spontaneous and more informal conversation (Girčienė & Tamaševičius 2012: 38). That is why it should also come as no surprise that with the appearance of live talk shows with famous politicians, artists and journalists, traditional Lithuanian (but not yet Russian or English) swearwords also started to be heard more often. *As could be expected, the variety in swearing had expanded even more by the end of the transitional period, where* celestial swearwords made up the majority, such as *Jėzau* [Jesus], *viešpatie* [Lord], *ačiū dievui* [thank you god]. Unlike what was the case in programs from the earlier period, where even celestial swearwords were used as part of citations, the above swearwords came across as elements of expressive, spontaneous language: slot-fillers or means of adding extra emphasis to what was being said. A typical example would be the term *dievaži* [god knows], used by a famous personality from the National Theatre, actor *Henrikas Kurauskas, to strengthen the authenticity and veracity of his main thought (talk show Veidai, 1988):*

> Aš nesu iš tų žmonių, tokių, kaip čia pasakyt, praktiškų. **Dievaži**, man pinigas, jis man atrodo nereikalingas.
> [I'm not one of those people, who, how can I say, are practical. **God knows**, to me, money, to me it seems unnecessary.]

Among the swearwords from this period, we have the first episodes of a mention of the devil, such as *velnias žino* [the devil only knows], or *kokio velnio* [what the devil]. Similar variants were even spoken by the famous journalist Algimantas Čekuolis in one popular program (the talk show *Veidai*, 1988). When the program host asked him whether he intended to leave and work in a foreign country, this Lithuanian media celebrity replied:

> Į užsienį? o **kokiam velniui**? geresnio užsienio negu Lietuva neišgalvosite.
> [Another country? **Why the hell**? You won't come up with a better foreign country than Lithuania.]

In this case, the swearing term "Why the hell?" used as an expressive reply serves to add emphasis to the categorical position of the speaker's conviction. Even though this is the briefest period in the total corpus being discussed, in terms of the number of years and scope of programs, the burgeoning variety of swearwords that occurred during this period is confirmation of the beginnings of informalisation, spontaneity and variance in public communication. Obviously, this is related to the appearance of new entertainment style programs, where intercommunication was more relaxed and spontaneous. The importance of the political transitions taking place cannot be underestimated either, as they brought about the innovation of openly and boldly stating one's opinion in public. Similarly as in programs from the Soviet period, swearwords were spoken not by ordinary people but by personalities from the public space, usually sharing various, intriguing episodes from their personal lives with the audience.

1993–2010: The first "fuck" and "go to shit"

Growing competition in the media market, together with the appearance of privately-run transmitters, determined the dramatically greater role played by the audience in this period. Today, the audience is seen as the consumer, which is why the informative function has been superseded by the entertainment function, while private, informal communication has taken the place of public communication. The familiar, friendly relationship (intimacy at a distance) in many of the new generation TV shows was created by using ordinary language rather than a formal style of standard language intended for communication in public (Tamaševičius 2012: 21). These trends were confirmed by earlier research using the same corpus, where it was

found that compared to the transitional period, there was a quantitative increase in expressive colloquial lexis and spoken syntactic constructions that did not sit within the frame of written language (Girčienė & Tamaševičius 2012: 39–40). It could be said that the changing ways of communicating on air was unavoidably reflected in the use of swearwords and swearing on air. In programs from the 1993–2010 period, it is religious-themed swearing that clearly dominates, which did not raise any ethical problems during the Soviet period, and not even during the transitional period. It is important to note that among the latter type of swearing, expressions such as *ačiū dievui* [thank god], *dieve mano* [oh my god], and *Jėzus* [Jesus] were used three times as often as diabolic swearwords. It is interesting that this tendency was also found in research done on the frequency of morphological multiword units in the biggest corpus of Modern Lithuanian (140,000,000 words) based on data from public written language. Again, the most used celestial expression *ačiū dievui* [thank god] appears three times as often as the most popular diabolic swearword *po velnių* [devil] (Rimkutė 2009). This confirms the trend observed in other studies of viewing diabolic swearwords as stronger and more crude, and thus less suitable to use in public than celestial swearwords. The study also showed that the critical comments made by journalists that were presented at the beginning of this article actually have no basis. Those swearwords that caused the greatest amount of ire among critics, that is, those related to scatological themes and sexual activity, were recorded in the *Corpus of Lithuanian Broadcast Media* on only a few occasions. One of these terms, *bliamba* – a euphemism borrowed from the Russian language – is used as a slot filler, often in place of *bliat*, which means "prostitute" in Russian. The first to use this term was one of the most prominent Lithuanian popular culture personalities, Marijus Mikutavičius, when, on his own talk show, he shared his experiences from the successful Lithuanian group's performance in the Eurovision Song Contest (talk show *Vakaras su Marijonu*, 2006):

> Jo, aš sėdėjau tenai, mes kada baigėme viską ir aš galvoju: **bliamba**, mes kažką ne taip padarėm; nes ten scenoje tu visą laiką esi kažkokiam tai lengvam transe, ten nelabai ir suvoki, kas buvo gerai. Kažkas blogai; tu galvoji: **bliamba** kažkur mes ne ten, nežinau, kas, bet kažkas buvo negerai.
> [Yeah, I was sitting there, when it was all over and I was thinking: **bliamba**, we did something wrong; because up there on the stage you're always in some kind of trance, so you don't quite know what was right. Something's wrong; you think: **bliamba**, at some stage, we did something wrong, I don't know what, but something was wrong.]

It is important to note here that Mikutavičius is one of the most experienced entertainment program hosts in Lithuania, known for his particularly informal style of communication in public, and someone who does not avoid slang or diabolic swearwords. Evidence that *bliamba* is a typical word characteristic of his individual style could also lie in the fact that he has used this word in one of his song titles, a popular song written more than 10 years ago called "Bliamba, juk aš tave myliu" [bliamba, I love you]. It should also be noted that the use of swearwords in a song title is even now highly rare and innovative in Lithuanian pop culture.

Bliamba was also used in quite another context in the entertainment dance contest programme *Kviečiu šokti* (2010) by the only woman to have used such swearwords in the whole corpus of media texts – the older, well-known actor and comic Kristina Kazlauskaitė. However, in her case she used the word *bliamba* when she was playing one of her better known characters, an uneducated wife of a wealthy husband from the provinces, invited to be one of the contest judges.

Another actor stood out for his use of swearwords in this period: Vytautas Šapranauskas, one of the main stars of entertainment programs in Lithuania. It was he, displaying his authority as a personality, who uttered the first "fuck off" on Lithuanian television, during the most watched interval on the most popular dance contest program *Šok su manimi* (2010):

> Žinai, tokį anekdotą, kaip į barą užeina Jamesas Bondas ir visi sako: "Look look, James Bond, James Bond"; viena blondinė sėdi ir net nekreipia dėmesio, jisai prieina jos "Sorry, can I introduce

myself?" ta nekreipia dėmesio; "I am Bond, James Bond"; jinai taip atsisuka: "Off, **fuck off**".
[Do you know that joke where James Bond goes into a bar and everyone says: "Look look, James Bond, James Bond"; a blonde is sitting there and doesn't pay any attention, he goes up to her "Sorry, can I introduce myself?" She ignores him; "I am Bond, James Bond"; she turns to him like this and says: "Off, **fuck off**".]

During the same program, using his typical method of amusing the audience, he relates a parody of a commercial as a joke:

Esi jaunas, ką tik baigei mokyklą, tau reikia buto, neturi pinigų, **tai eik tu šikt!** Sekundės bankas! Reklama.
[You're young, you've just finished school, you need an apartment, you don't have any money, **so go to shit!** Second Bank! Go to commercial.]

Note the contrast between this commercial-speak cliché and the regular "go to..." Lithuanian swearword *eik tu šikt* [so go to shit].

Generalising the last period in the *Corpus of Lithuanian Broadcast Media*, it could be said that the research conducted did not confirm the opinion expressed by some linguists and the media regarding the degeneration and vulgarisation of language in media. Even though there are relatively more swearwords being used now than in the Soviet period, it is mainly diabolic swearwords that dominate, which have been tolerated in public use for some time already, or celestial swearwords that are not even considered swearwords in the Lithuanian research tradition. The informalisation of public communication, as evidenced by the use of more frequent slang and a colloquial vocabulary, is basically related to religious swearing, but not to swearwords expressing an actual taboo in public communication related to scatological and sexual activity themes. During all the periods it was found that it was media personalities, educated and socially popular individuals, who were increasingly using swearwords on air, as opposed to ordinary people.

Conclusions

The research on swearing on air confirmed that of the radio and television programs examined, up until the transitional period, instances of swearing were mainly one-off events, or associated with a particular artistic function, or especially rare examples of spontaneous, emotional language. Only celestial swearwords were used during this period's programs, or damnations cited from a poetic text. With the increase in live, unscripted speaking programs in the transitional period, there was more space for emotional speaking and swearword use, and significantly more religious type swearwords – we now have diabolic swearwords, even though celestial swearwords are still more popular. In summarising the data from the present period (1993–2011), it could be said that all types of swearwords can now be heard on air, even though it is religious swearwords that remain the most dominant. Expressions related to sex and physiology are not widespread. Truth be told, media personalities are so far using them not spontaneously, but only in the form of citations, for example, in telling jokes.

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NOTES

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2 Celestial swearing is often associated with oath taking in God's name. Breaking taboos would occur in those cases where these celestial swearwords are used in a profane manner or deceitfully. What is interesting is that the Lithuanian verb *keikti* [to damn] could also refer to an oath in texts from the nineteenth century, much like in today's English and Swedish languages.

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Lost in translation?

– Swearing in the Swedish *Millennium* films and their German and Finnish translations

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a case study of translations of swearing in the Swedish films based on Stieg Larsson's crime trilogy Millennium. *The aim of the study is to examine to what extent swearing is omitted and how swearing is translated if not omitted. The research material consists of the Swedish DVD versions of the films, the German dubbed version, the German subtitles and the Finnish subtitles; in the analysis of omitted swearing, the Swedish subtitles are also examined and compared with the German and Finnish subtitles. The paper discusses constraints of dubbing and subtitling as different forms of audiovisual translation, which can influence omission of swearing. In the study of swearing, the definition and categorisation of Ljung (2011) are used. The quantitative analysis of omitted swearing shows that there is statistically significant less swearing in the translations than in the Swedish dialogue; this applies both to swearing in general and to swearing in the two main functions as stand-alones and slot fillers. There are no statistically significant differences between the three translations in the research material, but the Swedish subtitles have statistically significant less omission than the German and Finnish subtitles. The examination of the German and Finnish translations of swearing (if not omitted) shows that the religious theme is, like in the Swedish dialogue, the most frequent one; diabolic swearing is more frequent than celestial swearing. Furthermore, the scatological theme is more frequent in the German translations than in the Swedish dialogue and the Finnish subtitles. An interesting finding is that the Finnish subtitles do not just have the largest amount of omission in absolute figures in the research material, but they also contain a large amount of milder swearwords used in the cases when swearing is not omitted.*