

THE HASHTAG EFFECT: FROM LANGUAGE EVOLUTION TO LANGUAGE LOSS

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Abstract

While English increasingly establishes itself as a world lingua franca, many local and minority languages are subject to a steady decline, often facing significant challenges to their survival. The current research considers the growing predominance of English on social media and its impact on the future of local languages. Focusing on cases of code-switching that are common among influencers and online communities, the research analyses how digital communication contributes to contemporary language change. While the use of foreign words and phrases may demonstrate linguistic creativity and wider accessibility, they may also accelerate language shift and even diminish the status of less popular languages. Through the observation of social media discourse, this research raises questions whether these trends represent a natural process of language evolution or a catalyst for language decay in the digital age. The findings suggest that while English helps to achieve specific communicative goals and expand global reach, it also subtly displaces native-language functions in certain semantic domains.

Keywords: *code-switching, social media discourse, language shift, dominant language, non-dominant language*

1. INTRODUCTION

The fast-paced digitisation of many human activities in the 21st century has also brought significant changes in our use of language, particularly in the context of social media. As English continues to strengthen its position as the foremost medium of global communication, growing concerns have emerged regarding its potential impact on the development, status or even survival of less widely spoken languages. Subsequently, global communication, on the one hand, has enabled new forms of expression and cross-cultural interaction, on the other hand, it has also intensified disparities between dominant world languages and those at risk of extinction.

The phenomenon of language endangerment is not new and has been the subject of research in various fields. Accordingly, a lot of interrelated terms, such as *language death*, *decay*, *erosion*, *decline*, *shift*, *attrition*, *diglossia*, *obsolescence*, etc. have been coined and used by scholars to describe various stages of linguistic evolution, each highlighting different structural, cognitive, and sociocultural aspects of the process. Early studies focused on the structural and historical inputs of language change. For instance, Dressler (1988) and Aitchison (1991, 2001) analysed patterns of linguistic decay and transformation, questioning whether such shifts should be interpreted as progress or decline. Fishman (1991) proposed a concept of *language shift* referring to the gradual process by which a speech community abandons its native language in favour of another, typically more dominant language. As scholarly interest in language endangerment grew, greater attention has been turned towards its broader social and cultural implications. One of the most influential voices in this field is David Crystal, whose seminal work *Language Death* (2000) outlines both the causes and consequences of language extinction and draws to the social and emotional consequences of language death, framing it not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a profound cultural and epistemic loss. According to the scholar, languages decline is particularly pronounced in communities that are socially and economically disadvantaged and face pressure to adopt a majority language. More recent scholars have focused on interdisciplinary approaches. Low, McNeill, and Day (2023), for example, introduced a socio-cognitive model that links language erosion to cognitive dissonance. The authors also discussed leveraging AI technologies towards language heritage, archival, and preservation to limit the destructive impact of the death of a language. A critical point of view in contemporary debates on language vitality has been provided by Mufwene (2017), who claims that current theoretical models often overlook the ecological realities of language competition and survival. He calls for a rethinking of language endangerment that accounts

for the global spread of new ideologies, educational policies, and technological infrastructures that privilege dominant languages. This idea is echoed in the ongoing documentation efforts by UNESCO, whose *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (2003) highlights the scale and urgency of language endangerment, particularly in digitally marginalised communities.

Within this theoretical context, the current research examines how the language used on social media, particularly in terms of code-switching, contributes to both linguistic innovation and paradoxically, to the perpetuation of less popular languages. The online platforms such as *Facebook*, *Instagram*, *TikTok*, and *X* (formerly Twitter) function as powerful domains of human socialisation, where digital norms often influence what is seen, heard, and valued in everyday communication. While code-switching has traditionally been viewed as a sign of bilingual competence and sociolinguistic creativity (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Androutsopoulos, 2014), its growing influence in English-dominated digital contexts may in fact signal a gradual shift in language hierarchies, where the local ones give way to the globally dominant.

Despite the large body of research on code-switching in major linguistic contexts (e.g., Spanish-English, Arabic-French), there remains a significant gap in studies focused on smaller or less commonly used languages (Berruto, 2010). For this reason, the current research sets out to look into the functional use of Lithuanian to English code-switching among Lithuanian influencers on social media sites. Online language is ideal material for studying how language operates simultaneously as a communicative tool, a marker of modern identity, and a cultural resource. Understanding these patterns in smaller language communities contributes not only to sociolinguistic theory but also to broader discussions on language vitality. Recent scholarships also emphasize how social media platforms can simultaneously act as tools for minority language visibility and agents of subtle language shift, especially when symbolic value is restructured by global discourse norms (Siebenhütter, 2024).

To better understand these sociolinguistic dynamics, this research is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do Lithuanian influencers incorporate English lexical and syntactic elements into their native-language digital discourse?
2. What types of code-switching structures are most commonly employed?
3. How does the use of English reflect broader trends in digital identity construction, language shift, and linguistic vitality?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current research adopts a qualitative descriptive linguistic approach to investigate patterns of code-switching from Lithuanian to English in the social media discourse used by most popular Lithuanian influencers. Based on social media sites as a space of linguistic variety and self-representation, the research aims to reveal how English gradually permeates native languages and influences the way we communicate in online environment.

The data set comprises social media posts published in 2025 by a sample of fifteen prominent Lithuanian influencers active on platforms such as *Instagram*, and *Facebook*. The influencers were selected taking into consideration their high follower counts and frequency of posting. To ensure representativeness, the sample included both female and male influencers from different age groups and different content genres, such as lifestyle, fashion, fitness, technology, product promotion and public views, etc.

Over 500 posts were collected and analysed, with particular attention paid to captions, comments, and embedded hashtags. Only original content produced by the influencers themselves was included. Reposted material or third-party content was excluded to maintain consistency in authorship. The posts were analysed for instances of inter-sentential and intra-sentential code-switching, unmodified and slightly modified lexical borrowings, and instances of hybrid phrase formation.

The methodological framework draws on established theories of code-switching, including Myers-Scotton's (1993) *Markedness Model* and Poplack's (1980) typology of code-switching types, to categorise and interpret the data. Descriptive linguistic analysis was used to determine and classify the usage of code-switching, while comparative analysis helped identify recurring patterns and stylistic tendencies in influencers' communication.

This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how English is incorporated into Lithuanian digital discourse, as well as revealing the social motivations and consequences of online code-switching alongside its linguistic properties.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. *The Dominance of English and Its Implications for Language Vitality*

The global spread of English as a lingua franca has had serious implications for the vitality of local and less spoken languages. As Crystal (2003) observes, English has emerged as the dominant language of international business, science, education, and online communication, which has led to its unprecedented global spread. However, this dominance often speeds up language shift, as communities tend to abandon their native tongues in favour of English to gain better socioeconomic opportunities and global connectivity (Fishman, 1991; Mufwene, 2008). Additionally, Thomason (2015) warns that these shifts are not linguistically neutral but frequently result in simpler structures and a loss of language diversity. Similarly, Aitchison (2001) and Dressler (1988) note that language decline often starts with a loss in grammar and vocabulary, particularly when integrational transmission of language is disrupted. Kehayov (2017) and Low, McNeill, and Day (2023) highlight that the influence of English on local languages, often through code-switching and digital media, can mask ongoing processes of obsolescence and decay. Language decay, therefore, is not a sudden change but a complex process deeply connected to language policy, education, identity, and the socio-economic prestige of dominant languages. UNESCO (2003) framework for language vitality underscores these issues by identifying key indicators such as the numbers of speakers, attitudes towards languages, and institutional support, all of which are often weakened in environments where English is privileged above others.

3.2. *Origins and Development of Code-Switching*

Code-switching has become an important topic in modern language research due to its growing presence on digital platforms, especially social media. This linguistic phenomenon, commonly understood as the alternation between two or more languages within a single conversation, sentence, or even phrase, has drawn the interest of scholars from various fields, such as linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and discourse analysis.

The concept of code-switching emerged in linguistic discourse as early as the 1950s. Although initially treated as a somewhat marginal topic, code-switching gained theoretical significance through the works of Blom and Gumperz (1972), whose study on *Social Meaning in Linguistic Structures* laid the foundation for distinguishing between situational and metaphorical types of code-switching. Jakobson and Alvarez-Cáccamo also contributed to early understandings of the concept (Auer, 2007), helping to develop the terminology and theoretical scope of code-switching research.

Despite being widely classified as a linguistic feature, Vogt (as cited in Nilep, 2006) proposed that code-switching is inherently psychological in nature. He argued that it reflects a natural cognitive strategy used by multilingual individuals to adapt to social and communicative demands. This view is echoed by later scholars who emphasize that code-switching serves both communicative and identity-related functions.

3.3. *Definitions and Features of Code-Switching*

The term “code-switching” comprises two key components: “code”, which refers to a linguistic system or language—and “switch,” denoting a shift or change. Gumperz (1982) defined code-switching as “the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems.” This description highlights both the structural complexity and the

social embeddedness of the phenomenon. As defined by Crystal (2003), code-switching involves the “transfer of linguistic elements from one language into another”. This process often reflects multilingual speakers’ attempt to express themselves more precisely, comfortably, or purposefully.

Various researchers, including Poplack (1980), have categorized code-switching into intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag-switching. Each type indicates different grammatical and practical positions in speech. Wardhaugh (2010) made a distinction between situational code-switching, where language choice changes due to shifts in setting or participants, and metaphorical code-switching, where the language change comes from a shift in topic or purpose. These classifications help us understand how bilingual and multilingual speakers use their language skills during real-time communication, each indicating different syntactic and pragmatic positions within speech.

A significant concept in understanding code-switching is the *Matrix Language Frame* (MLF) model developed by Myers-Scotton (1993). This model suggests that one language, known as the “matrix language”, supplies the grammatical structure for sentences. The other language, called the “embedded language”, contributes lexical or syntactic elements. While some language experts have criticized this model, it continues to be a widely used framework in code-switching research, even in cases where more than two languages are involved.

While code-switching is sometimes perceived as a sign of linguistic deficiency, research increasingly shows that it is often a strategic and purposeful communicative tool used by speakers (Shin, 2010; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001). Functions of code-switching can be grouped into *social, linguistic, and psychological*. Socially, speakers may switch codes to adjust social distance or signal group identity (Auer, 2013; Myers-Scotton, 1997). Linguistically, it allows for more efficient communication, particularly when certain terms are more accessible or commonly used in one language than another (Heredia & Altarriba, 2001). Psychologically, switching may be used to navigate emotionally sensitive situations or reduce discomfort, especially in contexts where certain words carry cultural weight or social implications. Appel and Muysken (2006, as cited in Ignotaite, 2020) have outlined multiple communicative functions of code-switching, including emphasis, clarification, quoting others, managing topics, and signalling in-group membership. Ultimately, code-switching is best understood not as a deficiency but as a skilled and context-sensitive form of linguistic performance aimed at achieving effective communication.

3.4 Code-Switching vs. Code-Mixing

Code-switching and code-mixing are common linguistic practices among bilingual and multilingual speakers, often occurring naturally in everyday conversation. Although frequently used interchangeably, code-switching and code-mixing differ in some ways. Code-switching typically involves a switch between grammatical systems across sentence boundaries, while code-mixing often embeds smaller linguistic units (e.g., words, affixes) from one language into another without fundamentally altering grammatical structure (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1993). In other words, code-mixing is more concerned with the internal morphosyntactic consistency of the matrix language, whereas code-switching affects discourse structure and inter-sentential relations.

These processes are not random, rather, they serve specific communicative, stylistic, and identity-related functions. Speakers may switch codes to express solidarity, signal group membership, emphasize a point, or compensate for lexical gaps.

In digital spaces, especially on social media, code-switching and mixing have become increasingly visible, reflecting both linguistic creativity and the complex realities of multilingual environments. While some view these occurrences as a threat to linguistic purity, the others (for instance, Auer, 2007) argue that they are signs of linguistic competence and adaptability in diverse communicative situations.

3.5 Code-Switching in the Context of Social Media

In the digital age, social media has become one of the most dynamic environments for observing code-switching phenomenon in real time. *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *TikTok* serve not only as platforms for communication but also as spaces for building identity, branding, and cultural exchange (Androutsopoulos, 2015; Leppänen et al., 2014). Social media allows users, particularly influencers and

public figures, to express themselves as multilingual identities that appeal to vast audiences. The multimodal nature of online communication (text, image, audio, video) creates opportunities for more frequent and seamless language switching. This flexibility enables people play with language and different styles in both speech and writing.

As argued by Nilep (2006), the growing presence of code-switching in digital media reflects broader social and technological changes, where language becomes both a communicative and symbolic resource. More recent scholarship supports this view, emphasizing that digital communication fosters new norms of language use that are less constrained by traditional grammatical boundaries and more reflective of speakers' shifting cultural and linguistic affiliations. However, in smaller linguistic communities such as Lithuania, where English is the most popular foreign language, code-switching in online discourse can both enrich and endanger the native language. While it facilitates global reach and cultural relevance, it may also contribute to language shift or attrition, particularly among younger speakers whose everyday digital practices may be increasingly saturated with English (Crystal, 2003; UNESCO, 2003).

Although, there is a surge of research on code-switching in large linguistic communities, relatively little attention has been paid to its patterns in smaller language groups. This gap underscores the importance of current research, which seeks to examine the strategic use of English-Lithuanian code-switching by Lithuanian influencers on social media.

4. RESULTS

As stated in the methodology part, the current research focused the language use of fifteen popular Lithuanian influencers, selected to represent a diverse yet demographically relevant sample. The group included both male and female content creators, primarily between the ages of 25 and 55, who actively post on *Instagram* and *Facebook* that are currently the most widely used social media sites in Lithuania. The influencers were observed across a variety of content types, including personal reflections, lifestyle updates, travel commentary, and promotional posts. None of the selected influencers is known to be a bilingual, which adds an important dimension to the current research. This suggests that code-switching is not limited to speakers with advanced language competence, but rather a broader trend of “passive” or functional bilingualism, when individuals incorporate English words and expressions for stylistic, cultural, or pragmatic purpose. The analysis revealed frequent instances of English lexical items included into Lithuanian sentences, illustrating widespread practices of code-switching.

Unmodified and localized English words and phrases

The English language elements used by Lithuanian influencers can be broadly divided into two structural categories – unmodified borrowings and localized, morphologically integrated forms. These two categories reveal not only the degree of English influence but also the varying degrees of linguistic adaptation that occur in informal digital discourse.

A number of English words and phrases are used without any morphological modification, retained in their original form and directly inserted into Lithuanian sentences. The collected examples include individual words, such as *premium*, *random*, *again*, *update*, *inspo*, *affordable*, *royalties*, *cravings*, *delicious*, *nice*, *cute*, *happy*, *done*, *everybody*; abbreviations, like *Q&A*, *OMG*, *POV*; compounding – *must-have*, *win-win*, *so-so*, *beach body*, *last moment*, *air fryer*; as well as phrases or whole sentences, for instance, *happy Monday*, *happy place*, *family business*, *proud daddy*, *partners in crime*, *last week*, *so sad*, *next level*, *the final countdown*, *let's go*, *check this*, *as usual*, *either you hate it or you love it*, *just like that*, *what's on the menu today*, *today is the day*, *first things first*, *I can't believe it*, *so worth it*, *I'm back*, *back on track*, due to popular demand, etc. These are often stylistically marked and function as emphatic, evaluative, or discourse-structuring devices, contributing to the conversational tone and performative aspects of influencer communication (Myers-Scotton, 1993; Auer, 1998). Their function is to establish a casual, engaging, and often playful tone that draws in social media audiences. The use of these foreign words and expressions adds emotional appeal, highlights the main narrative moments,

and fosters a sense of shared cultural awareness, particularly among young followers attuned to global vernaculars.

In contrast, a substantial number of English terms have been localized through the addition of Lithuanian morphological endings, particularly nominal suffixes such as -as, -is or -ai. These include words like *outfitas* (outfit) or even its diminutive form *redcapeto outfitukas* (redcarpet outfit), *outfit check'as* (outfit check), *reelsas* (reel), *e-shopas* (e-shop), *postas* (post), *soldautas* (sold out), *dealas* (deal, special offer), *live'as* (live), *linkas* (link) *playlistas* (playlist), *unboxingas* (unboxing), *hackas* (hack), *oferis* (offer), *challengžas* (challenge), *junk foodas* (junk food), *street foodas* (street food), *oversizas* (oversize), and *heiteriai* (haters), *energijos crashai* (energy crashes), *preworkautas* (preworkout), *experienças* (experience), *red flagai* (red flags), etc. These examples show clear evidence of grammatical assimilation, whereby English nouns are adjusted to fit the phonological and morphological rules of the Lithuanian language.

The borrowed verbs also reflect systematic integration, as in many cases, English roots are adapted using Lithuanian verb conjugations, as in *chillinu* (I'm chilling), *jei skrolinsit* (if you scroll) and *pushinu* (I'm pushing), *pasishopinti* (to shop/to buy), *triggerina* (to trigger), *užinfluencintas* (to be influenced by) and so on. These forms not only preserve the semantic content of the English root but also conform to Lithuanian tense, aspect, mood, and person inflections, demonstrating linguistic creativity and adaptability.

Structural and Functional Dimensions

From the structural and functional perspective, the examples demonstrate three primary types of code-switching, as identified in Poplack's (1980) model:

- **Inter-sentential code-switching** involves complete English sentences or phrases inserted into an otherwise Lithuanian discourse. Examples include: *either you hate it or you love it!*, *just like that*, *what's on the menu today?*, *Back on track*, *Karaoke goes wild*, *game over*, *so worth it!*, *check this out*, etc. These cases function as **stylistic insertions**, often adding emphasis or summarizing a previous statement. They can mark shifts in tone, create a sense of drama or informality, and mirror the patterns of global social media communication. These forms are especially characteristic of performative and narrative-driven content, showing how influencers connect with their audiences.
- **Intra-sentential code-switching** occurs within a single sentence where English and Lithuanian elements co-occur. For example: *by the way šiandien dirbu* (by the way I am working today), *perfect atostogos* (perfect holiday), *welcome to mano vaikystę* (welcome to my childhood), *soon įvyko dabar* (soon happened now), *pushinu vaikus mokytis* (I am pushing my children to learn), *visiškai amazing* (absolutely amazing), *geriausias dalykas ever* (best thing ever), *o merginos out* (and girls out), *mums as usual viskas vyksta vienu metu* (just as usual, everything hits us at once), *labai geras Layout* (a very good Layout), *jis turėtų gauti Roayalties* (he should get Royalties), *Monday-Sunday ir vėl iš naujo* (Monday-Sunday all over again), *naujas šeimos outfit check'as* (new family outfit check), *last moment išgelbėjo mus su puokšte pagal užsakymą* (last moment saved us with a bouquet made to order), *kas turite Air fryerį?* (who has an air fryer?) and so on. These switches reflect **grammatical fluency and stylistic fluidity**, common among bilingual speakers in informal contexts as proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993). The seamless switching within a sentence indicated linguistic adaptability, used to sound more expressive or fit in the digital culture.
- **Tag-switching** includes short phrases or exclamations inserted into monolingual utterances, such as *let's go*, *nu tiesiog wow!* (just wow!), *čia yra wow!* (this is wow!), *į kraustynių realybę*. *Wow* (the reality of the moving house. Wow.), *Done!* *žaibiškai viskas* (Done! Everything in a flash), *So sad ... Negaliu žiūrėti* (So sad ... I can't look at that) serve as pragmatic or rhetorical markers, which are added for **emphasis, emotional intensity or stylistic flair**. According to Gumperz's (1982), such tag-switching functions as a contextualization cue, helping the followers interpret the speaker's intent, tone, or attitude.

Additionally, some examples reflect **hybrid constructions**, where English structure is partially translated or blended with Lithuanian syntax, as in *migrena is back* (*migraine is back*), *žiūrėsiu kaip tas jet lagas* (*I'll see how the jet lag goes*), *repeticija is done* (*rehearsal is done*), *Klaipėda next, atgal to business* (*back to business*), *back ir einam out again* (*back and going out again*), *gavom private turą* (*we've got a private tour*). These forms illustrate what Auer (1998) calls **language mixing**, a practice where speakers deliberately blur linguistic boundaries to reflect modern, cosmopolitan identities.

Thematic categorisation

The increasing influence of English in digital and social media communication among Lithuanian influencers is evident through a rich and varied use of English words and expressions used within Lithuanian discourse. These instances of code-switching reflect a blend of stylistic creativity, sociocultural alignment, and the functional needs of contemporary influencer communication. To better understand the sociolinguistic roles played by these English elements, the collected examples can be thematically grouped according to the domains they most frequently serve. This categorisation reveals how English is employed not randomly but with clear associative links to particular discourses. For instance:

- Fashion, food, sports and lifestyle – *must-have*, *inspo*, *delicious*, *max*, *street style*, *premium*, *outfitas*, *oversizas*, *junk foodas*, *preworkautas*, *gymas*, *gymo diena* (gym, gym day). These terms reflect global consumer trends and the aspirational tone of influencer communication. They also help to position the speaker within a globalized, trend-conscious digital community, diminishing the boundaries between local language use and global lifestyle narratives.
- Technology and digital culture – *e-shopas*, *live'as*, *reelsas*, *postas*, *playlistas*, *hackas*, *podcastas*, *tune in*, *skrolinsit*, *buds*. These words show how English dominates in the lexicon of digital tools and platforms, reinforcing the status of English as the common language of technology. The adoption of these words demonstrates the linguistic hegemony of English in tech-mediated communication and highlights how localized speech incorporates foreign terms to keep pace with rapid innovation.
- Emotions and experience – *excited*, *happy*, *cute*, *so sad*, *vaibas* (vibe), *crazy idėja*, *I'm obsessed*, *nu tiesiog wow* (just wow), *čia yra wow* (this is wow), *visiškai stunning* (absolutely stunning), *visiškai amazing* (absolutely amazing), *kad nestovėti awkwardly* (not to stand awkwardly), *nėštumo cravings* (pregnancy cravings), etc. By tapping into widely recognized and emotionally expressive English vocabulary, influencers intensify the tone of their messages, making posts feel more spontaneous and enthusiastic. This use of language often mirrors the fast-paced, affect-driven nature of social media, where emotion is a key tool for capturing attention and sparking interaction. In many cases, such expressions also act as discourse markers, highlighting reactions, shifting tone, or punctuating a narrative moment. Whether used in captions, stories, or comments, these emotionally expressive phrases help structure content and make it more engaging, particularly for audiences accustomed to global digital language norms. Their widespread use reflects how English has become not just a second language but a shared emotional and stylistic code in online communication.
- Marketing and Promotion – in influencer content related to branding or advertising there are a lot of English expressions such as *pre-loved perliukai* (pre-loved pearls/favourite things), *galioja viskam išskyrus gift cards* (valid for everything except gift cards), *tikrai būty game changer* (it would definitely be a game changer) *oferis* (offer), *soldautas* (sold out), *dealas* (deal), *trendas* (trend), *unboxingas* (unboxing), *next level*, etc. Such blending of languages makes the content sound more current, market-savvy, and appealing to digitally literate audiences.

Overall, the use of English across these thematic categories highlights how Lithuanian influencers carefully adapt their language to fit the style and pace of digital culture. Whether referring to fashion, technology, emotions or marketing, English serves as both a practical and symbolic tool that help them to connect with the audiences and position themselves in a global, trend-aware community.

Linguistic and sociocultural implications

In many cases, influencers write their main captions or posts in Lithuanian, but pair them with hashtags in English, such as #happymothersday, #fancylife, #redcarpetfashion, #sunnymood, #makeup, #summeroutfit, or #TalentedKids, #holiday, #adventuretime, #beyourownmotivation, #us, etc. This pattern reflects a strategic use of English to increase visibility, tap into global trends, and reach broader audiences beyond Lithuanian-speaking followers. Hashtags in English function as searchable keywords in the international digital space, positioning English as the default language of social media.

Occasionally, Lithuanian influencers also switch to languages other than English, adding a layer of playfulness, irony, or cultural flair to their content. Phrases like *finito*, *amigos*, *Con mis chicas*, *Solei!!!*, *Muchas gracias*, or hybrid expressions such as *life is pain au chocolat* illustrate this trend. These instances are typically not indicators of multilingual fluency but rather stylistic choices used to evoke certain moods, reference travel or lifestyle aesthetics, or simply to stand out in the digital feed. Such language play reflects a growing trend in social media communication where bits of various languages are used symbolically to express cosmopolitan identity, humour, or the feeling of the moment, rather than for functional communication.

The integration of foreign words or phrases (mostly English) in Lithuanian influencer language is not accidental or haphazard, it reflects conscious and strategic linguistic choices. Inserted words and phrases serve specific stylistic, pragmatic, and symbolic functions. They help to sound more expressive, closer to global audiences, and go hand in hand with current online trends. As Mufwene (2008) noted, the dominance of English in such contexts is less about coercive globalization and more about adaptive social behaviour, where English becomes a tool for accessing symbolic capital.

Moreover, the trend of code-switching raises broader questions about language vitality and the future of less popular languages like Lithuanian in digital spaces. While the use of English enriches communicative range, it may also signal domain loss, where certain topics (e.g., fashion, tech, marketing) become linguistically saturated with English, reducing the perceived adequacy of Lithuanian in those areas.

Thus, what may appear as casual or playful mixing also reflects deeper sociolinguistic transformations, as speakers negotiate the balance between local identity and global relevance in the digital age.

5. DISCUSSION

One of the key insights emerging from this research is that code-switching among Lithuanian influencers is highly context-sensitive. They often use English words and mixed constructions in personal posts, especially when conveying emotions, sharing personal reflections, attitudes, or offering informal commentary. In contrast, promotional content intended for advertising purposes usually tends to adhere more closely to standard Lithuanian, maintaining a formal tone and structure. This contrast suggests that influencers are quite aware of what is appropriate for different situations and what their audience expects.

Despite the emerging trend of code-switching among Lithuanian influencers, it still remains uncertain whether this could lead to potential language decline. The long-term impact of such code-switching on linguistic vitality cannot be fully understood without sustained empirical research and longitudinal observation. For now, the issue resists clear conclusions, but its significance is undeniable.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The conducted analysis of the cases of code-switching of Lithuanian social media influencers reveals a complex linguistic phenomenon, predetermined by the needs and norms of modern online communication. It appears that the use of English vocabulary and grammatical elements, whether fully integrated into Lithuanian conventions or retained in their original form, do not reflect linguistic

deficiency. Instead, they serve as social denotations that reflects one's identity, helps to be more expressive, and facilitate social interaction.

1. First, code-switching is more than just a linguistic option. In most cases it becomes a deliberate act of identity construction. By alternating between Lithuanian and English, influencers represent themselves as bilingual personas that exude notions of modernity, cosmopolitanism, and cultural sophistication. It is a conscious alignment with the aesthetics and expectations of international, digitally native communities. As such, language choice has a performative function to attract the followers who share similar lifestyles and aspirations.
2. Second, code-switching fulfils a range of pragmatic functions that go beyond style. Content creators often use English because they are trying to emphasize a specific point, communicate technical information, or fill in missing words, especially in areas like fashion, technology, and marketing. Terms like *game changer*, *cute*, *done*, *awkward*, and *excited* are used because they are more concise and better convey the intended meaning than their Lithuanian equivalents. Other English phrases are sometimes employed simply because they sound fancier and are more refined.
3. A number of instances of code-switching serve a stylistic and rhetorical purpose, especially in casual or sometimes humorous narratives. Phrases like *back ir einam out again* or *visiškai amazing* illustrate how English helps to create a playful, informal tone that attracts target audiences. This reflects a broader trend of tongue mixing, where combining languages becomes a way to express one's manner of speaking and produce an amazing variety of possible cross-language structures.
4. Finally, using English helps interlocuters to reach people outside the Lithuanian-speaking community. On a global platform, where followers come from different language and cultural backgrounds, incorporating English promotes inclusivity, visibility, and wider interaction.

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