

English Language Teaching in Lithuania: Historical Overview and Current Status, in comparison with Japan

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ABSTRACT

This article overviews the English language teaching in Lithuania with a focus on influences of the history to the choice of a foreign language, as well as a current status, in comparison with the ones of Japan. In order to cover how the history and current status influence the choice of a foreign language as well as students' motivation to study languages, particularly English, the article mainly discusses the following points: (1) historical overview of the English language teaching in Lithuania; (2) current status in English education in Lithuania and Japan; (3) motivating factors for the students to learn English.

【Keywords : foreign language teaching, English, Lithuania】

Introduction

“A man who has no acquaintance with foreign languages knows nothing of his own.”

– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Over the past hundred years the number of English language speakers has increased. Throughout the history English has moved around the world, beginning with the pioneering voyages to the Americas and Asia. It was an expansion which continued with the nineteenth-century colonial developments in Africa and the South Pacific; it was adopted in the mid twentieth century as an official or semi-official language by many newly independent states. English is now represented in every continent. It is this spread of representation which makes the application of the label ‘global language’ a reality (Crystal, 2003).

In a number of contexts, such as work, study abroad, international exchange programmes, and intercultural marriages, English has been used as a lingua franca among people with different mother tongue. Obviously, in many countries English is taught as the first or second foreign language at schools. Namely, in both Japan and Lithuania, the English language is the first foreign language and has been taught as almost a compulsory subject at schools. In order to understand characteristics of English language education in Japan and Lithuania as well as to compare the education systems, it is

essential to overview some historical periods; because history had given a major influence on the choice of foreign languages.

About Lithuania

Before discussing the English language education in Lithuania, the background information about the country is presented briefly: geography, diplomatic relations to Japan, population and language.



Figure 1. Lithuania's location on the map. (Source: <http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/europe/lt.htm>)

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Lithuania is one of the three Baltic countries, facing to the Baltic Sea and located in the west of Russia (Figure 1). Lithuania has been a member of the European Union since 2004.

As for diplomatic relationship between Lithuania and Japan, we cannot talk about it without Chiune Sugihara. In 1939, the consulate of Japan was opened in Kaunas (second largest city of Lithuania); however, it was closed down in the following year as a result of Lithuania's annexation to the Soviet Union. The diplomatic relations renewed in October 1991 following the recognition of Lithuania by the Government of Japan in September. In 1997, Embassy of Japan was opened in Vilnius (the capital of Lithuania). In Japan, in addition to the embassy in Tokyo, Lithuania also has a consulate in Sapporo.

The present Ambassador of Japan in Lithuania, Her Excellency Kazuko Shiraishi (2015), who came to Lithuania in February 2012 wrote as follows:

“Lithuania is well known in Japan as a country of its beautiful landscape and nature and the place where Deputy Consul Chiune Sugihara issued “visa of life” for Jewish refugees in Kaunas during the World War II.”

At the beginning of the World War II, Japanese Consul-General in Lithuania Chiune Sugihara and his wife Yukiko Sugihara, by an ultimate act of altruism and self-sacrifice, risked their career and life to save the lives of 6000 Jewish people of Lithuania during the Holocaust (Greene, 1995-1997). To commemorate the great deeds of Mr. Sugihara, in 1991 a street in Vilnius was called after his name. Besides, the Memorial museum of Mr. Sugihara was established in the former Consulate building in the city of Kaunas that is visited by many tourists and schoolchildren. What is more, every spring the locals and guests of Vilnius and Kaunas enjoy the blossoms of the Sakura trees that have been presented to Lithuania by Japan. It is the fact that both countries have been successfully maintaining good diplomatic relationship for more than 20 years

Going back to the current status in Lithuania, according to *Business Guide to Lithuania 2015*, the population of Lithuania is 2.9 million: 84.2% of the population are ethnic Lithuanians, 6.6% are Poles, 5.8% are Russians, and 3.4% are others. Lithuania is the largest among the three Baltic States, although it is a small country globally. Its capital and the largest city is Vilnius with a population of 541 thousand. The second and the third largest cities are Kaunas and

Table 1. Background information about Lithuania

Capital	Vilnius
Geographical size	65,300 km ² (The area of Hokkaido prefecture is 83 457 km ²)
Population	2,943, 472 (2014)
Population as % of total EU population	0.6 % (2014)
GDP	€ 36.309 billion (2014) 4901920872030.00 JPY
Official EU language	Lithuanian
Political system	parliamentary republic
Currency	Euro (since 1 January 2015) 1 Euro=135.01 JPY

(Source:http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/lithuania/index_en.htm)

Klaipeda with a population of 303 thousand and 157 thousand, respectively.

The official and most commonly spoken language is Lithuanian, which is one of only two living languages (the other one being Latvian) of the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language family. About 92% of the population speak one foreign language (English, Russian, German or Polish) and more than 50% speak two foreign languages (Krisciunaite, 2015). Table 1 presents the background information about the country.

Lithuania's name was first mentioned as *Lituae* (the genitive form of the Latin word *Litua*) in the entry for March 9, 1009 AD in the Annals of Quedlinburg recording the martyrdom of St. Bruno (Baranauskas, 2000). Recently, a significant contribution to the question of the origin of the name of Lithuania has been made by Arturas Dubonis, who used historical evidence to support his hypothesis that the primary form of the Lithuanian ethnonym was *leitis* (to pour, to flow, to drip), and that in some historical sources Lithuanians were called *leiciai* in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Background of the language in Lithuania, which is a key in this article, is explained briefly, emphasizing the reasons why a common belief that Lithuanian is close to Russian exists. According to Hilbig (2008), it is argued by scientists that the

Lithuanian language has its roots in Sanscrit (Classic Indian language), ancient Latin, and Greek languages. It is also believed that the Lithuanian language is the oldest living Indoeuropean language, which maintained many phonetical and morphological features of the proto-language.

"*The Lithuanian language is not Slavic, but it belongs to the Baltic group of languages*", very often a Lithuanian person would explain to a foreigner. The confusion of this kind has its beginning in the historical and political circumstances of the country: the majority of Lithuanians speak, or at least understand Russian. In the area of the capital (Vilnius), the population would also understand some Polish. Both Polish and Russian belong to the slavic group of languages, whereas the Lithuanian language is a Baltic language. The only living language of the same Baltic group is Latvian (the language of a neighbouring country Latvia), although Lithuanians and Latvians would not understand much of each others' language. The language of the third Baltic state, Estonia, does not belong to the Baltic group of languages; therefore, there is no similarities between Estonian and Lithuanian at all.

1. Historical Overview of the English Language Teaching in Lithuania

As mentioned above, history has a major impact on the choice of a state language as well as foreign language to be taught at school. In the case of Lithuania in this writing, the choice of languages, the state language as well as foreign languages, are discussed under the three categorization in its history. (1) Brief history before the Soviet Occupation; (2) During the Soviet Occupation of Lithuania (1940-1991); and (3) Changes in Language Education after 1991.

(1) Brief History of Lithuania before the Soviet Occupation

According to the official history of the Republic of Lithuania, the first settlers of Lithuania arrived in approximately 12, 000 B. C. In 3,000–2,500 B. C., the Indo-European Balts settled in this area. Between the 5th and 8th centuries tribal groupings formed in the western territories: Prussians, Yotvingians, Curronians, Zemgalians, Lithuanians and Latgallians. In the 10th c. the pagan Baltic tribes became the target of the missions of the Catholic Europe.

In the Middle ages the Grand Dukes of Lithuania could speak Lithuanian even though the

Lithuanian language was not official state language. That was so because Medieval Lithuania included also the territory of modern Belarus, the greater part of Ukraine, and had strongly influenced the historical fate of Poland and the other countries in the region. *Ruthenian* (Old East Slavic language) and Polish languages were used as the state languages of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. As for the foreign languages, Latin and German were used in diplomatic correspondence.

The European document, *Lithuania Country Profile – Overview*, states that the history of Lithuania has close connection with that of Poland, the neighbour to the southwest. By the end of the 18th century most of the country was under the Russian empire. German occupation in the World War I was followed by two decades of independence, although Vilnius was occupied by Poland for most of that time. During the period of the Commonwealth with Poland (1569–1795), Lithuania was gradually polonized, due to the fact that the Lithuanian nobility of the time regarded Polish culture and the language to be superior. This historical fact once again stresses the connection of the linguistic choices of the people to a country's history and geography.

By the 17th century the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania lost a series of wars that wiped out its great power position. In the late 18th century (1772-1795) the country was completely annexed by Prussia, Austria and Russia with the main Lithuanian lands falling under the Russian rule. During this period Lithuanian language was banned and Catholic religion suppressed. There were two unsuccessful revolts to restore Poland-Lithuania (1830 and 1863); however, eventually the restoration of statehood became possible after both the Russian Empire and the Germans surrendered in World War I.

During the polonization and russification periods, the Lithuanian language was regarded as the language of poor people, mainly spoken in villages. Those people managed to keep the Lithuanian language alive from generation to generation. Consequently, only at the early 20th century the basis of Lithuanian official language was formed (Hilbig, 2008).

The short period of prosperous freedom was cut short again by the World War II in 1940. Lithuania was occupied once by the Nazi Germany and twice by the Soviet Union. Both powers suppressed the country and brought stagnation to the development of the national language. Obviously, during the occupation periods the languages of the oppressive

country were essential to know in order to receive education and employment possibilities.

(2) The Soviet Occupation of Lithuania(1940-1991)

The Soviet period played the tremendous role in language teaching at Lithuanian schools. Therefore, it is necessary to present its overview. During the Soviet occupation the cultural assimilation process took place. Non-Russian community of Lithuania, voluntarily or not, had to give up their culture and language in favour of the Russian one.

In this era hundreds of thousands people, including the entire intellectual elite, were murdered, tortured or expelled to Siberia in cattle carriages. This has left deep economical, psychological and spiritual scars in the Lithuanian nation.

Seskauskienė and Grigaliūnė (2013) argue that English studies experienced a variety of contexts including a long and painful Soviet period. During the period of Soviet Occupation of Lithuania (1940-1991), big Lithuanian cities such as Vilnius and Klaipėda were heavily settled by ethnic Russians. The Russian population share in Lithuania increased more than threefold in a decade, and the Lithuanians living in other parts of the Soviet Union as well as those living in the multi-ethnic Vilnius region were russified. Therefore, the second language at Lithuanian schools used to be Russian. Besides, many Russian schools were established with Russian as the teaching language for all the subjects. The Lithuanian language was taught at such schools more as a foreign language rather than a state language. As a result, the Russian population in Lithuania used to have a poor command of the Lithuanian language. It is known that the motivation to learn the Lithuanian language was not enough because the Russian language was essential for the Soviet Union to acquire education and job, and operate well in daily life. What is more, it would be difficult to live in the Soviet Republic of Lithuania without the Russian language, especially if one desired to get a prestigious employment.

It is known that the Soviet Lithuania was isolated from the non-Soviet world with travel restrictions, both for foreigners to enter anywhere except for several designated tourist places and for the locals to travel abroad. Thus, foreign languages, mainly English and German, were taught just in specialized schools and the teaching methods were purely grammar-translation ones.

On December 25th, 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev

resigned as president of the Soviet Union, declaring the office extinct and dissolving the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a massive communist empire that had existed since 1922. The USSR had been in a long economic stagnation when Gorbachev came to power in 1985. In order to bring about change, he introduced several reforms, including perestroika (economic restructuring) and glasnost (openness). Glasnost opened the floodgates of protest and many republics made moves toward independence, threatening the continued existence of the USSR. In August of 1991, a group of Communist Party hardliners frustrated by the separatist movement attempted to stage a coup. They quickly failed due to a massive show of civil resistance – and the already-faltering government was destabilized even further by the attempt. In 1991, 16 Soviet republics, including Lithuania, had declared their independence. Russians withdrew their final soldiers from Lithuania by 1993 (the first completed withdrawal in entire Eastern Europe) (Taylor, 2011).

(3) Changes in Language Education after 1991

Since Lithuania regained its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, it has brought numerous changes in education. In this section, major changes are going to be discussed, particularly as for the policy changes in education. To briefly describe the changes, the National education rapport has been taken into consideration. According to the *National Education Development Rapport (1991-2000)*, the new education principles have been adopted, those of humanity (a person is the highest value), democracy (a person should live in accordance with the principles of democratic society), nationality (Lithuanian identity is to be cherished), and novelty (the education is open to changes). What is more, the attitude towards a student has been changed in the direction of a socially active personality who is able to create a democratic community. Together with the role of a student, undoubtedly, a teacher's role has been altered towards a creative personality, developing a young person, not just providing students with knowledge. The biggest changes, perhaps, took place in the content of education. For this purpose new curricula have been designed, and new textbooks, written by the national authors or adopted by the western European authors, were implemented into the school curricula.

Those changes were generally influenced by economic, political and social reasons. Indispensably,

the foreign language education has undergone very important transformations according to Language Education Policy Profile 2002-2006.

“All these changes imposed the requirement to study and learn foreign languages [...] New social conditions prompted the education stakeholders to change the choice of foreign languages, giving the priority to Western European languages and withdrawing from compulsory teaching / learning of Russian and providing possibilities to study two or three foreign languages. The teaching methods were also changing “(*Country Report, 2006*).

Since 1992, Lithuanians have studied at least two foreign languages at schools. The 1st or 2nd foreign languages taught at schools in Lithuania have been mainly German, French, and English. Besides, the Russian language partly regained its importance. The dominant pattern for a school is to choose English as the first and Russian as the second foreign language. The Russian language is mainly chosen as the second foreign language because of various factors: the existence of available teachers, the fact that a generation of parents who have learned Russian can help their children with the language, still the use of Russian as one of the working languages in some trades and tourism sector.

Undoubtedly, after the country regained its independence, numerous challenges to implement foreign languages into the curriculum have occurred: primarily, the lack of foreign language specialists. Initial and in-service training of teachers has not followed the same fast pace, largely because of lack of financial means, but also because of complication to change working habits and ways of thinking. The traditional way of teaching in Lithuania was teacher oriented lecture style teaching, where a teacher gives instructions and dominates at the lesson while students were supposed to follow instructions and learn passively.

In contrast, the modern view on teaching is cardinally different. General education plans, which schools use to develop their own teaching plans, stipulate that the learning environment at school must provide opportunities for active education of pupils, their individual learning, learning in groups of various sizes, and also for practical, experimental, theoretical activities. Meanwhile, teachers must be provided with opportunities to work innovatively using modern education technology: faster internet, interactive whiteboards, computers, modern classrooms, classroom equipment, libraries and etc. Further, education can

take place outside the school such as in museums and parks, by adjusting the educational process accordingly. (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014).

Regardless of the country, a modern teacher should face some universal challenges. With the development of Information and Communication Technologies, students have become overloaded with information. Thus, it is thought that learning should take place in real timing with a focus on students' needs. Besides, individual approach and differentiation is essential.

Moreover, with changes giving a different emphasis to the sociocultural content of language learning and to communication skills, new textbooks had to be produced, or in most cases in Lithuania, to be imported from British, French, and German publishers. The references to foreign models and methodological approaches have been adopted. In particular, the work of the Council of Europe has been the main source of inspiration for reforms in the field since 2004, the year Lithuania joined the European Union. Issues on textbooks will be discussed in the following section, more in detail.

At the same time, changes in a day-to-day classroom where teaching of foreign languages take place are at a slower pace. Still traditional approaches to language teaching, including the grammar-translation method, can be found in some classrooms, especially taught by a teacher with traditional views. However, nowadays they are in rapid decline.

The official education documents, the general curriculum and the Country Reports of Lithuania emphasize the importance of state language, foreign languages and cultures. It is essential not only for economic development and employment, but also for cultural awareness to live in a multicultural community. The necessity of a communicative approach to language instruction is essential for modifying previous ways of teaching and seeking the achievement of appropriate foreign language level after completing the secondary education to be an independent user of English, which is explained more in detail later.

Similarly, judging in the English language textbooks that are approved by the Japanese government and used at schools in Japan, the Japanese culture is emphasized, as well as foreign cultures. For example, the information about the Japanese festivals is included into some units. This trait of the Japanese textbooks proves that a foreign language and the state language have to be given equal importance culturally in the global society.

Undoubtedly, The English language teaching/learning in Japan and Lithuania is a complex phenomenon. In both countries the English language teaching has undergone many changes. Both Lithuania and Japan, though in completely different historical periods (Lithuania – during the Soviet occupation, and Japan – before the Meiji era), were closed from the exposure to the English speaking world. Consequently the stagnation of language teaching development took place.

According to Hosoki (2011), in Japan English language education as a system started in 1854 with the Treaty of Peace and Amity with the United States. This was the most important incident influencing the spread of English in Japanese society, following Commodore Perry's visits, by which the US-Japan diplomatic relations officially began.

It is important to note the social events that influenced both the people's motivations to learn English and the teachers' motivations to try new approaches to teaching English in Japan. According to Hosoki (2011), in 1964, close to 20 years after the end of World War II the Tokyo Olympics took place in Japan, and in the 1970s almost two million Japanese went abroad. Even though the English language curriculum in schools was still examination-oriented, these social events influenced both the people's motivations to learn English and the teachers' motivations to try new approaches to teaching English. Now, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology announced the major-scale program toward another Olympic in Tokyo in 2020, which includes to improve English abilities for students, from elementary school to the university.

To sum up the historical overview and the changing trends in the English language teaching, since 1990s, in Lithuania after the Soviet Occupation, dramatic changes have been brought, in the policy of education in general as well as in foreign language teaching. In foreign language education, English has become more valued, bringing more exposure to it, due to the importance of its role in the world. Since 1991, even more than 20 years after the Soviet Occupation, still many changes have been implemented. In the following section, the most current status will be discussed, in comparison with Japanese education policy.

2. Current Education Systems and Development of English Teaching in Lithuania and Japan

In this session, the current education systems and development of English teaching are discussed, as compared to the ones in Japan. Following the basic

policy in the previous session, in this session, first the education system is presented as a framework to implement new education policy. Then, school assessment will be explained, as for how students are evaluated based on the policy and system. Then, how to choose the textbooks is discussed, particularly because in Lithuania the emphasis on English has brought more textbooks published in other English speaking countries.

Education System

Over the past 20 years, even the education system has been changed in Lithuania. Table 2 represents the most updated education systems of Lithuania and Japan. The development of the current education system in the Republic of Lithuania started in the 1990s.

Comparison Factor	Lithuania	Japan
Duration of compulsory education (age)	Entry: 7 Exit: 16	Entry: 6 Exit: 15
Primary/elementary education:	4 years (grades 1-4)	6 years (grades 1-6)
Lower Secondary education:	6 years (grades 5-10)	3 years (grades 1-3)
Upper Secondary education:	2 years (forms 11-12)	3 years (grades 1-3)
School year	September to June	April to March
Lesson length	45 min.	45 min. in elementary school, and 50 min. in middle school

Table 2. Education System in Lithuania and Japan.

The education system in Lithuania covers preschool, general secondary, vocational, junior college, higher and adult education. Similarly, the basic part of the education system in Japan, according to the Article 1 of the School Education Law, includes kindergarten, primary school, lower secondary school and upper secondary school, secondary school, special needs school, university and technical college.

According to the Law on Education of Lithuania, the compulsory education consists of four years of primary school and six years of lower secondary school, which is divided into two parts: part I – a four-year programme implemented in the 5th-8th grades and part II – a two-year programme implemented in

the 9th-10th grades (1st-2nd forms of the gymnasium), whereas the Japanese children have to study for 6 years at a primary (commonly named elementary) and 3 years at lower secondary school.

After completion of the 10th grade, Lithuanian pupils must take the basic education achievement test (Lower Secondary education) in the Lithuanian Language and Mathematics. The test results do not influence the further education at the upper secondary stage. However, some prestigious gymnasiums (institutions, providing general secondary education) have acquired the official right to select students using approved tests, usually checking abilities in the following subjects: Mathematics, the Lithuanian language, History, and the English language. The situation in Japanese upper-secondary education is quite different. Those who want to receive school education after the compulsory stage have to pass an entrance examination; the results of which influence the quality and prestige of a high school to be entered.

Upper secondary education lasts for two years in Lithuania and for three years in Japan. Lithuanian pupils study following their individual education plans; the programme may include the modules of the programme for vocational education and training. Upper secondary education (grade 11&12) is provided in secondary schools, gymnasiums, and vocational education and training schools. Similarly, the Japanese curriculum as well as types of courses and schools at this stage vary.

Foreign language education is a part of language education in general according to the education policy of Lithuania. Children start learning the first foreign language (mostly English) at the second year of their primary school (usually at the age of 8).

Since April, 2011, the foreign language education in Japanese elementary school is carried out as "Foreign Language Activities" (commonly English) not a formal subject (Murata and Yamaguchi, 2010).

As it is stated in the Lithuanian *Primary Education Programmes* (Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2014), the foreign language education at the primary stage aims at developing elementary foreign language communicative competence.

In comparison, the overall objective of the "Foreign language Activities at the primary stage in Japan is as follows:

"to form the foundation of pupils'

communication abilities through foreign languages while developing the understanding of languages and cultures through various experiences, fostering a positive attitude toward communication, and familiarizing pupils with the sounds and basic expressions of foreign languages"

As the students move on with their education on the lower secondary stage in Lithuania, the primary aim of learning the first foreign language evolves into acquiring the communicative and intercultural competences. They will allow students to use the foreign language in various personal and public life situations; developing personal and social values, openness to the world community, tolerance, creativity and expression in the foreign language. The objectives are as follows:

- To use the foreign language as a means of communication (exchange information, ideas, opinions, experiences);
- To develop linguistic competence essential for successful communication;
- To apply appropriate strategies for understanding and creating texts, communicating verbally and in writing;
- To comprehend the foreign language as a part of countries sociocultural and intercultural means of communication;
- To learn different language learning ways and use them; to use information technologies for searching the information and communication in the foreign language (*Basic Education Programmes*).

Likewise, in the new version of the *Course of Study* for lower secondary school in Japan, which was announced in March 2008, the overall objective of foreign language education emphasizes students' communication abilities and deepening their understanding of language and culture. However, "fostering a positive attitude toward communication through foreign languages", as a part of overall objective for foreign language teaching in Japan, is not emphasized in Lithuania's foreign language education.

School Assessment

The description of education system would be incomplete without discussing the evaluation. What is more, assessment at school has always been a topic to be discussed during teacher meetings.

Evaluation of scholastic ability of students in both Lithuania and Japan is criterion-referenced assessment of each subject. Achievements and

progress of Lithuanian primary school pupils are not assessed with marks, whereas the Japanese elementary school students are assessed using three-grade evaluation (5 – the highest grade). Taking into consideration that the formal assessment might cause some stress to the students who start lower secondary education, that is, 5th grade, Lithuanian students are not assessed formally (with marks) during the first term of the 5th grade. In Lithuania this period is so-called adaptation period for the 5th graders although in Japanese junior high schools the adaptation period does not exist since students are assessed formally at the primary stage of education. Learning achievements in grades 5-12 in secondary schools as well as in the majority of higher education establishments are assessed in ten-point scale. Table 3 shows the correspondence of grades and results in Lithuania.

Outcome	Assessment
Pass	10 (excellent)
	9 (very good)
	8 (good)
	7 (average)
	6 (satisfactory)
	4, 5 (weak)
Fail	3, 2, 1 (unsatisfactory)

Table 3. Assessment system in Lithuania's schools in (grades 5-12)
(Source: https://www.lietuva.lt/en/education_sience)

Textbooks

Textbooks are the main teaching material for subject teaching at school in both Lithuania and Japan. According to Murata and Yamauchi (2011), textbooks in Japan have been carefully compiled, selected and examined, revised and improved numerous times. "In the education system, only textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology or of which copyright is owned by the Ministry can be used". Similar process takes place in Lithuania. Only the textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education can be used at education institutions.

According to the Lithuanian Education Development Center's research on textbook choices in

the secondary schools, generally subject teachers decide on the material they need, discussing the available textbooks within their subject methodological group. Afterwards the application is approved by the principal of the school. The opinion of teachers is of importance while choosing textbooks, whereas the opinion of the administration of the school is important while taking decisions on buying visual aid and other digital material not directly connected to textbooks. (Kalvaitis, 2013).

In Lithuania it is common that textbooks for school students are provided by school for a school year; at the end of year the students return the textbooks to their subject teacher who afterwards returns the course books to the library. Therefore, the librarian of the school has responsibilities in managing the textbooks and other teaching materials because a school librarian is in charge of lending course books and other material to teachers and students. The librarian is also commonly in charge of making and accepting orders from publishers. However, the English language textbooks are exception. Students have to buy their English textbook and workbook.

Quite the contrary, the Japanese primary and lower secondary school children receive all their textbooks free of charge and keep them, which might make the revision easier; besides, pupils can make notes in their own books. However, since the upper secondary education stage is not compulsory, at this level free textbooks are not provided (Murata and Yamaguchi, 2011).

As for selecting the English language textbook, teachers in Lithuania have certain freedom. Most of the textbooks are issued by foreign publishing companies. Their list together with the national textbooks is compiled by the Ministry of Education which approves the textbooks. The English language teachers' methodical group select textbooks for their school which is further approved by the principal. The selection of a textbook is a responsible process, many criteria, such as price, level, quality, actuality of the material, structure have to be taken into consideration. Therefore, in one and the same district students of the same grade from different schools might use different textbooks. In contrast, in Japan each Board of Education decides on an English textbook; the common tendency is to choose the same textbook for one prefecture. Moreover, all the English textbooks are issued by the national publishers.

Commonly, the teachers of both countries use a variety of supplementary materials so as to make the lessons more lively, attractive, interesting and creative. In some cases students might need more practice on some topics than textbooks can provide.

The supplementary materials include visual aids, reading materials, charts, cards, and audio-visual materials.

Regarding the recent teaching trends in Lithuanian high schools, the objective of the lesson has recently been given special emphasis, that is, what skills or competences the students will have acquired by the end of the lesson or set of lessons, by what methods that objective will be achieved, and in what ways it will be tested. In Japan, the objective of the lesson is also important; it is usually stated at the beginning of each lesson. Relatively the English lessons in Japan are very well organized with excellent time management, which is not always the case in Lithuania

3. Students' Motivation to Learn English

Students' motivation has been the most important factor to foster students' learning in both countries. As far as the students' motivation is concerned, teachers' primary goal is to make them interested in the subject and to raise their awareness of the importance of studying the subject. It is also necessary to take students' needs and opinions into consideration, so as to show them that they are responsible for their own learning.

One of the most important student motivating factors to acquire good command of the language is that English is the most popular foreign language to learn at present. As a result, today English is the language Lithuanians expect foreigners to speak: it is widely used in modern museums, hotels, tourist signs, sightseeing sights and restaurant menus. As

the language of the prestigious West, it has also become fashionable: the music and movies of the English speaking countries, especially the UK and the USA, have been a big part of the youth's interest nowadays.

As it is shown in the Figure 2, the age of people in Lithuania strongly correlates with the foreign languages they speak. It shows that about 80 per cent of the adolescents (aged 14-19) speak English.

The popularity of the English language among the young people is undeniable not only in Lithuania but also Japan. Therefore, many parents would enrol their children on various clubs and extra English language lessons. The fact that there are a number of English language courses and extra classes offered on the market of both countries proves the high demand of the population to speak the English language.

Conversely, the older generations in Lithuania are unlikely to speak English, as very few schools taught it seriously under the Soviet occupation. According to the Figure 2, about 80 per cent of the population of Lithuania aged between 40 and 50 speak Russian and only about 20 per cent of this age group can speak English a little.

As mentioned before, the upper-secondary education is not compulsory; however, most of the students proceed their education at this stage due to the fact that most Lithuanians are eager to continue their education at university level. As the recent data of *Statistics Lithuania* shows, at the beginning of the 2014–2015 academic year, there were 140 thousand students at higher education institutions, of whom 99 thousand – at universities, 41 thousand – in colleges. (*Statistics Lithuania Education, 2015*).

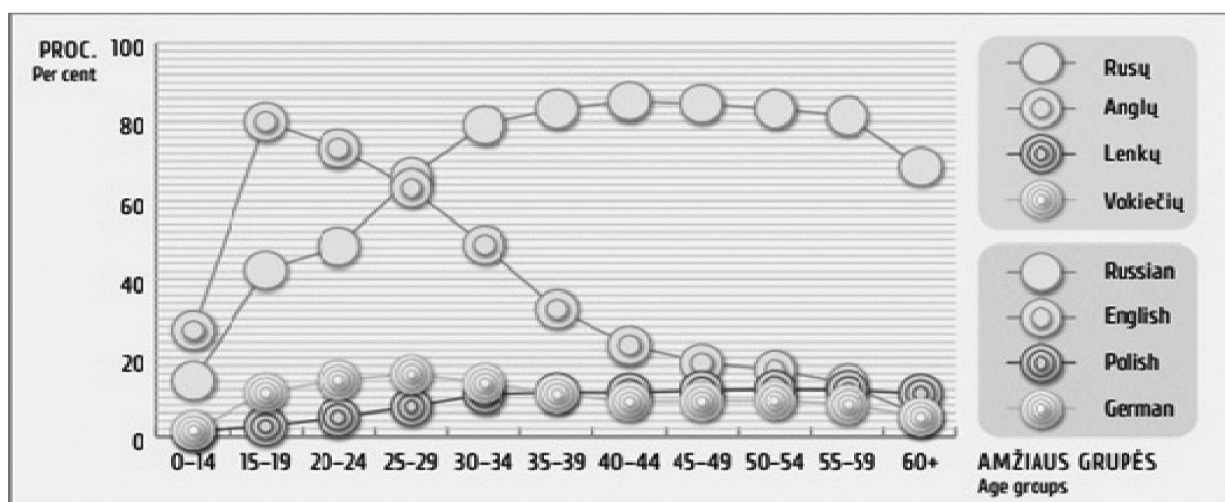


Figure 2. Correlation between age and what foreign language a person can speak. (Diagram by Lithuanian Statistics Department, 2011)

The foreign language education on the upper-secondary level in Lithuania aims at providing the students with the opportunity to develop foreign language and general competences essential for successful life, studying, social interaction and future professional activities. At this stage it is important to acquire the knowledge of the foreign language so as to be able to use it independently. In the similar way, the new version of the Course of Study for high school in Japan (announced in March 2009) stresses the development of communication abilities in which information and thoughts are adequately understood and are appropriately conveyed. Nevertheless the connection of the foreign language to future professional life is not strongly emphasized in the Course of Study (Murata, Yamaguchi, 2010).

In a broader perspective, as students enter the upper-secondary stage, it is common for them to start being concerned about their future career. In Japan and Lithuania likewise high school students wish to enter a university of their choices; for this reason the preparations for the final examinations after the upper secondary level is extremely important for school leavers.

Many Lithuanian students are particularly motivated to pass the English language examinations well due to the fact that they are striving to acquire the university education overseas.

Another important motivating factor for the young people of both countries to acquire the adequate command of the most popular foreign language is the possibilities of participation in the international exchange projects. Such possibilities are supported by the Government in case of Japan, and by the Education Exchange Support Foundation, and the Government, in case of Lithuania.

The Education Exchange Foundation administers more than 50 different activities relevant to education-related institutions. Some of the programmes include: Lifelong Learning Programme, Euroguidance, Europass, and Nordplus programme funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers (<http://smpf.lt/en/programmes-we-administer>).

It is needless to say that the English language knowledge is essential for the participation in the most of the programmes offered. What is more, many reports after the implementation of the projects claimed that the project participants had improved their language abilities.

One of the objectives established in the Europe's Growth Strategy *Europe 2020* is to encourage youth learning mobility. Learning mobility contributes to

both the personal and the professional development of young people and enhances employability and competitiveness (Barroso, 2012).

One example of the school that have been active in the implementation of various partnerships with schools from abroad (Latvia, Poland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Turkey) is Vilnius Simonas Daukantas gymnasium. The school was established in 1993 on the initiative of Vilnius Pedagogical University (now Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences) with the aim to apply new educational ideas, develop practical models for teacher trainees, monitor educational processes at the school, and involve university students and lecturers in the school activities. Since the very first day the community of the school has been working on the implementation of new creative ideas in the process of learning. For this purpose teachers sought international collaboration with educational institutions abroad. The gymnasium is proud of the implemented and currently being developed international projects (<http://www.daukanto.vilnius.lm.lt/index.php?group=56>) that improve students' and teachers' linguistic competences. Today the school offers students the following languages: English, French, German, Russian, Latin and Danish.

In 2012 the title of 'The Ambassador of Languages of the Year 2012' and the European Language Label was given to the gymnasium for the efficient language teaching/learning process. The award has become the inspiration to continue promoting multilingualism, innovations in language classrooms, implementing student and teacher mobilities and learning languages inside and outside the school.

As far as the Japanese government's efforts are concerned in order to promote the English language education, the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET) has launched in 1987 so as to increase mutual understanding between the people of Japan and the people of other nations. It aims to promote internationalization in Japan's local communities by helping to improve foreign language education and developing international exchange at the community level. 2015 is the 29th year of the JET Program. Since the beginning, it has seen significant growth, from its original 848 participants from 4 countries in 1987, to 4,786 participants from 43 countries at present (<http://jetprogramme.org/en>).

One of the authors have had an opportunity to attend a team teaching course for the teacher training

students at Shimane University and has observed many team teaching lessons in Japan where Assistant Language Teachers (ALT) assist Japanese language teachers of English. Such team work provide students with examples of real pattern of language, brings life to a classroom and makes teaching a cooperative process.

A programme of such level and type as JET does not exist in Lithuania, whereas ALT is a popular term in Japan. In Lithuania, the international exchange programmes have been developed since the country became a member of the European Union in 2004. The Education Exchanges Support Foundation has been entrusted with the administration of such programmes and initiatives since 2007. It has funded by the European Commission (EC) and the Government of the Republic of Lithuania in the field of education and vocational training (www.smpf.lt).

An example of a programme that was administered by the mentioned foundation is Comenius Assistantship programme. At the end of 2013 a research was carried out in order to evaluate the benefits of the programme that lasted from 2007 till 2013. The programme participants, both teaching assistants that came to teach at Lithuania's schools and the communities of those schools were interviewed. The results have shown that the Comenius Assistantship was equally beneficial for the assistants and the host schools, especially for the Lithuanian school children. The communication to a teacher assistant from abroad who could not speak Lithuanian has encouraged the students to use a foreign language, to explore other countries and cultures, to refuse stereotypes. According to a teacher mentor, who had a foreign assistant, "The attitudes of the students towards their own culture have changed- they deepened their understanding of their cultural identity and learned to cherish Lithuanian traditions, they have become more tolerant towards foreigners and each other" (Melaikienė, 2014).

Learning and teaching of foreign languages were at the core of the objectives of Comenius Assistantships. In this respect the assistants supported their host schools in two ways: firstly, they expanded the pool of (native) foreign language teachers and secondly, the presence of an assistant increased pupils' interest in the country and language of the assistant. In accordance with the pattern of foreign-language teaching in European schools, the assistants were mainly employed to teach English (63%) (Maiworm, Kastner and Wenzel, 2010).

The people in Lithuania and Japan have been

more exposed to English and had more chances to meet native English speakers in their daily lives. The rapid spread of the Internet, the growing popularity of the exchange programmes and the Governmental initiatives fostering foreign language learning are ones of the most significant and influential factors that affected people's motivation to learn practical English (Fujimoto-Adamson, 2006).

Conclusion

In summary, the development of the English language teaching in Lithuania and Japan has undergone a variety of transformations; the historical periods of each country determined the language choice and the amount of influence from overseas. Each historical context brought new priorities for the foreign language education. With the spread of the influence of the English language, it is essential to teach the language effectively at school, so as to provide a young person with the necessary command of the language for the further education, career, social and public life. The lack of sufficient knowledge of a popular foreign language (in this case English) would make a young person less competitive in the modern world.

Even though there are certain differences in the education systems, the English language teaching strategies, and students' motivating factors, young people in both countries endeavor to develop their communicative competences. The possibilities of the international cooperation as a motivating factor to learn English should be explored and used by the teachers of foreign languages; because, first, it is a great opportunity of the exposure to a universal language; second, cultural exchange that would inevitably take place will help to develop a tolerant personality; third, lessons would become more meaningful and attractive.

The 21st century has introduced the new terms, such as "globalization," "international understanding" and "multicultural co-existence"; inevitably, learning foreign languages and cultural understanding will become more important for the education policies of both countries.

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