

COURSE UNIT (MODULE) DESCRIPTION

Course unit (module) title	Code
Linguistics Gone Pop: Exploring Language in Popular Culture/ Kalba populiariojoje kultūroje	

Lecturer(s)	Department(s) where the course unit (module) is delivered
Coordinator: Lect. Jekaterina Šukalova	Department of English Philology, Faculty of Philology

Study cycle	Type of the course unit (module)
1 st , BA	Optional

Mode of delivery	The period when the course unit (module) is delivered	Language(s) of instruction
Face to face	Autumn	English

Requirements for students							
Prerequisites: B2-C1 level of English	Additional requirements (if any): None.						

Course (module) volume in credits	Total student workload	Contact hours	Self-study hours
5	130	32	98

Purpose of the course unit (module): programme competences to be developed

This course explores the intersection of linguistics and popular culture, analyzing how language shapes and is shaped by media, entertainment, and digital communication. Students will analyze spoken and written discourse in films, TV shows, music, video games, and internet communication, applying linguistic theories and discourse analysis to sources that have often been considered outside traditional academic study.

Through critical discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and multimodal communication studies, the course will investigate key themes such as language ideologies and their representation in media, identity and power structures in popular discourse, digital communication and linguistic innovation.

The course integrates theoretical and hands-on approaches, combining seminars, group or individual projects, and linguistic analyses of real-world pop culture artifacts. More specifically, seminars will include presentations to introduce key theoretical concepts; theoretical background discussions, providing students with foundational frameworks for analysis; discussion of relevant research, exploring studies of language in popular culture; discussions of assigned and optional/recommended readings; hands-on activities, including group or individual case studies.

By the end of the course, students will be able to critically analyze language in popular culture, applying linguistic frameworks to new media forms. Assessment will include two creative projects (such as a linguistic breakdown of language use in the media of choice) and/or a written essay analyzing linguistic patterns or phenomena in popular culture.

Generic competences:

- 1. Responsibility: the ability to set goals, make plans, and take responsibility for them
 - will be able to set goals, choose and use resources necessary for the completion of a task, plan their time and follow deadlines
 - will be able to take responsibility for their work/study results and learn from mistakes

- 2. Intercultural competence: respect and openness to other cultures, the ability to work in a multicultural environment
 - will be able to study, work, and communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds and develop awareness, respect, and openness to cultural diversity
- 3. Problem solving: the ability to solve problems by relying on analytical, critical, and creative thinking
 - will be able to identify problems and challenges in their own and related fields
 - will be able to identify problems by finding, analysing, and critically assessing relevant information, generate new ideas, choose the most optimal solutions
- 4. Openness to change: the ability to understand the necessity of change and the intention to constantly improve oneself
 - will be familiar not only with the changes taking place in their field of interest, but also their causes, challenges, opportunities
 - will be open to new ideas, strive to change, and be creative and innovative
 - will be able to evaluate the quality of their actions and achievements and will strive to acquire the competencies necessary for future change

Subject-specific competences:

- **5. Essential knowledge and skills in linguistics**: perception of language as a phenomenon and perception of linguistics as a scientific discipline
 - will know, understand and be able to define linguistics as a scientific discipline and to properly use and interpret the basic concepts and terms of linguistics
 - will acquire knowledge of the main branches and methods of linguistics
- 6. Communication skills in English (C1-C2): listening, reading, speaking, writing, mediation
 - will be able to understand, translate, edit and create texts of various genres in English, taking into account the communication intention, addressee, etc. and mediate in various communication situations
 - will be able to communicate correctly and effectively in English in various situations, taking into account the communication intention, addressee, social environment, etc. (C1 according to CEFR)
- 7. Competence of a researcher of language and literature: the ability to independently conduct linguistic, literary or interdisciplinary research applying the acquired philological knowledge and skills in practice
 - will be able to identify a linguistic, literary, cultural or interdisciplinary problem and choose appropriate empirical material, research methods and bibliographic sources
 - will be able to collect, analyse, systematise and critically evaluate material from various sources and adequately apply philological research methods to investigate the selected research problem

8. Ability to apply philological knowledge and skills in practice within and outside the University

- will be able to apply the acquired knowledge and skills of English philology during communication and cooperation in an intercultural (and multilingual) environment, creating, translating and editing various texts, teaching English as a foreign language, etc.
- will be able to use modern information technologies, data resources and research resources to conduct linguistic and literary analysis of English texts and present the results of analysis and/or interpretation to the public in order to contribute to the practical applicability of English philology studies (corpora, dictionaries, term banks and glossaries, thematic websites, literature maps, etc.).

Learning outcomes of the course unit (module)	Teaching and learning methods	Assessment methods
At the end of the course, students will acquire: - the ability to analyze spoken, written, and digital content using (critical) discourse analysis, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic methods; - the ability to apply discourse analysis techniques to films, TV, music, internet texts, and video games; - the ability to critically evaluate how language is shaped by ideology, power, and social identity in media and digital communication; - the ability to conduct independent research on language use in media and digital spaces; - the ability to identify strategies of identity representation in different media; - the ability to critically reflect on the role of digital communication and internet linguistics in shaping contemporary discourse;	Seminars will include: - presentations to introduce key theoretical concepts; - theoretical background discussions, providing students with foundational frameworks for analysis; - discussion of relevant research, exploring linguistic studies in popular culture; - discussions of assigned and optional/recommended readings; - hands-on activities, including group or individual case studies. Homework will include:	Accumulative evaluation: Project 1 (group/individual presentation) & Project 2 (group/individual presentation OR individual written assignment)

- enhanced group or individual work skills;	- prepare for discussions by reading and critically	
- enhanced analytical writing and presentation skills.	analyzing key texts and	
	identifying connections to	
	course themes;	
	- develop their own linguistic	
	case studies by selecting	
	relevant media artifacts for	
	analysis;	
	- gather data, apply theoretical	
	frameworks, and refine their	
	analysis in preparation for	
	presentations and written	
	assignments.	

		Contact hours							Se	elf-study work: time and assignments
	Content: breakdown of the topics	Lectures	Tutorials	Seminars	Exercises	Laboratory work	Internship/ work	Contact	Self-study	Assignments
1.	Introduction to the course. Contents, assessment criteria, and assignments.			2				2		Key reading materials and theoretical background:
2.	What is Popular Culture? High, low, and counterculture. Popular vs legitimized culture. Popular culture as <i>other</i> .			2				2	2	Obligatory readings: - Storey, J. 2018. Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, Chapter 1: What is popular culture?
3.	Scripted vs unscripted narratives. Communication as scripted dialogue vs unscripted (natural) conversation. Discourse circumstances of conversation: shared context, little elaboration of meaning, real-time occurrence, interactivity, expression of stance. 3.1. Ludic and metaludic discourse. Textual macrostructures. Intertextuality, intermediality, and interdiscursivity. Paratextuality. Gamer language: jargon and slang. Word formation processes. Metaphors. Linguistic pragmatics of gameplay. 3.2. Features that give information about characters and their identities: explicit, implicit, and authorial cues, among others. 3.3. Ideological and hegemonic processes in video games. The role of media in ideological dissemination.			6				6	20	Obligatory readings: - Domsch, S. 2017. Dialogue in video games, pp. 251-270. OR - Mäyrä, F. 2017. Dialogue and interaction in role- playing games. Playful communication as Ludic culture, pp. 271-290. OR - Ensslin, A. 2012. The Language of Gaming, Chapter 9: The Narrative Language of Videogames. On discourse circumstances of conversation: - Quaglio, P. 2009. Television Dialogue. The sitcom Friends vs. natural conversation, pp. 5-10. On macrostructures and textuality: - Ensslin, A. 2012. The Language of Gaming, Chapter 4. Optional: Chapters 5 & 6. On cues about characters' identities: - Bednarek, M. 2010. The Language of Fictional Television, Chapter 5. On ideology and hegemony: - Cassar, R. 2013. Gramsci and Games, pp. 330-353.
4.	Player communication in (multiplayer) games. (C)RPG, MMO, etc., genres: functionalist, strategic, socializing perspectives of communication. Video game engagement: viewers'/players' relationship and connection with fictitious characters/protagonists. 4.1. The role of language in perpetuating and disrupting power dynamics in (online) gaming. Gender and language in video game communities: linguistic expectations and treatment of male vs. female players. Toxic vs inclusive language. Othering in online and offline video games.			4				4	16	Obligatory readings: On theories of player communication: - Drachen, A. 2011. Analyzing player communication in multiplayer games, pp. 201-223. Recommended readings: On the relationship between the viewer/player and the character: - Şengün, S. 2023. Is Death Only the Beginning? How People Mourn Artificial

 4.2. Language attitudes towards varieties of English in popular media. Stereotyping based on accent and linguistic variety. Linguistic ableism. Disability, accessibility, and video games. Player linguistic (un)identification with game characters. 4.3. Analysis of: Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (2012), Counter-Strike 2 (2023), League of Legends (2009), The Last of Us (2013) & The Last of Us Part II (2020), Cyberpunk 2077 (2020), The Witcher 3 (2015), among others. 						Characters in Social Media, pp. 77-124. On language attitudes toward varieties: - Stein, S. D. Space Rednecks, Robot Butlers, and Feline Foreigners: Language Attitudes Toward Varieties of English in Videogames, pp. 1043- 1070 Ensslin, A. 2011. Recallin' Fagin. Linguistic accents, intertextuality and othering in narrative offline and online video games, pp. 224-235 Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, J. & M. Hejná. 2023. The Voices of Game Worlds: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Disco Elysium, pp. 578- 597. On linguistic ableism and disability: - Burrel-Kim, D. 2023. "Stuttering Matt". Linguistic ableism and mockery of speech impediments in video games Anderson, S. L. & K. Schrier. 2022. Disability and Video Games Journalism: A Discourse Analysis of Accessibility and Gaming Culture, pp. 179-197. On toxicity and inclusivity: - AlAfnan, M. A. 2025. Language, Power, and Social Dynamics in Online
						Gaming: A Discourse Analysis of Toxicity and
						Inclusivity in Digital Spaces pp. 62-72.
5. Project 1: Critical analysis of language in culture (group/individual project presentation and discussion)		4		 4	10	
6. Language in Westerns. Characteristics of Western dialogues: words as a form of aggression; repetition; directness; dialogue employed for moral messages; (in)significance of language.		4		4	12	Obligatory readings: On dialogue and language in the Western: - Kozloff, S. 2000.
6.1. Ethnic and cultural identity through accents, dialects, and languages: representations of White Americans as silent (and noble) heroes or chatty						Overhearing Film Dialogue, Ch. 4. Recommended readings:
sidekicks; (mis)representations of Native American and Mexican characters. Language attitudes towards varieties of English.						On collectivism and individualism:
6.2. Collectivism vs individualism in the Western genre from a pragmatic perspective.						- Saied, K. H. 2024. Cowboy as a Symbol of Individualism: A Pragmatic Analysis, pp. 155-169.
6.3. Analysis of: Red Dead Redemption (2010) & Red Dead Redemption II (2018), Deadwood (2004), Yellowstone (2018-2024), Unforgiven (1992), No						On language in <i>Deadwood</i> : - Benz, B. 2007. "Deadwood" and the English language, pp. 239-251.

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Country for Old Men (2007), The Assassination							On lyrics and identity construction:
of Jesse James (2007), among others.							- Dossena, M. 2021. From
							The Magnificent Seven to
							The Hateful Eight: Labels,
							lyrics and (group) identity
							construction in Western
							movie songs, pp. 155-181.
7. Language in the crime genre. Antilanguage as a		4			4	18	Obligatory readings:
symbolic boundary in the gangster genre: use of							
informal and vernacular slang and constructions;							On dialogue and language
repetition for emotional emphasis; naturalistic							in gangster film: - Kozloff, S. 2000.
speech patterns; lack of verbal finesse; use of							Overhearing Film
obscenity emphasizing characters' hypermasculinity							Dialogue, Ch. 6.
and crudeness; implicit and explicit threats;							- Pitroso, G. 2019. Mafia and
indirectness and ambiguity; a connection between							the representation of
unrestrained words and unrestrained violence.							Italians, pp. 45-76.
Humor, irony, and playfulness as a power move.							
71.0							Recommended readings:
7.1. Stress on un-Americanness via accent and							On gangster argot:
language choice: Italian, Irish, Cuban, German,							- Yang, Z. 2017. The
New York Jewish, and black accents. Language							Sociolinguistic Features of
attitudes towards un-Americanness. Use of							Gangster Argot in the
codeswitching.							Godfather, pp. 8-13.
72 P							- Scarpino, C.
7.2. Representations of the Mafia in video games							2011. 'Sopranos-Speak':
and movies through a sociolinguistic lens.							Neapolitan Dialect, Mafia
Values and representations transmitted via							Jargon, and Silence. Or,
language used by men and women.							Feeling 'All Agita All the Time', pp. 340-349.
7.3. Analysis of: The Godfather (1972), Scarface							On women's language:
(1983), Goodfellas (1990), The Sopranos (1999-							- Schimmenti, A., S. Giunta
2007), The <i>Mafia</i> trilogy (2002-2020), <i>Grand</i>							& G. Lo Verso. 2014. Mafia
Theft Auto series (2001-2013), among others.							Women: A Study on
The firm the series (2001-2013), among others.							Language and Mental
							Representations of Women
							Engaged with Mafia
8. Language and humor in popular media. Language		2			2	10	Members, pp. 267-274. Obligatory readings:
in comedies and sitcoms. Prevalence of informal		2			4	10	Obligatory readings.
language: expletives, slang terms, vocatives,							On informal language in
greetings, linguistic innovations, semi-modals,							television:
repeats, etc. Humorous tropes in multilingual films.							- Quaglio, P. 2009. Television
Crosstalk, misunderstanding, and comic confusion,							Dialogue. The sitcom
mock language. Multilingualism as a dramatic							Friends vs. natural
effect, plot twist, suspense, otherness,							conversation. Chapter 7.
misrepresentation, and negative stereotyping. The							On humorous tropes: - Chiaro, D. 2024. <i>Humorous</i>
role of pauses and silence in comedies.							Tropes in Multilingual
Total of pauses and shence in comedies.							Films, pp. 431-451. OR
8.1. Analysis of: Friends (1994-2004), Emily in							- Dore, M. 2024. Multilingual
Paris (2020-), The Office (US) (2005-2913),							Humour in Sitcoms, pp.
among others.							389-408.
							Recommended readings:
							On screwball comedies:
							- Kozloff, S. 2000.
							Overhearing Film Dialogue,
							Ch. 5.
							On codeswitching and
							identity in song lyrics:
							- Picone, M. D. 2024.
							Lyrical Code-Switching,
							Multimodal Intertextuality, and
							Identity in Popular Music,
			ı			i	in a opinia music,

						pp. 1-34.
9. Project 2: Critical analysis of language in culture (group/individual project presentation and discussion OR a written assignment)		4		4	10	
Total: 130		32		32	98	

Assessment strategy	Weight,%	Assessment criteria
Project 1: Presentation	50%	Students will be evaluated through two major projects:
Project 2: Presentation OR a written assignment	50%	- Research project 1: Critical Analysis of Language in Culture (Group or Individual Presentation). Students will conduct a linguistic analysis of a chosen media trend, such as a film, TV show, song lyrics, video game, meme culture, or digital discourse. The project will be presented in class, followed by discussion and feedback.
		The presentation (both group and individual) should last from 15 to 20 minutes, include at least one theoretical framework from the course, examples of the media (e.g. video clips, audio, text, images) analyzed for the presentation, and engage with at least 2-3 academic sources.
		- Research project 2: Critical Analysis of Language in Culture (Group/Individual Presentation OR Individual Written Assignment). Students will choose between:
		• a second presentation (individual or group) analyzing a new linguistic phenomenon in popular culture, or
		 an individual written assignment (essay) applying linguistic frameworks to a chosen case study.
		The presentation (both group and individual) should last from 15 to 20 minutes, include at least one theoretical framework from the course, examples of the media (e.g. video clips, audio, text, images) analyzed for the presentation, and engage with at least 4-5 academic sources.
		The written assignment (individual essay) should be approximately 1,500–2,000 words (about 5 pages long); should consist of a linguistic analysis, applying theoretical concepts and frameworks from the course (at least one framework). Students are expected to conduct a linguistic analysis of language use or function in media (e.g., film or video game dialogue, online communication, etc.) and engage with at least 4-5 academic sources (either discussed during the seminars or their own). The essay should adhere to the following structure: introduction, theoretical background, analysis, conclusion, and references. The written assignment is due at the end of the course.
		Both projects (presentation and written assignment) must apply relevant theoretical frameworks and linguistic concepts discussed during the course.
		Passing the course: To pass the course, students must achieve a minimum grade of 5. If they fail, they will have the opportunity to retake the failed part during the retake session in February. In other words, if a student fails Project 1 or Project 2, they can make up for it during the retake session.
		Attendance

The attendance of seminars is **compulsory**. Students are allowed **no more than 30%** of unexcused absences. Students with more than 30% of unexcused absences are not eligible to pass the course.

Course policy regarding the use of electronic devices in class

The usage of electronic devices (laptops, tablets, cell phones, smartphones, e-readers, music players, etc.) during class is only allowed for study and research purposes, when it is required for in-class assignments (assigned by the course instructor), for contacting group members (when such need arises), or in cases of emergency. Mobile phones should be silenced and put away during the entire seminar, unless they are used for above-mentioned learning purposes and prior permission to use them from the course instructor is granted. If a student has an emergency situation which requires to keep his/her phone on, he/she must inform the course instructor beforehand. Taking photos, videos and making sound recordings in class are forbidden, unless instructed otherwise by the professor or unless students provide documents which outline the requirements for necessary accommodations of the use of electronic devices due to disability or other diagnosed health issues.

Course literature

Author	Year of public ation	Title	Issue of a periodical or volume of a publication	Publishing place and house or web link
Compulsory reading			P	
Bednarek, M.	2010	The Language of Fictional Television. Drama and Identity		Continuum International Publishing Group
Cassar, R.	2013	Gramsci and Games	Games and Culture, 8(5), 330-353	
Chiaro, D.	2024	Humorous Tropes in Multilingual Films	Ranzato, I., Zabalbeascoa, P. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of Multilingualism and Language Varieties on Screen	Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
Domsch, S.	2017	Dialogue in video games	Mildorf, J., & B. Thomas (Eds.), Dialogue across media	John Benjamins Publishing Company
Dore, M	2024	Multilingual Humour in Sitcoms	Ranzato, I., Zabalbeascoa, P. (eds) The Palgrave Handbook of Multilingualism and Language Varieties on Screen	Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
Drachen, A.	2011	Analyzing player communication in multi-player games	Crawford, G., C. K. Gosling & B. Light (Eds.), Online Gaming in Context. The social and cultural significance of online games	Routledge
Ensslin, A.	2012	The Language of Gaming	of online games	Palgrave Macmillan
Kozloff, S.	2000	Overhearing Film Dialogue		University of California Press
Mäyrä, F.	2017	Dialogue and interaction in role- playing games. Playful communication as Ludic culture	Mildorf, J., & B. Thomas (Eds.), Dialogue across media	John Benjamins Publishing Company
Pitroso, G.	2019	Mafia and the representation of Italians	Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association December 2019, Vol. 5(1), pp. 45-76.	
Quaglio, P.	2009	Television Dialogue. The sitcom Friends vs. natural conversation		John Benjamins Publishing Company: Amsterdam / Philadelphia
Storey, J.	2018	Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction (8 th Edition)		Routledge
Optional reading				
AlAfnan, M. A.	2025	Language, Power, and Social Dynamics in Online Gaming: A Discourse Analysis of Toxicity and Inclusivity in Digital Spaces		
Anderson, S. L., & K. Schrier.	2025	Disability and Video Games Journalism: A Discourse Analysis of Accessibility and Gaming Culture	Games and Culture, 17(2), 179- 197	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/15554120211021005
Benz, B.	2007	"Deadwood" and the English Language	Great Plains Quarterly, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 239-251	University of Nebraska Press

Burrell-Kim, D.	2023	"Stuttering Matt": Linguistic	The International	
Bullett Rim, D.	2023	ableism and the mockery of speech		
		impediments in video games.	Game Research, Vol. 23(2), 1-20	
Dossena, M.	2021	From <i>The Magnificent Seven</i> to	Token: A Journal of	
		The Hateful Eight: Labels, lyrics	English Linguistics, 12, 155-181	
		and (group) identity construction	12, 133-161	
Ensslin, A.	2011	in Western movie songs.	Crawford, G., C. K.	Routledge
Elissili, A.	2011	Recallin' Fagin. Linguistic accents, intertextuality and othering in	Gosling & B. Light	Routleage
		narrative offline and online video	(Eds.), Online	
		games	Gaming in Context.	
		5	The social and	
			cultural significance of online games	
Felczak, M.	2022	Systemic Issues with Narratives of		https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/1
,		Identity: Toxicity and Esports	29(2), 400-416.	0.1177/13548565221138761
		Media Professionals		
Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, J., &	2023	The Voices of Game Worlds: A	Games and Culture,	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/a
M. Hejná		Sociolinguistic Analysis of Disco	Vol. 18(5) 578–597	bs/10.1177/15554120221115396
Latorre, O. P.	2015	Elysium The Social Discourse of Video	Games and Culture,	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/f
Latorre, O. P.	2013	Games Analysis Model and Case	Vol. 10(5) 415-437	ull/10.1177/1555412014565639
		Study: GTA IV	10(0) 110 101	dili 10.117 // 1333412014303037
Picone, M. D.	2024	Lyrical Code-Switching,	Languages, Vol.	https://www.mdpi.com/2226-
,		Multimodal Intertextuality, and	9(11), 1-34.	471X/9/11/349
		Identity in Popular Music		
Saied, K. H.	2024	Cowboy as a Symbol of	Arab World English	https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/v
		Individualism: A Pragmatic	Journal (AWEJ), Vol. 15 (2)	<u>ol15no2.10</u>
Scarpino, C.	2011	Analysis 'Sopranos-Speak': Neapolitan	Translating America:	
Scarpino, C.	2011	Dialect, Mafia Jargon, and Silence.		
		Or, Feeling 'All Agita All the	translating,	
		Time'	misrepresenting,	
			mythicizing, communicating	
			America:	
			proceedings of the	
			20. AISNA Biennial	
			Conference Torino, September 24-26	
Schimmenti, A., S. Giunta, & G.	2014	Mafia Women: A Study on	International Journal	https://lifescienceglobal.com/pms/i
Lo Verso	2011	Language and Mental	of Criminology and	ndex.php/ijcs/article/view/2341
		Representations of Women	Sociology, 3, 267–	
		Engaged with Mafia Members	274.	
Şengün, S., J. M. Santos, J.	2023	Is Death Only the Beginning? How	Games and Culture	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/a
Salminen, M. Milenkovic, & B. J. Jansen		People Mourn Artificial Characters in Social Media	2025, Vol. 20(1) 77– 124	<u>bs/10.1177/15554120231190195</u>
Stein, S. D.	2023	Space Rednecks, Robot Butlers,	Games and Culture,	https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/a
Stein, S. D.	2023	and Feline Foreigners: Language	Vol. 18(8), 1043–	bs/10.1177/15554120221150156
		Attitudes Toward Varieties of	1070	
		English in Videogames		
Yang, Z.	2017	The Sociolinguistic Features of	Global Journal of	
1 4116, 21				
1 4.1.5, 2.1		Gangster Argot in the Godfather	Human-Social Science, Vol. 17(7),	
Yang, Z.	2017	The Sociolinguistic Features of		

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