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**KALBA KAIP PRIEMONĖ KONSTRUOTI ALTERNATYVŲJĮ SEKSUALINĮ
IDENTITETĄ: HOMOSEKSUALIŲ ŽMONIŲ KALBĖSENOS
IŠŠIFRAVIMAS AMERIKIEČIŲ TV SERIALE *QUEER AS FOLK***

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**SPEECH AS A MEANS OF
CONSTRUCTING ALTERNATIVE GENDER IDENTITY: DECODING GAY
COMMUNICATION IN AN AMERICAN TV SERIES *QUEER AS FOLK***

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | 1 |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | 3 |
| SANTRAUKA | 4 |
| SUMMARY | 5 |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 6 |
| 1.1 Aim and Scope of the Thesis..... | 7 |
| 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK..... | 9 |
| 2.1 Alternative Human Sexualities..... | 9 |
| 2.1.1 A Non-Heterosexual Individual: A Sociological Perspective | 10 |
| 2.1.1.1 Development of a Non-heterosexual Identity | 12 |
| 2.1.2 A Short Historical Overview of the Homophile Movement..... | 13 |
| 2.1.3 Non-Heterosexual Communities: Lithuania and the USA | 14 |
| 2.1.3.1 The Gay Community in the United States..... | 15 |
| 2.1.3.2 The Gay Community in Lithuania..... | 16 |
| 2.2 Sexual Identity and Speech | 17 |
| 2.2.1 The Notion of Sexual Identity and Multiple Identities | 18 |
| 2.2.2 Use of Language in Identity Construction | 19 |
| 2.2.3 Emergence of “Lavender Language” | 20 |
| 2.2.4 The Case of Polari Language..... | 21 |
| 2.3 Strategies in Gay Communication..... | 23 |
| 3. METHOD AND MATERIAL | 26 |
| 3.1 Lithuanian Students’ Attitudes Toward Homosexuality..... | 27 |
| 3.1.1 Methodology of the Research | 27 |
| 3.1.1.1 Subjects and Instruments | 28 |
| 3.1.1.2 Data Collection and Procedure | 28 |
| 3.1.1.3 Data Analysis Procedure | 28 |
| 3.1.2 Data Analysis and Discussion..... | 29 |
| 3.2 Material for Study: Queer as Folk..... | 36 |
| 4. DECODING GAY LANGUAGE | 38 |
| 4.1 Application of Gay Communication Strategies in Queer as Folk..... | 39 |
| 4.1.1 Application of the Strategy of Effeminization in Decoding Gay Language..... | 39 |
| 4.1.2 Application of the Strategy of Utilization in Decoding Gay Language | 42 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 4.1.3 Application of the Strategy of Redirection in Decoding Gay Language | 43 |
| 4.1.4 Application of the Strategy of Invention in Decoding Gay Language | 45 |
| 4.1.5 Application of the Strategy of Sexualization in Decoding Gay Language | 48 |
| 4.2 Intertextual References in Gay Communication | 52 |
| 5. CONCLUSIONS..... | 55 |
| REFERENCES | 57 |
| APPENDIX A: Questionnaire to Students..... | 60 |
| APPENDIX B: DVD Cover of <i>Dawson's Creek</i> | 61 |
| APPENDIX C: DVD Cover of <i>Psycho</i> | 62 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 3. 1 Disposition of Terms <i>Heterosexuality</i> and <i>Homosexuality</i> | 29 |
| Figure 3. 2 Disposition of the Term <i>Bisexuality</i> | 30 |
| Figure 3. 3 Disposition of the term <i>Homophobia</i> | 31 |
| Figure 3. 4 Respondents' Sexual Identity..... | 32 |
| Figure 3. 5 Disposition of the Term <i>Transsexual</i> | 33 |
| Figure 3. 6 Respondents' LGBT Acquaintances | 33 |
| Figure 3. 7 Respondents' Homosexual Friends..... | 34 |
| Figure 3. 8 Respondents' Attitude Toward the Necessity of the Gay Pride Parade in Lithuania | 35 |
| Figure 3. 9 Respondents' Approval of Gay Marriage and Adoption Possibilities to Same-sex Couples | 35 |

SANTRAUKA

Šio darbo tikslas – teoriškai pagrįsti ir pristatyti kaip homoseksualių žmonių identitetas, jų lytinė tapatybė, yra konstruojama per kalbą amerikiečių televizijos seriale *Queer as Folk*. Homoseksualūs asmenys šiandieninėje visuomenėje, tiek Lietuvoje, tiek užsienyje, tapo pakankamai matoma grupė, todėl natūralu, kad kyla susidomėjimas homoseksualių žmonių gyvenimo, bendravimo, jų tarpusavio santykių bei santykių su kitais heteroseksualios ir heteronormatyvios visuomenės nariais ypatumais. Viena iš naujausių lingvistikos mokslo šakų tiria homoseksualių žmonių kalbėsenos ir kalbos vartojimo ypatumus. Šis darbas – tai kuklus bandymas bent paviršutiniškai pažvelgti į šią naują lingvistikos mokslo šaką, kol kas netyrinėtą Lietuvoje.

Studija yra padalyta į dvi dalis: pirmojoje, teorinėje dalyje apie alternatyvias seksualines tapatybes aiškinami kai kurie homoseksualumo sociologiniai aspektai, bei bendrais bruožais pristatomos Lietuvos ir Jungtinių Valstijų homoseksualų bendruomenės. Taip pat teoriškai grindžiama seksualinio identiteto ir kalbos sąveika. Teorinėje dalyje pristatomi anksčiau atlikti mokslininkų tyrimai sociolingvistikos, seksologijos ir sociologijos srityse bei paaiškinamos gėjų komunikacijos strategijos, kuriomis remiantis praktinėje dalyje šifruojami homoseksualių asmenų bendravimo ypatumai.

Praktinėje šio darbo dalyje pristatomas 2010 m. balandžio mėn. Vytauto Didžiojo universitete atliktas studentų požiūrio į homoseksualumą tyrimas bei analizuojama medžiaga iš amerikiečių televizijos seriale *Queer as Folk* praktiškai tiriant seriale homoseksualių žmonių vartojamą kalbą. Aiškinamasi, kaip jų (homo)seksualinis identitetas atsiskleidžia (arba kitaip tariant yra konstruojamas) per kalbą, kurią jie vartoja. Šioje dalyje praktiškai analizuojami iš seriale paimti homoseksualių žmonių kalbėsenos ypatumai, remiantis gėjų komunikacijos strategijomis, kurios sudaro prielaidą vertinti homoseksualių žmonių kalbėjimo ypatumus kaip atskirą sociolingvistinį fenomeną.

Be pagrindinių penkių skyrių, darbe pateikiamos išvados, naudotos literatūros sąrašas, bei priedai. Priede A pateikiamas studentų apklausos tyrimui naudotas klausimynas. Prieduose B ir C – vaizdinė medžiaga praktinėje darbo dalyje analizuojamiems aspektams patvirtinti.

SUMMARY

The aim of the present study is to theoretically ground and practically present how the sexual identity of homosexual individuals is constructed through the language they use in an American TV series *Queer as Folk*. Since the LGBT (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) individuals have become a more visible group in the present-day society both in Lithuania and abroad, it is natural that there is a certain degree of interest in the lives of non-heterosexual people, their customs, communication patterns, the relationship among themselves as well as the relationship between them and the heterosexual, heteronormative society around them. One of the most recent branches of linguistics researches the peculiarities of the speech and speaking patterns of homosexual individuals. This study is a humble attempt to look, at least superficially, at this new branch of linguistics which has not yet been researched in Lithuania.

The thesis is divided into two separate parts: the first part of the thesis, the theoretical part, deals with aspects of alternative human sexualities and explains some sociological aspects of homosexuality. Also, some basic features of the Lithuanian and American LGBT communities are presented. This part theoretically covers the link between sexual identity and language. Theoretical part also presents earlier research carried out by scholars in the fields of sociolinguistics, sexuality and sociology. Also explained are the gay communication strategies, according to which gay communication aspects are decoded in the practical part of the thesis.

In the practical part of the study, my research on the Lithuanian students' attitudes toward homosexuality, which was carried out at Vytautas Magnus University in April 2010, is presented. Later, the language of homosexual individuals from the TV series *Queer as Folk* is analyzed and decoded. It is explained how the (homo)sexual identity of the people presented in *Queer as Folk* is revealed (or constructed) through the language they use. This part analyzes practically the peculiarities of homosexual communication taken from *Queer as Folk* applying the gay communication strategies, which allow one to examine the peculiarities of homosexual language as a separate sociolinguistic phenomenon.

Apart from the five main Sections of the study, the thesis also contains the Conclusions, a List of References and Appendices. In Appendix A the questionnaire used for the research is provided. Appendices B and C present visual material to support the arguments made while analyzing the material in the practical part of the study.

1. INTRODUCTION

*Why is it that, as a culture, we are more comfortable
seeing two men holding guns than holding hands?*
Ernest Gaines¹

Over the last decade the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) people have become more and more visible in Lithuania as well as in other East European countries. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that, having joined the European Union some years back, the citizens, both gay and heterosexual, from Eastern Bloc countries are currently experiencing an upsurge of liberty. On the other hand, the legislation from the EU is forcing, to some extent, Eastern governments to accept the fact that a significantly large amount of people living in each of these countries happen to be non-heterosexual individuals.

The topic of the current thesis – to speak about homosexual people’s experiences, and especially about their communication patterns which reveal their sexual identity – has been chosen for several reasons. First and foremost, the current topic has never been discussed in the context of Lithuanian academia: apart from several sociological research papers published in 2007 there has not been a single publication about homosexual people’s speech and communication patterns in Lithuania. Thus, I was unsuccessful in finding information about it in Lithuanian, which made it a hard but also an interesting endeavor to research the topic. It is true that the topics concerning non-heterosexual individuals and their lives in Lithuania have slowly started to emerge into the public domain: there are TV shows in which the topic is being discussed, there are various newspaper articles about homosexuality and gay people’s rights being published, universities and institutes carry out research dedicated to the problem.

Second, while searching for information in books published in Lithuania, a problem has been encountered because the topic of homosexuality, as far as serious academic publications are concerned, is either completely ignored, for example, a textbook on modern literary theories of the 20th century, published by Vilnius Pedagogical University in 2006 (*XX amžiaus literatūros teorijos*. VPU leidykla: Vilnius, 2006) does not mention one of the modern literary theories, entitled “queer theory” in its pages; or, as it sometimes happens with school textbooks and methodological publications for school teachers, the information about homosexuality is often distorted and presented in a way that supports a radical Catholic viewpoint. It is especially true of sex education publications.

Finally, the people who do not identify themselves as heterosexuals, according to some vague calculations, comprise some ten per cent of a population. This is, undoubtedly, a

¹ Ernest Gaines (b. 1933) a black American author, winner of various literary prizes, including the “National Book Critics Circle Award” for fiction.

significantly large number of people, which, many people agree, cannot be simply ignored. Moreover, I strongly believe myself that all people should be given the same rights as everybody else. For a government to deny someone the basic human rights is simply a crime: genocides, such as the Holocaust, usually start with the denial of rights and after that it is very difficult to predict where it can take a society. I am writing this thesis in hopes that it will help, at least to some extent, to understand and celebrate the diversity of the human society as well as to look into a social group, or a community, which we do not have the possibility to look at very often.

1.1 Aim and Scope of the Thesis

The current thesis comprises two major segments. First of all, there is the theoretical part, in which presented are the issues related with non-heterosexual individuals and their experiences from the sociological perspective. Also provided are some important historical overview of the Homophile movement and some identity issues are looked at. We know that a person's identity may be studied from a number of different angles, drawing on the research carried out by many scholarly approaches such as sociology, anthropology, biology, history, sexology, psychoanalysis and many others. Linguists too have shown interest in researching how our identity is constructed and/or revealed through language. It has been firmly established that men and women, among other different qualities, tend to speak differently. This can be further extended to the idea that it is not only the biological sex of a human being that can determine differences in speech but also by far a more complex social construct of one's "gender" that may show these differences. It is important, therefore, to discuss certain aspects of a person's gender identity and a relationship between it and the speech that reveals that identity.

The second part of the thesis, the analytical part investigates the means that homosexual men and women reveal their (homosexual) identity through speech in an American TV series *Queer as Folk*. Drawing on the fact that one's gender identity is a social construct, it seems inevitable that it can be revealed and is thus recognized through language. The current study serves the purpose of attempting to examine how one of the most marginalized groups of people – the LGBT community – reveal their identity through the use of language.

There are two **hypotheses** that are raised in the thesis:

- homosexual community has a distinct homosexual language that becomes apparent within that community;
- the homosexual subculture has influenced and influences the language that homosexual individuals use within their community.

The **aim** of the thesis is to theoretically ground and present how the identity of homosexual people is revealed through their speech in the American TV series *Queer as Folk*.

The **objectives** of the thesis are as follows:

- to present sociological approaches related to the formation of gender identity of homosexual people;
- to present a research on the attitudes of Lithuanian students toward homosexuality;
- to identify linguistic devices found in homosexual people's speech (examples taken from an American TV series *Queer as Folk*);
- to determine how the identity of LGBT people, portrayed in *Queer as Folk* is revealed through their speech;
- to explain sexual ambiguities and intertextual references found in homosexual people's speech.

Since homosexual individuals (and the whole LGBT community) have become more visible in society (by, for instance, manifesting their presence in gay pride parades, fighting for the right to marry and adopt children or by establishing LGBT community centres), there is a tendency for society to be interested in their way of life. Therefore, more and more research into homosexuality is being carried out by scholars throughout the world. This study is a humble attempt to look at one aspect of homosexual people's life, i.e. the language that they use, especially when in a group of other people from the LGBT community.

Linguists and sociolinguists are interested in the way that language is used by the LGBT community because they have noticed that there is universality of behaviour (including linguistic behaviour) of homosexual people. It seems that gay men and women speak in a particular way for many different reasons but the most fascinating thing is that they are unaware of this communication peculiarity, which, oddly enough, appears to be universal. I will argue in my thesis that there exists a particular, clearly defined and well hidden code of communication between homosexual people, which is used by them to both reveal their homosexual identity to others and to determine, especially when searching for a potential partner, whether another person is gay or not.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*No government has the right to tell its citizens when
or whom to love. The only queer people are those
who don't love anybody.*

Rita Mae Brown²

*I'd rather be black than gay because when you're
black you don't have to tell your mother.*

Charles Pierce³

The following part of the thesis presents approaches and theoretical sociological and linguistic aspects of alternative human sexualities, which all can be divided into separate groups, for example homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, asexuality and others. In the sections below most attention is paid to the homosexuality and how homosexuality of an individual is manifested in both the behaviour and the speech of that individual. First, sociological aspects of what it means to be a person of alternative sexuality is presented, secondly a theoretical approach of how sexuality and language are related is given and finally strategies of gay communication are presented in this section.

2.1 Alternative Human Sexualities

In very general terms, a person's sexuality can be described as how (s)he experiences and expresses him/herself as a sexual being. Such primitive explanation, as offered by majority of sociologists and sexologists suggests that there are various different ways in which people can experience and express their sexuality. Today, it seems, it does not come as a very surprising allegation that there is a wide variety of different sexualities that humans have practiced and still practice all over the world. Sexuality is a fluid, multi-meaning term that can be described in different ways.

The online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests five main usages of the word "sexuality" (as quoted in Cameron and Kulick):

1. the quality of being sexual or having sex (1800); 2. possession of sexual powers or capability of sexual feelings (1879); 3. recognition of or preoccupation with what is sexual (1899); 4. appearance distinctive of sex; 5. a person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which he or she is typically attracted; the fact of being heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual; sexual orientation (1897). (Cameron and Kulick, 2006:2)

² Rita Mae Brown (b. 1944) an American author and screenwriter. She became a Civil Rights activist in the late 1960s.

³ Charles Pierce (b. 1953) an American sportswriter and author.

Cameron and Kulick (2006:2) state that, although the word has been in use since 1897 in “nineteenth century scientific discourse”, the fifth meaning of the word deals with the modern usage of the word *sexuality* to refer to a person’s sexual orientation. It was added to the dictionary in 2005. We will consider the term *sexuality* as synonymous with such terms as *sexual orientation*, *sexual identity* or *sexual preference* throughout the current study when referring to a person’s desire for and emotional, spiritual and sexual attraction toward people of the same or of different gender.

Human sexuality without doubt is an important human quality that influences all aspects of a person’s life. In a similar way like sex, gender and race, our sexual identity, although more fluid and more changeable (according to some authors) than the others, determines the way we think, behave and act in our lives. A person’s non-heterosexual sexual orientation has been a topic of much discussion for many years, for instance in a debate of whether a person is born gay / lesbian / bisexual or transsexual or whether (s)he becomes so in his (her) later years; or, for instance, whether it is possible to ‘cure’ homosexuality.

Currently scholars have started examining human sexuality not as a natural or unnatural quality but as a social construct. Such perception of sexuality offers more flexibility in viewing particular sexuality or sexualities. According to Seidman,

sexual desires, acts, and identities that are defined as natural are often considered ‘good’, ‘right’, or ‘normal’. [...] The notion that there are natural and normal types of sexuality assumes that there are unnatural and abnormal sexual desires and acts. (Seidman, 2003:xv)

This view, as he explains, is dangerous for the society as abnormality and unnaturalness always have and still are if not punished, at least not tolerated and accepted. He states that “classifying sexualities as good or bad depending on whether they are natural or not is socially divisive and harmful: it creates a world of sexual pariahs and outsiders” (ibid). It is not surprising, therefore, that nowadays many scholars view one’s sexual identity, i.e. being heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or transsexual not as natural or unnatural but as a socially constructed, acceptable form of human behaviour.

2.1.1 A Non-Heterosexual Individual: A Sociological Perspective

Drawing on Mondimore (2000), in every known culture there have always been a certain small amount of people whom it is possible to label as *homosexual*, i.e. whose preferred sexual partner is of the same sex as the person him/herself (Mondimore, 2000:36). These people, as opposed to the majority who are *heterosexual* (whose preferred sexual partner is of different sex) constitute

by various calculations from five to ten per cent of the planet's population. The difficulty in determining a more specific number lies in the problem of identifying oneself as homosexual.

The question of who can be said to be homosexual lays in the fact that, as Jagose (1996) argues,

while there is a certain population of men and women who may be described more or less unproblematically as homosexual, a number of ambiguous circumstances cast doubt on the precise delimitations of homosexuality as a descriptive category. (Jagose, 1996:7)

She gives various examples and rhetorically asks whether, for example, “the man who lives with his wife and children, but from time to time has casual or anonymous sex with other men” (ibid) is homosexual. The problem with such allegations is that the people often do not identify themselves as either gay or even bisexual. Rather, they explain, gay sex is something they do once or twice a week and, according to them, it does not harm their heterosexual identity in any way.

The problem becomes more complicated, if, according to Jagose, it is “worked across cultural or historical variations” (Jagose, 1996:8). It seems that the more we try to categorize various people and their sexual practices, the more problems arise. Sexuality transcends time and space; social categories, on the other hand, do not. Therefore, we understand that it is a complex matter to call all people with similar, even the same desires one single name as their experiences of sexualities differ greatly.

The term for denoting sexual relations between two men (not women!) was first created in 1869 by a German lawyer Karl Maria Kertbeny. His *Homosexualität* (German for ‘homosexuality’), was soon adopted and used by other nations, too. Although at the beginning the term had negative connotations, over the last century negative attitudes towards homosexual people in many Western societies have changed greatly and an upsurge of interest in gay and lesbian issues, especially triggered by the Gay Liberation movement, which was part of the American Civil Rights movement in the 1970s, has increased.

However, since, as explained before, there are so many different sexual practices homosexuality soon became a part of a broader term, namely *queer*. This term, as argued by Jagose, has in recent years

come to be used [...] as an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and [...] to describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of a more traditional lesbian and gay studies. (Jagose, 1996:1)

She also states that although “queer has been associated most prominently with lesbian and gay subjects [...] its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery” (Jagose, 1996:3).

We can, thus, see that it would be impossible to use *queer* and *homosexual* (or *gay*) as synonyms to refer to the people from the LGBT community. The term that best encompasses the idea of diversity as opposed to heteronormativity is the term offered by William F. Eadie who calls the people of non-conforming gender identities “non-heterosexual” individuals.

2.1.1.1 Development of a Non-heterosexual Identity

According to William F. Eadie, “the point of same-sex attraction is that gays and lesbians want to find someone of the same gender with whom to be physically, emotionally and spiritually intimate.” This intimacy is the ultimate goal of homosexual relationship but getting to the point when a person is able to form such relationship is not easy. D’Augelli (1994) emphasises that there are six different stages of “developing a non-heterosexual identity” through which each “non-heterosexual” person must go (as quoted in Eadie):

1. Recognizing that one’s attractions and feelings are not heterosexual as well as telling others that one is not heterosexual.
2. Summarizing self-concepts, emotions and desires into a personal identity as a gay / bisexual person.
3. Developing a non-heterosexual social identity.
4. Disclosing one’s identity to parents and redefining familial relationships afterward.
5. Developing capabilities to have intimate gay / lesbian / bisexual relationships.
6. Becoming a member of a gay / lesbian / bisexual community.

Notice that what Eadie calls “the point of same-sex attraction” D’Augelli places towards the very end of his list, thus, making it an all-encompassing and, therefore, one of the most important stages in a homosexual person’s socio-emotional development. Without completing earlier stages, it seems, there is very little possibility to get to the fifth stage, i.e. to be able to form a mature intimate relationship. The outcome of this is that, according to Eadie, “many [...] lesbians and gays do not wait until they have found their ‘soul mate’ before having sex” which is partly because of the fact that meeting other gay / lesbian people is not easy in a heteronormative society. This may explain, with some degree of certainty, why sex and sexuality play a very important role in gay and lesbian relationships: it is through sexual relationship that one substitutes one’s needs for emotional and spiritual intimacy with another person.

2.1.2 A Short Historical Overview of the Homophile Movement

As explained before, scholars believe that every society had or has a certain amount of people who we can consider as having, using Cohen and Savin-Williams' terminology, "homoerotic inclinations". Thus, it is not surprising that societies have started issuing certain restrictions as far as human sexuality was concerned. Mondimore (2000) describes that in A.D. 309 the Catholic Church issued a legal document that stood as opposition to what the Ancient Greeks and Romans held as private matters, i.e. human sexuality. In the Medieval document there were 37 articles (out of total 87 articles) which regulated people's sexual behaviour. This meant that the Church started regulating the lives of ordinary people as the canonical law was supposed to become the law of the Christian Europe. It is hard to imagine how harmful the document was as its influence is felt in some societies (not excluding the Lithuanian society) even today.

The mentality of the Middle Ages determined that homosexuality, along with some other sexual practices, for instance having sex with a Jew or having sex without the intention of having children, was a sin and had to be severely punished. Since it was a hard and complicated life for many non-heterosexual (as well as for heterosexual) people, we do not have a lot of information about homoerotically inclined persons from that time. Apart from various erotic letters and poems from the medieval ages, it is hard to say what life must have been like for people back then. One thing, however, is clear: homosexual relations and feelings existed in those hostile times as well as they do today.

After years of suppression for the LGBT community, the 20th century began a new era for many gay and lesbian people throughout the world. The years before that were, in Cohen and Savin-Williams' words, "often characterized by secrecy, fear, isolation and invisibility". Moreover, "sexual minorities were largely invisible to most of the country". (Cohen and Savin-Williams, 1996:1). The truth is that many societies of the earlier days (i.e. days before the Gay Rights Movement) lived under similar conditions.

Many people consider the start of the modern Gay Rights Movement to be June 27, 1969. As Jagose describes, on this day

police who raided a New York gay and drag bar called the Stonewall Inn met with resistance, which culminated in a weekend of riots. [...] Commentators have described Stonewall dramatically as the shot heard round the homosexual world. [...] [This date] marks the constitution of lesbian and gay identities as a political force. Stonewall functions in a symbolic register as a convenient if somewhat spurious marker of an important cultural shift away from assimilationist policies and quietist tactics, a significant if mythological date for the origin of the gay liberation movement. (Jagose, 1996:30)

It is understandable, then, that the American LGBT community refers to the historical time as either “pre-Stonewall” or “post-Stonewall” era. The Stonewall riots have become an important political statement that the LGBT community was able to make as a unified entity.

The American society today can be considered to be rather tolerant to its LGBT people, which, unfortunately, cannot be said about many places in the world. Cohen and Savin-Williams state that “during no other time in history have lesbians, gays and bisexuals been the recipients of so much overt attention, scrutiny and unprecedented acceptance and inclusion into mainstream American culture” as today. Alternative forms of sexuality are being acknowledged and accepted by more and more people, perhaps due to the fact that a lot of information is being provided to them.

2.1.3 Non-Heterosexual Communities: Lithuania and the USA

According to D’Augelli (1994), in order to develop as a mature non-heterosexual person one must go through the six stages of a non-heterosexual person’s socio-emotional development. One of the stages, stage six states that one must become a member of an LGBT community. His argument could be understood as a suggestion that only after becoming a member in a social group a person becomes fully accepted by that social group and can develop further as a member of the group and as a person.

Taylor et al. (2002) provide a more scholarly explanation as to why “communities of people with same-sex desires” are an important part of the LGBT life. They state that there are two main reasons for LGBT people to form certain groups and various communities: they are “essential to both the affirmation of same-sex sexuality and love and to collective resistance to cultural norms of gender and sexuality” (Taylor et al., 2002:99). The first reason, the fact that communities serve the purpose of being a sort of “social outlets” is probably the most important reason why these communities formed in the first place. They became a meeting place for people who were looking for friends or sexual partners. Also, as Taylor et al. indicate that it is

within communities [that] people develop and cultivate networks of friends, meet partners, and define for themselves and for society what it means to be a person who desires and loves someone of the same sex. (Taylor et al., 2002:101)

This social function of the LGBT community (or communities) is, according to Taylor et al., what strengthens the “collective identity” of the LGBT people. This leads to the formation of larger communities and eventually to political movements. Therefore it makes sense what scholars state that gay and lesbian movement were impossible if it were not for “the solidarity and shared identity that is constructed in communities”.

The second reason for forming these communities is to challenge, resist and “redefine societal expectations and cultural norms of gender and sexuality” (Taylor et al., 2002:99). It was true that the old social norms about gender and sexuality were challenged and redefined in the USA during the gay liberation movement in the 1960s and 1970s. At present, the American society is at the point when gay marriage policy is being discussed and implemented in many places within the United States. It is possible to say that the movement, the roots of which were in the early communities, was successful. The question may be raised why this is important. It can be assumed that communities are important because it is within those communities that specific models of behavior, including linguistic behavior, are formed. Without community there can be no possible means of identification of members of that community and, subsequently, linguistic features cannot be identified.

Having examined studies by many scholars, Taylor et al. provide a list of “common elements” that apply to LGBT communities all over the world. They state:

First, communities are characterized by shared identities based on same-sex love and desire, although the names for and understandings of those identities change over time and from place to place. Second, communities are defined by distinct physical space – such as parks, neighborhoods, bars, bookstores, or coffee houses – in which people gather. Third, communities are built around social networks, institutions, or events. And, fourth, communities are marked by common cultural ideas and practices, including behavior, attire, and language that stand as markers of identity. (Taylor et al., 2002:100)

From the description above it seems that for a group of people to be called a community they need to fulfill certain criteria. In the following two subsections we can try to look at two very distinct (culturally, historically or even geographically) LGBT communities: the American LGBT community and the Lithuanian LGBT community.

2.1.3.1 The Gay Community in the United States

Although some scholars state that the history of gay communities in America started as early as the sixteenth or the seventeenth century (which is probably true, since, according to Mondimore every culture in the world had a certain amount of people with homosexual inclinations), the real history of the American LGBT community starts at the beginning of the 20th century and flourishes in the 1920s and the 1930s. Taylor et al. explain how communities came into being:

In major urban areas, men and women with same-sex desires knew where to find one another, used particular labels to identify themselves and developed codes of dress and behavior that marked them as particular kinds of people (Taylor et al., 2002:101)

The formation of the LGBT community described above, as will be seen later, follows the same pattern in Lithuania and the fact that people used distinct complicated identification markers as

signals of their homosexuality will be very important in the discussion later as language was (and still is today) one of the markers of identification.

The US LGBT community showed themselves in the 1960s and the 1970s and have achieved a lot since then. The internet based research showed that currently the American LGBT community has dozens of various LGBT related organizations, hundreds of centers throughout the USA, thousands of people who are willing to donate their time and effort to support the community of which they feel they are a part. The American government, too, supports the LGBT community as they see this group of people as avid supporters of the US Government, not to mention the fact that, according to an article by James Hipps, “[LGBT] Americans are twice as likely to have graduated from college, twice as likely to have an individual income over \$60,000 and twice as likely to have a household income of \$250,000 or more”. Thus, it can be argued that the LGBT community in the US is not only a political entity, but has shifted to become a financially useful segment of the society.

2.1.3.2 The Gay Community in Lithuania

It was practically impossible to find information about the earlier history of the Lithuanian LGBT community. Recent publications are mostly dedicated either to LGBT people’s lives and experiences of the present day Lithuania or to the legal issues such as human rights policy of the Lithuanian government or its disagreement with the European legislation. I have conducted several interviews with people and asked them several questions about the Lithuanian LGBT community in the past. Not much relevant information can be found apart from this.

As far as the present-day situation is concerned, it is not easy to speak about the Lithuanian LGBT community for several reasons. First, it is not a well defined and well organized structural unit, comprising several smaller segments, as is the case with the US LGBT community. Rather it can be described as a fragmental, divided and very competitive among itself. Second, because of the stigma of being disclosed and discovered, the Lithuanian LGBT community lacks famous, politically active gay or bisexual people and this harms the credibility of the entity that can be described as a “community”. Finally, it can be said that the Lithuanian LGBT community is still in its early developmental stages.

There are many differences between the LGBT communities in Lithuania and the USA. The most visible difference between the two communities is that the American LGBT community is a multi-dimensional functioning, politically active and financially secure entity, whereas the Lithuanian LGBT community is still in its early developmental stages. The Lithuanian LGBT community seems to be competitive among itself and not having any support

from the government, unlike the American LGBT community. However, similarities can also be observed. First of all, the Lithuanian LGBT community, although still in its early stages of development, it is nonetheless a functioning body that can be observed in the society. In May 2010, a Gay Pride Parade in Vilnius is to take place, which shows that the community is becoming stronger and, most importantly, more visible for the society at large.

The current section on alternative human sexualities presented some sociological aspects of what it means to be a non-heterosexual person and live in a heteronormative society. It also indicated that there are certain steps for a non-heterosexual person to go through in order to become a person who, according to Taylor et al. “desires and loves someone of the same sex”. Non-heterosexual people redefine and develop further both emotionally and politically within certain groups known as LGBT communities. Communities have two functions, which are, according to Taylor et al., first to serve as “social outlets” or meeting places for non-heterosexual individuals and second to be a place where collective identity is fostered and eventually grow into a movement which challenges the existing social and gender norms. The following section will present theoretical aspects on the relationship between language and sexuality and will provide information about a completely new branch of linguistics, which has become popular since 1995. That branch of linguistics has been entitled “lavender linguistics”.

2.2 Sexual Identity and Speech

Much has been written and discussed about a person’s various identities. Today, we seem to agree that one does not have a single, unified identity but rather a combination of several identities, which came to be known as “multiple identities”. In fact, some scholars argue that although it seems that our identities are something that we can and are supposed to perform, this is not as easy as it seems for the simple reasons that there are limitations to seemingly limitless combinations of possible identities available for a person. As Rosenell and Seymour state:

The range of identity options available to any individual is limited, the act of choosing circumscribed by a wide range of social constraints. [...] It is easier to be [...] straight rather than queer, British rather than Black British in rural England. All identities are not equally available to all of us, and all identities are not equally culturally valued. Identities are fundamentally enmeshed in relations of power. (Rosenell and Seymour, 1999:2)

Rosenell and Seymour speak about the socially constructed illusion that there are various available identities that one can choose from. However, there are limitations and some identities are considered to be better and socially more approved than others. This refers to what can be called, in Seidman’s terms, *socially approved* or *stigmatized* identities.

However, Rosenell and Seymour also state that “our identities may be a means of enacting resistance and rebellion. Our identities may be a weight around our neck or a source of

pride and joy” (ibid). It seems that even with the stigmatized identities there is a possibility for a person to take pride in what (s)he is. This requires, undoubtedly, much self realization as well as positive social circumstances in order for this “pride and joy” to be achieved. Such circumstances most clearly appeared in American society in the 1960s and 1970s with the rise of the Civil Rights Movement. Also, it is what the Lithuanian society is experiencing at the moment.

2.2.1 The Notion of Sexual Identity and Multiple Identities

The question of whether our identity is something we are born with or whether it is something we acquire as a result of our being among other people used to be widely discussed. Nowadays, many scholars seem to agree that a person’s identity is neither something innate, nor something acquired. Rather, it is made, or constructed by ourselves as well as by the society we live in. The idea comes from the fact that as human beings we seem to have multiple identities and it is our choice to make one identity more salient than others in a specific context. Accordingly, it is also our choice not to reveal certain identities of ours. To illustrate this, Sen (1998) argues that

[t]he same person can be of Indian origin, a Parsee, a French citizen, a US resident, a woman, a poet, a vegetarian, an anthropologist, a university professor, a Christian, a bird watcher and an avid believer in extraterrestrial life. (Sen, 1998:350).

It depends on a specific context in which the person appears which of the identities she will give more prominence to and as a result will undermine all the other ones. For example, when at work at the university the fact that the person in the quote is a vegetarian is not important, or salient, at all, whereas the fact that she is an Anthropology professor becomes the most salient identity of hers. In the example above there seems to be no conflict among the multiplicity of identities that form the human being. However, if we consider that the person described above also has the identities of “a Christian” and “a lesbian”, we can already sense a conflict between the two identities as they do not seem to be compatible in any circumstances. Hence, the question of which identities are by default salient within a human being arises. Scholars, among who we also place Freud, argue that human sexuality, the sexual desire would always become more salient and more important than any other of a person’s identities. This probably has to do with the fact that sexuality relates very strongly with a human reproductive system.

As seen in Sen’s example, there are many different kinds of identities, e.g. ethnic, gender or racial identities, among others. However, a person’s *sexual identity*, turns out to be the identity, which, at least for the Western societies, seems to be one of the most important parts of our perception of what a human being is. As Cameron and Kulick (2006) state:

the term *sexual identity* is meant to capture an important point about the way modern Westerners think about sexuality. ‘The fact of being homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual’ is understood in contemporary Western societies not simply as an observation about someone’s sexual behavior, but as a characteristic that, like their gender or their ethnicity, enters deeply into their sense of self and affects every aspect of their life”. (Cameron and Kulick, 2006:3).

It becomes evident from the quote that as Westerners we view ourselves primarily as sexual beings, dividing ourselves into clear-cut biological entities such as ‘man’ and ‘woman’ and more vague entities based on our sexual preferences of ‘heterosexual’, ‘homosexual’ and ‘bisexual’. Therefore, it is not only our biological sex but our sexuality that plays a big role in our lives and influences our behavior in many ways. Jenkins (1996) goes one step further and states that “sexuality is especially privileged by Western society as a ground and explanation of who we are” (Jenkins, 1996:87). He repeats the same idea again but this time a person’s sexuality is viewed as the most important “explanation” of who a person is, or we could say his/her “core identity”.

It seems that our sexual identity is one of the most important characteristics and determines our sexual as well as non-sexual behaviour in many ways. We view our sexuality in this way partly, perhaps, because as opposed to gender or race it is not clearly evident from first sight. Sexual identity of other people can be supposed, guessed or determined but there seems to always be secrecy about it especially when communicating with other people. Other identities, such as nationality, citizenship or social class are usually not as hidden and therefore not as interesting as one’s sexuality. To support this we can refer to Seidman (2003) who states that “[b]ecause many of us view sexuality at the core of our identities, we are preoccupied with our own and other’s sexuality” (Seidman, 2003:43). Although it seems odd, people always refer to their sexuality in many different ways. Especially when communicating with each other, we tend to reveal ourselves as sexual beings. Seidman states that “heterosexuals typically reveal their sexual identity by simply talking about their girlfriends and boyfriends or expressing their attraction to people of the opposite sex” (Seidman, 2003:43). For gay and lesbian people, he says, “this disclosure [...] is often deliberate and difficult” (ibid).

2.2.2 Use of Language in Identity Construction

An identity (or identities) can be said to be constructed by both a person him/herself as well as by the society in which (s)he lives. One obvious way of constructing and performing our identities is by using language. Linguistic choices, it appears, determine important aspects of what we are and what we do.

Scholars have firmly established that men and women tend to speak in a different way. What research tells us, for example, is that

- women use more quantifiers (such as “sort of” or “kind of”) than men;
- women use more intensifiers (mostly adverbs and adjectives) than men;
- female register includes forms of speaking that are more polite and indirect;
- men use a wider range of words related to mechanics, finance, sports and sex;
- men speak more than women. (Burn, 2000; Murnen, 2000; Halstead, 2001 as quoted in Cameron and Kullick, 2006:3).

Having taken all this into consideration, it does not seem too difficult to distinguish when a woman speaks and when a man speaks. There are numerous exercises which give groups of sentences that people have to identify as being possibly spoken by men or by women. For example, the majority of people usually have no problem stating that a sentence, for instance, “Excuse me, could you be so kind and show me a way to the nearest bus stop” would be most probably uttered by a woman, whereas the sentence “Hey, what’s on TV” would most probably be spoken by a man.

Since there are differences in the way that men and women speak, it would be logical to assume that there also exist differences in the way that homosexual and heterosexual people speak. One may assume that those differences arise from different people belonging to different groups or communities and are usually governed by social expectations, power relations and various other circumstances. The collected data will show that homosexual people’s speech is distinct and, in most cases, only used, within the LGBT community among its members.

2.2.3 Emergence of “Lavender Language”

“Lavender language” and “lavender linguistics” is a relatively new term used by linguists to refer to specific language used by lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual (LGBT) people. “Language” or “linguistics” is combined with the word “lavender”, which is a colour associated with gay and lesbian communities. The term has been in use since mid 1990s and started to be used by Dr. William Leap, a professor of anthropology at American University in Washington DC.

While the term “lavender language” and “lavender linguistics” is new, the language, or the code of communication between LGBT individuals, is not. First studies in the specificity of homosexual people’s speech were carried out as early as in the 1940’s. Mostly they were lexicons and gay-speech dictionaries but since then many linguists have tried to look at the language used by LGBT people from various perspectives, ranging from phonetic, lexical to discourse differences from heterosexual people’s language.

It is important to note that there does not exist a single, unified language that would be used by all homosexual people or by everyone in a specific community. In this way “lavender language” should probably be called “lavender dialect” or “jargon” or “slang” as there are many different groups of people who would use different linguistic patterns in their communication. We can only speak about certain tendencies in homosexual communication that exist throughout the English-speaking LGBT world. One of the best examples of such “lavender dialect” is a Polari language (or dialect) used in Britain by the gay community from approximately the 1930s to 1970s.

2.2.4 The Case of Polari Language

According to Dr Paul Baker, senior lecturer at the Lancaster University and a foremost authority on Polari, this slang dialect originated in Britain in the 1950s as a secret code of communication between gay individuals. Baker states that Polari is

mainly a lexicon, derived from a variety of sources. Some of the most common include rhyming slang, backslang (saying a word as if it’s spelt backwards), Italian, Occitan, French, Lingua Franca, American airforce slang, drug-user slang, Parlyaree (an older form of slang used by tinkers, beggars and travelling players) and Cant (an even older form of slang used by criminals). Polari can be classed as a language variety, a sociolect, or an anti-language. (Baker, 2002:1)

While it was mainly used as a lexicon, Baker has determined that “some of the more adept speakers were so good at it, that it resembled a language, with its own grammatical rules, distinct to English”. This means that Polari, as well as other types of so called “lavender” languages, could be considered an interesting sociolinguistic phenomenon that is worth studying and analyzing in the same way as pidgin or Creole languages.

Although the origins of Polari can be traced back to, according to Bryant, as far back as the seventeenth century, it was only in the 1950s that it came to be used as an encoded language for homosexual people in Britain. There were different variations of Polari, for instance West End and East End Polari which was used by Londoners. Baker states that Polari was used mainly by

gay men, although also lesbians, female impersonators, theatre people, prostitutes and sea-queens (gay men in the merchant navy). It was not limited to gay men, however. Straight people who were connected to the theatre also used it, and there are numerous cases of gay men teaching it to their straight friends. (Baker, 2002:1)

Therefore, the usage of the Polari was extended not only to homosexual communication but to other groups of people. Its primary aim, however, it seems, was to ensure the privacy of the people who used that language so as for them not to appear gay. This can be understood since,

according to Quinion, Polari was “a slangy language which was virtually incomprehensible to anyone hearing it for the first time” (Quinion, 1996:1). He also describes it as “not a constructed language, but a secret vocabulary, a cant or argot in the linguist’s term, which uses the grammar and syntax of English as well as most of its core vocabulary”. It is unclear where Polari came from or how it was constructed. Quinion argues that it was a combination of Gypsy dialect, “Yiddish, back slang, rhyming slang and other non-standard English [...] interspersed with words of Italian origin”. All this data demonstrates that Polari was a language taken by the British LGBT community to ensure the possibility for them to communicate with each other without the fear of being prosecuted for homosexual offences which at that time were considered to be criminal acts in Britain. Baker also gives reasons as to why Polari was used:

There are numerous reasons: as a form of protection and secrecy - it excluded outsiders who wouldn’t be able to tell what you were talking about, and allowed gay people to conceal their sexuality. It could be used to talk about other people while they were present, and was particularly useful when cruising with friends. However, it could also be used as a form of attack, to insult or humiliate others. It was a form of humour and camp performance, and also a way of initiating people into the gay or theatre subculture. It allowed its users to construct a view of reality based upon their own values, or to give names to things that mainstream culture hadn’t recognised (such as certain forms of gay sex). (Baker, 2002:1)

Some words that were used by homosexual people in Britain are not used in gay communication nowadays, but there are very many words that have retained their meaning and are used in everyday speech even today. For example, Polari words that are not very often met today include such words as *omi* (‘a man’) or *vada* (‘to look’), but such lexical items as *blowjob* (‘oral sex’), *camp* (‘effeminate’, ‘outrageous’) or *to bitch* (‘to complain’) are used today throughout the English-speaking world and not only by its LGBT members.

Today, as Baker demonstrates in his research, the Polari language has found a position within the gay community, especially in Britain. He states that Polari can sometimes be observed in films, music and books as well as being used privately by gay men, especially the older generation. Baker also says that there is evidence of Polari being used in some of London’s gay clubs, and the language has merged with other forms of slang, for instance Techno or Bangra. This means that although Polari has lost its primary aim of concealing the sexuality of its users, it has found a new identity as a sort of an ornate, playful language additive to modern communication. Also, it can still be found in usage as probably a sort of reminder of the past, especially for people who remember it being used naturally.

The section presented some sociological issues about a person’s identities and his/her sexual identity as one of the most prominent identities. Having analyzed the sources it became clear that sexual identity is something that people, especially in the West, consider to be

an explanation of who we are, in the same way as our gender, race and ethnicity explain. It was also stated that, if we assume that identities are performed, language is one of the means to construct these various identities and to perform them. The current chapter also presented the notion of the “lavender linguistics”, a relatively new branch of linguistics that researches the way that LGBT people use language and also looked at one of the most prominent instances of lavender linguistics, i.e. the Polari language used by homosexual people in Britain from the 1940s to the 1970s as a means of concealing their homosexual identity.

2.3 Strategies in Gay Communication

The gay liberation movement, which took place in the US in the 1960s and 1970s meant that many things will have to be redefined if all of the society, which includes both heterosexual and homosexual individuals within it, wanted to exist and co-exist together. The mainstream society became interested in the way that homosexual people, who were now part of that society, lived. Therefore, scholars, first and foremost sociologists, started researching homosexual people’s lives. Linguists also started looking into the language that is used by homosexual individuals. It is important to note that, according to Sonenschein (1969) that scholars became interested in “characterizing language as a message system which is enacted through interpersonal relations; as such it carries a sociocultural value content which may be analyzed to give indications of ‘meaning’ in a wider sense than mere definition” (Sonenschein, 1969:41). This means that in order to understand the way that homosexual people live it is possible to look at their speech and to analyze it as a message that these people want to carry across. He explains that “the special language of the homosexual is the language of his special world: its roles, values, and activities” (ibid). He also states that the language of homosexual individuals can only be observed as different from the heterosexual individuals as long as gay people are in one group. He says that “the homosexual is in a sense ‘bilingual’ in that he has the choice of using ‘Everyday English’ or the slang in appropriately defined situations” (Sonenschein, 1969:42). He explains that the situation depends on “whether the individuals concerned are homosexual or not and whether the environment is homosexual or not” (ibid). It is possible to assume, then that the speech of homosexual individuals is a sort of performance which is necessary to indicate one’s homosexuality and to determine other people’s homosexuality. However, this allegation can be argued as the strategies in gay communication seem to be universal and wide spread. While nowadays the choice of behaviour can be said to be easily accessible through modern technological advances, it is still difficult to say how people knew how to behave as a

homosexual before the times of the Internet and TV. Further studies in homosexual behaviour and speech patterns are, of course, needed to answer that question.

According to Sonenschein, homosexual slang can be viewed as “a form of verbal communication, and identification between [homosexual] individuals” (Sonenschein, 1969:41). He states that there are four main processes of verbal distinction in homosexual slang: effeminization, utilization, redirection and invention and suggests that these strategies are used, as is the case with Polari, in order to, first of all, indicate that one is gay, and second to determine whether the person in whom one is interested, is gay too. This section aims at explaining the four processes and looking at them as four distinct strategies that are used by homosexual men.

Effeminization is an “enactment of female speech patterns, e.g. imitation of verbal sounds of female conversation, use of “feminine adjectives” (*darling, lovely*), use of feminine familiars (*honey*) as well as pronouns (*she* and *her*). It is the strategy that appears very often in gay communication and this strategy seems to be the most universal strategy, i.e. it is used not only in the English-speaking world, but also by homosexual people across the globe. In *Queer as Folk* there are various instances where effeminization is used as a strategy to either appear gay yourself, i.e. to stress your non-heterosexual identity, or to speak about another person’s homosexuality. Sonenschein explains that this particular strategy can be thought to be “naturally expressive of the ultimate nature of homosexuality: women trapped in men’s bodies” (Sonenschein, 1969: 42). He also suggests that “the verbal effeminizing process may in fact be a consciously learned form of behaviour” (ibid). Whether it is learned or not, it is one of the most popular strategies in gay communication that is used often to refer to other people’s homosexuality as well as to one’s own homosexuality.

Another widely-used strategy, as described by Sonenschein, is *Utilization*. It is a “borrowing of form and meaning of slang terms as used in other groups, most often related with sex”. The words used for this strategy are often words that refer to sex and sexuality (although not always) but not only in a homosexual context. In most cases these are words used by both homosexual and heterosexual communities. Most dominant examples of such words include vulgar names for sexual organs, such as *pussy* (‘vagina’) or *dick* (‘penis’), vulgar depiction of sexual activity, e.g. *fuck* (‘have sex’) or insult words, for example *prick* (‘penis’, as an insult to a man) or *faggot* (‘gay man’, also an insult to a man).

One more strategy in gay communication is *Redirection*. It is understood as a “borrowing a term which has the same form but a different meaning from a heterosexual referent”. There are many words that are used in a heterosexual community to mean one thing, usually sexual in nature, but which are then taken by the homosexual community and the meaning changes significantly. One such example is the word *queen*, meaning ‘a female

monarch' or 'a king's consort'. However, in homosexual context the word *queen* acquires the meaning of 'an effeminate man' or 'a transvestite, a cross-dresser'. Thus, a term has been borrowed and the meaning of the word changed.

The last strategy discussed of gay communication discussed by Sonnenschein is *Invention*. It is understood as a process when "words are taken and given a new and unique meaning, not to be found outside the homosexual circle". This strategy is similar to redirection; the only difference is that when applying invention strategy a word or expression is taken from the heterosexual context and new sexualized meanings are ascribed to these words. Otherwise the words do not have any sexual connotations in a heterosexual context.

In the previous section of the thesis theoretical aspects of a person's identity and multiplicity of identities have been introduced. Also, we have looked at the relationship between language and identity formation. The new approaches to analyzing gay language were presented and an overview of one instance of gay language – the Polari language – was also presented. Gay communication strategies were introduced and some information about possible decoding strategies of gay communication were given. In the following section, a mini research on the Lithuanian students' attitudes toward homosexuality will be presented. Also, the method of analysis and the material for the analysis will be presented.

3. METHOD AND MATERIAL

Straight Americans need... an education of the heart and soul. They must understand – to begin with – how it can feel to spend years denying your own deepest truths, to sit silently through classes, meals, and church services while people you love toss off remarks that brutalize your soul.

Bruce Bawer⁴

To achieve the aim of the thesis and to test the formulated hypotheses, the study follows a qualitative approach as explained by Johnstone (2000). She states that qualitative analysis is directed towards how and why certain linguistic strategies are used as opposed to quantitative analysis, which aims at determining how often and how much a particular linguistic variant occurs. Since the aim of the thesis is to examine the language used by a sexual minority as well as to look at what kind of strategies are used in homosexual communication, why they are used and what effect it has on communication, a qualitative approach of sociolinguistic research is used in this thesis.

The practical part of the thesis consists of two parts. First, a research about the Lithuanian university students' attitudes toward homosexual individuals is presented. Looking at what the general attitude is enables one to see whether such research as presented in the current study is necessary, interesting and whether or not people are ready to accept the fact that our society is a heterogeneous entity. The results of the research demonstrated that the topic of homosexuality and homosexual individuals' speech can be seen as an interesting topic to the society: the results show that many young people, i.e. students, know homosexual persons, some are friends with people who are non-heterosexual. Therefore, looking at homosexuality from a scholarly approach should be understood as a progressive and reasonable step to be taken.

The second part of the analysis is concerned with presenting some ways in which homosexual people use language. The material from *Queer as Folk* is examined from various different angles, taking three discourse analytic perspectives into consideration: *speech act theory*, *conversation analysis* and *interactional sociolinguistics*. As Bijeikiene states, "all of these three discourse analytic perspectives have received due attention in the scholarship of gender and discourse analysis" (Bijeikiene, 2006:113). The *speech act theory*, as explained by Searle (1969) refers to

what the speaker means, what the sentence (or other linguistic element) uttered means, what the speaker intends, what the hearer understands, and what the rules governing the linguistic elements are. (Searle, 1969:21)

⁴ Bruce Bawer (b. 1956) an American literary critic, writer and poet.

As explained by Searle, an uttered statement carries within itself many various aspects which need to be considered in detail. A sentence, according to Searle, is not merely a sentence but a speech act, which relates to various different aspects of communication, at the most basic level, what is meant to say, what is said, what is performed by saying it and what is understood. As will be seen in the discussion provided below, the various speech acts that are performed by homosexual individuals are in many cases related with sexual activity. The question to be answered there is how these sexual references can be traced and understood.

In *conversational analysis*, as explained by Hutchby and Drew (1995), the most important unit of conversation is *a turn*. The task of the conversational analyst is, then, to analyze and examine “how participants understand and respond to one another in their turns at talk and [...] how sequences of activities are generated” (Hutchby and Drew, 1995:182-183). This means that when analysing larger units of a conversation, it is necessary to look not only at what is meant by the speaker (and understood by the hearer) but also to examine what is meant by turns taken by different speakers.

The method of *interactional sociolinguistics* appears to be the most encompassing method of the three described above. It refers to both the lexical, syntactic and, most importantly, discourse levels of linguistic interactions. Founded by John J. Gumperz, it studies how meaning is constructed through interaction. The section below represents the analysis of the conversations found in *Queer as Folk* Episodes 101-109, applying the methods of *speech act theory*, *conversational analysis* and *interactional sociolinguistics*.

3.1 Lithuanian Students’ Attitudes Toward Homosexuality

In April 2010 a mini research was carried out at Vytautas Magnus University. In total one hundred and seven students were asked to fill out a short questionnaire (see Appendix A) with questions about their attitude toward homosexuality. The aim of the research was to find out whether the attitude of the university students toward homosexuality was generally positive, negative or neutral and also what the students associated with words such as *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual* and *transsexual*.

3.1.1 Methodology of the Research

To obtain the research data, questionnaire analysis and statistical analysis were used. Students were asked to answer an anonymous questionnaire (see Appendix A) and to provide their opinions and attitudes toward homosexuality. Respondents were asked various closed and open

questions about homosexuality, whether they understood the terms such as *homosexuality*, *heterosexuality* or, for instance, *gay*, *lesbian* or *transsexual*. The material was then processed and the information presented in graphical charts.

3.1.1.1 Subjects and Instruments

The research was carried out at Vytautas Magnus University. In total, 107 students who are in year 1 and 2 in the BA programme were asked to fill out the questionnaires about their attitude toward homosexuality. The distribution of learners to their gender was as follows:

- 19 male students (17.8% of respondents)
- 88 female students (82.2% of respondents)

The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 23 years old. The questionnaire was compiled to identify what the respondents know about homosexuality and how they react to it. Questionnaires consisted of 10 questions: the first two general questions about the respondents' gender and age, four close-ended questions, two open-ended questions and two mixed-type questions. The students were also asked to identify their gender, age, and their own sexual identity. As one possible option a possible answer to this question could have been chosen "I prefer not to say".

3.1.1.2 Data Collection and Procedure

Before answering their questionnaires the students were acquainted with the purpose and the scope of the research. They were assured that the questionnaires were anonymous and that the information provided will be used for the Master of Arts thesis. The questionnaires were given in Lithuanian because the students who answered the questionnaires, although all of them studied English, have not all achieved the linguistic level which would have enabled them to answer questions in English. The research and its analysis and interpretation were completed in several weeks' time.

3.1.1.3 Data Analysis Procedure

The results of the questionnaire were statistically analysed and graphically presented using the *Microsoft Excel 2007* programme. The data of the survey is presented in various graphs and charts, after which more explicit discussions follow. The results obtained from the questionnaires were also analyzed according to the gender of the respondents.

3.1.2 Data Analysis and Discussion

The aim of the questionnaire was to determine the students' attitudes toward homosexuality and to collect their views about what certain basic terms mean. Because of the multiplicity of different questions in the questionnaire the data analysis will be divided into different sections, corresponding with different questions that the students answered.

The first question asked the students to select their gender (male or female) and the second question asked them to identify their age. Question No. 3 asked them to describe briefly what the four basic terms mean. The words that the questionnaire asked them to describe were *heterosexuality*, *homosexuality*, *bisexuality* and *homophobia*. The idea behind this question was to see how well the respondents understand the very basic terms in the discussion about homosexuality. In spite of the fact that the above mentioned words very often appear in magazine or newspaper articles as well as on television, many students had difficulty in describing the words. **Figure 3.1** below provides graphic representation of the responses to the first two terms of Question No. 3:

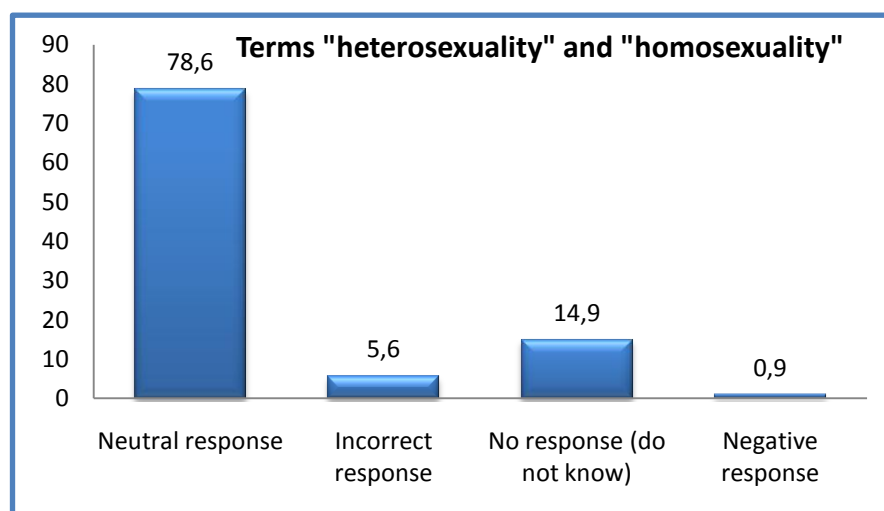


Figure 3. 1 Disposition of Terms *Heterosexuality* and *Homosexuality*

As for the first two terms in question 3 (*heterosexuality* and *homosexuality*) the vast majority of people (78.6%) stated neutrally that heterosexuality was either “a relationship between man and woman” or “when men are attracted to women and vice versa”. 14.9% of respondents failed to answer the first two questions because they stated “I do not know” or left the question blank. Another 5.6% of respondents gave their answers but the answers were not correct. For instance, one responded stated that heterosexuality was a “thing where women are into women” and homosexuality was a “thing where men are into men”. This small amount of people, who gave incorrect definitions, were also neutral in their responses. There was only one respondent (0.9%

of respondents) who stated that heterosexuality was “person of normal Christian attitudes” and that homosexuality was “abomination and shame to all men”.

As can be seen from the data presented in **Figure 3.1**, the majority of responses are neutral, which suggests respondents’ neutral attitudes toward the terms in question. Only a small number of responses (0.9%) gave a negative answer to the questions. However, the number of respondents who did not give a correct answer or failed to answer the question altogether is high (20.5%), considering the fact that the topic of homosexuality reappears in the Lithuanian media quite often, especially this year as Vilnius is preparing to host the Baltic Pride Parade.

The other term that has been asked in Question 3 was a term *bisexuality*, the respondents were asked to describe briefly what the term means. The majority of respondents (78.2%), were able to tell that bisexuality was either “people’s attraction to both men and women” or “when people can experience love with both men and women”. Few answers suggested “when people sleep with men and women”. All of the answers above could be considered to be correct. As presented in **Figure 3.2** below, 21.8% of respondents did not provide a response as to what bisexuality was.

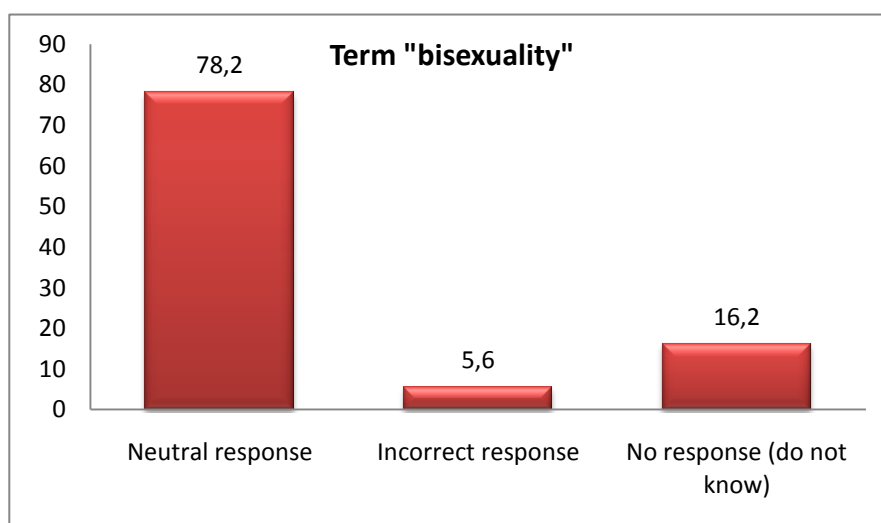


Figure 3. 2 Disposition of the Term *Bisexuality*

Since the numbers for the three terms are very similar, it is possible to assume that the respondents who knew the terms *heterosexuality* and *homosexuality* were also able to describe what *bisexuality* was. It is interesting that the respondents’ answers as to what the three basic terms mean included both men and women, which means that homosexuality is not seen in this particular group of respondents as entirely a male activity. A large amount of responses included such statements as “when men feel attracted by men and women are attracted by women” etc. This may suggest that people in general are becoming more accepting; that is they view homosexuality as existing between both men and women. But a more probable explanation is the

fact that the majority of respondents (82.2%) were, in fact, female who would mention women as well as men in their responses.

The last term that the respondents were asked to describe was *homophobia*, which could, according to the online dictionary⁵, be described as ‘unreasoning fear of or antipathy toward homosexuals and homosexuality’. The responses by students could be divided into three groups, as with the previous terms. However, the respondents seemed to have problems with this term, as the majority of people (42.9%) gave incorrect answers as to what homophobia was. The responses included such allegations that homophobia was “a fear of open spaces and masses of people”, “a fear of heights” or “a fear of people”. Some respondents said that it was “some kind of fear”, probably drawing on the fact that *phobia* means fear. The last definition was a logical assumption because, if translated from Latin, the word *homo* (‘person’) and translated from Greek the word *phobia* (‘fear’) does, in fact, mean a fear of people. However, the present day situation dictates that this word be used in a different sense, namely when referring to the fear or hatred toward homosexual individuals. This was mentioned by 18.7% of respondents who gave neutral correct answers to this question. As can be seen from **Figure 3.3**, 38.4% of respondents failed to give an answer to this particular question or said that they did not know what homophobia was.

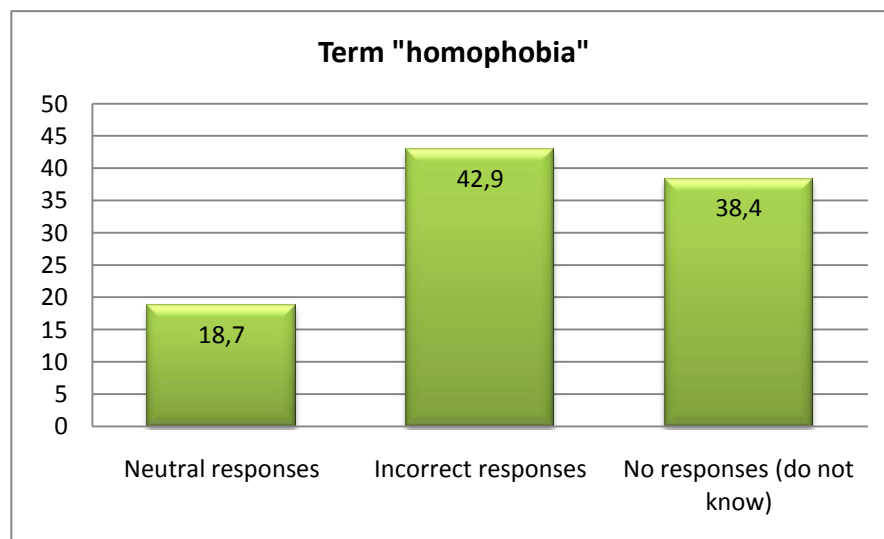


Figure 3. 3 Disposition of the term *Homophobia*

Some possible explanations about the fact that only the minority of people were able to answer the question correctly could be that, although they hear (or read) the term very often used in the media, since people are not interested in the homosexual issue they do not necessarily find out

⁵ www.dictionary.com

the meaning of the term. Another possible explanation could be that they have got confused by the *phobia* part of the word.

Question 4 asked the respondents to indicate how they would define their own sexual identity. There were four options to choose from: one could say that one was heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual or that one preferred not to disclose this information. **Figure 3.4** presents the data for Question 4:

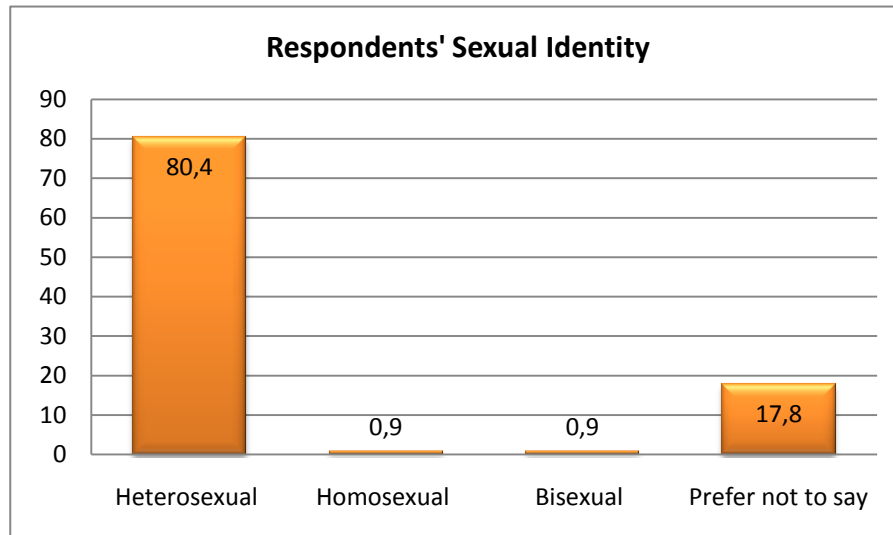


Figure 3. 4 Respondents' Sexual Identity

As could be expected, the majority of respondents (80.4%) selected heterosexuality as their own sexual orientation. There were very few people who were homosexual and bisexual (0.9% each) and a surprisingly large number of people (17.8%) who chose not to disclose their sexual orientation. Drawing on what has been said before, perhaps, it could be explained by the fact that many people were not positive about the terminology and therefore, in order not to tick the “wrong” identity selected the option which seemed safest to them. Another explanation could be that for some people the disclosure of their non-heterosexual identity, or the “coming out”, is a delicate and personal matter. Thus, selecting the fourth option would also mean the safest choice.

Question No. 5 doubled the previous question to some extent: terms such as *a gay man*, *a lesbian*, *a bisexual* and *a transsexual* were presented to the respondents and they were asked to describe them briefly as in Question No. 3. Very similar percentage of people was able to identify what *a gay man*, *a lesbian* and *a bisexual* means as in question No. 3. More interesting answers could be found in the student’s answers to the question of what *a transsexual* means. **Figure 3.5** presents the respondents’ answers to the question of who, in their opinion, *a transsexual* is:

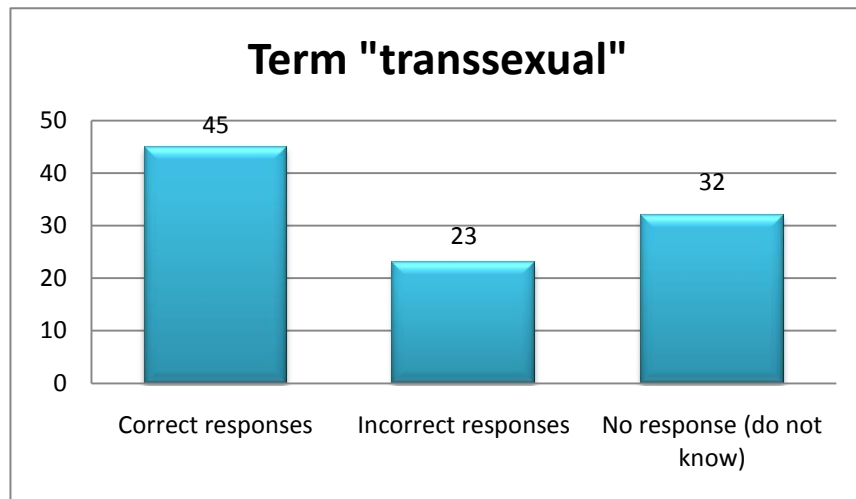


Figure 3. 5 Disposition of the Term *Transsexual*

Most respondents were unable to provide a correct answer to the question, with only 45% of respondents answering correctly that a transsexual is a person who is unhappy with his/her natural gender and undergoes surgery in order to change his/her sex. 23% of respondents were unable to answer the question, in most cases referring to transvesticism instead of transsexuality. Most incorrect answers referred to people dressing up in the clothes of an opposite gender. That, however, is the description of a transvestite and not a transsexual. A possible explanation for this is that many people mix the two terms because of the lack of information about such phenomena. This, however, cannot be said about homosexuality and bisexuality, as people obviously have more access to information about that.

Question No. 6 inquired whether or not the respondents have any contact with the LGBT people. The question asked “Do you know someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual?” Most respondents (59%) stated that they did not know anyone who was homosexual, bisexual or transsexual. The remaining 41% of respondents said that they knew someone gay or lesbian, or bisexual or transsexual. Their answers are summarized in **Figure 3.6**:

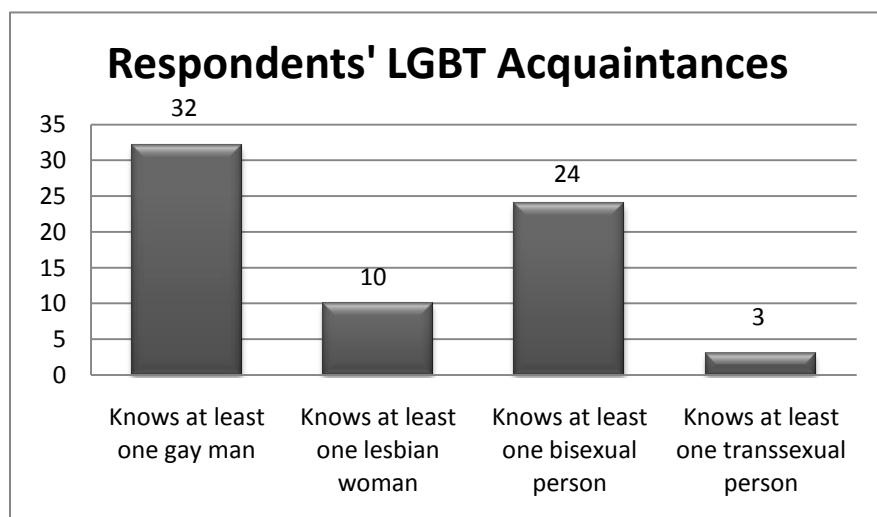


Figure 3. 6 Respondents' LGBT Acquaintances

Most people (32 respondents, 29.9%) indicated that they know at least one gay man, and the least people (three respondents, 2.8%) answered that they know someone who is transsexual. Also, as presented in **Figure 3.6**, 24 respondents (22.4% of respondents) answered that they know at least one bisexual person and ten respondents (9.3%) indicated that they are acquainted with a lesbian woman. Although in total 41% of respondents knew a person of alternative sexual identity, only 11% answered Question No. 7 positively and stated that a non-heterosexual person was in their group of friends. The responses are provided in **Figure 3.7**.

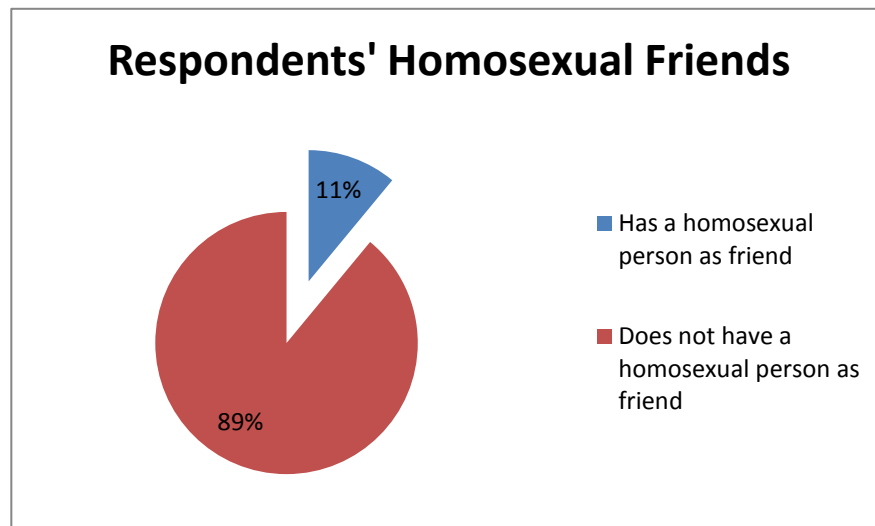


Figure 3. 7 Respondents' Homosexual Friends

As can be seen here, 89% of respondents said that they were sure they did not have non-heterosexual friends. Some respondents indicated that they could not state this with certainty as, according to their responses, their friends did not disclose their sexual identity to them.

In Question No. 8 the respondents were asked a question about the Gay Pride parade (the Baltic Pride) which was held in Vilnius in May, 2010. As **Figure 3.8** presents, the majority of respondents stated that the Pride parade was unnecessary (58%), however, there was a significantly large number of respondents (42% in total) who either said that the event should take place or had no opinion about this matter. Their attitudes (both positive and negative) may have been influenced by the fact that the discussions about the Gay Pride event were continually covered in the mass media during the time that the research questionnaires were given to the respondents.

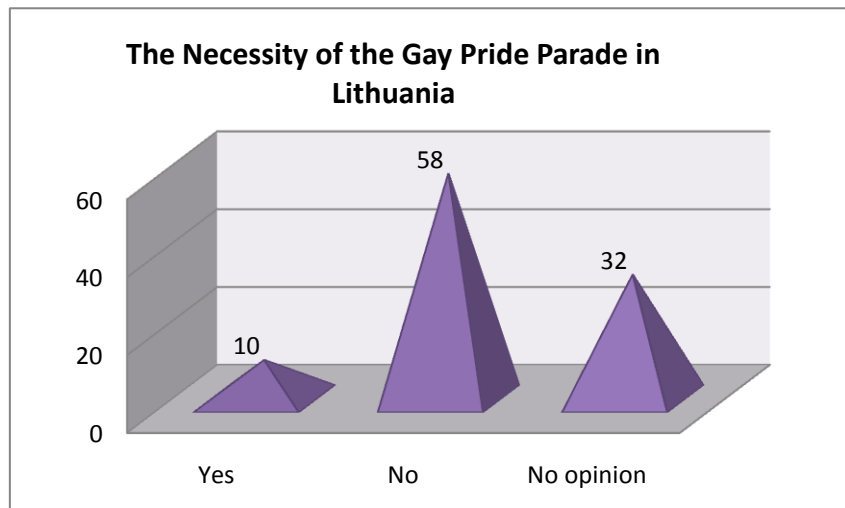


Figure 3. 8 Respondents' Attitude Toward the Necessity of the Gay Pride Parade in Lithuania

The two last questions, Question 9 and 10, asked the respondents to consider the situation of gay marriage and adoption possibilities to same-sex couples. **Figure 3.9** presents the respondents' attitude toward these issues:

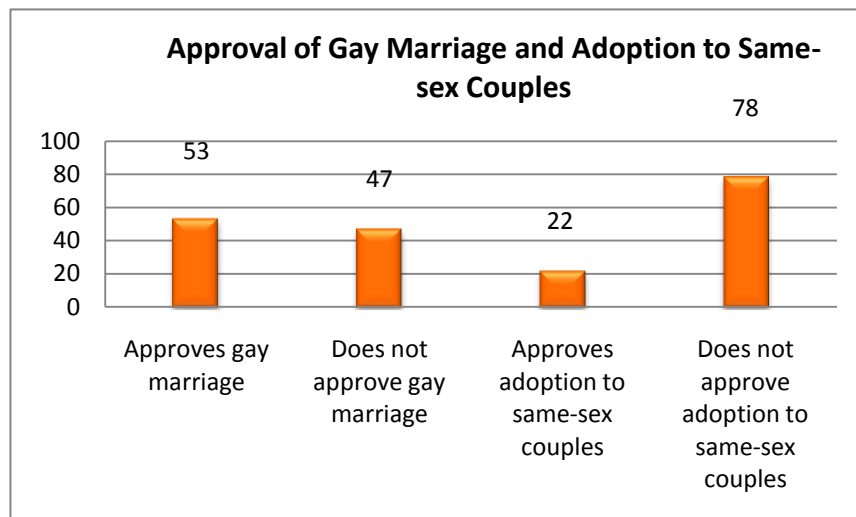


Figure 3. 9 Respondents' Approval of Gay Marriage and Adoption Possibilities to Same-sex Couples

As can be seen from **Figure 3.9**, the respondents' opinions about the two issues differ greatly. The answers to the question on gay marriage is almost equally divided (53% of respondents being against it and 47% of respondents for it). In most positive answers to the question above the respondents gave such explanations that marriage is a matter between two individuals and their rights should be respected. The explanations following negative answers to the same question stated, in most cases, that marriage is a sacred tie between a man and a woman and that it cannot be changed, while other arguments simply stated that "it is unnatural".

However, the disproportion of answers to the question on the adoption of children in same-sex couples differed more significantly. Only 22% of respondents stated that the

adoption of children should be allowed to same-sex couples, leaving 78% of respondents against this idea. The supporters of the adoption rights to same-sex couples explained that it is a right of an individual that cannot be ignored. The opponents of the adoption rights to same-sex couples in almost every answer stated that having two fathers or two mothers would be harmful to the children, although scientific data does not confirm that. Some arguments also stated that the children who grow up in single-sex families would experience bullying from their peers and the society in general.

Certain conclusions can be drawn from the results of the research, enabling one to state with some degree of certainty that the Lithuanian students' attitude toward homosexual individuals is neutral rather than negative and, taking the overall attitude of the present-day Lithuanian society, this is, in my opinion, an advancement for several reasons. First, many people who participated in the research were able to distinguish what a homosexual or heterosexual person was, as well as stating how it different from bisexuality. Secondly, almost half the respondents said that they knew someone who was a non-heterosexual individual, and some people even were friends with homosexual persons. Third, although the respondents were, in general, against the adoption rights to single-sex parents, almost a half of them did not see a problem of gay marriage. Many respondents seemed to relate this issue to basic human rights and the freedom of expression.

Having done the research and found out the results encouraged me to analyze deeper the issues of homosexuality and, more specifically, the relationship between homosexual people's sexual identity and their speech, which is the main aspect of the following sections of the present study. The results also show that the Lithuanian students' understanding and perception of homosexuality, although still influenced by the media, are becoming more flexible and people are becoming more accepting of others than before. However, education about people who are different (not necessarily in terms of sexual identity) is necessary so that people learn to understand what it means to be a different person, and so that they learn to accept others for who they are and not for what they are.

3.2 Material for Study: Queer as Folk

The data for this paper has been selected from several episodes (six episodes in total were analyzed) of the long-running American TV series *Queer as Folk*. This phenomenal TV series (at least considered to be phenomenal in the gay world), was created in 2000 and so far has been shown in many European countries as well as Canada and the US. The series follows the lives of five gay men and their families living in Pittsburg, USA. The show was shown in North America

from 2000 to 2005 and instantly became very popular. Altogether 83 episodes in five seasons were created. In Canada the show was so popular that a 43-minute episode had to be shown in over 70-minute time block in order to accommodate all the advertisements.

The immense popularity of the show, i.e. the fact that probably every gay person, man and woman in the English-speaking world (and not only in the English-speaking world) knows the TV series was the main factor that determined my choice of the material. Another reason why *Queer as Folk* was chosen was because unlike other TV series depicting gay people (e.g. such comedy series and soap operas as *Ellen*, *Six Feet Under* or *Will and Grace*), *Queer as Folk* was not a sitcom and attempted to depict the life of LGBT individuals as naturally as possible. Finally, the series has 83 episodes of considerable length, which means that there are hundreds of situations and conversations to choose from for a reasonable discussion. It also means that, because of such large amount of material one starts seeing patterns in communication between the characters.

The study and the analysis of the material in question could, of course, be criticized for the fact that the language depicted in *Queer as Folk* is not an authentic language used by LGBT individuals, nor is it my intention to present it as such. However, having looked at the theoretical material about homosexual communication, I have noticed in *Queer as Folk* that certain patterns of communication emerge as actors (many of whom are gay in real life) speak.

Relevant examples for analysis have been taken from various episodes of *Queer as Folk*, namely Episodes 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107 and 109 of the first season series. The total number of words present in the transcripts of the analyzed material sum up to 53 170 individual words. In the analytical part below many examples are viewed as parts of a discourse and, thus, sentences and sometimes larger units of language are presented for analysis.

4. DECODING GAY LANGUAGE

My own belief is that there is hardly anyone whose sexual life, if it were broadcast, would not fill the world at large with surprise and horror.

W. Somerset Maugham⁶

If male homosexuals are called “gay”, then female homosexuals should be called “ecstatic”.

Shelly Roberts⁷

It is assumed that the speech (as well as the behaviour patterns) of LGBT people, especially the ones who are open about their sexuality, differs greatly from the speech (and behaviour) of the heterosexual part of the society. Probably this is the reason why the portrayal of LGBT people in popular TV shows in the US, for instance, accentuates, quite deservedly, the linguistic peculiarities of gay speech. An instance of this could be found in many popular TV series. One such example, given below, is taken from the TV show *Family Guy* (which is not about gay characters). In this specific scene one of the main characters of the show, Peter, who has been turned into a gay man after having been injected with a gay gene, finds himself in a “straight camp”, where gay men are taught how to be straight. One such class of heterosexuality includes the teaching of how to talk like a straight man. This humorous conversation provided below in example 4.1 is between Peter and a member of staff, Tony, who teaches “straight talk” to gay men who want to turn to being straight:

- (4.1) Tony: All right, this next exercise will train you to talk like a straight man. Peter, we'll start with you. Repeat every word I say exactly as I say it: tonight, me and my friends Polly and Mattie are going out to drink a tone of beers.
Peter: Tonight my friends and I are going out but we're not drinking because those are empty calories.
Tony: Then we'll play full-contact football in the park with no pads or helmets.
Peter: Then we're gathering at Allan and Omar's for bad movie night.
Tony: Then it's straight to the bars to find loose women to have sex with.
Peter: Then it's straight to the gym for three hours of crunches and extended eye contact with strangers.
Tony: Peter!
Peter: Oh, don't give me that look, Tony, that's exactly what you said, I said it right back to you. (Excerpt from *Family Guy* Season 7 / Episode 8)

The conversation above indicates well how homosexual people's speech appears from the viewpoint of the heterosexual perspective. It appears to be both funny, playful and suggestive and refers to what many may consider to be gay worries, as the extract above suggests, gay people's preoccupation with their body and outer appearance. This is suggested by references to

⁶ William Somerset Maugham (1874 – 1965) English playwright, novelist and short story writer.

⁷ Shelly Roberts (b. 1943) American columnist, an author of popular relationship books.

“empty calories” and going to a gym. However, one thing is clear: homosexual and heterosexual people tend to behave and speak in a different way. These differences are portrayed in popular culture, as seen in the example provided. Indeed, there are many cases where gay people, both men and women, have to be portrayed and shown, and one way to indicate that a person is gay is by making him/her sound gay. The section below address the issue of how a person expresses his homosexuality by using various gay communication strategies.

4.1 Application of Gay Communication Strategies in Queer as Folk

Gay communication strategies, which will be applied in practice, provide an insight into a community that is very different in many respects from the mainstream heterosexual community. This insight may offer the re-evaluation of heteronormative values and norms of the mainstream society. Moreover, looking at such a distinct community with its own rules, norms and positive and negative aspects may also help the society at large to develop a sense of tolerance and acceptance.

In order to analyze the gay communication patterns and to decode the meaning of gay language, the four gay communication strategies (see Section 2.3) will be applied to some relevant examples from *Queer as Folk*. There are many instances in the TV series where gay communication patterns can be observed and sorted according to the four strategies described by Sonenschein. There are two new strategies used by the LGBT individuals that can also be observed in gay communication. The sections below present practical application of gay communication strategies.

4.1.1 Application of the Strategy of Effeminization in Decoding Gay Language

The first of Sonenschein’s strategies is *Effeminization*. In example (4.2) Emmet is talking about a man who expresses interest in Michael near a gay bar:

- (4.2) Emmet: Check out that bubble butt. And that basket? Enough in there for a big bad wolf. [...] Well, if it isn’t *Miss Riding Hood* and *her* big basket?

Notice how Emmet is referring to a man by calling him *Miss Riding Hood* and using pronoun *her* instead of *him*. This is said by a gay person about another gay person and clearly marks both people as gay. Sonenschein states that “effeminization is often considered to be the outstanding mark of the homosexual”. It is true to some extent as it often appears that many gay individuals refer to themselves or other gay people by effeminate pronouns or other feminine words. It must, however, be made clear that a generic term *a homosexual* (used extensively by earlier authors) is

an older term that does not necessarily fit all the people in the LGBT community. Thus, some of Sonnenschein's arguments cannot be applied directly in the 21st century. The basic principles, however, are valid.

In example (4.3) the group of men are in a gym and one of them is trying to become fit and, thus, appears to be working extra hard. The others, although they all are in a masculine environment, refer to him using feminine words:

- (4.3) Michael: What's with *G.I. Jane*⁸?
Ted: If he's not careful, he *might actually break* a sweat. *Or a nail*.

Michael asks everyone what has happened to Emmett not by calling him his real name but by referring to him as *G.I. Jane*, a fictional female character from a 1997 movie about the hardships that a woman soldier experiences during her training with the US Navy Special Warfare Group. In the response to Michael's question, Ted answers that Emmett (referring to him by using masculine pronoun *he*) might *break a sweat* or *break a nail* again effeminizing him and talking about his feminine features. In the conversation in (4.3) the same person is referred to in feminine words twice, which has an effect of strengthening the overall impression of the homosexuality of that person.

Another example that proves this point is when Michael's uncle is referring to Michael's relationship with his boyfriend David and says:

- (4.4) Vic: Come on, Michael, you're doctor's *wife* now.

In this example Vic calls Michael *doctor's wife* as a warning not to go to a party as a single man. In any case, although Michael is not an effeminate gay man, he is called a *wife* as, perhaps, a reference to Michael and David's relationship and their life together as partners, which some people may perceive as succumbing to heteronormative social norms and therefore unacceptable in a gay community. In this light, it is possible to say that this statement is a derogatory statement and the word *wife* is used as an insult. However, Legman's (1941) glossary states that a word *wife* means "the less aggressive member of a homosexual alliance, male or female" (Legman, 1941:33). Therefore, it does not necessarily need to be used as a derogatory term.

Example (4.5) provided below is another instance where a person refers to another gay man using a feminine form of address:

- (4.5) Michael: What the fuck did you do that for? You practically got us engaged.
Brian: Well, I wanna dance with *the bride* at *her* wedding. And Tracy, too.

In (4.5) Brian speaks about dancing with *the bride* at *her* wedding, where by these words he refers to Michael and his co-worker Tracy. Brian says that he wants to dance with the bride and

⁸ *GI Jane* – an American film from 1997 about a first woman who undergoes training in the US Navy Special Warfare Group

with Tracy which means that the bride is Michael. In this situation it is possible to interpret Brian's using of the feminine noun *bride* and pronoun *her* as demeaning terms because Michael is reluctant to tell Tracy about his sexual identity thus leading her to believe that he is an available partner for her. Brian, who disapproves of this, shows his disapproval in this manner, i.e. by effeminizing Michael.

Other examples that refer to this strategy are provided in examples (4.6) and (4.7):

(4.6) Emmett: Just be sure to compliment the hostess.

Michael: *I'm the hostess*.

Brian: And you look lovely.

(4.7) Ted: What happened to you?

Emmett: *Honey*, you name it. How about you?

In (4.6) Michael refers to himself as *hostess* because he and his partner are both having a dinner party. Michael instantly positions himself in this position and assumes the role of a feminine partner in the couple. What may be confusing is that Michael is not an effeminate gay man. However, by referring to himself as such he assumes the role of passivity, which can be seen as a negative trait of his personality. In example (4.7) Emmet talks to Ted and addresses him using an effeminate adjective *honey*. This does not in any way effeminate Ted but rather Emmett and his usage of feminine words.

In some cases, as provided by example (4.8), a person's homosexuality may be referred to by an outsider, a person who may, for different reasons, refer to a gay man by using feminine references:

(4.8) Emmett: Looks like it's just us, Three Musketeers.

Deb: [shows up with the check] More like *the Pointer Sisters*⁹.

By calling a group of men a feminine name, Deb specifically refers to their sexual identity, humorously and without condescension indicating that their not manly enough to be called the three musketeers, famous French literary characters, the soldiers in the court of Louis the XIII. Instead, if they want to be a group, they might be called *the Pointer Sisters*, an American girl music band. Deb does not intend to either effeminate or criticize the men but rather to joke about their sexual identity.

To sum up, effeminization as a strategy can be used as either a neutral strategy, mostly to refer to a person's non-heterosexual sexual orientation by himself or by other gay people or even by an outsider. There are many reasons why it could be done, in most cases probably as a mild insult, mostly by acquaintances and close friends. In other cases it simply refers to people's being less aggressive and having other feminine traits. However, this strategy is used often in homosexual communication.

⁹ Pointer Sisters – a popular girl band in the US in the 1970s and the 1980s.

4.1.2 Application of the Strategy of Utilization in Decoding Gay Language

The second strategy described by Sonenschein (1969) was *Utilization*, which means that words, in most cases slang terms, used by other groups are applied in homosexual contexts and are used here. These terms are in most cases related with sex and sexual activities. Examples below indicate the usage of this strategy. Example (4.9) is an instance of the usage of such a word. In it Brian is talking about his friend Lindsay:

(4.9) Brian: I wish I could have been here. How often do I get to see *snatch*?

The word *snatch* is a vulgar slang term meaning ‘vagina’ and is used here by Brian who ironically says that he is sorry to have missed his lesbian friend Lindsay giving birth. Although the word is used in both heterosexual and homosexual communities, and the strategy of utilization is applied by Brian, his usage of the word still refers to his being gay: he ironically says that he is sorry to have missed the birth but then gives the reason for being sorry, i.e. he wanted to see *snatch* (Lindsay’s vagina) because he does not have a chance to do that very often. Keeping in mind that he is gay, his desire to see woman sexual organs is understood here as an ironic statement, which, although using a non-homosexual term still refers to his homosexuality. In other words it can be stated that in many instances a homosexual person may say various things but when it is necessary these words and expressions refers to his/her homosexuality.

Examples (4.10), (4.11) and (4.12) also illustrate the use of slang terms that are in this case reapplied in homosexual context but do not change their meaning when used in heterosexual context.

- (4.10) Michael: I told you. I’m not interested.
Ted: Maybe, just for once, you should be. Show a certain someone he’s not the only one who can *score*.
- (4.11) Emmet: On the other hand, they don’t *come* as quick and they have lots of money. So, where’s he taking you?
- (4.12) Brian: You were on the phone when he *shot his load* all over me. (Everyone groans. Justin winces.)
Lindsay: [laughing] Oooh, Brian!

For instance, in example (4.10) the word *score* means to engage in sexual intercourse, and is probably used more by men, rather than women, and there seems to be no difference in usage in heterosexual or homosexual contexts. The term *to come*, in (4.12), meaning to have an orgasm, is also used for both men and women, in both homosexual and heterosexual contexts. Finally, the term *to shoot one’s load*, which refers to an ejaculation, is, equally used in both heterosexual and homosexual contexts. The words have the same meaning but most of such terms are related with sexual activity.

Example (4.13) provides words most usually used by heterosexual individuals to refer to homosexual sex activities and in many cases intended as an insult:

- (4.13) Chris: Yeah, then why do you have a nipple-ring?
Justin: I wanted it.
Chris: Yeah, so your *fudge-packin' friends* can pull on it while they're butt-fucking you?
Justin: How do you know so much about what *faggots* do unless you are one?

Such words as *fudge-packing* and *faggot* are used by Chris who tries to insult Justin and talk about his sexual activity. The adjective *fudge-packing* refers to anal intercourse and is a gruesome way of depicting it.

In conclusion, it could be said that there is probably no difference in the way that homosexuals and heterosexuals use sexually-charged slang term. The strategy of utilization may not necessarily be viewed as a separate strategy nowadays because of the changed attitude toward slang in general. In this light, there is no difference as to who uses particular terms and slang words, homosexuals or heterosexuals. However, it can be assumed that homosexuals take up the slang terms from their heterosexual counterparts especially if they refer to sex and sexual activity.

4.1.3 Application of the Strategy of Redirection in Decoding Gay Language

The third of Sonenschein's strategies was *Redirection*. This is an interesting strategy that refers to words and expressions being taken from the heterosexual context and being reapplied in homosexual context. Usually, although not always, these words are not of sexual nature within the heterosexual world, but they are turned into sexually charged words and expressions as soon as they appear in homosexual contexts. For instance, in example (4.14) Melanie expresses her anger at Brian by calling his partner *a trick*:

- (4.14) Melanie: What shock? You're the one who gave birth. All he did was show up with his latest *trick*.

In this quote, Melanie speaks about Brian's new partner and calls him *a trick*. Slang dictionary describes the word *trick* as either 'a sexually active female' or 'a person who spends money for sexual intercourse, usually in the context of prostitution'. In the homosexual context, however, the word *trick* means 'a short-term sex partner'. Legman's (1941) explanation of the word states that *to do tricks* means 'to be willing to fellate or to submit to predication; said of a male prostitute of any type and sexuality' (Legman, 1941:31). The meaning of a word *trick* in a

heterosexual as well as in a homosexual contexts changes, although in both contexts it is related with sexuality.

In another example Justin talks to Daphne, his schoolmate about his first sexual encounter with Brian:

(4.15) Daphne: So, what was it like?

Justin: Well, I started out as *a tight end* but wound up *a wide receiver*.

Daphne's question about Justin's first sexual encounter with Brian does not require an extensive answer but Justin talks about it in sexualized language. He uses expressions *tight end* and *wide receiver*, both of which are technical terms used in American football, and gives these words new, sexualized meaning by placing them in this particular co-text, i.e. the conversation with Daphne about sex. Both *tight end* and *wide receiver* in this case lose their meaning as sports metaphors and become sex metaphors, referring to anal sex.

In (4.16) we notice how again the meaning of a word becomes "homosexualized" as soon as it appears in the homosexual context:

(4.16) Justin: [turns to face Brian] So, you gonna raise him?

Brian: [laughs] Me? No. Way. *The munchers* are.

The word *muncher* (which means 'to chew food audibly or with a steady working of the jaws' also originally referred to a series of educational computer games) has acquired new meaning: by referring to women as *munchers*, Brian means to say *lesbians* (however, using a demeaning reference to oral sexual activity between lesbian women). In a similar way heterosexual individuals can also be referred to in slang terms. The word *breeder* (referring to someone who is able to procreate) is used by homosexuals who, naturally, cannot procreate. The usage is provided in examples (4.17) and (4.18):

(4.17) Michael: My god. This place is like *breeder* central.

(4.18) Brian: Yeah, you try spending an evening with some back-slapping *breeder* from Altoona, smoking cigars and talking about pussy.

The term *breeder* in this context, as well as the word *muncher* in (4.16), is used as demeaning terms or insults to both the heterosexual individuals and lesbians (as perceived through the eyes of a gay man). Of course, it is not only the heterosexuals and lesbians who are referred to by insulting terms. There are insults for gay men to be used by other gay men. One such term is provided in examples (4.19) and (4.20):

(4.19) Brian: Because that's what you are, pretending you're one of them.

Michael: I couldn't help it.

Brian: No, you could have told her the truth, instead of acting like a scared little *faggot*.

According to Legman (1941), the term *faggot* means a ‘homosexual’ but the term is used as a derogatory term “especially when used by homosexuals of each other” (Legman 1941:24). It is possible, of course, to find the usage of the term used by other people to insult a gay man by using this term. As example (4.20) suggests:

(4.20) Melanie: Yeah, that’s what I said to him. I said, ‘Brian is *not* the person you want responsible for your life. He’s a selfish, narcissistic little fucking *faggot*!’ And let me tell you something, it’s not because you suck cock, it’s because you’re a little fucking coward! So go, get out, now!

In (4.20) Melanie calls Brian a *faggot* simply to call him a coward (she explains that very clearly in the quote) and the term in this specific context does not have to do with a person’s homosexuality at all. The term *faggot* here is understood as an insult to a person who does not accept the responsibility that has been given to him rather than someone who is gay. This is often the case when homosexual people refer to others using demeaning terms: naturally, they would not refer to other’s sexuality as they share the same sexual preferences as the next person.

This strategy also includes words and expressions that are specifically and almost exclusively used in homosexual circles only. Example (4.21) provides the usage of one such word, namely *twink*:

(4.21) Brian: Fuck you. Fuck you. *Fuck you*. For going home with some tweaked out little *twinkie* and thinking you got lucky.

The word *twinkie* or in some cases *twink* refers to ‘a young, boyish-looking gay man’ and this word is exclusive in homosexual circles. It would be very unusual to find this word used by anyone outside the homosexual culture. As with other groups of people, there are many more such words which can be said to be used only by homosexual people and only in specific contexts.

All in all, this is an interesting gay communication strategy that could be further researched. The words and expressions that are used by heterosexual people, not necessarily in a sexual way, are taken and re-used in a homosexual context. Usually these words are slang terms and insults or simple metaphors to which new meanings are ascribed.

4.1.4 Application of the Strategy of Invention in Decoding Gay Language

The final strategy is called *Invention*. As explained before, it refers to words and expressions taken from heterosexual contexts and having nothing to do with sexuality, they are ascribed new sexual meanings within gay contexts. The words and expressions, if not used in any sexual way, usually have completely different meanings in both the heterosexual context and the homosexual

one. This can be seen as one of the most interesting strategies in gay communication, as it uses words and expressions in our everyday language giving them completely new meanings.

In the following example Ted and Emmet talk about a man, using expressions *top* (meaning ‘a dominant partner in anal sex’) and *bottom* (meaning ‘a submissive partner in anal sex’).

- (4.22) Emmett: Sean Peters. Went home with him the other night thinking he was this brutal *top*.
Ted: And?
Emmett: Turns out, he’s a big *nelly bottom*.

Such expressions as *top* and *bottom* have a different meaning in everyday language but the meaning changes in a homosexual context. Moreover, in example (4.22) there is the strategy of effeminization applied together with invention. The expression *nelly bottom* refers not only to a ‘submissive partner in anal sex’ but also to a very effeminate man who is that submissive partner. The merging of two strategies has an effect of enforcing the statement that is being uttered.

In (4.23) we notice how the word *number*, seemingly a neutral noun, becomes a sexualized word, meaning ‘an attractive man’:

- (4.23) Emmet: See that *number* in the red shorts?
Ted looks.
Ted: I could work out for a hundred years and never look like that.
Emmet laughs.

Examples (4.24) and (4.25) illustrate this strategy more clearly:

- (4.24) Ted: Why am I wasting my time staring at a bunch of over-pumped *princesses* with IQs smaller than their waist.

(4.25) Emmett: Check out that bubble butt. And that *basket*?

Although in both cases the words *princess* and *basket* literally mean what we understand them to mean, in homosexual contexts these words acquire additional meanings that can be determined from the context. A *princess* refers to either an effeminate gay man or a self-assured and snobby gay man whereas the word *basket* refers to male genitalia: Legman’s (1941) glossary states that a *basket* is ‘the scrotum or, rather, the size of the testicles and scrotum as seen or felt through the trousers’ (Legman, 1941:21).

In example (4.26) Brian uses the word *inch* to refer to ‘minutes’, the time in which he is having a date coming over. The word *inches* must, undoubtedly refer to the size of the sex organ that the date has:

- (4.26) Brian: That’s even scarier. Listen, you can’t stay. I’ve got someone coming over in approximately *seven and a half inches*, so... [they get up and start walking to the door]
I’ll see you tomorrow.

This can be viewed as a playful and innovative use of language that refers to Brian's sexually active life which he himself stresses by using the term *inches*.

Examples (4.27) and (4.28) further demonstrate how the strategy of invention work:

(4.27) Brian: Would you two please shut the fuck up. I think it's great that Mikey's got *a steady*.
Michael: He's not a steady. We went out twice.
Ted: Around here, that's a long term relationship.
Emmett: Next thing you know, you'll be exchanging rings.

(4.28) Brian: Not even six months old, and my kid's already *a drama queen*.
Ted: Well, at least you know he's yours.
Michael: The good news is he's alright.

The word *steady* in (4.27), from the adjective 'steady' refers to a long-term partner or 'a boyfriend'. It is by no means a sexually charged word and does not necessarily has to be used by homosexual individuals exclusively. Rather, its new meaning as 'a boyfriend' is ascribed to this word in this particular situation. In example (4.28) a *drama queen* refers to an emotional man and the word combination is used to refer to Brian's six-month-old son having been taken to hospital with fever. Brian refers to this as a sort of tantrum, and therefore calls his son, jokingly, *a drama queen*.

As can be seen from example (4.29), some words, especially related with sexual activities, fall into this category:

(4.29) Michael: We need a secret code word, like 'shaazam!', so that if I get in a tight spot you can come in and rescue me.
Brian: Tight spot. How about '*buttplug*.'
Michael: *Buttplug* might be a little hard to work into a conversation.

In this example the word that Brian suggests that Michael could use as a secret code word is *buttplug* (meaning 'a special device used for anal sex'), which is a word that only exists in homosexual context and cannot be found outside of the gay circles.

In conclusion it could be said that the words and expressions used by homosexuals in their circles but taken from everyday language is one of the most interesting strategies. It is the peculiarity of how the meaning of words such as *top*, *bottom*, *queen*, *basket* or *number*, for instance, is constructed and changed from its literal meaning to what they mean in homosexual contexts. This strategy shows inventiveness and creativity that language gives to people. Also, the strategy probably stems from the times when it was necessary to conceal one's sexuality. Then, using everyday words (or invented words) seemed like a possible way to avoid, in many cases, criminal prosecution.

There are two more strategies that could be observed in homosexual communication. The strategies are not described by Sonenschein but they might be considered to

be valid in terms of showing how homosexual people communicate, how meaning is constructed and how it is understood by others.

4.1.5 Application of the Strategy of Sexualization in Decoding Gay Language

A strategy that could easily be observed in the speech of homosexual men is an incorporation of (homo)sexual notions, concepts and topics in everyday conversations. I would like to call this strategy *sexualization*. This appears to be a process, during which seemingly everyday topics, such as a conversation about ordering the food in a restaurant or talking about one's job are either given a sexual "colouring", or turned into sexually charged conversations, which sometimes lose the primary, original meaning of the intended statement. In other words, this strategy refers to sexual themes appearing and reappearing in people's everyday conversations. This probably has roots in the fact that sexuality for homosexual people is the one aspect of their lives that they all, without exception, share. Therefore, sexualizing everyday objects, topics, conversations and even the everyday language itself, becomes a strategy that probably can be understood as allowing them to feel united and belonging to a group or a community. In example (4.30) we notice how a serious conversation about someone's situation at work is diverted and the topic turns to sexuality in a matter of seconds, the main idea of the conversation losing itself within the new-found topic of sex:

- (4.30) Brian: And if I don't get this account, *I'll be fucked and without lube*.
Emmett: And *that's a bad thing*?

Brian compares not getting an important account with being *fucked without lube*, which apparently is a practice that many people would rather avoid. However, Emmett's response is not to Brian's actual problem, not what Brian meant to say by using the metaphor, but rather to how he said it. In other words, Brian complains to his friends about the assignment he has been given at work using a sexual metaphor. Emmet veers from Brian's problem and focuses specifically on the literal meaning of Brian's metaphor, thus, showing interest not in Brian's problem (a complicated assignment at work) but at the meaning of his metaphor (having anal sexual intercourse without lubricant). The metaphor that Brian uses in his speech is a direct reference to anal intercourse and the meaning of the metaphor "I'll be fucked without lube" means here "I will have a lot of problems". Emmet instantly perceives the metaphor in both the literal and the metaphoric sense but chooses rather to discuss further its literal meaning.

Example (4.31) below demonstrates how sex and references to sexuality or even open sexual references are incorporated in even serious conversations:

- (4.31) Michael: His mom said she'd call us if there was any change.
 Brian: You know, he's a first. The first almost dead guy I sort of had sex with.
 Michael: You had sex with Ted?
 Emmett: You never had sex with Ted.
 Michael: When did you have sex with T--
 Brian: Sort of sex. At this semi-orgy.
 Michael: Semi? When?
 Brian: You know that weekend that John-John's plane went down?
 Emmett: Oh ... god. They kept showing him on the beach with his shirt off. I didn't know whether to jerk off or weep.
 Michael: So did-so did you, like, plan it?
 Brian: It just sort of happened. Things do.
 Emmett laughs.
 Brian: It was Scott and Kevin, the Todds.
 Emmett holds up his pinkie finger.
 Brian: And Ted shows up with my taxes and all the sudden we're all doing it and ... he even tried to fuck me.
 Michael: He's in there. His life's like this [gestures up and down], dot on a screen. And that could be us.

The conversation between Brian, Emmett and Michael provided in (4.31) takes place in a hospital, where Ted, about whom they are talking, is in a coma. The conversation starts with Michael saying that Ted's mom would phone them if there were any changes and finishes with Michael stating that any of them could be in a similar situation. However, between his first and last statements, the conversation diverts itself from Ted's health and moves to sex. Brian tells Michael and Emmett the story about his almost-sexual encounter with Ted and both of them join in the conversation. It seems as if the problem of Ted being in a coma is temporarily removed from their heads and a sex story gets all their attention for a while.

In the following examples the conversations are all related with sex and sexual matters, although the topics of the conversations are of completely different nature, in most cases without being related to sexuality at all:

- (4.32) Emmett: Next thing you know, you'll be exchanging rings.
 Ted: Mmm. And then they'll be one of those commitment ceremonies where, like, *all two hundred of the guests have slept with one, if not both, of the happy couple*.
 Emmett: (laughs) Just, um, promise me you won't wear matching white suits.
 Michael: There is no way that is ever going to happen.
- (4.33) Emmett: Or, uh, or invites you away for a romantic weekend in the country.
 Ted: *Not that you'll see much besides the bedroom ceiling*.
- (4.34) Emmett: (to Ted) Listen to him. He's got cold feet already.
 Michael: I'm not getting cold feet. I just...don't know what you do for a whole weekend.
 Emmett: Well, let's see. First you arrive...
 Ted: *Then you fuck*.
 Emmett: Then you unpack...
 Ted: *Then you fuck*.
 Emmett: Then you go berry picking.
 Ted: *Then you fuck*.

Michael: I mean after you fuck.
Emmett: You talk. You get to know each other.

- (4.35) Emmett: So, what's the problem?
Michael: The problem is what I have to talk about?
Ted: What we talk about.
Emmett: *What we've done. Who we've done. Who we want to do it with.*
Michael: These people aren't like us. They're professors and doctors, and things.

As can be seen from the examples above, sex and sexuality can easily be traced and understood within the conversations. In all of the conversations provided, sexuality is not the topic of the conversation, but it is included there. In (4.32) the conversation is about gay marriage, yet Ted still includes reference to sex. In (4.33), similarly, Emmett and Ted talk to Michael about his romantic weekend away in the countryside. Ted skeptically suggests that Michael will not be able to see much *besides the bedroom ceiling* which vaguely states that Michael will be having sex all the time and will not be able to go sightseeing. In (4.34) Ted clearly states what activities are there to be done in the countryside, and his understanding of these outdoor activities are encompassed in the verb *fuck* which he uses three times in the conversation. The example (4.35) is about gay conversation topics and Emmett says that they, meaning gay people, only talk about such things as sex and sexuality.

The fact that gay people use sexualized language in their everyday communication can be illustrated by various examples. Ambiguity plays a key role in this communication. Ambiguous statements, are usually related with sexuality. In all of the following examples the characters use ambiguous language, which is always sexual and suggestive of sexual (mostly homosexual) behaviour. Example (4.36) below illustrates an ambiguous use of a lexical item:

- (4.36) Brian: So, are you *coming* or going? Or *coming* and then going? Or *coming* and staying?

In the quote Brian has invited Justin, his young lover, to his apartment and wants to have sex with him. Literally Brian's question is intended as an invitation to stay over, which, of course, it is. However, the repetition of the word *coming* is sexually suggestive as the verb *come* is used here in a different sense. Online dictionary of English provides this meaning of *come* as its 21st entry: 'to have an orgasm'. Therefore, Brian's invitation, consisting of three colloquial questions is a speech act of suggesting having a sexual intercourse. While the first of the three questions *Are you coming and going?* may not be as apparent (and without other questions may be considered a literal question), the second question *Or coming and then going?* is clearly sexual. Translated into everyday language the question would mean "Do you want to have sex now and then leave?" The third of the three questions may be said to return back from the homo-

sexualized language into standard, hetero-language and reflects the first question: *Are you coming or going?* and *Or coming and staying*.

Another example of homo-sexualized language is Brian's "concern" with Justin's breakfast the next morning:

- (4.37) Brian: [coming down the stairs] There is *no such thing as enough*. [puts arm around Michael] Besides... I couldn't send him off without *a nourishing high protein breakfast*. [into Michael's ear] It's grrrrr-eat!

This utterance can be divided into several parts: first of all Brian tells Michael, his childhood friend that *there's no such thing as enough*, meaning sex and sexual relationship. In the second part of the utterance Brian says that he couldn't send Justin off without *a nourishing high protein breakfast*. This *breakfast* refers to oral sex and the chemical composition of semen, which is partly composed of protein. In a similar way we see the topic of protein, i.e. semen, appearing again in example (4.38) when Deb, the waitress at a local diner, jokingly tells Emmett that he should eat something:

- (4.38) Deb: Okay, boys, what'll it be?
Emmett: Nothing for me, thanks.
Deb: Em, hon, you should try to eat *some of your protein* off a plate.
[Everyone laughs].

Deb's suggestion can be interpreted as referring to Emmett's sexual life and she mockingly suggests that he gets all his protein only through oral sex. This is a clever joke as it can be seen as putting Emmett in a position where he is perceived as a very sexually active man.

In example (4.39) we notice how a routine description of a new born (Brian's son) does not avoid the topic of sexuality and it also sexualized:

- (4.39) Emmett: So, uh, who's he look like?
Michael: Well, he's got Brian's eyes and mouth, and ... Lindsay's nose.
Ted: Well, if he's got *Melanie's dick*, we're in big trouble.

Ted's humorous remark is directed toward one of the legal guardians of the child, Melanie. In the story, although Brian and Lindsay are biological parents, Lindsay and Melanie are a couple who are raising the child together. Therefore, in example (4.39), Ted also includes Melanie as part of the family, which, of course, she is. He, however, makes a remark about Melanie's homosexuality by referring to her having a *dick*, suggesting that she is a masculine type of woman.

Example (4.40) below is from a diner, where Michael and Justin come to have dinner. Debbie, the waitress, who happens to be heterosexual, suggestively speaks about sex and sexual intercourse:

- (4.40) Debbie: Hiya boys. ***Getting' any*** tonight? [to Justin] I haven't seen you around here before. [pulls out her order pad]
 Michael: He's new.
 Debbie: And cute. Every guy in the place has his eye on you tonight, sweetheart.
 [Justin looks around to check.]
 Michael: Can we order?
 Debbie: ***Shoot. Bet it'll be the first time tonight, am I right?*** [laughs]
 [Michael mock-laughs. Justin's eyes are wide at the two of them.]

Debbie's question *Getting' any tonight?* Actually means if Michael and Justin had or are going to have sex (not necessarily with each other). The question probably serves the purpose of suggesting that the two men should have sex. The second part of Debbie's speech in a dialogue contains the verb *shoot* which undoubtedly refers to ejaculation and orgasm as well as her being ready to accept their order for food. Later she mockingly asks a question of whether this "shooting" (ejaculation, not ordering the food) is the first "shooting" that night. Debbie uses ambiguous language probably as a joke and uses two different meanings of the word "shoot" which leads to humorous, sexualized expression.

These examples may be interpreted as clearly showing gay people's (and also people's who are in contact with gay people) preoccupation with sex and sexual intercourse. It may seem that sex plays a very important role in the lives of homosexual people and therefore is included in everyday communication. Also, it could be argued that because of their inability to be gay in the heteronormative society, gay people tend to overuse sexually charged language. However, the story of *Queer as Folk* shows that one's preoccupation with sex can be a temporary matter and changes as a person moves through the six stages of development presented at the beginning of this paper. In other words, although sex is important in gay (as well as heterosexual) person's life, it becomes less prominent as the person develops emotionally and spiritually. In the story such is the case with Justin and the opposite case with Brian.

One more interesting and distinct way of noticing the homosexual language is the usage of specific intertextual cultural (usually relating with pop culture) references in gay language. The usage of intertextual references and their decoding is presented in the section below.

4.2 Intertextual References in Gay Communication

Intertextual references are references in a person's language to various texts (in the broadest sense of the term). This means that when speaking a person may refer to various cultural (in most cases pop-cultural) "texts" such as films, celebrity lives, TV shows and characters and other such matters. In example (4.41) Brian refers to Justin by calling him Dawson:

(4.41) Brian: So, *Dawson*, how are things down at the *creek*?

By saying the name *Dawson* and referring to the *creek*, Brian undoubtedly uses an intertextual reference to an American teenage TV series *Dawson's Creek*. (The cover of the *Dawson's Creek* DVD is presented in Appendix B). His aim is, then, to refer to Justin's very young age and, thus, exclude him from the group of "adults" to which Brian belongs. The reference to *Dawson's Creek* can only be understood correctly by a viewer who is competent in American pop culture. However, the information encoded in intertextual references is not usually very important, so as not to make the text that is being uttered by the characters incomprehensible to a viewer who does not know American pop culture very well but it can help one understand the meaning of the overall text.

Another example refers to one more American film *Psycho* (DVD cover of *Psycho* is in Appendix C):

(4.42) Brian: No lingering on the playground or in the locker room with the gym teacher.
Michael: Oh, you did not tell him about that!
Brian: It's the most famous shower scene since *Psycho*.

There are many references in *Queer as Folk* to celebrities and their lives, which probably suggests gay people's preoccupation with trivial matters, such as celebrity problems. Examples (4.43), (4.44) and (4.45) provide instances where famous people are referred

(4.43) Michael: I better go change.
Emmett: For your date? Ooo, here's a sports mag. Better bone up. [hands Michael the magazine] Just in case the conversation veers away from *Liza's weight problem*.

(4.44) Emmett: I feel like *a 1991 Madonna video*.

(4.45) Emmett: Give me those divas of disco any day. *Gloria Gaynor*¹⁰.
Ted: *Donna Summer*¹¹.
Michael: And *Miss Alicia Bridges*¹².
All: [singing] I love the night life, I like to boogie, on the disco floor, ahhHHHH

In all of the examples presented above, celebrities are mentioned, all of whom are symbols of American pop culture. In example (4.43) by saying *Liza's weight problems* Emmett probably refers to American actress Liza Minnelli and her problems. Emmett suggests that Michael read a sports magazine; otherwise he will not be able to speak about anything else but celebrities. A reference to Michael's homosexuality is made by suggesting that he is unable to speak about anything else except unimportant, trivial matters. In examples (4.44) and (4.45) numerous celebrities, American singers and songwriters, are mentioned, each of which, apparently, have

¹⁰ Gloria Gaynor (b. 1949) an American singer, considered to be a gay icon

¹¹ Donna Summer (b. 1948) an American singer and songwriter

¹² Alicia Bridges (b. 1953) an American singer

some meaning to both Michael and Emmett, referring to their past years as teenagers when the mentioned celebrities were very popular.

There are also references not only to American pop culture, but also to, for instance, literature. Examples below illustrate how literary texts are referred to in the conversations in *Queer as Folk*:

- (4.2) Emmet: Check out that bubble butt. And that basket? Enough in there for a big bad wolf.
[...] Well, if it isn't *Miss Riding Hood* and her big basket?
- (4.46) [Michael and Emmett's place. Michael's in the bathroom, getting ready, as Emmett watches. There's knocking at the door]
Emmett: Ooh-ooh! That must be *Prince Charming*. [he opens the door to find Brian]
Make that *the wicked witch*.
[Brian walks in]
- (4.47) Michael: [makes a face and starts talking on the phone again] Uh, yeah, I-I think it'll be better in a couple of days. Uh. Oh, don't worry. I definitely plan on seeing my chiropractor. [Emmett laughs] Thanks. Thanks. Bye [he hangs up]
Ted: *You know what grows when you lie*.
Emmett: Too bad it's your nose.
Michael: I'm entitled to a couple of personal days.
- (4.48) Ted: Then we'd better get busy. Right, *Professor Higgins*?
Emmett: Right, *Pickering*. We'll *turn you from a simple flower girl into a lady*.

In example (4.2) and (4.46) there are references to fairy tales, the Little Red Riding Hood and another one to a tale about the *Prince Charming* and *the wicked witch*. In both cases it is not only the intertextual reference to the fairy tales but also the strategy of effeminization applied together with intertextuality: in (4.2) a man is referred to as *Miss Riding Hood* and in (4.46) Brian is called *the wicked witch*. In example (4.47) Ted makes a reference to Carlo Collodi's 1883 children's book *The Adventures of Pinocchio* in which the main character's, Pinocchio's, nose would grow a little if he lied to someone. The intertextual reference is here used by Ted, and Emmet instantly sexualizes it and says *too bad it's your nose*, meaning that it would be good if not one's nose but, probably, one's penis grew instead when one lied. Finally, example (4.48) is a clear reference to Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* in which Professor Higgins and Pickering try to transform the main character, who is a flower girl, into a lady by teaching her how to speak and behave properly, as a lady. Thus, in (4.48) Ted and Emmett assume the roles of Professor Higgins and Pickering in order to make Michael, their friend, into *a lady*.

To summarize what has been said before, it is possible to state that homosexual people's language relies to some extent on trivial and unimportant matters such as celebrities' life facts and TV shows. Homosexual individuals tend to incorporate both sexualized language and intertextual references in their speech as much as they can. It is possible to argue that this is due to the fact that they share interests in the same fields of TV and pop culture.

5. CONCLUSIONS

It always seemed to me a bit pointless to disapprove of homosexuality. It's like disapproving of rain.
Francis Maude¹³

The study has presented theoretical and practical approaches to how homosexual people use language in the American TV series *Queer as Folk* and how the language that they use helps them construct and establish their (homo)sexual identity. First, the theoretical part of the thesis presented sociological aspects of how homosexual individuals develop emotionally and within the boundaries of heteronormative social structures. Second, some sociolinguistic aspects were presented, aimed at explaining the relationship between language and sexuality. Finally, gay communication strategies were presented and explained.

The practical part of the thesis presented the language used by homosexual people in the first few episodes of *Queer as Folk*. The examples taken from the TV series were analyzed and the meaning concealed within the text was explained and decoded. Four strategies by Sonenschein (1969) were presented and the material was analyzed according to these strategies. However, it was noticed that some could not be categorized into the existing four strategies. Therefore, two new strategies were introduced and the text was analyzed according to these strategies as well as the existing scholarly approaches. The analysis of the linguistic units in the theoretical part led to the confirmation of the hypotheses of the thesis.

The first hypothesis of the thesis was that **homosexual community has a distinct homosexual language that becomes apparent within that community**. Having analyzed the material presented in the second part of the thesis, it is possible to draw a conclusion that homosexual community has a distinct, well formulated version of the everyday language that is used within the LGBT community among the people who are homosexual. Thus, the hypothesis is confirmed that the language of homosexual people is a distinct language of a community governed by its own social and gender norms, which do not necessarily correspond with the norms of the mainstream heteronormative society.

The second hypothesis stated that **homosexual subculture has influenced and influences the language that homosexual individuals use within their community**. Analysis of the material on the language used by homosexual people before the decriminalization of homosexuality was distinct from the language of the present-day LGBT community members. The language of homosexuals has changed according to the changes that took place in the society. It is also possible to draw a conclusion that since sexuality influences the lives of

¹³ Francis Maud (b. 1953) a British politician, a Conservative Party Member of Parliament, a Shadow Cabinet Office Minister and Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (since 2007)

homosexual individuals, the language, too, is influenced by it and sexuality is reflected in the language of the homosexual people. Therefore, the second hypothesis that the homosexual subculture influences the language of the LGBT community members, has been confirmed.

The aim of the study was to show that such a linguistic entity as a homosexual people's language exists and that it has its own rules and its own distinct ways of expressing certain aspects of people's lives. Considering the scope of the study, many things that could be discussed were left out and many aspects that could have been included were also omitted. More studies of the language of the LGBT individuals could be carried out, taking into consideration gay women's speech or, for instance, the speech of transsexual individuals. Most importantly, there is a possibility for future research to look at the language of the Lithuanian LGBT community and to compose a corpus of the gay language used in Lithuania. The material has not been studied before and it might be a way of looking into the community that makes up to, according to some calculation, approximately ten per cent of our society.

When Martin Luther King Junior gave his famous sixteen-minute speech in Washington D.C. in 1963 about racial equality and anti-discrimination, he wished for the future in which people would not be discriminated for what they are. He said "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." Today it is possible to say the same about the LGBT community, the people who are still marked by social stigma and judged according to what they are rather than who they are. There is, however, hope that with time and with the help of education the barrier that divides us into heterosexuals, homosexuals, transsexuals and other categories will be somehow crossed.

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APPENDIX A: Questionnaire to Students

*VDU Anglų filologijos katedroje atliekamas tyrimas magistro baigiamajam darbui apie Lietuvos studentų požiūrį į homoseksualumą. Anketa yra anoniminė, tyrime bus naudojami tik apibendrinti duomenys.
Dėkojame už Jūsų atsakymus.*

1. Jūsų lytis: ☐ vyras ☐ moteris

2. Jūsų amžius: _____ m.

3. Trumpai apibūdinkite, ką reiškia šie žodžiai:

heteroseksualumas: _____

homoseksualumas: _____

biseksualumas: _____

homofobija: _____

4. Kaip apibūdintumėte savo seksualinę tapatybę:

☐ heteroseksualus (-i); ☐ homoseksualus (-i); ☐ biseksualus (-i); ☐ atsisakau nurodyti

5. Kaip apibūdintumėte, kas yra:

a) gėjus: _____

b) lesbietė: _____

c) biseksualas: _____

d) transeksualas: _____

6. Ar pažįstate:

a) gėjų: ☐ nepažįstu; ☐ pažįstu vieną; ☐ pažįstu keletą; ☐ pažįstu daug

b) lesbietę: ☐ nepažįstu; ☐ pažįstu vieną; ☐ pažįstu keletą; ☐ pažįstu daug

c) biseksualų asmenį: ☐ nepažįstu; ☐ pažįstu vieną; ☐ pažįstu keletą; ☐ pažįstu daug

d) transeksualų asmenį: ☐ nepažįstu; ☐ pažįstu vieną; ☐ pažįstu keletą; ☐ pažįstu daug

7. Ar Jūsų draugų tarpe yra homoseksualių žmonių? ☐ taip; ☐ ne

8. Ar manote, kad š. m. gegužės mėn. vyksiančios eitynės „Už lygybę“ („Baltic Gay Pride“) yra:

☐ reikalingas renginys; ☐ nereikalingas renginys; ☐ neturiu nuomonės

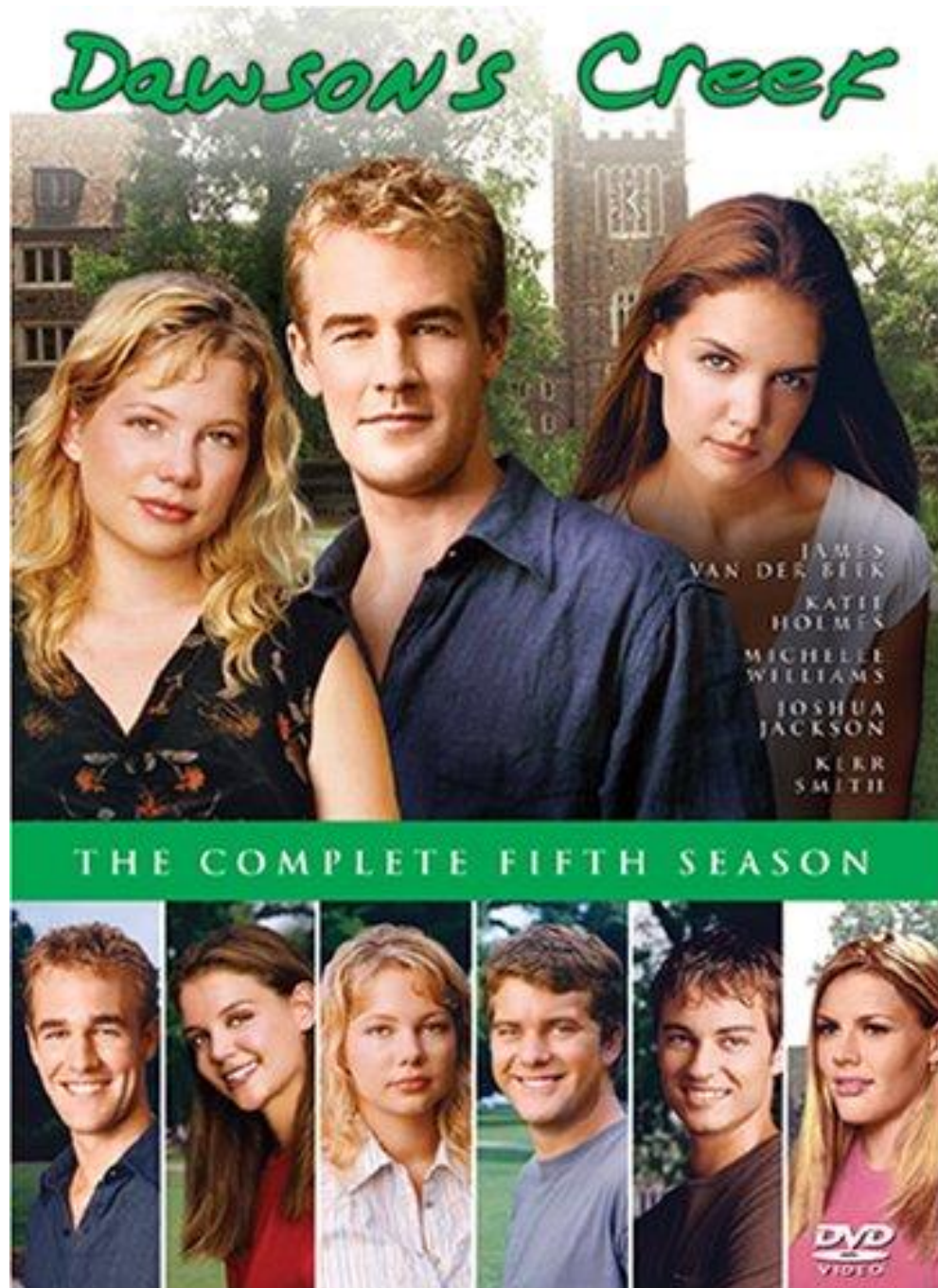
9. Ar manote, kad homoseksualūs žmonės turėtų turėti teisę tuoktis? ☐ taip; ☐ ne

Kodėl taip manote? _____

10. Ar manote, kad homoseksualūs žmonės turėtų turėti teisę auginti vaikus? ☐ taip; ☐ ne

Kodėl taip manote? _____

APPENDIX B: DVD Cover of *Dawson's Creek*



APPENDIX C: DVD Cover of *Psycho*

