The paper falls into two main parts. In the first part, I will be talking about the swearing practices among Vilnius adolescents. In the second part, I will be presenting the results of the online questionnaire about the adolescents’ attitudes towards swearing in Russian and in English.

Swearing is a daily linguistic practice for the vast majority of adolescents. Swearing is definitely not restricted to adolescents who hold "anti-school" attitudes and don’t conform to adults’ norms. However, the results of the ethnographic fieldwork in a secondary school in Vilnius (participant observation, self-recordings) show that deviation from the school norms goes along with certain swearing practices: Pupils who don’t conform to school norms use a lot more swearwords than other pupils. Besides, they usually swear in Russian.

I was also interested if such linguistic practices – great usage of Russian swearwords – are recognized as "anti-school" and streetwise. By the end of the fieldwork, I presented the questionnaire to my informants. They were, among other questions, asked to evaluate two utterances and to indicate the gender of a speaker. Both utterances were taken from the recordings of adolescents’ spontaneous speech. One utterance contained a lot of Russian swearwords; the other contained the English swearword "fuck". The results of this survey show that the great usage of Russian swearwords is associated with streetwiseness and masculinity. The English swearword "fuck" has gained more acceptance among my informants and was described as an indicator of a neutral and feminine youth language.

References


Keywords: swearing, language attitudes, youth language.