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**DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIAL LEXIS OF
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS PROTECTION DISCOURSE IN
LATVIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Summary of the Doctoral Thesis



RIGA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Liepaja Academy

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To be granted the scientific degree of Doctor of Science (PhD), the present Doctoral Thesis has been submitted for defence at the open meeting of RTU Promotion Council on 29 April 2026, at 12:00 at the Liepaja Academy of Riga Technical University, Lielā iela 14, Room 227.

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DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I hereby declare that the Doctoral Thesis submitted for review to Riga Technical University for promotion to the scientific degree of Doctor of Science (PhD) is my own. I confirm that this Doctoral Thesis has not been submitted to any other university for promotion to a scientific degree.

Andrejs Gorbunovs (signature)

Date:

The Doctoral Thesis has been written in Latvian. It consists of an Introduction, 4 chapters, Conclusions, four figures, seven diagrams, 64 tables, and five appendices; the total number of pages is 200, not including appendices. The Bibliography contains 212 titles.

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Introduction

The Doctoral Thesis is a study in the field of applied linguistics that analyses legislation and discourse on children's rights protection in Latvia and the United Kingdom. Paragraphs containing definitions and use of special lexis were excerpted from the analysed legislation on protection of children's rights to evaluate use of the special lexis in different editions of particular laws, which allows for a historic review of special lexis development. This method illustrates changes in definitions of special lexical units, while the legal analysis of law paragraph texts allowed to discover changes in language use and legal essence. The research describes processes that result in the introduction of new units of special lexis of children's rights protection or changes of the existing ones, while also providing an insight into similarities and differences in the development of the special lexis of children's rights protection in both countries.

The relevance of the study described in the thesis is confirmed by the number of child custody cases in the United Kingdom that result in children being removed from families of Latvian nationals. Court cases that result in the removal of custody rights in the United Kingdom are judged in English, and the case materials are translated to be provided to relevant state institutions of Latvia and to children's parents and relatives, who might lack special legal knowledge. The quality of such translations is very important, but the lack of equivalent special lexis units in the Latvian language creates serious issues for translators. Currently, only one explanatory dictionary of terms in this field is available in the Latvian language: "Terminu skaidrojošā vārdnīca ģimenes un bērnu tiesībās" (Explanatory Dictionary of Terms in Family and Child Law (2016)). The importance of this issue is also confirmed by the speeches of former ambassadors of Latvia in the United Kingdom, Andris Teikmanis and Baibas Braže, who stated that in 2014, custody rights were removed in 33 cases, in 2015 – 67 cases, and in 2016 – 78 cases. In 2024, in Latvia, custody rights were taken from 1212 parents in regard to 1439 children. This tendency continues to grow (BAC, 2025).

Hypothesis of the Thesis: The legal and linguistic changes in laws on children's rights protection allow us to follow the development of special lexis of the legal discourse in this field and to compare the development of the special lexis of the children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom.

Goal of the Thesis: To compare the development of special lexis of the children's rights protection discourse to study similarities and differences in the development, while describing potential translation issues.

Tasks of the Thesis

1. To provide a historic overview on development of children's rights and the discourse of children's rights in Latvia and the United Kingdom.
2. To define concepts of the children's rights discourse and units of special lexis by review and analysis of the theoretical material.

3. To excerpt the material for analysis from laws issued in different periods of time.
4. To study and compare the excerpted material while describing insights gained during research and comparison of the material.
5. To compile results of theoretical and practical material analysis and to provide a summary on changes and similarities found in the development of special lexis of children's rights protection discourse.

Methods used in the Thesis

1. Descriptive method – the method was used to describe the theoretical material and the material excerpted from the analysed laws.
2. Discourse analysis – the method was used to analyse the effect of various historical and linguistic factors on the discourse of the children's rights protection discourse and its special lexis.
3. Statistical method – the method was used to compile statistical data about the analysed laws (i.e., changes in word count, changes in the number of special lexis units, etc.).
4. Content analysis – the method was used to analyse the content of law paragraphs to determine legal changes and the nature of such changes, if any.
5. Comparative analysis – the method was used to compare and describe the excerpted materials, historical factors and discourses.

Scientific novelty of the Thesis. A new interdisciplinary approach was used in this Thesis. Linguistic changes in the paragraphs of the laws are analysed together with changes in definitions of special lexis in Latvian and English, while also comparing the legal changes. Three categories were used to describe the observed changes: 1st category – no changes; 2nd category – linguistic changes only; 3rd category – linguistic and legal changes. Possible reasons for the changes were provided. Special lexis units with their definitions in laws were selected separately and categorised in three groups: “family”, “special lexis of the children's rights protection system”, “children's rights violations”. For a statistical summary of special lexis units, several closely equivalent special lexis units in Latvian and English were determined to provide an insight into equivalence issues. This approach provides a comprehensive insight into the development of the special lexis of children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom.

Practical application of the Thesis. The research of the Thesis will provide information to experts working in the field of children's rights protection about historic development of the special lexis of this field both in Latvian and the United Kingdom with an opportunity to use the results of this research in new terminology development and preparation of new legislation, while providing insights into processes that affect the children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom. The Thesis lays a framework for future research of children's rights protection discourse and special lexis in the Latvian language. Future research on these subjects will allow us to develop specialised dictionaries that would promote consequent use of terminology in English and Latvian language translations and texts. The categories provided in

the Thesis for comparison of changes can be used in research in other fields. The Thesis also provides an insight into units of special lexis that differ due to different demographic and social situations in both countries, thus allowing to predict the need for necessary legal mechanisms and tools in a timely manner. The results of the Thesis will be useful to translators and interpreters who work with legal texts on a daily basis.

Thesis structure. The Thesis is structured in four chapters with subchapters. The **first chapter** describes the history of children's rights development in Latvia and the United Kingdom. This chapter provides a historical overview of the development of children's rights and the special lexis of this field in Latvia and the United Kingdom, while naming the main pieces of legislation, events and people that have shaped the development of the field and its special lexis. The **second chapter** describes theoretical material and the discourse of children's rights protection, while applying insights gained during the theoretical material analysis to determine characteristics of the children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom. The **third chapter** describes the material excerpted from different editions of the six laws (three in Latvian, three in English) on children's rights protection. The excerpted material is divided into three categories. The **fourth chapter** compares the development of special lexis of children's rights protection in Latvia and the United Kingdom and provides a summary of key similarities and differences.

The Doctoral Thesis research has been approbated in eight reports at scientific conferences in Latvia and abroad.

1. Bērnu tiesību valodas vēsturiskā attīstība Latvijas teritorijā: bērnu tiesību valodas salīdzinājums Vietējo civillikumu kopojumā un Civillikumā. Zinātniskā konference "Vārds un tā pētīšanas aspekti", Liepājas Universitāte. Liepāja, 2019. gads.
2. Bērnu tiesības Lielbritānijā: speciālās leksikas vēsturiskās attīstības tendences. Zinātniskā konference "Via Scientiarum", Ventspils Augstskola. Ventspils, 2019. gads.
3. Bērnu tiesību aizsardzības speciālās leksikas vēsturiskās attīstības tendences Latvijā un Lielbritānijā. Zinātniskā konference "Perspectives of Baltic Philology V: Trapped in Language and Culture", Poznaņa, Adama Mickēviča universitātes Poznaņā Baltistikas nodaļa. Poznaņa, Polija, 2019. gads.
4. Diskurs detskogo prava v Latvii. Zinātniskā konference "Sovremennaya teoreticheskaya lingvistika i problemi sudebnoy ekspertizi". A.S. Puškina Krievijas valsts Krievu valodas institūts, Maskava, Krievija 2019. gads.
5. Bērnu tiesības Latvijā un Lielbritānijā: izaicinājumi tulkošanā. Latvijas tulku un tulkotāju biedrības (LTTB) konference "Aktuāli jautājumi tulkojumzinātnē". Rīga, 2019. gads.
6. Challenges in translation of children's rights content from English into Latvian. Scientific Conference "Translation Landscapes IV", Szczecin University. Szczecin, Poland, 2019.
7. Bērnu tiesību diskurss Lielbritānijā. Zinātniskā konference "Vārds un tā pētīšanas aspekti". Liepājas Universitāte. Liepāja, 2020. gads.

8. Bērnu tiesību aizsardzības diskurss Latvijā un Apvienotajā Karalistē. Zinātniskā conference “Jauno pētnieku diena 2025”. Latvijas Universitātes Literatūras, folkloras un mākslas institūts. Rīga. 2025. gads.

The Doctoral Thesis research has been approbated in six anonymous peer-reviewed scientific publications.

1. Gorbunovs, Andrejs. Bērnu tiesību valodas vēsturiskā attīstība Latvijas teritorijā: bērnu tiesību valodas salīdzinājums Vietējo civillikumu kopojumā un Civillikumā. *Vārds un tā pētīšanas aspekti*, 23. Liepāja: LiePU, 2019, 287.–296. lpp.
2. Gorbunovs, Andrejs. Bērnu tiesības Lielbritānijā: speciālās leksikas vēsturiskās attīstības tendences. *Via Scientiarum: rakstu krājums*, 5. *laidiens*, Ventspils: Ventspils Augstskola, 2019, 44.–57. lpp.
3. Gorbunovs, Andrejs. Bērnu tiesību aizsardzības speciālās leksikas vēsturiskās attīstības tendences Latvijā un Lielbritānijā. *Perspectives of Baltic Philology V: Trapped in Language and Culture*, Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu, 2019, 123.–131. lpp.
4. Gorbunovs, Andrejs. Diskursu detskogo prava v Latvii. *Sbornik nauchnih rabot po itogam Mezhdunarodnoy nauchnoy konferencii. Sovremennaya teoreticheskaya lingvistika i problemi sudebnoy ekspertizi*, Moscow: Gosudarstvenniy institut russkogo yazika im. A. S. Pushkina, 2019, pp. 449–459.
5. Gorbunovs, Andrejs. Challenges in the translation of children’s rights content from English into Latvian. *Translation Landscapes IV – Internationale Schriften zur Übersetzungswissenschaft*, 4, Szczecin, University of Szczecin, 2019, pp. 78–87.
6. Gorbunovs, Andrejs. Bērnu tiesību diskurss Lielbritānijā. *Vārds un tā pētīšanas aspekti*, 27, Liepāja: LiePU, 2020, 236.–243. lpp.

1. Laws and selection criteria

The analysis of special lexis development can be performed due to the accessibility of legislation in Latvia and the United Kingdom, which allows for comparison of the laws from the early days of children's rights protection to modern laws and detection of the changes that have taken place over time in both countries. The Thesis analyses laws published in Latvia from the following periods: from 1864 to 1918, from 1918 to 1940, and from 1991 to 2023. Legal acts of the United Kingdom were selected according to these periods and their subjects to compare these acts with the Latvian laws. The legislation published in Latvia during the Soviet occupation period was not analysed due to the fact that this legislation is not in any way included in the current legal system of the Republic of Latvia. After Latvia regained independence, the Civil Law of Latvia was reinstated in the version that was in force before the Soviet occupation. The legislation of the Russian Empire, the Collection of Local Civil Laws (VCL), introduced in 1864, is one of the initial sources of the children's rights in the Republic of Latvia, which was translated into Latvian and served as the basis for the Civil Law of Latvia. The Thesis describes several paragraphs from VCL that are still found in the recent editions of the Civil Law of Latvia.

The material for analysis in the Thesis was excerpted from three laws in the Latvian language: "Civil Law of the Republic of Latvia, Part 1. Family rights" (LRCL), "Law on Children's Rights Protection" (BTAL), "Youth Law" (LRJL), and three laws in the English language: "Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act 1889" (POC, 1889), "Children and Young People Act 1933" (CYPA, 1933) and "Children Act 1989" (CA, 1989).

The legislation of the Republic of Latvia¹ and the United Kingdom² is available online, where different editions of the laws and acts can be accessed, which allows one to determine a particular moment in time when a special lexis unit was introduced into law, when it was changed, and when it was removed from the law.

The laws and acts for analysis were chosen according to the following criteria.

1. **Year of introduction.** Due to the large number of acts on children's rights protection in the United Kingdom, the acts for comparison were selected chronologically according to the years when the laws on children's rights protection were introduced in Latvia. The LRCL, which was introduced in 1937, is chronologically comparable to the POC 1889 due to the fact that the part of the LRCL on children's rights is based on the VCL 1864 of the Russian Empire and still contains paragraphs and definitions from this compilation of civil laws. The next pair is BTAL 1998 and CA 1989. Despite the almost 10 years of difference between the first editions of both laws, today both of these laws are still in force, are constantly updated, and the subject matter of both laws is comparably similar. The third pair of laws is the CYPA 1993, which in 2008 was updated to CYPA 2008, and the LRJL, which was introduced in 2008. The time difference between first editions of

¹ www.likumi.lv

² www.legislation.gov.uk

these laws is larger; however, the comparison is possible due to both laws being in force at the time of the Thesis research and being updated, thus allowing to follow the changes in the special lexis. This criterion provides an opportunity to study characteristics of particular chronotypes that illustrate the realities of the time, not only in language but in society in general.

2. **Aim of the law.** This criterion is used to ensure comparability of the use and development of special lexis units, meaning that legislation with similar goals will contain special lexis units of similar meaning. The aims of the laws are usually stated in the preamble or a particular paragraph of the law. The aims of CYPA 1889 and LRCL are not separately defined, but both laws have similar subjects that are described in detail in the Thesis. LRJL aims to improve the quality of life of young people by promoting their initiatives, work culture and patriotism, participation in decision making and public life, while providing support to youth work. This aim is similar to the CYPA 1933 update in 2008 that states that the act aims to reform the statutory framework for the care system, to ensure that children and young people receive high-quality care and support, and to drive improvements in the delivery of services focused on the needs of the child (CYPA, 2008). It must be noted that according to the current legislation, young people are still children, which means that this pair of laws is a part of children's rights protection discourse and contains special lexis of this discourse.

3. **Special lexis units.** Laws were paired according to their subjects to ensure that compared pairs have comparable special lexis units and their definitions, thus allowing to follow the changes in use and definitions of special lexis units across various editions of the legal acts and laws. The special lexis units in the abovementioned pairs were compared to special lexis units of similar meaning.

Paragraphs containing special lexis units and their definitions were also excerpted. The analysis shows how the special lexis units of children's rights protection discourse in Latvia have changed over time, allowing to compare these changes to changes in definitions and use of special lexis in children's rights protection discourse in the United Kingdom. The comparison of historical versions of law paragraphs provides vast opportunities for research, for example, an ability to determine legal and linguistic changes in laws over time, with an ability to calculate the number and classify the types of these changes, which can be used in various interdisciplinary studies in history, law and linguistics.

2. Discourse and discourse analysis

To define the discourse of children's rights protection, it is necessary to define the discourse and its genres, as well as the characteristics of the children's rights protection discourse that will be used to compare the discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom.

The concept of discourse is widely used in various studies and fields, for example, education, psychology, politics, etc., while the definition of discourse may vary in each field. The many discourse definitions can be divided into three basic categories: 1) discourse is everything greater than a sentence; 2) discourse is the use of language; and 3) discourse is a wide social phenomenon that includes both non-linguistic and imparticular use of language (Jaworski, 1999: 151).

The children's rights protection discourse in this Thesis is defined as "the use of language in the context of children's rights protection" to analyse and classify the observed linguistic and social characteristics of the children's rights protection discourse. For example, the legal language of the laws allows for the designation of the texts of this category and the roles (judge, counsel, etc.) defined by these texts as "legal discourse", while the participants of this discourse (children and their parents in this case) provide the context of children's rights protection to this type of legal discourse. This definition allows us to determine the field of study of the discourse that shows the development of the special lexis, while diachronic discourse analysis provides insight into the development over time.

2.1. Discourse analysis

The discourse research is directly related to the discourse analysis, meaning that it studies linguistic actions and forms as well as the interrelation between language actions and structures of society (Romanovska, 2023). This definition fits the aim of the Thesis to describe the development of special lexis of children's rights discourse from historic, linguistic and legal points of view in a multidisciplinary study, since the discourse analysis allows to research how social, linguistic, cognitive and cultural aspects interact in the children's rights protection discourse and how this interaction affects the development of special lexis and the discourse in general. The changes in the legal system and ethnic composition of a nation can be considered examples of the abovementioned changes. The wide range of discourse analysis capabilities allows it to be used with all interdisciplinary research methods, as well as all research methods used in the humanities and social sciences (Titscher et al., 2000: 146).

Children's rights protection discourse has characteristics of the discourse power (i.e., power to remove a child from family), as well as the effect on society and culture (i.e., changes in the legal age of the child), and the ideological task (i.e., the aim of LRJL to promote patriotism and work culture). Children's rights protection discourse is also a historic discourse, since it is based on historic legislation and traditions. The connection between the text and society in the children's rights protection discourse is shown in various publications, court decisions and other

discourse texts. The children's rights protection discourse analysis provides an opportunity to evaluate the data for further conclusions by describing the observed interconnections and effects. Children's rights discourse has various social actions and roles that are performed both by children and adults in accordance with the rules of the discourse.

2.2. Institutional, legal and children's rights discourse

Children's rights discourse is nested within the legal discourse, which is a part of the institutional discourse, meaning that the children's rights protection discourse has the power roles and communications scenarios of the institutional discourse, while the legislation structure and special legal lexis comes from the legal discourse. The discourse genre analysis is required to determine the particular characteristics of the children's rights protection discourse to compare the discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom.

2.2.1. Institutional discourse

To define the institutional discourse, it is necessary to define the institution. Institutions are most often associated with physical buildings, for example, schools, hospitals, government institutions, prisons, courts (Mayr, 2008: 1). According to this definition, the institution can both be a state governed or private institution, meaning that the institutional discourse is not only the discourse of state institutions, but it is the discourse of both state and public institutions.

In the context of children's rights, the characteristics of the institutional discourse provide the social structure, in which the legislation functions and is introduced according to the societal norms at the time of introduction (characteristic of the date and time) to the children's rights protection discourse, and this structure determines the participants (i.e., children, social services, judges, etc.), goals (i.e., to protect children's rights), values (i.e., to avoid separation of biological families), strategies (i.e., work of social services), precedents (i.e., violations of children's rights affect future legislation and special lexis), and discursive formulas of the children's rights discourse (i.e., order and use of special lexis during child custody cases). These characteristics show that the children's rights protection discourse is a part of the institutional discourse.

2.2.2. Legal discourse

The legality of the legal discourse is ensured by institutions and traditions that define the scope of the legal discourse since this discourse receives wide social and institutional support (court, police, legislators, etc.) – the legal discourse has hierarchy, status and power (Goodrich, 1987: 211). The legal discourse has the traditional characteristics of the legal field – theatrical setting, elitist knowledge of the institution's employees that is not available to common citizens, the ability and right to punish. These characteristics discern the legal discourse from other close institutional discourses, for example, political, religious and ethical discourse (Mayr, 2008: 14).

Participants of the children's rights protection discourse also have particular roles and act in accordance with the legislation, which is a characteristic of the legal discourse seen in the

children's rights protection discourse. Goodrich states that the institutional nature of the legal discourse is illustrated by the subject's subjugation by the discourse rules that determine what can be said and should be said, while legally defining the basis for value, cognition and communication modes" (Goodrich, 1987: 218).

The field of children's rights protection discourse is to be defined in several layers due to its specific legal hierarchy, as this discourse is based on laws and its language scope is defined by these laws. Participants of this language scope are the performers of the functions defined by laws, subjects of these laws and the general public.

Texts of the legal discourse genre are texts that are written in a particular way, and speech acts with particular goals (for example, legislative, judicial, administrative), which adhere to particular grammar and syntactic rules, while also having special legal lexis. The first or the highest-level discourse is the general human communication and interaction discourse, which includes all other discourses. Next level discourse is the institutional discourse in which a person interacts with a government institution or other organisation that requires communication according to clearly defined rules and roles, but these rules are not always legislative; for example, religious organisations, NGOs and other types of organisations have their own particular rules on behaviour and communication. The legal discourse is a part of the institutional discourse, but the communication and roles in the legal discourse are determined by legislation (at the state or international level). Children's rights protection discourse is a part of the legal discourse, and its communication norms and roles are defined by the legislation on children's rights protection, which is also the main source of special lexis.

2.3.3. Children's rights discourse

The children's rights protection discourse has power relationships in accordance with the definition by Foucault: "The discourse is implemented in the social order by the technologies of power. Power defines particular rules and categories" (Foucault, 1972: 171). Therefore, government institutions, aka power, implemented the principles of children's rights protection that were codified in legislation and that are observed through the threat of punishment. Power is not analysed in this Thesis research. The changes in institutional discourse affect legal discourse and children's rights protection discourse. The main goal of the children's rights protection discourse is to protect children's rights according to the legislation. Experts (courts, police, etc.) and non-experts (children, general public, etc.) participate in the children's rights protection discourse.

2.3. Comparison of the children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom

To compare children's rights protection discourses in Latvia and the United Kingdom, the following characteristics are used: institutional characteristics, language, communicative goal, discourse texts, participants and their effect on the discourse.

Children's rights protection discourses of both countries are part of the legal discourse, which is a part of the institutional discourse. In Latvia, the institutional interaction system of this discourse is determined by the primary legislation that determines tasks, duties and rights of the participants.

In the United Kingdom, the institutional system is defined by the primary and secondary acts. Primary acts are the laws that are introduced by the government institutions of the United Kingdom. The main secondary legislative acts are the statutory acts, statutory provisions, orders and church acts. The total number of primary and secondary acts related to the protection of children's rights in the United Kingdom exceeds 200 . An Orphans Court operates in each municipality of Latvia, while in the United Kingdom, each municipality has its own Family Court, and the operation of both of these government institutions is defined by the legislation.

The language of the children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom is the legal language that is used in legislation and communication acts, which also includes special legal lexis and general lexis. Roles in communication acts are defined according to the legal discourse definitions (i.e., judge, the accused, the victim, counsel, etc.). In both countries, the children's rights discourse uses special lexis that is used only in this discourse (for example, *looked after child*, *guardian*, *parental responsibility*, etc.), and in both countries, texts from other discourses (i.e., medical) can become a part of the children's rights discourse due to context.

In Latvia, the children's rights protection discourse has five communication goals, while in the United Kingdom, four. The main communication goal of the children's rights protection discourse in both countries is to ensure protection, care and freedom of children. In Latvia, the communication goals emphasise values, work and family, while in the United Kingdom, the main focus is the protection of the child from negative influences, harm and suffering.

Participants of the children's rights protection discourse are the same in Latvia and the United Kingdom, but the participants have different abilities to affect the discourse. The first category of participants includes state institutions that are granted rights and duties to protect children. In both countries, these institutions are authorised to inform (i.e., schools), investigate (i.e., police, social services) and punish (courts) violations of children's rights.

The second category includes persons that are subject to the rights and duties of the first category, meaning, children, families and violators of the children's rights. This group is unable to directly affect the discourse, legislation or special lexis directly. Due to the special lexis of the children's rights protection in both countries, possible translation difficulties exist in both

countries, which affects the ability to provide this group with texts in their native language since a special lexis unit in one language might lack an equivalent special lexis unit in the other language.

The third category in both countries consists of NGOs that work in the field of children's rights protection. In Latvia, the NGOs in this field provide educational activities for civil servants on children's rights, participate in discussions with industry experts and take part in the discourse. Even though the NGOs in Latvia have no official rights and duties to participate in the discourse defined by the legislation, these organisations take part by informing the society about current issues and violations of children's rights, and provide clarifications on various related legal nuances, thus using the special lexis in their daily work without the ability to affect this lexis directly.

In the United Kingdom, the number of NGOs involved in the children's rights protection discourse is not only greater, many of these NGOs are much older ("Barnardos", founded in 1866, "National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children" (NSPCC), founded in 1884). During the period of operation, these NGOs, compared to Latvian NGOs, have acquired greater authority in the children's rights protection discourse, for example, the NGOs are capable to stop introduction of contradictory legislation.

The statement above allows us to conclude that the effect that the NGOs have on the children's rights discourse and its special lexis in the United Kingdom is far greater when compared to NGOs in Latvia.

The fourth category is the general public and mass media. The main difference between this group in Latvia and the United Kingdom is its ability to affect the children's rights protection discourse. In Latvia, mass media widely cover violations of children's rights, for example, death of Ivans Berladins in 2017 (Delfi, 2017) and murder of the 7-year-old Justine Reinikova in 2023 (Jemeljanova, 2023), caused interest of the general public about these cases; however, it was not followed by any further pressure from the general public and mass media on the legislators. Latvia has no clear examples of cases when the violation of children's rights or pressure from NGOs would create a direct effect on the children's rights protection discourse.

In Latvia, the pressure from the public and mass media does not lead to changes in legislation of the children's rights protection or introduction of new positions, review of law texts and other similar actions, which would also affect the special lexis. However, in the United Kingdom, the mass media and general public are much more active in investigations of children's rights violations, requesting more comprehensive investigations that result in changes to legislation, introduction of new official positions, and new special lexis.

In summary, the children's rights protection discourse in both countries is a part of the institutional discourse and legal discourse. In both countries, general and special legal lexis is used in the discourse, while legislation serves as the source of special lexis and defines the roles, duties and rights of the participants. The main differences between institutional systems of the children's rights protection discourse in both countries are due to the structure of state

institutions, communication goals of the discourse and the number of legal acts that define the discourse, as well as the ability of the discourse participants to affect the discourse.

3. Special lexis of children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and United Kingdom

The comparison of the special lexis of children's rights protection discourse requires a theoretical basis and definition. To achieve this goal, the theoretical materials on concepts, words and terms, semantics and semantic changes over time, as well as special lexis is reviewed. The review of the theoretical material and analysis is followed by the analysis of the development of the special lexis of children's rights protections by using excerpted research material. The described semantic changes are then compared diachronically to provide an understanding of changes in the special lexis that are illustrated by definitions, use in law paragraphs and grammar.

3.1. Semantic change

The Thesis focuses on the change of meaning of special lexis units that demonstrate the changes that have happened over time in both languages. The *Begriffsgeschichte* (history of concepts) approach of historic semantic studies considers that the reality of the legal system is created by the linguistic means of expression (Laske, 2020: 10). In context of the children's rights protection this can be illustrated by introduction of new court orders designed for particular violations of children's rights, but these new court orders have no existing name, which means that a new concept is introduced. An example of such a court order based on the existing concept in the United Kingdom is the introduction of the *special guardianship order*. This order is based on the existing concept of *guardianship order*, which is expanded by additional conditions, thus resulting in a new type of court order based on the existing one. Semantic changes in the excerpted materials are mostly related to the processes of narrowing the meaning and expanding the meaning. For example, the first edition of BTAL defines *daudzbērnu ģimene* (family with many children) as a family that has three or more children (BTAL, 1991), while the latest edition of BTAL defines the same special lexis unit as a family that also includes persons up to 24 years of age, while these persons are studying (BTAL, 2023). Thus, the changes in the legal reality introduce the changes in the linguistic means of expression of the system.

Stephen Ullman studied the causes of semantic change in the 20th century. Ullman stated that the language is affected by social tendencies. He defined three causes of semantic change:

- 1) language factors – changes caused by the use of the word in different fields;
- 2) extralinguistic factors – changes that cause a change in the nature of the concept defined by a word, while the word remains unchanged;
- 3) specialisation of meaning – a particular meaning of a word occurs in a limited group, and later this meaning is used by a larger group (Ullmann, 1964: 198–199).

The change in legal age of the child, both in Latvia and the United Kingdom, can be named as an example of the extralinguistic change. For example, in the United Kingdom, a person was initially considered to be a child until 12 years of age, then 14, then 16, and now 17 years of age (CYPA, 1933; CA, 1987). The changes in the definition illustrate the change in the legal definition of the child while the child itself remains unchanged.

The described theory illustrated that there are various types and causes of semantic change in different situations of language use. These changes are characteristic of the legal language – special lexis is introduced by the field experts who use narrowing or expanding of legal concepts to achieve the desired legal effects. Narrowing of meaning can be illustrated by the definition of special lexis unit *punishment* in CYPA 1933, Paragraph 1.7, which states that parents and teachers have a right to *administer punishment to him* [a child]. The first edition does not define criteria or severity of punishment, which allows for wide interpretation that was used in cases where children suffered grievous bodily harm in the result of such punishment (Wade, 2020: 6). The changes introduced in 2004 to the CA 1989, “Children Act 2004”, narrowed the definition of punishment, compared to CYPA 1933, and forbode physical punishment completely.

The transfer of meaning in legislation on children’s rights protection can be illustrated by the changes in police officer names: *superintendent, inspector, or other superior officer of police* are replaced by *constable*, which includes the functions of all three previous types of police officers in the context of children’s rights. This way, three similar positions are transferred to a single special lexis unit – *constable*, which performs all legal functions of the previous three positions. Similar changes have happened to court judges: *magistrate, justices, or justice* is replaced by *justice*. In this case *magistrate* and *justices* are replaced by the existing special lexis unit *justice* that has its legal function widened. These examples illustrate the replacement of similar words with a single synonym, which includes the legal functions of previously used names while retaining the legal function of the paragraph. These changes correspond to the second category of changes.

In 1991, Elizabeth Traugott proposed an alternative semantic change, “Invited Inferencing”. This model analyses semantic change as a conscious and gradual process, while considering it as a result of the use of linguistic means of expression. Traugott states that each lexeme has its own semantic history. At the macro-level, however, the semantic change can often be predicted in several languages. At the start of the change process, the changes spread across the community of speakers, thus causing a cumulative effect, which resulted in the introduction of the semantic changes in the wider community of speakers (Traugot, 2001). The Thesis research illustrates the changes that happen both in the Latvian and English languages at the same time. As an example, in Latvia and the United Kingdom, changes to legislation on children’s rights protection were introduced in relation to the harmful effects of smoke produced by electronic devices (BTAL, Paragraph 1; CYPA, 1933, Paragraphs 7 and 5). Also, in both countries, the paragraphs of laws on children’s rights protection are constantly updated by removing redundant paragraphs (i.e., changes related to the prohibition of physical punishments in both countries). These changes to legislation illustrate changes in understanding of various processes

and their effects in different countries and cultures, which result in updates of legislation in accordance with global understanding of various factors.

3.2. Comparison of the special lexis of the children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom

The historic, theoretical and excerpted material reviewed in the Thesis provides an understanding of theoretical characteristics of the institutional, legal and children's rights protection discourses and practical manifestations of these characteristics in units of special lexis and their historic development. The definitions of special lexis of children's rights discourse are categorised in three groups: 1) family and child, 2) special lexis of the children's rights protection system, and 3) children's rights violations. These groups include all excerpted special lexis units, thus allowing to perform a numerical analysis and to determine similarities and differences between these groups. The special lexis units were also used, when possible, to create equivalent by meaning or closely equivalent special lexis pairs.

3.2.1. Equivalence in the special lexis of children's rights protection discourse

The Thesis compares legal lexis of two different countries, cultures and legal systems. Equivalence is one of the main elements of translation of legal texts, since without equivalence no legally precise translations are possible.

Šarčevič defines three levels of equivalence: (a) close equivalence – concepts of source and target language have in common all general significant characteristics and additional characteristics; (b) partial equivalence – source and target language concepts have in common most of the significant characteristics and some additional characteristics; and (c) no equivalence – source and target language concepts are completely different, have no common significant characteristics and no additional characteristics (Šarčevič, 1997: 238). This approach was used to compare special lexis units in the Thesis.

3.3. Special lexis definitions and equivalence

At first, the statistical analysis of the special lexis units was performed. The latest editions of BTAL, LRCL and LRJL have 26 definitions of the children's rights protection special lexis units, while CA 1989, CYPA 1933 and CA 1989 have 51 definitions. As mutually comparable special lexis units were considered special lexis units with equivalent meaning (i.e., *aizbildnis* and *guardian*) or partially equivalent meaning (i.e., *bērna tēvs*, *māte* and *parent*). This approach provides an understanding of similarities and differences in the development of children's rights protection special lexis in both countries. Table 1 provides the summary of special lexis units defined in the legislation on children's rights protection in both countries.

Table 1

Special Lexis Units

Special lexis units defined in the legislation of Latvia	Special lexis units defined in the legislation of the United Kingdom
Bārenis, bērns, bez vecāku gādības palicis bērns, audžuģimene, specializēta audžu ģimene, atbalsta ģimene, uzticības persona, ārpusģimenes aprūpe, jauniētis, bērnu aprūpes iestāde, vardarbība, seksuālā vardarbība, fiziska vardarbība, emocionāla vardarbība, ielas bērni, viesģimene, daudz bērnu ģimene, bērnu uzraudzības pakalpojums, radniecība, nepilngadība, bērna dabiskie aizbildņi, tuvākie nepilngadīgā radnieki, aizbildņa pienākums, nepilngadīgā audzināšanas mērķis	Parent, approved school, approved school order, child in need of care or protection, guardian, legal guardian, managers, young person, adoption agency, care home, child, child arrangements order, child of the family, children's home, day care, education supervision order, emergency protection order, enforcement order, family assistance order, family proceedings, guardian of a child, harm, ill-treatment, integrated care board, local authority, local authority foster parent, officer of the Service, parental responsibility, parental responsibility agreement, private children's home, privately fostered child, prohibited steps order, registered children's home, registered pupil, relative, residential care home, responsible person, school service, section 31A plan service, special educational needs, special guardian, special guardianship order, Special Health Authority, specific issue order, supervision order, supervised child, upbringing, voluntary home, voluntary organisation, Welsh family proceedings officer

For more detailed analysis, the special lexis units were divided into three groups “family and child”, “special lexis of children’s rights protection system”, and “children’s rights violations”. The numerical summary of these groups is provided in Fig. 1.

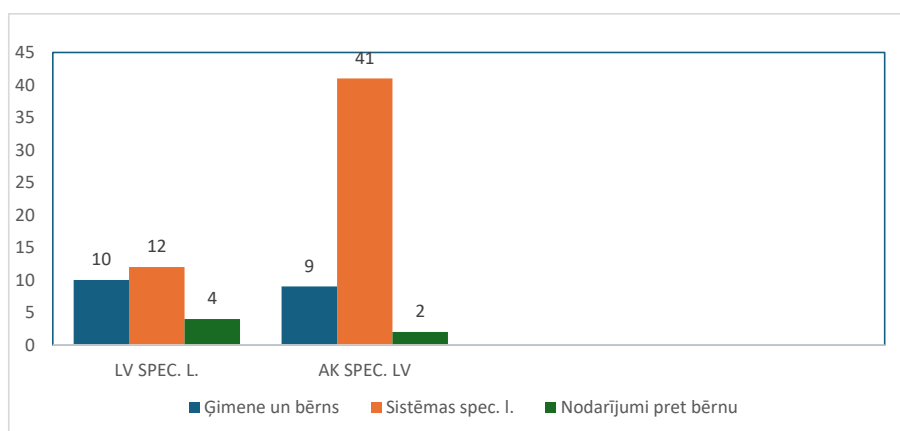


Fig. 1. Groups of special lexis units.

As shown in Fig. 1, the group “family and child” has 10 units defined in Latvian legislation and nine units defined in the United Kingdom, the group “violations of children’s rights” has four units in Latvian and two units in English. The group “special lexis of children’s rights

protection system” has 11 units defined in the legislation of Latvia, while 41 units are defined in the children’s rights protection legislation of the United Kingdom. The analysis shows that both countries have almost the same number in groups related to the child, the child’s natural family and violations of children’s rights. The largest numerical difference is seen in the special lexis related to the system of children’s rights protection. This numerical difference can be explained by the difference in both systems of children’s rights protection. The system in the United Kingdom is much larger, has more specialised positions, orders and other system elements that are named by use of special lexis. In Table 2, special lexis units of the group “family and child” are listed. This group includes special lexis units related to the child’s natural family and state.

Table 2

“Family and Child”

Legislation of the Republic of Latvia (8 units)	Legislation of the United Kingdom (8 units)
Bārenis, bērns, bez vecāku gādības palicis bērns, daudz bērnu ģimene, radniecība, bērna dabiskie aizbildņi, tuvākie nepilngadīgā radnieki, nepilngadīgā audzināšanas mērķis	Parent, child in need of care or protection, child, child of the family, parental responsibility, relative, supervised child, upbringing

The following pairs can be considered as partially or closely equivalent: *bērns – child*, *nepilngadīgā audzināšanas mērķis – upbringing*, *radniecība – relative*. Following special lexis units have no partially or closely equivalent pairs in this group or other groups: *bārenis*, *bez vecāku gādības palicis bērns*, *daudz bērnu ģimene*, *bērna dabiskie aizbildņi*, *tuvākie nepilngadīgā radnieki* (in legislation of Latvia), *parent*, *child in need of care or protection*, *child of the family*, *parental responsibility*, *supervised child*, *upbringing* (in legislation of the UK). Ten of the 16 special lexis units in group “family and child” lack close equivalent or partially equivalent pairs. Following special lexis units in English have no equivalent units that are defined in Latvian legislation on children’s rights protection: *child of the family*, *supervised child*, *parent*, *child in need of care or protection*, *child of the family*, *parental responsibility*. Lack of definition does not mean that the special lexis unit is not used in a legal or wider context. For example, the equivalent of the special lexis unit *parent* is the Latvian special lexis unit *vecāks*, which is not defined in the laws on the children’s rights protection in Latvia, while this special lexis unit is used 8 times in the latest edition of BTAL and 12 times in the latest edition of the Civil Law of Latvia.

The special lexis unit pair *bērns – child* is defined both in the first and latest edition of BTAL and the first edition of CYPA 1933 and the latest edition of CA 1989. BTAL’s definition has not changed since its introduction, while the definition of *child* has had the following age-related changes: “under the age of fourteen years” in the first edition of CYPA 1933 is replaced with “under the age of eighteen” in the latest edition of CA 1989. Both definitions of *bērns* and *child* state that a child is a person below the age of eighteen. However, the definition of *bērns* defines additional exceptions: “except the persons that have been deemed of legal age by law or married before the age of 18 years”. According to the definition, special lexis definitions of units *bērns* and *child* show that both countries have the same understanding of age until which

a person is considered a child, but there are possible exceptions. Changes in the definition of *child* show changes in the understanding of the child's age, while the lack of these changes in the definition of *bērns* can be explained by the fact that this definition was introduced only in the year 2000. These special lexis units are to be considered partially equivalent since their main characteristics (person younger than 18 years) are equivalent, but the definition of *bērns* has additional criteria, which define cases when a person younger than 18 can be considered as a legal adult.

The next pair is *radniecība* – *relative*. The special lexis unit *radniecība* is defined in the Civil Law of Latvia, and this definition has not changed. While the initial definition of *relative* in the first edition of CA 1989 has been updated in the latest edition by the addition “or by marriage or civil partnership”. These units of special lexis are partially equivalent due to the fact that their main characteristics describe a child's relative status in the legal systems of the respective countries. Despite the different definitions, both special lexis units define biological relatives of the child in the same way, which is the main characteristic of the units, but difference is seen in the additional conditions that define the relation to the child. The definition of *radniecība* provides a description or relation lines, while the definition of *relative* is wider and includes persons that are not related to the child by blood, but become the child's relatives via marriage, civil partnership or by becoming step-parents.

The third pair is *nepilngadīgā audzināšanas mērķis* – *upbringing*. These special lexis units are partially equivalent, since both define the concept of *upbringing*. The main equivalent characteristic is described by “...gādību par viņa veselību” (care for the child's health) and “...care of the child”. The initial edition of the LRCL contains a definition of *nepilngadīgā audzināšanas mērķis* stating “samērā ar viņa mantas stāvokli” (in accordance with the child's financial means), and these words were removed from the definition, confirming that in Latvia, care for the child is not related to the child's financial means anymore, which corresponds to the definition of *upbringing* that states that “upbringing includes care of the child, but not maintenance”, which can be considered as a partially equivalent additional characteristic. The definition of *nepilngadīgā audzināšanas mērķis* has been updated with “tikumisku un garīgu attīstību samērā ar viņa spējām un tieksmēm” (moral and spiritual development in accordance with the child's abilities and wishes), which illustrates a wider scope, compared to the definition of *upbringing*, which has no additional conditions for the upbringing of a child, except the general “care of the child”.

After analysis of the special lexis units in group “child and family”, both languages do not have closely equivalent special lexis pairs, but only partially equivalent special lexis pairs. Analysis of main characteristics only would allow us to consider these pairs as closely equivalent; however, the additional characteristics introduce differences that do not allow us to consider these pairs as closely equivalent in a legal context.

The next group, “special lexis of children's rights protection system”, includes special lexis units describing state officials, government institutions, court orders and other legal instruments.

Twelve special lexis units were excerpted from Latvian legislation, while 40 units were excerpted from legal acts of the United Kingdom. The definitions found in the laws of the Republic of Latvia define types of families that are not natural families, but care for children for remuneration, both in long-term and short-term placements. These special lexis units are: *audžuģimene, specializēta audžu ģimene, atbalsta ģimene, ārpusģimenes aprūpe, viesģimene*. The types of these families are defined by the fact that children enter them through court orders, and the members of these families are not biological parents or blood relatives. Special lexis units *ielas bērni* and *jaunietis* define the status that can be applied to a child within the system of children’s rights protection. The special lexis units *uzticības persona, bērnu aprūpes iestāde, bērnu uzraudzības pakalpojums* define means within the system to protect the children’s rights. Reviewed laws of the Republic of Latvia do not provide separate definitions for court decisions and court orders, and do not include separate definitions in relation to a child’s education and the positions of government officials within the system. It must be noted that the absence of definition does not mean that such special lexis units are not used in the children’s rights protection system. For example, *guardian* is comparable to the special lexis unit *aizbildnis*, which was defined in the 4th edition of BTAL (11.04.2000–07.06.2000), Article 1: Terms used in the law”, while the latest edition of BTAL (08.02.2024–30.06.2024) does not contain a separate definition of this special lexis unit, while *aizbildnis* appears in the latest edition of BTAL eleven times. Also, the children’s rights protection system of Latvia uses special lexis units *sevišķais aizbildnis* and *likumiskais aizbildnis* that are comparable to *special guardian* and *legal guardian*, while not being defined separately in the laws. The observed differences in the number of system-related special lexis units can be explained by the number of inhabitants and budgets of both countries (in UK the total budget for 2023 reached 1 189 billion pounds which equals to 1 408 billion euro (Treasury, 2023), budget of Latvia was 14.7 billion euro (FM, 2023)), as well as the historic factors described in the Thesis.

The equivalence analysis shows that partially equivalent pairs in the group “special lexis of children’s rights protection system” must be considered very carefully. Level of equivalence in the pairs of this group heavily depends on the context. For example, *jaunietis* – *young person*, where *jaunietis* is a person from 13 to 25 years of age, but *young person* is a person from 14 to 18 years of age. The main characteristics in the described pairs are similar, which shows that both systems have a similar understanding of the underlying concepts.

The third group includes special lexis units that are related to “children’s rights violations”. Table 3 includes special lexis units of the third group defined in legislation of both countries.

Table 3

Special Lexis Units of Group 3

<i>vardarbība, seksuālā vardarbība, fiziska vardarbība, emocionāla vardarbība</i>	<i>Harm, ill-treatment</i>
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The analysed laws of the Republic of Latvia define *vardarbība* (*violence*), while also providing separate definitions of three types of violence: *seksuāla vardarbība* (*sexual violence*),

fiziska vardarbība (physical violence), *emocionāla vardarbība* (emotional violence). Special lexis unit *vardarbība* is defined for the first time in the 22nd edition of BTAL (04.07.2013–31.08.2013); however, *seksuāla vardarbība*, *fiziska vardarbība* and *emocionāla vardarbība* were defined in the first edition of BTAL. In analysed children’s rights protection acts of the United Kingdom, two special lexis units are defined as *harm* and *ill-treatment*.

There were no changes in the definition of *vardarbība*. The definition also includes “all types of physical, emotional, sexual and other types of violence” against children, which means that this special lexis unit is general and all-encompassing. Due to the abovementioned, this special lexis unit can be used as a close equivalent to *harm* and *ill-treatment*, since *vardarbība* includes types of children’s rights violations described in definitions of *harm* and *ill-treatment*. The definition of *fiziska vardarbība* in the latest edition includes “intentional subjecting of a child to harmful effects, including tobacco smoke”, thus expanding the concept of *fiziska vardarbība* outside of the restrictions of “intentional use of physical force”. Intentional changes are also seen in the definition of *harm*, with its latest version including “for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another”. Expansion of definitions of *fiziska vardarbība* and *harm* to include more than direct physical harm shows that this pair can be considered as a closely equivalent pair. The definitions of the next pair *emocionālā vardarbība* – *ill-treatment* are similar in meaning, and the special lexis units can be considered as closely equivalent due to the fact that *ill-treatment* also includes *seksuāla vardarbība* and other types of violence that are not physical. The initial definition of *emocionāla vardarbība* has undergone significant changes, while the definition of *ill-treatment* remains unchanged. The pair *seksuāla vardarbība* – *ill-treatment* is closely equivalent due to the fact that *ill-treatment* “includes sexual abuse”. The definition of *seksuāla vardarbība* also remains unchanged since its introduction. The definitions of special lexis units *vardarbība*, *fiziska vardarbība*, *emocionāla vardarbība*, *seksuāla vardarbība*, compared to definitions of *harm* and *ill-treatment*, are wider and more specific; however, these units can be considered as close equivalents. Changes in definitions of *fiziska vardarbība* and *harm* show that in both countries, the understanding of the violence types against a child is similar.

These similarities show that in children’s rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom, a common understanding exists about particular concepts, as shown by the closely equivalent special lexis pairs. However, the differences in both children’s rights protection systems are illustrated by the special lexis units that do not have a close equivalent pair in the other language.

Conclusions

The Thesis research results provide an insight into the development of the special lexis of children's rights protection discourse in Latvia and the United Kingdom, while providing an additional overview of the history of children's rights protection systems. The comparison of the children's rights protection discourse illustrates both similarities and differences, while also providing possible reasons. Analysis of the excerpted material provides a comprehensive overview of changes in law paragraph texts and special lexis units definitions in a time period of more than 100 years. The compilation of the special lexis units will serve as a useful material for experts and as a basis for future research.

For analysis of the excerpted material, three categories of changes were used (no changes; only linguistic; linguistic and legal changes), which allowed for observing and describing change tendencies in both countries over more than 100 years. In the analysed laws of the Republic of Latvia, 117 paragraphs remained unchanged, changes of the 2nd category were found in 64 paragraphs, while 3rd category changes were found in 94 paragraphs, with 40 new paragraphs added over time. Children's Rights Protection Acts of the United Kingdom had 47 paragraphs without changes, 44 paragraphs with 2nd category changes, and 100 paragraphs with 3rd category changes, with 127 newly added paragraphs. These numerical differences can be explained by the age of the legislation, differences between the two legal systems, and the scale of children's rights protection systems in both countries. The abovementioned confirms that both countries constantly continue improving the children's rights protection systems and keep them up to date, which is illustrated by the introduction of new special lexis units.

After comparison of the excerpted special lexis units of children's rights protection discourse, the thematic group "family and child" has 10 units defined in Latvian legislation and 9 units defined in the United Kingdom, group "violations of children's rights" has 4 units in Latvian and 4 units in English. The group "children's rights protection system" has 11 units defined in the legislation of Latvia, while 41 unit is defined in the United Kingdom. Thesis research shows that the number of closely equivalent special lexis units is small (10 pairs), compared to the total number of the defined special lexis units (75 units, 21 LV, 54 UK). The comparison confirms the hypothesis stated in the Thesis.

In both countries, the children's rights protection discourses have the same characteristics – part of the institutional and legal discourse with narrow-use special lexis, rules, roles and communication goals, as well as similar development tendencies. The greatest difference between the children's rights protection discourses is the ability of the participants to affect these discourses, which is clearly illustrated by the ability of NGOs and the general public to persuade legislators to introduce changes to legislation.

Thesis research shows that both countries have similar children's rights protection systems, while the number of participants and funding in the United Kingdom is much larger, which results in a greater number of special lexis units, thus allowing us to conclude that the main

extralinguistic factors that affect the development of special lexis of children's rights protection discourse are geopolitical and economic.

The Thesis lays a framework for future research of children's rights protection discourse and special lexis in the Latvian language. The categories used in the Thesis for comparison of changes can be used in research in other fields. The Thesis also provides an insight into units of special lexis that differ due to different demographic and social situations in both countries, thus allowing to predict the need for necessary legal mechanisms and tools in a timely manner.

Thesis statements

1. The texts of laws can be used as a linguistic research material that provides insights into various historical periods and the language used during these periods. The law texts serve as "historic witnesses" due to their specific nature and availability of various editions that allow for comparison of the definitions and texts in a 100-year period.
2. The children's rights protection discourses in Latvia and United Kingdom are comparable. In both countries, the discourses have similar goals that are designed to protect children's rights. In both countries, the discourse participants are similar: legislators, government institutions, social services, children, families, NGOs, mass media and the general public.
3. Development of special lexis of children's rights protection is ongoing in both countries; however, in the United Kingdom, this process is more rapid. Both countries have a unified understanding of the main concepts and tasks of the children's rights protection discourse. The analysed acts of the United Kingdom define 51 special lexis unit, while in the same period of time, Latvian laws define 24 special lexis units of the children's rights protection discourse.
4. The introduction of changes to legislation is also ongoing both in Latvia and the United Kingdom. However, in both languages, there are cases when two sentences of one paragraph can have different special lexis units to describe one concept, as well as paragraphs containing archaic terms.
5. Active participation of the wider public and its ability to affect the children's rights protection discourse promotes the development of the discourse and its special lexis, while creating a system that is open to change, with changes happening more often and on a larger scale. However, when the wider public is unable to affect the children's rights protection discourse, the development of this discourse is slower, changes happen rarely and in smaller volumes, and such discourse will have a smaller number of special lexis units.

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