VYTAUTO DIDŽIOJO UNIVERSITETAS
HUMANITARINIŲ MOKSLŲ FAKULTETAS
ANGLŲ FILOLOGIJOS KATEDRA

Monika Misiūnaitė

VYRIAUSYBINIŲ INTERNETO PUSLAPIŲ MULTIMODALIOJI ANALIZĖ

Magistro baigiamasis darbas

Taikomosios anglų kalbotyros studijų programa, valstybinis kodas 621Q30002
Filologijos studijų kryptis

Vadovė lekt. dr. Teresė Ringailienė _____ _____
(parašas) (data)

Apginta doc. dr. R. Eidukevičienė _____ _____
(Fakulteto dekanė) (parašas) (data)

Kaunas, 2016

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF THE GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

By Monika Misiūnaitė

Department of English Philology
Vytautas Magnus University
Master of Arts Thesis
Supervisor: Lect. Dr. Teresė Ringailienė
May 2016

SANTRAUKA

Šiais laikais apstu įvairių elektroninių išteklių, kurie kaip interaktyvios skaitmeninės priemonės, padeda skaitytojui rasti reikalingiausią informaciją ir paslaugas. Dabar ir vyriausybės yra susikūrusios elektroninius puslapius, kuriuose pateikiama informacija apie vyriausybines institucijas, organizacijas bei jų veiklą įvairiose socialinėse srityse. Šiame magistriniame darbe analizuojami britų, amerikiečių, australų, lietuvių ir latvių vyriausybių interneto puslapiai, atsižvelgiant į įvairius multimodalumo aspektus, kurių sąveika atskleidžia šių vyriausybinių puslapių institucinę paskirtį. Šio darbo tikslas yra išanalizuoti kompozicinius, leksinius ir vaizdinius puslapių elementus multimodaliuoju aspektu. Darbo uždaviniai yra tokie: išnagrinėti kompozicinius kiekvieno vyriausybinio puslapio elementus; išanalizuoti vaizdinę medžiagą, pateiktą pirmuosiuose svetainių puslapiuose; išnagrinėti būdingiausius lingvistinius vyriausybinių tekstų bruožus; ištirti tipiškiausias daiktavardžių ir veiksmažodžių kolokacijas, naudojamas vyriausybių interneto puslapiuose.

Darbo analizė yra paremta Kresso ir van Leeuweno (2006 m.) pristatytais multimodalumo principais. Trys metafunkcijos (ideacinė, tarpasmeninė ir tekstinė) yra naudojamos nustatyti kompozicinius bei vizualinius elementus pasirinktuose puslapiuose. Būdingiausi lingvistiniai bruožai išanalizuoti pritaikant Biberio ir Conrado (2009 m.) pasiūlytą registrų analizę. Vardažodiniai ir veiksmažodiniai vyriausybinių tekstų bruožai yra nagrinėjami atsižvelgiant į šiuos aspektus: daiktavardžiai bei jų kolokacijos, tikriniai daiktavardžiai ir akronimai priskiriami vardažodiniams bruožams; veiksmažodžiai bei jų kolokacijos ir kontrakcijos priskiriami veiksmažodiniams bruožams.

Penkių pasirinktų vyriausybinių puslapių analizė atskleidė, kad iš kompozicinės perspektyvos trys angliškai kalbančių šalių puslapiai pristato informaciją panašiu būdu, pabrėždami pagrindines vyriausybių teikiamas paslaugas, o kompoziciniai elementai lietuvių ir latvių puslapiuose teikia pirmenybę naujausiai informacijai apie ministrų pirmininkų veiklas. Ideacinė metafunkcija parodė, kad amerikiečių ir latvių puslapiai daugiausiai naudoja funkcinių elementų (pvz., kalbų pasirinkimas ar socialiniai tinklai), kurie padeda skaitytojui interaktyviai nagrinėti vyriausybių puslapius. Iš vizualinės perspektyvos lietuvių ir latvių puslapiai labiau naudoja natūralistines nuotraukas, kuriose vaizduojami ministrai pirmininkai, o anglų puslapiuose daugiau randama paveikslėlių (emblematinių ir ikoninių), kurie simbolizuoja vyriausybinių paslaugų temas. Surinktų vyriausybinių tekstų registro analizė išryškino registrų skirtumą tarp tekstų, publikuotų trijuose anglų bei lietuvių ir latvių puslapiuose. Anglosaksų puslapių tekstai atspindi oficialųjį administraticinį registrą, o lietuvių ir latvių tekstai labiau atstovauja publicistiniam registrui.

SUMMARY

Today various electronic resources have become the interactive digital tools that enable the reader to search for different information and services. In order to provide all necessary information of every social domain, the governments have also created their own websites in which the citizens of the country can now find the government services they need. The present MA paper focuses on the British, American, Australian, Lithuanian, and Latvian government websites emphasising the use of various multimodal modes that create the representation of the government institution. Thus the aim of this paper is to carry out the multimodal analysis focusing on compositional, lexical, and visual elements used in the websites. In order to reach the aim, the following objectives have been formulated: to investigate the compositional elements of each government website; to analyse the visual choices presented on the homepages; to reveal the typical linguistic features of the government texts; and to explore the lists of the most common noun and verb collocations used in the government websites.

The present analysis of the five government websites is based on the principles of multimodality developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The three metafunctions, ideational, interpersonal, and textual, are used in order to study the compositional and visual elements of the selected websites. The analysis of the typical linguistic features is carried out according to the principles of register analysis proposed by Biber and Conrad (2009). Nominal and verbal characteristics of the English and Baltic government texts have been analysed: nominal features include the use of nouns and their collocations, the presence of proper nouns and acronyms; verbal features involve the use of verbs and their collocations and the presence of contractions.

The analysis of the five government websites has revealed that, from the perspective of composition, the three English websites present their information in a similar way focusing on the general government services; the composition found in the two Baltic websites stresses the importance of the newest information. The study of ideational metafunction has indicated that the American and Latvian websites include the greatest number of functional elements (e.g. multilingual option or social networks) that enable the reader to become more active on the website. From the perspective of the visual mode, the Baltic websites tend to use more naturalistic photos in which Prime Ministers are demonstrated, whereas the English websites use more simulated, i.e. emblematic and iconic, images that illustrate the topics of the government services. Register analysis of the collected government texts has indicated the register difference between the English and Baltic texts: the former ones belong to the official administrative register, while the later ones represent more the publicist register (press news).

Table of Contents

SANTRAUKA

SUMMARY

List of Figures

List of Pictures

List of Tables

1 INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Aim and objectives 1

1.2 Data and methods 2

1.3 The organization of the thesis 3

2 THE OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES 5

2.1 A background of semiotics: a social-semiotic theory 5

2.2 Theoretical assumptions of multimodal analysis 7

2.2.1 The main principles of multimodality 8

2.2.2 The representation of the three metafunctions 10

2.3 The digital genre of the government websites 16

2.4 Clarification of terms: genre, register, and style 18

2.5 The overview of the framework to register analysis 21

3 THE ANALYSIS OF COMPOSITIONAL FEATURES OF THE ENGLISH AND BALTIC GOVERNMENT WEBSITES 23

3.1 The use of the textual metafunction in the English and Baltic government websites 23

3.2 The use of the ideational metafunction in the government websites 28

3.3 Compositional comparison between the old and new versions of the Lithuanian, American, and Australian government websites 31

4 THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF PICTURES AND EMBLEMATIC IMAGES IN THE ENGLISH AND BALTIC GOVERNMENT WEBSITES 36

4.1 The analysis of pictures with social participants 36

4.2 The use of emblematic images and icons 39

5 STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTS WRITTEN IN THE ENGLISH AND BALTIC GOVERNMENT WEBSITES 44

5.1 Nominal characteristics of the government texts 44

5.1.1 The use of nouns (noun collocations) 44

5.1.2 The use of proper nouns 49

5.1.3 The use of acronyms 53
5.2 Verbal characteristics of the government texts 56
5.2.1 The use of verbs (verb collocations) 56
5.2.2 The use of contractions 62
6 CONCLUSIONS 64
REFERENCES 67
Appendix 1 The image of the British government homepage 71
Appendix 2 The image of the American government homepage 72
Appendix 3 The image of the Australian government homepage 73
Appendix 4 The image of the Lithuanian government homepage 74
Appendix 5 The image of the Latvian government homepage 75
Appendix 6 Collocations with the most frequently used nouns in the government texts of the British, American, and Australian websites 76
Appendix 7 Collocations with the most frequently used nouns in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts 79
Appendix 8 Proper nouns of names, status in politics, places, and organizations in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts (nouns extracted per first 1000 words) 81
Appendix 9 Proper nouns of names, status in politics, places, and organizations in the British, American, Australian, and BNCWeb texts 82
Appendix 10 Collocations with the most frequently used verbs in the government texts of the British, American, and Australian websites 83
Appendix 11 Collocations with the most frequently used verbs in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts 87
Appendix 12 The homepages, pictures, and the collected government texts of the five government websites 89

List of Figures

Figure 1. Components in a register analysis (taken from Biber and Conrad 2009: 6) 21
Figure 2. The distribution of proper nouns in the Baltic and English government texts 49

List of Pictures

Picture 1. The top section of the British government services 25
Picture 2. The bottom section of the British government website..... 25
Picture 3. The bottom section of the Australian government website..... 26
Picture 4. The news section of the Lithuanian government website 27
Picture 5. The top section of the Lithuanian website 27
Picture 6. The top section of the Latvian government website 27
Picture 7. Logo of the British government website..... 30
Picture 8. Logo of the Australian government website 30
Picture 9. Content information in the old version of the Australian website 32
Picture 10. Content information in the new version of the Australian website..... 32
Picture 11. Content information in the old version of the Lithuanian website.....32
Picture 12. Content information in the new version of the Lithuanian website 32
Picture 13. The visual mode in the new version of the Lithuanian website..... 33
Picture 14. The visual mode in the new version of the Australian website..... 33
Picture 15. The visual mode in the new version of the American website..... 33
Picture 16. Examples of photos illustrating the direct eye contact of the represented participants in the Lithuanian (a) and Latvian (b) government websites..... 37
Picture 17. Examples of photos illustrating the connection between two or more participants in the Lithuanian (a) and Latvian (b) government websites..... 38
Picture 18. Examples of pictures representing social participants in the British (a) and American (b) government websites 39
Picture 19. The emblematic images of buildings found in the American (a), British (b), and Latvian (c) government websites..... 40
Picture 20. The emblematic images of money topic in the American (a) and Australian (b) websites 41
Picture 21. Iconic images of the government services in the Australian website 42

List of Tables

Table 1. A type of the website (Cranny-Francis 2005: 71) 18
Table 2. The common organizational principles of the British, American, and Australian government websites 24
Table 3. The common organizational principles of the Lithuanian and Latvian websites..... 26
Table 4. The representational and functional elements of the five government websites..... 29
Table 5. Examples of mottoes from the old version and new introductory description from the new version of the Lithuanian government website..... 34
Table 6. Top 30 most frequently used nouns in the British, American, and Australian government texts..... 45
Table 7. Top 30 most frequently used nouns in the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts..... 47

Table 8. The first 10 proper nouns of *places* extracted from the Baltic government texts 51
Table 9. The first 10 proper nouns of *places* extracted from the English government texts..... 52
Table 10. The use of acronyms in the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts..... 53
Table 11. The use of acronyms in the English government texts..... 55
Table 12. Top 30 most frequently used verbs in the British, American, and Australian government texts..... 57
Table 13. The verb collocations of the domain *Money* and *Tax* extracted from the English government texts..... 59
Table 14. Top 30 most frequently used verbs in the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts 60
Table 15. The distribution of verb collocations which demonstrate bilateral relations between countries in the Baltic government texts 61
Table 16. The distribution of contractions in the English and Baltic government texts 63

1 INTRODUCTION

With the widespread popularity of the World Wide Web, the use of electronic media has become very popular among many public institutions and various private companies. A government website as such represents an easily accessible public institution of the country by providing the government services and information. Due to the integration of various semiotic modes (textual, visual, audio, and video), a government website can be analysed using the aspects of multimodality. It is interesting to investigate the genre of the government website since there is a lack of research in the academic field that would analyse the government website from the perspective of multimodality. Furthermore, multimodal analysis of the government website might also reveal whether the particular visual elements and the representation of them on the website depend on the cultural differences between countries or not.

Any government website belongs to institutional discourse since such a website serves two main purposes: to create an identity of the institution and to provide an access to the government information and services. Since the language used and the interaction between the reader/speaker and the representatives in institutional discourse are predetermined by the institution itself, a government website is also designed and presented according to the principles of the institutional, in this case government, work. Therefore, it is noteworthy to study whether any government website is created using the same institutional parameters or it is affected more by the decisions of the government authorities of the country. In addition, the question of the language use in a government website may be raised investigating if it influences the presentation of the government information.

1.1 Aim and objectives

A free access to the World Wide Web enables the reader to search for different information and services, including the information of the government of each country. A particular website of the government not only represents the government but it embodies the country itself and its cultural differences. Since a government website tries to engage the reader in the interaction with the information presented on the website, it might be relevant for the citizens and foreigners as well.

Due to the technical and digital possibilities, the website can include various interactive tools in order to attract the reader's attention and enable to easily navigate through the different topics. Through various semiotic modes the reader is attracted by the presented images (visual mode), different text varieties (textual mode), and interactive tools on screen (digital mode) such as chat rooms, social networks, or multilingual options. The selected British, American, Australian, Lithuanian, and Latvian government websites are freely available for everyone on the Internet. The function of the government websites is to provide an accurate and easily accessed information about

each government and its work on different topics or domains. The initial observations have led to the comparative analysis of the three English (British, American, and Australian) and two Baltic (Lithuanian and Latvian) government websites and the multimodal components of the homepages. The specific five government websites have been selected in order to investigate whether the three English government websites are similar to the two Baltic websites. Thus, the **aim** of this MA thesis is to carry out the multimodal analysis of the chosen government websites focusing on compositional, lexical, and visual elements used in the websites.

In order to reach the aim, the following **objectives** have been set:

(1) to investigate the compositional elements of each government website;

(2) to analyse the visual choices presented on the homepages;

(3) to reveal the typical linguistic features of the government texts from the selected websites;

(4) to explore the lists of the most common noun and verb collocations used in the websites.

All these objectives will be developed in the present study in order to perform the analysis of the five selected government websites.

1.2 Data and methods

For the present study, the two groups of the government websites that belong to the following countries have been analysed: the English group includes the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Australia; the Baltic group involves the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Latvia. Through the paper, these government websites are named as British, American, Australian, Lithuanian, and Latvian. For the sake of convenience, the two groups (English and Baltic) of the government websites are used in order to carry out the multimodal analysis of the selected websites. Due to the limitations of the paper, the homepages of each website have been selected for the analysis. In order to investigate the compositional and visual aspects of the government websites, the multimodal analysis has been applied focusing on the ideational and textual metafunctions adapted from Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (2006). From the perspective of the textual metafunction, the compositional elements have been analysed which include principles of information value, salience, and framing. From the perspective of the ideational metafunction, such interactive elements as title, logo, motto, disability feature, multilingual option, e-mail, FAQs, and social networks are investigated. The visual mode (pictures and emblematic images) presented on the government homepages have been explored as well. The comparative research method has been applied because the five government websites have been compared. In addition, the old versions of the Lithuanian, American, and Australian websites have been included in the analysis since the compositional and visual structure of these three websites has been changed during the period of writing the thesis; therefore, it is interesting to explore how and why certain elements have been modified.

For the analysis of the textual mode, 455 British (283,782 words), 81 American (74,509 words), 46 Australian (15,296 words), 37 Lithuanian (15,615 words), and 84 Latvian (28,664 words) government texts have been collected. Due to the preferences of the websites creators, the significant difference in the number of words has been identified. The corpus of administrative government texts has been compiled in which the five sub-corpora of the British, American, Australian, Lithuanian, and Latvian texts have been created. However, certain limitations have been set: the British, American, and Australian texts have been collected according to the four government topics which are *Benefits*, *Education*, *Environment*, and *Money and Tax*; such topics are selected because of their relevance and topicality to different readers. With regard to the Lithuanian and Latvian texts, the present analysis includes the English translations of these texts in order to compare them with the British, American, and Australian original texts. However, only those Lithuanian and Latvian texts published in September-February (2015-2016) are taken into consideration. Using the AntConc software (version 3.4.4), the following linguistic features have been examined: nominal characteristics (nouns and their collocations, proper nouns, and acronyms) and verbal characteristics (verbs and their collocations, contractions). These linguistic features have been also compared with the features obtained from the BNCWeb administrative texts. Therefore, the present study involves the descriptive, analytical, quantitative, and comparative methods.

1.3 The organization of the thesis

The present MA thesis is divided into six different chapters and their sections. **Chapter 1** is introductory since it presents the aim, scope, methodology, and objectives of the paper. **Chapter 2** provides the overview of theoretical and methodological approaches: a visual semiotic theory is overviewed in Section 2.1; the main theoretical assumptions of multimodality are presented in Section 2.2 in which Sub-section 2.2.1 discusses the principles of multimodality, and Sub-section 2.2.2 introduces the three metafunctions; the genre of the government website is described in Section 2.3; the meanings of the terms, genre, register, and style are clarified in Section 2.4; and the framework of register analysis is presented in Section 2.5.

Chapter 3 provide the analysis of the compositional features in the government websites: the elements of the textual metafunction are presented in Section 3.1; the elements of ideational metafunction are revealed in Section 3.2; and the compositional comparison between the old and new versions of the Lithuanian, American, and Australian websites is discussed in Section 3.3. **Chapter 4** offers the analysis of the visual mode: the study of pictures with social participants is provided in Section 4.1; and the use of emblematic images and icons is discussed in Section 4.2. **Chapter 5** investigates the linguistic features of the government texts. Section 5.1 provides the analysis of nominal characteristics: the most frequent nouns and their collocations are presented in Sub-section

5.1.1; the use of proper nouns is discussed in Sub-section 5.1.2; and acronyms are analysed in Sub-section 5.1.3. Section 5.2 explores the verbal characteristics of government texts: the most frequent verbs and their collocations are investigated in Sub-section 5.2.1; and the use of contractions is inspected in Sub-section 5.2.2. **Chapter 6** summarises the results of the present analysis.

2 THE OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Before beginning to analyse the compositional, visual, and textual aspects of the chosen government websites, it is important to discuss the theoretical and methodological approaches necessary for the present study. Section 2.1 overviews the study of semiotics focusing on a social-semiotic theory; Section 2.2 presents the approach of multimodality by discussing its main principles in Sub-section 2.2.1 and the three metafunctions in Sub-section 2.2.2; in Section 2.3, the genre of the government website is described; Section 2.4 presents the difference between genre, register, and style; and Section 2.5 discusses the framework of register analysis.

2.1 A background of semiotics: a social-semiotic theory

The term *semiotics* was first described by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916 in his *Course in General Linguistics*. As a founder of modern linguistics, Saussure also contributed to the study of semiotics by "his project for a general theory of sign systems which he called *semiology*" (Nöth 1990: 56). In his book, Saussure defined semiotics as "a science that studies the life of signs within society" (Saussure 1959: 16). Another famous figure in the early development of semiotics was the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce who described semiotics as "a system of principles for the study of sign-based behaviour" (Danesi 2002: 28). According to Peirce's writings, semiotics was closely related to Logic, focusing on the idea that every thought can be a sign (Chandler 2002: 10).

Contemporary researchers study semiotics as both "a *science*, with its own corpus of findings and its theories, and a *technique* for studying anything that produces signs" (Sebeok 2001: 5). In addition, semiotics is an important tool in order to obtain the meanings in messages; therefore semiotics examines "signs and codes, signs that are used in producing, conveying, and interpreting messages and the codes that govern their use" (Moriarty 2005: 227). Regarding semiotics as the science of signs, researches of semiotics come from various study fields such as "communication, linguistics, anthropology, film study, literature, and marketing, as well as the natural sciences, where sign systems are studied in such areas as cellular biology and zoology" (Moriarty 2005: 227). In all these different areas, semiotics is related to approach to a theory of signification; i.e. how the sign systems and codes work together.

A *sign* is regarded as a key term in any semiotics. There are various descriptions of the meaning of 'sign' proposed by different scholars. As Danesi (2004: 4) suggests, a sign is "anything – a colour, a gesture, a wink, an object, a mathematical equation, etc. – that stands for something other than itself." From the multimodality perspective, signs might exist in all modes; therefore "all

modes need to be considered for their contribution to the meaning of a *sign-complex*" (Kress 2010: 54). As the scholar explains further, signs originate in social (inter)actions, which means that "signs are *made* rather than *used*" (Kress 2010: 54). Thus the process of sign-making is a distinguishable feature of social-semiotic theory from other types of semiotics. In the study of social-semiotics, such aspects as "account of meaning, individuals, with their social histories, socially shaped, located in social environments, using socially made, culturally available resources" are the most important ones (Kress 2010: 54).

Social-semiotics is described as "a set of meaning making practices [that] is always immanent in the patterned exchanges and interactions of some wider social formation along with its regulatory and deregulatory functions" (Thibault 1991: 5). As Kress (2010: 54) adds, social-semiotic theory deals with all forms of meanings that appear in social environments and social interactions. The approach of social-semiotics addresses to such questions:

> '*Whose interest* and *agency* is at work here in the making of meaning?', '*What meaning* is being made here?', '*How* is meaning being made?', 'With *what resources*, in what *social environment*?' and 'What are the *meaning potentials* of the resources that have been used?' (Kress 2010: 57)

The scholar explains the presence of these questions by claiming that social-semiotics puts the emphasis on "the *interests of the sign-maker* […]; the *environment* in which meaning is made […]; the meaning and the semiotic/cultural resources" (Kress 2010: 57) that enable the realization of the sign meaning. Since the multimodal text might include various modes such as writing, image, colour, number, or facial expression, the study of social semiotics describes the function of each mode, the relation between these modes, and the main entities in the multimodal text (Kress 2010: 59).

In social semiotics, a *semiotic resource* is one of the key terms, in a sense, that it is a resource for making meanings. Van Leeuwen (2005: 3) defines semiotic resources as "the actions and artefacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically […], or by means of technologies." Since signs cannot be separated from their concrete forms, semiotic resources are treated as "signifiers, observable actions and objects" that are put in a certain social communication or interaction (van Leeuwen 2005: 4). When the concrete semiotic resources are identified, they create a semiotic potential that can be constituted by their past and actual uses. Such uses of semiotic potential exist in a particular social context which, according to van Leeuwen (2005: 4), "may either have rules or best practices that regulate how specific semiotic resources can be used, or leave the users relatively free in their use of the resource." Furthermore, semiotic resources are not only limited to the meaning-making of speech, writing, or picture; any mode can be expressed in different ways so that enabling "the articulation of different social and cultural meanings" (van Leeuwen 2005: 4). Therefore, while traditional semiotics assumes that meanings are frozen and fixed, social semiotics

contradicts to this idea by suggesting that "the struggles and the uncertain outcomes should be studied at the level of social action, and their effects in the production of meaning" (Hodge and Kress 1988: 12).

2.2 Theoretical assumptions of multimodal analysis

The term *multimodal* was first introduced by members of the New London Group (a team of academics) which included such scholars as Cope and Kalantzis, Kress and van Leeuwen (Lauer 2009: 227). Scholars claim that now communication is not restricted only to one mode (e.g. written text) that is expressed through one medium like the page in newspaper or book. Due to the process of digitization, multiple modes are combined together to make meaning in dynamic ways, especially in the medium of the screen, which has become a dominant channel of communication. In the multimodal texts, the emphasis is put on signs (the root in semiotics), materiality, and the way communication is designed and distributed (Lauer 2009: 228).

Multimodality is described as "an interdisciplinary approach drawn from social semiotics that understands communication and representation as more than language and attends systematically to the social interpretation of a range of forms of making meaning" (Jewitt 2013: 205). Semotician van Leeuwen (2005: 281) also examines multimodality from the perspective of social semiotics by defining it as "the combination of different semiotic modes – for example, language and music – in a communicative artefact or event." Multimodality encompasses various semiotic modes for their meaning making. As Lemke (2005: 3) adds, multimodality "refers to the combination or integration of various sign systems such as language, depiction, gesture, mathematics, music, etc." These semiotic signs are named as modes that are "a set of socially and culturally shaped resources for making meaning" (Mavers 2012: 1). There are various examples of modes; for instance, it might be a writing or image on the page, a moving image or sound on the screen, a speech, gesture, gaze or posture in interaction (Mavers 2012: 1). Modes are regarded as expressions of meaning that are not fixed but created through social processes, and might change (Mavers 2012: 1). The meaning of modes may differ because they are produced by a particular community. Therefore, Kress (2009: 54) highlights that a mode is "socially shaped and culturally given resource for making meaning;" and it involves image, writing, layout, music, gesture, speech, soundtrack used in representation and communication (Kress 2009: 54).

The main point in multimodal analysis is not to analyse various modes separately, excluding speech and writing, but to understand how different modes work together in discourse; i.e. "how *all* discourse involves the interaction of multiple modes" (Jones 2012: 29). Generally, multimodal analysis might be divided into two types: the first type focuses more on 'texts' such as "magazines, comic books, web pages, films and works of art;" the second type deals with "social interaction" that

can be named as multimodal interaction analysis (Jones 2012: 29). The first and most influential approach to multimodal analysis of texts was suggested by M. A. K. Halliday and his study of systemic functional grammar which refers to "a system of 'resources' for making meaning shaped by the kind of things people need to *do* with language" (Jones 2012: 29). Later Halliday developed a systemic functional theory (SFT) that "offers a rich framework for studying meaning-making, or communication, as a dynamic social process" (Djonov 2007: 12). This framework was applied to multimodal analysis of other modes such as images, music and architecture (Jones 2012: 29-30). The most famous application of Halliday's approach has been used and adapted in Kress and van Leeuwen's book *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* that was first published in 1996 (Jones 2012: 30). In their book, scholars explore how images fulfil the three metafunctions, ideational, interpersonal, and textual, suggested by Halliday, in a different way than language.

The term *multimodality* can be explained by dividing it into two parts: *multiple* and *modes*. The term multi has occurred with digital communication in which it attempts "to describe the multiple devices and media texts that are ubiquitous in our world" (Rowsell and Walsh 2011: 54). A mode can be defined as "a system of choices used to communicate meaning" (Page 2010: 6). Since there are various modes of "speech, writing, gesture, colour, and dress," a mode is treated as "any system of signs that are used in a consistent and systemic way to make meaning" (Jones 2012: 29). Thus multimodality can be treated as "representation, communication and interaction as something more than language" (Djonov 2007: 73). O'Halloran and Smith (2011: 1) add that multimodality itself might be understood as a theory, a perspective, or a field of enquiry.

2.2.1 The main principles of multimodality

The multiplicity of modes is an important aspect in representation and communication because all modes contribute to certain meanings. Multimodality describes a full range of "meaning-making resources that people use (visual, spoken, gestural, written, three-dimensional, and others, depending on the domain of representation) in different contexts" (Bezemer 2012: 1). These *semiotic resources* are "the product of the potentials inherent in the material, of a society's selection from these potentials and of social shaping over time of the features which are selected" (Kress 2009: 55). As Rowsell and Walsh (2011: 55) expand the description of semiotic resources by suggesting that these are "things, artifacts, practices used during meaning making that complete the task in a competent, apt way." From the perspective of the social semiotic approach, the emphasis is put on semiotic resources as the products of cultural histories, whereas cognitive resources are used to create meaning in the production and interpretation of visual and other messages (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 136). Thus, in social semiotics of visual communication, semiotic resources refer to "what can be said or done with

images (and other visual means of communication) and how the things people say and do with images can be interpreted" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 134).

According to Kress (2009: 55), the resources are composed by social action and modal affordances of material. It is pointed out that social actions indicate that the meanings of modes are "demanded by the requirements of different communities" (Bezemer 2012: 1). Modal affordances are described as follows:

> The potentialities and constraints of different modes – what it is possible to express and represent or communicate easily with the resources of a mode and what is less straightforward or even impossible – and this is subject to constant social work. (Jewitt 2013: 254)

The modal affordance refers to a concept which is connected to both the material and the cultural, social, and historical use of a mode (Jewitt 2013: 254). It is shaped by social and cultural conventions that inform how it is used in different contexts. For example, the affordances of the sounds of speech happen across time and have a logic of sequence in time, i.e. one sound is uttered after another, one word after another (Jewitt 2013: 254). This sequence of utterances becomes an affordance or meaning potential: the things can be put as the first elements, the second elements or somewhere else in a sequence (Jewitt 2013: 254). Thus, modal affordances impact the different communicational and representational potentials which show how a mode has been used.

The meaning of a mode is created through the selection and arrangement of modes, emphasising "the significance of the interaction between modes" (Bezemer 2012: 2). Therefore, all communicational acts are shaped by "the norms and rules operating at the moment of sign making" (Bezemer 2012: 2). Moreover, they are influenced by different motivations and interests of people in a particular social environment (Bezemer 2012: 2). As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 35) propose, modes are shaped by "the intrinsic characteristics and potentialities of the medium and by the requirements, histories and values of societies and their cultures." Although these characteristics may differ in societies, "cultural and social valuations and structures strongly affect the uses of these potentialities of modes (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 35).

Due to the increased ubiquity of sound, image, film in the three mediums like TV, computer, and the Internet, the shift of emphasis on and interest in the multi-semiotic complexity of the multimodal representations has been marked (Iedema 2003: 33). The current researches focus on the role of multimodal representations in constructing meanings in science. As Jamani (2011: 192) claims,

> multimodal representations/signs are also referred to as multiple semiotic modalities. Research based on multimodal representations is premised upon communication characterized by multiple modes of representation such as oral

> and written language, images, and actions in contrast to oral and written language (linguistic mode) being the forms of representation.

Moreover, the scholar adds that the purpose of multimodal analysis is "to interpret how multimodal signs or multiple semiotic modalities such as verbal and written language, visual diagrams, gestures, and objects signify meanings" in various discourses (Jamani 2011: 192). Since print- and screen-based technologies enable different modes and semiotic resources to shape the process of meaning making, the print- or screen-based texts have been always multimodal. Such texts "require the interpretation and design of visual marks, space, colour, font or style, and, increasingly image, and other modes of representation and communication" (Jewitt 2005: 315). Therefore, the reading of multimodal texts has become considerably important. It has to be taken into consideration that multimodal texts "have more than one 'mode' so that meaning is communicated through a synchronisation of modes" (Walsh 2004: 24). Such combination of modes might include spoken or written language, still or moving images that are produced either on paper or electronic screen, and may incorporate sound. The scholar also adds that multimodal texts can be of two types: texts in print form are "picture books, information books, newspaper and magazines," whereas texts in non-print form are "film, video, email, the internet and digital media such as CD Roms or DVDs" (Walsh 2004: 24).

2.2.2 The representation of the three metafunctions

The three metafunctions are taken from Michael Halliday's social semiotic approach to language, and adopted in multimodality because it is not only useful in language studies but also "it works well as a source for thinking about all modes of representation" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 20). All semiotic modes can be analysed using the three metafunctions described as "ideational (about something), interpersonal (doing something), and textual (the speaker's text-forming potential)" (Halliday 1978: 112). Halliday's social semiotic theory was intended primarily for the language studies; he proposed that language can perform three different functions:

> (1) to say something about the world, an Ideational function; (2) to say something about those involved in the communicative event, an Interpersonal function; and (3) to say something about the text, a Textual function. The three metafunctions can be used analytically to describe three different and intertwined layers of meaning of any language in use. (Adami 2013: 9)

In terms of this framework, any expression/form of language might be analysed through the meanings it realises, or through its functions in a particular social context (Djonov 2007: 12). Therefore, in this

given socio-cultural context, every act of communication is constituted and construed using three metafunctions (Djonov 2007: 12).

As noted earlier, multimodality is based on the systemic functional theory of meaning, where "an idea of meaning [is] social action realized through people's situated modal choices and the way they combine and organize these resources into multimodal ensembles" (Jewitt 2013: 13). Jewitt (2013: 13) also proposes that these meaning choices can be called meta-functions which are immediately made when people communicate. The meaning choices are described by Jewitt (2013: 13) as follow:

1. Choices related to how people realise content meanings (Ideational metafunction); i.e. resources that depict processes, relations, events, participants, and circumstances;
2. Choices related to how people articulate interpersonal meanings (Interpersonal metafunction); i.e. resources that represent the social relations between people and those they are communicating with;
3. Choices concerned with textual or organizational meaning (Textual metafunction); i.e. resources such as space, layout, pace and rhythm for realizing the cohesion, composition, and structure of a text or interaction.

In the multimodality studies, these metafunctions are applied to all modes in order to understand their meaning potential, i.e. the usage of a certain set of semiotic resources. In visual analysis, the meanings of these three metafunctions can be also attached to any image since it "not only represents the world (whether in abstract or concrete ways), but also plays an important role in some interaction and, with or without accompanying texts, constitutes a recognizable kind of text (a painting, a political poster, a magazine advertisement, etc.)" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 138).

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) have adapted the framework of three Halliday's metafunctions to the analysis of semiotic modes, especially the visuals. In multimodality studies, the three metafunctions are often named as "Representational, Interactive and Compositional" (Adami 2013: 9). As Kress and van Leeuwen explain in their book *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design* (2006: 42), in ideational metafunction, any semiotic mode has to represent aspects of the world, i.e. "semiotic modes offer an array of choices, of different ways in which objects, and their relations to other objects and to processes, can be presented." The representational meaning deals with abstract or concrete participants (people, places, or things) depicted in the visual. Jewitt and Oyama (2001: 141) suggest that this ideational metafunction focuses on spatial relationships; i.e. "where things are in the semiotic space and whether or not they are connected through lines, or through visual 'rhymes' of colour, shape, and so on." These lines are called *vectors* because they serve as "compositional elements that indicate the directionality of an action" (Jones 2012: 72).

In ideational metafunction, there are two kinds of pattern in order to relate visual participants to each other in meaningful ways. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 59) describe, in narrative

representations, "participants are connected by a vector, they are represented as *doing* something to or for each other." The vector might express "a dynamic, 'doing' or 'happening' kind of relation;" it can be, for instance, an arrow connecting boxes in a diagram, or the outstretched arm of the man (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 141). In narrative images, the depicted participants are treated as either 'actors' or 'goals.' The 'Actor' can be described as "the participant from whom or which the vector departs, and which may be *fused* with the vector to different degrees" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 59). 'Goals' are depicted as "the participants at whom the vector is directed" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 143). It is also noticed that if an image involves both and actor and a goal, it is called a 'transactive' image since it represents an action taking place between two parties (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 143). The narrative representation is useful in visual analysis since it helps to explore a visual text and to investigate "who are playing the active roles of doing and/or looking and who the passive roles of being acted upon and/or being looked at in visual texts with certain kinds of participants" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 143).

The second pattern of representing participants in visuals is conceptual structures which do not include vectors. Such conceptual images might 'define', 'classify' or 'analyse' people, places and things, even the abstract images (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 143). Conceptual structures of visuals are further grouped into classificational processes. This type of images "relate participants to each other in terms of a 'kind of' relation, a taxonomy: at least one set of participants will play the role of *Subordinates* with respect to at least one other participant, the *Superordinate*" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 79). In other words, different people, places or things are brought together in one image and symmetrically distributed in order to show "that they have something in common, that they belong to the same class" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 143-144). The other group, symbolic processes, indicates what the depicted participant might mean. Symbolic images involve two types of participants: "the participant whose meaning or identity is established in the relation, the *Carrier*, and the participant which represents the meaning or identity itself, the *Symbolic Attribute*" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 105). These symbolic attributes as objects can be defined according to the following characteristics:

> (1) they are made salient in the representation (by size, position, detail, focus, colour, or tone);
> (2) they are pointed out by means of a gesture;
> (3) they look out of place in the whole, in some way;
> (4) they are conventionally associated with symbolic values. (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 144)

The last group of the conceptual structures belongs to analytical processes that relate participants to each other in terms of a part-whole structure. Analytical structures include two key participants: "the carrier (the whole) and any number of 'possessive attributes' (the parts)" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001:

144). The typical examples of analytical structures are maps, diagrams, or pie charts. In all these cases, the represented entity is usually described by showing how it is made up of various parts.

The interpersonal metafunction is concerned with "the social relations between interactants as well as the evaluative orientations that participants adopt towards each other and to the represented world of the text" (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 39). This metafunction proposes that "any semiotic mode has to be able to represent a particular social relation between the producer, the viewer and the object represented" (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 42). In visual modes, for instance, a naturalistic image, a diagram, a portrait, or any other picture, the interaction between the represented person and the viewer may be depicted when the person, for example, addresses the viewer directly, by looking at the camera (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 43). The absence of interaction might be expressed when the person in an image, for instance, is turned away from the viewer (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 43). Furthermore, when defining the interpersonal metafunction, it does not only include the interaction between the participants but it also involves "the expression of attitudes and values, and, thus, contains and an element of judgement" (Junker 2013: 17). In other words, the interpersonal metafunction creates certain attitudes and feelings of the reader towards the representation of mode (Djonov 2007: 13).

In the analysis of visuals, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) have examined the meanings of visual semiotic modes such as images of people, various diagrams or children's drawings. As the two scholars (2006: 114) state, the interpersonal metafunction in the study of visual modes represents "visual communication [that] also has resources for constituting and maintaining […] the interaction between the producer and the viewer of the image." With regard to the interpersonal metafunction, visual resources include two types of participants:

- *represented participants* (the people, the places and things depicted in images);
- *interactive participants* (the people who communicate with each other *through* images, the producers and viewers of images). (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 114; emphasis in the original)

These participants communicate with each other through visual resources and create particular relationships that might be presented in three ways:

(1) through relations between represented participants;
(2) through relations between interactive and represented participants (what are the interactive participants' attitudes towards the represented ones);
(3) through relations between interactive participants (the things interactive participants do for each other through images). (Junker 2013: 19)

Therefore, the interpersonal metafunction indicates that the function of any mode is to create and maintain one or another kind of relationship between the producer of the message and its recipient.

In visuals, Kress and van Leeuwen state that the realisation of the meanings between the viewers and the attitudes they take towards what is being represented can be expressed through such devices as contact, distance, and attitude. With regard to the realisation of contact in visuals, contact deals with "gaze or lack of gaze at a reader" (Junker 2013: 19); a gaze is treated as a demand whereas a lack of gaze can suggest an offer. The second aspect in the study of interactive meanings is the social distance which is related to the choice of shot, i.e. "the closer the shot is, the more intimate the relation will feel, and conversely, the longer the shot is, the more impersonal the relation will feel" (Junker 2013: 19). Jones (2012: 75) adds that while close-ups (close shots) tend to create "a feeling of psychological closeness along with physical closeness", long shots tend to create "a more impersonal relationship." Since visual images might stimulate the feeling of closeness or distance between the viewer and the participants, it can be realised in varying degrees of shots. As Baldry and Thibault (2006: 39) explain, in close shots, head and shoulders are demonstrated; in the images of medium close shots, body is cut off at the waist line; medium long shots portray figures in their full-length; and in images of long shots, the presented body occupies approximately half the height of the image. Scholars summarise the use of shots by stating that close shots express "intimacy and personality", while long shots highlight "depersonality and objectivity" (Baldry and Thibault 2006: 39).

According to the choice of the presented shots, there are three types of social distances established: "intimate/personal, social and impersonal" (Kress and van Leeuwen in Junker 2013: 19). These social distances enable to define the relationship between the participant in the image and the reader. In relation to the meanings of shots in visuals, Jewitt and Oyama (2001: 146) suggest that the very close-ups indicate an intimate or personal relationship; a medium shot offers the meaning of a social relationship; and a long shot suggests an impersonal relationship. The last aspect, attitude, is concerned with "expressing attitudinal relations between the reader and the represented participants in the image" (Junker 2013: 19), focusing on either subjectivity or objectivity. The former deals with a specific angle or a point of view, i.e. the reader is enabled to see the represented participants from a specific point of view. It is established that these subjective angles are either horizontal in which frontal horizontal angle creates involvement while oblique angle indicates detachment; or they might be vertical as a sign of power in the visual (Junker 2013: 19). There are three types of vertical angles:

1) if it is high, the power is given to the reader;
2) if it is an eye-level, the equality between the reader and the participant is maintained;
3) if it is low, the power is given to the participant. (Junker 2013: 19-20)

The classification of these angles determine the reader's attitude towards the image or other visual in which the participants are visualized in a certain way. Finally, the reader's attitude can be created from the objective perspective that is usually described in technical or scientific images such as maps, charts or diagrams. In these visuals, "the reader gets to see everything there is to know about the represented participants, meaning that there is no point of view built into the image" (Junker 2013: 20). The objective images are more understandable since they do not contain an implied meaning as the subjective visuals.

In multimodal analysis, the last, textual, metafunction is concerned with the range of various resources which are different compositional arrangements intended for the realization of different textual meanings. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 176) emphasise that the composition is an important element since it indicates "the way in which the representational and interactive elements are made to relate to each other, the way they are integrated into a meaningful whole." Scholars also add that, in the textual metafunction, any semiotic mode has to have the capacity to form texts, complexes of signs which cohere both internally with each other and externally with the context in and for which they were produced (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 43). Composition indicates the arrangement of elements that might be "people, things, abstract shapes, etc. – in or on a semiotic space, for example, a page, a screen, a canvas, a shelf, a square, a city" (van Leeuwen 2005: 198). According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 177), composition is expressed through three interrelated systems:

(1) *Information value* (the placement of elements);
(2) *Salience* (by which factors the elements are made to attract the viewer's attention);
(3) *Framing* (the presence or absence of framing devices).

These three principles of composition can be applied not only to singles images but also to the composite visuals that combine text and image, and sometimes other graphic elements, on a page, television or computer screen.

The principle of information value is realised by the placement of the compositional elements in the visual; elements can be placed on the left or on the right, in the centre or the margin, or in the upper or lower part of the page. The information value of left and right creates a given-new structure in which 'given' means "something the viewer or reader already knows, as a familiar and agreed departure point for the message", whereas 'new' indicates "something not yet known and not yet already agreed upon by the viewer or reader, hence as something to which the viewer or reader must pay special attention" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 148). The left side of the image usually contains 'given' or known information while the right side is more related to 'new' or problematic information. As Jones (2012: 76) adds, the left-right placement of elements is typical in visuals since "people tend to 'read' images in the same way they read texts, starting at the left and moving towards the right."

The information value of top and bottom creates a real-ideal structure in which 'ideal' provides generalised or abstract information whereas 'real' indicates specific and more concrete information. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 186) further explain that "the upper section tends to make some kind of emotive appeal and to show us 'what might be'; the lower section tends to be more informative and practical, showing us 'what is'." The last information value is a centre and margin structure which is not very common in visuals. In this case, centrality means "what is placed in the centre is thereby seen as what holds the 'marginal' elements together"; the marginal elements are treated as "elements that are held together by the centre – belonging to it, subservient to it, and so on, depending on the context" (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 149).

The salience principle indicates that some compositional elements might be made as more eye-catching than others. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 201) explain, regardless where elements are placed in the visual, salience can create "a hierarchy of importance among the elements, selecting some as more important, more worthy of attention than others." It might be done by "judging the balance of the visual weight of the elements of a composition" (Junker 2013: 21). Thus the principle of salience is realised in many different ways: through size, sharpness of focus, tonal contrast, colour contrast, placement in the visual field, perspective (foreground, background), overlapping and specific cultural factors (Junker 2013: 21). The last compositional element used in visual analysis is framing. It indicates that either elements are presented as separate entities in the image, or shown as belonging together. Disconnectedness between elements is expressed through framelines (thick or thin lines), empty space found between elements, contrasts of colour or form, or visual features (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 150). Connection between the represented elements can be achieved by similarities and rhymes of colour and form, vectors that connect elements, and the absence of framelines or empty space between elements (Jewitt and Oyama 2001: 150). As Junker (2013: 21) states, "the stronger an element has been framed, the more it is presented as a separate unit of information"; whereas the lack of framing in visuals indicates "a way to stress group identity."

2.3 The digital genre of the government websites

The immense popularity of the internet among business and organisations worldwide has led to the closer examination of the electronic genres that are mediated through the net (Askehave and Nielsen 2005: 121). The web phenomena, and the websites themselves, are regarded as "unique expressions of contemporary culture, and as such they constitute a huge repository of potential data about contemporary ways of doing and thinking of large groups of people across ethnic and national boundaries" (Pauwels 2012: 247). On the Web, the defining characteristic of websites as hypermedia texts is their fluidity. It is described as "the quality resulting from a website's capacity for expandability and change and the ability of hyperlinks to obscure its structure and transcend its

boundaries" (Djonov 2007: 1). The fluidity of a website grants the user's freedom of movement and attracts to the Web itself. Only the website design can retain or increase the fluidity of the website by attracting the reader's attention or disorienting him/her (Dnojov 2007: 1).

The term 'cybergenre' has appeared to refer to "genres of electronic communications in organizations" such as electronic mails, fax and websites (Ryan, Field and Olfman 2002: 1116). It has been observed that genres in digital environment are capable to change over time due to innovative techniques that media use or the migration of existing genres from other media; or they might disappear through a process of selection, when the new genres become more preferred (Ryan, Field and Olfman 2002: 1116). Website as a genre consists of various webpages in which hypermedia text incorporate such modes as "visual, verbal and increasingly audio and kinetic elements, and hyperlinks" (Dnojov 2007: 3). The webpages are said to serve two functions: to present the website content in the main viewing area, "which excludes the anchor to the homepage, the navigation bars, website section or subsection, and any advertising banners"; the other function is "to reveal a website's content organization and navigation options as well as a user's position within a website" (Djonov 2007: 3). This function can be achieved through various interface design methods that are crucial for user orientation.

The Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) provide a possibility to share the information around the world quickly and easily. The institutions of the governments are also "embracing information and communications technologies (ICTs) to reinvent their organisational routine processes and service dissemination channels" (Parajuli 2007: 87). Governments have created their online websites in order to provide a quicker access to the government information, and to offer a range of services to the citizens. Therefore, the websites of governments might be referred to as "electronic government (e-Government) or digital government" that are more convenient today than the print media since they "promote and support citizen, business entity, and government agency participation for civic engagement and democratic responsiveness" (Parajuli 2007: 87).

Government websites belong to the institutional web genre because of their certain functions and purposes. Parajuli (2007: 88) defines the digital context of the website as follows:

> A Web site is a virtual location of the associated organization with a unique Uniform Resource Locator (URL) and is the information resource in the World Wide Web. It attempts to cater the need of all the intended users through a wide variety of contents such as text, image, audio, and video incorporated in connected Web pages of the site. […] a Web site is the virtual gateway of the organization.

The description suggests that a government website should provide the information of an organization, in this case, the government. It means that these websites should easily access the content of the work of the government and promote the citizen-government interaction. Therefore,

the government websites are usable, accurate, and effective in order to meet citizen demands in the Web (Parajuli 2007: 89). **Table 1** represents the characteristics of the genre of the government website.

Table 1. A type of the website (Cranny-Francis 2005: 71)

A type of the website	Characteristics
Government/Institutional	• Serving the public, by giving access to information • Creating an identity for that government instrumentality • Supporting the instrumentality by buying products

Furthermore, as an institutional genre, any government website has to function as representative of the country; to communicate effectively with the users; to represent the identity of its country of which it is an instrument; and to articulate the meaning of citizenship for the users (Cranny-Francis 2005 :72).

The present paper focuses on the analysis based on the selected part of the English and Baltic government websites, i.e. their homepages. The homepage is defined as "the top-level document of a website" (Askehave & Nielsen 2005: 123) that performs two functions:

1. It introduces the user to the general content of the site by presenting "informative" tables and providing "enticing" text bits.
2. It functions as the official gateway of the website as it enables the reader to access and navigate the site by providing navigational tools or links that branch off into the website as the whole. (Askehave & Nielsen 2005: 123-124)

When the user enters a website, the homepage and its structured elements create the first impression of the institutional website; thus, it should be as informative and accurate as possible. From the communication perspective, the homepage addresses all potential visitors to the site (Domingo, Jewitt, and Kress 2014: 11). With regard to composition and semiotics, it has to be "a half-way house, appealing to all groups, offering enough that is recognizable to all" (Domingo, Jewitt, and Kress 2014: 11). The homepage serves as a content indicator that combines together many features, such as pictures, sound, animations, form, and layout.

2.4 Clarification of terms: genre, register, and style

In order to begin to analyse the selected government texts published in three English and two Baltic government websites, it is important to clarify the meanings of such linguistic concepts as *genre*, *register*, and *style*. The terms, *genre* and *register*, are regarded as the most confusing and many scholars often use them interchangeably. In his *Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, Crystal (2008: 409) describes register as "a variety of language defined according to its use in social

situations, e.g. a register of scientific, religious, formal English." From functional language perspective, register is treated as "a contextual category correlating groupings of linguistic features with recurrent situational features" (Trosborg 1997: 5). Researchers in sociolinguistic studies expand the meaning of register and use it in broader sense:

> A communication situation that recurs regularly in a society (in terms of participants, setting, communicative functions, and so forth) will tend over time to develop identifying markers of language structure and language use, different from the language of other communication situations. (Ferguson 1994: 20)

The importance of communicative situations is also emphasised by Lee (2001: 42) who claims that register is "functionally associated with particular contextual or situational parameters of variation" and can be defined by its linguistic characteristics. In other words, register can be treated as language variety according to its use; i.e. in different situations, different configurations of language are required in order to fulfil its task, and to be functionally adapted to the immediate situational characteristics of contextual use (Lee 2001: 46).

In many general definitions, *genre* refers to "any formally distinguishable variety that has achieved a level of general recognition, whether in speech or writing, such as commercial advertising, jokes, and sermons" (Crystal 2008: 210). Furthermore, genre is said to be based on the external, non-linguistic characteristics of texts. Such external criteria include "intended audience, purpose, and activity type, that is, it refers to a conventional, culturally recognised grouping of texts" (Lee 2001: 38). Therefore, genre categories are determined by the speaker's purpose and topic, focusing on the use rather than the form of texts. With regard to the study of human language behaviour (sociolinguistics), Ferguson (1994: 21) suggests the following description of genre:

> A message type that recurs regularly in a community (in terms of semantic content, participants, occasions of use, and so on) will tend over time to develop an identifying internal structure, differentiated from other message types in the repertoire of the community.

Moreover, since genre formation is rooted in everyday language, researchers perform genre analysis on the basis of broad cross-cultural and historical study. When any text is treated as a member of a certain category, the term genre is identified as a grouping of texts that functions according to some conventionally recognised criteria and purposive goals which have to be culturally defined (Lee 2001: 46). If genres as categories are established within a particular culture, they have a tendency to change, challenged and revised, over time (Lee 2001: 46). As Trosborg (1997: 4) adds, genres are distinguished by mature speakers of a language and used in a particular situation for a particular purpose; these can be guidebooks, nursery rhymes, poems, business letters, newspaper articles, radio plays, or advertisements.

The difference between a *register* and a *genre* is expressed in the idea that while register reflects the internal dimensions of language, genre reflects the external dimensions of language. Trosborg (1997: 4) suggests that in order to reveal more about the nature of genres, registers are divided into genres to reflect how their social purposes are accomplished in particular settings; for example, academic conversation shows a great variety of casual hallway chats, lectures, e-mail, memos, scholarly papers, etc. In a social semiotic view of text, register refers to "context of situation" whereas genre refers to "context of culture" (Eggins and Martin 1997: 251) when text is both the realization of types of context, and the representation of what matters to cultural members in situations. Lee (2001: 46) states that it is useful to perceive the two terms, register and genre, as two different points of view; register is used in relation to "lexico-grammatical and discoursal-semantic patterns associated with situations (i.e. linguistic patterns), whereas genre is used when talking about "memberships of culturally-recognisable categories."

The term *style* has been used sometimes in two ways: in a broad sense, style refers to situationally distinctive varieties of language; in a more restricted sense, Halliday has suggested that style is associated with "the relations among the participants in a language activity, especially the level of formality they adopt (colloquial, formal, etc.)" (Crystal 2008: 460). The importance of determining the level of formality of a particular style is also highlighted in Lee's (2001: 45) definition of the term; he suggests that style should be used "to characterise the internal properties of individual texts or the language use by individual authors, with "formality" being perhaps the most important and fundamental one." In contrast to register, in which linguistic variation is functional because linguistic features are frequently used in a register, linguistic patterns associated with styles are not functional since these features refer to aesthetic preferences that are determined by the attitudes of the speaker/writer about language (Biber and Conrad 2009: 18). Therefore, style of particular individual author can be described using five arbitrary terms such as "froze," "formal," "informal," "colloquial," and "intimate" proposed by Joos (1961). On a more informal level, style can be also indicated as being "humorous," "ponderous," or "disjointed" (Lee 2001: 45-46). In short, the term style is associated with the particular linguistic preferences of an individual author.

In the present MA paper, the terms *register* and *register analysis* are more preferred and used in order to investigate the typical linguistic features of the selected government texts. The most suitable definition of register comes from Lee's (2001) work in which he defines register as functionally associated with particular contextual and situational parameters of language variation. According to certain linguistic characteristics determined in the analysis, the government texts can be divided into two groups; the first group represents the register of official administrative language; the other group represents the register of press news/reportage language variety. From the genre

perspective, these government texts belong to genre of website presented in the institutional discourse in the electronic/digital media.

2.5 The overview of the framework to register analysis

Since *register* is regarded as a variety associated with a particular situation of use, *register analysis* includes three major components: the situational context, the linguistic feature, and what functional relationships are determined between the first two components (Biber and Conrad 2009: 6). The following **Figure 1** illustrates the structure of register analysis.

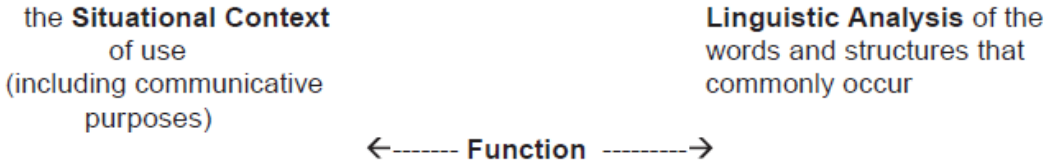


Figure 1. Components in a register analysis (taken from Biber and Conrad 2009: 6)

As **Figure 1** shows, linguistic analysis includes the use of lexical and grammatical characteristics that are always functional. The analysis of situational context of particular register indicates whether texts are produced in speech or writing, whether they are interactive, and include their primary communicative purposes. In addition, the before-mentioned linguistic features should be pervasive in a register analysis; i.e. registers can be described on a basis of either complete texts or a collection of text excerpts because "pervasive linguistic characteristics might occur in any variety but are much more common in the target register" (Biber and Conrad 2009: 6). In contrast, the features of genre analysis are nor pervasive since they occur only one time in a complete text, and are often conventional rather than functional.

In register analysis, it is important to specify the level of generality for registers. Biber (1995: 7) claims that "registers can be defined by situational characteristics at any level of generality." However, there may be some differences among registers analysed at different levels of generality. On the one hand, such general registers as speech and writing are defined "by reference to their physical mode;" on the other hand, more specified registers, for example, methodology sections in psychology articles, can be described by such factors as "their physical mode, production circumstances, intended audience, micro-purpose, topic, etc." (Biber 1995: 7).

Furthermore, Biber and Conrad (2009: 8) emphasise the idea that register characteristics can become more salient and apparent when comparing two different registers. Scholars provide an example in which the speakers in a conversation directly address each other; whereas, in a newspaper article, the author of a front-page does not address a specific person. It indicates that there is "no

direct interaction between a specific reader and the author" (Biber and Conrad 2009: 8). Besides, it is not a convention for the author to describe his/her own feelings, attitudes, or any details about his/her personal life; therefore, in the register of front-page newspaper articles, there are few first and second person pronouns and questions (Biber and Conrad 2009: 8). Due to such functional considerations, register analysis is more useful when any individual register is compared to other registers.

In his PhD thesis, Kołata (2010: 50-52) claims that register analysis contains two stages: the first step is "to describe the lexical and grammar structures which compose the texts under investigation"; the second step is "to explain the differences which were found while realizing the initial step." Biber and Conrad (2009: 7) expand the description of register analysis by claiming that at first it is important to consider and note the situational characteristics of a particular register that would distinguish it from other registers; the second task is to define the typical pervasive linguistic features of that register; and the third task is "to interpret the relationship between situational characteristics and pervasive linguistic features in functional terms." For the beginning of register analysis, these two scholars suggest the general framework for exploring situational characteristics; these components include participants, relations among participants, channel, production circumstances, setting, communicative purposes, and topic (Biber and Conrad 2009: 40). In linguistic analysis of register, the basic concern is to determine whether a particular linguistic feature is regarded as 'typical' in a given register. Three major methodological considerations are suggested for the analysis: "(1) the need for a comparative approach; (2) the need for quantitative analysis; and (3) the need for a representative sample" (Biber and Conrad 2009: 51). Register analysis should be always comparative; i.e. register features that are defined as typical linguistic characteristics should occur more frequently in the target register than in other comparison registers.

3 THE ANALYSIS OF COMPOSITIONAL FEATURES OF THE ENGLISH AND BALTIC GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

Three English (British, American, and Australian) and two Baltic (Lithuanian and Latvian) government websites have been chosen in order to investigate their visual design. Since this chapter focuses on the analysis of compositional features of these websites, Section 3.1 analyses the elements of the textual metafunction which refers to different organizational principles. Section 3.2 investigates the characteristics of interpersonal metafunction; i.e. the use of representational and functional elements of these websites. Section 3.3 discusses the most distinctive features extracted from the old and new versions of the Lithuanian, American, and Australian government websites.

3.1 The use of the textual metafunction in the English and Baltic government websites

As the electronic medium has a direct influence on the overall organization of elements, the homepages of the five selected government websites have their own typical structure. The authors of these government websites are the ones who decide how to create a quick and simple access to all government services and information through the arrangement of elements on a website. This section discusses the five chosen government websites from the perspective of textual metafunction; i.e. such principles as information value, salience, and framing will be taken into consideration. On the basis of similarities concerning the textual metafunction, two groups of websites may be distinguished: the English websites and the Baltic ones.

Since the British, American, and Australia websites provide many similarities in their visual structures, firstly, the most dominant compositional features of these websites are compared. The following **Table 2** distinguishes the most common aspects of organizational principles observed in the English government websites.

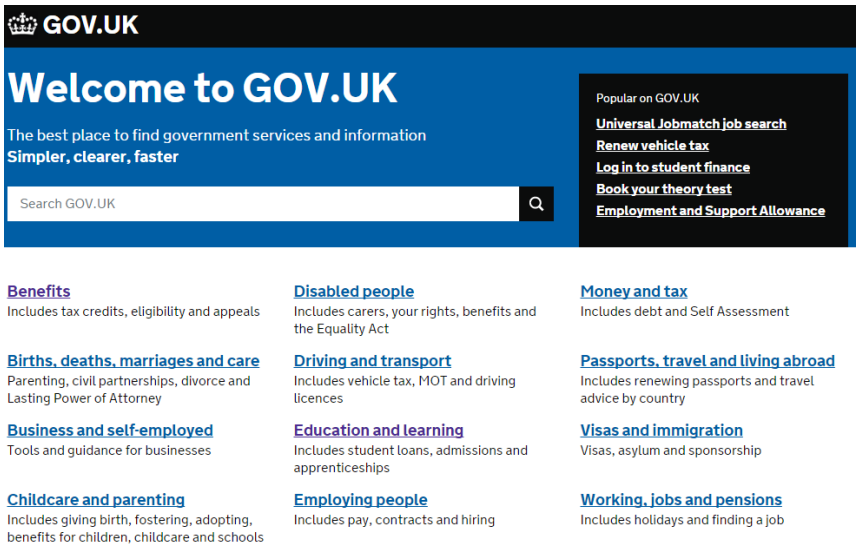
Table 2. The common organizational principles of the British, American, and Australian government websites

	British government website	**American government website**	**Australian government website**
Information value	• top – bottom: ➢ general, stable information about government services ➢ new information about 3 changing posters by specific topic	• top – bottom: ➢ generalized information about government services, agencies, and elected officials ➢ no new information	• top – bottom: ➢ general information about each topic of government services ➢ the newest information about public holidays and government's promotions presented at the bottom
Salient elements	• a list of sub-sections of government services: *Benefits*, *Education and learning*, *Environment and countryside*, *Money and tax*, etc.	• a group of government services by topic: *Benefits, Grants, and Loans*, *Education*, *Earth and the Environment*, *Money and Shopping*, etc.	• a set of government services followed by textual descriptions: *Benefits and Payments*, *Education and Training*, *Environment*, *Money and Tax*, etc.
Framing devices	• blue, black, grey font colours – to separate general and newest information	• blue and grey font colours – to indicate the arrangement of given information	• blue and grey font colours – to show the distribution of general and new information

As **Table 2** shows, the three English government websites are structured in a similar way from the perspective of the textual metafunction. According to the principle of information value, these websites use top-bottom principle in which the top section indicates the given or general information, while in the bottom section the newest information is usually presented; e.g. in the Australian website, there is *What's the Government promoting* section about the news in social, cultural, and other fields that the Australian government encourages. Furthermore, all three English websites emphasise the importance of government services which are visually supported by various emblematic images or icons: the British and Australian websites provide 16 different services (e.g. in the British website, *Benefits*, *Disabled people*, *Housing and local services*, etc.; in the Australian website, *Environment*, *Family and Community*, *Health*, etc.), while the American one uses 14 (e.g. *Health*, *Housing and Community*, *Travel and Immigration*, etc.). These government services suggest general and stable information that is essential for a reader.

It has been observed that the whole design of the government website is traditionally influenced by the electronic medium; i.e. when the reader opens any government website, the top part of a website demonstrates the most important information. Therefore, the British, American, and

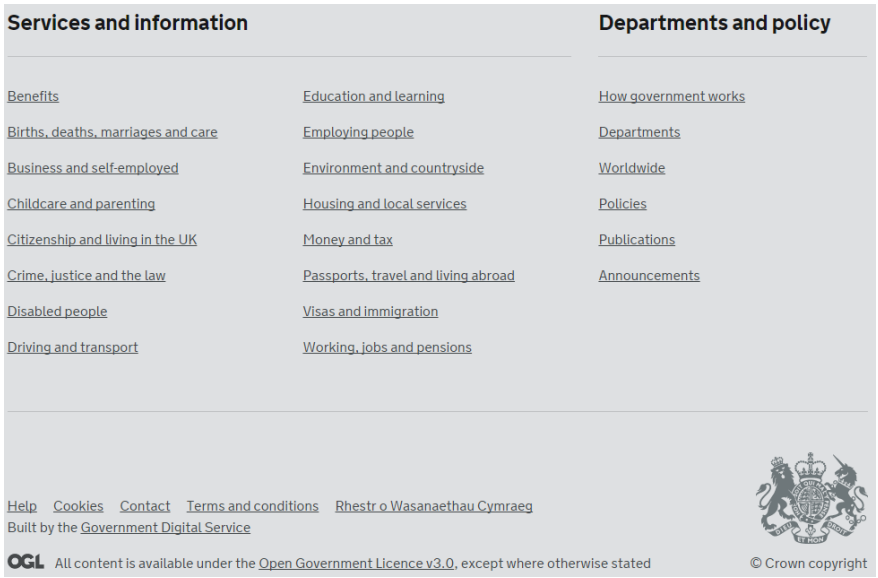
Australian government websites place the general information of the government services at the beginning of a page. The following **Picture 1** illustrates the top section of the British website.



Picture 1. The top section of the British government services

The British, American, and Australian websites are designed in a similar way. In the American website, the government services are presented at the top section and are visually supported by colourful and emblematic images. In the Australian website, representational icons are used in order to indicate each topic of government services. The images of the British, American, and Australian government homepages can be found in **Appendices 1**, **2**, and **3**.

Regarding the compositional structure, framing devices are used in the English websites in order to distinguish sections graphically. For example, blue, black, or grey colours are applied to the very bottom section of a page to indicate the contact information found in the website. The bottom sections of the British and Australian government websites are shown in **Picture 2** and **Picture 3** below.



Picture 2. The bottom section of the British government website



Picture 3. The bottom section of the Australian government website

It has been observed that these bottom sections repeat the generalised information using short phrases or expressions; e.g. in **Picture 2**, the main government services are repeated for a reader, while in **Picture 3** hyperlinks of state and territory governments are included again on the website. The bottom sections also include contact information, external links about government or country itself, and accessible social networks. The present analysis has revealed that the authors of these government websites attach different values or meanings to top and bottom positions on the website; i.e. at the top, the most essential and general information is provided for a reader; whereas the bottom part repeats the main information, this way framing the website.

The other group of government websites under the present investigation consists of the Lithuanian and Latvian websites, which belong to the same Baltic region. The analysis has revealed that the Lithuanian and Latvian websites have some similar compositional elements. The results of compositional analysis of the Lithuanian and Latvian websites are presented in **Table 3**.

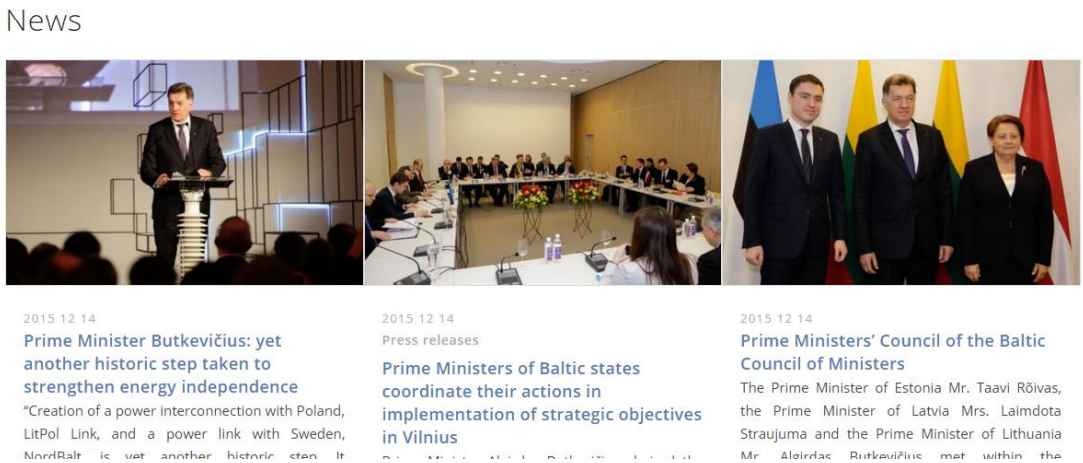
Table 3. The common organizational principles of the Lithuanian and Latvian websites

	Lithuanian government website	**Latvian government website**
Information value	• top – bottom: ➢ general information about government work ➢ the newest information related to the Prime Minister's work	• top – bottom: ➢ general information about ministers and agencies ➢ all news about the Prime Minister's agenda
Salient elements	• section of news includes articles about the Prime Minister's meetings and speeches	• news section involves the press releases of the Prime Minister's work
Framing devices	• blue and grey colours used to indicate sections with general information	• dark red and grey colours are applied to separate top and bottom sections

Regarding the principle of information value, the Lithuanian and Latvian websites are structured according to top-bottom principle. However, these two websites focus more on the news section which is presented at the bottom of the homepage. This section highlights the importance of the Prime Minister, either Algirdas Butkevičius (Lithuanian government) or Laimdota Straujuma (Latvian government). For more general information about government's work, the reader might check the

very top sections that are usually displayed in blue, grey, or dark red colours; these sections indicate the structure of each government or the contact information.

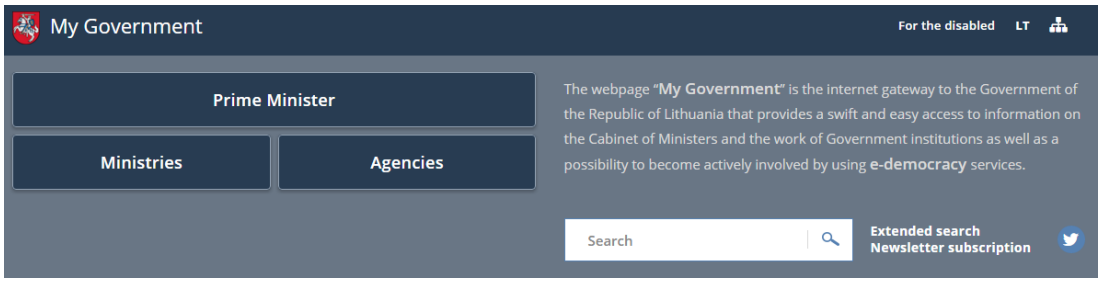
In the Lithuanian and Latvian government websites, the top part is dedicated to the general information of government and its ministers, and the bottom part focuses on the importance of news section. While English government websites emphasise various government services, the Lithuanian and Latvian websites maintain the significant status of the Prime Ministers. **Picture 4** illustrates how the newest information is presented on the Lithuanian website.



Picture 4. The news section of the Lithuanian government website

It has been noted that the Prime Minister is treated as culturally and politically important figure since the designers of these government websites highlight what the Prime Minister has done each week, where s/he has been, or whom s/he has talked with. This means that all agenda of the Prime Minister's work, including speeches and meetings, is highly valued in the Lithuanian and Latvian government system. The images of the Lithuanian and Latvian government homepages can be seen in **Appendices 4** and **5**.

In contrast to the composition of English government websites, the present analysis has revealed that the very top section displayed in blue or dark red colours is highly emphasised in the two Baltic government websites (see **Picture 5** and **Picture 6**).



Picture 5. The top section of the Lithuanian website



Picture 6. The top section of the Latvian government website

It has been investigated that these top sections are also valued as a cultural characteristic of the Lithuanian and Latvian governments because of the content presented in these sections. As **Picture 5** and **Picture 6** show, first, the reader is introduced with the political structure of each government; *Prime Minister*, *Ministries*, and *Agencies* are presented on the Lithuanian homepage; *Cabinet of Ministers*, *Prime Minister*, and *State Chancellery* are given on the Latvian homepage. Thus the present analysis of the Lithuanian and Latvian websites has revealed that these Baltic governments represent themselves through their political system and highlight the importance of the Prime Minister as a cultural and political leader of the government.

It has been observed that the five chosen government websites follow the top-bottom principle of information value typical of the websites. However, the British, American, and Australian websites visually emphasise the top part in which government services are provided for the reader; i.e. the symbolic images or icons are used that guide to the government services topical for the reader. In the Lithuanian and Latvian websites, the newest information presented at the bottom section is more salient since it is visually the largest part on the website. Moreover, colours as framing devices are used to separate the government information. The English websites have applied blue, black, and grey colours to suggest the repetition of government services or indicate the contact information, whereas the Baltic websites use blue and dark red colours to include more general information about the government and its structure.

3.2 The use of the ideational metafunction in the government websites

Since the hypertext found in any website contains various semiotic modes, there are certain interactive signs which help the reader to navigate through a website. Due to these interactive signs, the reader can search for necessary information, explore the website itself, or accommodate the layout of a particular website according to one's needs. Almost all websites include such interactive signs as representational (title, logo, or motto) and functional elements (disability feature, multilingual option, e-mail, FAQs, and social networks). This section examines the typical tendencies of the usage of interactive signs in the five government websites under the present investigation. With regard to the ideational metafunction, first, representational elements such as the title, logo, and motto have been explored in all five government websites; and then, functional features which include multilingual and e-mail options, chat room, disability feature, and social networks have been used in the analysis of these websites.

Regarding the use of representational elements, all five websites include titles and logos that are symbolic elements of each government. In addition, the British and Australian websites use mottoes to describe the purpose of the government itself. With regard to functional elements, it has been investigated that the American and Latvian websites suggest the broadest range of various

functional elements, while the British and Australian websites provide none of them. The results of the present analysis are presented in the following **Table 4**.

Table 4. The representational and functional elements of the five government websites

		British website	**American website**	**Australian website**	**Lithuanian website**	**Latvian website**
Representational elements	Title	GOV.UK	USA.gov	australia.gov.au	*My Government*	*Latvijas Respublikas Ministru kabinets*
	Logo	Crown	Star (as a sign taken from American flag)	Coat of arms	Coat of arms	Coat of arms
	Motto	*The best place to find government services and information Simpler, clearer, faster*	-	*Helping you find government information and services*	-	-
Functional elements	Multilingual option	-	*Español For Kids*	-	LT	*LV EN RU*
	Disability feature	-	+	-	+	+
	E-mail	-	+	-	-	+
	Social networks	-	*Facebook Twitter YouTube Google+ RSS*	-	Twitter	*Twitter YouTube Flickr Instagram Draugiem*
	Chat room	-	+	-	-	-

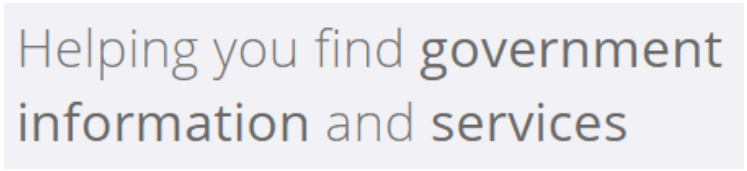
As **Table 4** shows, all five government websites represent themselves through the titles that are descriptive names chosen to indicate the particular country (e.g. GOV.UK, USA.gov, or My Government). In addition, logos are used since they contain symbolic meanings of a country; for example, in the British website, the crown symbolizes the constitutional monarchy while other websites use their coat of arms. It has been observed that only the British and Australian websites include mottoes on their homepages that will be discussed later in this section. Considering the use of functional elements, none of them have been found in the British and Australian websites; however, the American and Latvian websites involve many various functional elements which will be discussed in greater detail in this section.

It has been noted that the Lithuanian government uses a different title as compared to other government websites; its title *My Government* includes a personal pronoun, which indicates the accessibility of the website and the government itself to any citizen. Such unofficial title of the government institution suggests the idea that the Lithuanian government tries to maintain a close contact with the citizens. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the title of the Latvian government does not change in any version of the website; i.e. its title *Latvijas Respublikas Ministru kabinets* is used in the Latvian, English, and Russian versions of this website. It implies that the Latvian government emphasises the use of its national language.

The present analysis has revealed that the British and Australian government websites are the only ones that include particular mottoes as expressions of their government services. These mottoes provide a description about the purpose of the government work. **Picture 7** and **Picture 8** illustrate the phrases written on the British and Australian government homepages, respectively.



Picture 7. Logo of the British government website



Picture 8. Logo of the Australian government website

The motto used in the British website stresses its simplicity, explicitness, and easily accessible data through the use of three adjectives "Simpler, clearer, faster" that are written in the comparative degree. The whole phrase of the British motto also suggests the idea that the British website compares itself to other institutional websites, using the noun phrase "the best place;" this motto influences the reader to perceive the quality of the website as regards the search of information. In comparison, the motto of the Australian website expresses its purpose through the phrase "Helping you find" in which the pronoun *you* addresses the reader directly, this way maintaining the contact with every citizen or newcomer; i.e. one of the purposes of the Australian government website is to meet the reader's demands.

According to the results shown in **Table 4**, the British and Australian government websites do not include any above-mentioned functional elements on their homepages. Interestingly enough, the American and Latvian websites contain a wide variety of functional elements, especially, in the case of multilingual options and social networks. Since a large part of the American society belongs

to Latino culture, the American government website also includes the possibility to obtain all government information in Spanish (*Español*). Moreover, this website provides a version of the site that is suitable *For Kids* where young learners can study, play games, or watch videos about the American government. Similarly, the Latvian website suggests the option of multilingualism; e.g. the reader can find government information in *Latvian*, *English*, and *Russian*. It indicates that the Latvian government is oriented towards a multilingual society. Furthermore, the Latvian and American websites are the only ones which involve a large number of social networks such as *Twitter*, *YouTube*, *Facebook*, etc. They connect their government information with other external websites, allowing the reader to discuss and share their opinion about the government work.

The present analysis of the usage of the representational and functional elements has displayed the general tendencies among the five government websites. For example, two representative elements such as title and logo, which are treated as symbols of a particular country, can be found in all government websites. However, only British and Australian websites include official mottoes that describe the purpose of the government website. Functional elements are also not very common in all government websites; for instance, the British and Australian websites include none of them while the Lithuanian website provides multilingual option (Lithuanian or English), disability feature, and social network (Twitter). On the contrary, the American and Latvian websites use many functional features, specifically multilingual options and choices of social networks. In this way, these two websites offer a wide range of possible actions that the reader can make while searching for information.

3.3 Compositional comparison between the old and new versions of the Lithuanian, American, and Australian government websites

Electronic media is a constantly changing environment in which such interactive genre as a website maintains a tendency to update its structure and information. Any website might renew its layout and all information by simplifying the whole page or adding various modes like videos, images, or new hyperlinks. During the period of writing the present thesis, the chosen American, Australian, and Lithuanian government websites have been updated; thus, in this section, the old and new versions of these websites will be compared and the most distinctive changes will be discussed.

First, one can note that the content information has been changed in the Australian and Lithuanian government websites. With regard to the old version of the Australian website, the focus has been placed on the newest information about the government work, while the new version of this website now stresses the importance of general government services that are supported by the new symbolic icons (see **Picture 9** and **Picture 10**).



Picture 9. Content information in the old version of the Australian website



Picture 10. Content information in the new version of the Australian website

As can be seen in **Picture 9** and **Picture 10**, in these salient parts of the Australian website, the focus has clearly shifted from the newest information to more general and stable example. This suggests that the content of the Australian website is adapted according to the layouts in the British and American websites as if to make all three English government websites similar to each other.

On the contrary, the focus of content in the Lithuanian website has been changed conversely; the old version of the Lithuanian website emphasised the generalised topics about the structure of the government, the Prime Minister, and his work; now the new version concentrates on the news, making such elements as titles of news reports and their illustrative pictures more salient (see **Picture 11** and **Picture 12**).



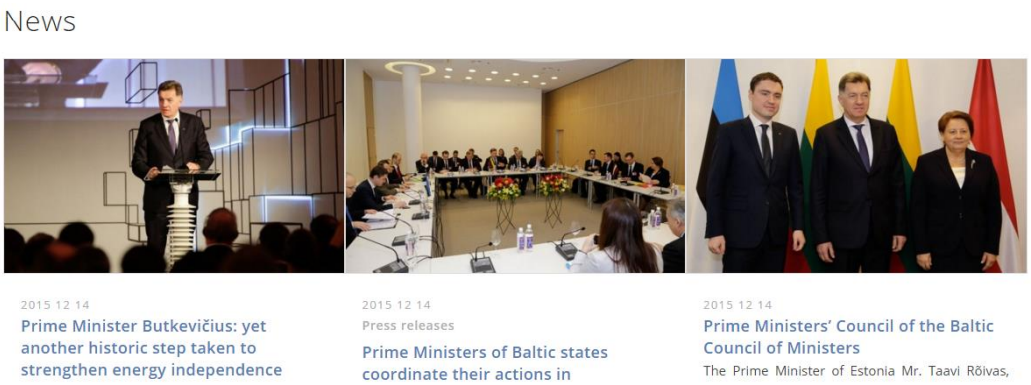
Picture 11. Content information in the old version of the Lithuanian website



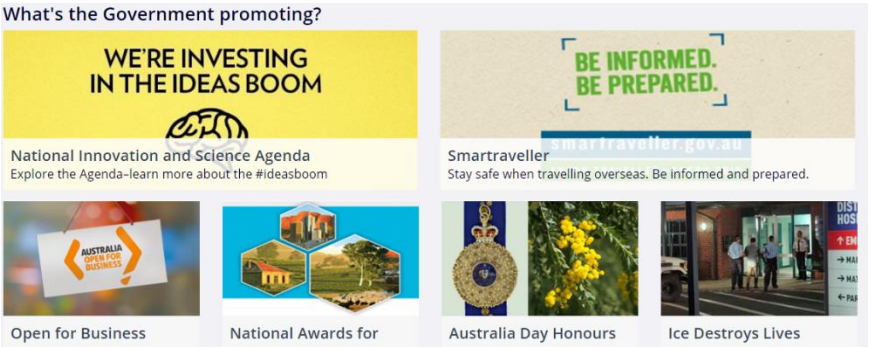
Picture 12. Content information in the new version of the Lithuanian website

As can be seen in the two pictures presented above, the old version of the Lithuanian website focused on one political figure, the Prime Minister, stressing his agendas, biography, speeches, and meetings. In contrast, the new version of this website highlights the importance of news as a primary source of government work; this news is delivered similarly to the online news portals.

Another distinctive feature immediately apparent in the new versions of the analysed websites is the extensive use of images. In the old versions of these websites, text has been a dominant mode. However, after the American, Australian, and Lithuanian websites have been updated, large and colourful images support the given text. The examples of such images found in the three renewed websites are provided in the following pictures.



Picture 13. The visual mode in the new version of the Lithuanian website



Picture 14. The visual mode in the new version of the Australian website



Picture 15. The visual mode in the new version of the American website

As can be seen in **Picture 13** and **Picture 14**, the shift and a more extensive use of images can be observed in the Lithuanian and Australian websites. In the Lithuanian website, these photos illustrate the topic of articles that are provided below them. It has been observed that the Prime Minister and politicians from other countries are demonstrated in these photos; i.e. the photos with social participants are mostly used. In the Australian website, not only photos with people are applied on the screen but symbolic images with some text are also used to illustrate the news; e.g. the topic of

investing is illustrated by the image of human brains and the textual motto "We're investing in the ideas boom." Moreover, the American government website uses the emblematic images which are selected according to the topic of government services. As can be seen in **Picture 15**, the topic *Health* is supported by the image of a green apple and a stethoscope; or the topic of *Housing and Community* is illustrated by the image of a house and two people shaking their hands as if there would be an agreement between them. Such emblematic images contain a specific representative meaning of a topic which can be chosen by the reader.

It has been observed that the Lithuanian government website has been entirely transformed as compared to the changes made in the American and Australian websites. A close attention can be paid to the very top section of the Lithuanian homepage in which the purpose of this government is expressed through a long description. However, the old version of the Lithuanian website has provided some dynamic texts based on the quotations from the Lithuanian Constitution. **Table 5** shows the examples of the mottoes taken from the old version of the Lithuanian website and the new introductory description of the government.

Table 5. Examples of mottoes from the old version and new introductory description from the new version of the Lithuanian government website

The old version of the Lithuanian website	Examples of mottoes	*The Government shall ground its activities on the principles of collegiality, democracy, lawfulness, and openness*. (The Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Government, Chapter One, Article 4) *The Government of the Republic of Lithuania shall consist of the Prime Minister and Ministers*. (Constitution, Chapter VII, Article 91)
The new version of the Lithuanian website	New introductory description	*The webpage "**My Government**" is the internet gateway to the Government of the Republic of Lithuania that provides a swift and easy access to information on the Cabinet of Ministers and the work of Government institutions as well as a possibility to become actively involved by using **e-democracy** services.*

As can be seen in **Table 5**, the examples of the mottoes from the old version of this website suggest a more complex way to express its government purposes; i.e. the Lithuanian government has chosen to support its work on the basis of quotations extracted from the Lithuanian Constitution. These Constitutional quotations create a more formal and official image of the website. In contrast, the introductory description found in the new version of the Lithuanian website fulfils a twofold purpose: it provides an easy access to all information about the work of the government and it allows the users of the website to be involved in the e-democracy services. Similarly to the mottoes provided in the British and Australian government websites, the Lithuanian website also highlights the idea that the reader should be easily informed about the government services and information through the various

semiotic modes found on the homepage; thus the new Lithuanian motto is more informative and less official than the old one.

This section inevitably results in the idea that even government websites have a tendency to update their layouts, compositional elements, and other useful information. The three websites (American, Australian, and Lithuanian) out of five have renewed their government information in order to make an easier and quicker access to their websites. As has been discussed, the American website has included more symbolic images to illustrate its government services; therefore, this website has become more attractive for the reader, and shifted to the visual mode more extensively. The Australian website has changed its focus towards general government services. The Lithuanian website has undergone the radical changes since the entire layout of the website has been transformed and the section on the news has become the major focus.

4 THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF PICTURES AND EMBLEMATIC IMAGES IN THE ENGLISH AND BALTIC GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

The English and Baltic government websites under the present analysis include a variety of pictures and images that reflect the topics suggested in these websites. Since the visual and textual modes are combined on government websites, it is important to discuss what meanings are created by the use of pictures and emblematic images. Therefore, the present analysis involves 27 pictures taken from three English and 6 pictures taken from two Baltic government websites. Section 4.1 investigates a group of pictures with social participants and discusses how such pictures create a particular connection with the reader. Section 4.2 deals with emblematic images and icons; the former is regarded as images that illustrate a particular government topic, the latter is used as simple and symbolic pictograms. Moreover, this section investigates the functions of these images and icons found in the government websites.

4.1 The analysis of pictures with social participants

In order to attract the reader's attention, the use of pictures is an important criterion while creating a government website. Not only might the pictures illustrate the suggested topic on a website, but they can also establish a particular connection between the reader and the website. Such connection might be created through the use of various variables of the represented participants found in the government pictures, such as gaze, gestures, contact with other social participants, and settings. Thus this section focuses on 13 pictures (Australian (4), American (3), Lithuanian (3), Latvian (2), and British (1)) with social participants that belong to narrative representations; i.e. in such pictures, the represented participants are acting in one or another way.

At first, the present analysis examines the photos taken from the Lithuanian and Latvian government websites since these photos clearly involve such social participants as the Lithuanian and Latvian Prime Ministers, predominantly. The chosen photos are regarded as narrative ones because they can be recognized by the use of vectors which are certain lines found in pictures. The analysis has investigated that there are some photos in which the represented participants look directly at the viewer's eyes. The following **Picture 16** illustrates this case in the photos taken from the Lithuanian and Latvian websites.



2015 12 14

Prime Ministers' Council of the Baltic Council of Ministers

The Prime Minister of Estonia Mr. Taavi Rõivas, the Prime Minister of Latvia Mrs. Laimdota Straujuma and the Prime Minister of Lithuania Mr. Algirdas Butkevičius met within the framework of the Baltic Council of Ministers on 14 December 2015 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Prime Ministers discussed the key issues of the Baltic cooperation and reviewed the progress of

(a) Lithuanian website



08.01.2016

Prime Minister: the number of tourists from Japan increased by 73% last year

On Friday, January 8, Ambassador of Japan to Latvia Mariko Fujii met Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma during her introductory visit, by highlighting the interest to continue to expand the excellent dialogue between Latvia and Japan.

(b) Latvian website

Picture 16. Examples of photos illustrating the direct eye contact of the represented participants in the Lithuanian (a) and Latvian (b) government websites

As can be seen in **Picture 16**, the connection between the participants and the viewer might be established through the direct eye contact. In both (a) and (b) examples, the represented participants are the Prime Ministers from various countries. The union between the two Prime Ministers in Example (b) is expressed by their shaking hands; this gesture might also indicate a vector between two participants as a sign of agreement, cooperation, and friendship. Moreover, the eye contact (gaze) found in these examples creates a visual form of direct address towards the viewer.

The study has also revealed that the vector can be found between two or more participants as they look at each other. In such a case, the connection is established between those participants who act in the picture; either there are two participants who look at each other, or one major participant looks at a crowd of people. The examples taken from the Lithuanian and Latvian websites show how connection is created between several participants.



2015 12 14

Prime Minister Butkevičius: yet another historic step taken to strengthen energy independence

"Creation of a power interconnection with Poland, LitPol Link, and a power link with Sweden, NordBalt, is yet another historic step. It strengthens energy independence of Lithuania and the Baltic countries", said Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius on Monday during the official opening ceremony of LitPol Link and NordBalt power...

(a) Lithuanian website



17.12.2015

Prime Minister: Our interest is to protect Schengen area

On Thursday, December 17, Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma participated in this year's last meeting of the European Council in Brussels (Belgium), where the EU Heads of State and Government discussed EU external border controls, further measures in fight against terrorism and migration issues, as well as cooperation with the third countries.

(b) Latvian website

Picture 17. Examples of photos illustrating the connection between two or more participants in the Lithuanian (a) and Latvian (b) government websites

As can be seen in Example (a), the Lithuanian Prime Minister directs his gaze towards the crowd, not necessarily focusing on one particular individual. This indicates that he is trying to establish and maintain relationship with the audience. Similarly, the connection between two Prime Ministers is shown in Example (b). The two participants communicate standing face-to-face in this profile photo; the direct and intense eye contact between them reveals that they are interested in the topic they discuss. Such photos illustrate the information about a particular event that has been reported in the text, focusing on the authoritative government figures. Moreover, it is also important to note that setting is an important characteristic in these photos; in both examples, the setting is an open public space in which participants communicate with others. In Example (a) the Lithuanian Prime Minister is giving a speech in an international conference, whereas in Example (b) the two Prime Ministers are standing in a public space since politicians from other countries can be seen in the background.

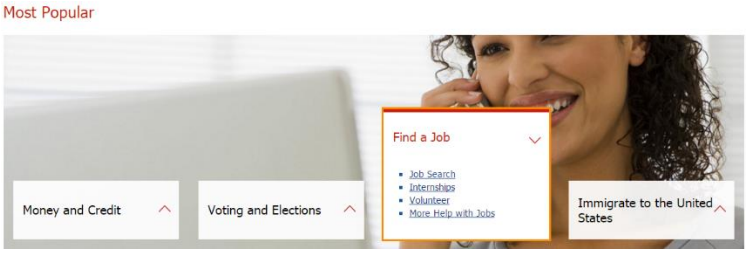
It has been investigated that the British, American, and Australian government websites also include pictures with represented participants. In the chosen English websites, pictures with social participants vary from the ones where participants look directly at the reader, to the ones in which participants communicate with other. Due to the limitation of the present paper, not all pictures found in English government websites can be discussed in the analysis; thus the typical examples have been taken in order to show what visual information can be found in these websites. The following **Picture 18** presents the examples taken from the British and American websites on the same topic *Find a job*.



Find a job

Use Universal Jobmatch to find full or part-time work in Great Britain and abroad.

(a) British website



(b) American website

Picture 18. Examples of pictures representing social participants in the British (a) and American (b) government websites

As can be seen in Example (a), the woman is more active than the man since she is explaining how to get a job using her open hands and a collection of papers spread on the table. In addition, her willingness to help is expressed by her upper part of body linking forward to the other participant. It can be noted that the eye contact of these two participants is not directed towards each other but they are looking at the papers, which indicates that they both are greatly focused on this topic. The setting is also important in this example; both participants are sitting in a partly-closed space (which might be an office) where they can discuss the topic of finding a job. In contrast, Example (b) reveals a different perspective; the picture of the woman is demonstrated in a close shot but her gaze is aimed at the computer screen. At the same time, she is talking with someone on the phone, presumably discussing an appointment of a job interview; this picture emphasises the communication process.

This section has focused on the pictures with social participants who may or may not establish a connection between them and the reader. As the present analysis has revealed, in the five selected government websites, there are photos in which the represented participants look directly at the reader; it indicates a visual form of direct address towards the reader. These government websites also include photos where participants communicate with each other and they can be more described as acting or doing something in the picture. It has been investigated that photos found in the Lithuanian and Latvian websites are recognized as more natural; i.e. such photos reflect the events described in the text, and photos of the participants are taken at the moment when they have participated in particular event. Contrary, pictures found in the English websites are regarded as simulated. Such pictures are specifically made to represent a particular government service suggested on a website.

4.2 The use of emblematic images and icons

The second type of visuals in the chosen government websites involves emblematic images and icons. Such images belong to conceptual patterns of visuals since the represented participants (people,

places, or things) can be generalized by their meaning or certain visual characteristics. The present analysis includes two types of conceptual visuals: symbolic patter in which the meaning of a participant is revealed by symbolic attributes; and classification pattern in which participants are placed together because they show similar characteristics. Therefore, this section deals with 19 emblematic images taken from the selected government websites and one iconic image from the Australian website.

While the photos with social participants are used to express a relation between the image and the reader, emblematic images create a symbolic or representative meaning of a particular topic. It has been found out that the British, American, and Latvian websites provide emblematic images of buildings that might represent various different topics. The images shown in **Picture 19** are closely linked with the text written below them.



(a) American website (b) British website (c) Latvian website

Picture 19. The emblematic images of buildings found in the American (a), British (b), and Latvian (c) government websites

All the three examples in **Picture 19** illustrate the buildings that correspond to particular topics: Example (a) shows the Capitol and Supreme Court of the United States; Example (c) demonstrates the school building; and Example (b) shows a graphically made image of two living houses. The first example is regarded as a representative one because it indicates the idea that if a reader clicks on this topic, s/he will be directed to a list of various government departments and agencies. The buildings in this image are salient since they are relatively large in size and presented in the central position of the image. In Example (c), the school building represents the issue of the article how the Latvian Prime Minister encourages all Latvian schools to honour the 25th anniversary of Barricades. The size of this building indicates that it is the main element in the image; the black-white image might promote for the reader a memory about the Barricades of all Baltic States in 1991. The image in Example (b) catches the reader's attention by the use of bright colours; the open doors in this image symbolize the possibility to rent a room. The text written below the image provides more information and indicates the idea that any landlord should check if his/her tenants are legal British citizens since the United Kingdom encounters with a real problem of illegal immigrants.

The present analysis has also investigated how the money topic can be expressed through the emblematic images in the chosen government websites. Undoubtedly, this topic is conventionally associated with the money sign which is the symbolic attribute defining the meaning of the whole image. The two examples demonstrated in **Picture 20** are representatives of the money topic.

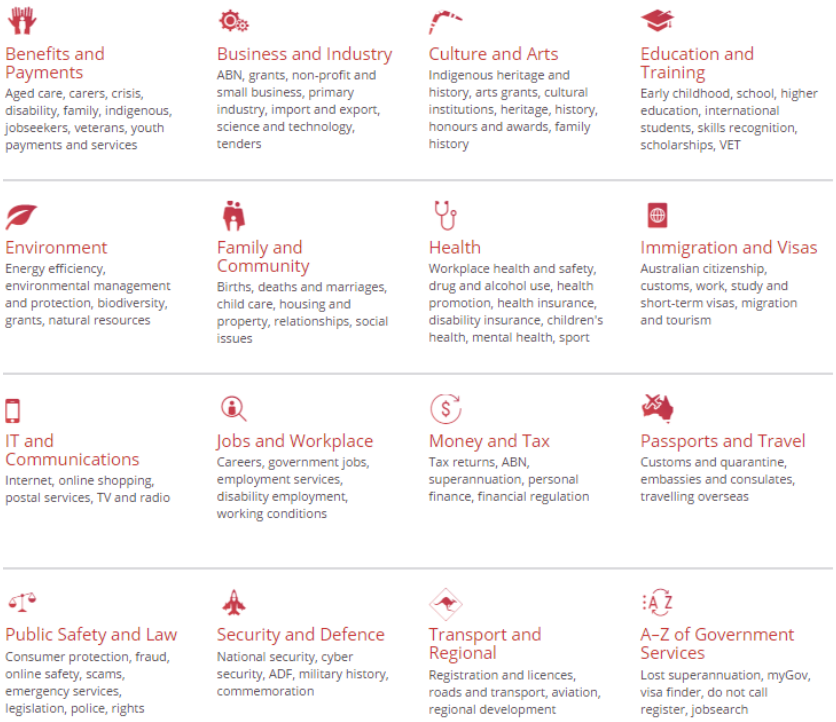


(a) American website (b) Australian website

Picture 20. The emblematic images of money topic in the American (a) and Australian (b) websites

As can be seen in Example (a), the money topic is represented by the image of real money bills. Since this emblematic image is taken from the American government website, a part of a one hundred bill of American dollars is used in this image. Moreover, such image suggests that a person is keeping bills in his/her hands. However, the text written below the image expands the meaning of *Money and Shopping* topic; if a reader clicks on this topic, s/he can learn about consumer issues or various taxes. In contrast, the Australian website suggests a more specific topic which is how to stop tax evasion globally. This idea is expressed by the image of the Australian dollar signs and one of them is demonstrated under the magnifier. The dark green colour in this image is also an important visual attribute since it symbolizes the colour of the Australian dollars and it relates to the topic of money and finance on the government website. However, without the textual description found below the image, it would be difficult to understand the specific meaning of this emblematic image; again the textual mode expands the meaning of the particular visual and this emblematic image functions only as representative symbol of the topic.

The last issue discussed in the present analysis is the use of iconic images found in the government websites. From the perspective of multimodality, an icon is a simple visual representation of an object or person. It has been investigated that only the Australian government website provides iconic images which symbolize its government services. These images can be discussed in terms of classification pattern of visuals because different topics have been placed together in the iconic images. The following **Picture 21** show how small icons can represent the government services in the website.



Picture 21. Iconic images of the government services in the Australian website

As can be seen in this picture, the textual information of each topic is supported by small representative icons which are associated with 16 different government topics. These topics illustrated by icons and textual descriptions are brought together in one place since they are members of government services on the Australian website. Furthermore, some of the represented icons are symbols of the Australian culture and its nature. For example, the icon of the topic *Culture and Arts* has been chosen as boomerang which, from the historic perspective, is well known as a hunting weapon used by Indigenous Australians. The other example might be the icon of the topic *Transport and Regional*; it is a road sign with the image of kangaroo inside it. This icon can be treated as specific to the Australian nature since kangaroos are only found in this country. In addition, a kangaroo is treated as an unofficial symbol of Australia because it appears as an emblem on the Australian coat of arms. The other representative icons are more general and typical to various countries, for example, the icons of *IT and Communications* or *Education and Training* topics.

To sum up, 19 emblematic and iconic images have been analysed applying conceptual (classification and symbolic) representations of the visual mode. The present study has revealed that emblematic images dominate in the English government websites since they illustrate government services and information. Due to various symbolic attributes like size, position, and colour, these emblematic images are described as representatives of particular government topics. Moreover, it has been noticed that the pictures are followed by the textual mode which provides the description of topic and expands the meaning of the visual. The iconic images has been found in the Australian website; it uses small icons to illustrate the topics of government services. Some of these icons are

typical signs of particular topics, whereas other signs are treated as specific to the country, for example, the image of a kangaroo in a road sign.

5 STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTS WRITTEN IN THE ENGLISH AND BALTIC GOVERNMENT WEBSITES

The present study has chosen to analyse the textual information presented in the English and Baltic government websites. For the analysis, 455 British (283,782 words), 81 American (74,509 words), 46 Australian (15,296 words), and 48 BNCWeb (697,001 words) texts have been used in order to investigate their linguistic features. They have been compared with 37 Lithuanian (15,615 words) and 84 Latvian (28,664 words) texts to determine the existence of any linguistic, social, or cultural differences between the English and Baltic government texts. **Section 5.1** investigates nominal linguistic features of the English and Baltic texts, focusing on the general use of nouns and their collocations in Sub-section 5.1.1; the use of proper names in Sub-section 5.1.2; and the presence of acronyms in Sub-section 5.1.3. **Section 5.2** deals with verbal linguistic features of the selected texts. While Sub-section 5.2.1 analyses the general use of verbs and their collocations, Sub-section 5.2.2 discusses any presence of contractions in the government texts.

5.1 Nominal characteristics of the government texts

The present analysis focuses on the textual information in order to investigate the nominal linguistic features of the government texts. In this section, the most common English and Baltic nouns and their collocations have been extracted and compared, using the AntConc tools. The English ones have been compared with BNCWeb as a tertium comparationis. Moreover, the use of proper nouns as a typical feature of the government texts has been investigated. The last linguistic characteristic, the presence of acronyms, has been determined as extensively used in all texts.

5.1.1 The use of nouns (noun collocations)

The selected government websites include informative and straightforward texts in which nouns dominate. Therefore, the 30 most frequent nouns from English texts have been taken into consideration (see **Table 6**). The findings of the present analysis have shown that nouns are a common linguistic feature in the texts of the three English websites. Throughout these English texts, there are many nouns that repeat in all texts (such nouns are marked in italics); e.g. *service*, *help*, and *home* appears in all analysed texts; *tax*, *credit*, *business*, *money*, and *insurance* repeat in the British and American government websites; nouns as *payment*, *school*, and *support* appear in the British and Australian government texts; nouns as information, government, department, energy, office, and resources are repeated in the American and Australian government texts.

Table 6. Top 30 most frequently used nouns in the British, American, and Australian government texts

	British texts			American texts			Australian texts		
Nr.	**Nouns**	**Freq.**	**BNC**	**Nouns**	**Freq.**	**BNC**	**Nouns**	**Freq.**	**BNC**
1.	*Tax*	10.47	0.55	*Information*	6.44	1.75	Site	29.62	0.13
2.	Income	3.77	0.48	State	5.73	0.20	Australia	13.47	0.02
3.	Child	3.41	0.36	*Tax*	4.98	0.55	*Department*	13.21	0.55
4.	Allowance	3.26	0.11	*Credit*	4.47	0.21	Education	9.81	1.13
5.	Benefit	2.69	0.26	*Help*	3.72	0.18	*Information*	9.22	1.75
6.	Form	2.51	0.55	*Home*	3.52	0.19	*Services*	8.89	1.00
7.	Pension	2.33	0.25	*Insurance*	3.52	0.16	Training	5.56	1.00
8.	Year	2.32	2.04	*Service*	3.27	1.00	*Government*	4.97	0.35
9.	*Help*	2.30	0.18	Complaint	3.18	0.03	Students	4.58	1.64
10.	Waste	2.08	0.09	*Business*	2.76	1.53	*Help*	4.45	0.18
11.	*Business*	2.05	1.53	*Government*	2.76	0.35	Care	3.99	0.35
12.	*Money*	1.89	0.20	Card	2.67	0.04	*Energy*	3.99	0.09
13.	*Credit*	1.85	0.21	*Office*	2.51	0.58	*Resources*	3.79	0.26
14.	*Payment*	1.79	0.36	Housing	2.30	0.13	*Support*	3.79	0.49
15.	Account	1.72	0.32	*Money*	2.20	0.20	Environment	3.73	0.31
16.	College	1.71	0.45	*Energy*	2.13	0.09	Water	3.20	0.21
17.	Rate	1.63	0.38	Company	2.09	1.22	People	3.07	0.70
18.	*School*	1.58	0.25	Loan	2.08	0.05	Human	2.94	0.01
19.	*Support*	1.51	0.49	Agency	2.07	0.13	*Home*	2.88	0.19
20.	*Insurance*	1.50	0.16	*Department*	1.87	0.55	Industry	2.75	0.84
21.	Partner	1.43	0.25	Mail	1.81	0.06	*School*	2.75	0.25
22.	Amount	1.41	0.31	Programs	1.79	1.18	Science	2.62	0.16
23.	Time	1.38	1.15	Number	1.74	1.04	*Payments*	2.29	0.16
24.	*Home*	1.35	0.19	*Resources*	1.62	0.26	Commission	2.22	0.09
25.	Call	1.32	0.05	Consumer	1.61	0.09	Australians	2.09	-
26.	Court	1.32	1.18	Fraud	1.61	0.03	Disability	2.09	0.09
27.	Person	1.25	0.49	Health	1.60	0.64	Links	2.09	0.08
28.	Scheme	1.23	0.45	Car	1.58	0.08	*Office*	2.03	0.58
29.	*Service*	1.22	1.00	Assistance	1.50	0.21	Range	1.96	0.50
30.	Relief	1.17	0.11	Security	1.38	0.18	Skills	1.90	0.69

As the findings in **Table 6** show, the majority of nouns are related to certain domains that each government regulates; for instance, nouns as *tax*, *credit*, and *business* are more related to *Money* domain, whereas nouns as *students*, *education*, and *training* are more related to *Education* domain. Moreover, there are some nouns which indicate the general function of the government website that is to inform and instruct the reader; these nouns are *service*, *information*, *help*, *home*, and *government*. Thus it can be suggested that the texts from three English government websites serve as official government documents that provide information on various topics in an electronic public space.

The quantitative results presented in **Table 6** suggest that nouns found in texts of three English websites correspond with nouns extracted from the BNCWeb administrative texts; i.e. the language of these English texts can be regarded as the language of official institutional documents. The present analysis has also shown that certain nouns might indicate the domains typical in the English government websites; for example, *Money* and *Tax* domain is very common in the British website since nouns as *tax* (10.47), *income* (3.77), *waste* (2.08), *money* (1.89), *credit* (1.85), and *payment* (1.79) are prevalent in the British texts, whereas *Education* domain is more dominant in the Australian website because of the use of such nouns as *education* (9.81), *training* (5.56), *students* (4.58), *school* (2.75), and *science* (2.62).

Furthermore, the typical words that collocate with the nouns have been included in the present analysis. Using the AntConc software, the most frequent collocations of nouns that repeat in the British, American, and Australian government texts have been distinguished. Such noun phrases are compared to those collocations extracted from BNCWeb texts. All the results focus on the nouns that occur in more than one English government website since such collocations can be useful for language learners. The findings are presented in **Appendix 6**.

The analysis has revealed that the majority of noun collocations taken from three English websites follow such word patterns as *noun + noun*, *adjective + noun*, or *verb + noun*. Such various collocations specify the meaning of each analysed noun and indicate to what particular domain it might refer; for example, considering the collocates of *service*, noun phrase as *pension service* is more useful for the elderly people and their needs, whereas *insolvency service* and *internal revenue service* refer to *Money* and *Tax* domain. According to Biber's (1988: 142-144) considerations about textual relations in speech and writing, the use of noun phrases is a common linguistic feature of official documents; nominal identification and elaboration are used in order to make texts more explicit and informative. Thus the noun phrases found in the English government texts help the readers to understand information more clearly and thoroughly. Furthermore, a list of the most frequent noun phrases compiled in **Appendix 6** should help language students to comprehend the language of official documents and learn the typical noun phrases that habitually co-occur in informative government texts.

The comparative research method has been also applied for the present analysis in order to investigate whether the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts belong to official administrative register as well. The first and most common 30 nouns from the Lithuanian and Latvian texts are taken into consideration (see **Table 7**). Comparing with the most frequent nouns from English websites, there are 3 nouns that appear in all analysed government texts; these are *government*, *information*, and *business*. These nouns can be regarded as keywords of the government texts since they indicate

that such texts provide information about the government itself, its work, and might be related to certain domains, for example, *business*.

Table 7. Top 30 most frequently used nouns in the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts

	Lithuanian texts		**Latvian texts**	
Nr.	**Nouns**	**Freq.**	**Nouns**	**Freq.**
1.	*Prime Minister*	15.31	*Prime Minister*	14.20
2.	*Lithuania*	10.82	*Latvia*	10.29
3.	Algirdas Butkevičius	6.15	Laimdota Straujuma	6.28
4.	*Countries*	5.06	*Meeting*	5.30
5.	*Cooperation*	5.00	*Cooperation*	4.92
6.	*Government*	5.00	Aiva Rozenberga	4.19
7.	*States*	3.97	*Government*	4.15
8.	*Meeting*	3.59	E-mail	3.70
9.	*Security*	3.20	Press	3.56
10.	Energy	3.01	*Ministers*	3.42
11.	Ukraine	2.95	*Countries*	3.14
12.	*Ministers*	2.69	Phone	3.10
13.	*Head*	2.56	China	2.90
14.	People	2.43	Information	2.76
15.	Implementation	2.37	Secretary	2.76
16.	*Union*	2.37	Council	2.65
17.	*Country*	2.31	*States*	2.55
18.	Business	2.18	Migration	2.06
19.	*Europe*	2.18	*State*	1.99
20.	Relations	2.18	Issues	1.88
21.	Gas	2.11	*Security*	1.88
22.	*Development*	1.99	*Lithuania*	1.78
23.	Commission	1.92	*Development*	1.74
24.	Support	1.92	*Union*	1.74
25.	Market	1.73	*Heads*	1.64
26.	Policy	1.73	Education	1.60
27.	Project	1.73	Communication	1.57
28.	Border	1.67	*Europe*	1.57
29.	*Latvia*	1.60	Work	1.57
30.	World	1.60	Future	1.50

It can been observed that the majority of nouns presented in **Table 7** are more specific and explicit than the ones from the English websites. The findings of the Lithuanian and Latvian texts have revealed that there are some nouns which repeat in these government websites; nouns as *Prime Minister*, *Lithuania*, *Latvia*, *meeting*, *country* (*-ies*), *cooperation*, *government*, *state* (*-s*), *ministers*, *security*, *head* (*-s*), *union*, *Europe*, and *development* are the most repeated ones. As can be seen, even the first 3 nouns (*Prime Minister*, *Lithuania*/*Latvia*, *Algirdas Butkevičius*/*Laimdota Straujuma*) stress the idea that the Lithuanian and Latvian government websites concentrate on the government work of the Lithuanian and Latvian Prime Ministers, who are Algirdas Butkevičius and Laimdota

Straujuma. Furthermore, the present analysis of nouns as *cooperation*, *meeting*, *communication*, *support*, *migration*, and *relations* suggest that the Baltic texts focus extensively on establishing and maintaining bilateral relations with other countries, which is not the main focus in English government websites. As has been noticed, nouns as *security*, *energy*, and *Ukraine* are frequently used in the Lithuanian texts, while nouns as *cooperation*, *China*, and *migration* are typical to the Latvian texts. It suggests the idea that the use of such nouns indicates the topics typical to either Lithuania's or Latvia's relations with other countries.

In order to compare the use of nouns in the English and Baltic government texts, the most frequent collocations of the Lithuanian and Latvian nouns have been also included in the analysis. Using the AntConc software, the typical noun collocations have been extracted and compared with the typical British, American, and Australian ones. It is necessary to note that only the collocations of nouns that appear in both, Lithuanian and Latvian texts, are distinguished (see **Appendix 7**).

It has been investigated that the majority of the Lithuanian and Latvian noun collocations follow *noun + noun* or *adjective + noun* word patterns, for instance, *Third countries*, *economic cooperation*, or *security policy*. As compared with the general noun collocations from the English websites, the Lithuanian and Latvian ones are more specific and directed to particular person, place or organization. The findings in **Appendix 7** show that texts which contain such collocations as *Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius*, *Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma*, the *Palestinian Prime Minister*, and *French Prime Minister* focus the government information on these particular individuals from different countries (mainly Prime Ministers). Moreover, it is interesting to note that various names of places are emphasised in the Baltic texts, e.g. *Baltic countries*, *Third countries*, *the Baltic States*, *the EU Member States*, *the European Union*, and *Nordic countries*. In contrast, the English websites do not mention any names of specific places that would be relevant for the topic. As Biber (1988: 109) suggests, the use of such noun collocations in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts indicates "active, event-oriented discourse" which can be considered as narrative discourse. Therefore, the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts are more related to press reportage or publicist register since they provide information about specific events that are extensively described using these nouns and their collocations.

To sum up, the use of nouns and their collocations is a dominant linguistic feature in the English and Baltic government texts. According to Biber (1988: 104), the high frequency of nouns indicates the great density of information; the results of the present analysis have shown that the English and Baltic texts include a variety of different nouns. In terms of word length, the British, American, and Australian websites use more general and static nouns which are shorter and, therefore, correspondingly more general in meaning, whereas longer nouns are more typical of the Baltic texts since they convey more specific and specialized meaning than the English ones. Furthermore, the

comparison of the English and Baltic nouns has revealed that even though the main purpose of each government website is to provide relevant information about the government's work, the focus areas differ in the English and Baltic websites: while the English texts focus on different domains such as *Benefits*, *Education*, or *Money*, the Baltic texts provide information about specific events related to the Prime Minister's government work and the topics important to the states.

5.1.2 The use of proper nouns

The present analysis of the selected government texts has revealed that some government websites tend to include the extensive use of proper nouns while other websites do not. Thus the quantitative study has been carried out focusing on the proper nouns in the government texts. The first 1000 words in the Baltic and English texts have been investigated in order to evaluate the distribution of proper nouns. During conducting the present analysis, it has been observed that proper nouns can be categorized into certain groups as *names* (of people), *status in politics*, *places*, and *organizations*.

In the Lithuanian and Latvian texts under analysis, the use of proper nouns is a particularly dominant feature. As has been emphasised in Sub-section 5.1.1, nouns, in Baltic texts, mostly refer to particular events or situations; therefore proper nouns might also signify certain individual's name, political status, place where an event might occur, or a particular local or global organization. In contrast, the English texts do not present a wide variety of proper nouns in their government websites; only several instances of the use of proper nouns have been recorded. The following **Figure 2** demonstrates the overall distribution of proper nouns per first 1000 words in the Baltic and English texts.

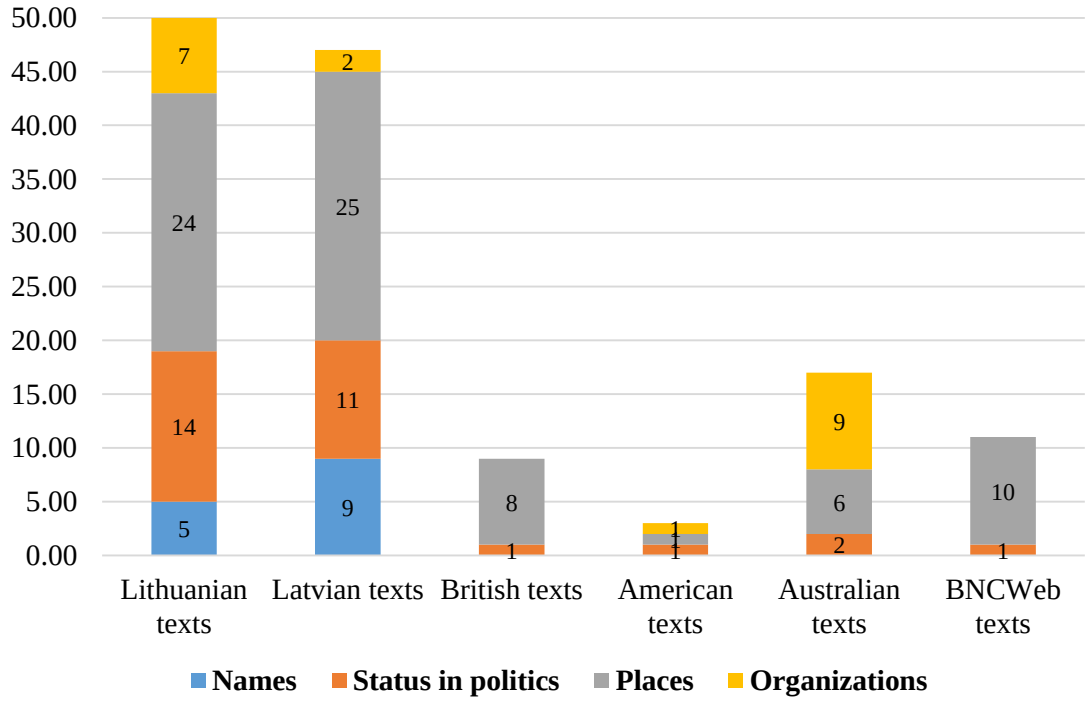


Figure 2. The distribution of proper nouns in the Baltic and English government texts

The findings in **Figure 2** show that the largest group of proper nouns is regarded as *places* (e.g. Lithuania, Latvia, the UK, the United States, Australia): the Latvian and Lithuanian texts include 25 and 24 proper nouns, respectively; the British texts contain 8 instances; the Australian texts include 6; and in the American texts, only one proper noun of place has been found. Moreover, the category of *status in politics* (e.g. Prime Minister, Council, Counsellor) is common in all government texts: 14 and 11 instances in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts; 2 instances in the Australian texts; and the British and American texts provide only for one proper noun of political status. Undoubtedly, the category of *names* (e.g. Algirdas Butkevičius, Laimdota Straujuma) is mostly dominant in the Baltic texts since there are many references to the Prime Ministers of various countries (9 instances in Latvian and 5 instances in Lithuanian texts). The last group named *organizations* (e.g. Rail Baltica project, the Northern Future Forum, Bureau of Meteorology) is not so extensively used: 9 instances found in the Australian texts; 7 instances in the Lithuanian texts; 2 instances in the Latvian texts; and one proper name of organizations is found in the American texts. All proper nouns with their normalized frequencies are presented in **Appendices 8** and **9**.

As has been mentioned, the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts belong to publicist register in which press news are presented in precise and accurate details. In this case, proper nouns serve the purpose of the register because they indicate the topic of such texts; i.e. who are the participants, where the event takes place, or what organizations are relevant to particular topic. It has been observed that the Baltic texts show a high frequency of the use of people's names, for example, in the Lithuanian texts, such names as *Algirdas Butkevičius* (6.15), *Laimdota Straujuma* (0.45), and *Taavi Rõivas* (0.26) are extensively used; in the Latvian texts, these names are also common, these are (*Laimdota Straujuma* (6.28), *Māris Kučinskis* (1.85), *Algirdas Butkevičius* (0.28), and *Taavi Rõivas* (0.28)). These names belong to the Prime Ministers of three Baltic countries, thus it can be assumed that the majority of the Baltic texts are related to the Prime Ministers' work in the government. The present analysis also emphasises the importance of category *status in politics* which, in many cases, is expressed by the noun phrase using the preposition *of*; e.g. the Lithuanian texts provide such proper nouns as *the Head of Government* (2.56), *the Baltic Council of Ministers* (0.77), and *Regional Committee for Europe* (0.26). In the Latvian texts, the similar instances of proper nouns are found like *the Cabinet of Ministers* (1.19), and *the Head of Government* (0.35). **Appendix 8** provides the table with more examples of proper nouns that indicate the political status in both, Lithuanian and Latvian texts. The extensive use of such proper nouns suggests the idea that the Baltic texts are similar to the register of press news since they include many details about the active participants.

The largest category of proper nouns is *places* which reveal what particular areas are important in discussing the Lithuanian or Latvian governments' work. It has been found out that the

majority of proper nouns of *places* direct to the areas in Europe. The first 10 examples of *places* are listed as follow:

Table 8. The first 10 proper nouns of *places* extracted from the Baltic government texts

	Lithuanian texts	Latvian texts
1.	Lithuania (10.82)	Latvia (10.29)
2.	Ukraine (2.95)	China (2.90)
3.	the European Union (2.05)	Lithuania (1.78)
4.	Latvia (1.60)	Europe (1.57)
5.	Europe (1.54)	the European Union (1.40)
6.	China (1.28)	Ukraine (1.19)
7.	Russia (1.15)	the United Kingdom (1.36)
8.	Georgia (0.90)	Turkey (0.98)
9.	Sweden (0.90)	Brussels (0.80)
10.	Poland (0.90)	Estonia (0.56)

The findings in **Table 8** suggest that the Lithuanian and Latvian texts focus on such areas as *Lithuania*, *Latvian*, *the European Union*, *Ukraine*, and *China*. Supposedly, these are the places and countries that are most extensively discussed in the selected Baltic texts. With regard to the use of proper nouns of organizations, the Lithuanian texts offer a great variety of organizations that show the maintenance of relations between Lithuania and European countries. These nouns are *Rail Baltica project* (0.58), *LitPol Link* (0.32), *NordBalt* (0.32), *Euro-Atlantic integration* (0.26), and *BalticConnector project* (0.19). The Latvian texts provide only 2 instances of organizations, *the Northern Future Forum* (0.38) and *Fudan University* (0.28). The use of such proper nouns related to places and various organizations indicates that the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts provide the newest and most topical information about the government's work; thus the newspaper language dominates in these texts.

As has been demonstrated in **Figure 3**, three English government texts do not include any proper noun of *names* in the first 1000 words. Since the English texts are more related to official administrative register, the use of people's names is not a typical feature in the texts; the government information is presented in general, without any specification to particular individuals. Similarly, few proper nouns of the category *status in politics* have been found in the English texts; *council* (1.07) in the British texts, *counsellor* (0.17) in the American texts, *council* (0.39) and *Prime Minister* (0.26) in the Australian texts, and *council* (1.10) in BNCWeb texts. The present analysis of these proper nouns reveals that the English government texts focus on the administrative issues of each government's work; there is no need to include the daily agenda of the head of government.

It has been observed that the category of *places* is a common linguistic aspect in the English government texts. The proper nouns of places are associated to either the United Kingdom, the United States of America, or Australia. The following **Table 9** demonstrates the distribution of the first nouns of places in the English texts.

Table 9. The first 10 proper nouns of *places* extracted from the English government texts

	British texts	American texts	Australian texts	BNCWeb texts
1.	The UK (2.81)	The United States (0.58)	Australia (13.47)	The UK (0.68)
2.	England (1.12)		Middle East (0.26)	Scotland (0.52)
3.	Wales (0.90)		Asia (0.26)	London (0.32)
4.	Scotland (0.76)		Africa (0.13)	Europe (0.31)
5.	Northern Ireland (0.66)		Europe (0.13)	Glasgow (0.20)
6.	the EU (0.47)			United Kingdom (0.18)
7.	London (0.41)			England (0.18)
8.	Switzerland (0.15)			Britain (0.18)
9.				Edinburgh (0.17)
10.				Wales (0.16)

The results in **Table 9** show that, in the British texts, the government's services and information are restricted to the *United Kingdom* itself and its parts such as *Wales, Scotland,* and *Northern Ireland*. The American texts restrict its government information only to *the United States*. In the Australian texts, places like *Australia, Middle East,* and *Asia* are more dominant ones. Interestingly, BNCWeb texts are more related to the British ones since the parts of the UK as *Scotland* and *Wales* are mentioned. In addition, such British cities as *London, Glasgow,* and *Edinburgh* are included in BNCWeb texts. The present analysis has demonstrated that the frequency of proper nouns of *places* depends on the reader's preferences; i.e. if the reader lives in Scotland, s/he will search for government services related to Scotland area (British texts); or vice versa, if the reader wants to travel to Australia, s/he will explore the information presented in the Australian government texts. With regard to the category of *organizations*, only American and Australian texts include few instances of proper nouns of specific organizations. In the American texts, there is one instance of proper noun as *Housing Choice Voucher Program* (0.15); whereas, in the Australian texts, these proper nouns are mostly related to the country itself (*Australian National Herbarium* (0.26), *Australia's anti-money laundering* (0.13), and *Austrade* (0.13)).

The analysis of proper nouns has revealed that, in the Baltic texts, the extensive use of proper nouns is a common linguistic feature. It characterizes Baltic texts as belonging to publicist register because proper nouns signify the specific details about the Lithuanian or Latvian Prime Ministers' work in the government. Conversely, the three English government texts do not show a great variety of proper nouns, apart those nouns that indicate the particular places. Since the English government texts are more related to official administrative register, the British, American, and Australian websites provide information about the general government's work, without mentioning any political names.

5.1.3 The use of acronyms

The present study has observed that acronyms tend to occur in all government texts. In order to investigate and compare the use of acronyms in the English and Baltic government texts, the first 1000 words have been taken into consideration. When acronyms have been extracted from each government website, certain tendencies can be noticed; the English and Baltic texts include various acronyms of countries, organizations, unions, agencies, offices, developments, or projects.

Undoubtedly, acronyms are dominant in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts since these Baltic websites offer government texts similar to news reports. As Galperin (1977: 298) has indicated, news items, press reports and headlines contain many acronyms of various kinds. It has been estimated that, in the Lithuanian texts, there are 13 acronyms per first 1000 words; while 11 instances of acronyms occur in the Latvian texts (see **Table 10**).

Table 10. The use of acronyms in the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts

Acronyms and their explanations found in the Baltic government websites					
Lithuanian texts			**Latvian texts**		
Acronym	**Full word**	**Freq.**	**Acronym**	**Full word**	**Freq.**
EU	*European Union*	3.71	EU	*European Union*	5.37
OECD	*Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*	1.60	FICIL	*Foreign Investors' Council in Latvia*	0.77
NATO	*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*	0.90	NATO	*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*	0.63
CMG	*China Merchants Group*	0.26	GDP	*Gross Domestic Product*	0.31
LNG	*Liquefied Natural Gas*	0.26	USA	*United States of America*	0.28
NB8	*Nordic Baltic Eight*	0.26	OECD	*Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*	0.21
BEMIP	*the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan*	0.19	UK	*United Kingdom*	0.21
CEF	*Connecting Europe Facility*	0.19	NB8	*Nordic Baltic Eight*	0.17
GHG	*Greenhouse Gas*	0.19	FRONTEX	*European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders*	0.14
GIPL	*Gas Interconnection Poland–Lithuania*	0.19	GIPL	*Gas Interconnector Poland-Lithuania*	0.14
DCFTA	*Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area*	0.13	COMAC	*the Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China*	0.10
EC	*European Commission*	0.13			
EULEX	*EU Rule of Law Mission*	0.13			

The present findings confirm the extensive use of acronyms in these Baltic texts. As **Table 10** shows, the acronym *EU* has a high normalized frequency in both, Lithuanian and Latvian government texts; 3.71 frequency in the Lithuanian texts and 5.37 frequency in the Latvian texts. Thus it indicates that the widely known acronym of *the European Union* (*EU*) is constantly repeated through the texts.

Furthermore, the analysis has revealed that there are many acronyms related to Europe and its various organizations; e.g. in the Lithuanian texts, such acronyms as *NATO* (0.90), *NB8* (0.26), *BEMIP* (0.19), *CEF* (0.19), *GIPL* (0.19), *EC* (0.13), and *EULEX* (0.13) are the dominant ones. The Latvian texts also emphasise the use of similar acronyms; these are *NATO* (0.63), *UK* (0.21), *NB8* (0.17), *FRONTEX* (0.14), and *GIPL* (0.14). The use of such acronyms suggests the idea that the topics found in the Lithuanian and Latvian government websites are associated with the European Union and its various organizations or projects.

The extensive use of acronyms is also identified as a typical linguistic feature in the British, American, and Australian government texts. Since these English texts belong to the official administrative register, acronyms are used in order to signify various departments, agencies, or offices that can be useful for the reader. The acronyms from the English texts have been compared with the acronyms found in the BNCWeb texts; all results are presented in the following **Table 11**.

Table 11. The use of acronyms in the English government texts

British texts	American texts	Australian texts	BNCWeb texts
RC (3.36) = *Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs* VAT (2.96) = *A Value-Added Tax* UK (2.81) = *United Kingdom* EU (0.47) = *European Union* NHS (0.44) = *National Health Service* DLA (0.28) = *Disability Living Allowance* ISA (0.27) = *Individual Saving Account* EEA (0.26) = *European Economic Area* ESA (0.26) = *Employment Support Allowance* PIP (0.24) = *Personal Independence Payment* JSA (0.24) = *Jobseeker Allowance* DWP (0.20) = *Department of Work and Pensions* IHT (0.16) = *Inheritance Tax* PAYE (0.15) = *Pay As You Earn* OFSTED (0.12) = *Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills* AIA (0.11) = *Annual Investment Allowance*	IRS (1.91) = *Internal Revenue Service* HUD (0.58) = *Housing and Urban Department* FTC (0.46) = *Federal Trade Commission* GSA (0.43) = *General Services Administration* SSA (0.36) = *Social Security Administration* EPA (0.30) = *Environmental Protection Agency* USPS (0.30) = *U.S. Postal Service* CFPB (0.24) = *Consumer Financial Protection Bureau* TANF (0.24) = *Temporary Assistance for Needy Families* ATM (0.20) = *Automated Teller Machine* SSN (0.20) = *Social Security Number* FHA (0.17) = *Federal Housing Administration* VA (0.17) = *Department of Veterans Affairs* FDA (0.16) = *Food and Drug Administration* FEMA (0.16) = *Federal Emergency Management Agency* EITC (0.15) = *Earned Income Tax Credit* CRA (0.13) = *Credit Reporting Agency*	CSIRO (0.78) = *Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation* ABN (0.59) = *Australian Business Number* NSW (0.52) = *New South Wales* ABR (0.20) = *Australian Business Register* ADF (0.20) = *Australian Defence Force* DHA (0.20) = *Defence Housing Australia* ESD (0.20) = *Economically Sustainable Development* ESOS (0.20) = *Education Services for Overseas Students* ICT (0.20) = *Information and Communications Technology* AMSA (0.13) = *Australian Medical Students' Association* ATO (0.13) = *Australian Taxation Office* CRICOS (0.13) = *Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students*	SCOTVEC (1.18) = *Scottish Vocational Education Council* SVQs (0.53) = *Scottish Vocational Qualifications* HCIMA (0.48) = *Hotel Catering International Management Association* BGS (0.34) = *British Geological Survey*

As the findings in **Table 11** show, the English government websites include many various acronyms that direct the reader to other external resources. It has been noticed that each English website provides a set of acronyms which are related to the government's local regulations. For example, if the reader searches for information on the topic *Money and Taxes*, the British website suggests such government resources as *VAT* (2.96), *ISA* (0.27), *PIP* (0.24), *IHT* (0.16), and *PAYE* (0.15); in the American texts, the reader can find acronyms like *SSA* (0.36), *SSN* (0.20), *EITC* (0.15), and *CRA* (0.13); and the Australian website offers an acronym *ATO* (0.13). For *Education* topic, the reader can visit such British external resource as *OFSTED* (0.12), or the Australian services as *ESOS* (0.20), *AMSA* (0.13), and *CRICOS* (0.13). Moreover, BNCWeb administrative texts sugget several external resources that are related to the British government; these are *SCOTVEC* (1.18) and *SVQs* (0.53). Thus the presence of acronyms in the English government texts depend on the government services or topics presented on the website.

The present analysis of acronyms has revealed that two Baltic and three English government websites show a great diversity of acronyms in their texts. However, the purpose of these acronyms differs in the Baltic and English texts. The Lithuanian and Latvian texts provide acronyms associated more with the European institutions and organizations; thus the two Baltic governments emphasise the importance of maintaining close relationships between the Baltic countries and the European Union itself. The British, American, and Australian websites provide administrative texts in which acronyms indicate the external government resources that might be helpful for the reader.

5.2 Verbal characteristics of the government texts

Regarding the textual information presented in the selected government texts, the present paper has also included the analysis of verbs. Quantitative analysis has been carried out by extracting 30 most frequent verbs that appear in the Baltic and English government texts. The most common collocations of these verbs have been also included in the present study. The comparative method has been applied in order to investigate how the Baltic texts differ from the English ones. In addition, the presence of contractions has been involved in the analysis to detect any instances of the use of informal language. Thus, first, Sub-section 5.2.1 explores the distribution of verbs and their collocations in the government texts. Then, in Sub-section 5.2.2, the presence of contractions is presented.

5.2.1 The use of verbs (verb collocations)

In order to investigate the linguistic features of the digital government texts, 30 most frequent English verbs have been analysed using AntConc software, and compared with the BNCWeb texts. The

following **Table 12** presents the results of the 30 most common verbs extracted from the English government websites.

Table 12. Top 30 most frequently used verbs in the British, American, and Australian government texts

	British texts			**American texts**			**Australian texts**		
Nr.	**Nouns**	**Freq.**	**BNC**	**Nouns**	**Fr.**	**BNC**	**Nouns**	**Fr.**	**BNC**
1.	*Get*	6.95	0.29	*Contact*	4.86	0.18	*Provides*	9.02	0.85
2.	*Pay*	5.60	0.32	*Find*	3.65	0.19	*Find*	4.38	0.19
3.	*Need*	3.84	0.41	File	3.05	0.03	Study	2.22	0.05
4.	Claim	3.76	0.07	*Get*	2.95	0.29	*Includes*	2.09	0.48
5.	*Use*	2.74	0.32	*Report*	2.66	0.09	*Use*	1.63	0.32
6.	*Apply*	2.67	0.36	*Use*	2.36	0.32	*Download*	1.50	-
7.	*Contact*	2.32	0.18	*Pay*	2.19	0.32	Helps	1.37	0.30
8.	*Find*	2.20	0.19	*Learn*	2.00	0.05	*Search*	1.37	0.01
9.	*Make*	1.64	0.62	*Make*	1.80	0.62	Assist	1.05	0.16
10.	*Send*	1.54	0.12	*Check*	1.60	0.06	*Need*	1.05	0.41
11.	*Check*	1.34	0.06	*Need*	1.57	0.41	Supports	0.98	0.25
12.	Tell	1.17	0.04	Call	1.37	0.04	*Learn*	0.92	0.05
13.	*Ask*	1.16	0.14	Purchase	1.29	0.07	*Get*	0.72	0.29
14.	*Take*	1.03	0.55	Return	1.25	0.08	*Apply*	0.65	0.36
15.	Appeal	1.00	0.01	*Provides*	1.19	0.85	Improve	0.65	0.16
16.	Fill	1.00	0.04	Receive	1.15	0.20	*Offers*	0.65	0.32
17.	Register	0.94	0.02	*Visit*	1.11	0.04	Compare	0.59	0.02
18.	Start	0.89	0.09	*Offers*	1.07	0.32	*Live*	0.59	0.08
19.	*Include*	0.88	0.48	*Apply*	0.95	0.36	*Make*	0.59	0.62
20.	*Report*	0.88	0.09	*Ask*	0.94	0.14	Meet	0.59	0.30
21.	*Live*	0.86	0.08	*Take*	0.93	1.03	Allows	0.52	0.19
22.	Qualify	0.82	0.04	*Download*	0.90	-	Covers	0.52	0.07
23.	Want	0.80	0.16	*Search*	0.72	0.01	Create	0.52	0.06
24.	Keep	0.76	0.15	*Buy*	0.70	0.06	Explore	0.46	0.03
25.	Give	0.74	0.55	*Include*	0.70	0.48	*Report*	0.46	0.09
26.	Sell	0.70	0.07	Protect	0.70	0.05	*Take*	0.46	0.55
27.	Depends	0.69	0.06	Resolve	0.66	0.01	Undertake	0.46	0.16
28.	Go	0.56	0.12	*Send*	0.62	0.12	*Visit*	0.46	0.04
29.	Charge	0.54	0.02	Avoid	0.58	0.09	Complete	0.39	0.14
30.	*Buy*	0.51	0.06	Change	0.58	0.08	Contains	0.39	0.08

The results in **Table 12** reveal that there are 9 verbs frequently found in all English government texts. These verbs marked in italics are *get*, *need*, *use*, *apply*, *find*, *make*, *take*, *include*, and *report*. The presence of such verbs highlights their general function; i.e. these verbs help the reader to find necessary information and government services. The verbs as *pay*, *contact*, *send*, *check*, *ask*, and *buy* repeat in the British and American texts; the verbs as *learn*, *provide*, *visit*, *offer*, *download*, and *search* occur in the American and Australian government texts; and only one verb *live* repeats many times

in the British and Australian texts. As has been observed, there is a group of general verbs which indicate the main actions the reader can do with the information presented on the government website; these are *get*, *need*, *use*, *apply*, *find*, or *take*. Besides, there are specific verbs that are not found in all government texts; such verbs are *download*, *meet*, *support*, or *receive*. It has been also noticed that some verbs like *pay*, *send*, *check*, or *buy* are more typical to the domain of *Money*, whereas verbs as *provide*, *offer*, and *support* are found in the domain of *Benefits*.

Administrative government texts are regarded as official documents that present a straightforward and concise packaging of information. Therefore, in order to expose a current government state of affairs in these texts, verbs in simple form are used, mostly using the infinitival constructions. To confirm this idea, the collocations of verbs, which repeat in the texts of the three English websites, are extracted and listed in **Appendix 10**. For example, there are collocations of verbs *provide*, *offer*, and *allow* that indicate what services the certain government website can offer; these are *provide resources and tips*, *provides assistance* (American texts); *provides information*, *provides access*, *provides links* (Australian texts); and *provide opportunity*, *provide advice* (BNCWeb texts). With the verb *offer* the websites provide such collocations as *offers contact information*, *offers free tax help* (American texts); *offers practical help* (Australian texts); and *offer local advice*, *offer programmes* (BNCWeb texts). With regard to the collocations of verb *allow*, the government websites include such collocations as *allows you to set*, *allows users to retrieve* (Australian texts), and *to allow improved access*, *to allow you to computerise* (BNCWeb texts).

It has been observed that there is a large number of verb collocations that help the reader to search for further information. Such collocations are relatively similar in all English texts; for instance, *get help* is found in all texts; however, the Australian website specifies this collocation as *get financial help*. Similarly, the collocation *need help* occur in the British and American texts, whereas the Australian website uses *need some extra help*. The collocation *search for information* is also repetitive in the American and Australian government texts; the collocation *find (government) information* is repeated in the American and Australian texts, while the collocation *find out the answer* is more used in the BNCWeb texts.

As has been noticed previously in this Sub-section, certain verbs and their collocations are more typical of the government domains. The *Money and Tax* domain is common in all English texts; thus the particular verb collocations suggest what the reader can do in the government websites under this domain. The following **Table 13** shows the possible verb collocations related to the *Money and Tax* domain.

Table 13. The verb collocations of the domain *Money and Tax* extracted from the English government texts

	British texts	**American texts**	**Australian texts**	**BNCWeb texts**
Get	Get tax credits Get money	Get your money back Get tax refund Get a loan		
Need	Need to pay tax			
Use	Use the tax credits			
Apply	Apply for student finance	Apply for financial assistance		
Find	Find out about call charges		Find out about study costs Find unclaimed money	
Make	Make payments	To make payments		
Report			Report your income	
Pay	Pay Capital Gains Tax	Pay bills To pay your taxes		Pay tribute Pay the Poll Tax Pay the charge Pay contributions
Send	Send your tax return	Send money		
Check	Check your bank's transaction limits	Check your federal tax		

The findings shown in **Table 13** suggest that the most extensive use of these verb collocations can be found in the British texts. It indicates that the British government website includes the largest amount of information under the topic *Money and Tax*. Such distribution of verb collocations suggest what functions the reader can perform on the website; for example, s/he might pay or check taxes, make payments, find about all charges or costs, get or send money to someone.

In contrast to the verbs and their collocations extracted from three English websites, the Lithuanian and Latvian websites provide a different use of the verbs. Using AntConc software tools, 30 most frequent verbs have been also taken from the Baltic texts. Although the Lithuanian and Latvian texts are treated as official government information, the presence of public verbs highlights the publicist register of these texts. According to Biber (1988: 109), public verbs, especially used in past time, function as "markers of indirect, reported speech." As can be seen in **Table 14** below, the Baltic texts include many various public verbs like *said*, *noted*, *agreed*, *expressed*, or *discussed*. Thus it stresses the fact that, in the Baltic texts, the reported speech is used; i.e. the reader can find many quotes of the Prime Ministers' speeches delivered during particular political meetings.

Table 14. Top 30 most frequently used verbs in the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts

	Lithuanian texts		**Latvian texts**	
Nr.	**Verbs**	**Normalized frequency**	**Verbs**	**Normalized frequency**
1.	*Said*	4.48	*Expressed*	1.92
2.	*Noted*	2.24	Held	1.54
3.	*Continue*	1.92	*Discussed*	1.47
4.	*Agreed*	1.41	*Stressed*	1.43
5.	*Discussed*	1.41	*Continue*	1.26
6.	*Strengthen*	1.35	*Said*	1.05
7.	*Met*	1.15	Participate	0.94
8.	*Stressed*	1.02	Emphasized	0.87
9.	*Expressed*	0.90	*Welcomed*	0.66
10.	*Welcomed*	0.90	*Meet*	0.63
11.	*Ensure*	0.83	*Noted*	0.63
12.	*Pointed*	0.83	*Pointed*	0.63
13.	Take	0.83	*Strengthen*	0.59
14.	Share	0.77	*Developed*	0.56
15.	*Develop*	0.64	Provide	0.52
16.	*Increase*	0.64	Improve	0.49
17.	*Promote*	0.58	*Increased*	0.45
18.	*Become*	0.51	Make	0.42
19.	Remain	0.51	*Open*	0.42
20.	*Exchange*	0.45	Reached	0.42
21.	*Implement*	0.45	*Become*	0.38
22.	Invited	0.45	*Implement*	0.38
23.	*Open*	0.45	*Promote*	0.38
24.	See	0.45	Called	0.35
25.	Signed	0.45	Confirmed	0.35
26.	Thanked	0.45	Acknowledged	0.31
27.	Encouraged	0.38	*Agreed*	0.31
28.	Highlighted	0.38	*Ensure*	0.31
29.	Informed	0.38	*Exchange*	0.31
30.	Underlined	0.38	Expand	0.31

From the set of 30 most frequently used verbs presented above, such verbs as *said*, *noted*, *continue*, *agreed*, *discussed*, *strengthen*, *meet*, *stressed*, *expressed*, *welcomed*, *ensure*, *pointed*, *develop*, *increase*, *promote*, *become*, *exchange*, *implement*, and *open* are the most repetitive ones in the Baltic texts. Apart those public verbs, the Lithuanian and Latvian verbs can be regarded as more specific than the English ones. The use of verbs like *strengthen*, *ensure*, *develop*, *increase*, *promote*, *implement*, or *exchange* suggests the positive ideas presented in the Baltic texts; i.e. the reader may find information about the government's attempts to maintain close relations with other European countries or to implement various local and global projects.

In order to analyse the broader context of verbs, the collocations of the most repetitive Lithuanian and Latvian verbs have been listed in **Appendix 11**. It has been investigated that the

presence of public verbs indicates the most important political figures in the Lithuanian and Latvian government websites. For instance, in the Lithuanian texts, such verb collocations as *said the Prime Minister*, *said the Head of government*, *noted the Head of Government*, and *stressed the Lithuanian Prime Minister* are frequently used; in the Latvian texts, verb collocations as *said L. Straujuma*, *said the Head of government of Latvia*, *noted L. Straujuma*, and *stressed L. Straujuma* can be found in many places. The extensive use of such verb collocations reveals the fact that the chosen Baltic texts fulfil the narrative function; i.e. the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts report the most important events related to the Prime Ministers' work.

As has been observed, certain verbs and their collocations clearly show that one of the most dominant topics presented in the government texts is establishing and maintaining close relations between countries. It is expressed by various verb collocations that are presented in the following table.

Table 15. The distribution of verb collocations which demonstrate bilateral relations between countries in the Baltic government texts

	Lithuanian texts	**Latvian texts**
Discussed	Discussed cooperation prospects	Discussed the cooperation
Strengthen	To strengthen the cooperation with Strengthen the relations	To strengthen cooperation
Expressed	Expressed strong support Expressed solidarity	Expressed the support
Develop	To develop friendly relations To develop partnership	Developed strategic communication
Promote	To promote development of relations Promote bilateral economic cooperation	To promote mutual understanding To promote sustainable peace
Become	Become of the main partners	To become partners

As the findings in **Table 15** show, both, Lithuanian and Latvian texts use similar verb collocations to reveal bilateral relations between the Baltic and European Member countries. With regard to the political context, certain keywords are used: *cooperation*, *support*, *relations*, *partners*, and *solidarity*. Together with the analysed verbs these keywords create political verb collocations which enable the reader to follow the government topic presented in the text.

Another possible government topic found in the Baltic texts can be related to economic issues in the countries. It is inevitably associated with the government's work. There are certain verb collocations that support the topic of economics; these are *to ensure the resilience of the economies*, *develop new economic and social policies*, *increase the trade*, *promote economic growth*, and t*o open up business* (Lithuanian texts). The Latvian texts provide such verb collocations as *to ensure continuous economic development*, *developed the business*, *increased the minimum wage*, and *to implement innovations*. The use of such verb collocations might increase the reader's awareness about

his/her government's development of economic issues not only in Lithuania or Latvia but in the global perspective as well.

To generalise the use of verbs (verb collocations) in three English and two Baltic government websites, the difference can be seen in the functions the analysed texts perform. In the case of the English government texts, the function of the official documents is regarded as nominal, descriptive and argumentative (Biber 1988: 140). The analysis of the English verbs and their collocations has indicated that these government texts expose for the reader the current state of affairs under various different domains; i.e. what the reader can find in these websites are the explanations or descriptions of various individual's rights and duties in the country. Thus, the use of the short general verbs, mostly in present time and infinitive form, supports the idea that the English government texts belong to official administrative register. On the contrary, the Lithuanian and Latvian government texts provide the government information based on the present-day news. It is indicated by the use of public verbs in past time and longer verb collocations that reveal different topics of the government work. As Biber suggests (1988: 191), press reportage or press news is a direct and factual presentation of information for the reader. Every time the reader opens the Lithuanian or Latvian government website, s/he is introduced with the new government topics under different issues such as bilateral relations or economic growth. Thus it can be claimed that the Baltic texts serve the narrative function of reporting events and presenting them for the reader as accurately as possible.

5.2.2 The use of contractions

The present analysis has also investigated the presence of contractions in the English and Baltic government texts. Due to the large number of words found in each text, the limitation has been set and contractions that appear in first 1000 words have been included in the analysis. It is generally known that, in English language, contractions consist of auxiliary verbs; the first group is primary auxiliaries as *be*, *like*, and *do*; and the second group is modal auxiliaries as *will*, *can*, *shall*, *may*, *must*, *would*, *could*, *should*, and *might* (Biber, Conrad, and Leech 2002: 27-28). The analysis focuses on both types of auxiliary verbs, either in their affirmative or negative form.

It has been assumed that the selected English and Baltic government websites as representing one of the most important official institutions should not include contractions in their texts. However, it has been observed that, in the British website, contractions is rather a common linguistic feature of the administrative texts (see **Table 16**). Per first 1000 words, 10 different instances of contractions have been found in the British texts; 8 instances have been detected in the American texts; and the Australian texts involve only 2 instances of contractions. As compared with the BNCWeb administrative texts, it does not include any instance of contractions. In the Lithuanian and Latvian texts, any instance of contractions has not been found as well.

Table 16. The distribution of contractions in the English and Baltic government texts

	British texts	**American texts**	**Australian texts**	**BNCWeb texts**	**Lithuanian texts**	**Latvian texts**
Contractions	*You're* (7.35) *You'll* (3.45) *Don't* (2.67) *You've* (2.06) *Can't* (1.67) *Doesn't* (0.41) *Isn't* (0.35) *Haven't* (0.31) *Aren't* (0.30) *Didn't* (0.18)	*Don't* (0.66) *You're* (0.44) *You've* (0.24) *Doesn't* (0.21) *Can't* (0.20) *You'll* (0.20) *Aren't* (0.17) *Didn't* (0.15)	*You're* (0.20) *Can't* (0.07)	-	-	-

As can be seen in **Table 16**, the most dominant verb contractions are *you're* and *can't* since they repeat in all three English texts. Such contractions as *you'll, don't, you've, doesn't, aren't,* and *didn't* occur in the British and American texts. Only British texts include contractions as *isn't* and *haven't*. Furthermore, it has been observed that one half of the chosen contractions is used in affirmative form while the other half in negative form. It suggests the idea that negative verb contractions might indicate what the reader is not allowed or not recommended to do under certain conditions.

The comparison of contractions found in the government texts has revealed the unexpected use of contractions in the British texts. Although the conventional linguistic feature of administrative texts is the absence of contractions, the British and American texts appear to use less formal language; i.e. these two websites try to attract the reader's attention by using contractions as a feature of informal language. Due to the use of contractions as *you're, you'll*, and *you've*, the British and American texts address the reader directly and adequately inform what actions can be performed if s/he is in a certain situation. It has been investigated that the Lithuanian and Latvian texts do not include any instance of contractions; thus these websites follow the formal linguistic norms and present the government news in an appropriate and accurate manner.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the present MA thesis has been to investigate the selected government websites from the perspective of multimodality. Interestingly, it has been observed that the chosen five government websites are not designed in the same way; the government services expressed through the compositional, lexical, and visual elements differ between the English and Baltic government websites. Although the selected websites belong to institutional discourse and the aim of these websites should be the same, the presentation of each government website depends on such cultural factors as the use of the official language, the country size, and the control of the government authorities.

For the present analysis, the five government websites have been chosen and their compositional, visual, and textual aspects have been investigated. Since each government website has a particular structure, it has been observed that all five government websites follow top-bottom principle of information value. In the British, American, and Australian websites, the most salient part is dedicated to the top section in which different government services are presented; the use of symbolic images and icons enable the reader to navigate through the government topics. In contrast, the Lithuanian and Latvian websites focus more on the presentation of the newest information that is provided at the bottom section of the website; this newest information takes visually the largest part in the website and is mostly related to either Lithuanian or Latvian Prime Minister's work. Furthermore, some framing devices are used to separate the sections: blue, black, and grey colours have been applied in three English websites to indicate the general contact information; in the Lithuanian and Latvian websites, blue and dark red colours are used to mark the general information about the structure of the government.

Although the selected government websites belong to the digital genre, not all of them display a great variety of the use of the representational and functional elements. Interestingly, only British and Australian websites include the official mottoes in which the purpose of the website is described. With regard to functional elements, the American and Latvian websites use many functional features such as multilingual option and choices of social networks. It suggests that these particular websites try to establish and maintain the close relationship with the reader by providing various interactive tools. However, the British and Australian websites do not include any of functional elements; in this case, these websites are regarded as less interactive for the reader.

The present analysis has revealed that the government websites show a tendency to update their government information. The American, Australian, and Lithuanian websites have renewed their layouts and compositional features in order to make an easier and quicker access to their websites. In comparing the old and new versions of these three websites, the new American website includes symbolic images to illustrate its government services; the shift to the visual mode has been

emphasised. The new Australian website now focus more on the general government topics; the news of the government work is presented at the bottom section as additional information. The Lithuanian website has been changed substantially since the entire layout has been transformed, and the section of the news articles has become the major focus.

From the perspective of the visual mode, the Lithuanian and Latvian websites include many photos with the depicted social participants; the actions of the participants and the settings of these photos reflect the events described in the text. As the analysis has revealed, such photos are treated as more natural since they depict the real life events. Contrary, pictures found in the English websites are treated as simulated; they are specifically made to represent a particular government service. Moreover, it has been observed that emblematic images are dominant in the three English websites since they illustrate specific government topics. Such images described as representative are followed by the textual mode that expands the meaning of the visual. Interestingly, only Australian website provides the use of iconic images to demonstrate the government topics; some icons are treated as conventional ones, whereas other signs are more specific to the country, for example, the image of a boomerang or kangaroo in a road sign symbolises the country itself.

The analysis of the textual mode has revealed that the British, American, and Australian government texts belong to the official administrative register while the Lithuanian and Latvian texts refer more to the register of press news. The extensive use of nouns indicates a great density of information. The three English websites use shorter nouns that are more general in their meaning; longer nouns found in two Baltic websites convey more specific and specialized meaning. The specific noun collocations suggest that the texts in the three English websites focus on such general topics as *Benefits*, *Education*, or *Money*; the texts in the Baltic websites provide information about specific events related to the Prime Minister's work. Moreover, the use of short general verbs indicates the administrative register of the English government texts; whereas public verbs in past time are dominant in the Baltic texts. The use of public verbs serve the narrative function of reporting events and presenting them for the reader. The publicist register of the Baltic texts is also emphasised by the extensive use of proper nouns and acronyms. Unexpectedly, the British texts indicate the use of contractions suggesting that the British government website uses less formal language than the other government websites.

In further investigation, it would be interesting to include more government websites in order to note any tendencies typical of electronic government services. Moreover, the attention could be drawn on the cultural differences to analyse whether they have an impact on the composition and the presentation of the content information in the government websites.

The present thesis might be useful for scholars who explore the digital genre of websites, focusing on the aspects of multimodality and the analysis of the typical linguistic features of the

certain registers. Moreover, the lists of the most frequent noun and verb collocations may be valuable for language learners who want to gain proficiency in analysing the government texts of the administrative and publicist registers. Since there is not much analysis of the government websites in the academic field, the present study may be relevant for translators as well; they can observe whether the Lithuanian and Latvian websites represent the same information in their English versions as compared with the original ones.

REFERENCES

Primary sources

American government website https://www.usa.gov/

Australian government website http://www.australia.gov.au/

British government website https://www.gov.uk/

Latvian government website http://www.mk.gov.lv/en

Lithuanian government website http://lrv.lt/

Secondary sources

Adami, Elisabetta. 2013. "A Social Semiotic Multimodal Analysis Framework for Website Interactivity." In *National Centre for Research Methods*. Southampton: University of Southampton.

Askehave, Inger, and Anne Ellerup Nielsen. 2005. "Digital Genres: A Challenge to Traditional Genre Theory." In *Information Technology & People*. Vol. 18. No. 2. Aarhus: Emerald, 120-141.

Bezemer, Jeff. 2012. "What Is Multimodality?" In Mode: Multimodal Methodologies for Researching Digital Data and Environments. London. Accessed 5 March 2016. http://mode.ioe.ac.uk/2012/02/16/what-is-multimodality/

Baldry, Anthony and Paul J. Thibault. 2006. *Multimodal Transcription and Text Analysis: A Multimedia Toolkit and Coursebook with Associated On-line Course*. London: Equinox.

Biber, Douglas. 1988. *Variation across Speech and Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biber, Douglas. 1995. *Dimensions of Register Variation: A Cross-Linguistic Comparison*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biber, Douglas and Susan Conrad. 2009. *Register, Genre, and Style*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Biber, Douglas, Susan Conrad, and Geoffrey Leech. 2002. *Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow: Longman.

Chandler, Daniel. 2002. *Semiotics: The Basics*. London: Routledge.

Cranny-Francis, Anne. 2005. *Multimedia: Texts and Contexts*. London: SAGE.

Crystal, David. 2008. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 6th ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Danesi, Marcel. 2002. *Understanding Media Semiotics*. London: Arnold.

Danesi, Marcel. 2004. Mess*ages, Signs, and Meanings. A Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication*. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. In the series *Studies in Linguistic and Cultural Anthropology*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.

Djonov, Emilia. 2007. "Website Hierarchy and the Interaction between Content Organization, Webpage and Navigation Design: A Systematic Functional Hypermedia Discourse Analysis Perspective." In *Information Design Journal*, 15:2. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 144-162.

Domingo, Myrrh, and Carey Jewitt, and Gunther Kress. 2014. "Multimodal Social Semiotics: Writing in Online Contexts." In K. Pahl and Rowsel (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Literary Studies*. London: Routledge.

Eggins, Suzanne and J. R. Martin. 1997. "Genres and Registers of Discourse." In Teun A. van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse as Structure and Process. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. Vol. 1. London: SAGE Publications, 230-256.

Ferguson, Charles A. 1994. "Dialect, Register, and Genre: Working Assumptions about Conventionalization." In Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan (eds.) *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 15-30.

Galperin, Ilya Romanovich. 1977. *Stylistics*. Moscow: Higher School.

Halliday, Michael. 1978. *Language and Social Semiotics*. London: Edward Arnold.

Hodge, Robert and Gunther Kress. 1988. *Social Semiotics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Iedema, Rick. 2003. "Multimodality, Resemiotization: Extending the Analysis of Discourse as Multi-Semiotic Practice." In *Visual Communication*. Vol. 2. London: SAGE Publications, 29-57.

Jamani, Kamini Jaipal. 2011. "A Semiotic Discourse Analysis Framework: Understanding Meaning Making in Science Education Contexts." In Steven C. Hamel (ed.) *Semiotics Theory and Applications*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

Jewitt, Carey. 2005. "Multimodality, "Reading", and "Writing" for the 21st Century." In *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*. Vol. 26. No. 3. London: Routledge, 315-331.

Jewitt, Carey. 2013. "Multimodal Methods for Researching Digital Technologies." In Sara Price, Carey Jewitt, and Barry Brown (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Digital Technology Research*. London: SAGE, 250-265.

Jewitt, Carey and Rumiko Oyama. 2001. "Visual Meaning: A Social Semiotic Approach." In Theo van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt (eds.) *Handbook of Visual Analysis*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 134-156.

Jones, Rodney H. 2012. *Discourse Analysis: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.

Junker, Susanne. 2013. *Exploring Hidden Promotional Strategies: A Multimodal Comparative Analysis of Whisky Producers' Corporate Websites*. Ph.D. dissertation. Aarhus: Aarhus University.

Kołata, Jacek. 2010. "The Reformulation of Genre and Register Analysis." In *Styles of Communication*. Vol. 2. No. 1, 50-74.

Kress, Gunther. 2009. “What Is Mode?” In Carey Jewitt (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*. London: Routledge, 54-67.

Kress, Gunther. 2010. Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication. London: Routledge.

Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen. 2006. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Lauer, Claire. 2009. “Contending with Terms: “Multimodal” and “Multimedia” in the Academic and Public Spheres.” In *Computers and Composition* 26. Mesa: Elsevier, 225-239.

Lee, David YW. 2001. “Genres, Registers, Text Types, Domains, and Styles: Clarifying the Concepts and Navigating a Path through the BNC Jungle.” In *Language Learning & Technology*. Vol. 5. No. 3, pp 37-72.

Lemke, Jay. 2005. “Towards Critical Multimedia Literacy: Technology, Research, and Politics.” In David Reinking, Michael C. McKenna, Linda D. Labbo, and Ronald D. Keiffer (eds.) *Handbook of Literacy and Technology*. Vol. 2. Erlbaum: LEA Publishing. Accessed 5 March 2016. http://www-personal.umich.edu/~jaylemke/papers/reinking2.htm

Mavers, Diane (ed). 2012. “MODE. Glossary of Multimodal Terms.” In *National Centre for Research Methods*. Accessed 5 March 2016. http://multimodalityglossary.wordpress.com/mode-2/

Moriarty, Sandra. 2005. “Visual Semiotics Theory.” In Ken Smith, Sandra Moriarty, Gretchen Barbatsis, and Keith Kenney (eds.) *Handbook of Visual Communication. Theory, Methods, and Media*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 227-242.

Nöth, Winfried. 1990. *Handbook of Semiotics*. Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

O’Halloran, Kay L. and Bradley A. Smith. 2011. *Multimodal Studies: Exploring Issues and Domains*. London: Routledge.

Page, Ruth (ed). 2010. *New Perspectives on Narrative and Multimodality*. London: Routledge.

Parajuli, Jitendra. 2007. “A Content Analysis of Selected Government Web Sites: A Case Study of Nepal.” In *The Electronic Journal of e-Government*. Vol. 5. Issue 1, pp 87-94.

Pauwels, Luc. 2012. “A Multimodal Framework for Analyzing Websites as Cultural Expressions.” In *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 17*. Belgium: University of Antwerp, 247-265.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. 1959. *Course in General Linguistics*. Translated by Wade Baskin. Eds. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy. New York: Columbia University Press.

Rowsell, Jennifer and Maureen Walsh. 2011. “Rethinking Literacy Education in New Times: Multimodality, Multiliteracies, & New Literacies.” In *Brock Education. A Journal of Educational Research & Practice*. Vol. 21. No. 1. Ontario: Brock University, 53-62.

Ryan, Terry, Richard H. G. Field, and Lorne Olfman. 2002. “Homepage Genre Dimensionality.” In *Eighth Americas Conference on Information Systems*. Dallas.

Sebeok, Thomas A. 2001. *Signs: An Introduction to Semiotics*. 2nd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

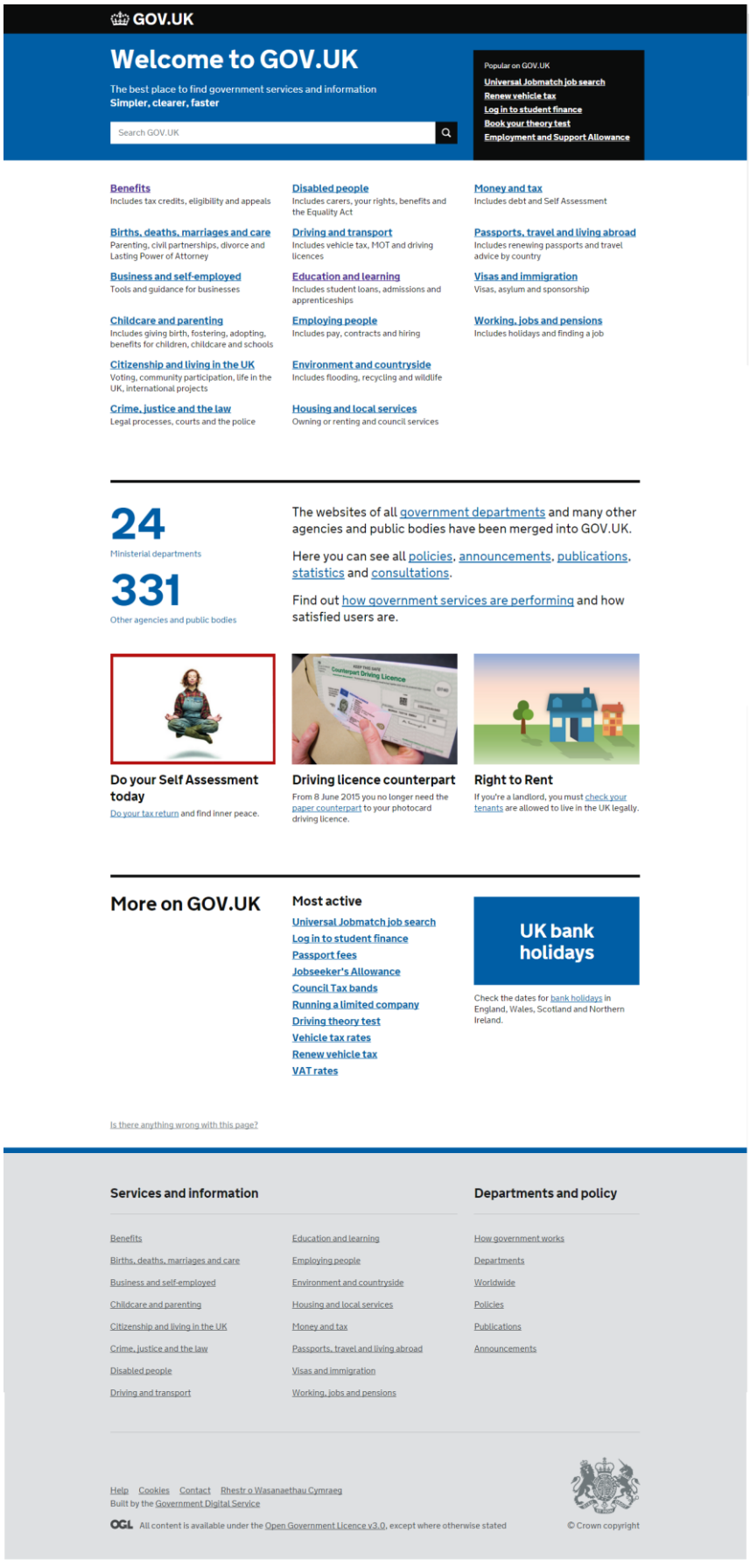
Thibault, Paul J. 1991. "Social Semiotics as Praxis: Text, Social Meaning Making, and Nabokov's Ada." In *Theory and History of Literature*. Vol. 74. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Trosborg, Anna (ed). 1997. *Text Typology and Translation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

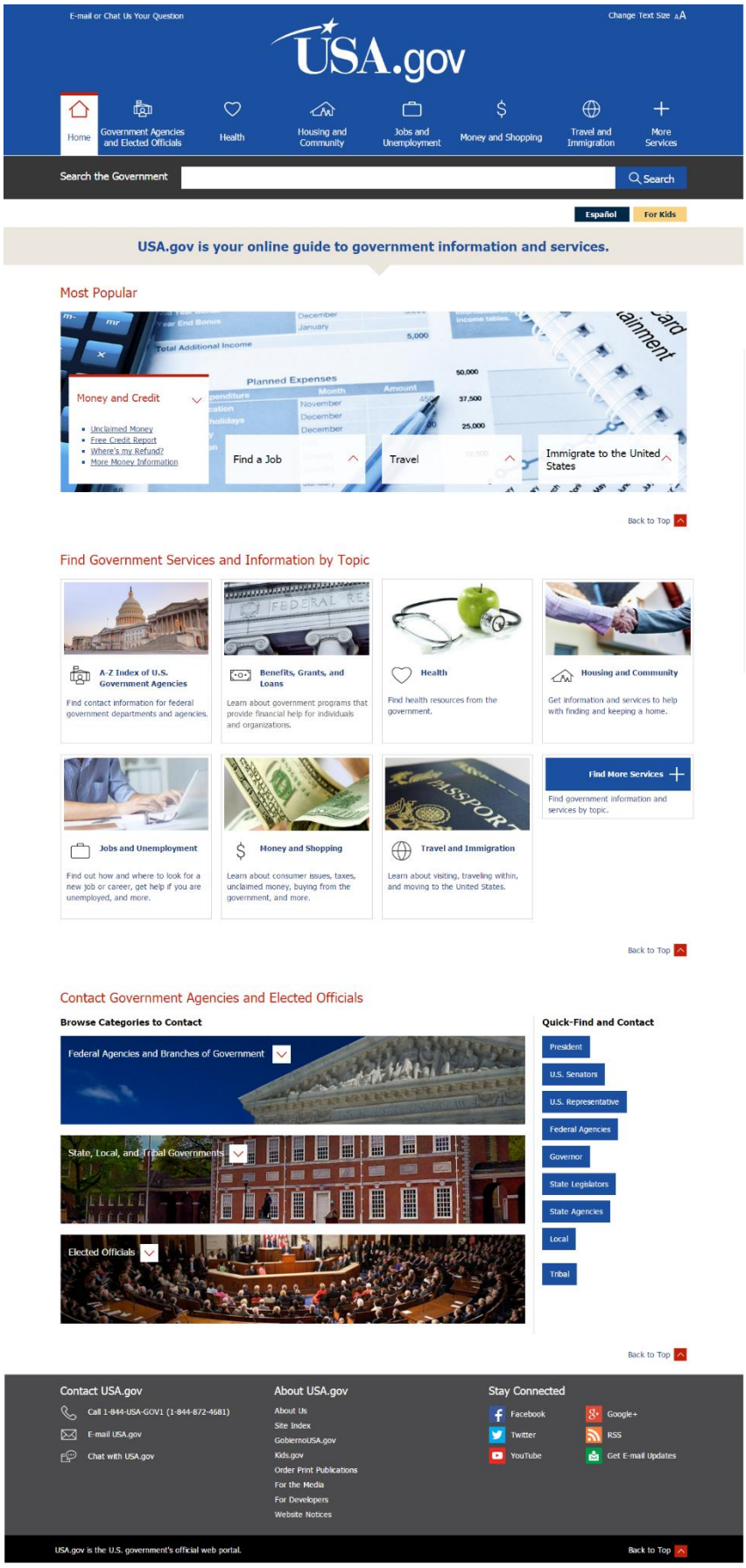
van Leeuwen, Theo. 2005. *Introducing Social Semiotics*. London: Routledge.

Walsh, Maureen. 2004. "Reading Visual and Multimodal Texts: How is 'Reading' Different?" In *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*. Vol. 29. No. 1, 24-37.

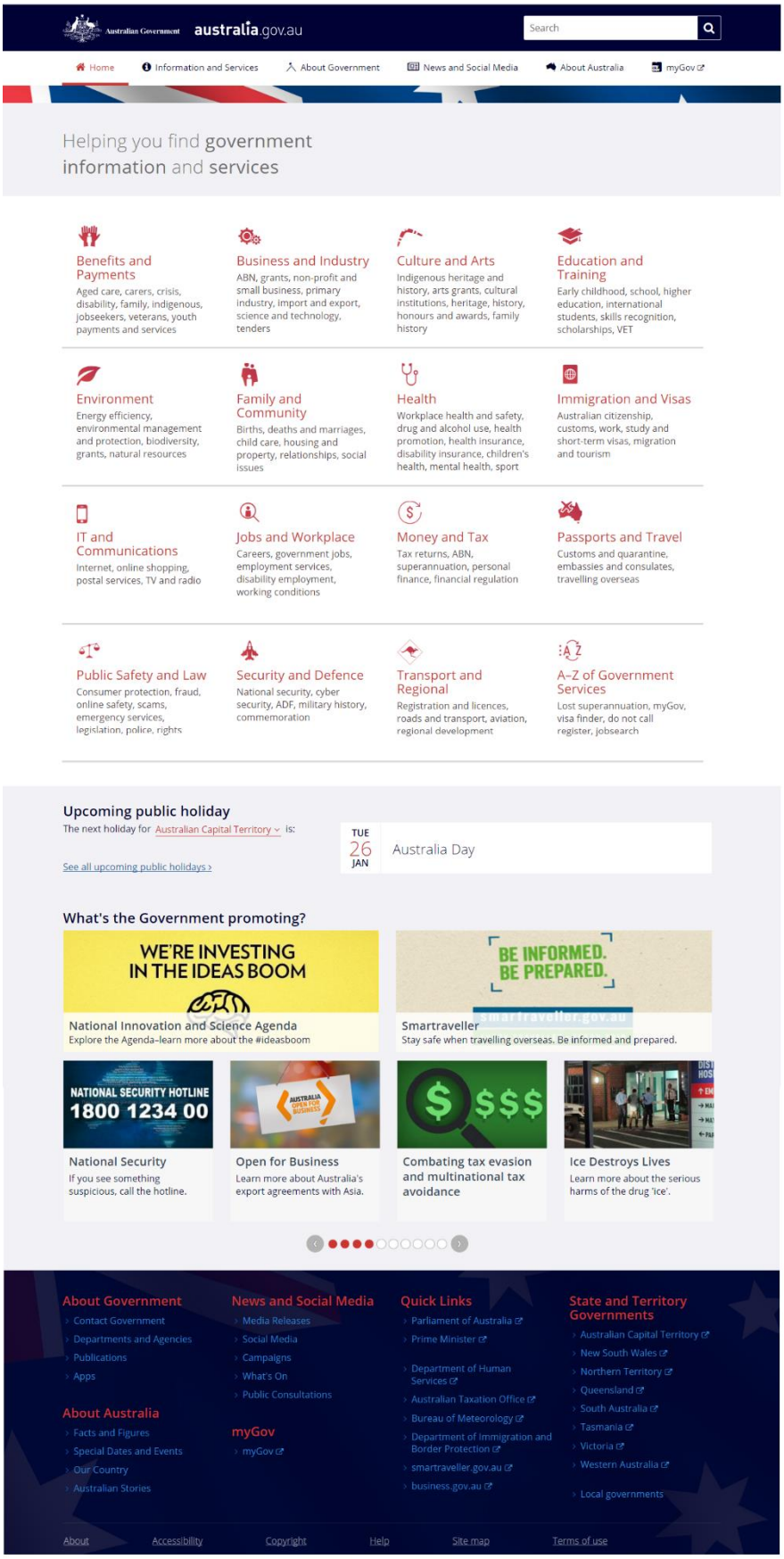
Appendix 1 The image of the British government homepage



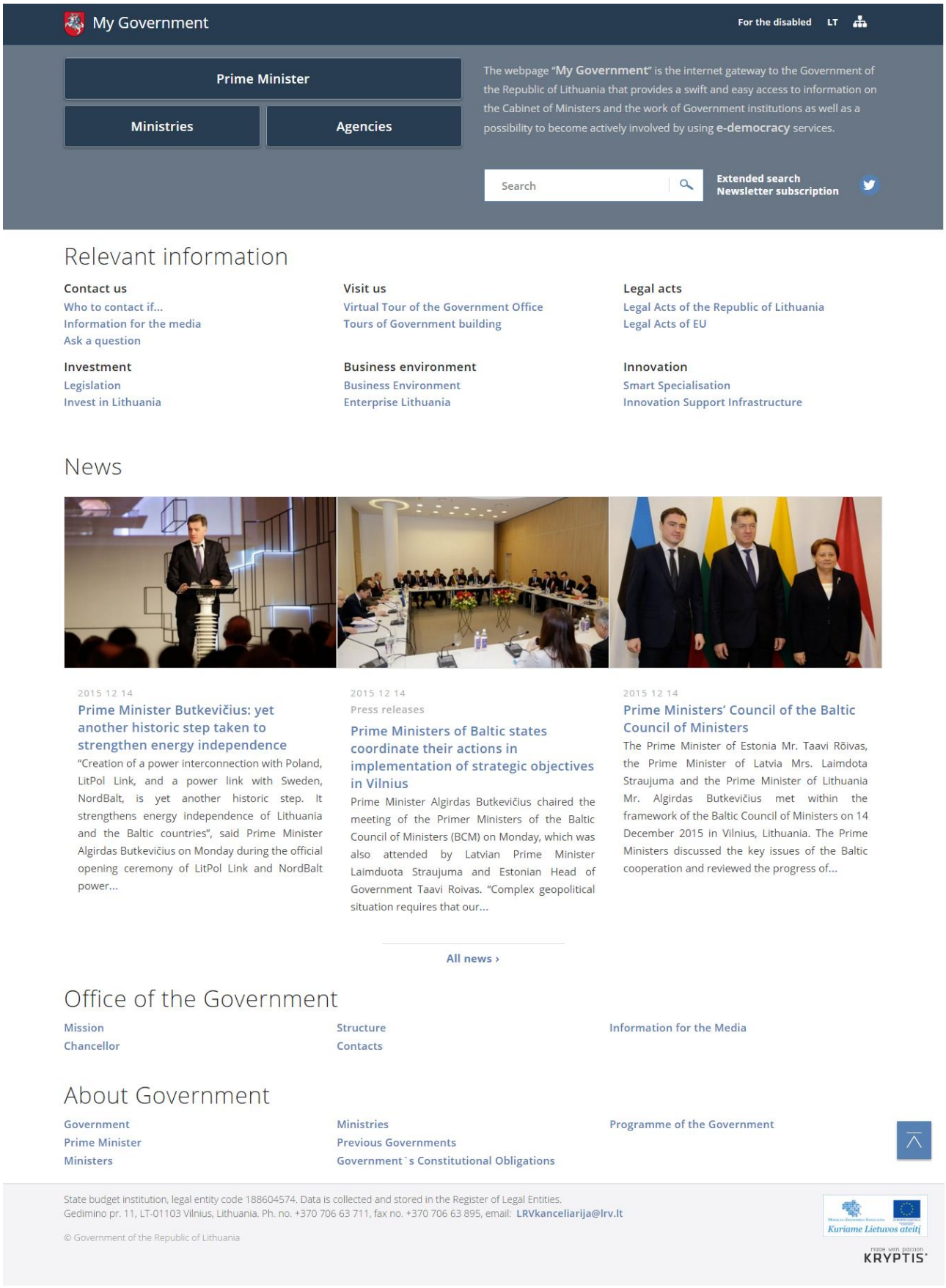
Appendix 2 The image of the American government homepage



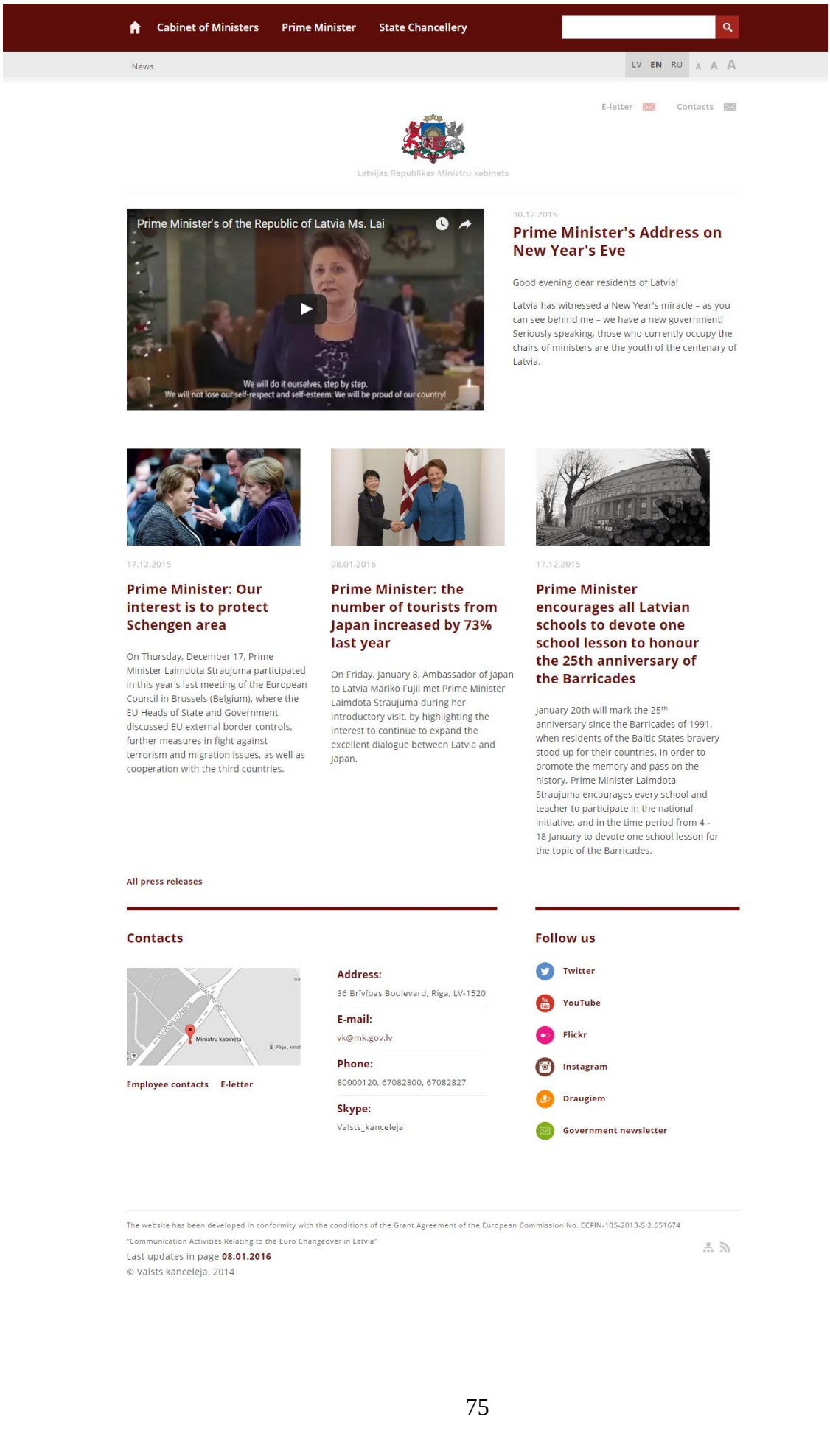
Appendix 3 The image of the Australian government homepage



Appendix 4 The image of the Lithuanian government homepage



Appendix 5 The image of the Latvian government homepage



Appendix 6 Collocations with the most frequently used nouns in the government texts of the British, American, and Australian websites

Nouns	Collocations in British website	Collocations in American website	Collocations in Australian website	Collocations in BNCWeb texts
Service	• Careers service* • Advice service • Insolvency service • Service telephone • Pension service • 24-hour service • Bereavement service	• Internal revenue service • Customer service • Postal service • Servicer provider • Service center • Service agency	• Service-external site • Self service • Counselling service • Wide service • Universal service	• Info service • Education service • Health service • Service industries • Customer service • Service contracts • Prison service • Quality service • Client service
Help	• Get help • Need help • Extra help • Financial help • To help pay • More help • Tax help	• Get help • Need help • To help pay • Help protect	• Self help • Extra help • External site help • Services help	• Get help • Provide help • Practical help
Home	• Main home • Care home • Home energy • Permanent home • Home improvement	• Home equity • Home energy • Home repairs • Home improvement	• Home care • Home-external site • Home page • Home owners	• Home care • Home Fashions • Home court
Tax	• Inheritance tax • Tax year • Tax return • Tax credits • Pay tax • Income tax • Capital gains tax • Tax-free allowances	• Federal tax return • Tax refund • Income tax • Tax lien • Estimated tax • Tax credits	-	• Poll tax • Council tax • Tax year • Pay tax • Corporation tax • Income tax • Tax bill
Credit	• Tax credit • Universal credit • Pension credit • Credit office • Credit helpline • Credit card	• Credit card • Credit report • Credit union • Credit counselling • Free credit • Tax credit	-	• Credit transfer • Family credit • Credit accumulation • Credit card
Business	• Business relief • Business premises • Business assets	• Small business administration • Better business bureau	-	• Investment business • Business administration

* All noun collocations are listed in descending order according to their frequency

	• Business activity	• Business owners • Business taxes		• Business development • Business rate • New business • Growing business
Money	• Get money • Pay the money • Money claim online • Owe the money • Take money	• Save money • Unclaimed money • Get money • Paper money • Owe money	-	• Money claim • Get money • Payment of money • Value of money
Insurance	• National insurance number • National insurance contributions • Pay insurance • National insurance record	• Health insurance • Renters insurance • Individual disability insurance • Life insurance policy	-	• Insurance companies • Insurance contributions • National insurance • General insurance
Payment (s)	• Personal independence payment • Make a payment • Get a payment • Date payment	-	• Child support payments • Range of payments • Means-tested payments	• Payment of fee • Notice of payment • Late payment • Make payment
School	• Free school • School days • School meals • Primary school • Contact your school • School transport	-	• Supportive school communities project • School age • School programs • Primary school	• School pupils • High school • Secondary school
Support	• Allowance income support • Child support tribunal • Get support • Learner support helpline • Need more support	-	• Income support • Child support payments • Financial support • Student income support options	• Income support • Support material • Support services • Financial support • Practical support • Provide support
Information	-	• For more information • Personal information • Further information • Find information	• Provides information • Government information • Site information • Includes information	• Information contained • Provide information • Information obtained • Information memorandum

		• Additional information • Contact information	• Find information	• Information technology • Information office • Information service
Government	-	• Federal government • Government agencies • State government • Government benefits • Local government • Government grants	• Australian government • Find government info • Government benefits • Government policies	• Local government • Central government • International government • Government departments
Department	-	• State department • Health department • Local police department • Contact your department	• Department of education • Department of human services • Department of industry • Department of social services	• Education department • Department of the environment • Department of trade and industry • Scottish department • Regional department
Energy	-	• Home energy • Saving energy tips • Energy efficiency • Energy uses • Energy resources	• Clean energy regulator • Renewable energy • Energy efficiency • Energy rating • Saving energy	• Energy efficiency • Department of energy • Geothermal energy • Energy conservation
Office	-	• Local office • Consumer protection office • State office • Post office • Contact the office	• Australian taxation office • Visit an office • Office work	• Information office • Court office • Security office • Local office • Social security office
Resources	-	• Following resources • Renewable energy resources • Tax resources • Housing resources	• Land and water resources • Educational resources • Natural resources • Mineral resources	• Human resources • Mineral resources • Available resources • The use of resources

Appendix 7 Collocations with the most frequently used nouns in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts

Nouns	Collocations in Lithuanian website	Collocations in Latvian website
Prime Minister	• Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius* • The Lithuanian Prime Minister • Said Prime Minister Butkevičius • The Palestinian Prime Minister • French Prime Minister	• Prime Minister of Latvia • Prime Minister Laimdota Straujuma • Prime Ministers of Baltic States • the meeting of Prime Ministers • The Prime Minister stressed • said the Prime Minister
Lithuania	• Prime Minister of Lithuania • The Republic of Lithuania	• Prime Minister of Lithuania Algirdas Butkevičius • Lithuania-Poland (interconnection)
Latvia	• Prime minister of Latvia • The Republic of Latvia	• The Republic of Latvia • The Government of Latvia • Latvia-China business forum
Meeting	• Meeting of the Prime Ministers • Regular meeting • High-level meeting	• European Council meeting • Meeting will be held • Informal meeting • Farewell meeting
Country (-ies)	• Baltic countries • Other countries • Countries share close relations • Third countries • Neighbouring countries	• Eastern European countries • Third countries • Baltic countries • Nordic countries • Foreign countries' Chambers of Commerce
Cooperation	• Economic cooperation • Cross-border cooperation • Close cooperation • Successful practical cooperation	• Economic cooperation • 16+1 cooperation format • Bilateral cooperation • Cross-sectoral cooperation • Future cooperation
Government	• Lithuanian Government • Government Chancellor • The Government Programme	• Government will discuss • The new government • The previous government • The next government • Local government • Latvian Government
State (-s)	• The Baltic States • EU Member States • The United States	• The Baltic States • EU Member States • The United States • The Visegrad States • The State Chancellery
Ministers	• Prime Ministers • The Baltic Council of Ministers • Interior ministers	• Prime Ministers • Ministers will lead
Security	• Energy security • To strengthen the security • Security situation • Information security • Cyber security	• Energy security • Security policy • EU Energy Security Package • To discuss security issues • National security

* All noun collocations are listed in descending order according to their frequency

Head (-s)	• The Head of Government	• EU Heads of State and Government • The heads of EU institutions
Union	• The European Union • The Economic and Monetary Union	• The European Union • The Energy Union
Europe	• Continental Europe • Western Europe • Connecting Europe Facility	• Central and Eastern Europe • United Europe
Development	• Further development • Economic development • Democratic development • Air transport development	• Economic development • Regional development • Further development • Investment and Development Agency of Latvia

Appendix 8 Proper nouns of names, status in politics, places, and organizations in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts (nouns extracted per first 1000 words)

	Lithuanian texts	**Latvian texts**
Names	Algirdas Butkevičius (6.15), Laimdota Straujuma (0.45), Taavi Rõivas (0.26), Jeremy Browne (0.19), Violeta Bulc (0.19)	Laimdota Straujuma (6.28), Aiva Rozenberga (4.19), Māris Kučinskis (1.85), Andrejs Vaivars (0.70), Lita Juberte (0.66), Donald Tusk (0.31), Algirdas Butkevičius (0.28), Taavi Rõivas (0.28), David Cameron (0.21)
Status in politics	Prime Minister (16.39), the Head of Government (2.56), the Baltic Council of Ministers (0.77), ambassador (0.70), President (0.64), Vice-President (0.38), WHO Director-General (0.32), Regional Committee for Europe (0.26), the First Deputy Chancellor (0.26), Commissioner (0.26), King (0.26), the Lithuanian and Latvian Cabinet (0.19), the Deputy Secretary-General (0.19), Swedish business delegation (0.19)	Prime Minister (14.30), Press Secretary (2.76), the European Council (1.88), the Baltic States (1.64), President (1.47), the Cabinet of Ministers (1.19), ambassador (0.73), the European Commission (0.52), the State Chancellery (0.49), the Head of Government (0.35), Saeima (0.21)
Places	Lithuania (10.82), Ukraine (2.95), the European Union (2.05), Latvia (1.60), Europe (1.54), China (1.28), Russia (1.15), Georgia (0.90), Sweden (0.90), Poland (0.90), Vilnius (0.90), France (0.64), Paris (0.64), Denmark (0.58), Kosovo (0.58), London (0.51), Riga (0.51), Continental Europe (0.45), Estonia (0.45), Israel (0.45), Belarus (0.38), Kaunas (0.38), Palestine (0.26), Romania (0.26)	Latvia (10.29), China (2.90), Lithuania (1.78), Europe (1.57), the European Union (1.40), Ukraine (1.19), the United Kingdom (1.36), Turkey (0.98), Brussels (0.80), Estonia (0.56), Shanghai (0.56), Italy (0.49), Japan (0.42), Poland (0.35), Georgia (0.31), Germany (0.31), Greece (0.31), Moldova (0.31), Nordic countries (0.28), Rokiškis (0.28), the USA (0.28), Denmark (0.24), Reykjavik (0.24), Riga (0.24), Suzhou (0.24), Finland (0.21), the UK (0.21)
Organizations	Rail Baltica project (0.58), Minsk Agreements (0.45), LitPol Link (0.32), China Merchants Group (0.32), NordBalt (0.32), Euro-Atlantic integration (0.26), BalticConnector project (0.19)	The Northern Future Forum (0.38), Fudan University (0.28)

Appendix 9 Proper nouns of names, status in politics, places, and organizations in the British, American, Australian, and BNCWeb texts

	British texts	American texts	Australian texts	BNCWeb texts
Names	-	-	-	-
Status in politics	Council (1.07)	Counsellor (0.17)	Council (0.39), Prime Minister (0.26)	Council (1.10)
Places	The UK (2.81), England (1.12), Wales (0.90), Scotland (0.76), Northern Ireland (0.66), the EU (0.47), London (0.41), Switzerland (0.15)	The United States (0.58)	Australia (13.47), Middle East (0.26), Asia (0.26), Africa (0.13), Europe (0.13)	The UK (0.68), Scotland (0.52), London (0.32), Europe (0.31), Glasgow (0.20), the United Kingdom (0.18), England (0.18), Britain (0.18), Edinburgh (0.17), Wales (0.16)
Organizations	-	Housing Choice Voucher Program (0.15)	Bureau of Meteorology (0.65), Anzac Day (0.26), Australian National Herbarium (0.26), Gallipoli campaign (0.20), Australia's anti-money laundering (0.13), Austrade (0.13), Thai's Burma Railway (0.13)	-

Appendix 10 Collocations with the most frequently used verbs in the government texts of the British, American, and Australian websites

Verbs	Collocations in British website	Collocations in American website	Collocations in Australian website	Collocations in BNCWeb texts
Get	• Get help* • Get relief • Get tax credits • Get Child Benefit • Get Child Tax Credit • Get advice • Get money	• Get help • Get information • Get your money back • Get tax refund • Get tips • Get a loan • To get your problem resolved	• Get a skills assessment • Get us thinking • Get a list • Get financial help • Get a better deal	• Get help • Get free prescriptions • Automatically get • Get back
Need	• Need help • Need to pay tax • Need to know • Need to do • Need to send	• Need help • Need to file • Need to report • Need a plan • Need more information	• Need some extra help • Need to be taken • Need attention • Need to perform	• Need to know • Need to obtain • Need to give • Need to do
Use	• Use a benefits calculator • Use form • Use the tax credits • Use the service	• Use a website • Use information • Use the IRS's database • Use these tips	• Use Grant Finder • Use public transport • Use a reporting timesheet	• Use the information • Use this table
Apply	• Apply online • Apply by post • Apply for student finance • Apply to get	• Apply for Unemployment Benefits • Apply online • Apply for financial assistance	• Apply to your student visa • Apply to form • Apply for a permit • Apply for a licence	• Apply for an order • Apply to the court
Find	• Find out about call charges • Find your National Insurance number • Find a job	• Find information • Find tips • Find resources • Find local office	• Find government information • Find educational resources • Find out about study costs • Find unclaimed money	• Find it helpful • Find out the answer • Find out train times
Make	• Make sure • Make a claim • Make payments • make a new claim • make a complaint	• Make sure • To make payments • Make a purchase • Make informed decisions	• Make a difference • Make decisions • Make a well informed choice • Make up of life forms	• Make sure • Make use of it • To make recommendations • Make an offer • Make arrangements
Take	• Take back service • Take the money	• Take these steps • Take advantage • To take effect	• Take time • Take the remembrance trail	• Take place • Take account

* All verb collocations are listed in descending order according to their frequency

	• Take action • Take longer • Take 3 working days	• Take a picture	• Take by going online	• Take advantage • Take responsibility • Take steps
Include	• Include details • Include your National Insurance number • Include a note	• Include liability • Include the investment • Include information • Include advance fee loans	• To include a global perspective • Include brochures	• Include options • Include core skills • Include the development
Report	• Report changes • Report someone • Report the death	• Report fraud • Report the problem • Report Environmental Emergencies	• Report your income • Report changes	• Report back • Auditors report
Pay	• Pay tax • Pay Capital Gains Tax • Pay Inheritance Tax • Pay National Insurance • Pay back	• Pay back • Pay bills • To pay your taxes • To pay for food	-	• Pay tribute • Pay the Poll Tax • Pay the charge • Pay contributions
Contact	• Contact HMRC • Contact your local council • Contact the Environment Agency	• Contact the IRS • Contact credit agencies • Contact the Office	-	• Please contact this office • Contact the Costumer Information officer
Send	• Send your tax return • Send the form • Send a Self Assessment tax return • Send back • Send your application	• Send money • Send a letter • Send supporting documents • Send you a notice • Send a copy	-	• Send original form • Send a copy • Send out
Check	• To check your eligibility • Check your National Insurance record • Check your bank's transaction limits	• Check with your state • Check your federal tax • Check refuelling policies	-	• Check the court records • Check the areas
Ask	• Ask the court • Ask HM Revenue and Customs • Ask to see • Ask the school	• Ask the rental company • Ask these questions • Ask consumers to return	-	• Ask for advice • Ask your social security officer • Ask for notification

		• Ask your insurance agent		
Buy	• Buy shares • Buy the new assets • Buy a licence • Buy something	• Buy a home • Buy a car • Buy a product • Buy the house	-	• But items of clothing • Buy the target of the business • But the car • But the business
Live	• Live abroad • Live in Northern Ireland • Live with someone	-	• Healthier to live in • Live in a rural or regional part	• People live • Live with a natural mother
Provide (-s)	-	• Provides information • Provide resources and tips • Provides assistance	• Provides information • Provides access • Provides resources • Provides links	• Provide opportunity • Provide information • Provide advice • Provide evidence • Provide opportunities
Offer (-s)	-	• Offers contact information • Offers free tax help • Offers tips • Offers resources	• Offers ways • Offers students in primary schools • Offers practical help	• Offer local advice • Offer customers • Offer programmes • Offer opportunities
Download	-	• Download Adobe Reader • Download Word Reader • Download the letter • Download the tax forms • Download a digital copy	• Download for Android • Download for IOS	-
Search	-	• Search for incidents reported • Search for information • Search by State • Search for a public school	• Search for courses • Search external site • Search for information • search online	• Search areas • To search work • Search for organisations • Search the register
Learn	-	• Learn more • Learn about programs • Learn ways • Learn tips • Learn some of the basics	• Learn about government benefits • Learn more • Learn about using • learn about the risks	• learn more about • learn to look for information • learn from instructors

		• Learn some guidelines		• learn to stand
Visit	-	• Visit the following links • Visit the telemarketer website • Visit DoNotCall.gov • Visit these websites	• To visit an office • Visit Canberra • Visit the Fuel consumption guide database	• Visit the centre • Visit the company • Visit the sights • Visit the library

Appendix 11 Collocations with the most frequently used verbs in the Lithuanian and Latvian texts

Nouns	Collocations in Lithuanian website	Collocations in Latvian website
Said	• Said the Prime Minister* • Said the Head of government • Said the First Deputy Chancellor • The Prime Minister said that	• Said L. Straujuma • Said the Prime Minister • The Prime Minister said • Said the Head of government of Latvia
Noted	• The Prime Minister noted • Noted the Head of Government	• Noted L. Straujuma • Noted with satisfaction • The Prime Minister noted
Continue	• Continue the work • Continue the reforms • Continue to promote • To actively continue the process	• To continue negotiations • To continue work • Continue to support • Continue to invest
Agreed	• Agreed to continue • Agreed to further strengthen • Agreed to work together	• Agreed on the need • Agreed to advance • Agreed on the set of reforms
Discussed	• Discussed the matters • Discussed cooperation prospects • Discussed the need to strengthen	• Discussed the cooperation • Discussed issues • Discussed recent developments
Strengthen	• Strengthen the information security • To strengthen the cooperation with • Strengthen the relations • Strengthen the legal framework	• Strengthen the security • To strengthen cooperation • Strengthen our cultural values • To strengthen the Energy Union
Meet / met	• Met with representatives • Met with Prime Minister	• Meet the heads of EU institutions • To meet Chinese officials • Meet the representatives
Stressed	• Stressed the Lithuanian Prime Minister • Stressed the importance • Stressed the significance • Stressed the need	• Stressed the need • Stressed L. Straujuma • Stressed the importance
Expressed	• Expressed strong support • Expressed solidarity • Expressed interest in	• Expressed gratitude • Expressed satisfaction • Expressed the hope • Expressed the support
Welcomed	• Welcomed Lithuania's position • Welcomed the successful implementation • Welcomed the signing	• Welcomed the cooperation • Welcomed the expansion • Welcomed the proposals set • Welcomed the results
Ensure	• To ensure information security • To ensure the resilience of the economies • Ensure a quick and convenient public transport • to ensure safety and wellbeing	• To ensure equal treatment • To ensure a similar platform • To ensure joint action • To ensure continuous economic development
Pointed	• Pointed out the upcoming completion • Pointed out the need • Pointed out Lithuania's importance	• Pointed to prudent planning • Pointed out the need
Develop (-ed)	• Develop new economic and social policies • To develop friendly relations	• Developed the business • Developed strategic communication

* All verb collocations are listed in descending order according to their frequency

	• To develop partnership	• Developed smart cities
Increase (-ed)	• To increase public awareness • Increase the trade • Increase support to • To increase gas supply security	• Increased the minimum wage • Increased significantly • Increased the amount of state benefit
Promote	• Promote lasting peace • To promote development of relations • Promote economic growth • Promote bilateral economic cooperation	• To promote mutual understanding • To promote sustainable peace • Promote the spirit of patriotism • To promote public participation • To promote the memory
Become	• Become the Prime Minister of Poland • Become of the main partners • Become a necessity • Become an integral part	• Become a common practice • To become a major centre • Become stronger • To become partners • Become a minister
Exchange	• To exchange views • To exchange films	• To exchange information and positions
Implement	• To implement strategic decisions • To implement this project • To implement this priority • To implement the free trade agreement	• To implement the decisions • To implement reforms • To implement innovations • To implement this idea
Open	• Open new opportunities • To open up business	• Open up new opportunities • Open their branches

Appendix 12 The homepages, pictures, and the collected government texts of the five government websites