Driving Forces behind Language Change. Does Danish Theory Hold up in Lithuania?

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Abstract: The paper presents a large-scale investigation of attitudes towards standard and dialectal speech varieties in Lithuania. It aimed at, firstly, obtaining comparable data on assessments of speech variation under two methodologically different conditions: 'unaware condition' (the participants being unaware of the linguistic goals of the research) and 'aware condition'. Secondly, it aimed at testing whether the two layers of consciousness yield two different systems of social values and how the evaluations accord with changes in language usage. The theory was developed by Danish scholars whose numerous experimental studies proved the driving force role of subconscious attitudes. The investigation closely followed the Danish methodology and was carried out in 23 secondary schools in 7 regions and the capital city of Lithuania, covering almost 1.5 thousand pupils in total. The regularity of the findings, i.e. the overall tendency to overtly valorise local dialects but subconsciously to downgrade dialect accented voices, confirmed that language awareness affects assignment of values to language and must be regarded as an important explanatory factor for the scenarios of language change.

1. Introduction

When a student of grammar proudly refers to his object of study as the spine of language, a sociolinguist can add that variation of forms is the spirit. What (s)he will have in mind is the social meaning of linguistic features that links language with the world of social identifications. We sociolinguists see language use as a man-made product – variant and changing in accordance with the choices of its speakers.

People get acquainted with and assign value to language differences and they act according to this knowledge and consequent emotions. Those

language features that, due to the association with certain types of speakers, have been imbued with positive social value are taken up and those forms which could raise unwanted social association are abandoned (cf. Kristiansen, Garret & Coupland, 2005, 12–13). This process of social meaning creation never stops. We cannot impact it, but we can indulge in the intellectual pleasure of observing and trying to grasp and foresee language development.

The paper addresses a theory which models scenarios for language change and conceptualizes subjective factors behind it. The point is that language judgements are processed at two levels of consciousness and each of them elicits a different value system. Only the attitudes at the level of subconsciousness are believed to be able to account for the major changes on the level of language use.

The theory of the nature and driving-force role of language attitudes was developed by professor Tore Kristiansen together with his colleagues at Copenhagen University (see among many others, Kristiansen, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2009, 2011). Kristiansen was certainly not the first scholar to recognize the dual perspective on language judgements and how they link to language change. In fact, pioneer of sociolinguistics William Labov had already addressed the distinction between overt and covert attitudes in the 1960s (see an exhaustive and captivating account of this matter in Kristiansen, 2009; 2011). The decisive Danish contribution consisted of persistent adjustment of research instruments for elicitation of covert attitudes and operationalisation of the conscious-subconscious distinction. During a workout of two decades, the Danish scholars collected a corpus of experimental attitudinal data from around 1000 young Danes and founded the theory with valid empirical evidence.

In time, the Danish insights and research instruments became an export commodity, and we in Lithuania became one of the importers. A network and research program called SLICE (*Standard Language Ideology in Contemporary Europe*) was established in 2009 to enable comparisons of language ideologies and language use across European societies. Since then, investigations of speakers' attitudes towards regional dialects and non-dialectal varieties were initiated in a few speech communities (see the studies from the network in Kristiansen & Grondelaers, 2013).

The research presented in this paper replicates the Danish design and relates to the other SLICE investigations that adapted the methodology. Prior to this study, in Lithuanian linguistics collection of attitudes to speech variation was performed using various surveys where participants knew they were evaluating language issues; experimental control

of language awareness was only applied in a few theses by university students (see Čekuolytė, 2008, 2010; Širvytė, 2009; Vainalavičiūtė, 2009). By adapting the methods of the Copenhagen school to the Lithuanian speech community, Lithuanian linguistics was supplemented with new instruments for measuring linguistic attitudes, new empirical data were collected and the theory was tested under different societal conditions.

In the following, a comprehensive investigation of value assignment to the three main varieties of Lithuanian, i.e. the standard language, the capital Vilnius speech and the dialectal speech, is presented. In addition to the empirical inquiry into young speakers' attitudes towards dialect-standard speech variation, the theoretical distinction of the levels of language awareness and their relation to language development is tested. The following research questions are addressed, formulated as hypothetical claims (to be falsified or confirmed):

(1) Language-related values will differ depending on the level of consciousness;

(2) The current language use situation is better accounted for in terms of subconsciously offered attitudes than in terms of consciously offered attitudes;

(3) Regional linguistic varieties are evaluatively upgraded and emerge as competitive alternatives to non-dialectal varieties.

The paper starts with an overview of the theoretical concepts concerning the role of language ideologies in the processes of language change (for more, see a comprehensive account by Coupland & Kristiansen, 2011) and gives a concise summary of the results from Denmark and other SLICE-network communities (Germany, Ireland, Norway, and the Faroe Islands) (Section 2). Then the language ideology situation in Lithuania is presented (Section 3), followed by a section on the data collection procedure and research design (Section 4). Finally the results are examined in two sections (Section 5 and 6) and discussed in the concluding section (Section 7).

2. Theoretical and empirical foundations

2.1. Subconscious attitudes and their role in language variation and change

When we collect data for the study of speakers' social motivations and their role in language change, Kristiansen (e.g. 2011) argues that we need

to take a principal methodological distinction into account: are the informants aware of expressing attitudes to language or are they not?

This distinction follows from the theory that there exist two ideological systems, activated on two different levels of consciousness, i.e. evaluative reaction patterns to language differ depending on the level of consciousness (Grondelaers & Kristiansen, 2013).

For instance, it has been noticed that when people are asked questions (explicitly/overtly) about language, *conscious* metalinguistic awareness is activated and reproduces a version of some dominant language ideology (cf. Preston, 2009, 115–117; Garret, 2010, 57). This type of attitude reveals which speech variety is assigned the highest status or value in the general discourse in society. Under these conditions, it is very likely that informants will try to present themselves as socially acceptable, or they will accommodate to the researcher and deliver responses they think the researcher wants to hear. The methodological issues that follow from this kind of informant behaviour are dealt with in terms of 'social desirability' or 'acquiescence biases' (Garrett, Williams & Evans, 2005).

In communities with a well-established standard language culture, it is to be expected that language users overtly recite standard language ideology and grant top position to the standard language in the hierarchy of linguistic varieties used in the community. However, local ideologies can develop alongside the national standard ideology. The rebirth of regional identities is said to have uplifted sentiments to local dialects and explicit valorisation of dialectal speech (Mugglestone, 1995).

The question remains why current overt attachments to dialect do not turn into a wider diffusion of dialect but rather dialects cease to be used? Or why, for instance, overtly stigmatised and downgraded urban varieties survive and spread?

The reason is – following the argument in the theory – that people do not necessarily speak in accordance with what they express overtly about their own preferences. Rather, their choices are governed by attitudes which *are not* part of the overt discourses and speakers are scarcely cognizant of them (e.g. Kristiansen, 2009; Coupland & Kristiansen, 2011, 21–22). This layer of language awareness is referred to as *subconscious, or covert, implicit* attitudes. Subconsciously held values reveal the hidden prestige of language varieties. When asked directly, language users may not come out with these values, but they are said to follow them when adopting or preserving features of language in usage. Hence, speakers might overtly agree that dialects are in need of revitalization, but there

will be no spread of dialect in usage unless dialect speaking is associated with qualities that enhance a positive self-image. Overt language ideology, i.e. speakers' ideas about language 'correctness', also affects language use; it accounts, for instance, for correction applied to 'individual linguistic forms' (Labov, 1972, 123, quoted in Kristiansen, 2011, 271), yet the 'overt' attitudinal climate is said to be of little or no importance to the evaluative processes involved in language variation and change (Kristiansen, Garret & Coupland, 2005, 13).

Methodologically, this established theoretical distinction means that researchers of language attitudes have to find ways to access the covert ideology of speakers, i.e. they have to control the two aspects of informants' awareness – production of conscious and of subconscious evaluations. For the study of the latter, experimental techniques are employed and I will return to this in Section 4 on data gathering and research design.

The idea that language changes accord well with subconsciously delivered attitudes was further developed to include scenarios for language change. Basically, there are two opposing options: (1) *standardisation* and (2) *destandardisation*.

The first scenario represents a continued homogenization of language use in a society, i.e. striving for one regimented central norm and rejection of non-standard varieties in favour of that "one best language". The second scenario represents a process where an established standard language loses its particular status as the whole idea of a 'best language' is weakened and eventually abandoned. Instead, several (regional) varieties acquire equally high value. Recent studies in European language communities have failed to provide empirical support for the destandardisation scenario. Rather, an on-going standardisation process has been evidenced, albeit with a remarkable ideological turn. It seems that the "one best language" ideology remains intact, but the idea of what language forms make the best language is changing. A subconscious upgrading of ordinary speech (often an urban variety of a capital city) to the status of the best language has been noticed. The development is referred to as the process of *demotisation*. (For more see Auer & Spiekermann, 2011; Coupland & Kristiansen, 2011).

2.2. Testing the theory

In the Danish studies, the theoretical distinction discussed was empirically tested with attitudinal data covering all major dialectal regions of Denmark. At each research site, young people evaluated the

three varieties that they (have to) relate to in their everyday life: Local speech (regional dialect), Standard language (conservative, codified Copenhagen speech) and Modern Copenhagen (the officially downgraded urban variety of Danish). The following general pattern was produced: overtly the informants evaluated local regional dialects most positively of all and covertly, in the context of a speaker evaluation experiment which was designed and conducted in a way so that the informants remained unaware of offering language attitudes, they downgraded the speakers from their own region and attributed the most positive personality traits to non-dialectal (Modern and Conservative Copenhagen) speakers. Thus, the ideological hierarchisation of dialectal and non-dialectal varieties was turned upside down when the informants were unaware of the language issue in the task given to them.

The overtly expressed 'local patriotism' did not seem to provide the local speakers (representing the speech of the informants themselves) with appealing personality traits; these were shared by the voices of the two non-local speakers in an interestingly systematic way: values associated with superior personality (such as *intelligent*, *conscientious*, *goal-directed* and *trustworthy*) were attributed to the Conservative Copenhagen voices, whereas values associated with personality's dynamism (such as *self-assured*, *fascinating*, *cool* and *nice*) were attributed to the Modern Copenhagen voices.

The Danish research revealed that 'the best Danish' is covertly conceptualised by young Danes as serving two different types of social identification. The features of the Conservative standard are linked to success in education and business, whereas the Modern standard is seen as indexing youth and media style (Kristiansen, 2003; 2009). The Local accent (different from the Copenhagen voices only in terms of prosodic features) is excluded from this "share-out" of prestigious values and hence the Danish data evidence that what happens at the level of subconscious attitudes correspond to what happens at the level of language use. Local speech is replaced by Copenhagen speech, which spreads among young people in its Modern version – in parallel with the spread of Modern also in the public domain of broadcast media. (See a detailed account of the research in Grondelaers & Kristiansen, 2013, 14–26).

The same pattern of conscious upgrading but subconscious downgrading of dialect was evidenced in other SLICE communities. For instance, German adolescents from the Stuttgart area top-ranked Standard German as well as the local Swabian dialect (with no significant difference

between them) and down-rated capital Berlin speech as the significantly less "liked" of these three varieties (Svenstrup, 2019). However, subconscious assessments of the voices representing the three speech varieties resulted in a reverse hierarchy: the Berlin voices were evaluated as the 'best' on all personality traits and the speech closest to the local dialect was assigned the least positive values. It seems that the covert positivity towards Berlin accent in the speaker evaluation task was due to the perception of the Berlin voices as the most standard of all. Thus, the role of Stuttgart speech as a linguistic norm centre in the area was not confirmed (ibid.). Since 'Standard German' was not included in the speaker evaluation experiment, it remains unknown whether the Danish split between a 'best superiority language' and a 'best dynamism language' would apply for German standard language development.

Also in Ireland (the province of Munster) an investigation of young people's attitudes to a set of relevant 'standard accents' rendered the pattern of two opposite value systems on the two levels of consciousness (Ó Murchadha, 2013). Although the Irish sociolinguistic situation is quite specific, it seems that Irish youngsters behave similarly. Overtly they reproduce the dominant ideology, common in public discourse on 'best language', i.e. they top-rate the local dialects and the conservative standard. Yet such openly-offered reactions to linguistic variation do not correlate with the direction of language change in the Irish-speaking regions, where "a rapid shift away from traditional speech forms is reported" (ibid., 87). The values that appeared to be linked with the patterns of language use were those delivered by the informants subconsciously, where the Modern voices (modern standard and Gaeltacht youth speech) were upgraded relative to Local voices (ibid.).

Quite different results were reported from two Nordic SLICE communities – Western Norway and the Faroe Islands (Anderson & Bugge, 2016; Bugge, 2018). Differently from many other Western European countries, Norwegians and Faroese do not have a codified standard spoken language; dialects are common and accepted in all domains. In their daily interactions, in public and in the media, people speak dialect and are used to speech variation. Such a linguistic climate makes dialect an unmarked variety in society (see Bugge, 2018, 327). When measured for their language attitudes, neither Western Norwegian nor Faroese students displayed subconscious disfavour to dialect-accented voices; no consistent hierarchy was reflected in the results of the speaker evaluation test. As put by the researchers themselves, the heterogeneity of

informant reactions was striking (Anderson & Bugge, 2016). Being un-aware of the goals of the research and listening to variously accented voices, the informants did not distinguish any accent as the best or the worst; the research indicated several cultural centres for young people to orient towards (ibid.). This was contrary to the communities where the use of dialectal features is more socially loaded and listening to voices containing regional variation, very likely, triggers a stronger and more consistent reaction pattern (Bugge, 2018, 327). Hence, typologically, Norway and the Faroe Islands provide a good empirical basis for the assumption that "the codification of a standard spoken language and the establishment of a standard language ideology are essential to the establishment of status hierarchies of spoken varieties" (Bugge, 2018, 327).

Overtly, however, certain patterns of consistent hierarchisation emerged, both in Norway and the Faroes. For instance, the Faroese students ranked their local dialect as the most beautiful, whereas they stated that the speech of the capital city Tórshavn should have the highest status in the community. The latter indicates an established overt ideology of the best Faroese dialect that favours the speech of the capital (ibid.).

Although at first glance the results from the Norwegian and Faroese investigations establish a divergent empirical pattern from the rest of the discussed SLICE communities (and the general trend of downgrading of dialect in Europe), they still support the theoretical distinction between overt and covert production of language values. As mentioned, the Faroese students overtly assigned the highest status to capital speech and covertly no hierarchisation emerged in their evaluations. The results of these two studies also support the hypothesis that subconscious evaluations reflect actual language usage. For instance, overt valorisation of capital speech does not explain the strong status of dialects in the Faroe Islands. Very likely, the explanatory factor behind the wide use of dialects in public in the two Nordic communities is the *absence* of covert negativity towards dialectal speech – the negativity that has been evidenced in, for instance, Denmark and Germany. One can thus presume that dialects will not cease to be used, at least not in the future of the current young Norwegians and Faroese.

Before proceeding to the Lithuanian investigation, in the following section I will briefly review the language climate in Lithuania. In spite of a rather harsh official language standardisation ideology, dialects in Lithuania are much more alive than in Denmark where the 'local' speech (outside of Copenhagen) reportedly differs from Copenhagen speech

mainly in some suprasegmental (prosodic) colouring (Kristiansen, 2009, 168; cf. also Kristiansen, 2001, 10–11).

However, previous enquiries into chances for regional cities to become competitive linguistic norm centres did not give much hope. An ideological stronghold for dialects, the Lowland region of Lithuania, was studied, but it did not seem to ensure covert positivity to dialect speakers (see Vaicekauskienė & Aliūkaitė, 2013). If nation-wide research were to show that regional speakers are perceived at least equally positively as non-dialect speakers, one can predict that the Lithuanian language will remain dialect-coloured for quite some time. Hence, what ideologies characterise the Lithuanian speech community?

3. Linguistic climate in Lithuania

Lithuania as a test location for the study of language attitudes is interesting in at least one respect. Standard Lithuanian originates not from an urban variety, but from rural dialects. Codification of both the written and spoken standard variety at the beginning of the twentieth century was based on the southern sub-dialects of West Highland, which was the mother tongue of a few cultural activists of the time (for more see Vaicekauskienė, 2011).

Urban speech, and especially the speech of the capital Vilnius, was never conceived of by the norm-setters as possessing the qualities of proper Lithuanian. Rather, Vilnius speech has been publicly downgraded and stigmatized as a source of speech errors, an impure "semi-speech", contaminated due to linguistic interference and borrowing from Polish and Russian (e.g. Vitkauskas, 1973, 1991; Pupkis, 2006). Obviously, the standard language has been raised above all other linguistic codes and granted the status of the best language; up to now a mixture of modernist and nationalist arguments including an emphasis on language engineering by linguists is used in language planning discourse when defining standard Lithuanian (cf. Pupkis, 2005, 30). Due to abundant language correction practices, the idea of standard Lithuanian (both spoken and written) can take a very concrete form. It is supported by legislation on language as well as by teaching programs in schools and echoed in public and political discourse (Urbonaitė, 2017).

Many can recall historical knowledge and standard language ideology from school and public discourse. In folk linguistic awareness, the idea that the standard language is the most beneficial has become almost

naturalized; references to West Highland dialect as the most "correct" are not rare, either. However, research into metalinguistic comments and language judgements show that the community's approach to the best Lithuanian cannot escape the effects of urbanization.

The urban shift in Lithuania took place around the eighth decade of the last century (when the size of the rural and urban population were equal), and the further growth of the cities changed the sociolinguistic landscape of the community (according to the Census of 2011, 67% of the population lived in the cities and more than one third of that number in the biggest urban areas). Being the urban hub of the country with a population of above half a million people, Vilnius became a major player in shaping the conception of the best Lithuanian. For instance, a strong association of Vilnius with a standard speech zone has been evidenced by folk linguistic perceptions in mapping tasks (Aliūkaitė, Mikulėnienė, Čepaitienė & Geržotaitė, 2017). Also, data from qualitative interviews show that Vilnius is considered the most dialect-neutral location and, consequently, the place where the standard ("grammatical", "correct", "common") language is spoken (Vaicekauskienė, 2014). Or it is approached as the most prestigious city consistently associated with such social values as national authority, modernity, youthfulness, cosmopolitanism, good education, progress and success (ibid.; cf. similar conclusions from anthropological research in Venskienė, 2008, 93).[1] The social qualities mentioned are assigned to the residents of Vilnius and then linked to the speech itself (Vaicekauskienė, 2014). Hence, we can see that the metalinguistic construction of the best Lithuanian by the community disregards the stigmas and the orthoepic norms and exceeds the normative discourse.

As for an assessment of dialects, Lithuania, like the Danish and other Western European societies, undergoes an ideological turn to pronounced overt positivity towards dialectal speech, connected to the renaissance of regional identity and local patriotism. However, both in the official language planning documents and locally, favorisation of dialect basically is limited to occasional political mobilisation or symbolic support, when there is a need to emphasise one's local affiliation; it does not reach out to the everyday lives of the speakers (cf. Kalnius, 2007a, 2007b; Vaicekauskienė, Sausverde, 2012). A unanimous agreement

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1 Associations of a big city with a young, dynamic and prosperous place have also been noticed in other communities (cf. Kristiansen, 2004, 173–174; Bishop, Coupland & Garrett, 2005, 139; Svenstrup & Thøgersen, 2009, 203–207).

exists that dialects make up an ethnocultural (and linguistic) heritage and therefore have to be protected and preserved, but such concerns reinforce the view that dialects belong to the vanishing ethnographic culture rather than support a potential revival of dialects as a competitive means of communication and social mobility (ibid.). Both the local communities and the decision makers (the school or language planners) continue stigmatizing dialectal speech as unsuitable for use in any public or educational domain (cf. attitudes of teachers in Keturkienė & Vaicekauskienė, 2016).

The discussed attitudinal discrepancy is clearly visible from meta-pragmatic constructions of types of speakers of different speech varieties. An experiment was carried out in 2012 as part of focus group interviews in 10 high schools in 9 bigger cities and included 83 students in total. Each student received a set of 56 cards indicating different personality traits (28 positive traits and 28 negative counterparts) and a card with a drawing of a human figure. The task was to pick out the cards that would best describe the typical speaker of a given speech variety and to place them around the human figure. The responses were photographed and discussed before the experiment continued with a new set of the same trait-cards in another colour for another speech variety. Comparison of value assignations to speakers of standard, Vilnius and dialectal speech revealed statistically significant differences in the choice of personality traits: *educated*, *intelligent*, *conscientious*, *responsible* and *goal-directed* were more frequently chosen for 'typical' standard language speaker; *urban resident*, *open-minded* and *modern* were more frequently chosen for a speaker from Vilnius; *villager, old-fashioned* and *old-minded*, but also *sincere* and *warm* were more frequently chosen for a dialect speaker. Remarkably, the only typification to consistently include negative traits and to emphasise personal attractiveness was that of a 'typical' dialect speaker (for more see Vaicekauskienė, 2014 and Ramonienė, 2017).

In the following sections, this language-related ideological climate will be investigated more consistently with additional research instruments, including the verbal guise technique for the study of subconscious attitudes as a surmised major driving force of language change.

4. Design of the research

The Lithuanian research started in 2011 with a pilot study in the Lowland region, West Lithuania. A few adjustments were made (see

the discussion in Vaicekauskienė & Aliūkaitė, 2013) and the main study was carried out during the spring of 2012 in 23 schools in eight research sites – smaller towns around the seven regional centres of Kaunas, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Alytus, Marijampolė, Utena and Telšiai, and in the capital city of Vilnius (see map 1). The participants were 9th and 10th graders, i.e. 15 to 17-year-old students. A total of 1451 students participated in the research: 712 boys and 703 girls (36 informants did not indicate their gender). The number of participants across research sites varied from 125 to 226.

The informants were selected form the final grades of the 10-year compulsory schooling for several reasons. Older students are generally considered to be more capable of understanding and completing given tasks, and youngsters of this age are generally assumed to be highly sensitive to processes of social categorization, including the role of linguistic variation in social meaning-making (cf. Kristiansen, 2004, 189; Maegaard, 2005, 58). Most of today's Lithuanian students leave school to continue professional or technical education only after 10th grade; hence, we assume that our informants were representing the widest possible social range of young Lithuanians.

The choice of the smaller towns for the research was in each region based on considerations regarding the town's inclusion or not in the 'zone of influence from the regional centre'. The smaller towns had to have some administrative link to the regional city, at least to be a part of the county. We also took into account the distance and the convenience of the routes from the town to the regional city (compared to other cities). We aimed at collecting data from no less than one hundred (preferably a couple hundred) students in each region to allow for statistically-based generalisations. In some of the regions practically all 9th and 10th graders of the eligible towns had to be included in order to reach the desired sample size.

In order to avoid the risk of leaking to the students the purpose of the experiment, which would have prevented us from obtaining subconsciously offered attitudes, we did not want to reveal the linguistic goals of the research to the school administration. This caused problems in relation to only one of the selected schools, where the administration requested all research materials be provided in advance. This particular school was excluded from the set.

In each class the experiment took 45 min, the duration of a standard lesson in a Lithuanian school. This time frame was practical in several

Map 1. Language attitude experiments with Lithuanian adolescents: research sites, 2012

respects. A longer duration can discourage students, it would have been more difficult to get permission from schools to use more teaching time and students usually have to leave to another room for the next class.[2]

In most schools the experiments were conducted in all (two to four) 9th and 10th grade classes at the same time to prevent participants from sharing information about the experiment. Additionally, in the interest of not allowing rumours about the experiment to spread, all the chosen schools in a county were visited during the same day. When we began in a new school we always asked whether the students had heard about the research being carried out. This never turned out to be the case.

When we first met the students in the class we told them that they were participating in an anonymous study on how people are judged,

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2 In Lithuanian school the classrooms are divided according to school subjects (i.e. a teacher of math has his/her own room) and students move from room to room following the schedule of the particular day.

and that they would be told more about the research afterwards. By doing so we stuck close to the procedure that had been followed in the Danish investigations.

Data was collected in two rounds. First, a Speaker Evaluation Experiment (SEE) was conducted to elicit *subconscious* attitudes. The students listened to 12 speech clips, four for each of the three target speech varieties – standard language (SL), Vilnius (VLN) and Local speech – and evaluated each of the 12 speakers by ticking on eight scales representing separate personality traits. In this way they indicated how much the given personality traits were applicable to the speakers. At this stage of the data gathering, the students were not aware that we were interested in their reactions to different accents. The purpose was to investigate whether there was an established covert hierarchical relation between speech varieties in the community.

The voices were selected from several dozen audio-recorded interviews with high school students who gave their opinions on what a good teacher is like. We anticipated this topic to be conceived of as both relevant and relatively uncontroversial, and did indeed experience that the students easily managed to make statements on the topic.

For the SL and VLN voices, the interviews were conducted with high school (and some university) students in Vilnius. Since none of the interviewed young speakers were able to naturally and systematically produce the codified orthoepic features of standard Lithuanian, the SL in our research must be taken as an orthoepically *accented* speech. The SL clips contain semi-long vowels in unstressed syllables; semi-long and tense unstressed [oː], [eː]; in the VLN clips these vowels are short and lack tenseness. In the SL clips the diphthongs [uo] and [ie] are retained. Also the stress position (the so-called stress attraction to stem from the end of the word) is different in the SL and VLN voices (stressed end vs stressed stem, respectively).

For the Local voices the speakers were recorded in the schools of the regional centres; the scale of dialectal variation was great and we selected clips containing just a few and not very salient dialectal features. The idea of the research was to provide for assessment a speech that was variant in a way the informants were familiar with from their local environment, but precautions were taken not to attract the listeners' attention to any distinguishing speech feature.

The clips were edited with the *Audacity* software. The duration of each clip was made approx. 15 seconds. Wording, speech fluency and

voice intensity were made very similar. Neither negative judgements nor references to concrete school subjects were included in the clips, in order to make the speech content as abstract and neutral as possible. The voices differed basically in terms of accent, mainly in segmental phonetics, stress position and intonation. Efforts were made not leave any catchy linguistic feature in the prepared clips, so that no single voice would stand out among the others.

In all the regions, the same clips of SL and VLN speech were used, whereas the local stimuli represented the speech of the various regional centres. The idea was to investigate whether the regional centre functioned as a local linguistic norm centre for the students in that particular region. In Vilnius the students only listened to SL and VLN voices, based on the assumption that dialectal speech was less relevant for the youngsters in the capital city.

In order to estimate whether we had succeeded in obtaining subconscious attitudes, we asked the students, immediately after they had performed the assessment of all the voices, to say what they thought the experiment was about.[3] It turned out that none of the judges had grasped the aim of the research (i.e., collection of attitudes to language varieties). Most often, the students guessed that we studied young people's ideas about their teachers and how people express their opinions.

If an informant had suggested that the experiment was about language attitudes, the pre-prepared procedure was to ask whether others in the class supported this opinion. In that case (which never occurred), we would have marked their questionnaires and continued the investigation.

When the assessment of the 12 voices was completed, the collection of subconscious attitudes was finished. We gathered the questionnaires and revealed to the students that we also were interested in language differences. The students were asked to listen to the audio clips one more time, and simultaneously assess the voices, again on scales, in terms of standardness and geographical affiliation. These tasks aimed to shed light on aspects of recognition present in the informants' subconscious assessments. It is believed that if people can easily recognize speech differences as soon as their attention is drawn to language, then we might presume that some form of recognition participated in

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3 An alternative methodological approach in other SLICE studies has been to ask the informants to *write down* what they believed the test was about and why they thought so (cf. Anderson & Bugge, 2016, 249).

their subconscious evaluations. The attitudes are considered 'subconscious', not because people operate unconsciously, but because they are radically different from the opinions expressed in public discourse (Kristiansen, 2011, 12).

The second part of the data gathering session focused on obtaining *conscious* attitudes. The students completed a *Label Ranking Task* (LRT), in which a number of given 'names' (labels) for language varieties had to be ranked according to preference.

The design of the research thus provided language-related attitudinal data from the same participants under two different conditions: an unaware condition and an aware condition. The purpose of the design is to investigate whether different levels of awareness hold different systems of language-related values – and to shed light on the role of these potentially different value systems in language change.

The following sections give more details on the methods used and discusses the results. Starting with the Label Ranking Task, I shall proceed in the reverse order of the actual data gathering procedure described above.

5. Consciously expressed social values: dialects at the top

The students received a list containing names, or labels, for 12 speech varieties. The labels were listed in random order and included 8 designations of regional city speech ('name of the city' + 'speech'), the two labels 'Vilnius speech' and 'Standard language' (SL), and two additional labels naming the speech of two smaller local towns in each region. The first ten of these labels were the same in all research sites, whereas the two names for the speech of smaller local towns were added adjusting for each particular region. The students were asked to rank the labels, giving top position to the speech they liked best, second position to the speech they liked second best, and so on. Our primary interest was the relative ranking of Local speech, SL speech and Vilnius speech.

The results of the LRT clearly showed that the students, when evaluating language varieties in full awareness of giving attitudes, display preference for the Local speech. In the majority of research sites the local labels were ranked better not just than the other regions' speech, but also compared to the varieties that are considered non-dialectal, i.e. Vilnius speech and SL. It seems that the students chose to manifest their

local identity rather than to reproduce the standard language ideology promoted by the educational system of Lithuania.

The students ranked the 'local speech' (the speech of the regional centres or the nearest/municipal local towns[4]) higher than SL and Vilnius speech in a statistically significant way (p<.05) in four of the eight research sites, and in a statistically tendential way (p<.10) way in two sites. In the two sites (Marijampolė and Šiauliai regions), the local labels also received high rankings, but these were not statistically different from the rankings of Vilnius speech. See Table 1.

Telšiai region	Local (Telšiai speech) *** SL ** Vilnius
Alytus region	Local (Alytus speech) *** SL / Vilnius
Kaunas region	Local (Kaunas speech) *** SL / Vilnius
Vilnius	Local (Vilnius) *** SL
Panevėžys region	Local (Panevėžys and Pasvalys speech) # Vilnius / SL [Lc * SL]
Utena region	Local (Utena and Anykščiai speech) # Vilnius / SL
Marijampolė region	Local (Marijampolė and Vilkaviškis speech) / Vilnius * SL
Šiauliai region	Local (Šiauliai speech) / Vilnius * SL

Table 1. Comparison of rankings between Local, Vilnius speech and SL in the eight research sites (Mean ranks: Friedman test; adjacent pairs: Wilcoxon Signed Pair Test, significant difference at one of the following levels: / = no significance, # = p<.10 ('slight difference'), * = p<.05 ('little difference'), ** = p<.01 ('medium difference'), *** = p<.0.001 ('major difference'))

The few cases of slightly lower rankings of local speech labels compared to SL and Vilnius speech may have been caused by our own research

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4 In some of the schools in three of the regions (Panevėžys, Utena and Marijampolė), the two additional local speech labels rather than the designations of the regional centres' speech were perceived as *the* local and ranked highest. These were either the speech labels of the closest town or municipal centre or the speech labels of the town in which the research was conducted (for instance, in Vilkaviškis (Marijampolė region) the students top-ranked the additional label 'Vilkaviškis speech'). Therefore, when comparing the rankings of 'local' with those of SL and Vilnius for the overall results by region, we used the average score for all 'local' labels in the three regions in question (see Table 1).

instruments. We may have failed to adjust the local labels in some of the locations. For instance in Radviliškis (Šiauliai county), which does not belong to Šiauliai municipality but is a municipal centre of Radviliškis district itself, we did not offer a label 'Radviliškis speech'. This may well have been the reason why students in Radviliškis top-ranked 'Vilnius speech' and SL. The same reasoning might apply for Alanta (Utena county, municipality of Molėtai), where the students also ranked 'Vilnius speech' and SL higher than 'Utena speech'. We can speculate that the mean scores for 'Local' in Šiauliai and Utena regions would have been higher if we had included 'Radviliškis speech' and 'Molėtai speech' in the label lists.

In any case, the general tendency in our research was to rank the local labels highest (see Table 2).[5] Such display of local patriotism was also found in the LRT data obtained from Danish students (cf. Kristiansen, 2009; Jensen, Kristiansen & Maegaard, 2015).

1.	Local speech	3.6
2.	Vilnius speech (I) / SL	4.4 / 4.5
3.	Kaunas speech (II)	4.6
4.	Klaipėda speech (III)	6.0
5.	Šiauliai / Alytus / Panevėžys speech (IV / VI / V)	6.7 / 6.8 / 7.0
6.	Utena speech (VIII)	7.3
7.	Marijampolė / Telšiai speech (VII / IX)	7.8 / 7.8

Table 2. Position of variety labels in LRT: overall rankings of Local and the ten studied labels (The lower the mean, the higher the ranking position of the label; *Post hoc = Wilcoxon Signed Pair test: / =* no significance; separate position in the table means statistically significant difference from the adjacent positions; Roman numerals in parentheses refer to an ordering of the cities by population size)[6]

5 The overall rankings in LRT (Tabel 2) do not include data from Vilnius due to scale difference. In Vilnius the list of labels consisted not of 12, but of 10 labels (the additional two local varieties were not relevant here). Yet the overall pattern in Vilnius was very similar to the regional sites.

6 The top10-list of varieties starts from 4th position because 3 of the 12 labels were the local varieties. The means for 'Local' were calculated from the means of the relevant local speech labels in each region.

As can be seen in Table 1, 'Vilnius speech' was mostly ranked on a par with SL across the regions, and the overall score for 'Vilnius speech' shows no statistical difference from the SL (Table 2). The scores for SL were significantly higher in only one of the regions (Telšiai). In two regions (Marijampolė and Šiauliai), 'Vilnius speech' did better than SL and was ranked on par with 'Local'. In the remaining regions, the rankings of both non-dialectal variety labels (Vilnius and SL) did not display any significant difference (Table 1).

This conception of Vilnius speech is not very surprising given the latest studies, which show that people map their metalinguistic constructions of 'the best Lithuanian' onto Vilnius. It might be argued that the overt assessments of our informants were grounded in the dominant idea that Vilnius is the standard speaking zone, hence, Vilnius speech *is* the standard – and also on a popular association of Vilnius and its residents with dynamic social identity and urban life-styles, from which Vilnius speech gets imbued with the respective values (see Section 3). The official language ideology thus has had impact on the overt positivity towards standard language displayed by our informants, but the total picture appears less clear cut than in Denmark, where the label for Modern (*københavnsk*) was consistently downgraded in comparison with the label for Conservative (*rigsdansk*).

It is an interesting aspect of the overall label ranking (Table 2) that it reproduces the ordering of cities according to population size. This can be interpreted as overt favorisation of urbanicity, but also as overt positivity to non-dialectal speech. One may assume, that the informants linked the size of the city to the degree of dialect use, i.e. the speech of bigger cities might have been approached as more unmarked with respect to dialectal accent. The latter underscores the symbolic nature of overt positivity towards one's own local dialect. (It may be noticed that the Faroese variety labels were ranked in accordance with physical distance from the capital city of Torshavn; Bugge, 2018).

We now move on to the *subconscious* assessments of Lithuanian speech variation, which were collected at the beginning of the data gathering session (see section 4 above). The assumption behind our use of the speaker evaluation experiment is that the potential disclosure of existing 'hidden' (covert) attitudes may be of paramount importance to any attempt at clarifying the role of attitudes in processes of language change.

6. Subconsciously expressed social values: dialects at the bottom

In the Speaker Evaluation Experiment (SEE), the students listened to a set of 12 speech clips (so-called stimuli voices) and assessed the speakers behind the voices in terms of personality traits. The informants did this unaware of the fact that the voices represented Standard language (SL), Vilnius speech (VLN) and Local speech. Each of the three varieties was voiced by two girls (g) and two boys (b). The inclusion of four voices for one variety was partly an attempt to reduce the impact of non-dialectal factors (such as voice timbre, word choice, intonation), partly a means to ensure that the evaluative reactions had indeed been triggered by the accent of the voices. If the four voices representing one variety were evaluated in a similar way, differently from the other two sets of voices, that evaluative pattern could be considered to result from a reaction to accent differences.

We played the speech clips, alternating both varieties and speaker gender: SLg, VLNb, LOCALg, SLb, VLNg, LOCALb etc.

The students first listened to all the clips. Then they were played again, one at a time, while the students indicated their evaluations on eight unnumbered 7-point semantic differential scales, or adjective scales, representing certain personality traits (see Table 3). Asking questions about the speakers' personality rather than their speech was yet another way to keep the listener-judges unaware of the linguistic goals of the research.

Goal-directed								Indecisive
Trustworthy								Untrustworthy
Conscientious								Happy-go-lucky
Interesting								Boring
Self-assured								Insecure
Intelligent								Stupid
Nice								Repulsive
Cool								Uncool

Table 3. 7-point scales of personality traits used for the SEE

For the analysis of the data, the steps of the scale were numbered 1 to 7 from left (assumed to be the more positive end) to right.

The eight adjective scales were replicated from Danish experimental studies.[7] The idea was to find relevant personal characteristics to match the changing ideas in society about public styles of speakers. The assumption was made that the changes were brought along by informalisation processes in the media. The Danes came up with two evaluative dimensions: "superiority" (which included the personality traits *intelligent, conscientious, goal-directed, trustworthy* and was thought to be rooted in the formal styles of education and business) and "dynamism" (which included *cool, interesting, nice, self-assured*, and was thought to be emerging as a more informal style in modern broadcasting). Since Lithuanian media seems to be undergoing a very similar development, we decided to investigate the validity of this evaluative model outside Danish society.

Following the Danish research design, we distributed the questionnaires in a way so that every second student got an opposite (bottom-up) version of the scales, and directed the students' attention to the fact that it would be meaningless to look at and copy from those sitting next to them.

After completion of the SEE, the students listened to the audio clips once again and assessed the voices in terms of standardness on a 7-point scale, and simultaneously in terms of geographical affiliation. For the latter task, three options were given: 'Vilnius', 'name of the relevant county centre' and 'other' (an open-ended option for students to offer their own guesses).

We now turn to looking at whether the reported preferences for local speech (described in section 5) are reflected in positive social points for the speakers of a regional dialect. The SEE assessments are presented in terms of mean summative score from 1 to 7 for *the four* voices representing the particular variety (Local speech, VLN and the SL).

Like in Denmark, the Lithuanian SEE turned the evaluative hierarchy of the informants upside down:

7 Translation was made of the adjective pairs from Danish into Lithuanian, taking into account the English equivalents, indicated in Danish research. Although some alternative variants (mainly of the negative counterparts) were considered, the translation was not very problematic: Siekiantis tikslo – Neapsisprendęs (*Målrettet – Sløv*); Patikimas – Nepatikimas (*Til at stole på – Ikke til at stole på*); Rimtas – Lengvabūdis (*Seriøs – Ligeglad*); Įdomus – Nuobodus (*Spændende – Kedelig*); Pasitikintis savimi – Nepasitikintis savimi (*Selvsikker – Usikker*); Protingas – Kvailas (*Klog – Dum*); Malonus – Nemalonus (*Flink – Usympatisk*); Kietas – Nevykėlis (*Tjekket – Utjekket*) (the Lithuanian adjectives in capital letters).

NON-DIALECTAL VOICES > DIALECTAL VOICES

Based on the integrated data from all regions, the dialectal voices were evaluated significantly lower than the non-dialectal ones (VNL and SL). Thus, the general trend in the Lithuanian community is that dialect speakers are found to sound *less* intelligent, conscientious, self-assured, trustworthy, goal-directed, interesting, nice and cool (see Table 4).

	SL		VLN		LOCAL
Intelligent	2.18	***	2.48	***	3.00
Conscientious	2.48	***	2.92	***	3.29
Goal-directed	2.50	***	2.89	***	3.31
Trustworthy	2.70	***	2.96	***	3.37
Self-assured	2.41	***	2.81	***	3.20
Cool	3.43	*	3.49	***	3.83
Interesting	2.91	/	2.93	***	3.44
Nice	2.55	***	2.67	***	3.22

Table 4. Integrated data of subconscious assessment of personality traits of SL, VLN and Local voices (Figures are mean scores; the lower the score, the closer the voices' match to the indicated trait. Friedman test; Wilcoxon Signed Pair Test: / = no significance, * = p<.05, ** = p<.01, *** = p<.0.001)

The opposite picture emerged from the assessments of SL voices, which received the most positive rankings on all adjective scales. Interestingly, however, the difference in relation to VLN was small on the scales *interesting* (not significant) and *cool* (p<.05).

In one site (Panevėžys), the VLN voices were assessed as more *interesting* than the SL voices (VLN ** SL) as well as more *cool* (VLN * SL). In general, VLN speakers were assessed relatively positively in comparison with SL speakers in terms of being *interesting*, *cool*, and *nice* (on a par with SL in 7, 5 and 4 of the 8 sites, respectively).

The Lithuanian findings thus point to a similar evaluative pattern as in Denmark, although the picture is less clear with regard to the association of Conservative standard speech (SL) with *superiority* values on the one hand, and the association of Modern standard speech (VLN) with *dynamism* values on the other hand. What we have observed might

be taken as a sign of growing tolerance to variation within the phonetic shape of what is conceived of as the 'best Lithuanian' and maybe also as a sign of emerging ideological redistribution of social values associated with the two non-dialectal accents (SL and VLN).[8] It seems that the slightly orthoepic accent is associated with a persona appearing *formal, serious and competent*, whereas the capital Vilnius accent perhaps represents a more *modern* and *attractive* persona.

Additional perspective for the interpretation of the findings can be found in the results from the assessment tasks relating to the voices' standardness and geographical affiliation. It turned out that the Local voices were recognized by the students as originating from a near-by town in the local region and (due to this recognition?) were perceived as sounding less standard than the SL and VLN voices. This recognition may have invoked the negative stereotypes about dialect speakers, which thus resulted in subconscious downgrading of dialect accented voices in the SEE.

For the non-dialectal voices the general trend was to allocate SL rather than VLN to the capital city (see Table 5).

Allocation to Vilnius (percentages)	SLg (1)	SLg (7)	SLb (4)	VLNg (11)	SLb (10)	VLNb (2)	VLNb (8)	VLNg (5)	Local
	75	67	65	62	58	56	52	51	21
Standardness (means on a scale from 1 to 7)	SLg (1)	SLg (7)	SLb (4)	VLNg (11)	VLNg (5)	VLNb (2)	SLb (10)	VLNb (8)	Local
	2.0	2.0	2.3	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.9	3.0	4.3

Table 5. Assessments of voices in terms of allocation to Vilnius and in terms of 'sounding standard' (Low value is 'more standard'; g = girl, b = boy, (x) = the clips' order of appearance in the test)

8 The interpretation of the SEE results in terms of historical development must be considered pure speculation though, as there is little previous attitudinal research available for comparisons. However, socio-demographic data and sociological research can be used as indirect support for the idea that Vilnius (and, consequently, Vilnius speech) accumulated attractive dynamic values with time. Metropolisation, economic investments and accumulation of cultural resources by the capital Vilnius is said to have accelerated during the almost three decades since the regained independence of Lithuania in 1990; the processes created a social gap between the capital and other cities (see Ubarevičienė, Burneika & Kriaučiūnas, 2010–2011).

The strong belief that the speakers behind the SL voices came from Vilnius was consistent across the research sites, with no exception for the informants in the schools of Vilnius. This belief closely correlated with the students' perception of standardness (see Table 5). It seems that 'coming from Vilnius' may have worked as a precondition for being conceived of as a 'speaker of SL', and such underlying associative links may have affected the outcomes of the Speaker Evaluation Experiment. It should be noted that these Lithuanian results differ from the corresponding Danish and German results. For instance, the Danish students did consider the 'conservative' voices to be the most standardised, but showed no sign of associating them with Copenhagen in particular (see Kristiansen, 2009). In German Stuttgart area, the perception of standardness was not conditioned by origin of a speaker from Berlin, either. Berlin voices were perceived as sounding the most standard, yet their allocation to Berlin was rather uncertain (Svenstrup, 2019).

I already discussed the overt support for the linking of the capital Vilnius and its residents with the best – the standard – speech in the community. This ideological link is being formed, bypassing the counter narrative about corruption of Vilnius speech due to the impact from other languages (Polish, Russian and, most recently, also English). In the process of judging 'dialect-neutral' varieties, it is as if the 'social value of the place' (the origin of the speaker) is the decisive factor rather than the speech forms themselves.[9] For instance, in our experiment the voices of the second biggest city, Kaunas, were phonetically closer to the orthoepic standard than the slightly SL accented voices, which we recorded in Vilnius.[10] And yet Kaunas voices received lower scores for standardness and were downgraded in the SEE. Quite a few students chose the option 'other' and allocated the Kaunas voices to various smaller towns in the region – association with a smaller town might have been the deciding factor for the results.

Additional experimental data can be provided to back up the effects of association of voices with Vilnius for the outcomes of assessment. In 2013, following the study presented in this paper, a control study was

9 Anecdotal evidence from daily encounters can support the claim: for instance, it has been noticed that university students thought a saliently SL-accented researcher came from Vilnius (the person concerned was a zealous learner of orthoepic standard and did not come from Vilnius).
10 Geographically Kaunas city belongs to the dialectal region of West Highland which formed the linguistic norm base for the codification of the standard.

carried out in 6 schools in 2 regions (Utena and Alytus region; 127 and 105 students were included, respectively). The only difference between the two studies were the stimuli voices. In the control study teachers' voices were used. The idea was to sharpen the phonetic distinction between the SL and VLN voices and to check whether clearer formal differences would alter the outcomes of SEE.

The findings from the control study support the argument that assessment of the different ways of speaking in Lithuanian differs depending on presumed origin of speaker. Concrete language forms do not matter given the condition that they are perceived as dialect-neutral. What matters is the idea that the speaker comes from Vilnius. This was demonstrated by the control study with adult voices in which a sharper phonetic difference was obtained between SL and VLN clips (see Table 6).

Allocation to Vilnius (percentages)	SLf (7)	SLm (10)	VLNf (11)	VLNm (2)	VLNf (5)	SLm (4)	SLf (1)	VLNm (8)	Local
	68	64	63	60	57	51	50	47	37
Standardness (means on a scale from 1 to 7)	SLf (7)	VLNm (2)	VLNf (11)	VLNf (5)	SLm (10)	SLf (1)	SLm (4)	VLNm (8)	Local
	2.1	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	3.0	3.5	3.6	3.6

Table 6. Assessments of teachers' voices in terms of allocation to Vilnius and in terms of 'sounding standard' in a control study (Low value is 'more standard'; f = female, m = male, (x) = the clips' order of appearance in the test)

As we can see, in the control study the tendency remained to perceive the standardness of a voice as linked to Vilnius origin. However, contrary to the main study with students' voices, the informants had difficulties in discriminating between the origin of SL and VLN. The SL and VLN clips were approached as if representing the same variety. Hence the endeavour to make the phonetic distinction between SL and VLN more expressed did not result in a clearer ideological distinction. The assessments of personality traits did not result in different scores; both SL and VLN voices were assessed equally positive on all traits (with one exception in the Utena region, where VLN voices scored significantly better for the trait *interesting* (VLN * SL)).

7. Best language ideology remains,
the standard is changing

Let me summarize the findings according to the mental scheme that might have emerged when our informants made their choices.

During the subconscious evaluation of the voices at the very beginning of the research, the level of awareness of what is being assessed must have been rather low. At least the issue of assessing language did not seem to be present. We can see that the informants distinguished between the dialectal and non-dialectal voices and linked them with particular places of origin. It has been noted elsewhere that association of the judged speakers' origin with either central or peripheral locality may evoke place-connected stereotypes (cf. Garrett, Williams & Evans, 2005). This must have been the case in our research. Likewise, we can suppose that, being members of a community with a strong standard spoken language ideology, the Lithuanian test takers have used dialect as a 'main evaluation criterion' in the verbal guise test (cf. Bugge, 2018, 314). These factors obviously affected the attribution of social values to the voices:

NON-DIALECTAL VOICES > DIALECTAL VOICES

When ranking the speech labels, on the contrary, the awareness of language as a subject-matter might have triggered certain responsibility for correct representation, not least in front of the researchers from the capital city, who asked for information about regional speech varieties. We must not forget that the research was carried out in a school setting – an additional factor for performance of a "right answer". The students thus had a chance to control their attitudes and apparently they chose to display their local identity and ownership of the local speech, which resulted in a reverse hierarchical order in LRT:

LOCAL (DIALECTAL) SPEECH > NON DIALECTAL VARIETIES

On this empirical basis we can thus claim that people store and retrieve different value systems from different levels of consciousness. The evaluation pattern was consistent in all research sites and indicates unanimous social experiences in the community.

The geographical allocation test confirmed that regional voices were recognized as such. If the assumption that people change their values depending on the level of language awareness was not valid, then our

informants would have stuck to their overtly reported valorisation of local speech when assessing locally sounding voices. The dialectal voices would then have been assessed at least equally well as the rest of the voices. This did not happen. The overt positioning of local speech as 'the best' variety did not turn the speakers behind the local voices into 'the best' personalities. On the contrary, negative stereotypes of dialectal speakers presumably were invoked and the voices were evaluated significantly worse.

As to evaluation of the non-dialectal VLN and SL voices, an interesting pattern emerged. The different degrees of orthoepic colouring of the voices in the two experiments with young and adult speakers showed that concrete features are not decisive for the outcomes of the SEE. The decisive factor in our research was the linking of the speakers' origin with the capital city, which happened regardless of the speech features and resulted in awarding the presumed residents of Vilnius the most positive social values. The known correlation between perception of standardness and increased covert positivity to the most 'standard sounding' voices was thus confirmed (cf. Svenstrup, 2019), but, in addition to this, the Lithuanian participants of the SEE drew on the common idea (constructed in societal discourse) that the standard Lithuanian is spoken by residents of Vilnius.

One of the aims of the research was to investigate whether regional varieties could be considered an appropriate choice in public on equal footing with non-dialectal speech. It could have been taken as a proof of the beginning of a destandardisation process in the Lithuanian speech community. However, there was no indication of such a process. In terms of possibilities of choice and reflexivity, the domain of language norm and variation seems to be radically different from other societal domains accounted for in postmodern descriptions of Western society which emphasize increasing plurality of contemporary life (Kristiansen, 2003, 299).

In all Lithuanian research sites, the regional voices were evaluated significantly worse than the VLN and SL voices. Not even the second largest city Kaunas (the interwar capital of Lithuania) could exhibit competitive potential relative to Vilnius as a linguistic norm centre for the local youth. The regional speech, being representative of just privately relevant social meanings, thus embodies only a symbolic local patriotism; the central norm of the best Lithuanian, relating to 'exellence' and 'status' in the public domains of language use, is to be found outside the regional reserves.

This is how Lithuanian language development links up with an ideological paradigm: the community's subconscious beliefs about what speech forms back up one's way to success sets the direction of language change. The features that are perceived as being of regional, dialectal origin, are set aside as lacking the needed qualities.

What features are adopted then?

Diachronic research on the pronunciation of TV and radio journalists since the 1960's evidences a gradual approximation of the public speech norm to the features typical for Vilnius speech. Additionally, a slight connection of a more standard-close norm with the 'serious' genres of broadcasting, and of a more Vilnius-close norm with entertainment, is noticeable (see Čičirkaitė, 2017). Investigations of informal lexis (Tamaševičius, 2017) and forms of address (Girčienė, 2017) also hint at a development towards a more ordinary style in the broadcast media. However, the turning point of informalisation of the media seems to be the breakdown of the totalitarian Soviet regime. Thus, both this media development and the democratisation of Lithuanian society in general appear delayed relative to other Western European societies. For instance, comparative research of Danish and Lithuanian TV series in time has shown that the degree of (in)formality in current Lithuanian dialogues corresponds to that of the Danish ones back in the 1960's (Schoroškaitė, 2018).

Does this mean that we can foresee that Vilnius speech will develop a stronger association with a 'best dynamism language' in accordance with the development of informal media styles? What will be the role of Vilnius speech in the future, if young Lithuanians do not attribute different social values to the SL and VLN features in the speech of adults? Will young people take over the SL accented phonetics which they seemed to favour in the SEE with young voices?

If we take the Danish situation as "a vanguard example of tendencies that are general to most European communities" (Grondelaers & Kristiansen, 2013, 27), we can perhaps accept the increasing variability within 'the best Lithuanian' as an indication that the Lithuanian community, although lagging a bit behind, is on its way to keep Denmark company.

Alea iacta est.

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