

ESTONIAN LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING

Summary

Although language has many different purposes, in case of official language the highest priority should be attributed to its function as the determiner of the national, mental and cultural integrity. There are three important aspects to the strategic planning of language development: Estonian language with its one million native speakers, status, corpus, and education is not a threatened language according to the sociolinguistic definition since it has the status of official language; the language is used in all domains, from everyday language to business and science; it is the language of education in all levels of education, from primary school to PhD studies; the language is spoken at home and also by children; Estonian language is supported by computers. Nevertheless, the modern globalizing world makes it necessary to pay special attention to maintaining language vitality even if the language has over one million native speakers.

The article gives an overview of the sociolinguistic environment and its dynamics in Estonia and the strategic planning of Estonian language environment during the last couple of decades. On the one hand, the focus of the article is on language political visions and activities carried out in order to realize these visions, including national programmes for developing, studying and propagating Estonian language in the world. On the other hand, the article discusses Estonian in the globalizing world while keeping in mind the developments of information society.

The article also lists recommendations for authors of the language development plan: 1) in order to set goals and plan activities for reaching the goals an overview of the situation of the language in all domains of use must be compiled; 2) visions and goals must be supported by a concrete action plan which must be approved at the state level and guaranteed the necessary financial backing from the state budget; 3) it must be stated who is responsible for carrying out the development plan as a whole as well as each activity individually; 4) there must be constant monitoring – are the goals still relevant in the changing time and environment, do the activities support the reaching of the goals sufficiently etc.; 5) the public must be informed regularly in

order to maintain the debate on the topics of language, to inform the so-called tax payer and to achieve satisfaction with planned activities in the society and among the people.

KEYWORDS: Estonian language, language policy and planning, language vitality.

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