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## GEOLINGUISTIC AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION OF NORTHERN SAMOGITIANS OF KRETINGA: DIALECTAL AREA, USE OF THE DIALECT, LINGUISTIC ATTITUDES

Šiaurės žemaičiai kretingiškiei geolingvistiniu  
ir sociolingvistiniu požiūriu: plotas, tarmės  
vartojimas, kalbinės nuostatos

### ANNOTATION

The aim of this article is to highlight the parameters denoting the vitality level of linguistic and cultural identity of one dialectal community (namely, the Northern Samogitians of Kretinga) under the circumstances of increasing globalization and diglossia. In accordance with the theoretical concept of geolinguistics as a dynamic dialectology, the domain classification proposed by Anton M. Hagen and the empirical material issues denoting sociocultural identity of the subdialect are presented. The vitality and sociocultural distinction of the dialectal area is being sustained by various factors, three of which have the most important role: sufficiently developed infrastructure, dialect use and attitudes based on the value system of users of the dialect.

KEYWORDS: Samogitian dialect, Northern Samogitians of Kretinga, standard language, geolinguistics, sociolinguistics, domain, linguistic attitude.

## ANOTACIJA

Straipsnyje svarstoma, ar įmanomas vienu dialektu kalbančios bendruomenės kultūrinės ir kalbinės tapatybės tęstinumas globalizacijos ir diglosijos (dialekto ir bendrinės kalbos) sąlygomis. Remiantis teorine geolingvistikos kaip dinamiškosios dialektologijos koncepcija, Antono M. Hageno pasiūlyta domenų klasifikacija ir empirine medžiaga, pristatoma vienos patarmės – šiaurės žemaičių kretingiškių – sociokultūrinės tapatybės problematika. Tarminės grupės gyvybingumą ir sociokultūrinę tapatybę lemia įvairūs veiksniai, bet ypač svarbūs trys – pakankamai išvystyta infrastruktūra, tarmės vartojimas ir tarmės vartotojų vertybinės nuostatos.

ESMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: žemaičių tarmė, šiaurės žemaičiai kretingiškiei, bendrinė kalba, geolingvistika, sociolingvistika, domenai, kalbinės nuostatos.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Geographical mobility, urbanization and globalization inevitably lead to contacts between dialects causing levelling and change of dialects. What is more, standard languages in the modern world are representatives of the territorial wholeness and entirety of states. They are firmly established at the top of the hierarchy of language varieties and serve as publicly accepted languages for public administration. Language standardization ideology prevailing in most European countries sustains a lower social value of dialects in comparison to the standard language (Ramonienė (ed.) 2013). However, the examples from Norway and some other countries tolerating dialects in various communicative spaces have shown that it is possible to resist linguistic homogenisation and retain linguistic diversity by consciously nurturing linguistic tolerance and linguistic values (Jahr 1997, 2008).

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century investigations of language variation evaluating linguistic, social and geographical parameters increased greatly worldwide. Various aspects of relationships between dialectal and standard languages were investigated as well (Ferguson 1959; Haugen 1966; Labov 1972; Trudgill 1983; Hagen 1989; Auer, Hinskens 1996; Auer 2005, 2011; Edwards 2006, 2009, 2010).

Currently, significant attention is being paid to linguistic variety in Lithuania. The use of dialectal and standard language has also drawn the interest of researchers (Aliūkaitė 2008; Kliukienė 2013; Bakšienė 2015). Such aspects as dialectal self-awareness and conscious/unconscious linguistic attitudes, overt and covert prestige of dialects/standard language have received special attention from some Lithuanian researchers (Venskienė 2008a, b; Aliūkaitė 2011; Vaicekauskienė, Sausverde 2012; Kačiuškienė 2012; Vaicekauskienė, Aliūkaitė 2013; Kalėdienė 2013; Geržotaitė 2016; Vyniautaitė 2016).<sup>1</sup>

This article complements the research in language variation in Lithuania by presenting a geo-sociolinguistic situation of one Samogitian subdialect, namely the Northern Samogitians of Kretinga (further in the text – NSK).

The aim of this article is to highlight the parameters denoting the vitality level of linguistic and cultural identity of one dialectal community. To this end, the following aspects are taken into account: 1) the area in which the dialect is being used, 2) the use of the dialect, and 3) linguistic attitudes towards vernacular language.

The investigation presented in this article is based on the project *Modern Research of Geolinguistics in Lithuania: The Optimisation of the Network and Interactive Spread of Dialectal Information* which was implemented in Lithuania in 2011–2013.<sup>2</sup> To examine the geolinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of the dialect, the methods of the project were applied.<sup>3</sup> The questionnaires<sup>4</sup> meeting general sociolinguistic principles were used in order to reveal and record socio-demographic parameters. Geographical, social and cultural dimensions were compiled out of the data about the speaker's place of residence, age, education, nationality, profession, spoken languages, language attitudes, and other information. The locality point questionnaire provided sociocultural heritage data that allowed to determine the level of the region's vitality.

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<sup>1</sup> A few innovative projects have already been implemented in Lithuania, e.g. *Sociolinguistic map of Lithuania: Cities and towns 2010–2012* (see results in two monographs: Ramonienė (ed.) 2010, 2013) and *Modern research of geolinguistics in Lithuania: The optimisation of the network and interactive spread of dialectal information 2011–2013* (see results in the monograph: Mikulėnienė, Meiliūnaitė (eds) 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Global grant project No. VP1-3.1-ŠMM-07-K-01-028. For more information, see [www.tarmes.lt](http://www.tarmes.lt).

<sup>3</sup> For more information about methodological issues, see Mikulėnienė, Meiliūnaitė (eds) 2014: 25–47.

<sup>4</sup> For more information about the methodology for compiling questionnaires, see Mikulėnienė, Meiliūnaitė (eds), 2014: 49–62.

## 2. DIALECTAL AREA

By referring to the traditional classification of Lithuanian dialects provided in *Lietuvių kalbos atlasas* (Atlas of the Lithuanian Language), 35 dialectal points were distinguished in the area of the NSK. **Dialectal point** is considered the point with the largest population, greatest infrastructure, highest social prestige, and most pronounced dialectal features. A dialectal point is not a single village/community/town/city. It is composed of both central and peripheral localities (Mikulėnienė 2013).

The authors of this article visited 35 dialectal points of the NSK. After collecting the data with the help of the questionnaire which was completed by all the informants,<sup>5</sup> they tried to examine whether the respondents from all three age groups spoke the dialectal language in each dialectal point under investigation. The speaker questionnaire created according to the general principles of sociolinguistics enabled the authors to reveal and record the sociodemographic parameters which exhibit the use of the dialect by all three age groups in all dialectal points except for one named *Serapinai* which had physically become extinct. However, considering the fact that the extinct point is surrounded by vital dialectal points, the conclusion can be made that the territory of the use of the subdialect has not substantially changed over the last fifty years. According to the primary data, nearly 11 per cent of dialectal points have disappeared in Lithuania (Meiliūnaitė, Švambarytė-Valužienė 2014). Meanwhile, only 3 per cent of dialectal points have become extinct on the territory of NSK.<sup>6</sup>

The investigation of each dialectal point was based on the sociolinguistic point questionnaire<sup>7</sup> (35 questionnaires in total) that allowed the authors to confirm the real existence of dialectal points and to establish their differences in respect of their vitality level. Having examined the dialectal points in respect of their administrative status, economic, social and cultural infrastructure as well as their localization regarding connection to urban areas, the following 5 groups of dialectal points were singled out:

**Strong dialectal points** (23 in total) have several (or at least one) educational institutions, a cultural centre, a church, a library, shops/café/a market,

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<sup>5</sup> Sociolinguistic speaker questionnaire No. 3 included 22 questions, see Mikulėnienė, Meiliūnaitė (eds) 2014: 381–384.

<sup>6</sup> Consider the situation in 37 language points of *Lietuvių kalbos atlasas* (Atlas of the Lithuanian Language) representing different dialects of Lithuania from western and eastern Aukštaitija (Highland) as well as southern and northern Žemaitija (Lowland) in Švambarytė-Valužienė 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Sociolinguistic point questionnaire No. 2 including a set of thirteen questions, see Mikulėnienė, Meiliūnaitė (eds) 2014: 378–380.

community organizations; the dialectal point has the status of administrative centre (188 Aīkas/Daugėdai, 91 Darbėnai, 218 Endriėjėvas, 216 Gargždai/Vėžaičiai, 94 Gintališkė/Plėteliai, 92 Grūšlaukė, 286 Judrėnai, 90 Kalgraužiai/Laūkžemė, 154 Kālنيškiai, 155 Karklėnai, 152 Kretinga, 185 Lapiai, 189 Medingėnai, 125 Mišėnai/Šateikiai, 156 Plūngė, 219 Rietėvas, 93 Salantai, 250; Veiviržėnai, 124 Stropėliai/Kūlpėnai, 123 Ruginiai/Karėtena, 39 Žemytė/Lenkimai, 64 Vindeikiai/Notėnai, 122 Žibiniškai/Rūdaičiai<sup>8</sup>).

**Dialectal points of medium strength** (3 in total) have at least one educational institution, a library, a shop, but there is no cultural centre – its functions are implemented and community members are consolidated by educational institutions (126 Babrungėnai/Didvyčiai, 61 Įpiltis, 252 Žadvainai).

**Weak dialectal points** (2 in total): have no educational institutions, but there are cultural centres, communities, shops and/or a market (153 Budriai, 186 Šakiniai/Tilvikai).

**Dialectal points in decay** (6 in total) have no educational institutions, cultural centres, churches, shops, or community organizations (217 Antkoptis, 251 Mataičiai, 187 Mižuikiai, 151 Pryšmaņčiai, 63 Šaukliai, 220 Ūžpeliai).

**Dead points** (1 in total): the point itself has already vanished, only the fields are left (62 Serapiniai).

The research of the traditional dialectal points under investigation showed that the majority of dialectal points of the region in question (over 80 per cent) are remarkably strong, vital, having preserved their traditional (or slightly shifted) centres from the geographic point of view. The main factor having determined the vitality/gradual displacement/decay of NSK dialectal points and/or their centres is infrastructural changes. The main factors sustaining the socio-cultural peculiarities of the dialect are such institutions as school, cultural centre, administrative status of a town, library, church, community organization, shopping centre, public catering institutions, post office, etc. The administrative reorganization of small towns, settlements and villages implemented by closing smaller schools, libraries, cultural centres, health care institutions and moving them to larger administrative centres had a very negative impact on the material and spiritual lives of communities, stimulated the processes of migration and other (psycho)social phenomena – unemployment, the loss of the sense of community, alcoholism, to mention but a few.

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<sup>8</sup> The second position shows which center the dialectal point has shifted to. The numbering of localities is provided in *Lietuvių kalbos atlasas* (Atlas of the Lithuanian Language).

## 3. USE OF THE SUBDIALECT

Another question under investigation was: How do people from Kretinga speak? What is the relationship between the dialect and the standard language?

Three generational categories were investigated: the younger generation (people under the age of 30), the middle generation (people aged 31–49 years) and the senior generation (people aged 50 and older). A total number of informants who were questioned and recorded in the study is 300: 69 per cent of them are women (209 in total); men comprise 31 per cent (91 in total). The informants from the elderly generation comprise 63 per cent (188 respondents); 20 per cent (59) of the informants belong to the middle generation; the informants from the younger generation account for 17 per cent (52). As a result, 300 speaker questionnaires were completed and 350 hours of digital speech recordings from 34 residential points were made.

In speaker questionnaire No. 3 (questions 9, 10, 15–18) each informant was asked which language – dialectal and/or standard one – he or she chooses to communicate with their family members (with a spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, siblings and grandparents) or in public (in shops, various institutions, meetings, in church, with acquaintances/strangers, neighbours, etc.).<sup>9</sup>

To carry out the analysis of standard and dialectal language (further – SL and DL respectively), the theory of domains proved to be a methodologically useful framework for the research. **Domain** is understood as an extralinguistic category that alludes to activity rather than place, to a discursive situation rather than mere language (for a more exhaustive description of a domain, see Aliūkaitė, Valikonė 2012). Various researchers distinguish different domains; however, this research employed the classification by Anton M. Hagen (1989). The author distinguishes the following domains:

- 1) Instrumental public domains, such as public institutions, school, religion, conversations with strangers.
- 2) Solidarity domains, such as neighbours, friends, colleagues.
- 3) Separate domains (family).

Researchers claim that the language of domains is a direct reference to the language vitality rate. Daiva Aliūkaitė emphasizes that considering SL and DL from the perspective of domains they refer to, a completely different value is attributed to the category of domain loss. The distribution of language varieties, as distinct from the use of different languages in bilingual or multilingual communities, is less likely to cause harm to the language as a communicative unit

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that all the informants permanently live in the dialectal points under investigation and know their vernacular dialect, except for a few respondents from the younger generation.

important for self-realization and identity of a particular ethnic community. On the other hand, as far as the maintenance of the dialectal language is concerned, the loss of, let's say, home domain is a reference to the loss of the dialect. Furthermore, the scheme of SL and DL distribution shows the ideological value of SL and DL in social context and the like (Aliūkaitė, Valikonė 2012: 9–10).

Thus, with regard to the classification of domains proposed by Anton Hagen, the following results of DL and SL distribution are presented below.

It should be emphasized that for this research the answers of the respondents reflecting their opinion were analysed, while the objective observation was not applied. The question of how much these answers reflect the real situation of the dialect use remains open. However, they clearly show conscious attitudes towards the dialect use.

### 3.1. Separate domain (family)

**Dialectal language.** Eighty one per cent of the informants use their dialect to talk to all family members (244 in total). Of them, 85 per cent belong to the elderly generation (159 informants); 80 per cent belong to the middle generation (47 informants), and 67 per cent belong to the younger generation (35 respondents) (see Diagram 1).

**Dialect versus standard.** Eighteen per cent of the informants use both the standard language and the dialect to communicate with some of their family members (51 informants). Fourteen per cent of the respondents belong to the elderly generation (26 in total); 17 per cent belong to the middle generation (10 respondents), and 29 per cent of all the informants are representatives of the younger generation (15 informants).

For example, the representatives of the elderly and middle generation use the dialect while communicating with all the members of their family, whereas the standard language is used for communication with children, especially with grandchildren. The representatives of the younger generation use their dialect for communication with their grandparents, mother or father only. Meanwhile, they use the standard language for communication with their siblings. Several informants from the middle or younger generation note that they speak the standard language while talking to their children so that they could learn the standard language better (in this case, both spouses of the family are Samogitian). In other cases, families whose members belong to different generations use SL and DL alternately; only the standard language is used for communication with some family members if one of the spouses is a representative of a different dialect/language.

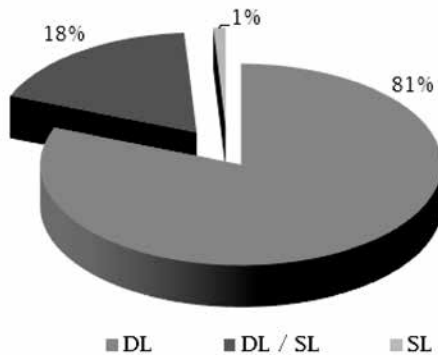


DIAGRAM 1. Separate domain. Distribution of language code

**Standard language.** Only 5 informants (1 per cent in total) use the standard language at home, 1 of whom belongs to the elderly generation (the informant with higher education); 2 informants belong to the middle generation, and 2 respondents are the representatives of the younger generation (see Diagram 1).

### 3.2. Solidarity domain (neighbours, friends, colleagues)

**Dialectal language.** Eighty per cent of all the respondents (241 in total) use only the dialect to communicate with their neighbours, friends, and colleagues. Eighty eight per cent of the respondents belong to the elderly generation (166 in total); 75 per cent of the informants belong to the middle generation (44 in total), and 54 per cent of the respondents are representatives of the younger generation (28 informants) (see Diagram 2).

**Dialect versus standard language.** Both the standard language and the dialect are used by 16 per cent (47 in total) of the respondents to communicate with their neighbours. The standard language and the dialect are used alternately by 12 per cent of the respondents from the elderly generation (19 in total); the respondents from the middle generation comprise 29 per cent (15 respondents), and 17 per cent of the informants belong to the younger generation (9 in total).

The Samogitians of Kretinga use their dialect to speak to the oldest and elderly generation, whereas the standard language is used for communication with the younger generation. Most commonly, the choice of the respondents belonging to the elderly and oldest generation to use the standard language when speaking to the children of neighbours and youth is determined by their professions (such as teachers, priests, librarians); however, for communication



with their neighbours who belong to the oldest and younger generation the respondents use their dialectal language. The respondents from slightly larger settlements (Kretingà, Gargždaĩ, Darbėnai, Lenkĩmai) claim to use either dialectal or standard language for communication with their neighbours depending on which language or dialect the neighbours prefer to use.

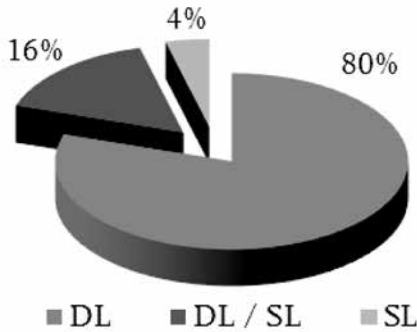


DIAGRAM 2. Solidarity domain. Distribution of language code

**Standard language.** Only 4 per cent of the respondents (11 in total) use the standard language to communicate with their neighbours. There are no respondents from the elderly generation who speak only the standard language. The standard language is used exclusively by 3 per cent of the middle generation (2 in total) and 17 per cent of the younger generation (9 in total).

### 3.3. Instrumental domain (encompassing public institutions, religion, school, conversations with strangers)

**Dialectal language.** In the instrumental domain 42 per cent of the respondents use the dialectal language (see Diagram 3). More than half of all the informants (58 per cent, 108 out of 188) who belong to the elderly generation use the dialectal language. One fifth of the respondents (20 per cent, 12 out of 59) belong to the middle generation; only 6 per cent are representatives of the younger generation (3 out of 52).

**Dialect versus standard.** Approximately half of all the informants of NSK (52 per cent, 156 in total) tend to shift their linguistic code in the instrumental domain. More than one third (40 per cent, 74 in total) of the elderly informants from Kretinga use both DL and SL alternately, preferring the dialect more frequently. The respondents from the middle generation usually use both

linguistic codes – 75 per cent of such informants (44 out of 59) were registered. Meanwhile, 73 per cent of the informants from the younger generation alternate between DL and SL (38 out of 52).

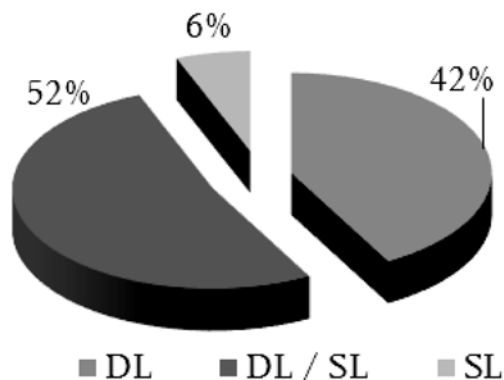


DIAGRAM 3. Instrumental domain. Distribution of language code

**Standard language.** Six per cent of the respondents (18 in total) speak the standard language only. It is mostly the young generation (21 per cent, 11 out of 52) who uses the standard language in public institutions or to communicate with strangers. The respondents from the middle generation speaking standard language only comprise 5 per cent (3 out of 59). It is very uncommon for the elderly generation (2 per cent, 4 respondents out of 188) to speak the standard language only.

The distribution of language varieties in the instrumental domain is closely related to ideology: the preference for the dialectal language is conscious, based upon the values of the speaker. For example, meetings in Kūlpėnai Municipality proceed in Samogitian which is used in a substantial part of cultural events as well. It stands to reason that the standard language prevails in the educational domain.

#### 4. LINGUISTIC ATTITUDES

The preference for a different variety of language in various spheres (see Chapter 3) is determined by linguistic attitudes and value position of the informants. Speaker questionnaire No. 3 (questions 18–21) used in this research intended to reveal the respondents' attitude towards communication in vernacular language, the texts written in dialectal language, and the people speaking the dialect. Each respondent was asked which linguistic code they would choose for communication with their relatives and acquaintances in the private/public

space, with unknown people in their homeland and outside it, which linguistic variety should be used on the radio or TV; how letters and SMS to relatives and acquaintances, publicist and fiction texts should/could be written, etc. The aim of question No. 21 of the questionnaire was to reveal how a person speaking the dialect is regarded (positively or negatively): the questionnaire included such descriptive key words as *a countryman, poorly educated, of senior age, respectful of a native dialect, having patriotic feelings*.

The research revealed positive attitudes towards dialectal language which predominate in all generations of the respondents from the Northern Samogitia of Kretinga (nearly 80 per cent of the informants): a person speaking Samogitian is regarded as paying respect to his/her dialect, as a patriot of his/her own land and, eventually, as a free person. The most positive attitudes towards dialectal language were expressed by the respondents having high or higher education. People who do not use Samogitian are viewed negatively – they are considered neither close nor sincere.<sup>10</sup>

The representatives of the senior generation acknowledge that they speak as they have been used to, since the Samogitian language is the only one they know. The cases of negative evaluation of dialectal speech are very rare, some of which include remarks about the vernacular speech being “plain, rough language, not suitable for communication; the dialect is used by non-educated people or those living in the countryside”.

Such high prestige attributed to the dialect raises hope that it will remain vital and will persist in the future.

The majority of the respondents (nearly 70 per cent) have a positive approach to the texts written in the Samogitian dialect. The publication of Samogitian fiction works, dialectal dictionaries, and different genres of folklore, jokes, and short ethnographic stories are regarded very positively. Advertisements, invitations to ethnocultural events, the names of various objects written in the dialect are viewed positively. The respondents were more doubtful about the use of dialectal language for political or economic issues. Almost all the respondents noted that texts written in dialectal language are much more difficult to read, so they suggested “writing in a simple manner”, that is, write as you hear. Only several respondents, mainly teachers, proposed to teach the young generation the basics of Samogitian writing.

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<sup>10</sup> Similar results were found by other researchers as well; consider the analysis of dialects in the urban environment provided by Regina Kliukienė: “[...] for 64 per cent of the respondents, the Samogitian dialect is most common and most acceptable. [...] The beauty of the Samogitian dialect is equaled to simplicity, transparency, even to the gentle and pleasant language, which is being used to talk to pleasant people” (Kliukienė 2013: 91–101).

More than half of all the respondents from the younger generation (more frequently men) declare that they write SMS and emails in their native Samogitian dialect of Kretinga. Usually, such communication takes place between peers, people of the same or similar age; it is less common in communication with the generation of parents. According to the respondents, they write “in a simple manner”, “with no rules”, “as they hear”. Such a practice is very common in the area covering the northern part of Samogitians of Kretinga (namely, Lenkimai, Šaukliai, Darbėnai, Įpiltis, Grūšlaukė, Salantai, Kūlupėnai, Gintališkė, Plūngė and other locations).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

1. The territory of the subdialect has not changed significantly over the last fifty years. The majority of dialectal points in the region in question (over 80 per cent) are remarkably strong, vital, having preserved their traditional (or slightly shifted) centres from the geographic point of view. The continuity of dialectal and sociocultural identity depends on the changes in the infrastructure of NSK: the processes of administrative reorganization of small towns, settlements and villages involving the closure of smaller schools, libraries, cultural centres, healthcare institutions and their transfer to larger administrative centres had a negative impact on the material and spiritual lives of communities.
2. The use of the subdialect in all domains raises hope that the linguistic and sociocultural identity of the subdialect users will not cease to be important in the future. The situation in different domains differs significantly, however. The generational category is also of great importance for the distribution of dialectal language.
  - 2.1. Dialectal language prevails in separate and solidarity domains: about 80 per cent of the informants use the dialect to talk with their family members, neighbours, and friends, while the use of the subdialect in the instrumental domain comprises only 40 per cent.
  - 2.2. A relatively small part of Samogitians, less than 20 per cent, shift their language code in separate and solidarity domains, while more than half of all the respondents, about 52 per cent, use the dialect and the standard language in the instrumental domain alternately.
  - 2.3. Only a few informants, mostly the representatives of the younger generation, use the standard language in all domains, the instrumental domain in particular.

3. The positive attitude towards the dialectal language can be further strengthened by the attitudes expressed by the respondents from all age groups: a person speaking Samogitian respects his/her dialect; he/she has a strong sense of patriotism for his/her land, and he/she is a free person. A positive approach to the texts written in the Samogitian dialect, especially to ones in the Internet domain (SMS, emails, and facebook), expands and enlarges the possibilities for dialect use. The so called dialectal cyberlanguage used by the youngest generation can provide opportunities to preserve the dialect and identity of the dialect users.

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## Šiaurės žemaičiai kretingiškiai geolingvistiniu ir sociolingvistiniu požiūriu: plotas, tarmės vartojimas, kalbinės nuostatos

### SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje svarstoma, ar įmanomas vienu dialektu kalbančios bendruomenės kultūrinės ir kalbinės tapatybės tęstinumas globalizacijos ir diglosijos (dialekto ir bendrinės kalbos)

sąlygomis. Remiantis teorine geolingvistikos kaip dinamiškosios dialektologijos koncepcija, Antono M. Hageno pasiūlyta domenų klasifikacija ir empirine projekto *Šiuolaikiniai geolingvistikos tyrimai Lietuvoje: punktų tinklo optimizacija ir interaktyvioji tarminės informacijos sklaida* (2011–2013) medžiaga, pristatoma vienos patarmės – šiaurės žemaičių kretingiškių sociokultūrinės tapatybės problematika. Tarminės grupės gyvybingumą ir sociokultūrinę tapatybę lemia įvairūs veiksniai, o ypač svarbūs trys: pakankamai išvystyta infrastruktūra, tarmės vartojimas ir tarmės vartotojų vertybinės nuostatos.

Dabartiniai šiaurės žemaičių kretingiškių tarminiai punktai infrastruktūros požiūriu yra nevienodi: vieni yra stiprūs, kiti vidutinio stiprumo, silpni arba nykstantys. Didžioji dalis kretingiškių tarminių punktų (per 80 proc.) yra stiprūs, gyvybingi, jų centrai išsaugoti tradiciniai ar kiek pasislėkę. Punktų silpnėjimui ir nykimui daugiausia įtakos turėjo mokyklų, kultūros centrų, bibliotekų centralizavimas.

Tarmė vartojama visose srityse, ypač gausiai – izoliuotajame (namų) ir solidarumo domenuose: apie 80 procentų pateikėjų kalba tarmiškai su šeimos nariais, kaimynais, draugais, pažįstamais. Instrumentiniame, arba viešajame, domene tarmės vartojimas sumažėja perpus – tesiekia 40 procentų. Maždaug penktadalis informantų keičia kalbinį kodą, t. y. kalba bendrine kalba, izoliuotajame ir solidarumo domene, o viešojoje erdvėje bendrinę kalbą renkasi net pusė žemaičių, ypač vidurinės ir jaunesniosios kartos (per 70 proc. abiejose amžiaus grupėse) atstovai.

Tik bendrine kalba su šeimos nariais, artimaisiais bendraujama retai. Maždaug penktadalis jaunesniosios kartos atstovų (apie 20 proc.) kalba bendrine kalba solidarumo ir instrumentiniame domenuose.

Tyrimo metu nustatyta, kad tarp visų šiaurės žemaičių kretingiškių kartų respondentų grupių dominuoja sąmoningos nuostatos tarminio kalbėjimo atžvilgiu (apie 80 proc.): žemaitiškai kalbantis žmogus gerbia savo tarmę, yra savo krašto patriotas, laisvas žmogus. Pozityvus rašytinės tarmės vertinimas ir jos vartojimas, ypač internetinėje erdvėje, teikia naujų galimybių išlikti ir gyvuoti tarmei bei jos vartotojų tapatybei.

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