

THE CONCEPT OF *STANDARD LANGUAGE* IN THE LEGISLATION  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA AND IN THE CONTEXT  
OF LANGUAGE POLICY

*Summary*

The publication raises the issue of whether the linguistic terms that describe the status of language and its key usage characteristics are used in the legislation and other language-policy documents clearly and unambiguously, whether the legislators and the general public understand them equally. The goal of the article is to discuss a system of the terms that include the related word *language* and that are used in the legislation and language-policy documents, as well as their dissemination and usage features. A lot of attention is paid to the concept of *standard language*, its functionality and usage context. The definitions of this term (provided in glossaries, the Term Bank of the Republic of Lithuania) are reviewed, also its relationship with other concepts describing the status and functions of a language is discussed.

Pranas Skardžius, the author of the term *bendrinė kalba* (*standard language*), distinguished two features of it: 1) The communicative, or commonly used, feature separates standard language as a language branch from all other language branches (in the broad sense, the full set of all regional, social and functional variants); 2) The codification, or correctness, feature emphasises the prescriptive nature of standard language (vs. dialects, jargon, etc.). The binarity of Skardžius' definition, only emphasising one of the features a bit more, is also preserved in later sources: glossaries, encyclopedias. The Law on State Language does not include the *standard language* term at all, therefore its ambivalence is avoided. Other legislation indicating codified language usually uses a clearer and more specific definition *correct Lithuanian language* which more accurately reflects the codification feature of the concept of standard language.

The term *standartinė kalba* (*standard language*) has not yet taken root in Lithuania but the relationship between the concepts of standard and national (or commonly used) language are more and more discussed, including whether we need to distinguish codified language from commonly used language variant (*standartinė kalba* vs. *bendrinė kalba*). The duality of the term used in both senses may be an obstacle when communicating. Several solutions are proposed to emphasise the aspect of codification: to accept the newly proposed

term *standartinė kalba*, to work around the issue by using descriptive word combinations, or to apply a less often used concept of *codified language (norms of language)* for this purpose.

KEYWORDS: official language, language policy, standard language, correctness.

DAIVA VAIŠNIENĖ

Lietuvos edukologijos universitetas

Lietuvių kalbotyros ir komunikacijos katedra

T. Ševčenkos g. 31, LT-03111 Vilnius

[daiva.vaisniene@leu.lt](mailto:daiva.vaisniene@leu.lt)