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Silesian Language or Dialect: Why Do We Need a Standard?

Introduction

In today's Europe, there is no doubt that there is a close relationship between language and group identity.¹ In the case of the region called Upper Silesia, a large part of which lies within the borders of the Republic of Poland, as a result of the complicated modern history of these areas, a language has developed which is considered by the majority of Polish linguists as a dialect of the Polish language, but by many of its speakers as a separate language. On 15 December 2020, Łukasz Kohut, MEP, while speaking in Polish in the European Parliament, at a certain point switched to Silesian causing consternation as the translation into other languages became impossible. In this elegant way, he proved Silesian to be sufficiently distinctive from Polish to render its intelligibility impossible. At the same time, he appealed to Polish politics (still in Silesian): *'Nie bój się Polsko ślonskij nacyje i godki'* (Don't be afraid, Poland, of the Silesian nation nor of the language).

In this article, we will try to trace the development of this language and its speakers and to present the state of research on it and the arguments of linguists (mainly Polish) for and against its recognition as a regional language. We will finally try to answer the question whether such recognition is needed and what it should serve. We assume that languages that are devoid of official status may be in danger when they lose their

¹ M. Dardano, P. Trifone, *Grammatica italiana con nozioni di linguistica*, Zanichelli, Bologna 1983.

primary function, namely, the everyday communication that enables understanding between people. In a country where it is perfectly fulfilled by an official language, the role of a dialect or unofficial language is changing; the group identification becomes its dominant role. However, such a language needs to be ‘kept alive’ by institutional help from the state whose languages have dominated it. Otherwise, it may fade away over time and thus another element of cultural diversity and heritage will vanish.

Since in this article we also ask a question about the ethnic identity of Upper Silesians and the relationship with the language they use, it is necessary to introduce definitions of some terms, which we will use in the further part of our discussion. This describes the process of transition from the status of a dialect to a regional language and the elements necessary to recognise the latter. We understand a ‘language’ in the classical sense of a system of arbitrary linguistic signs of communication. A ‘dialect’ is understood as a variant of the standard language, valued as lower in the social hierarchy and with a range of communication limited territorially and culturally in relation to the national language.² For the sake of convenience, and often also in order not to decide between the two poles of the language-dialect continuum, we will also use the term ‘ethnolect’, readily applied in works devoted to the Silesian language and encompassing the broad concept of any speech variety specific to a given ethnic group, understood as a language, dialect or even a group of dialects.³ Finally, from the political point of view, a ‘regional language’ is understood as a type of ethnolect (including the dialect) recognised by the state as separate from the national language, but not as an official language, whose use is limited territorially to a region, and which is not connected with a strong awareness of national distinctiveness.⁴ The last two terms are closely related to the sense of ethnic distinctiveness.⁵ We will begin our deliberations by discussing this issue – the Upper Silesian identity.

Difficult identity

Attempts to describe a regional or even state identity usually lead to discovering complex connections of various influences and the overlapping layers that create

² ‘National language’ is understood as the language code recognised by a nation as its official language. It is used in all contexts, develops the lexis in all areas (its distinguishing feature is the scientific-intellectual area), is codified and taught in schools, and has an identifying function, cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 44–45.

³ T. Wicherkiewicz, “Ginące języki, etniczność, tożsamość i polityka”, in: N. Nau, M. Hornsby, M. Karpiński, K. Klessa, T. Wicherkiewicz, R. Wójtowicz (eds), *Języki w niebezpieczeństwie: księga wiedzy*, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań 2016, online, https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/bitstream/10593/17548/1/Języki_w_niebezpieczenstwie_Ksiega_wiedzy_Nau_i_in_Wydanie_I.pdf (accessed 25-05-2021), pp. 105–106.

⁴ M. Bednarek, “Od suchara do pierwszego na świecie biura tłumaczeń. Bo po śląsku się godo”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23 grudnia 2016.

⁵ ‘Ethnicity’ is a concept that distinguishes groups of people on the basis of a cultural community. Such a unique cultural entity is expressed, inter alia, by the language (*The study of ethnicity, minority groups, and identity*, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/science/anthropology/The-anthropological-study-of-education#ref839804>).

a unique whole. In the case of Upper Silesia, the situation seems particularly complicated, as this area repeatedly changed hands, being under Polish domination between the 10th and 14th centuries, from the 14th century to the third decade of 16th century it was under the rule of the Bohemian Crown and then, until the second half of 18th century, in the hands of the Austrian Habsburg dynasty. After the Silesian Wars in the mid-18th century, most of Upper Silesia fell to the kingdom of Prussia, and then to the German Empire. After the Upper Silesia plebiscite mandated by the Versailles Treaty on 20 March 1921, one-third of the region's territory was attached to the newly reborn Poland and two-thirds remained within the borders of Germany. Finally, after World War II, almost all of German Silesia was handed over to Poland.

Religious relations also undoubtedly influenced the regional identity of Silesia. The unwritten rule of 'whose power, his religion'⁶ led to frequent changes of religion (from Catholic to Protestant and vice versa). In fact, in the second half of the 16th century, the Lutheran Church dominated in many parts of Upper Silesia. After the Thirty Years' War (1648), there was a period of recatholisation. The situation of Protestants in Upper Silesia improved after the Silesian Wars (which ended in 1742), when most of the lands fell to Prussia. Protestantism became the state religion again in Upper Silesia. It was the third change of religion for the inhabitants of Upper Silesia over a period of 200 years, apart from frequent and short-lived changes during the Thirty Years' War.⁷ In the custom sphere, it resulted in a rather peculiar mixture in which, apart from a fervent Catholic piety, often bordering on mysticism, a typically Protestant cult of work and order developed. After the Seven Years' War (1756–1763), Protestants gained religious freedom in Prussian Upper Silesia, although they were in the overwhelming minority. One of the elements of the policy of uniting the German states within the framework of the newly established German Empire in 1871 was the *Kulturkampf*. An element of this policy was the struggle between the state and the Catholic Church. The German Reich, fighting Catholicism at that time, imposed on its citizens, Germans, political religious identification; a German patriot should be a Protestant. Among the Polish Catholic population from the areas annexed during the partitions, this policy led to the perpetuation of the stereotype of a Pole-Catholic. After the plebiscite, some German Protestants (who had emigrated to Germany) were replaced by the Protestant Polish population from Cieszyn Silesia, but throughout the interwar period, the majority of Protestants were Germans.⁸ The effects of the national-religious state policy persist to this day in the form of the stereotypical identification of Poles as Catholics and Protestants as Germans.

⁶ R. Kaczmarek, "Ludzie – stosunki demograficzne, struktura społeczna, podziały wyznaniowe, etniczne i narodowościowe", in: J. Bahlcke, D. Gawrecki, R. Kaczmarek Ryszard (eds), *Historia Górnego Śląska. Polityka, gospodarka i kultura europejskiego regionu*, Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, Gliwice 2011, p. 48.

⁷ Cfr. W. Gojniczek, R. Kaczmarek, "Reformacja i kontrreformacja na Górnym Śląsku od początków do XVIII wieku", in: *500 lat Reformacji na Górnym Śląsku*, FNCE, Katowice 2017, pp. 19–40.

⁸ Cfr. W. Gojniczek, R. Kaczmarek, "Kościoły i podziały diecezjalne od wojen śląskich do czasów współczesnych", in: *500 lat Reformacji...*, pp. 41–86.

Despite constant changes in which state ruled the region, this area has developed its own cultural specificity, and a group of activists and enthusiasts of the region continues its efforts to promote regional identity, based on culture and language. In this article, we will try to deal with the issue of identity primarily in the linguistic aspect, while highlighting the historical and political background that cannot be omitted.

Therefore, without going too far back, we will focus on the events that most contributed to the creation of this specific Silesian identity. The political changes in the Habsburg lands and Prussia at the end of the 18th and in the 19th centuries created the basis for the formation of the socio-economic structure of Upper Silesia, as a result of which serfdom was abolished in both countries (and also the guild compulsion in Prussia). The immediate consequence of these changes was rapid industrialisation, which resulted, among others, in the creation of the Upper Silesian Industrial District⁹; factories and mines were built, the demand for labour grew, which was not able to be met by the local population. Therefore, workers' housing estates began to emerge, and the region's urbanisation accelerated. A model example of such a workers' housing estate is Gieschewald (today, Giszowiec in Katowice), a garden city designed by the architects Georg and Emil Zillmann in 1907, to which 300 families from the surrounding villages were brought (in 1935 it had as many as 5,000 inhabitants).¹⁰ Under such conditions a specific culture of Upper Silesia was formed, with a mine that provided work, housing and, above all, prestige. This culture also developed a specific language, assessed today mostly as a mixed code, with a rural origin but currently unrelated to the countryside.¹¹ Since the end of the 18th century, but above all in the 19th century, Upper Silesians talking their distinct ethnolect began to be perceived as a separate ethnic group, which became the basis for the formation of a regional identity. According to Kaczmarek,¹² one of the factors that contributed to the emergence of such a sense of separateness was Bismarck's Germanisation activity and another was the interwar activity of the fighting Polish and German political camps. With respect to religious identity, the polarisation described above: Poles – Catholics and Protestants – Germans, promoted by nation states, often did not work for Silesians who felt themselves to be a distinct group; there were many Catholics who did not identify themselves with any of the states, or who declared they belonged to the German state. And so, Silesians from the German part of Upper Silesia were mostly Catholics. In the plebiscite of 1921, most of them supported the Germans. On the Polish side of the border, it was similar, except that the majority opted for Poland.¹³

⁹ R. Kaczmarek, "Ludzie – stosunki demograficzne...", p. 44.

¹⁰ L. Szaraniec, *Osady i osiedla Katowic*, Śląsk, Katowice 2010, online, <https://www.giszowiec.info/pl/?co=historia&jak=h1> (accessed 25-05-2021).

¹¹ J. Tambor, *Mowa Górnolazaków oraz ich świadomość językowa i etniczna*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2008, online, file:///D:/Downloads/Tambor_Mowa_Gornolazakow.pdf (accessed 25-05-2021), pp. 76–87. For the definition of this term see the section 3.3.

¹² R. Kaczmarek, "Ludzie – stosunki demograficzne...", pp. 50–52.

¹³ For this issue see W. Świątkiewicz, *Religijność*, in: *Encyklopedia województwa śląskiego*, Vol. II (2015), online: <http://ibrbs.pl/mediawiki/index.php/Religijno%C5%9B%C4%87>.

The consequences of historical events were also significant for the development of the Silesian ethnolect:

The Upper Silesians, who did not belong to historical or state nations, did not experience the full linguistic phase typical of Central and Eastern Europe in the process of national formation and did not develop a codified, standardised Silesian language.¹⁴

The social repercussion of state power dominations was the inability to advance in society without actively knowing the dominant state language, a language of the political elite, which – for the most part of the discussed period – was German. On the other hand, some representatives of the intellectual elite used the literary Polish language, part of which had immigrated from other Polish regions and therefore was considered ‘foreign’. As for national belonging, in the 20th century:

... all generations of people living in Silesia had to change their national affiliation during their lives. [...] First, the Silesians had to define themselves during the plebiscite, then during the Nazi times, and then after the war. It is not surprising that in this situation Silesians treat national affiliation instrumentally. They could be Poles or Germans, as was required of them, but in fact they have always been Silesians.¹⁵

As for the fate of the Silesian ethnolect in these changing political conditions, it mostly played the role of the language of everyday communication and did not develop a literary variant in either the 19th or 20th centuries. Censuses from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century record the use of Polish, German, Polish and German (bilingual population) and other (Bohemian/Moravian) languages. The percentages of these categories in the 1910 census are as follows: 53%: 40%: 4%: 3%.¹⁶ It was in that period that the questions about nationality and language were included in the censuses, according to the principle of *Einzelssprache* (one person could fluently speak only one language, that is their mother tongue), ignoring the fact that a large part of the Silesian community was bilingual,¹⁷ and gave birth to that ‘classificatory tradition that to this day defines Silesian as a dialect (*gwara*) of the Polish language and Moravian as a dialect (*nářečí*) of Czech’.¹⁸ And so, Silesian speakers were declared Polish speaking, as the period in question was the time of the domination of strong nation states where there was no room for regionalisms. They were simply not taken into account, and the nation states ‘dragged’ the Silesians to their side with the help of propaganda, manipulation, and threats. On the other hand, a separatist

¹⁴ R. Kaczmarek, “Ludzie – stosunki demograficzne...”, p. 55.

¹⁵ M. Szmeja, “Czy zmiana identyfikacji? Ślązacy we współczesnym społeczeństwie polskim”, *Studia Migracyjne-Przegląd Polonijny* 2013, No. 39 (1 [147]), p. 181. All the quotations from Polish sources have been translated by the author of the present article.

¹⁶ R. Kaczmarek, “Ludzie – stosunki demograficzne...”, p. 52.

¹⁷ Or better: polyglossic: using Silesian at home and in the neighbourhood, German in school, state offices and army and Polish in church.

¹⁸ T. Kamusella, “Silesian: from Gwara to Language after 1989”, *Rocznik Polsko-Niemiecki* 2016, No. 24/1, p. 85.

organisation emerged, the Union of Upper Silesians (*Związek Górnoślązaków/Bund der Oberschlesier*), initially basing its sense of regional distinctiveness on Polish-German bilingualism and biculturalism (it claimed the existence of a separate Silesian nation and the need to create an independent region), and later mainly on nationality demands.¹⁹

As for the language influences to which the Silesian dialect was subjected, it took on certain structures from the Czech and German languages, as a consequence of everyday contacts with representatives of these two nations. Instead, centuries of isolation from the Polish state gave, as a result, a number of archaic features, for example, regional inflection forms, and the differences between the Silesian dialect and the Polish literary language increased.²⁰ We should also remember about the deliberate, intensive Germanisation of the Silesians, carried out both during the rule of Bismarck and the later German domination in this area. Hence, the influence of the German language was extremely strong, especially in the semantic area of everyday life and administration,²¹ which resulted directly from the situation for many years in (Prussian) offices and the (Prussian) army in which it was possible to communicate only in German. Communication with the authorities of industrial enterprises, mainly mines, in which only German speakers could advance, was similar. To this, education should also be added; from the 1870s, teaching in Polish was allowed only during religion lessons in the lower grades of primary school, and later, during the Kulturkampf period, even this privilege was withdrawn.²² The influence of the German language after World War II began to wane, as a consequence of an active eradication by the communist Polish authorities. In the years 1945–49, the inhabitants of Upper Silesia were subjected to nationality verification and national rehabilitation; they had to prove their relationship with the Polish culture and nation, otherwise they had to leave their homeland.²³ The Polish language took the place of German as the *Dachsprache*²⁴ and the Silesian ethnolect came lexically closer to Polish.²⁵ From the end of World War II, the German language disappeared from public life; it was

¹⁹ R. Kaczmarek, “Ludzie – stosunki demograficzne...”, p. 54.

²⁰ A. Kowalska, *Z historii polszczyzny ogólnej i regionalnej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2002, p. 67.

²¹ W. Lubaś, *Studia socjolingwistyczne*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, Opole 2013, p. 360.

²² K. Struve, “Germanizacja i agitacja wszechpolska w XIX wieku. Z perspektywy niemieckiej”, in: R. Kaczmarek, J. Bahlcke, D. Gawrecki, Dan (eds), *Historia Górnego Śląska. Polityka, gospodarka i kultura europejskiego regionu*, Dom Współpracy Polsko-Niemieckiej, Gliwice 2011, p. 428.

²³ M. Szmeja, *Czy zmiana identyfikacji?*, p. 181.

²⁴ ‘roof language’ – the term, coined in 1967 by Heinz Kloss, is used in sociolinguistics to indicate a standard language that is a reference language for different dialects in a country (cfr. Heinz Kloss, “‘Abstand languages’ and ‘ausbau languages’”, *Anthropological Linguistics* 1967, Vol. 9, No. 7, pp. 29–41).

²⁵ G. Hentschel, I. Fekete, J. Tambor, “Głos w sprawie aktualnego stanu użycia zapożyczeń niemieckich we współczesnym etnolekcie śląskim i postaw językowych jego użytkowników (raport wstępny z projektu badawczego)”, *Forum Lingwistyczne* 2019, No. 6, p. 18.

no longer used, and until 1989, it was even forbidden (unofficially) to be taught in schools. As a result, while in the earlier period German was the dominant language in official and partly domestic communication, at present this language is practically non-existent.²⁶ On the other hand, in some dialect variants, for example, in the urban language of Upper Silesia, Germanisms were firmly entrenched and can still be found today, especially in the elderly generation.²⁷ For this, and other reasons, from the Polish national point of view Silesian was seen as a corrupt version of the Polish language, and children speaking Silesian were corrected at school (where only literary Polish was taught), often mocked by teachers.²⁸ Many of them became convinced that speaking in Silesian proved their social inferiority and was worth condemning. ‘Until the fall of communism, Silesian was officially perceived as a dialect of Polish that would finally disappear and be replaced by standard Polish in the modernisation process.’²⁹ Against the state actions aimed at eradicating the dialect in the post-war period (e.g., obstructing access to higher social positions), linguistic contestation grew; the Silesians preserved and deliberately used dialectal elements, mainly lexical, as a kind of jargon incomprehensible to non-Silesians.³⁰ In this way, the dialect gained a cryptolalic, almost dissident, function. Taking into account the historical processes and political aspects that hindered the formation of a separate ethnic and national group in Upper Silesia, it can be understood that under the influence of the same tendencies, the Silesian dialect did not undergo the full process of evolution into a language. Nevertheless, the Silesians always felt they belonged to the ‘little homeland’ (or *hajmat* in Silesian or *Heimat* in German) and its language. With the political transformation and democratisation of Poland at the end of the 20th century, it became possible to unfold that sense of regional belonging, a thing that emerged in the census declarations of 2002 and 2011. The sense of distinctiveness was also enhanced by the difficult social situation related to the bankruptcies of the mines and industrial plants in Upper Silesia and the fact that authorities in Warsaw had left the region alone to deal with its own problems.³¹ It was in that period that regional organisations were founded: *Ruch Autonomii Śląska* (Silesian Autonomy Movement) in 1990, *Związek Ludności Narodowości Śląskiej* (Association of People of Silesian Nationality) in 1996 and *Stowarzyszenie Osób Narodowości Śląskiej* (Association of Persons of Silesian Nationality) in 2011, the last two of which were illegal because of

²⁶ P. Popiełński, “Identyfikacje narodowościowe a komunikacja interpersonalna na Górnym Śląsku z perspektywy socjologiczno-politologicznej”, in: M. Czabańska-Rosada, E. Golachowska, E. Serafin, K. Taborska, A. Zielińska (eds), *Pogranicze wschodnie i zachodnie*, Sławistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy, Instytut Sławistyki PAN, Warszawa 2015, pp. 134–135.

²⁷ W. Lubaś, *Studia socjolingwistyczne*, p. 360; Hentschel G., Fekete I., Tambor J., “Głos w sprawie aktualnego stanu użycia zapożyczeń niemieckich we współczesnym etnolekcie śląskim...”.

²⁸ L. Nijakowski, “O procesach narodotwórczych na Śląsku”, in: L. Nijakowski (ed.), *Nadciągają Ślązacy. Czy istnieje narodowość śląska?* Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR, Warszawa 2004, p. 145.

²⁹ T. Kamusella, “Silesian...”, p. 87

³⁰ J. Tambor, *Mowa Górnoszlązaków...*, p. 114.

³¹ T. Kamusella, “Silesian...”, p. 91.

the use in their name of the term ‘Silesian nationality’.³² The Polish authorities claim that there is no such thing as Silesian nationality or language. ‘Faced with the state’s unfavourable attitude, the Silesians began developing their language and culture at the grassroots level as they saw fit.’³³ In the 21st century, the local culture exceeded the framework of a low, folk culture and the dynamics of its development is still high. It is understandable that to express these cultural needs, a project appeared for creating an independent, regional language, different from the disabled and mocked form in which it was used, mainly in folk and humorous texts. In this new reality, only a modern, multifunctional and prestigious regional language could play the role of a culture-forming tool.³⁴

The need for one’s own language and to belong to a distinct group (ethnic or national) is evidenced by the previously mentioned recent censuses in which Silesians declare belonging to the Silesian minority; in the census conducted by the Central Statistical Office in 2002, there were 173,153 people, of whom 56,643 declared that they use the regional language in unofficial situations. In the census conducted in 2011, this had increased to 847,000 people, of whom 509,000 declared the use of the Silesian dialect at home. Popieliński³⁵ observes interesting data related to the linguistic declarations: in the 2011 census, Silesian is declared as a mother tongue by over 95,000 of the inhabitants of Upper Silesia, which is a far smaller number of people than those who declare they communicate in it at home (411,000).³⁶ Popieliński explains this by the fact that most probably some people using the Silesian ethnolect did not acquire it during the first socialisation, but later. This would testify to the increasing vitality of the Silesian language. Regarding ethnic/national belonging, it should be mentioned that 44.4% of Silesians declared this as exclusively Silesian (not combined with Polish) (NSPL 2011³⁷). Thus, it is by far the largest minority registered in the census (more numerous than German and Kashubian). However, we must remember that a declaration of national or ethnic belonging is not a stable feature; it can depend on the political situation (in which it is easier or more difficult to admit one’s distinctiveness) and even

³² SONŚ was registered by the court in 2011. It was a judicial precedent because there is no recognition of Silesian nationality in Polish legislation. The court explained, however, that the statute of the Union only mentions the declared sense of national belonging, which is not contrary to the law. However, the existence of the term ‘Silesian nationality’ in the name caused controversy and appeals against the court’s decision, and then the organization was made illegal (P. Popieliński, “Identyfikacje narodowościowe...”, pp. 133–155.

³³ T. Kamusella, “Silesian...”, p. 100.

³⁴ H. Jaroszewicz, “Rozwój języka Górnoszlązaków w XXI w. Szkic socjolingwistyczny”, *Zeszyty Łużyckie* 2019, No. 53, p. 43.

³⁵ P. Popieliński, “Identyfikacje narodowościowe...”, p. 146.

³⁶ The 2002 census does not provide for a declaration of the mother tongue, therefore, these data cannot be compared in both censuses. However, a huge increase in the number of users of Silesian at home is visible; in 2002 it was 40,200 in Silesia, while in 2011 it was already 411,000.

³⁷ NSPL, Narodowy Spis Powszechny, Struktura narodowo-etniczna, językowa i wyznaniowa ludności Polski, 2011, online, <https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechne/nsp-2011/nsp-2011-wyniki/struktura-narodowo-etniczna-jezykowa-i-wyznaniowa-ludnosci-polski-nsp-2011,22,1.html> (accessed 25-05-2021).

on a momentary impulse, as in 2011 when the leader of the opposition party stated that the Silesian option was a camouflaged German option, a declaration with which he irritated many people who might have made their choices under the influence of this feeling.³⁸ It seems that Silesians have always been aware of their own distinctiveness, which to some extent offsets the model developed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, according to which we had these identification categories: Upper Silesian-Polish or Upper Silesian-German.³⁹ At the end of the 20th century, the political situation changed. While in the early 90s, taking advantage of the atmosphere of the state's democratisation, associations of the German minority became active and many Silesians declared German identity, now the sense of this belonging has clearly weakened and is more ambiguous.⁴⁰ Silesians have started to emphasise their regional identity. In the newest national census, 2021, from which the data are still to be elaborated, we may find questions about national belonging and a sense of ethnic belonging, as well as about the languages used. The questions are analogous to the previous censuses, from 2002 and 2011,⁴¹ and leave open the possibility of answering freely. The scrolling system in each case gives one of the answer options as 'Silesian'. The censuses from 2002 and 2011 showed a downward tendency in declarations of belonging to the German nation (very significant in the early 1990s) and a growing number of Silesian declarations.⁴² It will be interesting to observe the tendencies of declarations of nation-ethnic belonging in the political reality in which the abovementioned political opposition party is in government. As Popieliński emphasises,⁴³ the strategy of future government actions for the protection of national and ethnic minorities may depend on the results of national censuses. This is why nationality and language declarations are so important.

Questions about status and norm

Socio-linguistical point of view: Dangers and chances

From the 1970s, Polish linguists and dialectologists warned dialects were rapidly disappearing⁴⁴ as a result of the state's language policy aimed at linguistic uniformity. Marginalised by the literary language that was taught in schools and used in standard

³⁸ M. Szmeja, "Czy zmiana identyfikacji?", p. 178; P. Popieliński, "Etniczność i narodowość rdzennych mieszkańców Górnego Śląska", *Poznańskie Studia Slawistyczne* 2015, No. 8, p. 144; Idem, "Identyfikacje narodowościowe...", pp. 148–149.

³⁹ R. Kaczmarek, "Ludzie – stosunki demograficzne...", pp. 55–56.

⁴⁰ P. Popieliński, "Etniczność i narodowość rdzennych mieszkańców Górnego Śląska...", p. 140.

⁴¹ While in the census of 2002 one could choose only one nationality, in 2011 more than one could be chosen. Popieliński observes that Silesian nationality has been included although such a nationality was not recognised by the Polish courts. Such a possibility was accepted on the base of Act on the national census of the population from 2011 (P. Popieliński, "Etniczność i narodowość rdzennych mieszkańców Górnego Śląska...", p. 142). In the newest census, Polish citizens may, once again, choose only one nationality.

⁴² P. Popieliński, "Etniczność i narodowość rdzennych mieszkańców Górnego Śląska...", pp. 142–144.

⁴³ P. Popieliński, "Identyfikacje narodowościowe...", p. 140.

⁴⁴ J. Tambor, *Mowa Górnoszlązaków...*, p. 80.

official situations, dialects (including Silesian) functioned for a long time as a tool of everyday communication, in direct contact and in unofficial situations. Their status was lower than that of the national language, being perceived from the outside as the language of uneducated people. Thus, the evaluating factor overlapped with a typical situation of diglossia, understood as an asymmetric system, in which one of the languages enjoys greater, and the other less, prestige, and there is also a diaphasic differentiation of the communicative situations in which they are used. To this day, as shown by field studies carried out in Katowice⁴⁵ and in Upper Silesia, the functional differentiation between the use of dialect and literary language persists in fact in all social strata. The respondents do not feel the need to recognise the Silesian ethnolect as an official language. Only 5% of active Silesian users declared that it should be recognised as the only official language in Silesia.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the vast majority would like a greater presence of spoken Silesian in public life (restaurants, shops, streets) and in schools.⁴⁷ It therefore seems that the alleged threat to the Polish language in this region is not real. Silesians are attached to their speech and want to support it in various fields, but they do not demand it replaces the Polish language in official spheres. The status of a regional language would thus be an ideal (and sufficient) response to these needs, as it would offer broadly understood systemic support to this element of regional identity, necessary to keep *ślōnskŏ godka* (Silesian language) in 'good condition'. However, for this to happen, codification is required in the Polish political reality,⁴⁸ even if the standard would necessarily be slightly different from each of the actually spoken variations. In fact, independence from the local dialectal background is a constitutional characteristic of a language.⁴⁹

Despite the efforts to maintain the vitality of this language, there is a continuous, natural process of interpenetration of Silesian and Polish, which in the long run threatens to assimilate the former into the latter. It is possible that if one does not take care to standardise, and thus maintain a certain separate form of Silesian, in the future only a relic of it will remain in the form of a series of geosynonyms⁵⁰ and a specific pronunciation. Linguistic unification has already occurred in many European countries, and in those where minority dialects or languages still exist, efforts are being made to prevent them from disappearing. In 2008, Tambor claimed that 'One of the important factors of the weakening condition of the Silesian dialect is its low degree of codification.'⁵¹ As Bogusław Wyderka observes,⁵² today we can still refer to active

⁴⁵ U. Burzywoda, B. Cząstka-Szymon, D. Dylus, H. Synowiec, H., "Język mieszkańców Katowic – zróżnicowanie i funkcjonowanie dawniej i dziś", in: A. Barciak, E. Chojecka, S. Fertacz (eds), *Środowisko, dzieje, kultura, język i społeczeństwo*, Vol. 2, pp. 309–394, Muzeum Historii Katowic, Katowice 2012, p. 380.

⁴⁶ G. Hentschel, I. Fekete, J. Tambor, "Głos w sprawie aktualnego stanu...", p. 28.

⁴⁷ Ibidem, p. 25.

⁴⁸ J. Tambor, "Status języka a wola ludu i kodyfikacja: przypadek śląski", *Forum Lingwistyczne* 2014, No. 1, p. 47.

⁴⁹ H. Jaroszewicz, "Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w.", p. 24.

⁵⁰ This term is used in linguistics to indicate synonymic words that function in a local context.

⁵¹ J. Tambor, *Mowa Górnślązaków...*, p. 81.

⁵² B. Wyderka, "O standaryzacji języka śląskiego", *Kwartalnik Opolski* 2018, No. 1, p.16.

knowledge of the dialect, but there appear to be more and more deviations, increasing irregularities and, in the future, this problem may worsen. The lack of a linguistic norm is also one of the reasons why Silesian has not been recognised as a regional language in the provisions of the Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and the Regional Language (*Ustawa o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz języku regionalnym* – UMNE) of 6 January 2005.

It should be realised that the existing high variability of linguistic forms – without having a fixed point of reference in a standard version – is more susceptible to change. Although such changes are in themselves a natural process, in the case of a dialect, they may mean a gradual disappearance under the influence of the dominant national language. The reality of continuous linguistic contact brings with it the phenomena of lexical flow, for example, borrowings from the Polish language, which are adapted to the dialect at the phonetic and morphological (inflectional) levels. However, for this to occur the dialect must be viable, otherwise it will be assimilated. Such was and still is the situation of the Silesian ethnolect. According to researchers, by the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries there was already great variability in the Silesian dialect, manifested, for example, by the changeability of forms in the speech of the same person. Kazimierz Nitsch, an outstanding Polish dialectologist, author of the first complete study of dialects of the whole of Silesia, published in 1909, emphasises that, depending on the communicative situation, the same person may speak different forms of the dialect.⁵³ For this reason, the Silesian ethnolect still cannot be called a language because:

The regional language, like the national language, is standardised. It is not subject to gradation/variability. Either someone speaks the language correctly or he does not. On the other hand, dialect is a non-codified type of speech, and therefore subject to gradation/variation. Therefore, it is possible to defend the claim that someone speaks Silesian (Silesian dialect) ‘more’ or ‘less’. [...] Only a complete codification: dictionaries, grammars, etc., i.e., an action aimed at including today’s Silesian dialect on the list of regional languages existing in Poland, could change this situation.⁵⁴

Research by Bartmiński⁵⁵ shows that after having lost the status of an exclusive language of communication, dialects sometimes assume the role of a specific functional variant, or a neighbourly language. Tambor⁵⁶ states that in the case of the Silesian ethnolect this is actually the case; in families where active competence in the Silesian language usually disappears quickly along with subsequent generations, the dialect sometimes remains – especially in the intermediate generation, which stops using it in most communication situations – in family or local use, such as talking to neighbours or at the local convenience store. It is therefore an expression of the identity of a small

⁵³ K. Nitsch, *Dialekty polskie Śląska. Materiały i Prace Komisji Językowej Akademii Umiejętności*, 2nd ed. Vol. IV, Kraków 1939.

⁵⁴ J. Tambor, *Mowa Górnślązaków...*, p. 83.

⁵⁵ J. Bartmiński, *O derywacji stylistycznej. Gwara ludowa w funkcji języka artystycznego*, UMCS, Lublin 1977, p. 222.

⁵⁶ J. Tambor, *Mowa Górnślązaków...*, pp. 115–116.

community. Field studies conducted by a team of researchers in the Katowice urban area led to similar conclusions.⁵⁷ The study also shows that the use of the Silesian language is perceived as a strategy of linguistic convergence, that is, a way of getting closer to the interlocutor, while the standard language is more adequate in official situations (Tambor gives the example of a Silesian man who speaks with his own parents in Silesian, but with his father-in-law, also a Silesian, only in Polish).

The factor influencing the life of a dialect is its usability. The Silesian ethnolect can be considered in this context as at risk of extinction. As it has always served as the language of everyday 'home' communication, today it is no longer necessary to achieve the goal of understanding between people. First of all, Upper Silesia is inhabited by a majority of immigrant origins (ethnically non-Silesian), and secondly, the indigenous people also actively use standard Polish language in everyday conversations. If we consider the natural and very general principle of the economy of effort,⁵⁸ which applies to both individual and group behaviour, we can explain the reasons for the danger to which the Silesian talk is exposed. In linguistics, the principle of language economy manifests itself in the pursuit of maximum communication efficiency while eliminating the 'inefficient' elements of the system. This phenomenon can be observed at many levels of the diachronic development of individual languages; in phonology it is visible in various reductions of consonant and vowel groups, at the morpho-syntactic level, the simplification of inflectional schemes and the tendency to systematise syntactic patterns.⁵⁹ Also, the relationship between languages which are in contact with each other brings linguistic changes over time. In a situation where one of the languages is hierarchically subordinate to another, it begins to narrow the spheres of influence, because a hierarchically higher language functions in the area of official communication.

This phenomenon can be illustrated using the example of what happened with Italian dialects. From the linguistic point of view, they are fully fledged languages, developed directly from Latin, on a par with the Tuscan dialect, which, due to the arbitrary decision of a group of scholars gathered around the venerable Accademia della Crusca, gained the status of the Italian language at the end of the 16th century. Since then, despite the fact that many Italian dialects could boast not only of a written tradition, but also of high literature, the process began of dialects withdrawing from areas of official communication in favour of the standard language. During the fascist

⁵⁷ U. Burzywoda, B. Cząstka-Szymon, D. Dylus, H. Synowiec, "Język mieszkańców Katowic...", p. 380.

⁵⁸ The principle states that in a given life activity no effort is made greater than that necessary to achieve the intended goal (G. K. Zipf, *Human Behavior and the Principle of Least Effort: An Introduction to Human Ecology*, 2016, online, <https://books.google.pl/books?id=m-XDCwAAQBAJ&lpg=PP1&dq=inauthor%3A%22George%20Kingsley%20Zipf%22&hl=pl&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false> [accessed 2021-05-25]).

⁵⁹ The processes mentioned above take place, as is easy to observe, outside the individual who is not aware of them, as Ferdinand De Saussure argued about diachronic changes (F. De Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, Arbre D'Or, Genève 2005, p. 106, online <https://arbredor.com/ebooks/CoursLinguistique.pdf> [accessed 25-05-2021]).

period, the dialects were already officially persecuted by the authorities, and there were heavy fines for using them in writing. It is worth noting that the vast majority of Italian citizens continued to use the dialect in their daily lives, and their competence in the Italian language was quite limited, to the extent that even teachers in schools faced difficulties in using the Italian language correctly. Today, despite a change in Italy's language policy and efforts to revitalise dialects, they are still in the regression phase. This is clearly related to the fact that today's Italians are proficient in using the standard language and they acquire it no longer by way of learning, but through first socialisation. As Italian is a natural and fully functional system for communicating in all areas, the dialect becomes less and less needed. Even so, it still does not die out. Why? In our opinion, it still has an important role, namely identification within the regional group, which is an essential element of the complex Italian identity. According to Ellen Bouchard Ryan,⁶⁰ users of a lower rank language often do not give up on it precisely because it is an element of their group identity, which is dear to them, a factor that maintains solidarity within a small group, a language close to the heart, more efficiently expressing the feelings and semantic subtleties of the surrounding reality.⁶¹ This readiness to 'keep the language alive', which from the point of view of the economy of effort is not rational, will obviously depend on a subjective assessment of whether the users consider the regional or ethnic identity a value worth cherishing.

In some respects, from the social, communicational, and political points of view, the Silesian ethnolect is in quite a similar situation to that described above. The main difference is that it has never had the status of an official language in the region. This function was performed alternately by the national languages: Polish and German. Therefore, Silesian was always hierarchically subordinated, and the scope of its use was usually limited to unofficial situations, assuming that the users of the Silesian language had at the same time a certain competence in the field of the currently functioning official language. To change this situation and raise its status, the ethnolect must participate in the world's culture, and this is possible thanks to, among others, literary translations, which at the beginning may seem awkward, as they must adapt a functionally defective dialect to a literary developed language, but the process of its intellectualisation progresses and leads the dialect in expanding its functional range. In recent years, Silesian 'exceeded the definition of a dialect',⁶² intended as the speech of an uneducated rural population, characteristic of a specific region of the country, functionally limited, found mainly in informal contacts. As we will see in following sections, present-day Silesian cannot be 'pushed' into its definition framework.⁶³ It is, however, necessary to take targeted measures to support this process within the revitalisation activities.

⁶⁰ E. Bouchard Ryan, *Why do Low-Prestige Language Varieties Persist?* in: H. Giles, R. St Clair, Robert (eds), *Language and Social Psychology*, Blackwell, Oxford 1979, pp. 145–57.

⁶¹ See also the statements of Andrea Camilleri, the famous Italian author, on the Sicilian dialect (A. Camilleri, T. De Mauro, *La lingua batte dove il dente duole*, Laterza, Bari 2014).

⁶² B. Wyderka, "O rozwoju polskich dialektów", *Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne* 2014, Vol. 21 (41), No. 2, p. 112.

⁶³ H. Jaroszewicz, "Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w.", p. 32.

Distinctiveness and variability of the Silesian ethnolect

As we said in the previous section, the modern Silesian regional identity needs a solid standard code with which to express itself within the wider national frame. In this part of the article, we will try to analyse the issue of whether a standard norm of the Silesian language is really needed, for what purpose and to what extent it has been elaborated until now.

Nowadays, we have a situation in which the variability of the dialectal variants of Silesian is still so great that it allows the inhabitants of nearby towns to distinguish each other, and every modification, lexical or phonetic, is perceived as a foreign, often unacceptable element. Is it possible, then, to imagine the emergence of one general linguistic norm which, after all, by definition, will not be identical to any of these numerous existing variants? And above all, can *ślōnskō godka* be considered distinct enough to apply for the status of a regional language? Many Polish linguists are sceptical about this; Helena Synowiec and Jan Miodek claim that raising one variant of the ethnolect would impoverish it and lead to the disappearance of its variability.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, it seems quite probable that such a gradual disappearance would not be stopped even without a normative Silesian and the ethnolect deprived of a norm would not have better chances to survive. But, as Jaroszewicz observes, ‘the newly created language cannot be identical with the dialects from which it grows. One of the constitutive features of each language is its independence from the local dialectal basis.’⁶⁵ As for the possible confusion and rejection of a new norm by the speakers, Jaroszewicz argues that a normative version in every language is different than its spoken variants, so Silesians should not be surprised by that fact:

After all, the communication space of each language is separated by a caesura that marks the area of normative and non-normative behaviour. The discrepancy between the Silesian standard and the living Silesian language, as well as the inorganic nature of the first code, will therefore fit into the common, normal patterns of the communication space.⁶⁶

Activists also criticise another proposal which consists of taking parts of different variants for norm-building. Such an idea would eliminate the risk of marginalisation of some dialect variants for the benefit of others. They call it ‘Silesian Esperanto’ and do not give it any chance of being accepted by the community.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, in language history we find, apart from Esperanto, other examples of this kind; in the 14th century, Dante proposed creating the literary language of Italy from the best parts of various Italian dialects (*De vulgari eloquentia*). Much later, in 1998, Heinrich Schmid developed a standard for a Ladin Dolomitan language based on elements of various variants of the language (*Wegleitung für den Aufbau einer gemeinsamen Schriftsprache der Dolomitenladiner*⁶⁸).

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 25.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 24.

⁶⁶ Ibidem.

⁶⁷ Ibidem, pp. 26–27.

⁶⁸ H. Schmid, *Wegleitung für den Aufbau einer gemeinsamen Schriftsprache der Dolomitenladiner*, Istitut Cultural Ladin Micura de Rù, San Martin de Tor 1998.

If we look at the ‘Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional languages’, it states that a regional language may be considered a language traditionally used in a country by its citizens and which is ‘different from the official language of that State’, but without taking dialects into account.⁶⁹ The Act recognises only Kashubian as a regional language in Poland. Silesian has always been considered as a dialect in Poland, which is why Polish linguists usually answer any questions about its possible recognition as a language in the negative. For example, Jan Miodek, while expressing his opinion on the bill submitted on 30 March 2012, aimed at recognising the Silesian ethnolect as a regional language, stated unequivocally that ‘the language of Silesians [...] does not differ significantly from the official language of the state and is its regional variant, that is, a dialect’.⁷⁰ As such, in accordance with the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages,⁷¹ it cannot be considered a regional language. Since 2007, several attempts to raise Silesian to the status of a regional language have been made (2007, 2010, 2012, 2016, 2018), the last of which was rejected in 2019.⁷² The *Rada Języka Polskiego* (RJP – Polish Language Council), a body appointed to advise on these applications, has always expressed a negative opinion, arguing the lack of linguistic premises which would justify such an emancipation.⁷³ At the same time, in an opinion given in 2012, the Council claims that:

The boundary between a language and a dialect is fluid both diachronically (some territorial variants of a language, initially considered dialects, mature, develop and over time gain the status of a separate language) and synchronously (the same variant of language is sometimes considered a dialect in some respects or by some researchers, or treated as a separate language by other researchers). In many cases, political considerations determine whether a dialect is granted the status of a separate language.⁷⁴

Polish linguists generally agree with the opinion of the RJP on the close relationship of Silesian to the Polish language. For example, after having compared Silesian with other Polish dialects, Jadwiga Wronicz states that it cannot claim to be independent. At the same time, she claims the Kashubian language is a Polish dialect, regardless of its already functioning status as a regional language, granted in the UMNE, as she

⁶⁹ UMNE, Ustawa z dnia 6 stycznia 2005 r. o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym. Dz.U. Nr 17, poz. 141, online, <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20050170141> (accessed 25-05-2021), Chapter 4, Art. 19, 1.1, 1.2.

⁷⁰ M. Myśliwiec, “Ślōnskō godka – przaśny folklor czy język regionalny?”, *Przegląd Prawa Konstytucyjnego* 2013, No. 3 (15), p. 114.

⁷¹ ERKM, “Europejska Karta Języków Regionalnych lub Mniejszościowych, sporządzona w Strasburgu dnia 5 listopada 1992 r.” Dz.U. 2009 Nr 137, poz. 1121, 1992, online, <http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20091371121/O/D20091121.pdf> (accessed 25-05-2021), Part I, Art. 1, a [ii].

⁷² H. Jaroszewicz, “Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w.”, p. 21; Idem, “Współczesny rozwój etnolektu śląskiego na tle językowych procesów emancypacyjnych w Europie”, *Slavica Wratislaviensia* 2020, No. 171, p. 104.

⁷³ Idem, “Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w.”, pp. 22–23.

⁷⁴ RJP, “Śląszczyzna jest odmianą dialektalną języka polskiego”, *Śląsk* 2012, No. 11 (205), p. 3.

considers such extralinguistic aspects as awareness of the distinctiveness of one's language, existing literature or even the granting of official language status irrelevant for evaluating the stage of emancipation of a dialect to language status.⁷⁵ Some researchers⁷⁶ claim that the criterium of mutual intelligibility could be relevant for distinguishing a language from its dialect. Jaroszewicz demonstrates the groundlessness of such opinions by showing quite consistent intelligibility between many Slavic languages (on the other hand, as Łukasz Kohut proved in his speech in European Parliament, such a criterion may be applied in the case of Silesian⁷⁷). Jaroszewicz⁷⁸ shows the inability to indicate clear interlinguistic (structural) criteria, on the basis of which it would be possible to make a distinction between a language and a dialect. In the face of this impossibility, some researchers, including, among others, Polish linguists,⁷⁹ turn to extralinguistic criteria, in line with the spirit of contemporary sociolinguistics. Kazimierz Polański puts it clearly:

The problem of distinguishing languages from dialects is not a purely linguistic problem, it is rather a sociological, psychological problem. To some extent also a political one. It is impossible to establish linguistic criteria that would make it possible to distinguish a language from a dialect. The essential thing here is linguistic awareness, which makes a certain linguistic community mature at a certain moment and decide to become independent: it develops a dictionary of its language, codifies the rules of its use, spelling rules, the choice of the alphabet, etc. From now on, you can speak a separate language.⁸⁰

Languages mature from dialects and, once this process is complete, only then are they born. From a sociolinguistic point of view, bringing a language to life is parallel to the process of limiting its formal variability and expanding its functional capacity.⁸¹ We could observe the birth of languages using examples of the languages of the former Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Jaroszewicz calls the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries in Europe a period of 'the spring of languages', in which 'the map of Europe has been enriched with several dozen new languages, which made the genetic and historical classification of languages, adopted so far and established by many years of tradition, no more relevant'.⁸² Moreover, the similarities to Polish, its dialects, and other Slavic

⁷⁵ J. Wronicz, "Mowa Ślązaków – gwara, dialekt czy język regionalny (w związku z próbą zmiany statusu prawnego)", *ingVaria* 2013, Vol. VIII, No. 1 (15), p. L175.

⁷⁶ Jan Miodek, in: H. Jaroszewicz, "Rozwój języka Górnos Ślązaków w XXI w.", pp. 31–32.

⁷⁷ See the introduction to this article.

⁷⁸ H. Jaroszewicz, "Rozwój języka Górnos Ślązaków w XXI w.", pp. 30–31.

⁷⁹ K. Polański, "O nauce i języku", *Śląsk* 1997, No. 6, pp. 31–38; W. Lubaś, *Studia socjolingwistyczne*; A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie na tle procesów językotwórczych i standaryzacyjnych współczesnej słowiańszczyzny*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2015; H. Jaroszewicz, "Rozwój języka Górnos Ślązaków w XXI w."; Idem, "Współczesny rozwój etnolektu śląskiego...".

⁸⁰ K. Polański, "O nauce..." p. 37.

⁸¹ Ferguson, in: S. Grabias, *Język w zachowaniach społecznych. Podstawy socjolingwistyki i logopedii*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2019, p. 102, online, https://repozytorium.uph.edu.pl/bitstream/handle/11331/2328/Grabias.Stanislaw_Jezyk_w_zachowaniach_spoecznych.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed 25-05-2021).

⁸² H. Jaroszewicz, "Współczesny rozwój etnolektu śląskiego...", p. 101.

languages do not prove Silesian's genetic dependence on Polish, but simply its systemic and genetic relationship with this language.

Karol Dejna, a dialectologist, claims that Polish dialects 'are not a derivative of a national language, but partially the opposite – the nationwide language has elevated some of the features that distinguish Polish dialects to the rank of binding norms'.⁸³ In fact, if we think carefully, the first Polish sentence written in *Liber fundationis claustris sanctae Mariae Virginis in Heinrichow* from 1268, may be as well identified as Silesian, as it quotes the speech of people living in Lower Silesia. On the other hand, the common roots of languages do not mean that they are related once and forever; languages are living communication systems and, as such, may converge or diverge in the course of their development.⁸⁴ At present, the Silesian ethnolect seems to meet all the definition features of 'regional collateral languages' listed by Tomasz Wicherkiewicz, an expert in the field of language policy; in short, Silesian is an indigenous language, related to the national one (*Dachsprache*) and functioning as a low-prestige code, perceived as rural and undeveloped, although having quite considerable writings and being an indicator of a strong regional identity. One of the features enumerated in the definition is also the standardisation and codification *in statu nascendi*.⁸⁵ As this last condition is also considered indispensable by Polish linguists and politicians, we will delineate the steps taken so far in this regard in the next section.

Language emancipation and the codification process

Milorad Radovanović, the Serbian sociolinguist, distinguished ten stages of language standardisation: 1. selection (of the standard), 2. standard description, 3. codification, 4. elaboration (popularisation of the standard), 5. acceptance (official recognition of the standard), 6. implementation (adoption of the standard in practice), 7. expansion (with the consequent reduction of local variants), 8. cultivation (institutional activities aim to care for the development of the standard), 9. evaluation (verification of the standard with the local society), 10. reconstruction of the norm.⁸⁶ Although Radovanović claims that these stages follow each other in sequence, in the case of Silesian it is not entirely true, and we can observe different steps happening in parallel. In fact, alongside the first three phases we may observe at least phases six and eight.

The first step towards codification is selecting a variant to form the basis for developing a standard. In the course of natural linguistic evolution, usually one of the many competing variants 'takes the lead' and imposes itself on the others. In addition, it should be considered whether the basis of the norm should be a language closer to rural dialects, where more lexical archaisms have survived, or the language of the most

⁸³ K. Dejna 1993, p. 26, in: A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie*.... p. 78.

⁸⁴ A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie*...; H. Jaroszewicz, "Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w."

⁸⁵ T. Wicherkiewicz, *Regionalne języki kolateralne Europy – porównawcze studia przypadku z polityki językowej*, Wyd. Rys., Poznań 2014, pp. 89–90.

⁸⁶ Radovanović 1979, in: R. Bońkowski, "Etapy standaryzacji języka bośniackiego", *Zeszyty Cyrylo-Metodiańskie* 2013, No. 2, p. 34.

industrialised part of the region, which, due to the openness to innovation and foreign influences typical of large agglomerations (e.g., borrowings from German in areas related to industry and administration), is called a mixed code. Taking into account the standardisation activities in recent years, it seems that one group of dialects has been taking the lead; this is the interdialect of the industrial district of the eastern part of Silesia,⁸⁷ a group called the Kazimierz Nitsch Toszek-Gliwice dialects⁸⁸ – in general we are talking about the area of the Upper Silesian industrial district. This variant emerged spontaneously due to the fact that most of the people involved in the standardisation process come from this area.

The choice of a pattern is a difficult task, as each of the equivalents, in terms of status, and numerous variants of Silesian, plays the most important role in determining its survival, namely, the function of group identification. Attachment to one's own (in this case Silesian) regional speech was, as Alina Kowalska claims, a unique phenomenon in the whole country; unlike in other parts of Poland, even the intelligentsia used the dialect here, because, among other reasons, for a very long time 'knowledge of the Polish literary language was not a factor determining social advancement'.⁸⁹ Moreover, the use of the Silesian ethnolect was an element of linguistic resistance to German.

With the dialect's well-established status as an indicator of collective identity, giving up one's own speech in favour of another, related, but not the one closest to the heart, may be difficult for language users to accept. When a representative of an ethnic minority speaks in a nonstandard variant of a minority language, there is also a problem of teaching that language in the standard variant, because the speaker judges the attempts of 'correcting his mistakes' as not authorised. In fact, Polish linguists raise that potential problem as an argument against the standardisation process.⁹⁰ A proposal for avoiding such a gap would be the introduction of a model of 'bidialectal' education,⁹¹ in which, on the one hand, schools would propose a standard minority language, and on the other hand, the existing territorial variety, acceptable in informal contact, would not be stigmatised. Such an approach would permit the language to remain 'close to the heart', that is, the basic function of this language would still be fulfilled, and on the other hand, the prestige of the minority language as a whole would be ensured, because written texts and translations would be published in a standard version, and institutional communication would also be possible. To adopt such a solution, the Silesian language needs the status of a regional language, which would enable the institutionalisation of activities and their financing from public funds.

⁸⁷ B. Wyderka, "O standaryzacji języka śląskiego".

⁸⁸ H. Synowiec, "Jeden śląski język odbierze Ślązakom ich godkę?", *Dziennik Zachodni*, 17 lutego 2011, online, <https://dziennikzachodni.pl/jeden-slaski-jezyk-odbierze-slazakom-ich-godke/ar/370293> (accessed 25-05-2021).

⁸⁹ A. Kowalska, *Z historii polszczyzny...*, p. 69.

⁹⁰ I. Nowakowska-Kempna, "...uważam stworzenie jednego wspólnego dialektu śląskiego za niemożliwe", *Śląsk* 2008, No. 11 (157), p. 75.

⁹¹ D. Selvaggi, *Il bilinguismo. Da anomalia a costante antropologia*, Aracne, Roma 2012, p. 50. In fact, such a model had been introduced between 1846 and 1920 in the eastern part of Austrian Silesia.

We might assume that the modern story of the emancipation of the Silesian language began after the promulgation of the Act in 2005, when hopes were raised that Silesian would also be recognised as regional language. In 2007, thanks to the actions of two activists, Andrzej Roczniok and Grzegorz Kozubek, Silesian was given the ISO 639-3 code szl, an event that made it possible to found the Silesian version of Wikipedia in 2008. In the same year, two organisations for the protection and promotion of the language were established: *Danga* (Rainbow in Silesian) and *Pro Loquela Silesiana* (For the Sake of Silesian). In recent years, two other organisations have been founded: *Nasz Wspólny Śląski Dom* (Our Common Silesian House) in 2012, which declares interest in the codification works and *Demokratyczna Unia Regionalistów Śląskich* (Democratic Union of Silesian Regionalists) in 2015, which aims to promote the full standardisation of Silesian and its recognition as a regional language or in the UNESCO endangered languages register.⁹² We have already mentioned the parallel actions of activists in the Polish parliament whose aim is the recognition of Silesian as a regional language, that also started in 2007. One of the results of such activities were two conferences on the standardisation of Silesian, organised by Andrzej Roczniok and Jolanta Tambor in 2008 and 2009.⁹³ One of the outcomes of the discussions at these conferences was the formation of a research group, led by Jolanta Tambor, who developed the spelling standard called *norma ślabikorzowa* (primer norm⁹⁴) or the *Cieszyn norm*, as it was accepted in Cieszyn in 2009. The first name is due to the fact that this norm has been applied in *Gōrnoślōnski ślabikōrz*,⁹⁵ edited in 2010, one of the most popular in the region. The spelling norm marks phonemes characteristic for Silesian but leaves space for the use of various local options.⁹⁶ Apart from this standard, others have been elaborated (like those of Andrzej Roczniok or Dariusz Dyrda), but *norma ślabikōrzowa* is the most often used, for example, by writers and translators cooperating with Silesia Progress and Narodowa Oficyna Śląska, the largest Silesian-language publishing houses, but also by writers such as Szczepan Twardoch or Alojzy Lyska. It is also implemented in the information portal *wachtyrz.eu* that publishes texts in Silesian, in the linguistic corpus of Silesian on the website *silling.org*, and in the Silesian Wikipedia.

The standardisation of the spelling norm is so far the main step taken in the standardisation process of the Silesian language. Others, like adopting a grammar standard and elaborating a lexical minimum (basic vocabulary), are extremely difficult tasks, due to the still great variability of Silesian and the general lack of a systemic character of the lexis. With respect to the vocabulary, we may consider part of its codification process the existing numerous dictionaries, although many of them do not meet scientific standards. Praiseworthy examples in this respect are *Słownik gwar*

⁹² B. Wyderka, "O standaryzacji języka śląskiego", p. 10.

⁹³ T. Kamusella, "Silesian...", p. 107.

⁹⁴ This unofficial name stems from the fact that this standard orthography was employed first for the production of two Silesian language primers.

⁹⁵ AA.VV., *Gōrnoślōnski ślabikōrz*, Pro Loquela Silesiana, Chorzów 2010.

⁹⁶ B. Wyderka, "O standaryzacji języka śląskiego", p. 8.

*śląskich*⁹⁷ edited by Bogusław Wyderka (2000–2017) or *Słownik frazeologizmów i typowych połączeń wyrazowych w gwarach śląskich* by Lidia Przymuszała⁹⁸ (2013). As Jolanta Tambor claims, these two works ‘are a milestone in the work of Silesian codification understood as collecting and systematizing, and not artificial unifying’.⁹⁹ The researcher herself can also boast of studies in the field of lexis; for example, within an international team she undertook research on borrowings from German in contemporary Silesian.¹⁰⁰ Other extensive, but methodologically poor, dictionaries are those edited by Andrzej Roczniok (*Zbornik polsko-ślonski*, 2007–2010¹⁰¹), Bogdan Kallus (*Słownik górnoślonskiej godki*, 2007¹⁰²) and Dariusz Dyrda (*Rychtig gryfno godka Słownik polsko-śląski*, 2009¹⁰³).¹⁰⁴ An interesting initiative is the internet dictionary *dykcjonorz.eu*, founded by Stanisław Neblik and Wojciech Orliński, that includes 7,000 lexemes with complete paradigmatic information and examples of use. With respect to the lexical level, Bogusław Wyderka¹⁰⁵ articulates the need for elaborating scientific metalinguistic terminology, allowing the description of the Silesian ethnolect and teaching in this language. He also considers it necessary to establish a commission for the standardisation of toponyms.

As for the other grammatical levels (mainly morphosyntactic), the standardisation work is far from being completed. The first step in this respect has been taken by Grzegorz Wieczorek, who elaborated a language guide which was distributed during the standardisation conference of 2008 in Katowice. It is entitled *Tak sie rzóndzi po ślónsku* (That is how you speak Silesian) and discusses, apart from orthography, some aspects of verbs, adjectives, and prepositions. It was the first scientifically based attempt to describe Silesian grammar.¹⁰⁶ The newest initiative of this kind is by a team of specialists organised in 2015 by Józef Porwoł, with the participation, among others, of Artur Czesak, that discusses various grammatical issues and intends to complete the process of codification.¹⁰⁷ In 2017, Jan Drenda edited his *Gramatyka gwary górnośląskiej*¹⁰⁸ (The Upper Silesian Dialect Grammar), but we still cannot speak about one, fully accepted, grammatical norm.¹⁰⁹

⁹⁷ *Słownik gwar śląskich*, ed. B. Wyderka, Instytut Śląski, Opole 2000–2017.

⁹⁸ L. Przymuszała, *Słownik frazeologizmów i typowych połączeń wyrazowych w gwarach śląskich*, Uniwersytet Opolski, Opole 2013.

⁹⁹ J. Tambor, “Status języka a wola ludu...”, p. 47.

¹⁰⁰ G. Hentschel, I. Fekete, J. Tambor, *Język mieszkańców Katowic...*; J. Tambor, “Status języka a wola ludu...”.

¹⁰¹ A. Roczniok, *Zbornik polsko-ślonski Słownik polsko-śląski*, Narodowa Oficyna Śląska, Zabrze 2007–2010.

¹⁰² B. Kallus, *Słownik górnoślonskiej godki*, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2007.

¹⁰³ D. Dyrda, *Rychtig Gryfno Godka Słownik polsko-śląski*, Instytut Slunskij Godki, Łędziny 2009.

¹⁰⁴ A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie...*, p. 181.

¹⁰⁵ B. Wyderka, “O standaryzacji języka śląskiego”, pp. 12–13.

¹⁰⁶ A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie...*, p. 168.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 185.

¹⁰⁸ J. Drenda, *Gramatyka gwary górnośląskiej regionu katowicko-bytomskiego*, Siemianowice Śląskie 2017.

¹⁰⁹ H. Jaroszewicz, “Współczesny rozwój etnolektu śląskiego...”, p. 107.

Once a standard is elaborated, it becomes possible to teach the language at school, not only as a subject (as a foreign language), but also to use it as a language of schooling. This activity fits in the so-called status planning, that is, the social promotion of the language. In Radovanović's classification, it covers point four, or the popularisation of the standard. Apart from prompts, delineated below, this point includes lessons and seminars on Silesian spelling in schools, community centres and museums, which have occurred in recent years.

Elementarz śląski by Marek Szołtysek,¹¹⁰ published in 2001, may be considered as the first prompt of the Silesian language. It is a selection of readings on school topics, with a description of the alphabet and a supplementary dictionary. It was edited some years before the first attempts at spelling codification, and that is why – as the author himself claims – the Ligoń spelling was adopted in it, which consists of using only Polish alphabet signs.¹¹¹ Six years later, in 2008, Szołtysek published *Rozmówki śląskie. Podręcznik do nauki śląskiej godki*,¹¹² in which he already includes some specific orthographic signs. Apart from the readings, there are sections dedicated to the discussion of the dialectal and historical differentiation, of the lexical complexity (including foreign borrowings and Silesian-Polish false friends), a grammatical part devoted to conjugation and declension paradigms of many parts of speech. In the opinion of Artur Czesak, it is a well-constructed and interesting proposition, though not based on a generally accepted norm, which still lacks. *Rychtig gryfno godka*, by Dariusz Dyrda, published a year later, applies a spelling standard proposed by the author, and contains a series of parallel Polish-Silesian texts. In their elaboration, however, not always the same criteria are adopted.¹¹³ *Gõrnoślõnski ślabikõrz*, from 2010, prepared by a group of authors and consulted by Jolanta Tambor, adopts the spelling norm from Cieszyn (2009). It contains many modern Silesian readings as well as an anthology of older texts and translations, but the grammatical information is marginal. It has become a textbook for teaching Silesian in many elementary schools. Another prompt from 2010, *Ślabikorz ABC*, by Barbara Grynicz and Andrzej Rocznik,¹¹⁴ also adopts the *ślabikorzowa* spelling norm, with a few modifications. As for the lexis contained in the readings, Czesak observes quite a lot Germanisms and alleged archaisms whose actual use in modern Silesian should be verified by corpus and field studies.¹¹⁵ The texts seem to stress the lexical differences between Polish and Silesian and present a less official version of the language than *Gõrnoślõnski ślabikõrz*, but in the opinion of Czesak, this prompt is an interesting position. A third coursebook from 2010, *Ślabikõrz niy dlõ bajtli*, by Mirosław Syniawa¹¹⁶ (co-author of the previous prompt), adopts and explains the spelling norm of Cieszyn, and contains a number

¹¹⁰ M. Szołtysek, *Elementarz śląski*, Wydawnictwo Śląskie ABC, Rybnik 2001.

¹¹¹ A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie...*, p. 170.

¹¹² M. Szołtysek, *Rozmówki śląskie. Podręcznik do nauki śląskiej godki*, Śląskie ABC, Rybnik 2008.

¹¹³ A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie...*, p. 174..

¹¹⁴ B. Grynicz, A. Rocznik, *Ślabikorz ABC*, Narodowa Oficyna Śląska, Zabrze 2010.

¹¹⁵ A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie...*, p. 177.

¹¹⁶ M. Syniawa, *Ślabikõrz niy dlõ bajtli*, Pro Loquela Silesiana, Chorzów 2010.

of the author's texts dealing with such topics as the origin and status of the Silesian language. In my opinion, it may also be considered as an example of raising Silesian to the scientific level, expanding its functional range. There is also a prompt of the Cieszyn variant of the Silesian ethnolect, *Szlabikorz cieszyński rzeczy*, published online and edited by Tomasz Sochacki,¹¹⁷ in which we may find – as in the Upper Silesian prompts discussed above – a selection of readings and lessons dedicated to grammatical issues. All these proposals prove intense promoting activity and attempts to implement a norm, which is still in its formation phase. For this reason, they often represent an idiolectal version of the dialect, eventually consulted by some other users. As Czesak claims, a really trustworthy prompt should be a synthesis of field research conducted after 1909 (that is, starting from Nitsch's first research) and a large corpus of texts that could dispel doubts about concrete lexemes, their chronology, and territorial range.¹¹⁸ In the next section, we will describe the achievements in the field of corpus building which have been completed so far.

Corpus building and status planning

Corpus building is intended as creating a sort of thesaurus with texts written in a language, from the earliest times to contemporary works, as well as generating new texts in this language. One of the aspects of such a corpus creation are translations. As we said previously, translations of high literature prove a target language to be functionally developed. Among Silesian translations we should mention at least the selection of world poetry translated into the Silesian ethnolect by Mirosław Syniawa, entitled *Dante i inksi* (Dante and others),¹¹⁹ from 2014 and his translation of a volume of Robert Burns' poetry – *Wiersze i śpiywki Roberta Burnsa* (2016).¹²⁰ Translations by Grzegorz Kulik include the collection of stories by Charles Dickens, *Godniõ pieśń* (A Christmas Carol, 2017),¹²¹ *Drach*¹²² – an award-winning novel by Szczepan Twardoch (2018) and *Mały Princ* (The Little Prince) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (2018).¹²³ We also have a translation of Franz Kafka's aphorisms by Jerzy Ciurlok (*Ślõnski Kafka*, 2016),¹²⁴ and Zbigniew Kadłubek's Silesian translation of Aeschylus's *Prõmytojs przibity* (*Prometheus Bound*, 2013).¹²⁵ The *New Testament* translation by Gabriel Tobor (2017)¹²⁶ is symbolic in this respect, as the existence of the Bible in

¹¹⁷ T. Sochacki, *Szlabikorz cieszyński rzeczy*, <https://mrrnny.webwave.dev/lib/mrrnny/Szlabikorz-keg0huxf.pdf>.

¹¹⁸ A. Czesak, *Współczesne teksty śląskie...*, pp. 171–172.

¹¹⁹ M. Syniawa, *Dante i inksi*, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2014.

¹²⁰ M. Syniawa, *Wiersze i śpiywki Roberta Burnsa*, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2016.

¹²¹ Ch. Dickens, *Godniõ pieśń*, transl. by G. Kulik, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2017.

¹²² Sz. Twardoch, G. Kulik, *Drach. Edycja śląska*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2018. The title 'Drach' is a polysemic word meaning: a dragon, a scamp or a kite.

¹²³ A. de Saint-Exupéry, *Mały Princ*, transl. G. Kulik, Media Rodzina, Poznań 2018.

¹²⁴ J. Ciurlok, *Ślõnski Kafka*, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2016.

¹²⁵ Ajschylos, *Prõmytojs przibity*, transl. Z. Kadłubek, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2013.

¹²⁶ *Nowy Testamyt po ślõnsku*, transl. G. Tobor, Selfpublishing, 2017.

a given language version is often considered a mandate for the language. In this context, it is also worth mentioning Marek Szołtysek's *Biblia Ślązoka* (Bible of a Silesian),¹²⁷ which is a collection of adaptations of biblical stories (2000).

These translations prove the full functionality of the Silesian ethnolect, both in terms of high literature and the contemporary requirements of general communication. Nevertheless, translations into Silesian are not always accepted. Jaroszewicz refers to the opinions of Jan Miodek and Anna Momot who ridicule the character of the Silesian translations of texts with higher intellectual aspirations. According to these linguists, the only effect of such translations is comic and embarrassing. Such reactions, as Jaroszewicz rightly notices, are a derivative of well-established stereotypes, according to which nonstandard variants of language are seen as:

... functionally limited and underdeveloped codes, to some extent primitive, allowing only content with a low level of intellectualisation and a low level of formal complexity to be conveyed. [...] used only by low social classes, uneducated people, economically disadvantaged, not participating in high culture.¹²⁸

As I am not Silesian, I asked some native users of the Silesian ethnolect¹²⁹ if they had such an impression while reading (or listening to) the Silesian translation of *Drach* by Twardoch. The answer was negative. In the case of the translation of a fragment of Dante's *Divine Comedy* by Syniawa, the feelings were more ambivalent, due to the fact that the work is perceived as linguistically very elegant. We must not forget, however, that Dante himself was criticised by members of the Accademia della Crusca for 'barbarisms' and keeping an inadequate register in his work, to the extent that not everyone wanted to accept his works as a canon that was the basis for the formation of a linguistic norm in the 16th century.

A new path towards language intellectualisation has been traced by the publication of a collection of philosophical essays in Silesian, *Listy z Rzymu*¹³⁰ (Letters from Rome), written by Zbigniew Kadłubek (2008), and *Filozofja po ślōnsku* (Philosophy in Silesian) by Marcin Kik (2015).¹³¹ However, there is also much literature being produced in Silesian. In just the last ten years dozens of titles have been published; novels and collections of stories, poetry, and fairy tales, alongside one-act plays, some of which have been staged. Among the novels, the series of epistolographic novels, *Duchy wojny* (Ghosts of War, 2008–2017),¹³² deserves attention as well as Marcin Melon's quite popular detective tetralogy, *Kōmisorz Hanusik* (2014–2016).¹³³ In 2003, the *Ślōnsko Nacyjno Ōficyno* was founded by Andrzej Rocznik. It was the

¹²⁷ M. Szołtysek, *Biblia Ślązoka*, Wydawnictwo Śląskie ABC, Rybnik 2000.

¹²⁸ H. Jaroszewicz, "Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w.", p. 38.

¹²⁹ These persons come from Upper Silesia and have a higher educational degree (at least a Master's), both in technology and human sciences.

¹³⁰ Z. Kadłubek, *Listy z Rzymu*, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2008.

¹³¹ M. Kik, *Filozofja po ślōnsku*, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2015.

¹³² A. Lysko, *Duchy wojny*, Śląsk, Katowice 2008–2017.

¹³³ M. Melon, *Kōmisorz Hanusik*, Silesia Progress, Luboszyce 2014–2016.

first publishing house specialising in editing books in Silesian. Four years later it inaugurated *Ślůnsko Nacyjo* (Silesian Nation), the first bilingual Polish-Silesian periodical. Dariusz Dyrda founded another periodical, *Ślůnski Cajtůng* (Silesian Newspaper) in 2011, in which he promotes his own spelling standard.¹³⁴ Granting the ISO 639-3 standard made the existence of Silesian in the digital space possible: the establishment of the Silesian-language version of Wikipedia in 2008, the Facebook social networking site, and even a Silesian-language menu on Samsung phones. There are information portals in the network *wachtyrz.eu*, founded in 2018 by Pejter Długosz, Rafał Szyma and Grzegorz Kulik, where a large number of the articles are published in Silesian. A few years ago, a Silesian language office, *ponaszymu.pl*, was founded by Adrian Górecki. It offers translations, language courses and cooperates with Coca Cola, Tchibo and Samsung to produce advertising campaigns in Silesian.¹³⁵ An essential initiative, and an answer to the need for corpus planning, is the creation by Grzegorz Kulik of the *Korpus Ślůnskij Mowy* (Silesian Speech Corpus) *silling.org* (2018), which includes 941 texts, the oldest of which is from the 16th century. The dialect texts were transliterated from the phonetic alphabet according to the *ślabikorzowa* spelling standard. It also offers a Silesian-Polish translator.¹³⁶

Another side of status planning is the activities promoting language in the public space, such as the TVS channel, Radio Piekary, radio broadcasts by Radio Katowice (e.g., *Po naszymu, czyli po Ślůsku*, a programme by Maria Pańczyk in Silesian, *Ligoniowe Radio* by Anna Musialik and Henryk Grzonka) and oratory competitions, such as the *Po naszymu, czyli po Ślůsku* (In our language, that is in Silesian) competition promoted by Maria Pańczyk (since 1993), in which the title of the ‘Silesian of the Year’ is awarded by the jury composed of Prof. Jan Miodek, Prof. Dorota Simonides and Prof. Jerzy Szymik. We should also not forget about cinema. In the 1990s, cinema did recreate a rather stereotypical perception of the dialect imposed by the authorities, but the notable exception here is the work of two well-known Polish directors, Kazimierz Kutz and Lech Majewski.

Silesian is used in the streets, in the frame of the so-called linguistic landscape,¹³⁷ for voice announcements about upcoming stops on Silesian trams, inscriptions and advertisements on shops, etc. Other initiatives take place: Mirosław Syniawa, together with the association *Pro Loquela Silesiana* which he founded, carries out a programme that promotes the use of Silesian in public life and local self-governmental offices, as a counteraction against the discrimination of Silesian speakers.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ T. Kamusella, “Silesian...”, pp. 106–108.

¹³⁵ M. Bednarek, “Od suchara...”.

¹³⁶ H. Jaroszewicz, “Rozwój języka Górnoszlązaków w XXI w.”, p. 33; Idem, “Współczesny rozwój etnolektu ślůskiego...”.

¹³⁷ R. Landry, R.Y. Bourhis, “Linguistic Landscape and Ethnolinguistic Vitality. An Empirical Study”, *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 1997, No. 16 (1), pp. 23–49; E. Shohamy, D. Gorter, *Linguistic Landscape: Expanding the Scenery*, Routledge, London 2008, online, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254919529_Linguistic_Landscape_expanding_the_scenery (accessed 25-05-2021).

¹³⁸ T. Kamusella, “Silesian...”, pp. 114–115.

All these initiatives mentioned above prove that Silesian is no longer a low-prestige code, rather it is a fully functional, modern means of communication, used by all social strata.

Conclusions

The process of nation-shaping provides the phases of transition from ethnic group through nationality to nation. Today, the so-called cultural and historical school maintains that this process depends largely on subjective evaluation.¹³⁹ Referring to linguistic considerations, within this trend, we may rely on the opinion of Kazimierz Polański, who states that it is the political will of the people that determines the distinction between dialect and language.¹⁴⁰ Such opinions give support to attempts to raise the status of the Silesian dialect to a language, which Władysław Lubaś¹⁴¹ considers quite realistic, and Bogusław Wyderka¹⁴² or Henryk Jaroszewicz¹⁴³ as almost inevitable.¹⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the Polish authorities still see a language as the basis of statehood, an approach typical for Central Europe, and therefore are afraid that constituting a new language within the Polish state would lead to separatist movements.¹⁴⁵

In recent years, we have been dealing with the rehabilitation of the Silesian dialect. Speaking Silesian has become fashionable and the dialect is not fading as quickly as expected. As Jaroszewicz emphasises, ‘The Silesian ethnolect in the first two decades of the 21st century underwent a revolutionary transformation, changing from a dialect into a form of language.’¹⁴⁶ There are consistent and coordinated activities of scientists and activists, both in the field of codification and in popularisation of the Silesian language. It seems that there is only a lack of political will to recognise Silesian as a regional language, although from time to time initiatives are carried out by local activists. If we consider the state of development of the Silesian ethnolect and the efforts undertaken as part of the revitalisation activities, it seems that there are no contraindications for considering Silesian as a regional language.

As indicated above, the strictly objective scholar perspective¹⁴⁷ has been replaced in the Europe of today by a more subjective, emic approach. Europe supports cultural and ethnic diversity, which, in spite of top-down efforts, inevitably fades into the sphere of museum folklore. It seems, though, that it is not too late for the Silesian language; it still

¹³⁹ R. Kaczmarek, “Ludzie – stosunki demograficzne...”, p. 56.

¹⁴⁰ K. Polański, “O nauce...”.

¹⁴¹ W. Lubaś, *Studia socjolingwistyczne...*, pp. 337–345.

¹⁴² B. Wyderka, “O rozwoju polskich dialektów...”.

¹⁴³ H. Jaroszewicz, “Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w.”.

¹⁴⁴ Opinions of some of the major Polish researchers, like Bogusław Wyderka or Władysław Lubaś, changed with time: initially sceptical, they turned to consider the raising of Silesian to language status as quite possible (H. Jaroszewicz, “Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w.”, p. 36).

¹⁴⁵ T. Kamusella, “Silesian...”.

¹⁴⁶ H. Jaroszewicz, “Rozwój języka Górnślązaków w XXI w.”, p. 38.

¹⁴⁷ Understood as a description in terms of linguistics.

has many speakers with active linguistic competence. And most of all, there is a sense of regional distinctness and of belonging to the Silesian community that deserves protection on an equal footing with other European communities. In modern Europe, mature enough to recognise ethnic and cultural minorities as worthy of being cultivated and kept alive, there should also be a place for a very numerous group that has been manipulated and discriminated for its individuality for at least a hundred years.

As we can see, the discussion about officialisation of the Silesian language is dynamic. Nevertheless, it seems that without concluding the codification process – the requirement for Poland to recognise Silesian as a regional language¹⁴⁸ – further revitalisation activities could be hindered and the process of the progressive disappearance of this cultural heritage could continue, and this might go unnoticed. Granting regional language status would mean a chance to preserve this heritage, and is not a threat to the unity of the Polish state. So, if we go back to the question asked at the beginning of this article: Why do we need a standard? – we may answer it in two ways. The first answer has a narrower perspective (as narrow is the Polish authorities' thinking): because, otherwise, Poland will not recognise the regional language status of the Silesian ethnolect. The second answer has a wider breath: because it is right to protect local cultural heritage, and the language indisputably is such a reality.

Upper Silesia is undoubtedly a very specific phenomenon on the map of Europe, with a rich and complicated history. Attempts to interpret its past from a national, Polish, or German perspective are reminiscent of actions taken in the past by great state powers. The Silesian regional identity, expressed in its own language, should no longer be feared and seen as a threat of separation of the region from the state but as a cultural wealth and heritage that must be protected with the help of state funds. It is time to take a step forward.

Abstract

Silesian Language or Dialect: Why Do We Need a Standard?

The article's goal is to reflect on the history of the regional identity of the Upper Silesian region of Poland. Although historical, political, and cultural aspects are considered, the focus is on the linguistic dimension, since language is one of the most important elements of collective identity. The article opens with a short historical overview, starting with the period of the Industrial Revolution, which was the crucial moment for the formation of the so-called Upper Silesian mixed code which is the subject of reflection in this article. Next, we analyse the status of the Silesian ethnolect and the possibility of raising it to the rank of a regional language. The investigation is conducted from the point of view of Polish linguistics, but based on a wider perspective of European minority language politics.

Keywords: ethnolect; identity; linguistics; regional language; Silesian.

¹⁴⁸ J. Tambor, "Status języka a woła ludu...", p. 45.

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