LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND BELIEFS ABOUT LANGUAGE IN ESTONIA AND ESTONIAN LANGUAGE PLANNING

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Abstract. Throughout Estonian history, the language ideologies prevailing in Europe have had great influence on Estonian language planning. Language planners, in turn, have influenced the views of Estonian society. In this paper we analyse how language ideologies have supported myths and beliefs throughout the history of cultivating Standard Estonian. The privileged status of Standard Estonian (compared to local dialects) strengthened considerably from the early 20th century. Although Estonian language planning became more tolerant and democratic since the 1980s, a totalitarian understanding of the language still remains in the background. Using foreign words and the mixing of languages and registers is considered especially objectionable due to the ideology of a small nation, which has to defend itself and its language.

In the 2020s, discussions about language change and the principles of language planning re-emerged. These have been interesting, because language planning wishes to make the "top-down" language norms of Standard Estonian closer to actual language use, while language maintenance experts still see any potential changes as a threat to the Estonian language and even the nation.

1. Introduction

Language is dynamic. Thus, it is subject to language planning, but at the same time, due to it being dynamic, there are limits to the manipulation of language (Clyne 1997: 500). The Estonian literary language tradition was initiated by German missionaries and Bible translators in the 16th and 17th century; they looked at Estonian as a means of

preaching the faith (Viht & Habicht 2022; Undusk 2012). The codification of the present form of Standard Estonian is considered to have begun in 1872 when the Society of Estonian Literati (*Eesti Kirjameeste Selts*) gathered to discuss the unification of morphology and the use of a new spelling system for written Estonian, which had been proposed already in 1843.

In the past two decades, language standardisation studies worldwide have changed – greater attention has been paid to the role of ideology in all aspects of language standardisation (McLelland 2021: 110; see also Milroy 2001). In this paper, we look at the views of Estonian language planning throughout history, starting from the end of the 19th century. Our focus is also on language ideologies and beliefs about language, especially those that have been shared by language planners but also other language experts and wider audiences. This overview will hopefully help with understanding the current language planning situation, which is a topic of many papers in this volume (e.g., Koreinik 2023; Lindström 2023; Risberg & Langemets 2023; Siiman 2023) and serves as a background for others.

The term *language planning* has many meanings even in the European context – for some scholars, language policy goes hand in hand with language planning (see Tollefson & Pérez-Milans 2018 for a detailed overview of *Language Planning and Policy*). Language planning is usually divided into *corpus planning* and *status planning* – corpus planning denotes changes by deliberate planning to the actual corpus or the shape of a language, and status planning is concerned with the standing of one language in relation to others (see Kloss 1969; Clyne 1997: 1). In this paper we use the term *language planning* mostly in the narrower 'corpus planning' sense. We do not use the term *corpus planning*, because it is too similar to the name of a completely different field, namely, *corpus linguistics* (e.g., see Stefanowitsch 2020).

Throughout its history, the main task of Estonian language planning has been the development of Standard Estonian – in other words, activities related to corpus planning. The Estonian term for it – *kirjakeel* 'standard language, literary language, written language' – is ambivalent, since it can be used as 'a written form of a language' (Est. *kirjutatud keel*), but also in the meaning of a 'standardised (official) language' (Est. *(ametlik) kirjakeel*; *normikirjakeel*), and as 'a unifying standard' contrasting with individual dialects (Est. *ühiskeel*, *ühine keel*), among

other meanings. Also, the *Language Act* (RT I, 14.06.2011, 3) uses the term *kirjakeel* without defining it properly. In this paper, we use the term 'standard language' (Standard Estonian) for the unifying standard, which has been the subject of language planning and "top-down" norms, which have been described in various prescriptive dictionaries and text-books. However, when we look at others' work, the meaning of *kirjakeel* sometimes remains vague, since all the meanings are intertwined.

Language is an object of interest to linguists, language planners, editors, teachers, journalists, translators, and many others. They all are concerned with language use – some are more interested in maintaining and cultivating language, others in analysing and studying it as it is used. In practice, the boundaries are not at all precise, and instead of having sharp divisions exists more like a continuum, ranging from professional linguists to people with no metalinguistic competence at all (Davies 2012: 52). Although language professionals in Estonia working with Standard Estonian can be divided into language planners (they give "top-down" language rules) and language maintenance experts (e.g., editors and teachers who implement those rules in practice), in reality, throughout the 20th century, the same people have done both in Estonia.

People with different linguistic backgrounds do have some shared beliefs about language. These beliefs are strongly maintained and cultivated in the educational system. When we look at the Estonian school system, teaching the standard language has always held a central position, and other topics related to language have not gotten much attention, including the role of dialects that were in active use as a home language at least until the 1960s. The belief that the standard language is the only correct form of language begins in school, but it is more broadly related to other societal understandings and especially how language planners have introduced and explained their decisions regarding standard language norms.

There are many myths regarding language, for example that mutual understanding is guaranteed only by one common and stable standard language (see also Davies 2012; Pajunen 2023; Risberg & Langemets 2023). Here, myths refer to strongly entrenched beliefs or assumptions about language – they are the 'cultural wisdom' of a society (Bauer & Trudgill 1998: xvii; Davies 2012: 51–52). Myths are also related to language ideologies. Language ideology was first defined as "sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or

justification of perceived structure and use" (Silverstein 1979: 193). Language users from a speech community share beliefs about what are regarded as appropriate language practices. As a result, some language varieties become more prestigious. Those beliefs both derive from and influence language practices and they can be a basis for language planning (Spolsky 2004: 14; Kimura 2022: 42). It is argued that these kinds of beliefs link linguistic features to social factors – they are never about language alone. The ideological nature of the beliefs is not always visible – sometimes the beliefs are regarded as common sense, because they have become too naturalised (Milroy & Milroy 2012: 135; Walsh 2021: 774–775).

Language ideologies are considered to some extent harmful, because they can enable inequality and abuse of power (Koistinen 2018: 84). Language ideologies serve as "a basis for norms or expectations for communicative behavior, the ideologies guide, influence or underlie what can be noticed as a deviation from the norm, what can be evaluated (negatively, positively or otherwise) and so forth, that is, they guide [language planning] processes" (Nekvapil & Sherman 2013: 86; Kimura 2022: 42).

Although the success of language planning efforts is considered to depend on the individual speakers' attitudes towards the language they use (Haarmann 1990: 117; Davies & Ziegler 2015: 5), in this paper, we focus mostly on language ideologies of Estonian language planning (planners) since they have influenced attitudes of language users and the position of the standard language the most. The tradition of language planning is so deeply rooted in Estonia and other European countries that it has outlived all the different regimes (see Clyne 1997).

Throughout Estonian history, language planners have had great influence on others, both in education (e.g., via school textbooks and the *Dictionary of Standard Estonian*, which is used as a reference for correct language) and the opinions of the general public (e.g., for a long time, speaking dialects was disapproved of). Thus, this influence is shared by a wider community and seems to be a common way of thinking about language in Estonian society more generally. In this paper, we look closely at how the Standard Language Ideology (hereafter: SLI) has influenced Estonian language planning, the myths and beliefs it has been supported by throughout the history of Standard Estonian, and how it affects attitudes towards Estonian today.

Discussions about language easily turn emotional. As noted by Kimura (2022: 37): "Language is a social construct – it becomes a social reality through the accumulation of its use between people. [---] This leads to the impossibility of neutrality regarding language." As this paper reveals, discussions about Standard Estonian have been far from neutral.

2. Language ideologies in the European context

Since at least the 17th–18th century, but mostly since the 19th century, the Standard Language Ideology has been the most common language ideology in Europe (Milroy 2001; Vogl 2012). The "SLI is the belief that one particular form of language [the standard language] is the 'most correct' or the 'best' form and that all other forms of language are 'incorrect' or somehow less valid" (Lippi-Green 2012: 67, via Walsh 2021: 775). The core of the SLI is therefore the belief in language correctness and in the one best language variety, leaving out and belittling all other (non-standard) varieties (Milroy 2001; Vogl 2012: 13). For example, for the general public of England, the term *Standard English* "is simply a reference to an existing entity, as is the notion 'proper' or 'correct' English" (Ebner 2017: 20). The SLI makes people think that the standard form of a language is superior – this leads to an assumption that a language in general, but especially standard language is a clearly bounded system that should be fixed and is not allowed to change. This, in turn, leads to resistance to change in the standard and to variation in general (Milroy & Milroy 2012; Davies 2012: 54; Walsh 2021: 775).

In European countries, prescriptive views date back to at least the 18th century and its educational traditions. In the 20th century, especially the Prague School (1926–1939) influenced the understanding of a standard language: it was seen as impersonal, standardised, and complex. Those characteristics reflect the kind of society that public language serves (Teleman 1979: 69). Standard language is taught in school and, once an adult, "the individual unremarkably submits to language [planning] demands", despite these implementing inequality and exclusion (Jernudd 2022: 365). The structuralist era also laid the foundations of Language Planning and Policy, "language was seen as a static and delimited entity, an object which could be captured, codified and thus standardized" (Lane 2015: 265–266). Even today, for example

in Germany, as well as in Estonia, the standard variety has a privileged place in public and official domains (Davies 2012: 49; e.g., see Estonian *Language Act*). The SLI gives standard language varieties a greater level of prestige and a greater legitimacy than non-standard varieties. So, standard languages are somewhat 'normalised products' (Bourdieu 1991: 46) and the SLI maintains a hegemonic order by privileging the standard language which is used by those in positions of power, and accordingly, the speakers of other varieties are marginalised. Legitimacy is also created by ensuring that the standard variety is used in 'official' situations, such as schools, public administrations and political institutions (Walsh 2021: 775).

People are reluctant to accept variation in standard languages because standard language has been closely linked to one's nationality since the late 18th century (Vogl 2018: 189; Davies 2012: 58; Walsh 2021: 775). While Europe was organised into nation-states, the ideology of nationalism blossomed and this in turn made a national language – in other words, the one unifying, standard language – valuable (Jernudd 2022: 361). Today, language is still seen as an important factor in national identity (Walsh 2021: 775; also in Estonia, see *Keelehoiakute uuring* 2017). There is a "rather strong, shared belief that there is a one-to-one relationship between nation, speech community and language – Icelandic as the language of the Icelanders in Iceland; Greek as the language of the Greeks in Greece" (Vogl 2012: 10–11). However, the situation is more complicated and there is no such one-to-one correspondence in modern Europe, or in Estonia, where the number of Estonian L2 speakers is steadily increasing. "Given both the highly diverse linguistic situations and the diversity of social, cultural, economic and historical contexts in which standardization comes about, it is clear that monolingualism is not the default for speakers of standard languages, even in countries where it has long been assumed to be so, such as the UK or France" (Walsh 2021: 774).

2.1. Standardisation and expectations

Due to the spread of the SLI in Europe for many centuries, 'correct language' has become indexical for cultivation and education. The activities related to standardisation were part of the activities of high culture, hence, violation of language rules came to be seen as an indicator of low

education and general ignorance (Vogl 2012: 15). A standard language is also a social norm, which allows speakers to identify themselves as members of an educated or non-low social class (Langer & Nesse 2012: 612). So, one of the important characteristics of the SLI is that the standard variety is often equated with 'the highest prestige variety'. Standard language acquires prestige when its speakers have high prestige (Milroy 2001: 532). Hence, "the reason why communication in the standard variety is often more successful is because of its status connotations and the fact that it is more likely to be listened to than other varieties" (Bourdieu 1991: 54–55, via Davies 2012: 62), not because this 'stable' language variety is objectively more understandable than others.

The erasure of non-standard varieties has several repercussions, for example, it affects speaker attitudes towards non-standard varieties and it can lead to discrimination (Walsh 2021: 775–776). A side effect of the ideology of correctness is that the (standard) language is no longer the property of the native speakers, they too have to learn the correct (idealised) version of the language (at school) (see Milroy 2001: 537; also Plado 2022: 1088 on early 20th century Estonia). As a result, the SLI makes speakers believe that they do not speak their own language in a proper and correct manner (Leith 1997: 33).

Thus, in Europe, standard language culture is widespread. This means that speakers believe that the language they use exists in a standardised form, which, by extension, affects the way speakers understand what language is. Research has found that, for example, in Greek, French, Icelandic, Lithuanian, Finnish, and other European language communities, the standard language exists only at a relatively idealised level, and this ideal is often quite far from linguistic reality, i.e., from the language that people acquire and use in real life, outside of the domain of formal contexts presuming use of standard language. On the one hand, standard languages are considered a reality by the general public, but on the other hand, even linguists among themselves cannot agree on what a standard language is or whether it even exists (Ebner 2017: 20).

Moreover, because of the deeply rooted SLI, society often expects language planning to strive for an ideal language (Vogl 2012: 12; see also Hüning et al. 2012; Ebner 2017: 20; Vaicekauskienė & Šepetys 2018). In the ideal standard language, there is "minimal variation in form and maximal variation in function" (Milroy 2001; Vogl 2012: 13). This has been true for Estonian language planning as well; this ideal is

found, for example, in the book *Introduction to a Theory of Language Planning* (1968) by Estonian language planning theorist Valter Tauli (who at that time worked in exile). In the spirit of the traditions of Estonian language planning, Tauli based his theory on the idea of a linguistic ideal towards which the language must and can be guided. This ideal is also seen later: "Language planners have a language ideal in front of their eyes, based on expedient linguistic communication and cognition" (Erelt 2003: 448). We will expand on this issue in Section 3.

It is not understood that often the ideal is only someone's particular taste, not a collective understanding and usage. Rules of standard language are followed automatically and without questioning them; few rarely ask what explains or justifies these rules (Cameron 1995: 225–226). Variation in a standard language is consistently presented as a problem by language planners, teachers, language users, etc., and by downplaying variation, the illusion is maintained that a fully standardised (fixed) language variety is attainable. In many societies (incl. Estonia), the prescriptive rules that are presented in handbooks and school textbooks originate from written (official) registers (and some or many of the rules are not based on analysis of use, but are established on the basis of analogy, etymology, or individual language planners' tastes). The term *analogy* [Ger. *Strukturgemäßheit*] "describes being 'in accord with the structure' of the language or variety [---]. This criterion assumes that certain developments are in accord with the structure or system of a clearly defined variety, whilst other developments are incompatible with the structure." (Davies 2012: 47, 54–55)

So, behind the SLI stands the attempt to standardise, which consists of the imposition of uniformity upon language, and as a result, *uniformity* or *invariance* becomes an important defining characteristic of a standardised form of language (Milroy 2001: 530–531). Uniformity is seen as one of the best qualities of a correct standard language, although total uniformity in the language use of different people can never be achieved in practice. Second, the standard language must be *delimited* to distinguish it from other language variants (also Clyne 1997: 2); thus, foreign words and mixing of languages are excluded, leading to a desire for linguistic purism. The third characteristic of a correct language is *stability* – any changes (at different levels of the language such as grammar and vocabulary) are resisted (Milroy 2001: 534, 543; Vogl 2012: 14).

2.2. Linguistic purism

In addition to the SLI, there is another common language ideology which is tightly connected to it – linguistic purism. Language ideologies are activated situationally and often simultaneously, hence, the SLI and purism often overlap (Koistinen 2018: 83).

Milroy (2005) distinguishes between 'sanitary purism' and 'genetic' or 'etymological' purism. The latter "is aimed not so much at standardizing a language but at legitimizing it by giving it a (preferably long and glorious) history and, in some cases, moving towards restoring the language to its ancient lawful state of purity" (Milroy 2005: 329). Other linguists have divided purism into the attempt to get rid of any undesirable elements and the attempt to get rid of only foreign elements. At any rate, at the core of any puristic activity is the assumption that a language can be damaged. Linguistic purists want to protect a prestigious language, in other words, a language that is worth protecting from foreign influences and in some cases dialects. (Langer & Nesse 2012: 607–608, 622; see Felder et al. 2018 for an overview of linguistic purism in European languages.)

When new vocabulary is being developed by language planning, the dichotomy 'foreignness' vs. 'nativeness' holds an important role (Clyne 1997: 490). Only a few European countries have published dictionaries specifically dedicated to loanwords. Aside from Estonia, Germany is another country that has a long-standing tradition of this sort. However, some people have criticised this approach, perceiving it as a form of segregating native vocabulary and marking foreign words as unwanted words (see Kirkness 2000; Lipczuk 2012). Purism and the concept of standard language are inextricably intertwined: removing undesirable elements from standard language can only be effective if it is clear what needs to be removed from the language (Kimura 2022). It can be debated to what extent standardising includes puristic tendencies:

> "Standardization involves deciding not only what *is* standard but also what is *not* standard language. Thus, codification cannot really take place without stigmatizing those words and constructions which are not to become part of the standard language. This would certainly be true for the broad interpretation of purism as the removal and exclusion of *anything* that is undesirable, rather than simply those elements that are foreign. As a consequence of this argument, the emergence of

> vernacular grammar-writing in post-Renaissance Europe would come to involve puristic efforts in the wider sense and therefore pave the way for a purism of the narrower definition." (Langer & Nesse 2012: 613)

All of this presupposes the existence of a norm, because without a norm, language users do not have a reference point for what is incorrect or undesirable (Langer & Nesse 2012: 612; see Langer 2007 about linguistic norms).

In the next section, we provide an overview of Estonian language planning and the main language ideologies that have been prevalent in it throughout more than a century of the history of Standard Estonian.

3. Language ideologies and beliefs of Estonian language planning through the decades

The standard language in Estonia started to develop hand in hand with the national awakening in the second half of the 19th century, when the goal of a single unified nation was set. The ideal unified situation was carried over to language as well: a unified nation needed a unified language (Raag 2008: 57; see Tafenau 2023 about previous centuries).

Whereas until the 20th century there were two written languages in Estonia (North Estonian and South Estonian), the South Estonian written language was forced out of use by the beginning of 20th century. Even Jakob Hurt, the first Estonian language planner, who was of South Estonian origin himself, emphasised in 1865 the need for one written language, and suggested that it should be based on North Estonian (Raag 2008: 58). By 1872, when the first meeting of the Society of Estonian Literati took place (this is also considered to be the beginning of Estonian national language planning, Erelt 2002: 47), there was already a consensus regarding the use of North Estonian as the basis for the unified Estonian language. As a result, the foundation for the Standard Language Ideology was set; although the discussions about Standard Estonian had only just begun, it was clear that some features would be regarded as more preferable and better than others.

In the last two decades of the 19th century, the importance of one unified language was highlighted in newspapers. At that time, the main idea was to prove the advantage of using North Estonian. In order to do this, South Estonian was portrayed as backward and inferior to North

Estonian, for example, because the entire Bible was published in North Estonian, but not in South Estonian. Already then, the publication of literature in South Estonian was seen as weakening Estonian as a whole (e.g., *Kirikulaulude asjus* 1895: 700). This attitude developed, and in the first half of the 20th century dialects were considered inferior to the written language and seen as a threat to the unified standard language (e.g., Ederberg 1913). Following this puristic attitude, dialects were considered to be the source of undesirable elements in unified Estonian. Another strong statement was that every educated nation has a unified language, and hence, if Estonians want to be an educated nation, there should be only one standard language, therefore, the South Estonian written language should be abandoned (*Eesti kirjakeel ja Võru murre* 1898). Thus, the "one nation – one language" principle emerged at the end of the 19th century also in Estonia.

Already during this period when there was no fixed Standard Estonian, some signs of genetic purism (Milroy 2005, see Section 2.2) appeared. There were two main trends in genetic purism at that time: 1) according to Ado Grenzstein (who is also called the first Estonian language purist), one should avoid international stems in creating new words, because using Estonian stems strengthens the vitality of the language. However, international stems already found in the Estonian language system should not be avoided (Grenzstein 1881); 2) Karl August Hermann's view was much stricter and also retrospective: he suggested replacing already widely used loanwords with (almost) lost Estonian stems (Hermann 1898). However, Hermann's view did not find any influential followers.

In addition to this rather narrow view of purism, some other puristic ideas were also present, for example, a call for avoiding some specific dialect vocabulary (e.g., Hurt 1871) and discouraging some undesirable stylistic expressions (Grenzstein 1899), which can be seen as a type of broader purism.

3.1. Early 20th century (1900s–1930s)

By the beginning of the 20th century, the North Estonian written language had gained prevalence in Estonia. However, there was considerable variation in the language. Different societies and associations tried to make decisions about the language, but these decisions were not

widely followed. As a result, the members of the two primary societies that dealt with language decided to gather together to make decisions about the standard language, which all literati would then follow. Four meetings were held annually from 1908 to 1911. At the first meeting, it was agreed that the main principle that would be followed in making decisions would be expediency, i.e., changes should be made only if they are (strongly) needed and that only changes that fit the language system or that improve the systematicity of Estonian should be approved. Based on this, decisions were made about orthography and morphology as well as some decisions about syntax (Veski 1912). Through these meetings, a great leap towards a prestigious standard language was made, which would combine the "valuable properties" of the dialects while excluding others. The SLI and the privileged status of the standard language (compared to local dialects) markedly strengthened.

At that time, the language reform movement was gaining prominence. The leader of the movement, Johannes Aavik, found Estonian to be poor and ugly (e.g., 1912a, 1912b) and claimed that only through the artificial development of the language would Estonians get a standard language suited to their needs:

> "Language culture! Language reform! An inevitable need to refine, plan, enrich, beautify the language! Orthology more strongly on the agenda! More interest in language issues and more self-willed respect for my mother tongue! More enthusiastic and systematic work for the Estonian language! The issue of language is one of the most burning questions in our cultural life! The extreme importance of language in national culture! No nation without a language! No literature without a developed language! No expression of the lifestyle of the elite without cultivated language!" (Aavik 1912b: 170–171)

Aavik emphasised the need for one unified, strong, and beautiful standard language that would meet the cultural needs of a relatively new group of Estonian literati and other elites, as well as the importance of orthology. Aavik offered a wide range of neologisms (both in vocabulary and grammar), some of which were inspired by his home dialect or Finnish. Aavik was extremely productive both in proposing new vocabulary and grammatical constructions as well as in introducing and advocating for neologisms. The main principles Aavik followed were the historical principle (this also explained his orientation towards

taking Finnish as a model), the richness of the language, and most importantly – the beauty of the language. Following these rules, he introduced many parallel forms and stylistic nuances (e.g., Aavik 1924a, 1924b; Plado 2022). Although Aavik did not have an official position as a language planner (no one had that at the time), he was widely known among language experts because he worked as a teacher of Estonian language at different schools and was a lecturer of Estonian at the University of Tartu. He introduced his neologisms in numerous writings and translations of world literature that were highly popular at the time. Additionally, his views about language were largely supported by younger writers who used his neologisms in their works.

Aavik's style of language planning and language reform was not supported by Johannes Voldemar Veski, another great language planner of the time. He accepted the need to develop Standard Estonian but by using different means. Unlike Aavik, he was convinced that Estonian was not poorer than other languages, but that its richness was noticeable in different areas of vocabulary (e.g., Veski 1914). He was also convinced of the higher value of the standard language (compared to areal variants). Although he did not say it explicitly, he demonstrated this with his attitude towards local dialects: he saw dialects as the store for the standard language. According to him, dialect elements were welcome in the standard; however, the ideal language was a systematically developed Standard Estonian (Veski 1914). Moreover, he found that when taking dialect words or expressions, one can change the original meaning and also the form of the word, i.e., for the sake of the standard language, dialect material can be used quite freely and creatively. For example, he suggested taking words with the same meaning from different dialects and giving them different meanings in Standard Estonian (e.g., the North Estonian word *riie* for 'cloth' and the South Estonian *rõivas* for 'garment' both of which originally had the same meaning, Veski 1914, 1929, 1933b).

When developing Standard Estonian, the main principle that Veski followed was systematicity, and in connection with this, one-to-one correspondences. While he accepted some of Aavik's linguistic innovations, he wanted them to be systematic without exceptions. His desire for systematisation was so strong that he also tried to systematise the linguistic units already present in the language (e.g., Veski 1933a) and create differences in meaning between closely-related words, including

between relatively close synonyms (e.g., Veski 1914; see Risberg & Langemets 2021 about problems with paronyms created by Veski). By following extreme systematicity and avoiding variation and synonyms, he clearly treated Standard Estonian as superior to other variants (cf. Section 2.1).

Veski had a strong position among language experts: he was a lecturer of Estonian at the University of Tartu (1919–1938) and the editor (1915–1934) of the most important linguistic (and cultural studies) journal *Eesti Kirjandus*. As the editor, he even went so far as to comment on the language use of other authors and point out "errors" they made in their articles (these were published as comments after the article). Thus, he strongly created an attitude of "correct" and "incorrect" language. He continued his work with the same rigid attitude in the 1930s and even later (see Section 3.2).

Veski's activity and mostly his extreme systematicity was also criticised by some linguists. Andrus Saareste, a dialectologist and a professor of Estonian at the University of Tartu, wrote in 1933: "When, however, the strictness of order and norms takes over in all morphological issues, and begins to threaten even the syntax, the meaning of words and the choice of words, then we again feel in ourselves a mighty urge for freedom." (Saareste 1933: 265–266)

Saareste was active in Estonian language planning already in the 1920s. According to him, it was important to have one "firm and proper" Standard Estonian. Still, in contrast to Aavik and Veski, he found it essential to take actual language use as a base for the standard (Saareste 1922). Hence, he strongly objected to the artificial systematisation Veski stood for and found that in standard language, natural irregularity is better than artificial regularity (Saareste 1933). Saareste's views, however, did not become dominant, as he did not focus on language planning (Erelt 1983: 37). Thus, the leading influencer of Estonian language planning in the 1920s and 1930s was still Veski with his strict views. As a result, the attitude that there exists "correct" and "incorrect" language also deepened.

An important milestone for Standard Estonian was the publication of the first prescriptive dictionary, the *Dictionary of Standard Estonian* (DSE), in 1918. It was adopted as the basis for the language by public authorities, schools, and the press (Raag 2008: 289). The dictionary became popular and was quickly sold out. As the first dictionary was

rather sparse, work began on compiling a new and more comprehensive one. The second *Dictionary of Standard Estonian* (DSE 1925–1937) was compiled by Veski, and its language was made compulsory in schools and for writing official texts by the Ministry of Education (see Tauli 1943; on the topic of the influence of the DSE in the 1920s and 1930s, see Risberg & Langemets 2023). This dictionary further consolidated Veski's position in Estonian language planning; while weakening the position of Aavik's language reform. Aavik (1927: 254) was quite critical of the fact that the dictionary was designated as the basis of the official language because, in his opinion, Standard Estonian was not yet ready for such a consolidation.

Although, already in the 1920s, many texts were edited before publication, the editing depended on the publications (Muuk 1926; see also Risberg & Langemets 2023). In 1929, the Mother Tongue Society proposed that newspapers impose language editing. During the 1930s, editing the language of the press became common. At the same time, the language used in different newspapers was homogenised based on the DSE 1925–1937 (Kasik 2020: 31). As the use of language in newspapers had been discussed in earlier meetings of the Mother Tongue Society (Kasik 2020), the general language editing of newspapers deepened the attitude of "correct" and "incorrect" language. Yet, not all authors were happy with the changes editors would make, and already in the 1930s, there arose an attitude that language editors follow norms too strictly and inflexibly (Argus 2022: 93; see also Risberg & Langemets 2023).

As the position of Standard Estonian strengthened, puristic attitudes re-emerged. The leading language planners, however, did not rule out borrowing but were of the opinion that, if possible, Estonian words should be preferred (e.g., Veski 1913: 120; Saareste 1936: 470). Yet, unlike others, Aavik was of the opinion that the origin of words was unimportant as long as they fit into the Estonian language system (Aavik 1924a: 29).

However, among intellectuals, there were even more extreme views. For example, as early as 1913, the article "Rikutud Eesti keelest" ('On the Ruined Estonian Language') appeared (Ederberg 1913), which clearly stated that because of education in foreign languages, intellectuals had lost their pure mother tongue and their language use was influenced by foreign languages (primarily Russian). The influence of the South Estonian (Tartu) language was seen as reprehensible in this

article. This view is typical of that time: the purism of the first half of the 20th century is illustrated by its extension to dialects; the dialects were seen as a necessary source for Standard Estonian, but their use was no longer encouraged. There were even school counsellors who went to schools to check that dialects were not used in lessons (Lõbu 2005).

Thus, by the end of this period, Standard Estonian was established and the Standard Language Ideology had taken root and was shared by most leading language planners.

3.2. Soviet period (1940–1991)

In 1940, Estonia lost its independence and forcibly became the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. In the period after World War II, almost everything in Estonia changed dramatically, including the linguistic situation, which also affected language planning. For example, a huge amount of new Russian (Soviet) loanwords were introduced into Estonian. Estonian streets, newspapers, enterprises, etc. were renamed (e.g., *Rüütli tänav* 'Knight Street' in Tartu became a *21. juuni tänav* 'June 21st Street', in honour of the date that Estonia became a part of the USSR), the use of Estonian was removed from some domains, such as administration and military domains. The use of Estonian was also ideologically controlled; old publishing houses were closed and new publishers were censored. The population of Estonia decreased, urbanisation accelerated, and new Russian-speaking migrants were brought in; Russian became an obligatory subject in schools. (See Raag 2008: 213–226.) At that time, a parallel school system was also established with Russian as the language of instruction. The Russian-speaking population increased from 41,700 in 1934 to 240,227 in 1959 and even to 474,815 in 1989 (Raag 2008: 218); Russians generally did not learn Estonian.

After World War II, most linguists and language planners had left Estonia. Most of the professors of linguistics at the University of Tartu emigrated, some were imprisoned and killed. Veski, who had been a lecturer of Estonian between 1919 and 1938, was invited to leave retirement and become a professor of Estonian in 1946. At the same time, he became the chairman of the Mother Tongue Society and directed the lexicology and language planning section in the newly established Institute of Estonian Language and Literature (1947–1952).

Thus, this one person, rather rigid in his views on language, had enormous power over language planning.

Generally speaking, the decades after the war have been characterised as a very conservative era in Estonian language planning (Kasik 2022a); views on language and language planning became very strict. There was not much linguistic research, but much strict "top-down" standardising: for example, parallel forms were not accepted in orthography and morphology, and among other things, polysemy was frowned upon.

The SLI continued to be strongly rooted and correct standard language skills were supposed to be within the reach of every educated person; dialect accents and errors were disapproved of, especially in schools, where the use of local dialects was sometimes even punished. All deviations from the standard were seen as mistakes, and words that were not included in the DSE were disapproved of in public use (Kasik 2022). Thus, totalitarianism spread from society to (standard) language and understanding of language was mostly limited to a question of "correct" or "incorrect". Accordingly, the first two DSEs of this period (1953, 1960) were strict and did not include parallel forms or other types of variation.

After Stalin's death in 1953, there was more freedom in society. In 1960, the National Orthology Commission was founded (as part of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR) for making collective decisions about language planning. This has been seen as a step towards more democratic language planning (Erelt 2002: 252). However, during the first two periods (1960–1965 and 1972–1978), the Commission adhered to very rigid rules and considered regularity to be the most important principle in language planning. The rules were so rigid that in 1961 teachers of Estonian sent an open letter to the Commission asking for some morphological rules to be loosened; most of the proposals, however, were rejected (Raiet 1962; Raag 2008: 244).

Attitudes towards language planning started to change in the 1970s, when especially the younger generation of linguists and language planners spoke out about the need to move Standard Estonian closer to actual language use. As a result, many parallel forms were allowed into the standard language, and the topic was widely discussed in newspapers and linguistic articles. It is believed by some scholars that at that time "the emerging generation of language planners carried an understanding of standard language as a phenomenon in variation and change,

and so the planners' main responsibility was to monitor that change" (Kasik 2022a: 1103). Thus, the second half of the 1970s was a period of democratisation for Estonian language planning.

Although language planning became more liberal during this period, language ideologies did not change. Standard language was still seen as the most important register of the language requiring systematic planning and norms, in the absence of which it would fall into chaos – "like traffic without traffic rules" (Kull 1971). Even the young linguists who demanded more liberal attitudes towards language during this period did not demand fundamental change; they admitted the need for language planning and shared puristic views: "Language maintenance [such as editors and teachers] keeps the language clean, while language planning thinks about how to make it even cleaner" (Sang 1977: 113).

What really changed was the understanding that language planners needed to know how language works in order to make better decisions regarding language norms and, therefore, there was a need for more substantial linguistic research into the actual use of Estonian (e.g., Kull 1978: 682; Saari 1979: 164; Liivaku 1984: 583). Thus, from the late 1970s and especially from the 1980s, the views of Estonian language planning changed from a strict view of "correct" and "incorrect" language towards recommending "good" standard language (Erelt 2002: 251–263; Kerge 2012).

But what is the difference between "correct"-"incorrect" and a "good"-"bad" dichotomy regarding language? Although younger language planners better understood that there are different layers and registers in language (and also the centre-periphery theory of a language), they still considered some constructions, words, meanings, etc. to be inappropriate for Standard Estonian (mostly foreign influences and also the same features that had been considered inappropriate during the pre-war period). Furthermore, although language planning became more tolerant in its principles, these understandings did not actually reach schools or society at large.

In the period after Stalin's death (especially the 1960s and later) when ideological pressure weakened for those working with language, Russification and Russian influence on Estonian became a significant problem. This was something that could not be discussed openly (Raag 2008: 264). Only at the end of 1980s, when the USSR was about to collapse, did Russification become an important topic in linguistics as

well as in society. Later writings of language planners show that "good" use of language was viewed as a tool for avoiding Russian influence (e.g., Liivaku 1989). Interestingly, widespread administratively-directed bilingualism was seen as the main channel of Russian influence (Hint 1987), and the term "bilingualism" had many negative connotations:

> "The Estonian language is definitely becoming Russified. The changes are evident in both vocabulary and grammar, and the latter is particularly sad and ominous because it indicates profound shifts in thinking. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that our way of thinking is also becoming Russified. The culprit, of course, is not the Russian language, on the one hand, the system that promotes so-called bilingualism, rejects all languages other than Russian, and on the other hand, there is the indifference of Estonians, especially educated Estonians, towards the language." (Liivaku 1989: 257)

Thus, the fight against Russian influence became important and a pure and strong standard language was seen as a mean to get rid of it.

In this context, language maintenance experts come into play. In the Soviet period, the role of language editors became extremely important. On the one hand, their task was to follow the rules of standard language, but they were also censors ensuring that "inappropriate" language and content did not appear in the texts. According to Argus (2022), editors considered every word to see if it was ideologically correct. Hence, in addition to content censorship, language editing during this period could also be called language censorship, since editing of fiction at that time often involved over-editing: words that seemed strange were replaced by "normal" ones, "too new" words were replaced by "more correct or more common" ones, etc. (Argus 2022)

On the other hand, language editors and other language experts promoted so-called *language culture* in newspapers, radio, and TV as a counter-activity to extremely formal Soviet language; they spoke publicly about the need for "good" language. Good language meant language that did not follow the formal, stilted language of Soviet propaganda and stamp expressions. (Kasik 2022a) The use of Soviet extremely formal language in newspapers and journals was especially criticised in public at that time (e.g., Raadik 1989). Although the language culture was primarily directed against Russification and Soviet-style language use, public criticism of language use in the

media influenced attitudes towards language in general and stigmatised many expressions as stylistically inappropriate or Russian-like, often unjustifiably.

To conclude, the same ideologies – the SLI and purism – continued throughout the Soviet period. Although by the end of the Soviet period, the understanding of "correct" and "incorrect" language was replaced with "good" and "bad" by language planning, the role of the standard language in society was strong, and other dialects and registers were suppressed. The public discussion of "bad" language in Soviet media deepened the conviction that bad language objectively existed. Since the "bad" language of newspapers was essentially related to Russian influence, the SLI and purism were also seen as tools for fighting against Russification. The standard language was therefore equated with Estonian.

3.3. The Republic of Estonia (since 1991)

The periods of language planning and the general language land-scape in the Republic of Estonia (since 20.08.1991 – the date Estonia regained its independence) can roughly be divided into 1) liberation from the Soviet occupation (including from Russification and strict censorship) and taking in English and Finnish influences in the 1990s and 2000s, and 2) contemporary linguistic research done in the 2010s and 2020s.

If from earlier times we know more about the views of language planners, then over time, the opinions and beliefs of others (i.e., editors, teachers, the general public) are increasingly visible, hence, in this sec-tion, we also describe their views on the language landscape of Estonia.

3.3.1. 1990s–2000s

Regaining independence in 1991 crucially altered the language land-scape of Estonia. Openness to the western world quickly changed the topics that people discussed, thereby also bringing in new vocabulary, many loanwords, and other influences mainly from English. Later, the use of the internet and social media have strengthened the same tendencies. Moreover, while the knowledge of English was relatively poor in the Soviet period and Russian dominated as a language of

administration in Estonia, now English was taught more widely at schools and the need for English as a *lingua franca* was evident when traveling.

However, Estonian language planning and status planning were first oriented towards getting rid of Russian influence in every sphere of public life. The first *Language Act* that specified Estonian as one of the national languages was adopted already in 1989. In 1995, the government of the Republic of Estonia adopted a law codifying Estonian as the only national language of the Republic of Estonia, and established that Standard Estonian is defined by the DSE (*Dictionary of Standard Estonian*) as well as by normative grammars and standards/decisions made by the Language Committee of the Mother Tongue Society and the National Orthology Commission (RT I, 1995, 79, 1349). Since 2006, the cover of the DSE states that it is the basis for Standard Estonian (Est. *kirjakeele normi alus*). Thus, language planning received legal support.

However, language planning also underwent changes: it was understood that in a democratic society language planning must be democratic (an approach which had already been attempted since the 1980s). In 1993, the Language Committee of the Mother Tongue Society was founded (as a rival to the National Orthology Commission which ended its operations in 1997). Its role was seen as being a collective guardian of Standard Estonian: "In 1993, it was evident that the standard language no longer remains within its previous strict framework but increasingly shows changes that have developed over a long period of time as well as new ones" (Erelt 2000: 6). However, at the same time, the leading person in language planning, Tiiu Erelt, also stated that people are not used to recommendations but expect the earlier framework: "Unfortunately, democracy brings choices and requires thinking with one's own head. There are still many people in Estonian society who cannot cope with it, at least in the area of language, and for whom the previous form of commands and prohibitions would be better suited." (Erelt 2000: 7)

In linguistics during the 1990s, much attention was paid to other non-standard registers (spoken language, dialects, news and media, etc.) that had been understudied up to that point. Also, the position of the standard language was widely discussed as well as changes taking place in Estonian. Linguist Tiit Hennoste (1999) wrote – in his paper on ongoing changes in the Estonian sociolinguistic situation – that in a totalitarian

society, the standard language was seen as the only legitimate form of the Estonian language, deviation from which was treated as a mistake and a representation of "bad" language. In an open, democratic society, the standard language loses its central role, and the scope of use of other sub-languages (registers) increases. For language planners of that time, however, this vision seemed unacceptable: "The danger of Hennoste's polylogy is in promoting the equality of sub-languages, in denying the central role of the standard language (Est. *kirjakeel*). After all, it is well known that languages without a strong backbone – standard language (Est. *kirjakeel*) – have disappeared or the number of their speakers has decreased significantly." (Erelt 2002: 260) As can be seen, the idea of standard language was still equated with written language and with Estonian language in general, precisely which Hennoste had characterised as a totalitarian way of thinking about language. Thus, although language planning became more democratic and gave recommendations instead of orders and rules, the changes were slow and the totalitarian language model was still present in the background.

The views and ideologies of language planning at that time can be seen in the following quote:

> "Language planning is the conscious development, enrichment, stabilisation and updating of the standard language. In it, the search for a language ideal is carried out, and in order to move towards it, language recommendations are given and norms are fixed. The goal of language planning is a good Standard Estonian [---]. Language maintenance is practical actions to improve language use." (Erelt 2002: 15)

The 1990s can (with restrictions) also be considered the first era of "bottom-up" language planning. This was partly due to circumstances where, within the vortex of social liberation, language managed to change more than it could be planned. These were times of linguistic innovation – there were many new loanwords and other influences from Finnish and English, and they were widely used in the language of the press. Moreover, the role of language editors also weakened during that period, mostly because liberal media were not eager to control language in the way it had been during the Soviet period.

Online news and new platforms were especially seen as a source of "bad" language (as in earlier periods). In public media, we can see many

complaints about the language of the media and high school students' poor knowledge of Standard Estonian (e.g., Maasalu 2010) as well as fear about the future of Estonian as a result of the expanding use of English (Saks 1999). There were also some other voices in the media that were against strong control over media language (e.g., Varuste 1999); however, these voices were rare at least in public media.

A large number of new loanwords from English intensified the concern in society about the future of Estonian. Although linguists kept confirming that Estonian was in good condition and had strong status (see e.g., Simson 2003), the fear of Estonian becoming extinct remained due to the pressure of global languages (mainly English), which could be observed in everyday life. New loanwords from English were often assessed as "useless" (e.g., Lõhmus 2002). Thus, the threat from Russian, present especially during the Soviet period, was replaced by a threat from English.

The SLI, purism, and the threat to language was often combined into a widespread public narrative, which kept the standard language at a high level of prestige and viewed the democratisation of language use as a threat to the standard language and, by extension, as a threat to the Estonian language and nation in general.

3.3.2. 2010s–2020s

The 2010s were similar to the previous period in terms of language planning and understanding the position of standard language in society. During this period, the use of social media and digital communication grew exponentially, meaning that the ways in which people wrote and communicated also changed considerably (due to the development of technology which allows quicker written conversations, easy online publication, etc.). In everyday interaction, people encountered more informal writing than in earlier periods and their writing habits rapidly changed. As a result, the position of the standard language weakened, at least in informal language use where destandardisation processes can be observed (for destandardisation, see Kristiansen 2021).

In 2012, the Association of Estonian Language Editors was founded. The main purpose of the association is "to represent the professional interests of language editors and to contribute to the implementation of

Standard Estonian".[1] In 2018, the association gained the right to draw up a professional standard for language editors and conduct a professional exam, which requires detailed knowledge of Standard Estonian and related recommendations. Passing the exam demonstrates that the language editor's work is at a sufficiently high professional level. Upon the initiative of the association, a textbook on language editing was published (Argus, Kern & Mäekivi 2022). Thus, the editors have made efforts to preserve and promote the tradition of standard language in response to the destandardisation process, which Estonian is undergoing.

Linguistic research has widened its scope in Estonia since the 1990s, due to improved access to language corpora and other linguistic data. A great deal of research has been done on different Estonian registers and varieties. Thus, we now know much more about Estonian language use in different registers, by different speaker groups, etc. During earlier periods, language planning lacked this kind of information on actual language use when making decisions that correspond to linguistic reality (see e.g., Liivaku 1984: 583). However, even though an increasing amount of research has been done on different aspects of Estonian, it has still not always been considered in language planning (Risberg & Lindström 2023). However, one of the principles of Estonian language planning since the 1980s–1990s – and especially since 1993 when the Language Committee of the Mother Tongue Society was founded – has been that standards and recommendations must be based on research. Thus, the decisions of the Committee are based on research into actual language use (see Siiman 2023 for an overview on the methods used by the Committee).

In the 2010s, following the example of other European languages, after publishing a multi-volume explanatory dictionary, the Institute of Estonian Language (EKI) started compiling a single-volume dictionary based on corpus data (Langemets et al. 2010). In the course of this work in the 2010s, it was understood that the needs of the present day are better met by an online dictionary that can be continuously updated (Langemets et al. 2018). Thus, when one round of updating of the data was completed, the dictionary was published on a new language portal Sõnaveeb ('WordWeb') in 2019. Since 2017, EKI has been developing

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1   See the statutes of the Association of Estonian Language Editors here:
    https://keeletoimetajateliit.ee/pohikiri/.

the new lexical database Ekilex with the aim of including all lexico-graphic information in a single database (Tavast et al. 2018; Langemets et al. 2021). Combining descriptive and prescriptive dictionary infor-mation has posed a challenge due to conflicting language descriptions, which various dictionary users have been facing for decades (since 1988 when the first fascicle of the explanatory dictionary was published), e.g., if an explanatory dictionary described words and meanings as they are used, the DSE provided recommendations for avoiding some of them (Risberg & Langemets 2021: 903). Since 2020, the *EKI Combined Dictionary* has been available at Sõnaveeb (its versions are updated annually).

The differences between the explanatory dictionary and the pre-scriptive DSE have been known from the beginning. The author of the concept of the DSE 1999, Henn Saari, said: "A dictionary tells us what is found in it. It does not say anything about what is not found in it." However, "excluded materials are also those that the compilers do not recommend using" (Saari 1984; see also Erelt 2001b). But how should a dictionary user distinguish between what has been left out due to limi-tations of space and what has been omitted due to being considered inappropriate for Standard Estonian? This has been one of the principles for compiling the previous DSEs (1999–2018), which has been vague for others using the DSE, namely, that the same label has been used for opposite features: 1) the omission of something can be due to space restrictions or being considered inappropriate for the standard language (e.g., the meaning 'correctly' was omitted for the word *õieti* in the DSE 1999, see Risberg & Langemets 2021: 912–914), and 2) the label ARGI 'colloquial' denotes the opposite of neutral standard language in one context and the opposite of a technical term in another context (see Vare 2001; Paet & Risberg 2021; Risberg 2022 for critique). This has caused confusion among users, exacerbating the lack of knowledge and the popular interpretation that everything not found in the DSE is prohibited in the standard language.

In a single, combined dictionary, it is even more important for the user to understand clearly what is standardised in Estonian (orthography and morphology) and what emerges through use. The principles of language planning have been more or less the same since the 1980s–1990s, especially since 1993 due to, but they have not always been implemented in the practical work of language planning. The standards

and recommendations of the DSE not always having been researched or revised systematically. While adding information from the DSE to the *EKI Combined Dictionary*, it has been attempted to review all the recommendations of the DSE systematically (similar work was done with the explanatory dictionary data in the 2010s). It can be argued that EKI is increasingly implementing the principles of language planning, which have been in the background since the 1980s–1990s[2] (e.g., see Risberg & Lindström 2023: 318–321 for principles of research-based language planning). Moreover, the need to avoid obvious differences between the official norms of Standard Estonian and actual language use has been discussed publicly in recent years (Päll 2019; Maarits 2020; Lindström 2021).

Thus, language planning has been striving to be more informative (i.e., allowing people to make their own informed choices) rather than strictly prescriptive (see Risberg & Lindström 2023). But these ideas and actions have received considerable criticism, especially from language editors. The main opponents blamed EKI for the destruction of the Estonian language and promoting sloppy language by loosening language standards; they claimed that standard language (i.e., the idealised version of it) is not important to EKI anymore (e.g., see Sarapuu 2020; Saluäär 2022; Lukas 2022; Vaino 2023). Many opponents of EKI linguists and language planners are especially concerned with the description of word meanings: the general public is used to taking these descriptions as rules (see also Risberg & Langemets 2023). Word meanings are a relevant topic due to certain recently published research papers and popular science articles (e.g., see Risberg 2021; Risberg 2022). A decade ago, similar concerns about (Standard) Estonian were

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2   For example, meaning transfers (i.e., metaphor, metonymy) have been one of the principles for creating new terms (Erelt 2007: 186–198) – terminology has been considered a field where the meanings of words can be strictly standardised. By contrast, meaning transfers have not always been accepted by language planning in both technical language and general language (see Risberg 2022: 201–202). For example, it was desired that the verb *testima* would have only a psychology-related meaning and not the other meanings it has in English (which it does in actual language use today). Thus, previously there had been a contradiction between the theory of standardisation and the actual practice of standardising; however, in compiling the *EKI Combined Dictionary* EKI is reducing these earlier contradictions and, among other things, taking language dynamics and actual language use data more into account (for *testima*, see Paet & Risberg 2021: 976–977).

in the news, but the topic was related to the orthography of historical events (e.g., see Jürjo et al. 2012; Sutrop 2012).

Thus, EKI strives for corpus-based lexicographic entries that reflect actual language use. There exists a large amount of corpus data, which allows for statistical analysis of patterns regularly observed in Estonian language use. Corpus methods also enable lexicographers to work more systematically and objectively covering more than just one's own intuition and preferences but regular structures as observed within the Estonian language community. All of these advantages are recognised in international lexicography today (see Storjohann 2021; Frankenberg-Garcia et al. 2021; Šipka et al. 2021; Balteiro 2011; Krishnamurthy 2008).

The fears of language editors are related, however, to the dictionary's reliance on large language corpora, which include "bad language" and even "makes bad language a new rule" (e.g., *Pöördumine…* 2021; Koik 2022; Saluäär 2022; Veldre 2022; Vider 2022; Kerge 2022b). It must be admitted that an unfortunate choice of words might be one of the triggers for another wave of discussions on language planning. Namely, the word *sõnastikureform* 'dictionary reform' was used for the process of combining data from separate dictionaries into one database (Langemets & Päll 2021). Due to the misunderstanding this word, language editors and others were at first concerned that EKI would make the DSE disappear completely; however, when it was confirmed by EKI that the next DSE would be published in 2025, they were then worried whether it would be as prescriptive as before (e.g., see Mäekivi & Reinsalu 2021; Rudi 2021; Mäekivi 2022; Rats 2022; Susi 2022; Alas 2022; Kasik 2022b). However, there were also voices in support of these language planning activities, noting that "by keeping the Estonian language carefully locked in a box of moral rules, we deprive it of oxygen and the language withers" (Lelov 2022).

All those fears found in newspaper articles were shared by a former leading language planner – the now retired Tiiu Erelt – even in 2021:

> "However, for a language planner, language use data is only one of the necessary criteria, next to everything else, for evaluating a language phenomenon and giving a recommendation. For them, "usage-based" is not the only criterion. An attempt has always been made to consider what kind of change is beneficial for the clarity and expressiveness of

the language, what is neutral and what is harmful (see e.g., Saari 2004 [1995]: 740). Broadly speaking, hundreds of changes have been made to the language norms, which generally have not bothered anyone. Even more: they have not even been noticed, because change in use has also been taken into account. However, the sole criterion of use would bring back the style of four decades ago for language to be a completely self-regulating system. The 1940s and 1950s are remembered from an even earlier time: then *vernacular* (Est. *rahvakeelsus*) was the same magic word as *usage-based* is now. In the current rather awkward language political situation, abandoning language planning (including advice from professionals) would be a disservice to our national culture." (Erelt 2021: 404)

Another interesting fact from this decade relates to teachers. While in the 1960s–1970s teachers wanted more freedom in the standard language (see Erelt 2001a; Erelt 2002: 225), in 2012, the opposite happened: the Language Committee of the Mother Tongue Society sent a letter to teachers saying that they should not be as strict in evaluating pupils as they are (see Kerge 2022a: 195–198). This is an interesting aspect of discussions today: the usual roles of "top-down" language standardisation have reversed. Linguists and language planners want to keep standard language close to actual language use but language maintenance experts and others see research on an idealised version of language as a threat to the Estonian language and even the nation. But language and language use have their own inner dynamics, thus, there are limits to the manipulation of language (Clyne 1997: 500). Therefore, it is quite the opposite situation: "top-down" planning of language and especially language editing are attempts to change language, while research into language attempts to maintain inner standards and avoid diglossia (for diglossia, see Ferguson 1959; Fishman 1967; Rannut et al. 2003).

Hence, although linguistics in Estonia has developed a great deal in the last decades and this has also been taken into account in language planning, the beliefs of the general public seem not to have changed much (this is also due to the fact that the teaching of Estonian in schools changes very slowly). These beliefs are strongly based on the SLI, which has been the main language ideology throughout the last century. Over time, language planning has become research-based and tolerant, but the general public seems to think differently: if Estonians do not

defend [Standard] Estonian, it will die (very) soon (see M. Mäekivi 2022). A similar fear existed, for example, at the beginning of the 21st century, e.g., in 2001, the conservative Eduard Vääri said:

> "Standard Estonian is our most precious asset. As long as it exists, we must preserve and protect it. Although the trend and ideal of the current young generation is to become a hybrid, the better part of young people should keep and protect their language until a new generation of Estonians grows up, who will remain in the backwaters of Europe and preserve their language and nationality." (Vääri 2001: 1)

3.3.3. The present day

In March 2023, several myths about language were strongly represented in the heated debates about changing the meanings of two words: *liiderlik* (older loanword from German *liederlich*, meaning 'debauched'; a new loan from English *leader* + adjective suffix *-lik*, meaning 'leader-like') and *osavõtlik* (the older meaning is 'solicitous'; a new adjective meaning is based on the verb *osa võtma* 'take part' and means 'is eager to take part'). These words mean something else for older generations than they do for young people, and therefore, young people who do not know these "correct" meanings have received a lot of criticism (see e.g., Vaino 2023; Ehala 2023; Tomusk 2023). The most prominent myths were that "the meanings of words should not be allowed to vary or change" and "children can't speak or write properly anymore" (on those myths see Bauer & Trudgill 1998). These myths are, of course, connected. This is also not surprising because an "old-new" contrast usually emerges when, according to the SLI, language change is seen as a negative development. Old words are then considered better than new ones (Koistinen 2018: 82).

The clash between generations is evident everywhere, and a good example of how intertwined all these topics are can be seen in this quote from literary scholar Maarja Vaino:

> "In a certain context, it is necessary for words to have meanings, which are as unambiguous as possible, because otherwise formal communication becomes impossible. If a person is not sure of something when looking for an expression, they must be able to check/ask the most accurate and correct meaning of the word in the *Dictionary of*

Standard Estonian or through language consultation. And the answers à la "decide for yourself; all spoken language is correct; language cannot be standardised," etc., just create chaos in the same way. [---] The language of the Internet that is collected in EKI's language corpora cannot be representative of standard language, because it introduces errors – yes, expressing oneself incorrectly. Either out of ignorance or confusion or some other reason. *liiderlik* is a good example. It is possible that in a couple of decades this word will already be used in a new sense. However, this is not the case at the moment, and if we leave the meaning of this word free, we will no longer be able to understand each other normally." (Vaino 2023)

Thus we can see that the SLI and a belief in "bad" and "good" language is still present in Estonian society (partly because of the history of language planning and maintenance, including the school system, etc.), and research-based language planning has received much criticism (see Vainik & Paulsen 2023 for a comprehensive analysis). When looking back at the history of Estonian language planning, this is of course understandable: the written standard has always been seen as the most important form of the Estonian language, usually equated with the Estonian language itself, and other registers and dialects have not been valued. The "purity" and "beauty" of the (standard) language have been values, which have been maintained throughout the history of language planning, and there has been an understanding that these values can be achieved only through careful language planning and editing. The attempts to take actual language use more into account have seemed too radical to many over time, but especially to language maintenance experts, who have seen themselves as implementers of standard language.

This discomfort continues to be strongly related to concerns about the existence and future prospects of Estonian and potential influence from other languages – currently mostly from English. Thus, the SLI, purism, and the wish to defend Estonian are still strongly present in society. In reality, Estonian is doing well: (Standard) Estonian is considered stable (see *Estonian Language Development Plan 2021–2035*), Estonian is the official language of Estonia, it is one of the official languages of the European Union, IT software is available in Estonian, various translation platforms enable translation to and from Estonian, ChatGPT can be prompted in Estonian, doctoral theses can be defended

in Estonian, the government conducts business in Estonian, and Estonian can be spoken in all Estonian institutions, Estonian terminology is well-developed across various fields, etc.

4. Conclusion

During the rather short history of Estonian language planning, one can spot almost every hallmark of the SLI and purism (which are widespread across Europe). At the beginning of the 20th century, a "systematic", "beautiful" Standard Estonian was created, which was superior to other variants and – until the last few decades – this fixed standard was protected from changes resulting from both language-internal and language-external influences. As a result, there has been a desire in the language community for uniformity (i.e., resisting variation and dialects) and stability (i.e., unchangeability). At the same time, the origin and justification of old norms have not always been questioned. A strong "one nation – one language" attitude has been present. Even today, when Estonian language planning is research-based and is striving towards descriptiveness, the attitude in society has remained more or less unchanged, seeing language change and descriptiveness as a threat to the Estonian language and nation. The only difference has been who we have to defend ourselves from – originally, German and Russian influences and now, in the 21st century, mostly English influences.

The direction of Estonian language planning (and also the tradition of language editing) was set in the 1920s and 1930s, when Estonia was an independent country and the cultivation of Estonian was in our own hands. Unfortunately, this was interrupted by the Soviet period, when the SLI deepened: on the one hand, because of the totalitarian view of language (control), and on the other hand, because of the silent fight against Russification (pure Standard Estonian was seen as a crucial part of this fight). The general understanding was that the Estonian language equals standard language, and other registers are less worthy. Even though Estonia has been an independent country again since 1991, the mindset of the general language landscape has only partly changed, and we can see this also in recent discussions about (Standard) Estonian language and language planning.

However, society only reflects the ideologies it has been taught. This is why almost every time when language planners have decided to "loosen" something in Standard Estonian, some part of society – including language maintenance experts – have been upset. The same also happened in the 2020s when another wave of discussions began. In this case, it was mostly language editors opposing change, who also perpetuate the myth of the standard language being the only representative of "good" language and that erring against it would dramatically damage Estonian as a whole. In these discussions, the usual roles of language standardisation are reversed and the most prescriptivist approaches come in the "bottom-up" rather than "top-down" direction. As language planners follow the methods widely recognised in international lexicography today and as there are heated discussions about language planning in the media, it is to be expected that an understanding of how language works will also become more widespread and accepted in society – especially considering that Estonian is actually doing very well both in Estonia and in Europe. However, this all takes time, since, for now, the SLI and purism are still strongly embedded in language-related understanding and beliefs within society.

Acknowledgements

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Kokkuvõte. Liina Lindström, Lydia Risberg, Helen Plado: Keele-ideoloogiad ja uskumused keele kohta Eestis ja eesti keelekorralduses. Euroopas valitsevad keeleideoloogiad on aja jooksul eesti keelekorraldusele suurt mõju avaldanud. Keelekorraldajad on omakorda mõjutanud eesti ühiskonnas valitsevaid arusaamu. Artiklis analüüsime, kuidas keeleideoloogiad on alates 19. sajandist toetanud müüte ja uskumusi eesti kirjakeele kohta. 20. sajandi algul tugevnes kirjakeele staatus (võrreldes kohalike murretega) järsku, samuti süvenes hoiak, et on olemas „õige" ja „vale" keel. Kuigi eesti

keelekorraldus muutus alates 1980. aastatest leebemaks ja demokraatlikumaks, on taustal püsinud siiski totalitaarne arusaam keelest. Võõrsõnu ja keelte ning registrite segamist peetakse eriti halvaks ideoloogia tõttu eestlastest kui väikesest rahvast, kes on pidanud ja peab ennast ja oma keelt pidevalt kaitsma.

2020. aastatel järjekordselt esile kerkinud uued arutelud on huvitavad, sest keelekorraldus soovib norminguid hoida tegeliku keelekasutusega kooskõlas, kuid keeletoimetajad ja õpetajad näevad võimalikke muudatusi ohuna nii eesti keelele kui isegi rahvusele. Niisiis on pika aja jooksul levinud keeleideoloogiad eestlastes tugevalt juurdunud.

Märksõnad: eesti keelekorraldus, eesti keel, eesti kirjakeel, keeleideoloogiad, standardkeele ideoloogia, purism