Age factor and the social value of English in Lithuanian cities

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The sociopolitical changes in Lithuania after regaining our independence led not only to the new language policy, but also to substantive changes of the social value of various linguistic codes. These changes included the changed status of the Lithuanian language, changed importance of Russian, whereas the opened borders and globalization increased communication in English.

The paper will deal with values and functions attributed to English as the main foreign language in Lithuania. Based on the data of new quantitative and qualitative research done in 2008-2011 in urban areas of Lithuania, involving the use of languages, language preferences and attitudes of adults and young students, the use of English including attitudes and beliefs will be analysed.

The paper will consider the issues of language choice in different domains in big and smaller towns of Lithuania, the value of English regarding such characteristics as aesthetics, usefulness, habit and prestige. Correlations between new trends of the English language use and attitudes and age factor will be analysed. The paper will be illustrated with sociolinguistic maps.

Keywords: language attitudes, language use, language policy.