

## **New multilingualism in Lithuanian cities**

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After the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Lithuania in 1990, the nature of bilingualism and multilingualism has completely changed in Lithuania. A radical departure from the Soviet-era asymmetric bilingualism model that meant bilingualism of titular ethnicities and monolingualism of Russian-speakers has occurred. The new language policy influenced, in particular, language attitudes and behaviour of ethnic minorities, comprising about 16 per cent of Lithuania's population. Poles and Russians, the largest ethnic groups in Lithuania, who knew little or no Lithuanian before the restoration of independence, have modified their language practices which also influenced their language choice. It should be emphasized that former monolingual speakers of Russian (mainly Russians, Poles and other ethnicities in Soviet times) have increasingly become bilingual or multilingual. Moreover, the use of Lithuanian in public and private spheres has become much more frequent.

The most obvious changes in language attitudes and behaviour are noticed in the biggest cities of Lithuania where the increasing process of globalisation stimulates the development of new multilingualism. Not only ethnic minorities but also Lithuanians in the biggest cities of Lithuania are distinguished for their linguistic repertoire which has changed. The linguistic attitudes and behaviour of the people living in the biggest cities of Lithuania make a big influence on the changes of sociolinguistic situation in Lithuania.

The paper will deal with the new tendencies of multilingualism in the biggest cities of Lithuania – in Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda. Based on the data of new quantitative research done in 2008 -2009 involving the usage of languages, language preferences and attitudes of adults and young students, correlations between new trends of multilingualism and different social factors will be analysed. Careful attention will be paid on multilingualism, language and ethnic identity and influence of age factor.