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## **Standardization of the Silesian Language: The Current Status and Prospects for Development**

The first decade of the 20th century saw two events that significantly affected the typology of linguistic codes operating in the territory of the Polish language. The first event was closing the decades-long discussions on the status of Kashubian, treated in Polish linguistics either as a dialect of Polish or, less frequently, as a separate, independent West Slavic language. The legitimacy of further disputes on the subject was effectively thwarted upon the adoption in 2005 of the Law on National and Ethnic Minorities and Regional Language, granting the Kashubian language the status of the only Polish regional language (“The regional language within the meaning of the Law is the Kashubian language”, ch. 4, article 19.2). The linguistic, rather than dialectal, position of Kashubian was emphasized in the afore-mentioned law by defining a regional language, in accordance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, as a code that “differs from the official language of the state” and is not a “dialect of the official language of the state” (ch. 4, article 19.1.2).

While the elevation of Kashubian to the status of a language became an event closing one of the most important discussions in contemporary Polish studies, another event opened a similar discussion. This is because in the first decade of the 21st century the status of the Silesian ethnolect, until then traditionally considered, not only in Polish studies, to be a dialect of Polish, was questioned. In the public debate and in the academic discussions, one increasingly encountered the view that Silesian has “transcended the definitional boundaries of dialect” [Wyderka 2014: 112] by transforming into a language independent of and separate from Polish. The thesis of the non-dialectal, linguistic status of the speech of Silesians was formulated mainly by circles of Upper Silesian socio-cultural activists, gathered around such organizations as the Tõwarzistwo Piastowaniõ

Ślōnskij Mōwy “Danga”, or The Society for Cultivating and Promoting of Silesian Speech Pro Loquela Silesiana. The legitimacy of granting Silesian the status of a second Polish regional language, together with Kashubian, was also recognized by a significant group of Polish scholars. The conclusions of expert reports and opinions accompanying parliamentary draft amendments to the Law on Ethnic and National Minorities bore witness to this [see, for example, Łodziński 2012, Sekuła 2008, Szmeja 2012, Śliz 2014, Tambor 2011, Wicherkiwicz 2008]. Of course, the view of Silesian independence was also supported by local Silesian political organizations, such as the Silesian Autonomy Movement and the Union of People of Silesian Nationality. Ever since a proposal to amend the Law on National and Ethnic Minorities granting the Silesian ethnolect the status of a regional language was first submitted to the Sejm in 2007, the issue of Silesian emancipation has become an issue that transcends local, Silesian political and social life. When writing about the activities aimed at giving the Silesian ethnolect the status of regional language, it should be noted that these activities may be met with a relatively large public support. The scale of the popularity of the idea of an independent language was quite objectively reflected in the results of the Polish national census: in 2001 just over 56,000 Poles, and in 2011 530,000 Poles recognized the ‘Silesian language’ as the ‘language of home contacts’ [*Struktura...* 2015].

As indicated, for example, by the participants of the popular scientific conference „Śląsko godka [Silesian lingo] – still a dialect or already a language?” held in 2008 in the Silesian Parliament [cf. e.g. Kallus 2008, Lysko 2008, Wiczorek 2008], the circles of Silesian activists and politicians were aware that one of the most important obstacles hindering the development of Silesian and preventing its legal elevation to the rank of a regional language was the lack of codification. The absence of a strict norm, at least in terms of the European linguistic area, situates a particular ethnolect in a group of dialects or dialects, rather than among independent languages. The lack of a standard variety, for obvious reasons, also hinders the public dissemination of a particular ethnolect, curbs the development of literature created in it and in practice prevents its introduction into schools as a subject of study. Predictably then, as early as in the first decade of the 21st century, more than a dozen works of a descriptive-normative nature appeared on the Silesian publishing market, the authors of which aimed to describe and codify modern Silesian. These were primarily dictionaries, mainly bilingual Silesian-Polish dictionaries, among which the best known were the three-volume *Zbornik polsko-ślůnski* by Andrzej Roczniook [2008, 2010, 2015] and the two-volume *Słownik gůrnoślůnskij godki* by Kallus [2007]. Among the lexicographical works published was to be found some quite original

publications, such as the trilingual *Great Silesian-German-English Dictionary*, edited by Andrzej Czajkowski [2006], picture dictionaries by Marek Szoltysek *Pictorial dictionary of Silesian* [Szoltysek 2011] and Joanna Furgalińska [2010], or even Marek Jachymski's *Chinese-Silesian Dictionary* [Jachymski 2011]. In addition to dictionaries, a number of phrase books, "teach yourself" books on Silesian, primers and grammars also served the purposes of describing and codifying Silesian [see: Dyrda 2013; Szoltysek 2008, 2011; Grynicz, Rocznik 2011].

A cursory look at the above-mentioned publications, however, allowed us to conclude that works of little scientific value appeared on the publishing market, in most cases with little cognitive value. At least in part, this was due to the fact that the afore-mentioned dictionaries, teach yourself books and primers were created by amateurs, usually lacking basic lexicographic and linguistic competence. The lexicographical works of the time were usually heterogeneous registers of lexicon compiled on the basis of already extant Silesian dictionaries and lexical lists attached to various older Silesian dialectological works. In the case of some dictionaries, such as the extensive *Zbornik polsko-ślůnski* by Andrzej Rocznik, a noticeable part of the lexicon was made up of ephemeral units, probably known only to the author himself (*kilofreser* 'man eating a lot', *blafarnio* 'yap', *szytchać* 'bother'), it was also noticeable that the work ignored the stylistic differentiation of lexis (*curik*, *nazot*, *cofski rziciũm* 'backwards'). If even some of the works mentioned were accompanied by a list of the sources used, such as Kallus' *Słownik gōrnoślōnskij gōdki*, or Czajkowski's *The Great Dictionary of Silesian-German-English*, as a rule, the criteria and method of quoting the entries were not provided. Attention was also drawn to the low level of lexicographic technique, as evidenced, for example, by the recognition as separate entries of grammatical forms and collocations, such as *I can't, for you, go quickly, in three days* [Kallus 2007]. In turn, incompetent use of dialect dictionaries, mixing dictionary and encyclopedic information, and unreflective automation when reversing the sides of the dictionary led to the creation of pseudo-words such as: 'a board with densely packed nails for hammering flax', 'a woman from Austria-Hungary' [Rocznik 2010], or 'a caroler with a Bethlehem nativity scene', 'a wooden paddle for washing' [Kallus 2007]. The outlines of grammars on the market, however, focused on inflection, mainly the paradigms of selected nouns and verbs, the inflection of which forms obviously coincided with the dialect background of the author's own idiolect. Other sections of grammar, phonetics, vocabulary and syntax, were either completely ignored or presented in a rudimentary and unsystematic manner in such works. The "teach yourself" books and primers on the market exhibited not only an unsatisfactory editorial ability, but also extremely poor methodological ability. One such

example is the tutorial *Rýchtig gryfno godka* by Dariusz Dyrda [2013], which in practice is a two-sided Polish-Silesian dictionary, supplemented by a collection of short columns (mainly political, historical and sports-related), accompanied by short succinct ones on selected grammatical and pragmatic-language issues.

A unique position in the Silesian publishing market at the time was held by *Gõrnošlõnski šlabikõrz* [Adamus et al. 2010], a primer aimed mainly at elementary school students. It was prepared by a group of authors associated with Pro Loquela Silesiana, headed by Mirosław Syniawa, Józef Kulisz and Rafał Adamus. This work featured high methodological, linguistic and editorial qualities, as was confirmed by positive publishing reviews by four linguists, literary scholars and Polish language teachers, Artur Czesak, Zbigniew Kadłubek, Władysław Lubas and Bernadeta Nieszporek-Szamburska. The practical usefulness of the primer was confirmed by its use in several Upper Silesian schools and kindergartens as a teaching aid in regional lessons [*W Chorzowie...* 2017]. *Gõrnošlõnski šlabikõrz*, in comparison with other works which around 2010 attempted to describe and codify Silesian, stood out due to several distinguishable features. One of the most important was that the primer was based on relatively well-developed theoretical and linguistic foundations, since the method of writing used in it and the language model itself were based on the document *Preliminary Principles of Silesian Spelling*, adopted in Cieszyn in 2009, which contains the framework principles of the new Silesian orthography [*Wstępne zasady...* 2009, cf. also Tambor 2009]. This document, a short orthographic and grammatical study, was the result of the work of a language committee created by Silesian language activists and chaired by Jolanta Tambor, a linguist affiliated with the University of Silesia. The most important feature of the orthography pushed in the *Preliminary Principles of Silesian Spelling* was far-reaching conservatism, manifested in the adoption of most of the orthographic solutions inherent in standard Polish. These include the use of a distinctive set of graphemes *ch, h, ó, u, rz, ź, dź, ł*, avoidance of notation of unaccented sounds (*przodek, godka*, not: *\*pszodek, \*gotka*), and specific notation of soft sounds using monographs or digraphs (trigraphs) *ś, si, ć, ci, ź, zi, dź, dzi*. A more important novelty was the use of the grapheme *õ* to denote the phoneme [õ], which is absent in standard Polish (the so-called closed [o]), as well as two homographs, *õ* and *ô*, which graphically unified the phonetically diverse area of Upper Silesia [see Jaroszewicz 2022b].

Despite the fact that Silesian language activists failed to produce any fully-fledged work of a codifying nature, it transpired that this four-page 2009 *Preliminary Rules of Silesian Spelling* and its elaboration, *Gõrnošlõnski šlabikõrz*, sufficed as a normative basis for the dynamic development of Silesian literature in the years to come. In fact, in the second decade of the 21st century some

fifty monographs on literature, using the new orthography, have appeared on the market, published both by regional, Upper Silesian publishing houses (Wydawnictwo Śląsk, Silesia Progress, Narodowa Oficyna Śląska) and prestigious nationwide publishing houses (Wydawnictwo Literackie, Wydawnictwo Czarne, Wydawnictwo Media Rodzina). Significantly, these items tended formally and thematically to transcend the framework of typical dialectal literature. Silesian has become the linguistic material of both novels and novel series, collections of short stories, volumes of essays, popular science articles, volumes of poetry, comic books and translations of world and Polish literature [see Czesak 2015]. It is worth noting that the new model of Silesian orthography has found application not only in Silesian literature, but also in other public spaces, online information and cultural webistes, and popular science portals (Wachtyrz, Silling), online dictionaries (*Dykcionorz*), computer and smartphone software (Samsung, Firefox, Facebook), advertising space (Coca-Cola, Credit Agricole, Volkswagen) [for more details see: Hadasz 2017, Jaroszewicz 2019a].

The functional and quantitative development of literary Silesian meant that clarification and correction of the rather vague rules of Silesian orthography adopted in 2009 soon became one of the most urgent needs of Silesian regional culture. The absence of explicitly and systematically articulated rules of notation, regulating not only general but also specific orthographic issues, prevented a definitive break with the normative confusion inherent in Silesian writings in the early 20th century [cf. Jaroszewicz 2022b]. The lack of a normative study also limited the Silesian reading market, reducing not only the number of people reading in Silesian, but, more importantly, the pool of artists creating content in Silesian.

A scientific monograph, *Principles of the Silesian Language Spelling. A Normative Study* by Henryk Jaroszewicz, was an attempt to meet public demand. It was published in the fall of 2022 [Jaroszewicz 2022a] and reviewed for publication by Tomasz Kamusella and Jolanta Tambor. Aimed primarily at helping those writing in Silesian, the book was a comprehensive development and methodological continuation and partial revision of the rules adopted in Cieszyn in 2009 and subjected to more extensive elaboration in the 2010 *Górnoślōnski ślabikōrz*. The normative solutions used in this work were based primarily on the author's analysis of the shape of literary language functioning in modern Silesian writings. Jaroszewicz achieved the image of literary Silesian by creating a lexical corpus of 1.05 million word items ("word tokens"), yielding 119,000 original word forms ("word types"). The sources of the corpus were the texts of 44 most philologically valuable literary works created in the Silesian language and published between 2000 and 2021. The following translations may be mentioned:

*Prōmytyjos przibity* by Aeschylus [Aeschylus 2013], *Drach. Edycyjō ślōnskō* by Szczepan Twardoch [2018], *Nowy Testamyt* [2017], *We Muminkowyj Dolina* by Tove Jansson, *Mały Princ* by Antoine Saint-Exupéry [2018] and original works: *Letters from Rome* by Zbigniew Kadłubek [2008], *Ród* (The Family) by Alfred Bartylla-Blanke [2000], *Milka from Trześnia* by Katarzyna Szkaradnik [2008], *Cebulowō ksiynga umartych* by Mirosław Syniawa [2018], *Kōmisorz Hanusik* by Marcin Melon [2014]. All of the collected lexical material was compiled using the freeware AntConc.

Although *The Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* was a single author's work, the normative solutions contained therein were consulted repeatedly between 2019 and 2022 with a number of the most important Silesian writers, translators, publicists and language activists, including Rafał Adamus, Grzegorz Kulik, Marcin Melon, Stanisław Neblik, Mirosław Syniawa and Rafał Szyma. For the purpose of the discussion, a closed codification group was created on one of the social networks, whose participants, including the above-mentioned authors, could discuss subsequent versions of the *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* submitted by the author. Importantly, all members of the group had a significant influence on the final version of the normative decisions adopted, since any codification solution that raised major objections was discussed more widely, and then put to a vote in which each member of the group, including the author of the monograph himself, had one vote. The result of the vote was binding and translated directly into the final text of the monograph. If we compare the working versions of the manuscript presented by Jaroszewicz and the final editing of the *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling*, we may see that in most cases the corrections, additions and changes led to an increase in the level of inclusiveness of the Silesian language norm by expanding the repertoire of normative behavior to include orthographic-grammatical doublets.

*Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* is a work consisting of three main parts. The first part features explicitly laid out rules of spelling which describe the grapheme system of the Silesian language, the method of recording selected sounds and inflectional forms, the rules of using hyphenated or separated spelling, the procedure for adapting borrowings from German, the use of uppercase and lowercase letters, or punctuation rules.

The second part of the monograph features an orthographic dictionary of about 8200 entries, which were extracted from the afore-mentioned lexical corpus. Each inflected part of speech (verbs, nouns, adverbs, adjectives, numbers, some pronouns) was provided with the endings of selected dependent forms, mainly those that could raise normative doubts (e.g., *wypytywać*: -ujã, -ujesz, -ujymy; *wyróż*: -azu, -azy, -azōw; *wysoko*: wyżyj; *wyraźnō*: -ny, -ne, -ni, -iyszō;

wy: wõs). Such a procedure, on the one hand, clarified the Silesian orthographic norm and indirectly fixed the inflectional, phonological and morphological norm. It is worth noting that the dictionary included in the monograph was prescriptive-descriptive. On the one hand, it strictly regulated the orthographic (orthographic-grammatical) form of lexemes, but on the other hand, it neglected to evaluate them, ignoring the origin of the lexemes, the level of their rooting in the Silesian dialects, the degree of dissimilarity from standard-Polish equivalents and the stylistic value they possessed. In fact, the basic key to the selection of forms for the dictionary part of the *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* was frequency. It was assumed that all lexemes that appeared in the corpus in at least two sources, at least seven times (in total), would be recorded. It should be noted that the dictionary part of the monograph is the first complete index of vocabulary functioning in contemporary Silesian literature. Due to the applied key of quoting entries (frequency), the index presents an objective picture of modern Silesian lexis, untainted by subjective selection criteria. These advantages are particularly important given that other newer dictionaries describing Silesian dialects are either far from complete and omit modern Silesian literary lexis (such as *Słownik gwar śląskich* edited by Bogusław Wyderka [2000–2020]), or, quite typically, are differential in nature, presenting only those lexemes that differ in form or meaning from their standard-Polish counterparts (cf. e.g. *Mały słownik gwary Górnej Śląska* – Little Dictionary of the Upper Silesian – edited by Bożena Cząstka-Szymon, Jerzy Ludwig and Helena Synowiec [2000]).

The third part of *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* is a grammatical appendix focusing on the description of Silesian inflection. This section of the work divides Silesian nouns, adjectives and verbs into declension-conjugation groups and also presents the inflectional paradigms of these parts of speech, discussing in detail the types and ways of forming particular verb forms.

Five general normative principles guided the formulation of the general orthographic (and, indirectly, grammatical) solutions implemented in *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling*. The first principle was to respect those solutions that showed the highest frequency in modern Silesian literature. Preference was also accorded linguistic forms with a prestigious status due to their membership in Silesian dialects and patois with the greatest number of speakers, and greatest cultural and economic potential. The third principle was to strive to affirm the totality of the Silesian cultural and linguistic space in its tripartite division into Opole Silesia, Cieszyn Silesia and „Czarny” (industrial) Silesia. Borne in mind was also the need to maintain a connection with the orthographic solutions adopted in 2009 in Cieszyn and used in *Górnoślōnski ślabikōrz*, and indirectly with the spelling of the Polish language. The final, fifth principle, was

to strive for simplicity and economy in the solutions introduced. The result of applying such criteria, criteria sometimes quite difficult to reconcile, was the need to introduce into *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* a division of normative linguistic behavior into model and optional ones. Model solutions were preferred, but optional solutions were acceptable. The inclusion in the space of the Silesian orthographic (and partly grammatical) norm of model and optional behavior has established Silesian as a language with a relatively inclusive norm, accepting a relatively wide range of acceptable communicative behavior.

Those linguistic realizations that most closely fulfilled the five general normative principles mentioned above (the requirements of frequency, prestige, generality, economy and tradition) entered the model norm. As a result, in most cases, the model standard consisted of solutions inherent in the writing idiolect of the most important and active modern Silesian-speaking authors, including Grzegorz Kulik, Marcin Melon and Mirosław Syniawa. It may be added that the language model preferred by these authors was clearly related to both the central Silesian patois (Gliwice-Toszek) and the interdialect used in the western part of the Urban-Silesian conurbation. In both cases, we deal with the patois space specific to the most populous part of Upper Silesia, one where the economic, educational and cultural center of the region, Katowice, is located.

The optional norm, on the other hand, consisted mainly of those linguistic realizations that are present in modern Silesian literature, but in terms of frequency differ significantly from competing orthographic-grammatical realizations. This usually applies to behaviors that are also characterized by lesser prestige, generality or tradition than solutions considered to be model. Forms characteristic of the literary idiolect of such authors as Alfred Bartylla-Blanke, Alojzy Lysko and Stanisław Neblik tended therefore to become the optional norms. The genetic basis of these optional realizations was usually the Opole patois and that of the area where the Gliwice-Toszek and Cieszyn patois intersected.

Outside the norm of the Silesian language, both model and optional, were, however, those types of linguistic realizations that were not found in the works included in the corpus, or those that occurred only incidentally. These tend to be features reflecting the peculiarities of Cieszyn dialects (e.g., “jabłonkowanie” – *cziarne, szciekać*), but also, less frequently, behaviors specific to other Silesian dialects, including Central, the Gliwice-Toszek and the Opole patois. These are such features of literary idiolects that reflected recessive dialect behavior (“mazurzenie” – *ucyc, dysc*), phenomena occurring in Silesia only punctually (verbal suffix *-uwa-*, *narychtuwać*), or dialectal phenomena clearly limited territorially (anticipation of palatality, *niejsie*).



The main discrepancies between the normative orthographic-grammatical variants of Silesian are shown in the table:

|                    | <b>Model standard</b>          | <b>Optional standard</b>      |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>o : ǒ</b>       | ptok, fajno, godać             | ptǒk, fajnǒ, gǒdać            |
| <b>o : ȳ</b>       | mōndro, piyrso, Wilijo         | mōndrȳ, piyrszȳ, Wilijȳ       |
| <b>a : ǎ</b>       | prosia, widza, trocha          | prosiǎ, widzǎ, trochǎ         |
| <b>ym : am</b>     | gymba, symp, zymby             | gamba, samp, zamby            |
| <b>yn : an</b>     | rynka, wszyndy, gynsty         | ranka, wszandy, gansty        |
| <b>-nie : -ni</b>  | czytanie, podziynkowanie       | czytani, podziynkowani,       |
| <b>-cie : -ci</b>  | życie, bicie                   | życi, bici                    |
| <b>eł : oł</b>     | bydełko, spełnić, wełna        | bydołko, społnić, wołna       |
| <b>o : ło</b>      | chop, gowa, motek              | chłop, głowa, młotek          |
| <b>u : łō</b>      | dugi, tumaczyć, wysuchać       | dłōgi, tłōmaczyć, wysłōchać   |
| <b>ge : gie</b>    | angelski, figel, wielge        | angielski, figiel, wielgie    |
| <b>gy : giy</b>    | ciyngym, ôgyń, regyrować       | ciyngiyym, ôgiyń, regiyrować  |
| <b>ke : kie</b>    | cuker, kery, tukej             | cukier, kiery, tukiej         |
| <b>ky : kiy</b>    | filōkym, ôkynko, siykyra       | filōkiyym, ôkiynko, siykiyra  |
| <b>ze- : zō-</b>   | zegōn, zegōwek, zegroda        | zōgōn, zōgōwek, zōgroda       |
| <b>za- : zō-</b>   | zabawa, zakōn, zapłata         | zōbawa, zōkōn, zōpłata        |
| <b>nōn : ny</b>    | kopnōńc, siednōńc, wyciōngnōńc | kopnyć, siednyć, wyciōngnyć   |
| <b>niyn : ny</b>   | kopniynty, wyciōngniynty       | kopnyty, wyciōngnyty          |
| <b>-ami : -ōma</b> | dziolchami, fatrami, kolanami  | dziolchōma, fatrōma, kolanōma |

\* \* \*

It is difficult to predict the way the development of Silesian, both in its literary, standard variety and its colloquial, dialect variety, will unfold. The vitality of the Silesian ethnolect as a whole would certainly benefit were it to be elevated to the status of a second Polish regional language alongside Kashubian. It may be assumed with a fairly high degree of certainty that such a legal step would increase the social prestige of Silesia and facilitate, through statutorily guaranteed financial support, the development of a Silesian-speaking culture. Introducing Silesian lessons in schools, which would be one of the consequences of recognizing Silesian as a regional language, would also help, at least partially, to rectify the damage done to Silesian speech by the violation of its intergenerational transfer.

Even should the official status of Silesian not change in the foreseeable future, the published *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* seem to have opened up new prospects for the Silesian language. If the language model recorded in this monograph is approved by the circles of Silesian artists and activists, the work in question may finally sort out the orthographic features of the Silesian linguistic standard, bringing to a definitive close the era of competition between competing Silesian alphabets. It is also clear that *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* may become the theoretical foundation for conducting further, standardization activities and fulfill a similar role in the coming years to that fulfilled by *Preliminary Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* and *Gõrnošlõnski šlabikõrz* a decade ago. The creation of a handy grammar of Silesian, as well as a two-sided Silesian-Polish dictionary, which would be based on the grammatical and lexical material collected in this work seems a feasible undertaking manageable within a few years. *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* already makes it possible to begin the first works on Silesian teaching materials, which, after the hypothetical elevation of Silesian to the status of a regional language, would be used in the region's schools. Regardless of what direction the development of the Silesian language will take, it is clear that the publication of *Principles of Silesian Language Spelling* does not represent the culmination of the normative process but is only one of the preliminary steps towards the full standardization of the Silesian language.

*Translated by Magdalena Perdek*

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### **Standardization of the Silesian Language: The Current Status and Prospects for Development**

At the beginning of the 20th century, a discussion on the status of the Silesian ethnolect emerged in Poland. Several years ago, the creative and language activist circles advocating for the linguistic autonomy of Silesian initiated actions aimed at the description and codification of the Silesian language. Among the many published works, only the few-page *Wstępne zasady pisowni śląskiej* (Preliminary Rules of Silesian Orthography) from 2009 and *Górnoślōnski ślabikōrz* from 2010 can be considered valuable studies that had a real impact on the development of Silesian literature in the second decade of the 20th century. The relatively general normative decisions presented in these works are revised and extensively expanded in *Zasady pisowni języka śląskiego* (*Rules of Silesian Language Orthography*) from 2022. This monograph, which codifies not only Silesian orthography but also elements of grammar and vocabulary, can serve as a foundation for further activities towards the complete standardisation of the Silesian language.

**KEYWORDS:** Polish language; Silesian language; Silesian dialect; language standardisation; language norm.

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