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Language Ideologies and Language Management of Bilingual Inhabitants in the German-Polish Relic Borderland[1]

1. Introduction

The first half of the twentieth century was a tumultuous period in European history. Two world wars wrought vast destruction, leaving an indelible mark on the lives of millions and bringing untold suffering and death. While historiography often frames

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the German people in the context of World War II as the oppressors, it is undeniable that the atrocities of the war and its aftermath also profoundly impacted the civilian German population.

The postwar reality was marked by the upheaval caused by one of the most significant border shifts in modern European history. Poland ceded its eastern provinces to the Soviet Union and, as "compensation," received former German territories: Warmia and Masuria, Pomerania,[2] Lebuser Land, and Silesia. This territorial reconfiguration not only prompted mass migrations but also transformed the lives of those who remained behind, whether by choice or compulsion, in a now foreign land (Jańczak, 2022, pp. 258–259). The border shift of 1945, when the eastern territories of the former German Reich were transferred to Poland, brought changes in the framework conditions that significantly influenced language policy and language planning at the macro level. These factors undoubtedly shaped ideologies concerning the use, functions, and characteristics of the Polish and German languages, which, in turn, were closely intertwined with individual language management of each German minority speaker.

This article aims to explore the language ideologies of ethnic Germans in the German-Polish relic borderland (namely those living in the present-day administrative provinces of West Pomerania, Pomerania, and Warmia-Masuria) concerning the value, role, and use of Polish and German, and to examine how these beliefs interact with language management practices. The analysis is conducted through the lens of their language biographies, providing insight into their linguistic experiences and strategies for navigating their complex sociolinguistic environment.

2. Research method

2.1 Informants: "Generation Poland"

Our informants, referred to as "Generation Poland," were interviewed within the framework of the LangGener project.[3] They are members of the oldest generation of ethnic

including also scientists from the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, the University of Warsaw, and the University of Opole.

[2] The official names of the northern administrative regions, established in 1999, are Zachodniopomorskie Voivodship (West Pomeranian Region), Pomorskie Voivodship (Pomeranian Region), and Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodship (Warmian-Masurian Region). However, it should be noted that their borders do not perfectly align with those of the prewar German Reich, as discussed in Section 3 below.

[3] The LangGener project examined differences in language use between members of two generations of German-Polish bilinguals: "Generation Poland" and "Generation Germany." The latter, however, is not the focus of this paper. "Generation Germany" refers to the middle generation, born in Poland after World War II in the same regions as "Generation Poland." Members of this generation emigrated

Germans living in Poland, in the areas that were part of Germany until 1945. Born between 1932 and 1945, they acquired German as their first language, having grown up in a German-speaking family environment.

Due to the political changes, when they were children or early teenagers, as inhabitants of these regions, they had to learn Polish, usually before the age of 12–13. Most of them are, therefore, considered consecutive bilinguals. It must be taken into account that speakers of this generation are highly diverse, as they were at different ages and developmental stages during the changes that have occurred since 1945. This diversity may have significantly influenced both later language ideologies and language management. Their communicative abilities in German and Polish may also vary across different domains.

2.2 Interviews: Language biographies

Within the framework of the project, semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with the aim of reconstructing the participants' language biographies.

The language biography method focuses on language and its importance in the speakers' lives: "the narratives that revolve around acquiring one's own language and are embedded in narrative interviews" (Franceschini, 2006, p. 32). Thoma (2022, p. 422) draws attention to an important aspect of biographical research, which allows the speaker to develop their life narratives in the process of (re)interpretation of their experiences in the context of important social and historical events. Zielińska argues that language biographies present "the multilingual speaker's perspective on language acquisition and loss, language use in various situations, and emotional attitudes to language" (Zielińska, 2018, p. 106). As Franceschini (2022, p. 69) points out, the speakers' biographical view of their linguistic repertoire provides insights into scientific research at the macro level.

The interviews were conducted in Polish and German by two interviewers. The material obtained was transcribed and annotated with sociolinguistic tags, with a focus on elements of language biographies, including life stages, language domains, and conceptualizations of language (language management, language ideologies, and lived experience of language). The entire material compiled is available in the LangGener language corpus (*LangGener Spoken Corpus*, n.d.).

The empirical research method used was relational content analysis, which has an experiential foundation and illustrates how the interviewees' personal experiences shape their language ideologies and, in turn, their language management.

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to Germany as teenagers or adults; their first language is Polish, and they acquired German only after their migration to Germany.

3. German-Polish relic borderlands: Pomerania, Warmia, and Masuria

3.1 Definition of borderland

The concepts of "border" and "borderland" are not easily defined. The conceptualization of "border" spans a continuum from narrow definitions to all-inclusive ones. At the same time, we often expand the meaning of the term beyond its classic territorial perception and transfer it to socio-cultural borders/boundaries (Jańczak, 2020). Also, the concept of the borderland is not unambiguous. As Opioła (2014, p. 42) points out, due to its various forms and functions, there are at least four different types of borderland: (1) direct frontier borderland: an area located on one or both sides of a national border; (2) relic borderland: a social borderland formed in areas of phantom borders, existing in the past; (3) migrational borderland, which is also social: regions that are areas of migration; (4) mixed borderland: a social borderland which is a combination the types mentioned above: direct frontier borderland, relic, or migrational borderland. Domagała (1998, p. 15) claims that borderlands can also be understood as an area of mutual cultural influence, and therefore not necessarily as regions located on the border between two countries, but rather as spaces inhabited by members of different nationalities – an understanding that corresponds to the fourth type of the notion of borderland mentioned above.

In our paper, we refer to the fourth type – mixed borderlands, which, in our case, are at the same time relic and migrational borderlands. Although now integral to Polish territory and not located in the immediate vicinity of national borders,[4] the regions in focus are historical Polish-German borderlands. Moreover, they had a diverse population of Poles, Germans, Kashubians, Masurians, Jews, trilingual Old Believers who identify with the German cultural circle (Jorroch, 2015, pp. 82–91), and other ethnic or national groups.

[4] The focus is on the regions of Warmia-Masuria and Pomerania (including Gdańsk Pomerania). In West Pomerania, our analysis focuses on locations away from the immediate border area. The sociolinguistic situation as well as the interrelations between language ideologies, language management, and the conceptualization of multilingualism among the German minority living in Silesia have been discussed by Zielińska and Księżyk (2020).

3.2 A brief overview of Pomerania and Warmia-Masuria regions as borderlands

Although Warmia and Masuria constitute a single administrative region today, they include different historical lands within their area: parts of West Prussia and the southern part of East Prussia. Therefore, they differ in their sociolinguistic circumstances and historical reasons for being considered Polish-German borderlands. For simplicity, however, researchers combine Masurian and Warmian people into one category in their descriptions, despite existing differences in terms of culture, religion, and national consciousness (cf. Beba & Pijanowska, 1998, p. 26).

Polish Pomerania, which today comprises the West Pomeranian and Pomeranian administrative regions,[5] also encompasses several distinct historical regions. Still, they do not coincide with the historical territories of former Pomerania. Until 1945, Western and Central Pomerania were part of Germany. Part of Gdańsk Pomerania – which in the interwar period constituted the Free City of Gdańsk – and had belonged to West Prussia prior to World War I – had long been a cultural crossroads due to centuries of changing political rule, home to Germans as well as Kashubians, Poles, Jews, and other national and ethnic minorities (cf. Borzyszkowska-Szewczyk, 2015, pp. 95–96; Klein & Piwnicki, 2009, pp. 316–317). That affected the postwar history of the region. Consequently, each of the parts of Pomerania has its own ethnic, religious, and/or cultural characteristics. Considering the narrative relating to Pomerania and the reconstruction of its history, Borzyszkowska-Szewczyk uses the term "fractured landscape of memory" (coined by Eva and Hans-Henning Hahn; Hahn & Hahn, 2002). From her perspective, this metaphor fits perfectly to indicate the heterogeneity and the transitional character of this borderland (Borzyszkowska-Szewczyk, 2015, pp. 96–97). Linguistically, Western Pomerania was a German-speaking area before World War II (Szultka, 2001, p. 18), while in Gdańsk Pomerania the linguistic situation was much more diverse, with the population speaking not only German (by far the dominant language), but also Kashubian and Polish (cf. Klein & Piwnicki, 2009, p. 321).

Also, the areas of Warmia and Masuria were not ethnically homogeneous. Historian Andreas Kossert points to the mixed nature of society in Masuria:

> As with almost all ethnic groups in Europe, the Masurians are a majority ethnic group that assimilated other groups such as Old Prussians, Germans, French Huguenots, Scots, and Salzburgers. The ethnic Polish population remained the dominant group in southern Prussia until 1945. (Kossert, 2001, p. 12)[6]

[5] And some areas of the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Region, although no research was conducted there by our team.

[6] All quotations from the publications which originally appeared in Polish or German have been translated into English by the authors of this paper.

The settlement of German population in Masuria was related to the arrival of the German Teutonic Order at the request of Prince Konrad of Masovia in 1226. Until 1945, Masuria belonged to Germany, with German serving as the language of administration. Masurians, however, might have continued to use the Masurian dialect at home. Domagała (1998, p. 14) points out the cultural discrepancies between the indigenous and the newly settled populations in Warmia and Masuria after World War II. She defines this region as a historical western borderland, marked by the dominance of German culture and civilization. After 1945, the area was settled by "people coming from different regions of the country (within its prewar borders), each characterized by a distinct culture at the ethnic or ethnographic level and by a civilization that caused a phenomenon referred to in ethnology as a 'clash of cultures'" (Beba & Pijanowska, 1998, p. 25).

Our interviewees, as members of the German national minority, spoke German in both historical regions of the Polish-German borderlands under study, namely Pomerania and Warmia-Masuria, and experienced varying degrees of German-Polish language contact.

4. Language ideologies

While language ideologies of the German minority in the context of language management have already been explored, notably concerning Upper Silesia (cf. Zielińska & Księżyk, 2020) and so-called *(Spät-)Aussiedler* (or, (late) resettlers) from Poland and Czechia in Germany (cf. Bučková & Nekula, 2022; Księżyk, 2023), no study to date has focused on language issues in the relic borderlands of northern Poland,[7] where the minority is more dispersed and has remained largely inactive for decades. This study aims to fill this research gap.

Based on the language biographies reconstructed from information provided in interviews conducted as part of the LangGener project, it is possible to note and analyze our speakers' conceptualization of their language/languages, which Silverstein describes as language ideologies:

> […] ideologies about language, or linguistic ideologies, are any sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use. (Silverstein, 1979, p. 193)

[7] The German minority in the Gdańsk region has been studied by Magdalena Lemańczyk. However, her publications focus on social issues, primarily on state policy toward this minority and the question of identity redefinition (cf. Lemańczyk, 2015, 2016).

According to Zielińska (2018, p. 106), language ideologies significantly impact a speaker's strategy regarding his or her language(s). Guided by the argument of identity or benefits, language ideologies rationally justify the management of a given speaker's language (Jańczak et al., 2022, p. 37).

Zielińska and Księżyk, analyzing the reasons for language shift by immigrants from Upper Silesia as part of the LangGener project, highlight the taken-for-granted character of language:

> Ideologies operate as a *doxa* – the convictions and truths, or conventional opinions, about what the social order should be, that are believed to be natural and binding, therefore they are neither discussed nor examined, they are taken for granted. (Zielińska & Księżyk, 2020, p. 700)

In our article, we analyze the impact of language ideologies on the language management of bilingual speakers in the regions presented briefly in Section 3.

5. Language management

Language management was one of three conceptualizations applied in the LangGener project's investigation of bilingual language biographies. As Sanden (2016, p. 520) points out, the concept of language management has spread widely in sociolinguistics.

Neustupný and Nekvapil (2003, p. 185) see language management (LM) as an umbrella term for all measures aimed at solving "language problems." At the micro level (simple management), the focus is on solving individual language problems. At the macro level, it takes the form of an organized activity (organized management) and includes both "discourse about management" and the intervention of ideologies:

> Language management is understood broadly, as any sort of activity aimed at language or communication, in other words, at language as a system as well as at language use (or, put simply, "behavior toward language" or "metalinguistic behavior"). These activities can be undertaken by an institution (e.g. the ministry of education, which makes decisions regarding mandatory foreign languages in a given country), but also individuals in particular interactions […]. (Nekvapil & Sherman, 2015, p. 6)

It should be emphasized that LM goes far beyond the earlier Theory of Language Planning,[8] as the concept involves far more actors operating at different levels: the individuals, social organizations (including associations), media, economic and educational institutions, local and central government, etc. (Neustupný & Nekvapil, 2003, p. 186).

[8] Sanden (2016, p. 522) points to a shift in research focus away from the classical notion of Language Planning toward Language Management Theory, which is a more inclusive and broader approach.

6. Language ideologies and language management of German-Polish bilinguals: Classification and discussion of the data

Language ideologies – how one perceives the role of language in life, what attitudes one adopts toward surrounding languages, dialects, and issues related to multilingualism – significantly impact language management at the individual, family, social, and state levels. The following section presents some of the most frequent language ideologies expressed by interviewees from Warmia-Masuria and Pomerania, including its western part, and examines how these ideologies influenced language management, often in relation to the prevailing political circumstances.

Children acquire languages very quickly

When JT_BAR[9] started school in the postwar Polish environment, she spoke only German. But according to JT's memories, the acquisition of the new language was a quick process:

(1) Aber das ging schnell, **bei den Kindern geht das schnell**. (JT_BAR)[10]
(But it [learning Polish] went quickly, **with children it goes fast**.)[11]

Other interviewees also share the conviction that children acquire languages very quickly. For example, QK_BOB stressed that the child learns the language smoothly while playing with foreign-speaking peers (in his case, Polish children):

(2) [Wir] verstanden kein Polnisch mehr da / klar (...) **als Kinder wi / i / kommt man mit der Sprache eher raus** / als als mit mit [den Polen waren] / die Polen die / mit den Kinder haben wir gespielt täglich / das ging ganz schnell. (QK_BOB)
([We] didn't understand any Polish there / clearly (...) **as children we / you manage to learn it quickly** [lit. you come out with the language sooner] / when [we were] with [the Poles] / the Poles / we played with the children every day / that went very quickly.)

Respondent FT_ELB, answering the question about whether it had been difficult for her to learn Polish, referred to her observations of her grandchildren's language learning:

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[9] The quoted utterances, originally in Polish or German and translated into English, are referenced using code names constructed according to a systematic scheme: two letters representing the participant's initials followed by a three-letter abbreviation of their place of residence. All personal data have been anonymized to ensure that participants cannot be identified.

[10] In this and all subsequent quotations from interviews – bold added.

[11] All quotations from interviews conducted during field research have been translated into English by the authors of this paper. The translations have been done faithfully, so they include hesitations, restarts, and ungrammatical expressions, typical of spoken language.

(3) **Für die Kinder ist das nicht so schwer** / ich sehe ja jetzt, wie meine zehn Jahre Enkel Urenkelkinder lernen sich Deutsch in der Schule gleich und das geht ihm sehr gut; mir ging das auch gut Polnisch zu lernen, nicht? (FT_ELB)
(**It's not that difficult for the children** / I can now see how my ten-year-old grandchild / great grandchildren [sic!] is learning German at school and he's doing very well; I also did well learning Polish, didn't I?)

The conviction about the ability of children to learn languages faster influenced the language management of our speakers or their relatives (children or grandchildren). In many cases, acquiring a second language in childhood meant that they developed balanced bilingualism. JT_BAR's strong belief in the power of children's learning, along with the support of her husband, undoubtedly influenced her decision to pass on German to her children:

(4) Das ist gut, das ist gut / **ich habe mit meinen Kindern Deutsch gesprochen**, und sie sind nachher weggefahren, **und konnten fließend Deutsch ohne Probleme**. (JT_BAR)
(It's good, it's good / **I spoke German with my kids**, and later they left [for Germany], **and they could speak German fluently without difficulties**.)

One of our Masurian respondents, LA_MIK, married a Pole and was not allowed to speak German in her family; she was forbidden to teach her daughters German because the language was regarded as the language of fascists. However, she made an attempt to pass it on as a grandmother, even though she received no support from her husband. She taught her granddaughter German despite her husband's belief that she would not be able to do it. It had the opposite effect on her language management as a bilingual speaker:

(5) […] und mein Mann sacht: **„Nein das schaffst du nicht" (...) aber ich habe weiter gesprochen** (...) na ja aber sie [die Enkelin] spricht sie spricht immer doch zu mir Deutsch. (LA_MIK)
([…] and my husband said: **"No, you can't do that" (...) but I kept talking** (...) well, but she [the granddaughter] speaks, she always speaks German to me.)

This speaker's language management enabled her to succeed in passing on the language to her granddaughter, despite a lack of support from her family.

Masurian / Kashubian is a mix of Polish and German

Our speakers from the regions of Masuria and Kashubia (part of the region of Pomerania) emphasized not only the ethnic but also linguistic diversity of the area. Trying to classify the languages/dialects of the autochthonous population, they pointed out borrowings from German or even their confusion. For example, talking about the Masurian dialect, EM_UKT claimed:

(6) **Das war so was Gemischtes zwischen Deutsch und Polnisch nicht**, denn hier waren doch von der Geschichte hier waren doch viele Ansiedler von Kurpie nicht? Von / vom Süden von Masowien / und **da hat so was die so / die Sprache gemischt**. (EM_UKT)
(**It was a mixture of German and Polish, wasn't it**, because there were many settlers from Kurpie, weren't there? From the south of Masovia / and **there was / a mixture of languages**.)

This ethnic diversity and mixed communication practices highlight how difficult it is to draw a clear boundary between Polish and German. Hence, some speakers in these regions describe themselves as "local" (Ger. *hiesig*, Pol. *tutejszy*).

The syncretic character of the language environment was not without significance for language management. For example, in the fragment below, PQ_GDY claims that, although Kashubian partially shares its lexicon with German (numerous lexical borrowings from German were obvious to this interviewee), she was unable to communicate with Kashubians:

(7) […] **denn wir haben nichts verstanden**, aber ich habe mich so angehört die kaschubische Sprache, **da ist viel viele Wor / so so viele Sätze Deutsch**. (PQ_GDY)
([…] **because we didn't understand anything**, but I listened to the Kashubian language, **there are lot of German wor[ds] / sentences**.)

By contrast, the Masurian respondent AL_PAR, when talking about the linguistic mix in the region, points out the distinctiveness of the Masurian dialect from Polish but stresses that it was possible to communicate with Poles:

(8) […] und die Mutter konnte etwas Polnisch / na **die konn… na nicht so richtig Polnisch / wie sie haben *po mazursku*** [gesprochen], aber mit Polen haben sich gut verstanden. (AL_PAR)
([…] and my mother [lit. the mother] knew a bit of Polish / well **she could… well not really Polish / they** [spoke] ***po mazursku***, like, but they got along well with Poles.)

Bilingualism makes life easier

Although not all of our speakers can confidently identify themselves as bilingual, many acknowledge the advantages of speaking multiple languages. For example, KL_PIA said that he speaks "internationally" depending on the situation, and that this way of communicating makes everyday life easier:

(9) **Wir sprechen international** / wie es leichter ist; immer wenn Polnisch, dann Polnisch, wenn denn Deutsch, dann Deutsch. (KL_PIA)
(**We speak internationally** / the way it's easier; if Polish, then Polish; if German, then German.)

This appreciation for bilingualism is reflected in language management. Respondent CS_GIZ confirmed the benefits of bilingualism: when answering the question about what language people speak during meetings at the Association of the German Minority, she said:

(10) Dem Anlass nach, was / was für Bedarf ist, nicht / **wenn wir dort [in Deutschland] sind sprechen wir Deutsch / wenn wir hier [in Polen] sind, Polnisch** geht schneller. (CS_GIZ)
(Depending on the situation, what / what's needed / **when we're there [in Germany] we speak German, and when we're here [in Poland], Polish** is faster.)

SB_KLA mentioned that thanks to good interpersonal relations and the fact that she speaks both languages, she feels comfortable in both countries, Poland and Germany:

(11) Ich war / war **da gut aufgenommen und hier auch** / ist egal / ich / ich weiß nicht / ich ha / ich sehe eigentlich nicht so einen großen Unterschied, nicht? (SB_KLA)
(I was / was **well received there, and here too** / it doesn't matter / I / I don't know, I / I don't really see that much of a difference.)

You should speak the majority language

One of the key patterns that resulted in the language shift was the ideology of speaking the language of the environment. In postwar Poland, German was seen as the language of the enemy.[12] In the new, Polish-speaking environment, it became a stigma[13] that the native inhabitants of Warmia-Masuria and Pomerania tried to get rid of so as not to stand out:

(12) W czterdziestym piątym (...) jak pierwsze dzieci polskie były gdzieś tam na ulicach (...) ta nauka języka polskiego szła bardzo szybko / jako dzieci na pewno się szybciej uczą / poza tym **myśmy się wstydzili być Niemcami, bo nas wytykano i / i / i wyzywano. I my jako dzieci chcieliśmy koniecznie się nauczyć szybko tego języka i / i nam się chyba to udało**. Gorzej było z naszymi rodzicami, więc w domu mówiło się jeszcze po niemiecku. (IT_ELB)
(In 1945 (...) when the first Polish children were somewhere on the streets (...) learning Polish went very quickly / because children certainly learn faster / and besides, **we were ashamed of being Germans, because we were pointed at / and called names. And we, as children, we wanted to learn this language quickly / and**

[12] Hostility directed at Germans in the years following the war stemmed primarily from the Poles' wartime experiences. As a result, the informants' remarks, presented as examples, also implicitly reflect the belief that speaking German and being German is something to be ashamed of.

[13] Zielińska (2013, p. 239) relates the term "stigma" to language as a sign of being different from the surrounding social norm.

I think we managed to do it. It was worse with our parents, so we still spoke German at home.)

Following this ideology, IT_ELB managed to completely hide her German identity:

(13) Das war, als mein Mann / ich musste dann schon so gut Polnisch gesprochen haben, dass **mein Mann auch gar nicht erkannt hat, dass ich eine Deutsche bin**, aber als es schon so weit war, dass wir zusammen sein wollten, dann habe ich meinem Mann gesagt „Hör mal aber du musst eins wissen: ich bin eine Deutsche und ich bin evangelisch." Das war ein Schock für ihn / ich sagte: „Du sollst, musst dir das überlegen." (IT_ELB)
(It was when my husband was / I must have spoken Polish so well that **my husband didn't even recognize that I was German**, but when it got to the point where we wanted to be together, I told my husband: "Listen, you have to know one thing: I'm German and I'm Protestant." That was a shock to him. I said: "You should give it some thought.")

As a consequence of the language ideology that one should speak the majority language and speaking the minority language is associated with risk, a language shift took place in the family of Respondent IT_ELB:

(14) **Das war eine Zeit, eine schwere Zeit für uns / für uns hier Gebliebene; das war immer noch so ein großer Hass** und wir haben auch nie gedacht / wir haben auch nie gedacht, dass es noch eine Zeit geben würde, wo man sich hier treffen kann, [um] einen deutschen Verein zu gründen und Deutsch zu sprechen / **nein, zu Hause haben wir Polnisch gesprochen**. (IT_ELB)
(**That was a difficult time for us / for those of us who stayed here; there was still such great hatred**, and we never thought / we never thought that there would still be a time when people could meet here [to] found a German association and speak German / **no, we spoke Polish at home**.)

Apart from gaining acceptance among Polish children, rapid learning of the majority language was also motivated by the prospect of improving one's financial or social status in one's environment, as the example of Speaker SB_KLA from Pomerania shows:

(15) Weil die Kinder, die Kriegskinder, die waren arm dran mit der Schule / früher war das bisschen nicht so wie jetzt / (...) **mussten die Leute erst zu was kommen und und sich viel verdienen** und / und darum hatten sie auch sehr große Lust, irgendwas zu lernen: Sprachen und so. (SB_KLA)
(Because the children, the war children, were poor with school / things used to be a bit different than they are now / (...) **people had to get somewhere** [lit. get to something] **first and earn a lot** and / and that's why they were very keen to learn something, languages and so on.)

The Polish language is difficult

A recurring ideology explains the lack of good command of Polish on the grounds that it is a difficult language. LA_MIK told us how difficult it had been for her to get used to Polish and learn its complicated pronunciation:

(16) I / ich konnte / **das war mir so schwer dieses *cz sz ż*** / kein Deutscher spricht *ę ą* / ist richtig *ę ę*, nicht. Nie, Niemiec nie wymówi / moje dzieci też nie wymówią. **Ich dachte, ich lerne das nie / Polnisch**, Polnisch. (LA_MIK)
(I / I could / **that was so difficult for me, this *cz sz ż*** / no German [speaker] pronounces *ę ą* / *ę ę* correctly, right? No, no German will pronounce it / my children won't pronounce it either. **I thought I'd never learn it / Polish**, Polish.)

As a result, the respondent's idea of the difficulty of Polish influenced her language management and made her reluctant to learn:

(17) Ja aber / aber ich dachte / ich gehe nicht zur Schule, **ich werde mich** da jetzt **blamieren**. (LA_MIK)
(Yes, but / but I thought / I'm not going to school, **I'm going to embarrass myself** now.)

This made her uncertain, and even convinced her that she would not be able to cope:

(18) A po polsku to się nauczyłam w czterdziestym piątym roku. Tam ja nie szłam do szkoły, bo / bo ja się nie chci / chciałam / **myślała, że się nigdy nie nauczę, bo mnie to było tak trudne**, te *sz* te te te te *li* te ojej *ł*. (LA_MIK)
(And I learned Polish in 1945. I didn't go to school / because I didn't want to / **I thought I would never learn it, because it was so difficult for me**, these *sz*, these, these, these *li*, these, oh, *ł*.)

She was also terrified of being ridiculed:[14]

(19) Ja do szkoły nie by nie chciałam iść, bo myślę, **będę się śmiali ze mnie.** (LA_MIK)
(I didn't want to go to school, because I thought **they would laugh at me**.)

Just like in Masuria, German children in Warmia were not only ridiculed but also harassed by their peers and even teachers, as the example of IT_ELB shows:

(20) Przecież ja nie znałam ani słowa po polsku, więc myśmy się u / uczyli i tego tak, że **szkoła dla nas była straszną udręką i / i najsmutniejsze to było to, że / bo jeżeli dzieci z nas się śmiały, to jeszcze można było to przeżyć, ale jak nauczyciele nam to wytykali, no to było bardzo smutne.** (...) Tak słabo mówiliśmy [po polsku], **nam ciągle tam coś dogadywano**. (IT_ELB)

[14] Zielińska and Księżyk (2020, p. 693) write about German minority children being ridiculed in the school environment in Silesia.

(I didn't know a word of Polish, so we learned it, so **school was a terrible torment for us, and / and the saddest thing was that / if the children laughed at us, you could survive it, but when the teachers pointed it out to us, it was very sad.** (...) We spoke [Polish] so poorly that **they kept making snide remarks**.)

The language policy of the People's Republic of Poland, prohibiting speaking German, coupled with the perception of Polish as difficult and the experience in a new, Polish-speaking environment, may have contributed to low self-perception of one's language skills. The ideology of poor linguistic competence appeared in interviews with two respondents from Masuria. One of them, UM_JAN, talked about her Polish as follows:

(21) Ich (...) ging nicht in die Schule, aber **ich spreche sehr schlecht Polnisch**. (UM_JAN)
(I (...) didn't go to school, but **I speak Polish very badly**.)

Her low self-assessment of her command of Polish is confirmed by her grandchildren, socialized in the Polish-speaking environment:

(22) Nawet moje wnuki raz jakiś / tego, „Babcia, **tak się nie mówi, no**." (UM_JAN)
(Even my grandchildren once in a while [say] / "Grandma, **that's not how they say it**.")

Her self-perception of her language proficiency as insufficient has an impact on her language management: during our interview, she gave up speaking Polish and switched to German, saying:

(23) **Ich kann nicht so richtig Polnisch.** (UM_JAN)
(**I can't really [speak] proper Polish.**)

AL_PAR, another speaker from Masuria presenting this type of language ideology, went further and claimed that he did not know any of the languages in which he was talking to us during the interview:

(24) **Ich kann auch nicht gut Polnisch, auch nicht gut Deutsch. Deutsch vergessen und Polnisch nicht gelernt.** (AL_PAR)
(**I'm not good at Polish, I'm not good at German either. I forgot German and haven't learned Polish** [lit. German forgotten, Polish not acquired].)

It is impossible to forget or unlearn a language

A respondent from Pomerania, JT_BAR, argued that the language of the environment in which one was raised and socialized remains part of one's skills for good:

(25) Ich muss manchmal lachen, dass die Polen fahren für / für drei Monat nach / nach Deutschland, kommen zurück und (...) können kein Polnisch mehr / was soll das denn, was soll das denn? **Ich wohne hier das ganze Leben und kann noch Deutsch, nicht?** Oder Polnisch, was soll das, ne, ne, ne. (JT_BAR)

(It sometimes makes me laugh that Poles go to Germany for three months, come back and (...) they can't speak Polish anymore / what's the point of that, what's the point of that? [I mean,] **I've lived here all my life and I can speak German, right?** Or Polish; what's that supposed to mean; no, no, no.)

The ideology outlined above relies on evaluating the linguistic behavior of other speakers. It is most often present among expatriate communities and tends to involve a certain degree of stigmatization of those who have not managed to preserve their ancestral language. Here, however, it should be noted that in the course of our research in Western Pomerania, we came across speakers who, as a result of a very repressive language policy, had suffered a complete loss of their first language (German), which they had spoken, for example, for the first ten years of their lives.

The satisfaction and joy of speaking German nowadays

Another ideology presented by the respondents is the concept of returning to one's language. For years, speaking German in Pomerania (especially Gdańsk Pomerania) and Warmia and Masuria was impossible, and the only contact with the language were trips to Germany (which were not possible for everyone).

IT_ELB could only speak German when she was in Germany, and she is happy that it is now possible where she lives, although she still has doubts and is unsure:

(26) Ja, **ich bin wirklich froh, dass es / man hat ni / nicht mal geträumt, dass es noch so kommen wird, dass man doch hier Deutsch sp / sprechen kann**, dass wir hier bei offenen Fenstern Deutsch singen können, dass wir uns auf der Straße in Deutsch unterhalten können. Obwohl irgendwie jetz ist es jetzt bisschen unruhiger geworden **/ jetzt muss man schon bisschen aufpassen**, sonst man weiß nie. (IT_ELB)
(Yes, **I'm really glad / we never even dreamed that something like this would happen, that we can / speak German here**, that we can sing in German here with the windows open, that we can talk in German on the street. Even though somehow **it has now become a bit less calm** / you have to be a little careful, because you never know.)

In the early 1990s, IT_ELB struggled with her German after years of not speaking it, which required her to relearn the language. She made a significant effort to prepare a speech for a visit of the German Consul General in 1993:

(27) **Ich habe mich bemüht, ich habe viel gearbeitet / das heißt, viel gearbeitet mit Wörterbüchern, um das Deutsch wieder zu lernen.** (IT_ELB)
(**I tried hard, I worked a lot / that means, I worked a lot with dictionaries to learn German again.**)

The effort and challenge gave the respondent satisfaction and enabled her to return to her native language:

(28) **So bin ich wieder zu meiner Muttersprache gekommen** (...) das heißt, das war viel, viel Arbeit, aber **ich freue mich sehr**. (IT_ELB)
(**So I came back to my mother tongue** (...) it means, it was a lot of work, but **I'm very happy**.)

The respondent communicates in German regardless of grammatical or lexical shortcomings, of which she is aware:[15]

(29) Ich habe das nie gelernt, grammatikalische Regeln, und ich mache nicht so oft grammatikalische Fehler, das ist geblieben von damals, wo ich nur die deutsche Sprache gehört habe. (...) Ich höre oft den Fehler und so dass ich / ich würde sagen, ja, ich habe dann die vielleicht vergessen / **das Schwerste für mich war, Sätze zu bilden. Da fehlten mir Worte, obwohl mein Wortschatz auch gar nicht so reich ist, nicht? Aber aber ich komme weit fertig mit dem allem**, ja. (IT_ELB)
(I've never learned the grammatical rules, and I don't make grammatical mistakes that often, that's left over from the past, when I only heard the German language. (...) I often hear the mistake, and so / I would say, yes, maybe I have forgotten it / **the hardest thing for me was forming sentences. I was missing words, even though [sic!] [because] my vocabulary isn't that rich, right? But, but I'm pretty much done with it all**, yes.)

7. Final remarks

The LangGener project represents a groundbreaking initiative in the analysis of language contact phenomena, exploring the language biographies of Polish-German bilingual speakers to draw conclusions about their expressed language ideologies and the interplay of those ideologies with their language management.

As can be seen from the language biographies recorded, sociolinguistic factors related to bilingualism exhibit complex interdependencies. The language ideologies articulated by the respondents and shaped by their socio-cultural environments significantly influenced their language management practices. Notably, shifting political borders and population exchanges following World War II, but also the political breakthrough after 1989 and the change of policy toward the German minority, appear to have played a pivotal role in guiding the evolution of language ideologies.

The language ideology emphasizing the difficulty of Polish does not appear to hinder its acquisition, as most of our respondents are now bilingual, despite varying levels of linguistic competence. The postwar period was marked by challenging experiences, including a lack of security and acceptance, as well as feelings of fear and

[15] The same belief about speaking German despite linguistic imperfections was mentioned by one of the new speakers of German in Masuria (Jorroch, 2022, p. 300).

shame associated with learning Polish during childhood. These conditions contributed to the emergence of two distinct language ideologies: the belief that children acquire languages quickly, and the prohibition against speaking German. It is important to note, however, that the ideology emphasizing the necessity of learning the majority language may serve as the foundation for an ideology of perceived linguistic incompetence. This, in turn, often manifests itself in the avoidance of speaking Polish. By contrast, the language shift prompted by this ideology has led to the abandonment of German as a medium of communication and the discontinuation of its intergenerational transmission, with instances of bilinguals actively teaching German to their grandchildren remaining exceptional. This has also contributed to the respondents' uncertainty regarding their proficiency in German. Such outcomes illustrate the impact of language ideologies: some of the respondents, having been compelled to learn Polish, perceive themselves as not truly proficient in it, while others struggle to comprehend how Polish, as the majority language, could be unfamiliar to its native speakers. Despite these challenges, speaking German continues to provide a sense of pleasure and personal fulfillment to some individuals.

Appendix: List of informants

Masuria

AL_PAR	male living in Kętrzyn district, born in Rastenburg district in 1933
CS_GIZ	female living in Giżycko district, born in Angerburg district in 1942
EM_UKT	male living in Ruciane-Nida district, born in Sensburg district in 1940
KL_PIA	male living in Pisz district, born in Sensburg district in 1942
LA_MIK	female living in Ełk district, born in Lyck district in 1932
UM_JAN	female living in Kętrzyn district, born in Rastenburg district in 1933

Pomerania

JT_BAR	female living in West Pomerania, born in Köslin district in 1942
PQ_GDY	female living in West Pomerania, born in Sensburg district in 1932
QK_BOB	male living in West Pomerania, born in Köslin district in 1944
SB_KLA	female living in West Pomerania, born in Köslin district in 1938

Warmia

FT_ELB	female living in Elbląg district, born in Elbing district in 1934
IT_ELB	female living in Elbląg district, born in Allenstein district in 1936

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Language Ideologies and Language Management of Bilingual Inhabitants in the German-Polish Relic Borderland

Abstract

This paper investigates the language ideologies and language management strategies of the bilingual German minority residing in the historical Polish-German borderlands. The study is based on qualitative data from interviews with Polish-German bilingual speakers from northern Poland, particularly the Pomerania and Warmia-Masuria regions. The analysis adopts a biographical approach, focusing on the language biographies of the respondents, to explore their linguistic experiences and strategies for navigating their complex sociolinguistic environment. The data was collected during field research conducted in 2018 as part of the international project LangGener, devoted to language changes across two generations of bilinguals living in the areas annexed to Poland in 1945 and in Germany.

Keywords: German minority in Poland; German-Polish bilinguals; language ideologies; language management; language biographies; Warmia and Masuria; Pomerania

Ideologie językowe i zarządzanie językiem wśród dwujęzycznych mieszkańców polsko-niemieckiego pogranicza reliktowego

Streszczenie

Niniejszy artykuł bada ideologie językowe oraz strategie zarządzania językiem wśród dwujęzycznej mniejszości niemieckiej zamieszkującej historyczne pogranicze polsko-niemieckie. Studium opiera się na danych jakościowych pochodzących z wywiadów z polsko-niemieckimi użytkownikami dwóch języków, zamieszkałymi na terenie Polski północnej, w szczególności z regionów Pomorza oraz Warmii i Mazur. Koncentrując się na biografiach językowych respondentów, analizujemy ich doświadczenia językowe oraz strategie radzenia sobie w złożonym środowisku socjolingwistycznym. Dane zostały zebrane podczas badań terenowych przeprowadzonych w 2018 roku w ramach międzynarodowego projektu LangGener dotyczącego zmian językowych w dwóch pokoleniach osób dwujęzycznych mieszkających na terenach przyłączonych po 1945 roku do Polski i w Niemczech.

Słowa kluczowe: mniejszość niemiecka w Polsce; polsko-niemieckie osoby dwujęzyczne; ideologie językowe; zarządzanie językiem; biografie językowe; Warmia i Mazury; Pomorze

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