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The ecological status of language in the discursive formation of Kashubian communities

0. Introduction

Showing the contemporary situation, as far as the use of the Kashubian language in selected discourses (for instance: in religious and institutional discourses) is concerned, is the underlying theme of this work. In order to support this point of view selected recorded material will be interwoven in the main stream of the paper; translated, into English, from Kashubian and Polish. Those recordings comprise interviews with local civil servants from Kartuzy and Żukowo. Certain aspects of language ecology must be raised, such as: the name of the language and its users, approaches to the language or social characteristics of the language users. Wąsik, (1999: 10) rightly emphasizes that: *Centralną heteronomią języka jest jednak jego uzależnienie od użytkowników. – Language’s dependence on it’s users is it’s core heteronomy.* [translation mine – M.R.O]. It appears that various discourses consist of various languages that are particularly needed due to some specified extralinguistic variables at a given moment. Wierzbicka, (1997: 21) stresses the following: *Language – and in particular vocabulary – is the best evidence of reality of “culture,” in the sense of a historically transmitted system of “conceptions” and “attitudes.” Of course, culture is, in principle, heterogeneous and changeable, but so is language.* The Polish and the Kashubian languages are frequently mixed in the above types of discourses, as religion and institutions are the focal points around which the use of the Kashubian language is easily observed nowadays. If one lacks knowledge about one of the two main ingredients of any discourse that is text and context, some situations are not understandable enough. Chruszczewski, (2002: 51) is of the opinion that: *... discourse is also a process which is influenced to a great extent by situational, social and cultural elements which constitute the immediate context.* It means that one not only translates texts from one language into another but also situations are translated and interpreted through the offices of language as a metalinguistic tool. Even though, doing any Kashubian course while learning in primary or secondary school appears to be an uplifting example in promoting the minority language, a more complete picture of the practical

language use is needed. One also does not neglect the necessity of highlighting the importance of the *Rodna Mowa* competition. Apart from the above mentioned form of linguistic activity, it is essential to conduct a research in, at least, two spheres of everyday life communication where the language is the verbal carrier of emotions, anxieties, requests, delights, strivings and aspirations, etc. on the one hand and cultural (see Duranti) and social identification on the other hand. A closer look at mutual interrelations between the Kashubian and Polish languages (in particular contextual embeddings) will give a broader insight into the matter which is at issue. It is also important to remember about 06.01.2005 – the date when the Polish Sejm enacted a bill about national and ethnic minorities and a regional language. The aforementioned bill gave future prospects for the Kashubians as well. It is, therefore, worth observing to what degree people in question take advantage of it.

1. Selected Normative, Religious and Social Aspects of the Revival of the Kashubian Language and the discursive formation of Kashubian Communities

One has to be aware of the existence of certain legal foundations that are very much of support of the Kashubian language in everyday life – that is in all sorts of potential discourses that happen to flourish eastwards, westwards, northwards and southwards on the Kashubian area. This tool that organizes potential ways of development of the Kashubian language is called: *Strategy for Protection and Development of the Kashubian Language and Culture*. The very *Introduction* of this *Strategy* comprises the following statement, (2006: 7):

The Kashubian language constitutes the foundation of the identity of the Kashubs. Fundamental for this Strategy is the conviction that the language and culture constitute an important contribution to the common cultural heritage and avert the alienation and commercialization processes. The Strategy is based on the confidence that the essential way of preserving own identity is opening to the new trends and not separation.

It is crucial to note that this strategy had its rudimentary discussions in Żukowo – one of the two places where interviews took place. Objective 2.1 treats about *promoting bilingualism at various levels of public life*, Objective 2.2. focuses on *promoting and supporting the presence of Kashubian in Church*, Objective 3.3 encapsulates *strengthening Kashubian identity*. As far as the presence of the church service in the Kashubian language is concerned (Kashubian masses), there twenty parishes (from author's investigations in 2004): Banino, Chwaszczyno, Piecki Migowo, Przymorze, Żukowo, Gdynia, Babie Doły, Cisowa, Pogórze Górne, Wielki Kack, Kościerzyna, Miastko, Pręgowo, Sopot, Wejherowo, Wygoda Łączyńska, Gdańsk, Rumia, Reda, Wejherowo. It is quite obvious that as the Kashubian language has more and

more opportunities to develop and exist, the more passive and active participants of a given discourse it gathers. Tadeusz Gocłowski – Metropolitan Archbishop of Gdańsk states in *Më trzimómë z Bògã* – a Kashubian prayer book (1998: 6) that: *Niech nie je nikòmù to dzywné, że dzysodniowô òdroda kaszëbsczi kùlturë i jãzëka, òbjãła téz sferã religijnã, bò ta w zëcym Kaszëbów wiedno bëła na pierszim môlu.* – Nobody should be surprised at the fact that contemporary revival of Kashubian culture and language comprised also the religious sphere, because this sphere has always been of vital importance in life of Kashubs. [translation mine – M.R.O.]. Significant contributions to contemporary shape of Kashubian identity were provided by John Paul II, especially those words of strength during his papal visits in Gdynia (1987) and Sopot (1999). Our Pope’s address to people in Gdynia was in a form of verbal reminder: *Dear Brothers and Sisters – the Kasubian People! Protect those values and heritage that are the foundation of your identity.* And then Pope entrusted the Kasubian people to Mother of Christ’s care. Through such firm statement one witnesses quite a special type of discourse: institutional and religious as words were uttered by the Head of the Roman-Catholic church and the Pole himself in one person. Such a juxtaposition of formal religious role and social closeness expressed in the Polish language aimed at strenghtening Kashubian culture, language and identity. Several years later, on 01.07.2006, during 8th Meeting of the Kasubian people in Gdynia, Tadeusz Gocłowski – Metropolitan Archbishop of Gdańsk addressed Kashubs themselves (in the Polish language) during the mass in the following way:

(...) When there was the revival and development of the Kashubian movement, when the Kashubians were more and more aware of their magnitude and culture, a sense of responsibility. So one can say that altogether with 80 year old Gdynia, the Kashubian movement was developing; through the development of press, the language in use, culture and music. Dear Brothers and Sisters! Cherish it, still! (...) And all the aforementioned issues do not stand in opposition, as some people would like to see it, with value of this great homeland, that Kashubs have always loved and protected. (...) Majkowski clearly talks about all those that is Polish and Kashubian. (...) It is important to be more and more united with this great homeland and form a very vital Kashubian group within. (...) One may say without any hesitation that the pontyficate of John Paul II was, in history of Kashubs, an authoratization of the magnitude of Kashubian culture by the Head of the Roman-Catholic church (...).

[translation mine – M. R. O.; recordings in the archives of the author]

As far as identity is concerned – no matter whether or not one speaks about Polish, Kashubian, Croatian, Catalan, Frisian, Welsh one – interesting observation appears to be handy, Laclau, (2003: 360): *There is today a lot of talk about social, ethnic, national and political identities. The ‘death of the subject,’ which was proudly proclaimed urbi et orbi not so long ago, has been succeeded by a new and widespread interest in the multiple identities*

that are emerging and proliferating in our contemporary world. Such distinctions can also be made in case of Kashubians that share either Polish identity, Kashubian one or both. Language, however – the Kashubian language – is not necessarily the main marker or key exponent of Kashubian identity. Further in the paper one will see that one can be very dedicated to the Kashubian issues and feel herself or himself Kashubian without fluency in the this language. At this stage one should remind Milewski (1993: 28): *Teksty utrwalają się w pamięci jako szeregi zdań wraz z ich treścią pojęciową i towarzyszącymi okolicznościami. – Texts are preserved in memory as sequences of sentences with their conceptual content and accompanying circumstances* (translation mine – M.R.O.). Those accompanying circumstances refer to the speaker and the whole spatio-temporal and contextual embedding – texts in the Polish language uttered by a given person have causative power, through the offices of which Kashubian exponents of identity are promoted. If one wants to see language as culture, one should adhere to Schiffman, (1998: 57): *(...) we must make a further distinction, between texts in particular language, and the ideas and beliefs contained in those texts, or expressed by them. Very often this distinction is not made; instead, we hear that there is an identity of language and thought, indeed of language and culture, or that a particular language is best suited to express certain thoughts or ideals.* Furthermore, if one sees culture as communication, Duranti (1997: 33) should never be neglected: *To say that culture is communication means to see it as a system of signs. (...) To believe that culture is communication also means that a people's theory of the world must be communicated in order to be lived.* Any language truly exists when it is both used in oral and written form. Kashubian has all the potential to meet these conditions perfectly. Not only the Bible but also “Winnie the Pooh” and “Little Prince” were translated into Kashubian. Moreover, Kashubian is taught at schools at primary and secondary level. Places like: *Głodnica, Studzienice, Puck* or *Dębogórz* may serve as an example where Kashubian is being taught in primary school. As far as teaching Kashubian in secondary school is concerned, one may go to *Brusy*. It is also known that liturgical celebrations are conducted in Kashubian in some churches (vide the end of the second page). There also appear bilingual names in standard Polish and in Kashubian of institutions, for example: *Zarząd Powiatu w Kartuzach* (Management of Kartuzy District) is translated into Kashubian as: *Przèdnictwò Kartëszczègò Pòwiòtu* (inscription seen by the author in late summer 2003).

1.1. Community and Discursive Practices

Communities can be spotted in various places in the world but each community is governed by some common lowest denominators that unite all its participants. Community has to have some goals some space for debate and discussion and all the undertakings that create a certain sense of being inside and outside a given community. Communication process is an immediate binder that overlaps with symbolic and spiritual binders of a given community deriving from the past (culture, tradition, rites, rituals). Culture and community are mobile notions – people change in the course of time and so happens with their milieu under their actions, changed perception of their inner and outer world. When people pray they gather and interact, when people want their civil servants act, they come to the office and enter interaction as well. Therefore it is a given spatio-temporal setting that really changes and people (community) that change. People act in a selective way; it is hardly possible to take everything or limit oneself to nothing. Speech community can be cemented around various practices that involve the use of a given language or languages. Switching codes as well as switching various levels of behaviour is essential as the aim of understanding and being understood stems from various reasons (as if from stem to stern). Morgan, (2001: 31) is of the opinion that:

(...) Because they are constructed around culturally and socially constituted interaction, speech communities cannot be defined by static physical location and can be experienced as part of a nation-state, neighbourhood, village, club, compound, on-line chat room, religious institution, and so on. (...) Rather, a speech community reflects what people do and know when they interact with one another. It assumes that when people come together through discursive practices, they behave as though they operate within a shared set of norms, local knowledge beliefs and values.

It appears that language is a salient notion that group people and strengthens their identity and the need of using it activates all the potentials of a speech community that are vital at a given moment and deactivates redundant ones. If someone wants to show or highlight their attitude, they use an earlier selected code of communication and potential receiver becomes accessory to the speaker. Strategy of entering discursive practice using an earlier selected code of communication lets us assume that the conversation will lead in a more or less the same code (unless two or more parties decide the other way) If one (from Lower Silesia) salutes someone in the Kashubian language and still leads the conversation in the same language in Kartuzy or Żukowo, there can be a three level reaction, namely: a) suspicious reception, b) surprised reception c) warm reception. Selected recorded material, translated from Kashubian and Polish into English will be presented several lines further.

2. Identity, (Societal) Bilingualism and Bilinguality (Individual Bilingualism)

Identity may be manifested in two ways; in words and in actions. Identity is partially understood as a sense of belonging to a given group that shares features we agree to share. What is also worth mentioning in this aspect is consciousness. One has to be conscious to think in terms of having an identity. Identity is not a kind of commodity one can buy on the one hand but is precious and valuable on the other. One may risk claiming that identity is a kind of universal value everybody deserve. It is possible to lose and gain this universal value. Furthermore, an identity is not free from changes, so an identity is changeable, dynamic. Identity is a dynamic process, using medical terminology, identity is a kind of *labyrinth* that keeps the men in the upright position, using nautical terminology, identity is a kind of *anchor*, that helps the men feel their roots. So identity is strictly bound to culture one has chance to grow in and to history.

There should be made a clear distinction between bilingualism and bilinguality so as not to have a haphazard impression. Following Hamers and Blanc, (2000: 6) certain borderline is created:

The concept of bilingualism refers to the state of a linguistic community in which two languages are in contact with the result that two codes can be used in the same interaction and that a number of individuals are bilingual (...); Bilinguality is the psychological state of an individual who has access to more than one linguistic code as a means of social communication (...).

The above distinction is very much of help while presenting the below (selected) recorded examples. There are four people representing institutional discourse, three from local municipal institution in Kartuzy (Hubert Hoppe, Ewa Zaremba and Jan Mazur) and the fourth person is Albin Bychowski – mayor of Żukowo himself. Their views concern status of the Kashubian language, values and local situation. All people in question were responding in the Kashubian language, except Mr. Jan Mazur who was replying in the Polish language:

2.1. Hubert Hoppe is of the opinion that:

(...) It is most important for the Kashubian language to be among people again, in church, institutions (...) as I said at the very beginning: if there is no language, there are no Kashubs and so the language must be present in every place (...)

2.2. Ewa Zaremba is of the opinion that:

Using the Kashubian language is not a problem for me, I was brought up in this environment, since childhood I speak Kashubian (...) As far as my job is concerned, it all depends. If there

are petitioners that ask me to speak in the Kashubian language or, prior to the main issue that they come with, they signal the need to speak in the Kashubian language, I do speak and respond in the Kashubian; if they use Polish, I use Polish as well. (...) I am rather a patient civil servant, therefore I should show much patience and understanding – I do not know whether or not I succeed in it but I try hard. I try to understand each and every person's problems and try to make their queries run smoothly so that a given person was not angry with the whole institution (...).

2.3. Jan Mazur is of the opinion that:

My wife is also a civil servant in the Kartuszy County Council, and she frequently makes coming people gain confidence to speak Kashubian saying: I do understand the Kashubian language (even though I am not Kashubian myself). I understand Kashubian and (addressing someone) if you want, you can tell me about your problem. And it is much easier to approach such a person. (...) So, even though my wife is speaking in Polish, this person can talk in Kashubian. (...) Especially older Kashubs may have problems with Polish pronunciation, but this is not the problem with understanding Polish. Older people (Kashubs) may not find Polish lexical equivalents (names for objects, machines on farms; especially those that are not in use – in the working everyday lexicon of the Kashubian person). (...) If it happens that my wife does not comprehend everything in the Kashubian language, then context comes with help. The good thing to mention is that we were living on farm and my wife knows many things in the Kashubian language from the hearsay as my parents, practically, were talking only in the Kashubian language. (...) I am a member of The Kashubian-Pomeranian Association (henceforth ZK-P) but many people who are from the outside (of Kashubian area) are also members. It all shows a certain level of assimilation; those people identify with language, as the Association promotes the Kashubian language, so that it could be far from decline. It is somekind of cultural wealth. (...).

2.4. Albin Bychowski is of the opinion that:

The Kashubian language and Rodna Mowa is something I took from my family as I was born here, in Cassubia. Apart from my studies, I was living here the whole life. My professional career was here as well. As far as I remember – the Kashubian language was my first language and it is still in my family and I do not use any other language within my family and my siblings as well. It is crucial to note that I started learning Polish as early as the primary school. (...) As far as most dear words are concerned, love of the Kashubian land, using the Kashubian language is very important to me – there are no more or most important Kashubian words – all the Kashubian words are most important. Language is the basis of culture in general. And, undoubtedly Kashubian culture is very close to me and I have to state that Kashubian culture enriched national Polish culture. (...) Żukowo was lucky so far (last four years), as my predecessor was Kashubian, the Vice-Mayor is Kashubian as well as the Chairperson of the City Council and we – civil servants, among ourselves, we speak in the Kashubian language, inside and outside the institution (...).

The above excerpts of recordings come from the author's archives and show shaping and binding of the Kashubian community, various viewpoints concerning culture, identity and language as well as the relations among Kashubs themselves in everyday life from the institutional perspective. One should note that one is human having certain background and social role comes as the second or outer embedding. It is interesting to mention that one of the

readings during masses belong to the mayor of Żukowo and such a reading is uttered in the Kashubian language, usually on 3rd May and 11th November.

3. Conclusions

One has to be a good observer to notice and label the sphere of our current interest. However, one has to be conscious how much their labels are only mere observations and how much they embody their personal aspirations. Szpakowska (2003:122) observes the following:

“Wypowiedzenia ludzkie”, pisze Znaniecki, są w zasadzie dwojakiego rodzaju. (...) Po pierwsze jako wyraz obserwacji i uogólnień społecznych wypowiadającego, po drugie zaś, jako świadectwo jego dążności i ocen.

Znaniecki writes that human utterances are of double nature (...) First of all, they are as the manifestation of observations and social generalizations of the speaker, secondly, they are the evidence of her or his aspirations and estimations.

[Translation mine – M.R.O.]

The very question of identity's universality must undoubtedly be understood well. An identity is a value itself and aims, in the light of the above considerations to be a universal value, but one rather cannot or even should not seek universality in the very term. One should not juggle with their identity arbitrarily. Henceforth, one is to repeat one more time, that the identity is nothing one can purchase freely on a values' bargain. The author attempted to show warm words of religious discourse/address in the Polish language that gather the Kasubian and Polish community as well as field work that comprises selected opinions of selected Kashubians about their most dear milieu. Kartuzy and Żukowo were not chosen at random. Both local Kashubian organisms enjoy less than 20% of people using the Kasubian language in everyday life but empirical investigations show that these are not the numbers that count all the time as far as the proliferation and understanding of the Kashubian language is concerned – these are the people that count and their attitude regardless of where and whom they talk to. Each and every human-being that is capable of making use of their consciousness should preserve their being unique, being unique to some extent. Kashubian discursive communities do form, but more and more local incentives should be applied to strengthen the already existing *status quo* and engraft the regional Kashubian code of communication – the Kashubian language into the young.

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