Schools as agents of transmission: language revitalization in Brittany and Kashubia

Michael Hornsby (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) mhornsby@wa.amu.edu.pl

Nicole Dołowy-Rybińska (Instytut Slawistyki PAN) nicoledolowy@gmail.com

One way that many smaller, minoritized languages in Europe are undergoing revitalization attempts, despite Fishman’s caveat (1991), is through educational initiatives. Language planners as a result have circumvented or downplayed the importance of intergenerational transmission as a means of language reproduction, seen by some researchers as the ‘commonsense’ approach (Baker (2003) and Krauss (1992)). The focus has been on gains in the absolute numbers of speakers and less attention has been paid to the processes and linguistic outcomes associated with students in these education programmes. In this paper, we aim to initiate a discussion on the revitalization situations in Brittany and Kashubia from a comparative perspective. In particular we will look at the different models of education in each of these regions following Skutnabb-Kangas and McCarty (2008) regarding nonforms, weak forms and strong forms of bilingual/immersion education. Ethnographic data will be provided to explore the attempts of students to attain legitimate “speakerhood” of the minority languages in question, given all the difficulties associated with these situations of attempted additive multilingualism when the general trend, among the majority populations, is toward standardized monolingualism. By way of a conclusion, we will attempt to evaluate the different educational systems in both regions in terms of the production of future generations of “successful” Kashubian and Breton speakers.