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German-Polish bilingualism: bilingual language education and language policy – an example of Ślubice-Frankfurt (Oder) “twin town”

Posing the question about the support of bilingualism and bilingual education, the main challenge seems to be to create a reasonable language policy that establishes legislative frameworks and supports language acquisition processes on the administrative level. The question of what constitutes an optimal foreign language policy gains importance especially in border regions, which more than any other regions can benefit from transborder cooperation. A special category of border locations are “twin towns” or “divided towns,” where the free movement of people is an everyday practice and the processes of social and linguistic diffusion take place widely. There is space for unconventional and creative transborder educational policy and praxis.

Referring to the transborder location and cooperation, the theories reflecting the interspatial phenomena taking place in borderlands should be mentioned. According to Mezzadra and Neilson (cf. 2013: 30) borderlands are places of transition that are involved in the creation of new worlds. Perera (2007: 206f) calls these places borderscapes - zones of emergent space and temporality. These concepts convincingly reflect the process of language and cultural contact, but also other interactions taking place in the borderlands, which form a space between cultures. On the other hand one should not forget that the German-Polish border is typified by linguistic discontinuity and moreover the border effect, also the linguistic one, operates mostly asymmetrically – in one direction more than in the other (cf. Zeller 1993: 179).

This paper analyzes the foreign or bilingual language education on offer on the German-Polish border in Ślubice and Frankfurt (Oder). This “twin town,” lying in the middle of the border, creates, according to the author’s long-term observation but also recently conducted research, a balanced local policy to support the education of the neighbor’s language. The educational solutions offered in bilingual education are mostly possible thanks to the border location.

Mezzadra, S., Neilson, B. (2013). *Border as Method or the multiplication of labor*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Perera, S. (2007). A Pacific Zone? (In)security, Sovereignty, and Stories of the Pacific Borderscape. In: Kumar Rajaram, P. & Grundy-Warr, C. (Eds.). *Borderscapes:*

Hidden Geographies and Politics at Territory's Edge. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 201-227.

Zeller, Ch. (1993). Linguistic symmetries, asymmetries, and border effects within a Canadian/American sample. In: Clarke, S. (Ed.). *Focus on Canada*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 179-200.