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10 Young Kashubs and language policy: between officialisation and community

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10.1 Introduction

The Kashubs are west Slavonic people who today live in northern Poland, near the city of Gdańsk. Kashubs and people with mixed Polish and Kashubian descent currently number some 500,000. Most Kashubs identify as both Polish and Kashubian (Synak 1998; Porębska 2006). There are many reasons for this. Despite the growth of Kashubian intellectual circles in the mid nineteenth century and their efforts to standardise the language, Kashubian did not gain a high status and Kashubs did not manage to create a form of supra-local imagined community (Anderson 1983). Kashubian belongs to the same language family as Polish and, for a long time, it was treated as a dialect of the Polish language. Up until the last quarter of the twentieth century, Kashubian existed mostly as an oral language and was fragmented into many local variants (Treder 2011: 76). The twentieth century was a difficult time for the Kashubs, who found themselves on the border between two hostile nations, namely Poland and Germany. After the Second World War, Poland's new Communist authorities proclaimed the country to be mono-ethnic and – as a result – a monolingual state, and Kashubs lost their opportunity to have their language recognised. Kashubian culture therefore existed only as a subset of Polish folklore, and the Kashubs were considered to be an 'ethnographic group' (Wicherkiewicz 2011: 148).

During the second half of the twentieth century, the intergenerational transmission of Kashubian weakened considerably, almost disappearing towards the end of the century due to the low prestige of the language, ongoing processes of modernisation and urbanisation, the appearance of new media and the efforts of the younger generation of Kashubs to attain a better position in life.

Sociological studies (Mazurek 2010; Mordawski 2005) suggest that Kashubian is currently used by 80,000–100,000 people (mostly of the older generation) in their daily lives. In Kashubian homes, where parents and grandparents speak Kashubian to one another, the older generations increasingly make exclusive use of Polish when addressing children (Mazurek 2010: 177). However, the position

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of the language has changed significantly in recent years. Moving away from its reputation as a low-prestige dialect and a form of 'broken Polish', which damages the mental development of children and prevents them from becoming successful (Dołowy-Rybińska 2011: 379–93), Kashubian's recognition in Poland's Act on National and Ethnic Minorities and the Regional Language (2005) and in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ratified by Poland in 2009 – see also Grenoble; Tresidder; Mooney, this volume) has earned it state subsidies. The political shift means that Kashubian circles have also started to adopt their own language policies, incorporating issues such as codification and standardisation, as well as introducing the language in schools, media and public life (Wicherkiewicz 2011). This chapter discusses some of the measures that led to an improvement in the status and prestige of Kashubian, although, as will be seen, this has not, as yet, had any major impact on the use of the language in the home. The chapter thus presents the divide that can occur between the theory and practices of language policy in the context of endangered languages. It argues that, despite the emergence of a new group of people who are choosing to learn and use the language and who play an active role in its dissemination, Kashubian is gradually losing its communicative function in favour of a symbolic role, being used to foster a sense of community (Edwards 1985: 110–12; Mazurek 2010: 177; see also Goalabré, this volume). It will demonstrate that this sense of community increasingly applies to a particular self-aware group that is currently engaged in activities supporting Kashubian culture and that it is less relevant to ordinary Kashubs, in particular from the younger generations (see also Joubert, this volume).

10.2 Language policies and reversing language shift

In this chapter, the term 'language policy' is construed broadly and denotes the state-established legal framework for strategies applied by activists within the linguistic minority (i.e. those individuals who are best placed to define its situation and needs and able to negotiate the expansion or restructuring of such state regulations). At a micro-level, it also means the individual decisions taken by every single person every day. Choices such as selecting the right language to suit each situation, making sure children attend Kashubian language lessons or are enrolled in cultural clubs and groups all influence the language's vitality (Shohamy 2006: 50). It could even be argued that every family – even every individual – has their own language policy which is, in turn, affected positively or negatively by 'top-down' approaches. Somewhere between these two distinct interpretations of language policy we find animators within the community, who – working in ways that are structured to varying degrees and, applying the knowledge of the local population, with or without financial support – initiate their own activities in support of the local community, including its use of the endangered language.

John Edwards believes that preserving an endangered language can only succeed if two conditions are met. First, the language must continue to be used in the most important spheres in which it previously operated. This depends on the social, political and economic conditions within and beyond the community itself. Second, the language will only be preserved if the community has the will to counteract language discontinuity resulting, for the most part, from mobility, modernisation and cultural shifts (2010: 32–3) (see also Grenoble, this volume). François Grin has a similar take on the situation. His first condition for the existence of a language community is its capacity to use the language, understood as adequate language proficiency. Members of the language community need to know the language. If they do not, or do not know it to a sufficient degree to allow them to communicate freely, they must have opportunities to learn it. This challenge must be regulated by national policies (permitting communities either to teach the endangered language itself or else to provide lessons in the language) and also by the linguistic minority themselves engaging in certain activities such as creating schools (see also Valdovinos; Sherris and Robbins, this volume) and convincing parents to encourage their children to attend language lessons (see also Goalabré, this volume). Grin's second condition is the opportunity to use the endangered language: being fluent in the language is of little benefit if there are no prospects of using it. Once again, both the state and the activists come into play: they must provide access to the media and cultural centres and afford a space for the endangered language in administrative and legal frameworks. At the same time, people must be made aware of these possibilities, and must want to take advantage of them. This brings us to the third condition: desire. No language will be preserved if individual speakers do not wish to use it (Grin 2003: 43–4). In certain 'official' domains (schools, churches, courts, public administration), the use of the endangered language can be controlled; however, managing and influencing language choices in private spheres is far more difficult (Shohamy 2006: 187). At the same time, it is these choices that determine the success of reversing language shift (Fishman 1991). Here, a grass-roots approach is especially important, including the creation and support for communities of practice (Wenger 1998; see also Joubert, this volume), namely people who focus on common goals, interests and passions, and – coincidentally – for whom using the endangered language becomes the basis of building a common identity.

Bernard Spolsky outlines three key components of language policies. Language beliefs concern the ideology behind a given language, as a result of which it is regarded as equal or lower in status to another: as a language of success or a dialect which is not worth preserving. In the case of Kashubian, the negative treatment of the language in the past, which has verged on contempt, continues to play an important role in the language choices made by young people, who are frequently concerned that using Kashubian will result

in them being perceived as uneducated rural folk. Furthermore, Kashubian culture is widely seen as having close ties with folklore and regarded as a relic of the past, incompatible with contemporary life. These stereotypes relating to Kashubian language and culture must be changed if young people are to want to identify as Kashubs. Another element named by Spolsky is language practices, or how the language is used and by whom. Spolsky's third component is language management, which refers to specific legislation influencing the position of the language and linguistic behaviour in the given community (Spolsky 2004). This chapter demonstrates how these three areas can intertwine.

10.3 Examining young Kashubs' views

This chapter aims to contribute to research into the groups that give a voice to the people directly affected by language policies. The benefits of using ethnographic research in the planning and preparation of language policies have been highlighted by many scholars (Hymes 1996; McCarty, Romero-Little and Warhol 2011). Listening to people's personal stories and analysing them forms a basis for understanding wide-reaching language processes. By giving the young Kashubs a voice, this chapter examines the problems faced by the official language policies that are currently in place in Kashubia. Bearing in mind the aforementioned conditions required to reverse the language shift, three specific domains have been selected for analysis: young people's language attitudes (resulting from both existing language ideologies and from strategies used to alter the image of the endangered language and culture); education (an absolute requirement for the success of revitalisation processes in a situation of weakened language transmission within families, albeit insufficient in itself) (Hornberger 2011); and the impact of the application of official language policies on grass-roots approaches which aim to create new communities where the endangered language can become a genuine tool of communication.

10.3.1 Methodology

The research presented in this chapter, carried out in 2012, is ethnographic in nature (Wolcott 1999) and was based on a tripartite phenomenological interview model that combines life history with focused in-depth interviewing and participant observation (Seidman 2006: 56). Thirty semi-structured interviews were carried out with young Kashubs (aged between 16 and 25). Although the interviews were based on a questionnaire, questions were adjusted to suit the interests, education and experience of each interviewee.

Respondents were divided into two main groups. The first included pupils from two high schools where Kashubian is taught, and teenagers who participated in some forms of organised Kashubian culture. The second group

included young people engaged in Kashubian life: some were involved with Kashubian associations and organisations (such as student clubs, political organisations and cultural associations), while others were studying Kashubian at university. The remaining interviewees were committed to different aspects of Kashubian cultural and linguistic life. Long-term participant observation was also conducted in the Kashubian community via cultural projects, meetings and high-school lessons.

10.3.2 Young Kashubs' attitudes to language

The assimilation with Polish culture that occurred during the second half of the twentieth century meant that affiliation with Kashubian culture was no longer an obvious choice for young Kashubs. The subject was not discussed at all in many homes and, as a result, young people rarely consciously identified with Kashubian culture or even believed that the Kashubian language was worth protecting. The following view is typical:

> I grew up in a Kashubian family. Both my parents are Kashubs, and all my grandparents, but for me for example this identity was suspended, nothing went with it [...] My parents spoke Polish to me, and so did my grandparents. But my mum spoke Kashubian to her parents and to a large part of her family, so I was familiar with the language, and that made it much easier for me to learn Kashubian later, to start using it. (Interview with A20M[1])

Of course, the degree of identification and the way in which it is expressed depends on many factors, such as family, friends, school and extra-curricular activities (Verkuyten and deWolf 2002). To generalise, young people in Kashubia can be split into two distinct groups, depending on their attitude towards the language. The first includes those who live in Kashubian villages and who have a passive or at least some active knowledge of the language while believing it to be inferior to Polish. A typical example of this is the attitude that Kashubian is a language of make-believe, with speakers pretending to be someone else. This, in turn, means that the younger generation sees no reason to transmit the language further:

> We don't speak Kashubian unless we want to say something funny or when [as children] we used to pretend we were adults. That's how we used to play in primary school: when we pretended to be older, we spoke Kashubian, because it was funnier. For us, it was a language of jokes. And my friends who have stayed there, in this environment, and who will probably always live there, don't want to speak Kashubian. They don't want to speak Kashubian and they don't want their children to speak Kashubian because, according to them, it's a hindrance. (I22F)

The second group includes young people who have consciously joined the Kashubian movement, and who want to be active in the promotion of the

language. Most have made a concerted effort to learn Kashubian, although there may also be certain people from the first group who have encountered someone or something to encourage them to reconsider their heritage. For them, the language becomes a marker of their Kashubian identity and a symbol of Kashubian culture as being distinct from Polish:

> It would be great if I could speak Kashubian with my friends and it would be normal, and it would be strange to speak Polish. Even if I still felt Polish [...] And here is something to think about. Maybe in this situation I wouldn't feel so Polish? I don't know. (N22M)

It is worth considering where this division comes from. One reason is rooted in language ideology (Schieffelin, Woolard and Kroskrity 1998): the prolonged deprecation of Kashubian has meant that many Kashubs have come to regard their language as inferior to Polish. This attitude is not exclusive to the older generations, but is also common among young people. In my interviews, I heard numerous reports of unpleasant encounters which have confirmed people's conviction that speaking Kashubian is negatively perceived by others:

> I remember such situations from my life [...] like when we were going shopping to a city, maybe to Kartuzy or Gdańsk, and when we were speaking Kashubian among ourselves, when we got closer, my mum used to say, 'C'mon now, kids, we're not speaking Kashubian now, we're speaking Polish; it's not the done thing to speak Kashubian in the city'. (H24F)

However, in recent years, attitudes towards Kashubian have shifted significantly, largely thanks to Kashubian community leaders and activities on a wider, national scale. Following years of discussions, in 2005, Kashubian was finally recognised as Poland's first (and as yet only) regional language, which had a far more wide-reaching impact than just providing subsidies for its protection and promotion. Many young Kashubs now speak with pride about their language's upward shift in status and the fact that it is the only recognised regional language in Poland. It appears that this official change of status has, in their eyes, marked more than just a change in nomenclature. Young people frequently regard this status as 'proof' that their language has value, which, in turn, motivates their activities in its promotion:

> Because this language is important to us, we are thrilled that it is so far Poland's only regional language; it gives us many benefits but it also makes us more proud of it. Because a dialect is not the same. A regional language is something more important, something we can be proud of and it can spur us into further action. (N22M)

This statement clearly indicates that the act of awarding Kashubian status as a language has increased its prestige among its users. However, it does not mean that the hang-ups acquired over the years have disappeared. This is emphasised by the absence of sufficient activities striving to change the image

of Kashubian culture, which remains powerfully rooted in folklore such that young people find it unattractive and struggle to identify with it:

> Whenever I meet new people, especially from other parts of Poland, but from here as well, and I say that I am a Kashub, I can see in their eyes that they perceive me as someone straight out of an ethnographic park. Of course I think that our folklore is interesting and colourful but [...] it's not in harmony with our times. So I think that we have to make Kashubian culture more up to date. (B24F)

Young people feel that Kashubian culture should be modernised in two distinct ways. On one hand, they point out the need to move away from the 'folk' image maintained during the Communist era, and to show that Kashubs are just as contemporary as anyone else. On the other hand, as well as adapting typically Kashubian motifs to fit with modern culture (such as Kashubian songs performed to hip-hop rhythms, or fashionable clothes incorporating Kashubian symbols in their design), they see the role of the Kashubian language as one that can naturally adapt to the present day:

> Without a language we don't stand a chance, because everything comes down to folklore. Something that I think used to be instilled in children. For me, in the beginning, Kashubia, the entire culture, I was taught that it's just folk culture, that it's somewhere children dance nicely in regional costume. Of course for me with age this has turned into a greater awareness, but for most people it remains on that level: we're ordinary Poles but we can perform a nice dance, it's all nice and folksy, we take snuff here, we go along to feasts, that's it. But none of this translates into real life. That's the point – that it should translate into real life. It would be so much better and more normal to listen to the news in Kashubian, to speak with friends in Kashubian and to read books in Kashubian. (N22M)

People who are striving to turn the language into a symbol of their identity express the need to introduce Kashubian into all domains of everyday life and that this is necessary in order for Kashubian culture to 'break away' from its current image and for people to start using Kashubian spontaneously. However, before young people can start using Kashubian in various domains of their lives – before they can switch their mobile phone language setting to Kashubian, for example (if such an option were available), they must first learn the language, and not just in its spoken form, used in face-to-face conversations with family or friends. They must also know the written language, which forms the basis of most of today's media. This means that Kashubian needs to be taught in schools.

10.3.3 Education

The current method by which Kashubian is taught in schools, which was formally proposed in 2005 but actually first implemented a few years earlier by

Kashubian activists, involves introducing elements of the teaching of this endangered language into the regular curriculum. This method, known as the 'weak' model of teaching, is regarded by educators as insufficient to provide adequate language skills to achieve bilingualism (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000: 579–80). Kashubian is now taught for three hours per week on an opt-in basis. The number of children attending Kashubian lessons has been growing year on year, and currently exceeds 15,000.[2] Although it will only be possible to assess the actual impact of the school on students' familiarity with, and use of, Kashubian in a few years from now, there are a few issues worth noting at this point.

First, those children who learn Kashubian – in particular when the classes are not obligatory – frequently see the lessons as a form of punishment, since they mean spending longer at school:

'We [the students] are definitely appalled by the number of hours we have of Kashubian, because it's three hours per week [...]. I think that's why there is a negative attitude towards Kashubian. If we had Kashubian for just one hour, then I'm sure it wouldn't bother us, but as it is [...] And of course it's an additional burden for us. (U18F)

It comes as no surprise that high-school students have a very different attitude towards Kashubian than primary-school pupils; in the latter case, enrolment is much higher and lessons frequently include interesting field trips.

The second problem is the low standard of teaching. Many teachers are not native speakers and have merely attended intensive courses in Kashubian in order to teach the language and improve their chances of employment in the current economic climate. They do not teach Kashubian with love or enthusiasm, which are essential elements if children and young people are to believe that gaining a working knowledge of Kashubian makes sense:

I don't think that [Kashubian education] should be compulsory. But I do think that teachers should teach Kashubian if they really want to, if they are really interested in it. So they can transmit their passion to young people, not just so they can earn a bit more money. (C21F)

Another challenge is how to adapt teaching methods for different groups of children, as it is becoming increasingly rare for children to have an active knowledge of Kashubian:

Let's not delude ourselves, the truth is now that children don't speak Kashubian with their parents at home. But where I teach, those kids understand everything in Kashubian. [...] And when I speak to them in Kashubian, they understand but they don't want to respond in Kashubian. And I see a growing language barrier, like there is with a foreign language such as English or German. For them to say something in Kashubian, they really need to push themselves. They need a dictionary and their book to make sure they write things correctly, because they are afraid. (I22F)

If an ethnic or endangered language is taught as a foreign language, there is a risk of losing the ties that exist between that language and its culture; between ethnic affiliation and knowledge of the language (Fishman 1989: 396–7, 422–3). As such, the main aim of teaching the endangered language – to reinstate it as a medium of communication in the community – will not be attained (see also Goalabré, this volume). This is directly linked with another issue, namely schools teaching the literary variety of Kashubian. Since this variety – created recently and still relatively unknown, often sounding alien even to native speakers – enjoys a higher prestige, parents frequently believe that their own spoken Kashubian is incorrect and are reluctant to speak it with their children:

> I started to learn Kashubian at school and then I decided to take the Kashubian final exam. I said to my mum, 'You have to speak Kashubian with me now.' And we started to speak Kashubian. But once my mum said to me that I spoke a different Kashubian and that it would be better for me not to hear her uneducated language. And she refused to speak Kashubian with me. (W18F)

In adopting this practice, parents shift the responsibility for their children learning Kashubian from the home to the school. This attitude represents the greatest threat of all to the future of Kashubian, namely that rather than associating the language with everyday communication, children will instead associate it with school lessons and therefore find it difficult to switch to using Kashubian in other situations and environments.

For the teaching of Kashubian to be successful, young people should be aware that they will have opportunities to use the language outside the school walls and that being able to speak it may even be an advantage in the future. As such, language policies relating to education should not be separate from the more broadly understood promotion of Kashubian, and they should also seek to strengthen its position in other domains. In Kashubia, such complementary activities are largely limited. Although Kashubian has carved a niche in regional media, young people do not have the sense that their knowledge of the language may prove useful:

> The only future opportunity connected with working in/with Kashubian is teaching it in schools. Nothing is being done about it, and these opportunities aren't being expanded. (C21F)

An absence of efforts aiming to make Kashubian useful in everyday public life, including in employment beyond the spheres of education or tourism, means that people who do not want to make a career out of the language see it as a hobby at best. In 2013, the University of Gdańsk planned to open a new study field of 'Kashubian Ethnophilology'.[3] As just fourteen candidates applied, the course was suspended. Young people's low interest in studying Kashubian at

university level also demonstrates that the language continues to be held in poor regard and is not seen as being useful.

The option of learning Kashubian at school is important for raising the prestige of the language but it appears that teaching Kashubian as a foreign language, on a non-compulsory basis, has as many negative as positive consequences. Most young people believe that learning Kashubian is an additional burden that they can avoid. This divides potential users of the language into those who are motivated and those who believe that there is no point in learning it. The level of teaching and the lack of positive attitudes linked with using Kashubian are also factors that limit young people's motivation. Currently, there is no social demand to shift the form of teaching Kashubian towards a 'strong' model (namely immersion and bilingual schools), which would bring significantly better results and allow learners to master the language as a valid tool of communication. This also reflects the Kashubs' conviction that knowledge of Kashubian is simply an option, a bonus, but that it cannot be equivalent to education in the majority language.

10.3.4 Language policy and communities of practice

The turn of the new millennium has brought a major shift not only in perceptions of Kashubia and what it means to be Kashubian, but also in language policy in Poland. In spite of the new measures, policies concerning minorities and their languages remain far from perfect.[4] However, in recent years, Poland has paid closer attention to the issues of ethnic minorities and the need to protect their languages, which, in turn, has expanded the opportunities available to the linguistic minorities and provided motivation for the implementation of language policies on their part. Kashubian activists linked with the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association, the largest and most important organisation to represent Kashubs, have been active participants in the development of the Act on Minorities and in the ratification of international conventions. Since the fall of the Communist regime, many grass-roots activities bolstering the prestige and position of Kashubian have been conducted: Kashubian has been introduced into the Catholic liturgy, Kashubian language programmes are being broadcast and Kashubian is being taught at school.

Since the Act has come into force, more coordinated activities have been put in place. In 2006, the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association prepared the 'Strategy for the Protection and Development of the Kashubian Language and Culture',[5] which forms the basis of the language policies implemented by this state-funded organisation. The strategy has four main priorities: (a) popularising Kashubian education, particularly the teaching of Kashubian; (b) promoting and supporting the use of Kashubian; (c) protecting the linguistic and

cultural heritage of Kashubian; and (d) strengthening the position of Kashubian on regional, national and international levels.

At the time of writing, some of these proposals are being implemented consistently. First and foremost, Kashubian is indeed now being taught in school and student numbers have been growing year on year. Additionally, the Kashubian Language Board has been founded, which has initiated work on the codification of the language. These measures have made it possible to create a uniform and consistent teaching programme. Numerous publications such as dictionaries, grammars, handbooks and teaching aids have been prepared in recent years, and the newly standardised Kashubian language is subject to all aspects of language planning (corpus, status and acquisition) (Wicherkiewicz 2011: 176). Scientific and artistic activities are being conducted on local and regional levels and these promote the Kashubian cultural heritage. Kashubs are also increasingly active not only on the regional stage but also at a national level (a cross-party Kashubian Parliamentary Group operates in the Polish Parliament) and on the international stage (the Kashubian-Pomeranian Association is a member of the Federal Union of European Nationalities).

Kashubian is now present in the linguistic landscape of the region, featuring on bilingual signs and plaques and on street signs (cf. Soria; Mooney; Tresidder, this volume). This performs an important symbolic function, indicating to residents and visitors alike that Kashubian is the region's language (Landry and Bourhis 1997: 25):

> Bilingual signs are appearing everywhere. Young people see them all the time and have contact with the language all the time. Thanks to even such small things, they are up to date with what is happening around them. They see that Kashubia is developing and that the language exists and is in good condition. (K25F)

Many initiatives and actions undertaken by Kashubian intellectual circles focus on reinforcing the 'imagined' Kashubian ties. Kashubian Congresses have been held in the last fifteen years, the Day of Kashubian Unity has been celebrated since 2004 and the Day of the Kashubian Flag since 2012. These types of activities are known as 'invented traditions', which create a continuity through their symbolism and repetitiveness and serve to 'establish or symbolise social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities' (Hobsbawm 1983: 9). These annual celebrations, whose symbolism is strengthened by the use of Kashubian symbols such as flags, gryphons, car stickers with the inscription 'Kaszëbë', T-shirts in the Kashubian 'colours' (black and yellow), Kashubian embroidery, traditional folk costumes and Kashubian music groups (folk and modern), inspire people's imagination (Billig 1995). They reinforce a feeling that their culture is interesting and important, and – most of all – that it creates a sense of kinship with other, not directly known, Kashubs (cf. Anderson 1983). Young activists perceive these activities as important:

We now definitely have a situation where, thanks to all these activities, fewer and fewer people are embarrassed to be from Kashubia and more people are starting to emphasise: 'I am from Kashubia, it's cool and fun, we have this and that'. And people are starting to become more interested. I don't know whether suddenly lots more people will start getting interested but those who already are a bit interested are becoming more interested because they can see that Kashubian is [...] developing, and so you can tell others about it without this tinge of shame. (I22F)

The words of this young Kashubian woman are significant as they point to results being achieved by the 'top-down' efforts and the shifting attitudes of young people in favour of Kashubian identity. At the same time, she believes that those activities primarily strengthen only the interest of those people who are already interested and that this does not necessarily translate into a desire to learn or to use Kashubian.

It is difficult to establish the degree to which official activities are leading to an actual reversing of the language shift. Examining the language behaviour of young people in Kashubia shows clearly that, beyond certain small rural communities where Kashubian is still used in everyday life, and some restricted groups of young people involved in the Kashubian activist movement, the language is not really being used (see also Goalabré, this volume). Some young people learn Kashubian at school, but their interactions with their peers are conducted exclusively in Polish. Young people associate speaking Kashubian with special events – performance situations organised by Kashubian activists:

Young people deliver beautiful public speeches in Kashubian about how things used to be difficult for their grandparents and their parents and we can finally speak Kashubian freely and things are cool and times are great for us. And then I go up to this person and start speaking Kashubian to them, and they reply, 'Stop messing around, why are you speaking Kashubian? We can speak normally'. And this hypocrisy and these hang-ups really annoy me. I want to show that, apart from these speeches and amazing initiatives, it's possible to be a Kashub every day. (A20M)

This statement makes some important points. Most young people do not have the opportunity, the ability, or the desire to make Kashubian the language of their daily interactions and, for them speaking 'normally' means speaking in Polish. Polish is first language of young Kashubs and they generally regard Kashubian as a language of school competitions – in other words, a symbolic language, a language of 'organised' ethnic life, rather than the language of their day-to-day interactions with their peers (Edwards 2010: 6–7; see also Joubert, this volume). Indeed, it seems that today's Kashubian teenagers do not have an appropriate environment in which to use Kashubian and it would be difficult to create one. Exceptions can be found in circles of young Kashubian activists, who consider using the language as one of their key aims and who make a point of stressing their Kashubian identity in their everyday lives. It is also worth adding that most of the interviewees who belong (or wish to belong)

to these circles have learnt Kashubian on their own initiative, and have taken a conscious decision to make it their main language. However, such a choice comes with some common problems: all such speakers still tend to think in their first language (Polish) and many experience a sense of being torn between the desire to demonstrate their belonging to the Kashubian minority and the difficulty of actually speaking the Kashubian language:

> My native language is Polish. Even if I try to drive it out from inside me, it is hard because thinking in Kashubian is not easy. Even for someone who was born here and lives as a Kashub. I try hard to look at what happens in Kashubia from the Kashubian perspective, but I still have problems with it [...] I think in Polish, and I use Kashubian only to express those things. I would like to change it, but I admit: it is hard. (C21F)

Nonetheless, changing linguistic behaviour is possible when a Kashubian-language community exists – a group of people who want to use Kashubian and who welcome new members even if they have difficulty in communicating in Kashubian:

> At the beginning I thought 'Ok, I can write in this language but I can't speak it'. And, after all, who could I speak with? And then I met Kashubs from Gdańsk [the Pomerania Student Club] and they said, 'Goodness, girl, you are young, you can speak your own way. We can, so why wouldn't you? What are you ashamed of?' I said that I am not ashamed, but I have no one to talk to. Because my parents don't speak fluently and [...] then I started to speak Kashubian with them. (T18F)

Another young man recalls that he started speaking Kashubian by chance and because of his contact with a group of determined activists, which he subsequently joined:

> There was this option at some competitions that if someone talked about something in Kashubian, then that was more impressive and they got more points. So I thought 'I could do that, what's the harm in it, I'll have a go'. So I had a go. And it was at one of these competitions that I met a friend, we met up the same day during an event at the Museum in Wejherowo. And I met a few other young people there who spoke Kashubian. Although I didn't start speaking Kashubian with them straight away, that moment came after a while and, eventually, I had this breakthrough and started speaking Kashubian because I decided that, if I didn't start, I would never do it. (J21M)

Observing the language practices of young Kashubs brings me to the conclusion that the language is used only when it exists 'naturally' or when it brings together a certain community, a group whose members 'come to develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values – in short, practices – as a function of their joint involvement in mutual activity' (Eckert and Wenger 1994: 2). If they are connected by their activities relating to Kashubian culture, the language has the opportunity to become not just a language of creativity but also, under the right conditions, the medium of communication between group members.

We formed a Kashubian-language theatre group, enrolling people who are already involved with the Kashubian movement. But there weren't many of them, so we invited a few others who [...] already had some stage experience and who just had to learn their lines in Kashubian. It was an interesting experience for them to start with but they could see our own 'natural' attitude. We didn't create situations where we all spoke Polish. Of course we had to translate for them so they could understand but we spoke Kashubian among ourselves. And this attitude spread, and we actually managed to recruit a few new people. (A20M)

Here, the influence of a Kashubian-language theatre group turned out to be sufficiently strong for a few people to gradually get drawn in and also start using Kashubian words during breaks. One of the new members enrolled in a Kashubian language course, and now – thanks to regular practice – speaks the language fairly fluently. It is important that using the language brings with it an increasingly stronger feeling of identification with a given group. This, in turn, encourages reflection on one's own Kashubian identity. It can be said that such groups engage in a 'more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities' (Wenger 1998: 4). Being part of such a group is a double source of identity – because of an engagement in cultural and language activities and an investment in relations with other people (Wenger 1998: 192). This observation confirms that young learners may adopt Kashubian as their main language if they start identifying with it, making it their 'own', feeling they can use it to express anything. However, 'top-down' approaches are insufficient for this: there is a need for grass-roots initiatives for young people to become engaged with ones they will enjoy and that will allow them to build their Kashubian identities anew.

10.4 Conclusions

The present situation faced by Kashubian provides a good basis for observing the interactions between language policies introduced on a national and 'official' level, the opportunities they provide to negotiate new solutions on the part of decision makers within the linguistic minority and the grass-roots activities implemented by the Kashubs themselves to protect their language. This chapter has shown that official provisions cannot succeed unless there is a change in the language ideologies that remain deeply rooted in the consciousness of the linguistic minority and others outside it. Changing the status of the endangered language through official policies such as the introduction of bilingual signage, the use of the endangered language in public life and in the education system, in the media and in other institutions is an ongoing process that must engage the speech community itself. It is ultimately this community which will determine whether more people wish to

become involved and active and whether this basis is sufficient to support future language activists who will, in turn, drive grass-roots activities that have impact on individual linguistic behaviour.

The Kashubian example also highlights how great a challenge it is for a speech community to preserve and/or revitalise an endangered language as an in-group medium of communication. Language revitalisation must be supported by 'top-down' decisions, by a conducive atmosphere and by legislation. Without them, in the wake of years of exclusion, the speech community will not be able to perceive its language as equal to the dominant language. The linguistic behaviour and attitudes of young people towards the endangered language and its culture are essential because it is this generation that will ultimately decide whether the language will retain its vitality or whether it will survive purely in symbolic form. If a language is to become a medium of communication among peers, young people must be familiar with both its written and spoken form but, above all, they must want to use it. Given the current situation faced by Kashubian, niches in which the language can be used freely must be built afresh in order to bring young people together outside the contexts of the family and school, providing them with a community in which to share their interests and passions. Belonging to such a community of practice may become a motivation for active participation, in which new speakers grow to enjoy the endangered language and encourage its active use (see also Joubert, this volume). Naturally, this carries the risk that Kashubian may become a language of isolated groups rather than a language that is genuinely used and shared by the entire community. However, the more such niches exist, the more young people are likely to be convinced that using the endangered language not only is not embarrassing but also is 'cool' and can make them stand out among their peers. This, in turn, makes it more likely that the linguistic tide can be turned.

NOTES

1 Each interviewee is identified by a letter, followed by the individual's age and gender: [F]emale/[M]ale. All quotations have been translated into English.
2 www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=505541222828268&set=a.336671269715265.73759.108955502486844&type=1&theater (last accessed 20 February 2015).
3 A specialisation in Kashubian studies, however, remains on offer at the same university's Faculty of Polish Studies.
4 See, for instance, the report on the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages: www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/minlang/report/EvaluationReports/PolandECRML1_en.pdf (last accessed 20 February 2015).
5 www.zk-p.org/files/482strategy-en.pdf (last accessed 20 February 2015).