

Kashubian language reclamation. An emic perspective on the challenges to linguistic continuity and development

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Keywords: Kashubian language reclamation, an emic perspective, process of the colonization, heritage language, school education

The process of the colonization of the Kashubs—the inhabitants of the southern coast of the Baltic Sea since the 6th century—and of their language has begun in the 13th century. From the 19th century on, the primary school system has been an important tool for the Germanization and then Polonization of the Kashubs. In the 1990s, after the fall of the communist regime, the community began a process of language reclamation trying to revive the language that over a half of their population could no longer speak. Paradoxically, it was school (again) that was envisioned as the most important tool for language reclamation efforts. Has this reclamation been successful? What role has the school education played in the process? What are other resources and tools that the Kashubs can use in their struggle to keep the heritage language alive? The talk, based on my emic perspective as an ethnic minority researcher, language activist, writer and promoter of Kashubian education, will be an attempt to provide answers to these questions related to the future of education in Kashubian.