Co? Was? German-Polish Linguistic Attitudes in Frankfurt (Oder)

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In this study I analyze the linguistic attitudes held by Polish and German speakers in the border towns of Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany and Słubice, Poland, held together by a cross-border university. I consider the historical background in the relationship between the two communities, including but not limited to the effect of Germany and Poland's separate entrances into the European Union and Schengen zone, which have divided the two countries until recently, as well as the adoption of the Euro in both Germany and, later, Poland. With consideration of this history, I explore the concept of linguistic attitudes in other border communities to mark parallels and differences in the attitudes of speakers on each side of the border, most notably different because of the presence of the university on both sides of the dividing river. I supplement this research with a study conducted on speakers themselves within each side of the community to explore the underlying thoughts and ideas behind attitudes toward speakers of the other language, investigating why so many Polish speakers are fluent in German, while only a few German students endeavor to learn Polish. The research we have conducted here explores a very important aspect of language attitudes as a proxy for European geo-political relations as exemplified in the role of Poland as an outlier in the European Union due to its late joining and reluctant acceptance of the Euro. Though student relations on the border are strong, the heart of Słubice remains untouched by German residents, despite full osmosis of Polish citizens into the heart of Frankfurt. Scholars of European relations and linguistic attitudes alike will find merit in this thesis as a study of attitudes both toward speakers and of speakers.

1.0 Introduction

The towns of Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany and Słubice ([swuˈbit͡sɛ]), Poland are neighbor cities divided by the river Oder yet connected by the international university Europa Universität Viadrina. With a long and tense history between the two countries, it is no surprise that the relationship between the two towns as they stand now is strained, especially among older generations. Divided by language almost as much as by the river, Polish and German citizens within the two cities are often entirely unable to communicate with each other and linguistic attitudes between the two bodies of speakers are strong and very noticeable. In order

to begin to analyze the lack of coexistence between the two cities, it is necessary to study the linguistic attitudes shared by the different speakers within the two cities.

To study linguistic attitudes is to observe and analyze often subconscious ideas held by speakers of any given language towards speakers of another language, as well as the language itself. These attitudes are "subjective evaluations of both language varieties and their speakers" (Myers-Scotton, 2006: 120) and can be influenced by any number of various notions; stereotypes, "preconceived and oversimplified idea[s]" or "an attitude based on such a preconception" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2010); or even in-person encounters. Linguistic attitudes shape a language's speakers as well as the *language status*. They can strongly influence the future of a language, a country, or a *linguistic* or *speech community*, namely, "the whole set of people who communicate with each other, either directly or indirectly, via the common language" (Hockett, 1958: 8).

Linguistic variation, using "different linguistic forms on different occasions, and different speakers of a different language [expressing] the same meanings using different forms" (Biber, Fitzmaurice and Reppen, 2002: vii) as well as variation of languages is a given in most every society, which means that, by some standards, "everyone is *bilingual*" (Edwards, 2004: 7) when one considers borrowed words and phrases with commonly-understood meanings. Although the exact definition of bilingualism is greatly disputed due to the multitude of varying factors that enter into defining proficiency (for example, varying levels of speaking and grammatical skill in each language (Edwards, 2004: 7)), bilinguals are widely accepted to be "those people who use two (or more) languages (or dialects) in their everyday lives" (Grosjean, 2004: 34). All bilinguals have (at least) a primary language (*L1*) and a second language (*L2*) (Butler and Hakuta, 2004: 114). It is also common for bilingual communities to have *diglossia*, which is "a term used to

refer to a kind of functional specialization between languages (referred to as *High* and *Low*) so that the language used within the home . . . is different from the one used in higher functions" (Romaine, 2004: 393). That is to say, in a diglossic relationship, the L1 and L2, one high one low, function in parallel but separately within a community. A high language is a language used in "higher functions" (Romaine, 2004: 393) such as government and education. A low language is the language used at home and in personal interactions. Even in such communities, there is still a documented bias toward one's own language or a language that may be considered more elite. Once a language is found to be less elite, it not only becomes an assumed reflection of the culture with which the language is bound, but also marks the language and its associated culture. This marking can put a language at risk of endangerment as well as create divided language communities and speakers. It is therefore important to study these attitudes so that linguists and sociologists alike can best understand and react to the power and influence that they have on the future of language and society.

1.1 What are language attitudes?

In order to understand how linguistic attitudes affect a language or culture, one must understand where they come from in a larger sense. There was a notion in the first half of the 20th century that the study of these attitudes was merely a study of stereotypes (Schiffman, 1997), which does not come from out of the blue -- many attitudes toward languages have stereotypes that go hand-in-hand. These attitudes arise when one group of people or speakers either consciously or subconsciously compares themselves to another group. By determining the group to which a speaker belongs and deciding that the language they speak is better than that of another group, a sense of elitism and superiority is almost certain. Conversely, it is likely that another group (or even the same) could feel a sense of inferiority when compared to a more elite or common language. As these groups are compared, one group or language must undoubtedly

be viewed as even slightly more desirable than the other, which gives that language the status of the elite language, meaning it is the more popular or successful language of the compared group. That leaves the other language(s) to be the less elite, the less desirable. This gives false identities to both groups based often purely on circumstance. Not all attitudes are based on judgments from afar, either; some arise from encounters between groups during which one small thing is determined to be a trait of an entire body of people. These ideas are then passed on among friends, families, and groups until they are considered to be truths. As they spread, such thoughts apply not only to groups, but to every individual within them as well, until all are affected, even if it began with an interaction between only two people.

1.2 Importance of language attitudes

So why are these attitudes so significant? Language can be considered an intrinsic part of a person as much as or even more than their nationality. Whereas nationalities can shift or be changed, a native language is forever. It is as much as sense of identity as it is a part of one's speech habits. It is “the most 'visible' symbol of a group” (Myers-Scotton, 2006: 111), and a group's outermost marker. It is also one of the most difficult things to change. Even if a speaker of language A learns to speak language B, it is difficult, at least after a certain age, to escape the accent. Unlike clothing, which can change to suit the environment, language is a part of the speaker. And therefore, when a language is devalued due to a linguistic attitude, the speaker is as well. “Speaking a particular language means belonging to a particular speech community and this implies that part of the *social* context in which one's *individual* personality is embedded, the context which supplies the raw materials for that personality, will be linguistic” (Edwards, 2004: 23). Belonging to a speech community makes a speaker part of that group as well as makes that group a part of the speaker's identity. “So long as not everything is inscribed in nature and the acquisition process is something more than a simple maturation, there exist linguistic differences

capable of functioning as signs of social distinction." (Bourdieu, 1991: 259) In addition, these attitudes are deeply connected with stereotypes. Speakers of the same language are as much a part of a cohesive group of people as are those born within the same location, if not more. This allows speakers to be generally classified according to a few general assumptions, all based on biased attitudes and stereotypes.

Attitudes can give rise to issues in fields other than status. Studies have shown that a negative attitude towards a language can negatively impact a learner's ability to acquire skills within that language, including accent (Moyer, 2007). If a student does not want to learn a language, for whatever reason, that student's progress will be greatly hindered in their studies. For example, students in communist-run Poland used to be required to learn Russian in school, despite a large passive resistance to the Russians who controlled the country at the time. Despite years of Russian instruction, "the great majority of Polish school-leavers [knew] hardly any Russian, despite the fact that the languages are closely related and consequently should be easy to learn" (Wierzbicka, 1990: 6). Moreover, what they do learn may be easier to forget, or never used (Moyer, 2007). In the case of the Polish students learning Russian, the few words and phrases which were acquired by the students on a larger scale were often used for satirical purposes. On a larger scale, negative attitudes impact the language directly as well. If a language is viewed as less elite and less desirable, fewer speakers will learn it, causing a slow decline. Bilingual speakers will often begin to switch to the majority language, whether it's the language of their friends, their school, or elite society, and as a result will use their native language less and less, until it isn't passed on until the next generation. This leads to a rapid decline in the life expectancy of minority languages as they are replaced by the majority in multiple locations.

An outside attitude towards a language will also determine the language's *ethnolinguistic*

vitality, which is a measure of the vitality of a language based on the attitudes its speakers hold towards themselves and their own language. It is "the ability of groups to behave and survive as distinctive and active collective entities in multi-group settings" (Giles and Sachdev, 2004). A language with low ethnolinguistic vitality is more likely to die out than a different language with higher. This vitality is measured by various factors, such as domain of use, frequency of *code-switching* ("the use of various linguistic units (words, phrases, clauses, and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems across sentence boundaries within a speech event" (Bhatia and Ritchie, 2004: 336). Namely, using elements from one language in the context of another), dynamics among the speakers (for example when the last two speakers of the Zoque language in Mexico ceased speaking with each other due to a separation over a possible argument (BBC News, 2007)), distribution of the speakers (geographically or demographically), economic base and linguistic prestige of the language, and the social outlook of a community with regard to its own language (Landweer, 2010). The strength of a group's identity increases the vitality of its language, and the prestige of a language increases its desirability on the linguistic market.

The effect of these attitudes, even if they are negative, can by contrast sometimes be positive. It is possible that, once a language receives a minority status, it can bring its speakers together through solidarity and a desire to maintain the language. This happened in the early 1990s with Welsh; under the Welsh Language Act, put in place to help preserve the slowly dying Welsh language, the Welsh Language Board was created "to encourage more people to speak, read or write [Welsh] in new situations, and to pass on the language to their children". Since then Welsh has become, though still not a major language, much stronger, and these preventative measures have kept Welsh from becoming more endangered (The Welsh Language Board, 2010).

This pride for one's language leads to preservation efforts such as bilingual schools, in which students can learn minority languages to pass on to their children, as is the case in Wales today (There exist at least 22 Welsh primary schools within Wales as of November 18, 2010 (The Welsh Language Board, 2010)). The reality remains, however, that most students will speak the language of their friends rather than their forefathers, leaving the chances of unassisted protection of a language somewhat slim. This causes a great *language shift*, in which "[l]anguage choices, culminated over many individuals and many choice instances, become transformed" (Fishman, 2000: 93) into a new linguistic setting. For example, within the United States "there are relatively few speakers of sidestream languages . . . who are more than two generations removed from their family's immigrant origins" (Fishman, 2004: 407). This demonstrates a strong example of language shift, as that means most immigrants and speakers of non-English languages lose their language within two generations of time in the U.S. This leaves the future of certain languages very much at risk as entire populations switch to a majority language, leaving the minority (and sometimes original native) language unused. Without active protection, minority languages that are victims of language shift are likely to become endangered if not die out.

1.3 Background of language attitudes

It is important to have some background in linguistic attitudes and how they have been previously studied in order to better understand this issue. The study of linguistic attitudes prior to the 1960s was considered to be "*dignifying stereotypes* and popularizing 'unscientific' ideas about language" (Schiffman, 1997). However, when W. E. Lambert published his study on language attitudes at a bilingual school in Canada, this opinion began to change. Within his study, Lambert was able to document higher opinions toward English speakers than towards the same speakers speaking French, showing that the idea of attitudes toward language may not be

as unscientific as was thought in the ‘60s. No longer “popularizing 'unscientific' ideas” (Schiffman, 1997), the study of linguistic attitudes began to take shape with Lambert's first study.

To complete his study, Lambert used a type of test called the Matched Guise Test, which is intended to demonstrate that “hearing a person speaking language X will trigger an expression of the attitudes a judge has about speakers of language X.” (Myers-Scotton, 2006: 127) So if a listener hears one speaker speaking two different languages at different times (so as not to make clear that it is the same speaker), it is then possible to document a difference in opinion of the two languages based on the listener's assessment of the speaker at any given time. For example, in his experiment, Lambert recorded a set of speakers speaking in both English and French (so that each speaker was recorded speaking each language). He then played these recordings in a mixed order to listeners, who ranked each speaker on different traits, such as intelligence, reliability, leadership, sociability, likability, confidence, and character (Schiffman, 1997). His results demonstrated a kinship between minority language speakers, but an overall higher ranking for majority language speakers. Listeners tend to mark speakers of their own language higher on personal qualities such as kindness and honesty (expressing solidarity with them), but mark speakers of the more elite language higher on other qualities, showing that they are likely to hold the majority language in a higher regard than their own.

2.0 Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany and Słubice, Poland

2.1 Geography

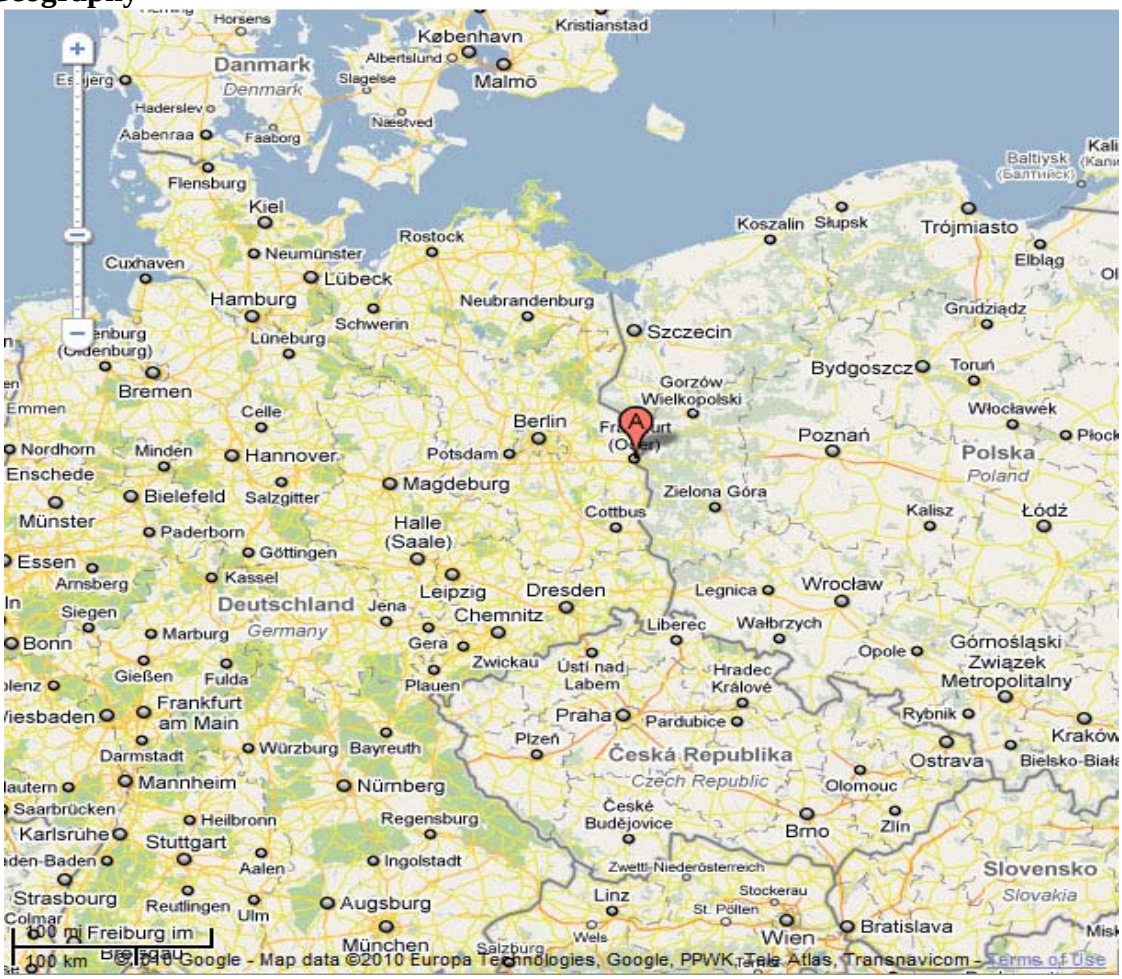

Figure 1.1. Frankfurt an der Oder in relation to greater Germany (Google Maps).

Frankfurt an der Oder and the sister city Słubice are located near the center of the border between Germany and Poland along the Oder river. Frankfurt (Oder) is within the German state of Brandenburg just one hour east of Berlin by train, and Słubice lies in the Lubusz province. Separated by the river, the towns are connected by a three-lane bridge between the two (two lanes into Germany, one lane into Poland).

Figure 1.2. Frankfurt an der Oder and Slubice in relation to each other along the river Oder (Google Maps).

2.2 History

Although the towns Frankfurt an der Oder, Germany and Słubice, Poland are two separate towns in two separate countries today, they were suburbs of the same city until 1945 (Encyclopaedia Brittanica). Of course, relations between the two countries have always been strained, even before World War II. Poland has a long history of being divided and conquered by various other groups, including but not limited to Prussians, Russians, Communists, and Nazis. After more than a thousand years as neighbors, Germany and Poland still do not trust each other, and that continues today. One of the subjects mentioned specifically the precarious location of Poland in regard to its neighbors, paraphrasing Andrzej Stasiuk. “The Poles don’t have it easy. In the east they have these wild beasts (Russians) and in the west are the robots (Germans). I think he said it very well. I’d also describe the Poles’ culture like that. It’s somewhere between

Germany and Russia" (Polak, 2010).

During World War II the town was divided along the river as borders in Europe shifted, leaving them divided. This division, along with the war, marked a turning point in the relations within the city as they were pushed apart by laws and regulations. After World War II, Frankfurt remained a part of communist East Germany until it rejoined Brandenburg (the reconstituted state) in 1990, making the entire country part of the European Union. Germany was also one of the original signatories of the Schengen Area Agreement in 1995 which began a "gradual abolition of the checks at [the] common borders" (The Schengen *Acquis*, 2000) of countries within the Schengen Zone. Poland, however, did not join the European Union until 2004, and was not part of the Schengen Zone until 2007, which mandated that borders be patrolled until that point. Because Poland was not a member of the Schengen Agreement for so long, it used to be that travelers going from one city to the other would need a visa, despite their close proximity. Even when Poland was within the European Union but not in the Schengen Zone, passports would still be required to cross the bridge into the other country. Today there are only signs and abandoned border patrol buildings, vandalized and covered with graffiti, to mark what used to be the closed border. Still, the atmosphere between the cities remains tense in the wake of a long path toward peaceful coexistence.

2.3 Financial and economic comparison

Poland, as the less wealthy country between the two in this setting, has a distinct disadvantage compared to Frankfurt (Oder), especially economically, though the citizens do try to benefit from their proximity to their German counterpart. Since Słubice no longer has a factory or sustainable farming, the town was left with fewer jobs around 2001. Although there are many German goods imported to Słubice, it is a complaint among citizens that "the only smooth Polish export to Germany [is] the smuggling of cigarettes" (Irek, 2001: 216). Citizens of

Słubice feel that it is "an insignificant player with no industry of its own, dominated by its powerful neighbor and having to accept the Frankfurt-Oder terms to obtain its goal." (Irek, 2001: 216)

Because of Poland's use of the Złoty as their currency[1], worth now roughly ¼ of a Euro, Polish prices are much lower than those in Germany, which inspires many German citizens to cross the border in search of lower prices and discounts. Germans will bring empty suitcases on wheels across the bridge and fill them with produce and cigarettes by the carton to bring back to Germany. With an open border, such minor importing goes completely unmonitored. Polish citizens take advantage of this as well – during the Polish asparagus season, though the produce is available in Germany (for a higher price), vendors line the streets of Słubice with tables full of fruits and vegetables, sold almost exclusively in Euro (to tailor to their German clients) at prices much lower than those on the other side of the river. In official data, "5,490 of the total 17,000 inhabitants in Słubice[2] have been registered as owners of an enterprise, which would mean that every third person in this town, including babies, invalid, and the aged, has been a business owner!" (Irek, 2001: 216) This does not include insurance agents, private medical services, owners of entertainment industries, and traders on the "German market" (Irek, 2001: 216) Even beyond economics, tensions between the two towns run high. There was, as of 2001, much anti-Polish graffiti found within Frankfurt, most notably at the bridge to Poland where the empty border checkpoints are, however I did not see any record of this during my time (see section 2.5). There are also reports of alleged attacks on Polish students around the year 2000 (Irek, 2001: 216), as well as some in Poland on German-speaking students. These xenophobic actions

[1] Poland as a country accepts payment in the form of both Złoty and Euro; it is not uncommon to see signs posted in grocery stores within Poland, especially in border communities such as these, which announce the store's legal obligation to accept payment from customers in Euro.

[2] List of registered entrepreneurs, "Wykaz ilosci przedsiebiorcow od 1989.011.01 do 1999.11.03," from the Department of Commerce in Słubice Town Hall.

are hoped to be remedied more and more over time by the presence of their international university as more and more foreign students come to the area from other countries.

Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice without a doubt see the merit in joining together for the sake of receiving funding and other bonuses. Frankfurt is driven to Słubice as a result of its inability to be a competitor with nearby Berlin (located about an hour by train to the west), and a successful teaming between these two towns would greatly influence their access of international funds. Though this makes cooperation a prerogative for Frankfurt, Słubice is not as successful. In the place of officials or groups in charge of organizing and fostering stronger border relations, they have a single office for cultural promotion within the town hall, located next to the office for Viadrina (of course). However, the extent of this office seems to be handing out bulletins, sponsored by the EU, with very little action to back them up.

2.4 Linguistic relationship

Despite the somewhat distant history of unity between the two towns, they are very linguistically divided. Although Frankfurt an der Oder is has a linguistically diverse student body, most of the town's adults speak only German, sometimes with limited Russian from their childhood in East Germany. The town's university as well offers language courses (some at an additional cost to students) in English, Finnish, French, German for foreigners, Italian, Polish, Russian, Swedish, Spanish, and Turkish, which gives the students an advantage in language learning, as well as the recent (as of the reunification of Germany) switch from Russian in schools to English. However, though English is taught in schools, students who do not go on to study it in university classes often lose all that they have learned within a few years.

Things are distinctively less diverse on the Polish side of the river. Although the students living in Słubice have the opportunity to take the same language courses as the German students, there is much less linguistic diversity among the older generations within the town. Students

study English in school, as well as (often) an additional language, but these languages are usually forgotten if they are not actively pursued. Post-education adults speak almost uniformly Polish with sometimes enough German to manage basic financial transactions with German visitors. Polish shopkeepers are also surprised when someone they assumed to be German knows any Polish. As an obvious foreigner in their town, I was assumed to be German by most of the citizens I passed, at least in the beginning of my stay. While purchasing some of the prized Polish asparagus from street vendors during my stay, many were surprised when I would request two or three bunches of asparagus in Polish. Often the seller would exclaim out of surprise: "You speak Polish!" I'd tell them that I was learning, and they would congratulate me on my endeavor, usually with follow-up questions asking how long I'd been studying, and why. This wasn't always the case – sometimes I would be met by the same cold shoulder they seemed to give to the German customers, speaking in German. The citizens manage to get by surprisingly well with the language barrier – I spoke with one woman who weekly came to Słubice for a salon (one of the services they are best known for to the Germans), and I asked her how much Polish she knew. She told me none, so I asked how she was able to communicate with the woman who styled her hair. She told me that pictures and gestures go a long way.

Bilingualism among the two towns is present, but is also divided. There are many Polish-German language signs in Słubice (mostly advertisements), as well as many solely in German, but very few signs in Frankfurt (Oder) with any Polish at all. Most of the Polish language presence in Frankfurt (Oder) stops at the bridge, where there is a sign marking the nearby towns and landmarks (such as the university) in German, Polish, and English. Each town has its own web site as well – Słubice actually has two. Conversely to what is demonstrated within the towns, Frankfurt's web site is the more internationally accessible, with options for German,

Polish, and limited English. Although Słubice has two pages, only one has links to change the language to German (or English), but neither of them were functioning as of late November 2010.

Spoken language within the two towns is also quite divided. Although many of the university students are proficient in multiple languages and speak them fluidly within the school buildings, the presence of foreign languages within the towns is minimal at best. With so many international students, it's common to hear in the cafeteria conversations in English, Polish, German, etc. However, these conversations remain monolingual to the extent possible. When conversing with my classmates, we would speak German unless the other student decided he or she wanted to practice English, and then we would speak English. There was only accidental borrowing of vocabulary when a speaker would insert a word or two of another language subconsciously ("Das ist cool"), or borrowing out of demand, such as when I couldn't remember the word I wanted to use in German or Polish. Any use of Polish vocabulary by German speakers I noticed was only from classmates in our Polish classes, and usually only to discuss classroom matters. With my Polish roommates, because German was our strongest common linguistic ground, our conversations were mostly German. They did, unlike the German students, switch into Polish for certain words or phrases, often knee-jerk obscenities (which may have also been difficult to translate), but primarily because they knew I was learning Polish. Each seemed delighted that I had chosen to learn Polish, and it was very common that I would be asked why I had decided to learn it if no one in my family has retained the ability to speak it. As a result, they were often overly willing to help – during my stay in our apartment, a roommate began a regular language table designed to help students of Polish practice their skills with native speakers – and always made sure I knew I could ask them for help with assignments or anything else (such as

when I couldn't pick out which bottles in the supermarket were laundry detergent and which were fabric softener). The words they used were usually translatable, as well, so that when they switched into Polish they could still explain in German if I didn't understand. They would often choose words and phrases that they found to be both important and difficult to learn in the classroom, and use them sparingly. We would also make linguistic and cultural comparisons – for example, while cooking, a friend might tell me that, in Polish, what I was cooking was referred to as *fasola*, and I would tell them that my family called them *string beans*. Another night we had a small gathering with students from Germany, Poland, America, and France, and out of curiosity we all compared pronunciations of the (borrowed) word *okay*. Aside from the words many university students consider vital but aren't taught in the classroom (such as obscenities), Polish words were usually supplied for learning opportunities – when neither of us knew the German, or for words my roommates considered too important not to know.

2.5 Viadrina University

Today the two towns, with their total combined population of around 100,000 were, as of 2001, better known for "huge gray zones, problems with drugs, prostitution, and well-developed organized crime." (Irek, 2001: 215) They are kept alive and unified mostly by the local university, the Europa Universität Viadrina (the Viadrina European University), which was re-founded in 1991[3], and may also be the cities' best hope for a well-functioning relationship. The university Viadrina, though located in Frankfurt (Oder), now runs with Collegium Polonicum (located entirely in Słubice) as a joint project with the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. Funded by the European Union, the university appears as well to be taking the strongest steps toward a unified border – of the many foreign language courses offered at the Viadrina, Polish is the only one offered *gratis* – that is to say, without an additional fee. Yet despite the one-third

[3] EUV was originally known as the Alma Mater Viadrina, founded in 1506. It was open until 1811, when it moved to Breslau and helped form the University of Breslau.

Polish student body (an additional third German, and the other third of other nationalities) and numerous courses offered in the Polish language, the total number of students studying Polish is comparatively quite small, with roughly 30 students in all intermediate level courses combined, a considerable number of whom are not German, but from countries such as the Ukraine and the Czech Republic, some of whom studied Polish before coming to Viadrina. It is also noteworthy that many of the students elected to learn Polish for familial reasons, such as having Polish heritage, while only a few want to help border relations.

On the contrary, nearly every Polish student at the university has a strong command of or is learning German, and takes many if not all of their classes in German, from German professors. That is not to say that every Polish student is pro-German by any means – students from Poland seem to divide themselves into one of three categories: the Poles who are genuinely interested in assimilating into German culture, who speak German fluently and almost without accent; there are also the Poles who accept German as a requirement for advancement in their study, especially at Viadrina, but who associate mostly with other Poles outside of the classroom; and finally, the Polish students who do all that they can to never speak German. The German students can be divided much in the same way, from those who strive for unity with their neighbors to those who barely even associate with them. One student surveyed referred to "ColPol students (who study only in Polish and only in Polish fields of study)" (Katarzynskaja, 2010), ColPol being short for Collegium Polonicum.

An important development from the school, established in 2006, is the Fforst house, which is known among students as the international, inter-cultural residence for students. Entirely student-run, it focuses on hosting events to foster a stronger relationship between the two countries. For example, during my time at Viadrina, students from Fforst hosted a mock

German-Polish wedding, complete with a bilingual ceremony followed by a mixture of German and Polish food and drink for students from both sides of the river. The entrance fee included tokens for a free cup of Polish barszcz (borscht), as well. It is a step forward in Frankfurt's efforts to welcome Słubice as a true partner community.

Despite this rather bleak outlook for unity between the adult community within the two towns, the palpable atmosphere, at least among the student body, is quite different. In classes with foreigners from various countries, students were outwardly welcoming of new students from around the globe, and excited to see a fellow student from a new country. Reports of anti-Polish graffiti have been replaced in places by anti-Nazi graffiti, or Nazi graffiti that has been changed to be anti-Nazi. Despite hearing reports of the Nazi and anti-Polish graffiti in Frankfurt (Oder), however, I can't recall any examples that I saw. I do recall, however, seeing arguments in graffiti, developed over time – graffiti that began as supporting the "Antifa" (short for Antifascismus, the common anti-fascist sentiment within Frankfurt (Oder)), which later became "~~Anti~~fascismus" (simply "fascism," to support fascism), and then would be re-written as "**Anti**~~Anti~~**fa**~~scismus~~" (back to "anti-fascism"). If there was ever graffiti supporting Nazis, it was quickly changed to say simply "Nazis raus" (roughly translated to "Nazis get out"). Vandalism is a problem around the bridge especially, but the youth anger is no longer so outwardly directed toward Polish students. There is much graffiti talking about a coming revolution and the symbol of anarchy, but these are no longer so obviously directed at any groups, like the Poles. However, it is worthy of note that, despite the welcoming atmosphere from German students at the university, many of these students came originally from Berlin or other more distant towns in Germany, rather than Frankfurt itself, and the presence of Poles in these classes, especially Polish citizens from Słubice, is still very limited.

3.0 Study

3.1 Methods

I carried out a qualitative pilot study consisting of surveys sent to a total of 14 residents of either Frankfurt (Oder) or Słubice. The survey (see appendix) was made up of fifteen questions, in German, asking each participant where they are originally from, where they live now, how long they have lived there, and various questions about their linguistic ability. Participants were asked to assess their own accents and how they are treated because of them, as well as what words the two groups use to describe each other. They were also asked how the citizens of the two towns go about life in proximity to each other, and what they think is possible or necessary to improve relations between Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice. Included were spaces to describe individual experiences with being on the opposite side of the river, or if they had heard of anyone else's experiences regarding division between the two towns. The questions were designed to gain information not only on current relations between the two cities, but also past relations between the cities and the citizens themselves as noticed by residents (either permanent or temporary) within each city. Their answers were given in German, and all quotations given here I have roughly translated into English, as well as the survey questions in the appendix.

The questions were derived based on surveys as part of other studies on linguistic attitudes. For example, Laada Bilaniuk conducted a study on how gender impacts language attitudes in the Ukraine in 1995. Though the study was accompanied by a matched guise test, it provided vital information on its own as well with the goal of noticing more overt attitudes, rather than delicate subconscious attitudes detected by the matched guise test. This survey had participants rank speakers on various qualities based on how well they speak each language. Alene Moyer used similar questions to assess a speaker's ideas regarding their own speaking ability in her study (published 2007) on attitude's effect on accent. She had non-native English

speakers assess their own ability to speak English and their intentions for continuing their study of it to match external assessments of each speaker's accent and ability.

3.2 Participant group

The contacted participants for this study were students from various locations and countries who had studied at Viadrina University or lived in one or both of the two towns, ranging in age from 19 to 29. I contacted 9 women and 5 men with whom I had had contact abroad, and received answers from seven (3 women and 4 men). These participants come from Germany, Poland, and the Ukraine, live in both towns, and speak in total German, Polish, English, Italian, Russian, Ukrainian, French, Danish, and German Sign Language. They have resided in these towns ranging from 26 years to a few months. And, coming from different social circles, each had a very different outlook on the relationship between the two towns. It is easy to divide the participants into university students and non-university students, and there is a noticeable difference in answers between the two groups.

3.3 Limitations of Study

The participant body of this group was very limited with little variation in age, which makes the data difficult to apply on a larger scale. Without data from residents born in the height of Communism or after its fall in Poland, it is difficult to say how their opinions of the two towns would differ from those expressed by these. It is also worthy of note that every participant except for one is a student at the university, and the answers given by the one non-student do differ greatly in both opinion and outlook for the future. Were this to be redone in the future, finding a larger and more diverse participant body would be key to finding more definitive results. Having responses from more than one citizen who grew up in one of the towns instead of coming in from an exterior perspective would shed much more light onto how things were in the past compared to how they are now, making tracking any changes in how the towns have been

functioning together much easier, instead of speculating about what must have changed based on what the rumors were from years before. It would also be crucial to find more open lines of communication (or an incentive for the study) in order to make follow-up answers or general participation more likely.

3.4 Significance

The significance of the attitudes within Frankfurt an der Oder and Słubice is great when one considers Poland's role in the European Union and Schengen Zone. As a very recent addition to the Zone and Union, Poland is the newcomer, and finding a place where the citizens are welcome is very important. With consideration paid to Germany's history and current political climate especially[4], it is necessary to observe and understand what is happening when cultures try to mix, and what we can do to help create a more unified European Union – not to unite or mix the countries, but to increase social tolerance and partnership between the countries, especially at their borders. On a linguistic level, it is also important to understand what impact this will have on the future of each of these languages. It's true that neither German nor Polish are endangered, but this will make it possible to begin to see trends of languages being replaced at the borders (or of adamant resistance to acquiring a new language, as is the case with many non-student citizens of Słubice, who speak not a word of German outside of what they need to sell their wares on the border). That can then be applied to border communities with the same type of climate where one language may be more endangered than either German or Polish, so that linguists can see themes as to where the languages are headed based on the attitudes of their speakers. It will show a language's Ethnolinguistic Vitality, a prediction of a language's vitality as determined by the attitudes of its speakers.

[4] Most notably regarding the German intolerance of Turkish immigrants, who are finding little welcome among Germany's social climate.

4.0 Study results

The participants within this group, with the exception of one, had all come to Frankfurt (Oder) or Słubice in order to study at the university, specifically for its intercultural experience, languages, and/or proximity to the border. When surveyed which languages they speak, subjects for the most part gave a range of languages. Only one, who was not a student at the university, reported that he was able to understand four languages other than German and German Sign Language, but was unable to speak them very well. All participants who spoke a language other than their native tongue recognized the presence of their accent, but all agreed that, though some found it embarrassing at first, it was no longer a concern, so long as they could be understood.

Of the Polish-heritage participants who spoke about their experiences speaking German with German citizens, none recounted any negative reactions. One woman, living in Słubice remarked that, instead, “People are mostly happy when [she speaks] German (the Germans) because otherwise they'd have to understand Polish . . . therefore it's not important to them if I make mistakes” (Mrozek, 2010). This seems to reflect the Germans’ position regarding the Poles fairly well; they appreciate the Polish students’ ability to speak German, but seem also to expect it. One woman from Poland noted that she was rarely corrected by German interlocutors, which gave her little opportunity to improve her German. There was a consensus among the non-native German speakers that Germans will often correct other speakers' mistakes, though one noted that he “found them to be a bit more unfriendly” (Polak, 2010) when correcting his mistakes. It seems that the Germans are content with a native Polish speaker’s ability to speak German so long as they are understandable. Conversely, all non-native Polish speakers noticed delight from native Polish speakers when they were heard trying to speak Polish, which I also noticed in town. “The Poles are always very considerate. They always say how 'sweet' and 'nice' [the]

Polish is. Often they are very delighted that someone from the west is trying to learn their language" (Polak, 2010). In contrast to the German expectation that a Polish citizen should speak German in Germany, the Poles seem to expect that a German will not learn their language. It's therefore all the better when a foreigner is able to say even a few things to them in their native tongue. This is a good reflection of the two languages in a contrast of status – German definitely ranks higher to both the Germans and the Poles as the expected language to be able to speak. Polish, however, is distinctly less elite, and it's therefore a nice surprise to Polish speakers when a non-native speaker chooses to learn and practice their language.

All of the participants responded that they regularly cross the border to the other town at least a few times each week, for reasons varying from studies at the university to frequenting the cafeteria in the Collegium Polonicum. The reason most often stated for crossing the border was to shop in Słubice due to their drastically cheaper prices and higher product availability. One student at the university who was not formally surveyed recounted buying caffeinated drinks in Słubice that weren't available in Germany due to content restrictions. Although the survey asked what they thought of the atmosphere in relation to the atmosphere where they are living, only one participant commented, saying "It's totally normal" (Polak, 2010). None commented on any palpable negativity between the two countries in the spheres in which they spent most of their time.

The participants' responses began to vary more when they were asked how the people between the two towns treat each other in day-to-day life. Although one participant said they were simply "friendly" (Sk, 2010), every other noticed a difference between the inhabitants of the two sides. One woman noted that "there are many worlds" (Katarzynskaja, 2010) within Frankfurt and Słubice. She mentioned the rumored presence of the Russian Mafia who build cars

in the towns and hold illicit transactions, the Polish students who come to Germany but insist on remaining separate from the German culture (the ColPol students), Russian students who have come to learn Polish, as well as a strong Nazi presence in Frankfurt (Oder). She mentioned many worlds, which would be expected with the presence of the university so nearby, but only half of the groups specifically mentioned were tied with the university. The other half were groups native to Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice which help create a more hostile environment between the two countries. Though I heard of a Nazi presence in my short time there, I hadn't heard of a Russian mafia or noticed any indication of the Nazism that was mentioned from the past few years, which will be discussed more later in this section. Another woman was able to summarize the common feelings of the others and offer her own idea as to why:

> I think that the relation between the Germans and Poles is somewhat distanced and, although they live on the border, few unfortunately facilitate integration. I don't know why it's come to that, maybe it still has an historical background (and therefore the two nationalities don't want to have so much to do with each other today), but perhaps it's all caused by the linguistic obstacles. (Mrozek, 2010)

Another woman noted that "there are a few idealists who are interested in the other side, organizing tasks, festivals, and other things together. The magnitude of these groups is unknown, but noticeable" (Hanke, 2010). I have had experience with these groups personally as well. Many students look past the river as a divider between the towns and see a bridge as a connector, especially those who haven't lived in Frankfurt (Oder) or Słubice for as long. The one participant who grew up in Frankfurt (Oder) was by far the least optimistic regarding the relationship between the towns, whereas the most optimistic had only been living in Frankfurt (Oder) for just over two years and rated himself as an advanced Polish speaker. He also mentioned spending much time in Poland, including at the Collegium Polonicum, since it reminded him of being home. This could indicate that the relationship has been improving over time, and from a fresh

perspective is no longer as bad as it used to be. However, it could also be the case that newcomers in the town simply have not had enough experience between the two to understand the full depth of the division. As another outsider looking in, it's my personal belief that the relationship is improving over time, as seemed to be the case as indicated by the change in graffiti within Frankfurt (Oder) and the growing size of Viadrina. However, it is important to remember that most of the efforts for unity I found were from university students, most of whom will eventually graduate and probably leave the towns. Still, in contrast, one man (who has lived in both Słubice and later Frankfurt (Oder) over a period of years) went so far as to change my word selection from what I had used in the survey originally (*behandeln* – to handle, to deal with) to a word he felt was more suited (*umgehen* – to deal with, to avoid) (Wieczorek, 2010). I tried to clarify if this was a correction of my German in general or his opinion regarding which word was more appropriate, but received no further response. Despite not hearing what he had meant by his correction, I can hypothesize that it was a matter of opinion, not grammar. Of all the participants surveyed, he was the only one to correct the word choice, and was not a native German speaker. Still, it does pose an interesting aspect of writing a survey in a foreign language – a mis-chosen or incorrectly translated word could greatly skew any answers received from survey participants. In addition to the grammatical change, he also noted that "to the people from Słubice, the Frankfurters who come to Słubice are anti-social and too poor to afford anything in Germany" (Wieczorek, 2010). Because of this harsh outlook on the interactions between the two countries, I believe it is safe to assume that his word change was based the word's implications towards the two towns' interactions, not grammatical correctness.

Each of the participants asked was also able to recall different names or titles each group uses for the other, ranging from "Kartoffelkonsument" (Katarzynskaja, 2010) (potato-consumer,

in Polish) to simply “The Poles”, which “can also be a swear with the right tone” (Hanke, 2010). Poles are also often disparagingly referred to as “Polakken” (Polacks) or “Herr/Frau Ski” (Mr./Mrs. -ski). The Poles speak “u Niemców” (at the Germans), “u Helmutów” (at the Helmuts), and “u Kartofli” (about the potatoes). They also refer to the Germans as inhabitants of “Dojczland” (the Polish spelling of Deutschland) (Katarzynskaja, 2010). This spelling is not a standard Polish spelling for Germany (it should be “Niemcy”). Instead, they adopt the German word for Germany and in a typically Polish manner alter the spelling to match its pronunciation (as they do with some English names, for example, “Waszyngton” for “Washington”). It may have something to do with the meaning of the Polish word for Germany (“Niemcy”), which is “silent people” or “mute people”, namely those who can't speak a Slavic language (Polończyk, 2008). Though unofficial, it is becoming a more commonly-known spelling after the publishing of Andrzej Stasiuk's bestseller *Dojczland* in 2007, detailing his journeys, as a Pole, back and forth across Germany. Still, despite the spelling, why would a Polish citizen refer to Germany by its name in German? It may be a gentle teasing, as I have often referred to being in Germany (to English-speaking friends) as being in Deutschland. But the alternate spelling differentiates it from being an example of code-switching (simply saying “Germany” in German). It instead demonstrates the Polish adoption of the word into their own language. Unable to receive any follow-up information from the woman who mentioned this as a common utterance among the Poles, I am unable to decisively conclude what it should infer. Perhaps it is a demonstration of a bridge between the two countries – if the Germans call Germany Deutschland, wouldn't it be a sign of respect to not change its name to “The Mute”? And yet in the context it was given, it seemed instead to be a mockery of the way the Germans refer to themselves.

One man said he had heard of the Germans being described as “punctual, cold, and

organized” and the Poles as “warm, with a sense of camaraderie” (Sk, 2010). Although one woman hadn't heard any names, another participant refused to mention any, because “there are too many” (Hufert, 2010). These names indicate a unique intention in both directions. According to Bourdieu, “[i]nsults, like naming, belong to a class of more or less socially based acts of institution and destitution through which an individual . . . indicates to someone that he possesses such and such property, and indicates to him at the time that he must conduct himself in accordance with the social essence which is thereby assigned to him” (Bourdieu, 1991: 105-6), meaning that an individual will use a name to tell another that the named individual is and should act as he has been named. Keeping this in mind, it is interesting to consider some of the insults listed were common words, such as “The Poles”. By using the proper name of their nationality as an insult (with the right tone), it assigns insulting qualities to their nationality. Conversely, it’s also possible that, through stereotypes and negative attitudes, negative associations have become attached to the nationality, making it an insult. This makes these everyday insults by far the most disparaging, as there is no way to escape them. Though it may be insulting to be referred to as a “Kartoffelkonsument”, it is not a part of one’s identity. Using a nationality as an insult makes it insulting to be who that person is.

> [I]t *signifies* to someone what his identity is, but in a way that both expresses it to him and imposes it on him by expressing it in front of everyone . . . and thus informing him in an authoritative manner of what he is and what he must be. This is clearly evident in the insult, a kind of curse . . . which attempts to imprison its victim in an accusation which also depicts his destiny. (Bourdieu, 1991: 121)

By being so public with the given names and insults, each side traps the other into an assigned identity, marking them not only as an outsider in the other town, but as someone less, someone worthy of insult.

When asked to name events, either good or bad, which had occurred in either Frankfurt

(Oder) or Słubice, fewer were able to answer. One man, the same man who described the atmosphere in each of the two towns as “friendly” remembered a city fest as a good event within the recent past (Sk, 2010). One woman from Poland had heard “that neo-Nazis are active, and that many mafia people are active here, etc” (Katarzynskaja, 2010). Another “heard that one time two kids in Poland were talking in German, and they were hit because of it. That was sometime at night; I know outside of that that in Frankfurt there are many Nazis” (Mrozek, 2010). These are some of many reports of Nazism which was shown, but the anti-Nazi response seemed to be just as strong, if not stronger (as demonstrated by the graffiti in section 2.5). The only interviewee who had grown up in Frankfurt (Oder) mentioned that “before it was bad, and bound with hate, but now and again it's like that” (Hufert, 2010). Although his outlook tended to be consistently negative regarding understanding between the towns, this statement did show a glimpse of improvement. He specifies that things were worse before than they are now, which indicates that the relationship is improving over time, not just appearing to be better to newcomers in the towns.

All of the participants except for one were in agreement when asked if the Germans and Poles could ever function well with each other. “Absolutely. We are two people who have very many similarities. The Oder divides us, and maybe that's also wonderful, especially since because of it we're now somehow brothers. Both cultures would only profit from each other” (Polak, 2010). Still, the participant who had spent his full life in Frankfurt (Oder) had a different opinion. He said that “that wouldn't go well, because we have too many right extremists here. It'd simply degenerate into trouble since, according to their opinions, there are too many foreigners in Germany” (Hufert, 2010). Although it would be difficult to change this opinion among all of the right extremists, the relationship still seems to be improving as some of the younger

generations move on to bigger cities and they are replaced by newer opinions.

Each participant had different ideas regarding what should (or could) be done to improve the relationship, as well. Many agreed that there was much work to be done on the German side. “The Germans shouldn't simply drive over for shopping, but also to take walks, or spend their vacation in Poland, simply learning to evaluate the otherness of the other side of the river as positive” (Hanke, 2010). However, this is a very idealistic view. While relations would greatly benefit from more Germans spending time in Poland, the view still exists that Słubice has little to offer in comparison to Frankfurt (Oder). The linguistic one-sidedness is also a concern for most Germans – the Poles who come to Germany generally have enough German to get by in town, whereas the Germans who come to Poland depend on the Polish citizens speaking enough German to help them. “The Germans must learn more about the Poles . . . the clichés must be fixed. The Poles aren't auto thieves and rogues. And the Germans aren't stark Nazis in the east” (Polak, 2010). The Polish side had its own requirements. “I find they should develop a more positive self-image” (Hanke, 2010). It seems that many of the issues between the two cities could be cause by what used to be, more than what still is. Of all the stories reported regarding negativity towards the other side of the river, they were all reported stories; no one could name the person to whom the events had happened. Despite hearing about anti-Polish remarks in Frankfurt (Oder), I had personally seen or heard of very few, if any at all. The names undoubtedly still exist and the stereotypes will likely be hard to die out, but it seems that the negativity that remains may not be due to the most recent interactions, rather stories from before, when the communities were more divided. Still, all were in agreement that border-crossing events would be great steps toward a unified community, if the two sides can learn to work together and overcome the mutual biases against each other.

When asked openly if they had any experience which exemplified the relationship between citizens of the two towns, one participant, German but currently residing in Słubice, retold this story:

> It recently came to pass in Intermarche (the supermarket), that I was standing at the cashier, and in front of me was a German who wanted to pay in Euros. The cashier told her the total in Polish, which the German didn't understand. The cashier took the correct money from the German's wallet, which the German didn't appreciate. There was a short dispute – the German in German, the cashier in Polish – but the German eventually recognized that everything was in order, and left, and the people in line behind me and the cashier began to vent about the German: She should just learn Polish! . . . I was really happy that I had zlotys to pay with, and that I didn't understand what they were saying about this woman. (Hanke, 2010)

Another woman, Polish and living in Słubice, reported that acquaintances have told her how "when one is on the German side, one sees old people, many homeless, and Harz IV recipients[5]", in contrast to the apparent satisfaction of life in Poland (Katarzynskaja, 2010). This is not to say that no one mentioned positive stories of relationships between Germans and Poles. However, when someone did mention a story which positively reflected the way the two countries interacted, they were universally between students at the university. Still, not even students are above the divide between the two, as is seen by the ColPol students at the university.

4.1 Personal observations

As a foreigner living in the town of Słubice but studying in Frankfurt (Oder), I crossed the border a few times each day, as an outsider on each side. Germans rarely if ever assumed me to be a Pole, despite often being seen in Poland. However, in Słubice I was automatically assumed to be German, mostly because so few foreigners have ever chosen to stay in their town instead of in Frankfurt (Oder).

One afternoon in a shop, I was trying to decipher a price from a messily written sign,

[5] Harz IV is an unofficial term for the unemployment compensation given out as part of the Hartz IV reform from 2003 which combined long-term unemployment benefits with welfare (SozialLeistungen.info, 2010). However, it is also now commonly used to describe German citizens who are poor and non-working.

when the shop's owner came up and began asking me what I was looking for. I did my best to explain with limited ability, and she immediately returned to her register and told me “I don't speak any German” (in Polish). I told her it was all right, I'm not German, which caused her and her husband both to start up and ask, “So where are you from?” I told them I was visiting from America, and their faces immediately brightened. They switched into an impressive level of English for Chinese immigrant shopkeepers living in a small Polish town. “My brother lives in America!” When they thought I was German, and couldn't understand them more than superficially, I was given no further notice or time; once I was marked as being from somewhere else, I was important again. One of the participants, who lived formerly in Frankfurt an der Oder but moved to Słubice, said that, in order to improve relations between the two towns, “the Germans shouldn't only drive over for shopping, but also to take walks, or spend their vacations in Poland. Simply learn to evaluate the differences on the other side of the river as positive.” (Hanke, 2010)

Although the students I met at the university seemed to generally want to become ambassadors for each side of the river, helping them come to a point of peace with each other, they were not above the stories they had heard in their time there. During a gathering at my apartment, I had friends from the Polish and German side visiting, along with some family members. Because of the presence of my family, who are unable to understand German or Polish, our conversation was entirely in English. One woman, German, living in Frankfurt (Oder) at the time, arrived late, and explained it was because she had to park her car by the bridge and walk. When others asked why she had to do this, thinking something must be happening that would prohibit her ability to park in the supermarket lot across the street, she explained that she was worried something would happen to her car if she left it on the Polish side

for so long (because of the rumored Polish car thieves). This was understandably upsetting to my friends from Poland, and they were immediately defensive. Her idea to try and protect her car led to an intense debate, in which every Polish friend explained (to her and to my family as well, who, having arrived that morning in Berlin, had no experience with the relationship between the two countries or towns) that, despite what she had heard, Poland was no worse of a place to park one's car than Germany. In fact, they reasoned that it would be worse for them to park a car on the German side of the river than it would for a German to park in Słubice. Though I can unfortunately not remember many details of their argument, it was clear that the stories are still having an impact on residents of the towns young and old, no matter how long they've been there (As a note, the same German woman as of November 2010 is a resident of Słubice, and parks there daily).

Still, despite the palpable general dislike between the two cities' citizens, the economic relationship between the two is very obvious from the moment one crosses the bridge. Well, at least in one direction. The presence of Słubice in Frankfurt is minimal if it's there at all. There are city festivals to celebrate the two, when the bridge is shut down to automobile traffic and the streets turn into a fair, but the only mention of Słubice in Frankfurt is a sign pointing across the bridge. However, as soon as one begins to cross the bridge, Frankfurt's role in Słubice's economy becomes obvious. Prominently displayed on the nearest building to the border is a red and white sign announcing "You are now crossing the price border" with a mock-border dividing the sign in two – a border made of logos for candy, alcohol, and other consumer goods. The main pedestrian walkway directly across from the bridge in Słubice (which the Germans and some Poles refer to as "Zigarettenstraße" (Cigarette Street)) seems to be tailored to the German visitors – as well as some of the other streets deeper into the city. The cobblestone street is lined with

signs mostly in German, some in Polish, advertising prices for cigarettes and conversion rates for exchange bureaus (marked as both a “Kantor” (in Polish) and a “Wechselstube” (in German)). Biedronka, one of the grocery stores in Słubice, posts a sign outside of its front doors stating in Polish, German, and English that, as Poland is now part of the European Union, the store accepts (out of obligation) both Złoty and Euros. There is also a building whose side faces the bridge and Zigarettenstraße in Słubice which advertises Słubice's connections outside of Poland, displaying the names and shields of its partner cities throughout the world in Polish, German, and English.

Figure 4.1. Display of Słubice’s partner towns as seen near the city center (Clark, 2010).

4.2 Conclusion of study

Every set of answers I received made me able to conclude the same thing: there is a rift that runs along the river Oder dividing Frankfurt an der Oder from its sibling city Słubice. Every participant spoke openly about the poor relationship between the two countries, and whether or

not it could be repaired. Only one mentioned the “idealists, who are interested in the other side, organizing tasks, festivals, and the other things.” (Hanke, 2010) Another made note that she had heard of active Neo-Nazis within Frankfurt (Oder), but that she didn’t feel afraid.

Because linguistic crossing of the border seems to only happen in one direction for the most part, Germans tend to react to Polish citizens speaking German with ambivalence, or have an expectation that the Poles should speak German if they will be coming to Germany for whatever reason. Polish citizens, on the other hand, will often react with surprise or pleasure when they hear a foreigner speaking their language, even more so when the foreigner is not German. The two groups are closely linked because of their close economies and different offers – the Germans have large-scale retail stores such as H&M and Kaufland, while Poland has seasonal vegetable stands and bazaar markets -- still, despite their dependence on each other for economic purposes, citizens of the two cities, for the most part, go about their lives merely tolerating each other at best.

Still, the answers I received did shed a more optimistic light on the most recent years between the towns. I noticed that, of all the stories I received, no one could name any that happened directly to them. The most first-hand contact with animosity between Germans and Poles was the report from Intermarche regarding making Polish change, and, though frustrating certainly, there was no violence or lasting outward impression that this even left on any participant. The reports of tension between the two towns have changed from violence and anti-Polish graffiti (reported in 2000/1) to anti-Nazi graffiti and rumors of what gangs used to exist. It is very true that this may only result from my limited number of participants and their generally brief time in Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice (with an average stay time of 5 years, an average which is greatly influenced by the one 26-year resident of Frankfurt (Oder)), it does appear from

my own time there as well that the atmosphere is changing. With open borders and a lack of required visas to travel between the two towns, a partnership seems to be beginning to grow over time. For example, in 2000 a German-Polish kindergarten opened in Frankfurt (Oder) advertising "childhood without borders", under the idea that "[c]oming generations will live in a Europe in which the Oder is no longer a demarcation line, but rather a river flowing through a common living and working space. For this, we would like to prepare our children" (Eurokita, 2010). The teachers and facilitators of this kindergarten are striving to teach the children not only to accept the other side of the river, but to learn the history, the culture, traditions and language of their neighbor. "Before all", they say, "it's for the people." (Eurokita, 2010) Though the towns are far from being willing siblings, only a few residents look upon citizens of the other side with as much disdain as used to be seen, and the younger generations are certainly taking into their own hands what needs to be done to improve the relationship. With university events bridging the border, along with recent developments from adults as well, the towns are seeing something closer to a friendship than before.

5.0 Conclusion

The study of language attitudes is essentially the study of biases listeners may hold against speakers of a certain language or with a certain dialect or accent. It is these attitudes that can divide and separate speakers of different languages as well as determine the future of the languages they speak. Such attitudes come from judgments and comparisons between one culture and another, forcing one to be seen as a better or more elite language or culture, until the less elite language is marked as undesirable to learn or be included with. Though these ideas usually propagate from person to person, they can rapidly spread to encompass entire cultures until, as in cases such as this one, it is one nationality pitted against another. This is especially upsetting when one considers the role that language plays in identity: it is both an internal and

external marker of who a speaker is and where they are from which is almost impossible to erase completely. Even if a speaker learns a new language to the point of fluency and changes where they say that they are from, chances are that an accent will still remain as a constant reminder of the speaker's original and “true” identity. But a negative linguistic attitude affects not only the speaker of the non-elite language. Speakers of the elite language will find it harder to learn the minority language if they view it as undesirable. Without a good reason to learn the language, they simply will not make the effort to learn it.

Most important of all, however, is the idea of political unity finally occurring between the two countries. Despite their long and violent history of interactions with each other, taking steps like joining the European Union together and both becoming members of the Schengen Agreement helps to repair the damage that has been cause by hundreds of years of invasions and war. It is another step closer to a unified European identity, a long-standing goal of many. With open borders, the next step is linguistic understanding between the two countries in order for communication between the two to really begin to flow. In that case, Słubice may become more to Frankfurt than a location for wholesale cigarettes, and Słubice may begin to gain the same sort of reputation and economy as its stronger counterpart Frankfurt. By improving the relationship and attitudes between these two countries, the two towns may not only learn to function with each other, but the citizens as well. With an increase in status for Polish on the border, the linguistic exchange has the possibility to become two-sided, removing the Polish language's disadvantage in comparison to German, also increasing the sense of worth among Polish speakers. Because identity is so intrinsically bound with language, by increasing the linguistic sharing at the border, it is possible to increase both nationalities' feelings of worth in the eyes of their counterpart and therefore reduce the animosity and violence reported to take place,

especially near the bridge.

Whether or not this is readily achievable is another question entirely. Many students gladly cross the border to expand their knowledge of the culture, but just as many choose not to. ColPol students form cliques away from German students and won't speak with Germans until they have to. All the same, German students will choose not to learn Polish, and will only cross the border for to shop (in Euros, despite the omnipresent exchange bureaus directly across the border). Although long-term residents of the town appear to not hold much hope for the future of the two towns as they function together, new students and residents remain hopeful. They believe that will a little effort each year, a friendship between the two towns is fully achievable, if the citizens are willing to put in the effort. It does appear, from the lack of recent reports and first-hand encounters, that relations between the two are greatly improving over time. With just a little more time and effort together, Frankfurt an der Oder and Słubice may come to see a time in which they function as partners rather than rivals on each side of the Oder.

6.0 Appendix

6.1 Survey Questions:

1) Who are you? (Name, age)

2) Where are you from?

3) Do/did you live in Słubice or Frankfurt (Oder)?

4) How long have you lived/did you live there?

5) Which languages do you speak? How well do you speak them?

6) How do people treat you when they hear that you might not speak German or Polish perfectly?

7) Do you have an accent in German or Polish? Is it embarrassing if someone hears it?

8) What brought you to Frankfurt (Oder) or Słubice?

9) How do you think the residents of Słubice and Frankfurt (Oder) treat each other?

10) Have you heard of any events (good or bad) that have taken place in Frankfurt (Oder) or Słubice?

11) Do you think that the Poles and Germans can function well with each other or not?

12) What do you think must be done in order to improve the relationship between the two cities?

13) How often do you go to Frankfurt (Oder) or Słubice? Why? What do you think of the atmosphere there?

14) Are there words you've heard of that people use to describe German or Polish people?

15) Have you heard anything else (a sentence, a description, etc.) that describes the Germans or the Poles especially positively or negatively? Is there anything else that you can remember that shows how the Poles and the Germans treat each other or think of each other?

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