

The 'Linguistic Borderscape' as an Analytical Framework for Studying Linguistic Hybridity in Border Regions

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Abstract

This article proposes a new conceptual framework for analysing linguistic phenomena in border regions, drawing on examples from the Polish-German borderland. Although language constitutes one of the key dimensions of cross-border interaction, linguistic relations have remained relatively underexplored within border studies. To address this gap, the paper introduces the Model of Border Integration, which combines insights from sociology and border studies and enables the analysis of linguistic dynamics in relation to varying degrees of durability, permeability, and hybridity, characteristic of border regions. Within this framework, particular attention is devoted to the concept of the 'linguistic borderscape' (*linguistische Grenzschaft*), understood as a hybrid zone where linguistic landscape, language policy, and language contact intersect and mutually shape one another. The paper is based on the assumption that multilingualism and multiculturalism tend to manifest more intensely in permeable borderlands than in inland areas. Border regions are therefore conceptualised as "language laboratories" in which communicative practices, linguistic norms, and symbolic representations are constantly negotiated and transformed through sustained intercultural contact. Inspired by the concept of the borderscape, the study examines how hybrid linguistic realities emerge and develop in cross-border contexts. The analysis focuses on three interrelated domains: (1) the linguistic landscape of border towns and villages, including public signage and commercial communication; (2) the development of language policy and planning, such as bilingual education and multilingual public services; and (3) the communication practices of border inhabitants and service-sector providers. The findings demonstrate that hybridity in border regions is not an exceptional phenomenon but rather a constitutive feature of the communicative ecology of permeable borderlands. The article argues that the concept of the linguistic borderscape offers a valuable heuristic and methodological tool for the study of multilingualism in border areas and highlights the role of borderlands as spaces of linguistic negotiation, adaptation, and innovation.

Keywords: Linguistic Borderscape, Model of Border Integration, Languages and Borderlands

Introduction

This paper introduces and analyses a new conceptual framework for the study of linguistic phenomena in border regions, drawing on examples from the Polish-German borderland. The issues of language and language contact have not received much attention in border studies, even though it is undeniable that language is one of the key elements enabling mutual understanding between the two sides. Language relations and questions of bilingualism appear to be crucial for defining power relations between neighbours and often influence local policies. To close this research gap, the author introduces the ‘Model of Border Integration,’ which combines sociological theories with border studies and can be applied to the study of linguistic relations in border contexts. It was developed to account for the varying degrees of permeability, hybridity, and durability that characterise border-related linguistic dynamics. Within this model, special emphasis is placed on a distinct zone of integration termed the ‘linguistic borderscape’ (linguistische Grenzschaft), an analytical category referring to hybrid phenomena in the areas of language contact, linguistic landscape, and language policy (Jańczak, 2024).

The premise underlying this investigation is that processes of multiculturalism and multilingualism manifest with greater intensity in permeable border regions than in inland areas. The author writes these words while remaining fully aware of the changing global dynamics (migration crises, pandemics, military conflicts, and shifting power relations), which significantly trigger processes of re-bordering (Popescu, 2012) and the securitisation of borders (Baker-Beall, 2019). These processes are also observable within the EU, calling into question the future of the integration project and the four freedoms of the EU. Despite these obstacles, the European project continues to function, and communities living on both sides of permeable borders are, to a greater or lesser extent, “destined” to function together (often as one organism). Borderlands, especially those marked by permeable or even fluid boundaries, become fertile grounds for hybridisation and contact-induced change. In this sense, they function as ‘language laboratories’, spaces where communicative behaviour, linguistic norms, and symbolic landscapes are constantly negotiated, reshaped, and challenged. This idea draws on the conceptualisation of border regions as cultural laboratories, as discussed by García Canclini (1999) and Gasparini (1999/2000), and it emphasises the transformative potential of sustained interlingual and intercultural contact. Building on this foundational perspective, the paper proposes the concept of the ‘linguistic borderscape’, drawing inspiration from Perera’s (2007) notion of the ‘borderscape’ as a dynamic, spatially and temporally complex formation. In the linguistic adaptation of this concept, borderscapes are understood as zones where linguistic and cultural boundaries do not merely intersect but also merge, producing hybrid constellations of practice and representation.

In particular, the study investigates the following research questions:

1. How is the linguistic borderscape manifested in the linguistic landscape of border towns and villages? The analysis explores how public signage, street names, commercial advertisements, and informational displays reflect the syncretism characteristic of the border region.
2. In what ways do borderlands influence the development of unique solutions in language policy and planning? This paper discusses flexible curricula, bilingual service provision, and the implementation of language offerings in schools, all of which reflect the hybridity of the social environment.
3. What are the manifestations of hybridisation in the language behaviour of the border population? Drawing on previous research by the author, the study identifies communication strategies employed by border residents and/or service-sector workers that transcend clear language boundaries, including practices such as code-switching and language mixing.

The empirical examples presented throughout this article are intended as illustrative applications of the proposed ‘linguistic borderscape’ model rather than as independent case studies. They are drawn from fieldwork conducted on the Polish–German border during the research underpinning the author’s monograph (2024) and serve to demonstrate the analytical potential of the model across different dimensions of border-related language phenomena.

The ‘Linguistic Borderscape’ in the ‘Model of Border Integration’ – An Integrative Perspective¹

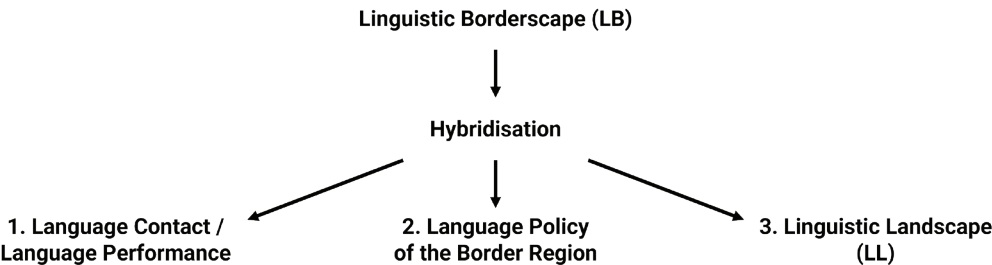
As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter will describe and analyse a new concept, namely the ‘Model of Border Integration’. It conceptualises borders not simply as lines of division but as zones of varying degrees of permeability and hybridity. Accordingly, it differentiates between three types of border zones: (a) zone of separation, marked by linguistic and cultural insulation; (b) zone of interaction, where coordinated cross-border cooperation takes place; and (c) zone of linguistic borderscape, where overlapping and diffuse interactions generate new language practices and meanings. This zone offers insights into both the challenges and creative potential of language use in transnational contexts.

Particular attention is given to the zone of the linguistic borderscape, which illustrates processes of hybridisation. The concept is based on the assumption that a permeable border contributes to the emergence of cultural and linguistic hybridity. The linguistic

1 This chapter is, with the publisher’s permission, a translated and slightly revised and updated version of a chapter from the author’s book, originally published in German; Jańczak, B. A. (2024). *Linguistische Grenzschaft’ als eine analytische Kategorie. Sprachkontakt des deutsch-polnischen Grenzgebietes*. Göttingen: Brill | V&R unipress, pp. 127–145. To date, no English-language article on this topic has been published.

borderscape encompasses a range of hybrid phenomena observable in three key domains: (1) language contact, which includes mixed-language communication routines and code-switching practices; (2) linguistic landscape, encompassing hybrid signage and spatial semiotics that reflect cross-border entanglements; and (3) language policy and planning, referring to unique, often piecemeal, institutional solutions in education. These phenomena are not treated as isolated or incidental but are analysed as mutually reinforcing components of a broader syncretic system shaped by the social, political, and linguistic permeability of the border itself.

Figure 1: Fields of Reference of the Linguistic Borderscape²



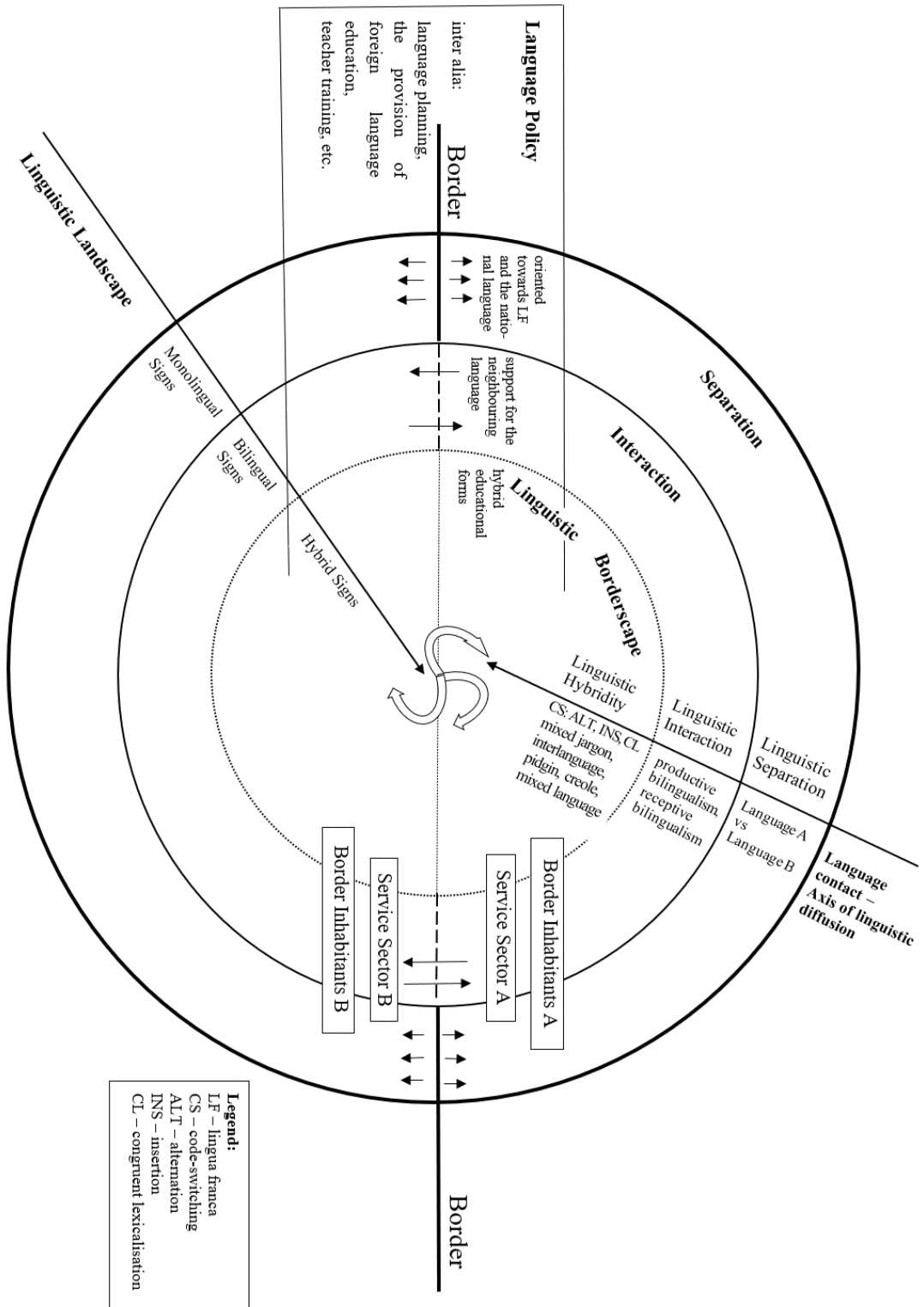
It should be emphasised that hybridisation occurs across all three dimensions (language contact, language policy and linguistic landscape) and can contribute to the emergence of a linguistic borderscape. The above-mentioned reference domains are interconnected to a certain extent.

Different zones of border integration are represented in Figure 2 by three circles. At the centre of these circles runs the border, which is characterised as durable in the first (outer) circle, permeable in the second (middle) circle, and hybrid in the third (inner) circle. Hybridisation thus constitutes the innermost stage within the linguistic “ecosystem” of border regions.

Living in the border area does not necessarily translate into cross-border contacts. This fact is visualised by the first, outer circle. It indicates the separation of language policy (e.g., with regard to the language education provision), the linguistic landscape (e.g., monolingual signs), and the language behaviour of border residents living in the border region (e.g., communication strategies based on an insistence on their own mother tongue). Even if it may seem unintelligible to the reader, a large number of border residents live exclusively within their own national, linguistic, and cultural community and refrain from contact with the other side. This form of demarcation suggests the existence of a zone in which the influence of the border on the processes taking place within it is reduced to a minimum. The existence of minimal contact with the other side cannot be entirely eliminated. Even if border residents A never visit the other side of the border, they may be sporadically exposed to contact, for example through chance encounters with border residents B. In the circle of separation, border residents speak their own national language. They have no

2 Unless otherwise indicated, all tables and figures are the author’s own work.

Figure 2: Model of Border Integration



or only minimal contact with their neighbours and thus with the neighbouring language. Language policy is nationally oriented and focuses on the needs of the local border population (without regard to the border region as a single unit). The foreign language education provision concentrates on the promotion of the most popular foreign languages, lingua franca (marked as LF in the figure). In most cases, this will mean the promotion of English, and in some further cases Spanish, French, or Chinese (depending on the national and, in some cases, such as the European Union, supranational language policy of the respective state or community). The neighbouring language, if offered at all, is taught in the form of typical foreign language instruction. Advertising and informational signs are presented monolingually in the national language.

The middle circle, in which the border becomes permeable, constitutes the zone of interaction. Here, cultural and linguistic exchange between neighbouring countries takes place. In the dimension of language policy, support for the neighbouring language is advocated. This occurs, among other things, through the promotion of bilingual education in the neighbouring language, the establishment of bilingual educational institutions or branches, and bilingual teacher training. In the linguistic landscape, this permeability is manifested, for example, through bilingual signs or advertising displays. Border residents or employees in the service sector try maintaining contacts with their neighbours. They strive to learn the neighbouring language (at least receptively). Some, thanks to their advanced knowledge of the neighbouring language, even choose the partner language as their interlingual communication strategy. Those who are confronted with foreign neighbours and do not speak the neighbouring language (due to different circumstances) employ supportive communication strategies (mime, appeal for assistance).

The inner circle marks the existence of a linguistic borderscape, which manifests itself as hybridity. It is likely the smallest zone, characterised by a syncretic nature. It is important to emphasise here that hybridity is an umbrella term for many phenomena that originate from, or result in, a shared participation. With regard to language policy, hybrid educational forms are introduced that are only possible due to the border situation and its permeability. Proximity to the border can, among other things, enable Content and Language Integrated Learning instruction (CLIL, cf. Marsh, 1994) in mixed, cross-border established classes or regular teacher exchanges on a rotational basis. In terms of the linguistic landscape, hybridity becomes visible on information signs and advertising boards that, among other things, include mixed-language neologisms and linguistic blends. It should be noted that these are mostly unofficial signs, which are often even attributable to happenings or artistic initiatives. Regarding language contact, the mixing and hybridisation of linguistic systems can be observed. This is characterised by the routine use of code-switching (alternation [ALT], insertion [INS], congruent lexicalisation [CL]) as well as by the use of mixed jargon, interlanguage, or even the existence of pidgin, creole, or mixed languages in certain groups of border residents. The outcome of language contact, resulting in a given form of communication, depends on many factors defining a particular border region, such as social asymmetries, the shared history of speakers A and B (duration of coexistence, frequency of contacts), the linguistic prestige of languages A and B, etc.

It must be emphasised that the three circles operate side by side in border regions. However, the question arises as to their relative size. Unlike suggested in the schematic representation, the size of the zones marked by the circles and their impact on border reality can and does vary, and depends, among other things, on border permeability and border asymmetries. In border regions where the border has a durable character, the circle of separation will dominate; the circle of interaction will, if present at all, be minimal, and the circle of hybridity will most likely not occur. The more diffused the border, the greater the share of interaction and hybridity in cross-border contacts.

In the following, hybridisation is once again summarised with reference to the three domains (language policy, linguistic landscape, and language contact). To help the reader better navigate the concept, all three dimensions are briefly described within their respective zones of integration. We begin with language policy, followed by the linguistic landscape. Finally, the zones of border integration are discussed with particular emphasis on linguistic borderlands in relation to language contact.

Language Policy

Marten (2016, p. 15) notes that, in the context of language policy, many terms and approaches – such as ‘language policy,’ ‘language planning,’ or ‘language management’ – are used in parallel. The author also points to the “specificity” of the German scholarly tradition, which, in contrast to English terminology, for example, distinguishes between ‘Sprachpolitik’ and ‘Sprachenpolitik.’ Wright (2012, p. 61) defines language policy as a top-down process of language planning, rooted – according to the author – in the French Revolution. By contrast, McGroarty (1997, p. 1) understands the term more broadly, extending it beyond public decision-making to include social practice as well: “Language policy can be defined as the combination of official decisions and prevailing public practices related to language education and use (ibid.).”

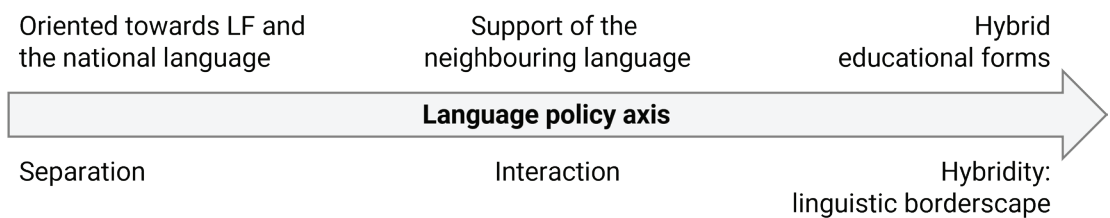
Nekvapil and Sherman (2015, p. 6) define ‘language management’ as the management of language or communication by institutions or individuals. Language management at the macro level, that is, from a top-down perspective, includes, among other things, language policy and language planning. At the micro level, language management concerns a bottom-up perspective, which is considered to be subjective (ibid.): “Language management is understood broadly, as any sort of activity aimed at language or communication, in other words, at language as a system as well as at language use [...]. These activities can be undertaken by an institution (e.g. the ministry of education, which makes decisions regarding mandatory foreign languages in a given country), but also individuals in particular interactions [...].”

Arendt (2010, p. 242) distinguishes between ‘language policy,’ ‘language planning,’ and ‘language regulation,’ whereby language regulation is manifested within language planning – and language planning, in turn, within language policy. Lisek (2014, p. 75f.), drawing on Czerwiński (2005, p. 37), proposes a model of language policy that takes into account the complexity of the relationships between its individual components. He distinguishes

between practical language policy (language planning) and language policy in the legal sense (*de iure*). These two elements interact with each other and together constitute language policy. In this context, Lisek (2014, p. 75f.) identifies three groups of actors – the state, educational institutions, and linguists – who influence one another reciprocally. Their interaction takes place across three levels: the legislative level, the educational level, and the level of corpus planning, all of which are linked to both practical and legal (*de iure*) language policy.

In this article, the term ‘language policy’ is understood as an umbrella term for all political activities *sensu largo* (that is, those relating to individual language management, language planning, and/or *de iure* language policy) in a cross-border context, regardless of whether the focus of such activities is on a single language or on the interaction of multiple languages (at least two neighbouring languages).

Figure 3: Language Policy in Relation to Border Integration Zones



Language policy that focuses exclusively on internal interests tends to contribute to the consolidation of existing borders. The separation zone includes all language policy decisions and language management measures that imply a neglect for the border’s potential for language contact. This includes, among other things, the orientation towards and promotion of the *lingua franca* (LF) and the national language(s). The promotion of a *lingua franca* (most often English) sometimes serves to reduce linguistic asymmetry (where one country is typically proficient in the partner language, while the neighbouring country is not). This language policy is then understood as an investment in redefining neighbourly relations, or at least this is how it is justified by public educational institutions (cf. Jańczak, 2017, p. 159–162). At the same time, the replacement of the neighbouring language with a globally dominant *lingua franca* may simultaneously weaken direct linguistic interdependence between neighbouring communities, thereby contributing to a gradual distancing in cross-border cooperation.

In the permeable zone of interaction, language planning provides for the promotion of neighbouring languages. This can take various forms. These include ensuring the provision of the neighbouring language in schools and kindergartens in the form of elective or compulsory language instruction. Another form is the establishment of bilingual educational institutions such as daycare centres and schools.

The zone of linguistic borderscape, the innermost level, comprises forms of cross-border cooperation that are, on the one hand, made possible only by the border location and, at the same time, partially dissolve the border as a barrier. One feasible and practised

form of a hybrid educational offer is CLIL instruction for combined binational classes, which takes place on a rotating basis alternately on either side of the border. Students from two classes – one from one side of the border (State A) and the other from the opposite side (State B) – are divided into mixed groups. Half of Class A (A1) is combined with half of Class B (B1), while the remaining students (A2 and B2) form the second group. Once a week or once a month (at regular intervals), the combined class AB1 participates in instruction on one side of the border, while AB2 attends classes on the other side. The next session then takes place in reverse, according to a rotational principle. An alternative variant is the exchange of teachers who provide instruction in their own mother tongue at the target school (on the other side of the border). In both cases, the replicability of CLIL instruction is to be ensured. Permeable and, in particular, hybrid forms of education naturally require careful language planning and the implementation of a neighbour-oriented *de iure* language policy.

Linguistic Landscape

Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 25) understand the concept of the ‘linguistic landscape’ as the visual reality of a given environment as it is represented in and through written language: “The language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration.” (ibid.)

Similarly, Shohamy and Gorter (2009: 1) define the linguistic landscape as “language in the environment,” while also broadening the concept to include images: “[...] words and images displayed and exposed in public spaces...” (ibid.)

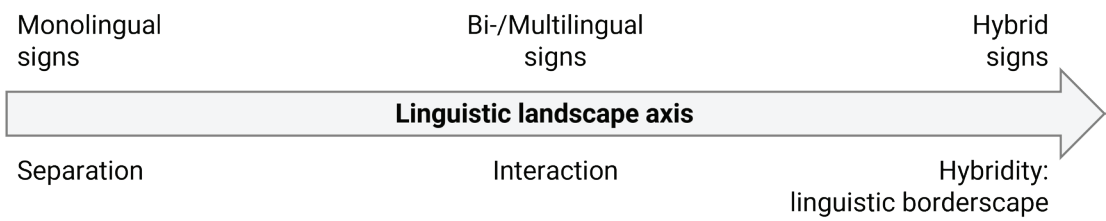
The main aim of linguistic landscape (LL) research is to describe and identify “systematic patterns of the presence and absence of languages in public spaces”, which reveal the underlying “motives, pressures, [and] ideologies” associated with their use (Linguistic Landscape, 2015, p. 1).

The linguistic landscape reflects linguistic reality, functioning both as a top-down process (language choice on all official public signage) and as a bottom-up process (language choice on signs produced by private individuals, associations, companies, etc.).

Ben-Rafael, Shohamy et al. (2006, p. 8) point to an emblematic and identity-constructing function of the linguistic landscape in communities, societies, and regions. The linguistic landscape shows two different aspects: firstly, it reveals the relationships between different social groups; secondly, it indicates the relationships between public authorities and civil society (cf. ibid., p. 9). The asymmetric and symmetric relations between the languages that constitute the linguistic landscape are, among others, the subject of studies by Puppel (2007) and Grzeškowiak (2010). The interlingual or translingual relation (cf. Puppel 2007, p. 85ff.) reflects the linguistic and political reality of the contact languages. In this context, the state border is not a necessary point of reference. As in the case of language contact and language policy, the linguistic landscape can likewise be analysed in terms of different

degrees of border integration. If Ben-Rafael, Shohamy et al.’s claim about its identity-constructing role holds (cf. *ibid.*, p. 8), the occurrence of hybrid signs suggests the presence of a hybrid identity in the border region, including at least some of its inhabitants.

Figure 4: Linguistic Landscape in Relation to Border Integration Zones



For all three cases discussed, examples from the German-Polish border region are presented. However, similar examples can be found at many other borders.

Figure 5: Signpost in Słubice, Słubice–Frankfurt (Oder) Border Crossing, Author: Jarosław Jańczak



In the zone of separation, only monolingual signs are found. They are addressed to a specific addressee group, usually the local population. The inhabitants of the other side of the border are not taken into account. An example of this is shown in Figure No. 5.

In the zone of interaction, signs are displayed that are addressed to recipients on both sides of the border.

Figure 6: Club of Young Detectives (*Klub Junger Detektive / Klub Młodych Detektywów*), Bad Muskau–Łęknica Border Crossing, Author: Barbara A. Jańczak.



Figure 7: Small Market, Zgorzelec, Author: Barbara A. Jańczak.



The signs are labelled bilingually or in multiple languages, although the languages are clearly separated. The font size may be symmetrical or asymmetrical and depends on several factors, including the assumed origin of the addressees, language policy, language attitudes, language prestige, etc.

The zone of the linguistic borderscape includes signs that mix both languages within a single message (this involves both code-switching within an utterance [a sentence or sentence equivalent] as well as mixed words and bilingual neologisms). Examples of this are shown in Figures 8 and 9.

Figure 8: The City Wall Marks the Boundary of Ślubfurt, Author: Monika Stefanek (source: URL 1).



This image illustrates that the different zones of the linguistic landscape can permeate one another. At first glance, it is evident that the sign in Frankfurt presents information in three languages – English, Polish, and German – which points to the zone of interaction. At the same time, however, the neologism “Ślubfurt” (in German and in Polish, inflected according to the respective grammatical rules) is a portmanteau created through the fusion of the proper names ‘Ślubice’ and ‘Frankfurt’. They are toponyms – *nomina propria* – which are well suited to hybridisation. The name suggests the existence of the twin city as a shared organism.

An analogous example is a large advertising poster for the study programme of the Collegium Polonicum, featuring the slogan: “radość studiowania” (the joy of studying). The Collegium Polonicum is a joint institution of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder), located on the Polish side of the German-Polish border in the twin city of Ślubice-Frankfurt (Oder).

Figure 9: Photo Archive of the Public Relations Office at the Collegium Polonicum, Author: Ewa Bielewicz³



This neologism “stüdiowania” has a primarily symbolic, identity-constructing meaning that does not fully correspond to linguistic reality. The German deverbal noun “Studieren” does not contain an umlaut. However, the sign is easily identifiable for Poles as German, thus contributing to the emergence of a German–Polish hybrid form. At the same time, the umlaut can also be interpreted as a smiley, especially since the word refers to “radość,” i.e. joy.

Language Contact and Language Performance

Language contact refers to the direct interaction between two or more languages on either an individual or a collective level and results in processes of linguistic convergence and divergence (Martinet, 1968, p. XI). Many approaches in language contact research focus primarily on the contact situation itself, understood as a dynamic process in which the linguistic and cultural experiences of different groups become visible (Kawazoe Takano, 2015, p. 119). Research on language contact encompasses a variety of perspectives, ranging from studies of specific contact situations and comparative analyses of larger linguistic areas to investigations of the potentially negative effects of language contact (Hasselblatt, de Jonge & Norde, 2010, p. 1). At the same time, scholars point out that no

³ The faces of the female students were intentionally blurred, Barbara A. Jańczak.

universally applicable model of language contact has yet been developed, and that the study of new or typologically different language pairs remains highly relevant (Jahr, 1992, p. 1; Matras 2009, p. 2). Factors such as space, time, and legal frameworks are also crucial for the analysis of language contact processes, as they significantly influence the intensity and forms of linguistic interaction (Tabouret-Keller 1992, p. 182ff.). Within contemporary language contact research, Gugenberger (2011, p. 12–16) particularly emphasises the shift from mono- to transcultural perspectives, in which multilingualism, hybridity, and mixed-language practices increasingly come to the fore. In summary, it can be argued that the transitive character of borders contributes to the dynamics and intensification of cross-border language contact. Ludwig (2010, p. 104) highlights openness to contact as a source of emergent hybrid contact varieties.

The characteristics of linguistic border integration with regard to language contact phenomena can be represented along the language contact axis.

Figure 10: Language Contact in Relation to Border Integration Zones



Assigning language contact phenomena to the respective zone of border integration is not a simple task. First, it must be noted that the speaker’s behaviour in a communicative situation, and thus the use of possible strategies, may at least partly be a result of the available language competence. Thus, the linguistic action of a given speaker often results from the language constellation, the communicative possibilities arising from linguistic competence, and the communicative strategies employed. A response in the speaker’s respective mother tongue is not always a sign of separation – especially not when the speaker continues to demonstrate cooperative behaviour in their interaction.

The durable border zone, which is associated with the separation of linguistic systems and the restriction of language contact, presupposes the use of one’s own mother tongue in communication with speakers from the other side of the border without any effort to ensure communicative success. In this context, the linguistic behaviour of border residents proves to be non-solidary. Either a speaker deliberately chooses not to use a shared language of communication (this can occur, among other things, when the speaker holds a negative attitude towards the neighbouring language and the neighbouring country, see Jańczak, 2018, p. 244f.), or they implement communication strategies that are

uncooperative (avoidance strategy). As mentioned earlier, the use of one's own mother tongue does not necessarily imply separation. If other communication strategies are employed, linguistic behaviour is classified as interactive and cooperative.

In the zone of linguistic interaction, coordination of language contact takes place. The permeability of borders often, though not always, manifests itself in knowledge of the neighbouring language and its use as a communicative instrument. One or both interlocutors may be communicatively competent in the neighbouring language. This results from asymmetrical or symmetrical language contact. In the case of competent bilingualism, the choice of the partner's language is one of the possible communication strategies. In this case, one interlocutor may speak in the neighbouring language while the other uses their own language – or both may speak in the neighbouring language. However, it is also possible that, despite a high level of competence in the partner language, the interlocutors choose a third language. In the case of limited linguistic competence on the part of both partners, communication may be based, among other things, on receptive bilingualism (if both sides understand the other language). If this is not the case, the language must be simplified and supported by additional means (mime, gesture). Border residents who do not master the neighbouring language often choose another language (a third language) as a means of communication. Those who have no knowledge of foreign languages at all at least try to maintain the conversation in their own language and to overcome the “problem” of communicative breakdown. Communication strategies that do not require language proficiency often serve as support (mime and gesture, requests for assistance – usually from third parties, or paraphrasing).

When linguistic boundaries become diffuse and syncretic, communication resulting from language contact undergoes hybridisation. The linguistic borderscape is characterised by hybridity and by the use of mixed language routines, manifested in code-switching (alternation – ALT, insertion – INS, congruent lexicalisation – CL), a mixed jargon or interlanguage, or even the existence of a pidgin, creole, or mixed language. As the model of border integration is intended to have general applicability and is not limited solely to the German-Polish case, various contact-induced mixed languages, language varieties, and linguistic registers are assigned to the zone of the linguistic borderscape.

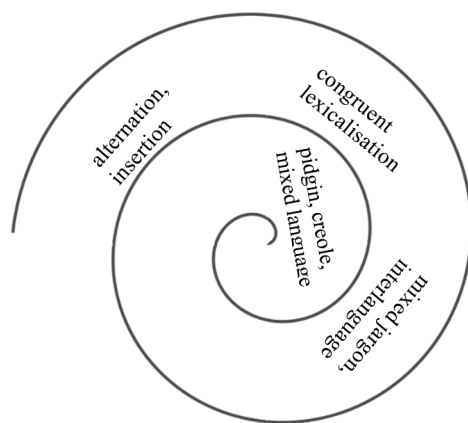
Gugenberger (2011, p. 25) identifies five possible hybridisation strategies employed by bi- and multilingual speakers within an interlingual/translingual space:

1. One utterance – one language: An utterance is produced in one language, while another utterance is produced in a different language.
2. Hybrid utterance: Within a single utterance, sequences in one language are combined with sequences in another language.
3. Combination of lexical and grammatical morphemes: Morphemes from two or more languages are combined, resulting in the emergence of hybrid words and phrases. This strategy also takes into account the combination of morphosyntactic and semantic patterns.

4. Linking phonetic-phonological and/or prosodic features of two or more languages.
5. Alignment of linguistic and cultural patterns: Speakers synchronise and intertwine the “pragmatic-communicative and cultural patterns of the languages and cultures involved” (ibid., translated by B. A. J.). This strategy consists in a broader consideration of the consequences of language contact, one that also takes into account an extralinguistic perspective.

The strategies do not necessarily exclude one another, and their use varies between speakers. Following Gugenberger’s understanding of hybridisation as an umbrella concept, I employ the term ‘linguistic borderscape’ in a broad sense, focusing on the degree of advancement of language-switching phenomena. Code-switching becomes a communicative strategy, and the extent of mixing indicates the progression of hybridisation within the spiral of hybridisation. With regard to language contact, linguistic borderscape thus functions as an overarching concept encompassing all mixed-language modes of communication resulting from the simultaneous use of both languages. It should, however, be noted that some communicative routines may be more hybrid than others, a point illustrated by the hybridisation spiral presented below.

Figure 11: Hybridisation Spiral: Degree of Linguistic Hybridisation



The first stage consists of alternation and insertion, followed by congruent lexicalisation, mixed jargon or interlanguage, and finally pidgin/creole or mixed language. Whereas alternations, insertions and congruent lexicalisation are spontaneous language-switching phenomena, in the case of mixed jargon, interlanguage, pidgin, creole and mixed language there is at least partial routinisation of mixed language use, and in the case of the latter three, the establishment and conventionalisation of grammatical rules.

The relationship between the respective communicative strategies and membership in the corresponding zone is shown in Table no. 1. The respective communicative strategies have been assigned to the corresponding zones of linguistic border integration. It should

be noted that language choice is singled out as an additional category within communicative strategies. It is also important to add that many of the strategies can be used in parallel within a conversation, which is intended to strengthen their function.

Table 1: Communicative Strategies in Relation to the Zones of Linguistic Border Integration

		Communication Strategies				
		Language choice: mother tongue (MT), partner language (PL), additional language (AL)	Avoidance (Av)	Mime	Appeal for assistance (As)	Code-switching (CS)
Zones of Linguistic Border Integration	Separation	Deliberate use of one's mother tongue	Avoidance of conversation in the MT/PL/AL	-	-	-
	Interaction	PL/AL	-	MT/PL/AL accompanied by mime	Requests for assistance mostly in the MT or AL	-
	Hybridity: Linguistic Borderscape	-	-	-	-	-CS MT/ PL or PL/MT -CS MT/AL or PS/ AL -CS: MT/PL/AL

The classification of language choice depends on the use of a given interlingual communication strategy, which is often shaped by whether it is intentional or, for example, constrained by a lack of language proficiency. The deliberate choice of one’s mother tongue (MT) when addressing a foreign speaker who does not speak one’s language is classified as uncooperative behaviour and belongs to the zone of separation. In contrast, conversation in one’s mother tongue (MT) in which the speaker makes an effort to convey information (often accompanied by other strategies), as well as interaction in the partner language or an additional language, are understood as cooperative behaviour and assigned to the zone of interaction. In addition, language choice may be accompanied by strategies such as mime (non-verbal communication: facial expressions, gestures), appeal for assistance, paraphrasing, or a combination of several of these. The use of more than one language situates communication in the zone of linguistic borderscape. The concepts of hybridity (as an end state) and hybridisation (as a process) are employed to account for a wide range of phenomena emerging from shared participation in both languages. For the purposes of broadly assigning a phenomenon to the zone of linguistic borderscape, the specification of the degree of hybridity is deliberately set aside. When switching between languages occurs, a range of language constellations may be identified. The speaker may alternate between the mother tongue and the partner language (code-switching MT–PL), between the mother tongue or partner language and an additional language (MT–AL or

PL–AL), or across all three languages (MT–PL–AL). The degree of linguistic mixing may vary significantly, ranging from the insertion of isolated lexical items from one language into another (code-mixing: MT→PL, PL→MT, MT or PL→AL, AL→MT or PL) to the formation of a mixed language (MT/PL, MT/AL, PL/AL or MT/PL/AL).

It should be noted that the table presented above outlines possible communication strategies of one speaker. In order to further specify the interlingual communicative situation, it is necessary to identify the strategies employed by both interlocutors.

To sum up, a correct interpretation of the model and a proper understanding of the phenomena occurring in border regions as language contact areas require rejecting the assignment of speakers to specific zones based solely on linguistic competence. Of course, it must be acknowledged that communication strategies depend on knowledge of the neighbouring language; however, it is primarily the speaker's attitude that determines in which zone they are situated. A person who does not know the language, if they ask passers-by for help (appeal for assistance), will be classified as belonging to the zone of interaction. This assumption of assigning individual zones to interlingual strategies rather than solely to the respondent's linguistic competence reveals the analytical perspective of this model. In the linguistic borderscape zone, we may therefore find speakers with a high level of language proficiency as well as those who are linguistically non-competent, and it should be noted that in this study they constitute a clear majority of speakers in this zone.

Conclusion

The model of border integration, with particular emphasis on the zone of linguistic borderscape, facilitates the investigation of linguistic phenomena in border regions across the three interrelated domains of language policy, linguistic landscape, and language contact. A proper interpretation of the proposed model begins with understanding hybridisation as an umbrella concept encompassing a broad spectrum of phenomena that arise from, or lead to, the crossing of linguistic boundaries. Such boundaries may be stable, permeable, or hybrid in nature.

The discussion presented in this article also provides clear answers to the research questions formulated in the introduction. First, the study demonstrates that border regions foster innovative forms of language policy and planning that extend beyond conventional national frameworks, including bilingual educational models, cross-border CLIL initiatives, and institutional arrangements specifically enabled by border permeability. Second, the analysis has shown that the linguistic borderscape manifests itself in the linguistic landscape through hybrid signs, bilingual neologisms, and multilingual forms of public communication that symbolically and functionally transcend national language boundaries. Third, the findings indicate that language contact in border regions gives rise to a continuum of communicative practices, such as code-switching, mixed jargons, and other contact-induced varieties. Taken together, these three domains demonstrate that

the linguistic borderscape is not a collection of isolated phenomena but an integrated analytical construct reflecting the dynamic interaction between language, space, and social practice in border regions.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that hybrid language practices and policies emerge in response to the sociolinguistic conditions created by permeable borders. Hybridity across the three domains, linguistic landscape, policy, and language contact, is enabled by the continuous, sustained, and diffuse interaction between the two linguistic and cultural systems present in the region. If such contact is not merely superficial or episodic but constitutes an embedded and enduring condition of life in the borderland, hybridity ceases to be an anomaly to be explained away and instead becomes a constitutive feature of the region's communicative ecology.

In sum, this paper contributes to the theoretical and methodological discussion on multilingualism in border regions by proposing the 'linguistic borderscape' as a useful heuristic and empirical category. One of the principal contributions of the proposed model is its conceptual integration of three research fields – language policy, linguistic landscape and language contact – within a single analytical framework for investigating border-induced linguistic hybridity. Moreover, the model highlights the need to embrace the complexity and creativity inherent in hybrid linguistic realities. Although illustrated with examples from the Polish-German borderland, the proposed framework is intended to be transferable to other border regions and language constellations, thereby offering a comparative analytical perspective on linguistic hybridity beyond the present case. The findings are not only relevant to scholars of sociolinguistics and language policy but also to practitioners engaged in cross-border cooperation, education, and cultural mediation. Ultimately, the proposed model underscores the potential of borderlands as spaces where new forms of linguistic interaction emerge – spaces where language is not only a means of communication but also a site of negotiation, adaptation, and innovation.

Author Contribution Statement

The author declares that this manuscript constitutes an original scholarly work authored exclusively by the author. All conceptualisation, theoretical development, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions presented in the article are solely attributable to the author. Generative AI tools were used exclusively for language editing, proofreading, and stylistic refinement and did not contribute to the intellectual content, argumentation, data analysis, or scientific findings of the manuscript. The author assumes full responsibility for the integrity and originality of the work.

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