# DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUMMARY

| Title | Linguistics and Language Planning from the Viewpoint of the Uncountability of Languages: A Case of Minority Languages in Poland |
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This doctoral dissertation has the following objectives:

1. In 2005, the Republic of Poland established a legal document for minorities and their languages called the Minority Act. The author reveals the types of influence the Minority Act has had on the linguistic discussion in Poland.

2. The author is also engaged in critical analysis of the Minority Act, especially its purpose of attempting to control language in Poland.

This dissertation constitutes four chapters in order to achieve the objectives specified above.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Linguistic Classification of Languages

Chapter 3: Political Classification of Languages

Chapter 4: Conclusion

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Contemporary linguistics studies a language as an autonomous system of signs, and describes the inner construction of the system. However, even linguists have no specific criteria, that define the distinction between "language" and "dialect." No such criteria can be found inside the system itself. In addition, the distinction and naming of language sometimes reflect the political situation and historical background outside of the language. Thus, languages are fundamentally uncountable. In many cases, linguists do not regard this uncountability as a "purely linguistic" problem. On the contrary, we generally treat languages as "countable entities." This fact indicates that there are some criteria to count languages and, consciously or not, we accept them. There is no doubt that linguistics, as an academic discipline, classifies (counts) languages into at least two groups – "language" by itself, and "dialect" as a subordinate system of some superordinate "language." If it were not for this process of categorizing, linguists could not be engaged in linguistic description. Thus, the categorization of languages shapes units of linguistic study. This

dissertation calls the classification of languages by linguists "linguistic classification." On the other hand, language planning also carries out classification of languages, in the form of status planning (e.g., confirmation of the status of a national language in legal documents). This type of categorization is called "political classification" in this dissertation, and is based on the interests of political subjects. A political classification decides the general orientation of language planning (e.g., monolingualism, multilingualism, and so on).

In summary, because linguistics and language planning classify languages in some way, each of them is dealing with the "uncountability" of languages. Although these two types of classification differ in purpose and background, there are some points that they have in common: authority and collectivity. On the premise of this similarity, this dissertation investigates: (1) the influence of political classification on linguistic classification; (2) the aim of political classification, which is generally not written in a legal document itself.

In order to achieve these goals, the author analyzes minority languages in Poland, especially the Kashubian, Silesian, and Lemko languages as research sample. Generally, Poland is said to be a monolingual state. This fact, however, does not mean that there is no social discussion on minority issues in Poland. On the contrary, the intention of status planning to control language appears strongly because of the linguistic "sameness."

**Chapter 2: Linguistic Classification of Languages**

In Chapter 2, the author reveals how Kashubian, Silesian, and Lemko have been classified in the history of linguistic study. The historical background and political situation are reflected in the linguistic classification of these languages.

The problem of linguistic classification of Kashubian has existed since the second half of the 19th century. Thus, we observe the long-term confrontation between the "Kashubian language" and the "Kashubian dialect (of Polish)."

In the case of Silesian, the idea of "Silesian language (on its own)," appeared in the beginning of the 1990s, when freedom of speech was established in Poland after the collapse of the Communist regime. Furthermore, the name, "Silesian language," [Pol. *język śląski*] was first used in the public sphere with regard to the matter of Silesian ethnicity; in fact, the name, "Silesian language," is not a category of linguistic classification and cannot be neutral because of its political origin. Some scholars are accepting the new term "ethnolect" to designate Silesian. It seems that this term is useful to avoid the problem of classification; instead, the term "ethnolect" is sometimes adopted to declare pro-Silesian sentiment.

When it comes to the classification of Lemko, we should consider two categories: a "dialect of Ukrainian," and a "regional variant of Rusyn language." The former is traditional from the viewpoint of Ukrainian dialectology. The latter is based on the relationship between Lemko and Rusyns subgroups in other central European countries (e.g., Serbia, Slovakia). Lemko is considered to be one of the regional variants of the Rusyn language in Poland. However, the name, "Rusyn language," is of only generic character and not based on a specific corpus, because there is no such language as "standard Rusyn." The idea of "Lemko language (on its own)" has existed since the 19th century, but has only recently (after the 1990s) been accepted as a category of linguistic classification, mainly in Poland.

**Chapter 3: Political Classification of Languages**

In Chapter 3, the author analyzes the aim and intentions of the Minority Act of Poland (2005). Each of the three languages (Kashubian, Silesian, and Lemko) possesses different political status. This difference can be understood as a reflection of the views and interests of the majority (Poland) regarding minorities.

Kashubian is classified as a "regional language" in the Minority Act. It is important that the concept of "regional language" is defined differently from "minority language" in the Act. The Minority Act of Poland is based on the policy of the Council of Europe (CoE). Comparing the Minority Act with the policy of the CoE, the author concludes that the category of "regional language" was established especially for Kashubian.

Silesian is not given any legal status in the planning of Poland. However, the newest census indicates that the 2.18% of the population declare Silesian identity – a number larger than any other "officially recognized" minorities. Additionally, some political parties in Silesia, such as Silesian Autonomy Movement, profess a radical argument for separatism. Summarizing these facts, Silesian is ignored in the Minority Act, since Silesian (specifically political arguments surrounding Silesian) is regarded as some kind of "threat" by the Polish majority.

Historically, Lemkos have been regarded as the subgroup of Ukrainians by the Polish majority. Despite this historical background, Lemkos, as an ethnic group, are recognized in the Act; thus, the Lemko language is *de facto* regarded as a "minority language." Comparing Lemko with Kashubian and Silesian, the Minority Act seems to have no influence on Lemko language, only ratifying the status quo. This ratification of the Minority Act, however, also can be observed as a political control over a minority. The Minority Act was established to appeal to the CoE and European Union (EU) before Poland became a member of the EU. Thus, the status of the "Lemko

language" can symbolize the minority protection policy of Poland. Also, Lemkos in Poland are not considered a political "threat" like Silesians are. In the case of Lemko, the interests of the minority group (Lemkos) and status planning match each other.

**Chapter 4: Conclusion**

Study of languages can be influenced by political power, because languages themselves are subjects of political control. In this dissertation, we observe this kind of influence of politics on linguistics. Linguistic classification sometimes ratifies the decision of status planning. In some ways, "linguistic" classification is oriented to political decisions. Also, the intentions of status planning (political classification), which is not written in the document itself, are revealed by analyzing discussions on the linguistic classification.