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Code-switching on the page in the *Electronic Repository of Greater Poland Oaths 1386-1444* (ROThA)

Multilingual practices in medieval texts are inevitably mediated through the handwritten page. It is thus crucial to recognize and investigate the visual aspects of code-switching in order to fully appreciate a multilingual text as a communicative object. This paper draws on the *Electronic Repository of Greater Poland Oaths 1386-1444* (ROThA), currently under construction on the basis of the oldest extant collection of secular texts written in medieval Poland predominantly in Latin, however allowing glimpses into Old Polish.

In this paper we view the switches between Polish and Latin in c. 2,000 texts from three locations from the perspective of visual pragmatics (Carrol et al. 2013) and a larger framework of written code-switching (Kopaczyk 2017). We focus on the meaning-making strategies involved in the visual cues, such as space management, type size, ink colours, etc. Admittedly, compared to illuminated manuscripts, court records are relatively plain and do not employ the full spectrum of devices found in medieval texts (Machan 2011: 305). However, research is needed into conventionalised CS marking on the page across genres. Starting from the visual pragmatics of a typical oath, our analysis looks into the interplay between genre-related functional divisions of the texts and CS-marking devices, and uncovers some patterns and constraints. The findings show that CS marking was only partially conventionalised and subject to change over time.

References

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