Prohibiting Sorbian at the Workplace
- A case study on the cyclical process of language management[1]

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Abstract

Language Management Theory was proposed as a more integrative approach than the study of language policy that inclines towards discussions only of the macro-level. It seeks to integrate both micro and macro dimensions. Actual research in language management, however, tends to show a rather a weak approach to macro processes of trans-interactional duration. The aim of this paper is to re-examine the process model of LMT from a trans-interactional perspective in order to make it more suitable also to macro processes. After comparing the LMT process model with other process models on policy and management, a concrete case is examined. A remarkable case showing the unease of the majority with a minority language serves here as the case study. It is about the "prohibition" to use Sorbian at an institution in Eastern Germany with German and Sorbian employees. This study makes use of LMT to analyze the processes of the employers attempts to regulate the language at the workplace. Theoretical as well as empirical considerations suggest that the process model would profit from including a post-implementation stage, which provides the process with a cyclical strand.

1. The process model in LMT

Communication is a process. So it is natural that studies on communication focus on processes. One of the approaches in which the process occupies a central position is the Language Management Theory (LMT). According to one of its initiators, Neustupný (1994:9), in contrast to the modern research paradigm which posits its objective to be results in *categories*, the characteristic of postmodern social science is to emphasise *processes* rather than categories. So, a process model was set at the core of the LMT. The "classic" process model of language management looks as follows:

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[1] This is a slightly revised version of the paper presented at the sociolinguistic seminar at Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, May 2013. It is partly based on Kimura (2011).

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1   deviation from the norm
2   noting
3   evaluation
4   adjustment
5   implementation
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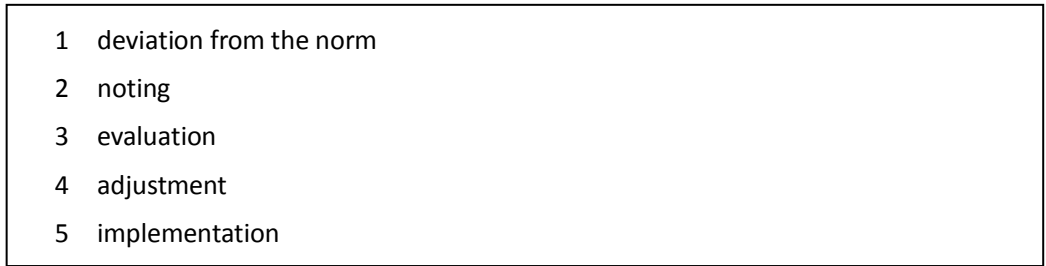
Figure 1   'Classic' process model of LMT

This process model begins with the point of deviation from the norm (or expectation) and finishes at the point at which adjustments to the deviation are implemented. Of course, deviation does not always bring about adjustment and implementation. In some instances, the management process halts partway. The basic significance of this model can be said to lie in presenting the various stages within the management process to which attention should be drawn. In analytical terms, it would be desirable to take a broad-ranging view of the entire process, but it is also possible to focus on one or several of these stages.

One of the basic characteristic of this process is that there is deemed no essential difference *with regard to this process* within language management between various levels - from that of the individual interaction to international policies. According to Neustupný, 'the process of organized management is a complicated version of the basic simple management process' (Neustupný 2002). The levels can roughly be listed as follows:

- The level of international organisations
- The level of central government
- The level of local government
- The level of educational organisations
- The level of the media
- The level of employers
- An ethnic or other level of social organisation
- The level of local communities
- The level of the family
- The level of individuals that interact within discourse

Figure 2   Levels of language management (based on Neustupný 1997: 29-30)

Each level of language management can be treated using the process model. This can be regarded as a basic ingredient of the integrative perspective of LMT linking micro and macro levels.[2]

2. A re-examination of the process model

This process model, however, has been re-examined in the last years. We could agree that the process model is after all a model, and must be treated flexibly so as to conform to the actual research objective. Nekvapil states generally:

'Up to now, the point of departure has been that the management process model is essentially universal. However, it can be assumed that management processes take various forms in various genres, styles, and communicative situations.' (Nekvapil 2009: 5)

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[2] This is not to say that micro and macro levels should be regarded the same way. Nekvapil (2012) points out the dialectic relationship between micro and macro.

Maybe the most remarkable example of flexibility is that it has been claimed the beginning of the management process need not be triggered by a deviation from a norm (see Mariott, Nemoto, in Nekvapil & Sherman 2009). Noting is coming to be regarded as the first phase of the process model. [3]

While this point concerns the beginning of the process, today I want to focus rather on the end of the process. And the reason why we should be concerned with this matter comes from the following observation. Looking at the studies that used LMT, a major role is taken up by micro contact situations, or in other words, by the investigation of interaction at situations where people of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (as perceived by those involved) meet. While LMT was proposed to be more integrative than the study of language policy that inclines towards discussions only of the macro-level, actual research in language management tends to show a rather a weak approach to macro-level processes. Studies focusing (also) to macro-processes which could be named *institutional management* or *organizational management* are rather rare. Thus, 'the readers may have the impression that LMT is an approach concerned with other phenomena than it is common in language policy studies; that it is rather a complementary than a more comprehensive approach' (Kimura 2013:73, trans. by KGC).

It can be claimed that a consideration of the macro-perspective is significant in terms of making full use of the broad potential intrinsic to LMT. Whereas we would expect

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[3] See the special special issue "Language Management Approach - Probing the Concept of 'Noting'", *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 22 (2), 2012. Kimura (2011) also focuses on this matter emphasizing the role of language ideology as a precondition for noting.

institutional and human networking factors related to the proliferation of the theory to be reasons for its current 'unbalanced' application, it is possible that the management process model at the centre of the theory has limited versatility. At this juncture, I will continue by looking at the process model of language management while bearing in mind a broader application encompassing a more macro-level.

3 The management process as a cycle

An interesting proposal in this regard was raised by István Lanstyák at a workshop on LM in 2006. Questioning the applicability of LMT, he compared it with Language Planning and Language Cultivation approaches. Among the 15 points here raised, the last one concerns the process model:

'The processual character of LM (…) is not so different from that of LP, but lacks "deep concern" about the fourth phase, implementation. One more phase might be added: A fifth phase, feedback, which can be identical to the first phase' (Sherman 2007: 75)

Indeed, there have already been attempts to this direction. Just to mention some examples: Saijo (1999) included questions on the evaluation of adjustment within follow-up interviews of scenarios of contact between Japanese learners and native Japanese speakers. Fairbrother (2000) reconsiders evaluation within an analysis of interaction management, and proceeds to focus on situations in which re-evaluation is seen and incorporates this as a 'reprocessing' stage.

But it seems that this point was not taken up to a general discussion on the process model so far. So my aim today is to put forward the discussion on this issue.

The point made by Lanstyák can be illustrated by regarding policy process models used within political science. Looking at examples of those models, though there are some fundamental similarities with the language management model, the most prominent difference is that the policy process models do not end with 'implementation' but proceed to the subsequent stage of 'evaluation'. This leads to the conception of the process as basically having a cyclical rather than linear form.
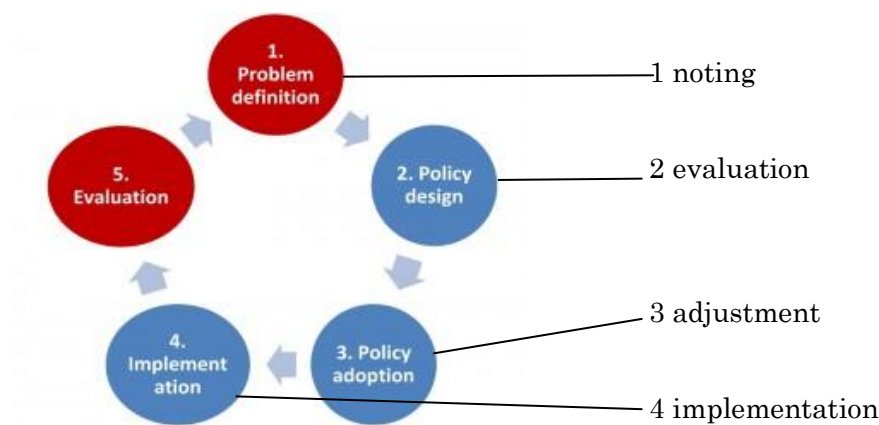

1 noting

2 evaluation

3 adjustment

4 implementation

Figure 3   A prototypical policy process model compared to LMT process stages [4]

The cyclical structure of the policy process model shares commonalities with other process models as the *ADDIE-model* (Analyse→Design→Develop→Implement→Evaluate), which is also used in language education contexts. Also the so-called *management cycle* (Plan→Do→See) or *PDCA cycle* (Plan→Do→Check→Act) found in (business) management studies are usually cyclical, including a stage after 'Do'. In comparison with these

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[4] The model here is from the following website. There are much more complicated models proposed, but this model shows the basic components clearly.
http://policyprojects.ac.nz/clairemortimer/analytical-framework/alignment-to-policymaking-process/

general management models, the LM-model seems to be mainly concerned with the circled part in figure 4 (P→D), enabling to more precisely focusing on this part, which could be a strength of the LMT model, but maybe not paying sufficient attention to the post-implemention ('do') stage.[5]
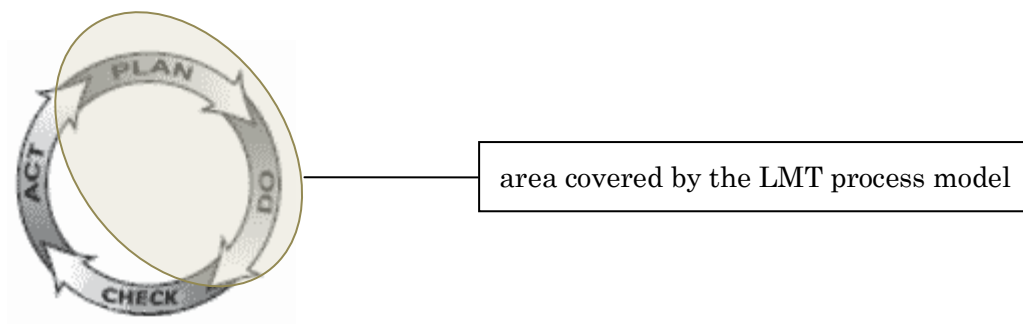

area covered by the LMT process model

Figure 4   PDCA Cycle[6] compared to the LMT process model

These comparisons raise the question, whether adding to the model an item of 'feedback' or 'evaluation of implementation' can be useful, which evaluates the implementation (and possibly also other stages) of the management process.

Of course, the current process model of the LMT does not deny the possibility of a cyclical recommence.[7] Notions as 'pre-interaction management' or 'post-interaction management' (Sherman/Nekvapil 2009) can be utilised in this sense. But it has still to be remarked that a post-implemenation stage that could serve as a link *between* the processes is not included as an integral part of the current LMT process model.

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[5] The notion 'management cycle' is used sometimes in LMT referring to the micro→macro→micro relation (Nekvapil 2009: 6). A term like 'micro-macro cycle' would be more transparent and would help to avoid misunderstanding, as the term 'management cycle' is used in another sense in general management studies, as we have seen here.

[6] http://asq.org/learn-about-quality/project-planning-tools/overview/pdca-cycle.html

[7] 'The important thing is that language management can stop after any of the phases given above or recommence in a cyclical manner' (Marriott & Nekvapil 2012: 156).

4. The test case: the controversy on "prohibiting" Sorbian in the workplace

As a test case of cyclical processes including feedback, or the evaluation of the implementation, we will now turn to an institutional management process of a remarkable case showing the unease of the majority with a minority language which can be regarded as typical to minority-majority situations. It was about language use at a workplace in the German-Sorbian bilingual area in the East of Germany. Maybe needless to say here in Prague, Sorbs are a Slavic people living in Germany just across the Czech border. Their number is estimated about 50000. In this area, where German-speaking and Sorbian-speaking people live together, German is usually regarded as the common language between Germans and Sorbs, but Sorbs use their mother tongue among themselves. Sorbs speak German without any problem. On the other hand, the majority of Germans do not understand Sorbian, which leads to situations perceived as problematic by them, as we will see below. The populations of Sorbs and Germans in the area and workplace in which the 'incident' to be discussed now occurred, are roughly equal.

The following is based on interviews with people directly involved, German and Sorbian newspaper articles and other documents gathered by the author during his fieldwork. The case study addressed here involves the developments surrounding three notices (in the German language) posted on a staff bulletin board at a centre for the disabled in the Sorbian region. The sequence of those notices is as follows:

'First notice' (27th November 2003)

Instruction: This is a reminder that German is the everyday language that must be used during working hours in the presence of disabled persons and non-Sorbian speaking staff.[8]

'Second notice' (7th June 2004)

Notification from the Centre: Due to the occurrence of the situation in question, we would remind you that all staff must adhere to workplace directions while in the centre and particularly in relation to the direction issued on 27th Nov 2003. Any infringement of these directions will have consequences under the Labour Law.[9]

'Third Notice' (22nd March 2005)

Notice: We would like to add the following to maintain the content of the notification of 27th November 2003 and workplace notice of 7th June 2004 in full force and effect:
'The everyday language of use during working hours should not directly or indirectly exclude any person present from communicating.'[10]

Though the expressions and format of the notices differ, all three effectively stipulate that German is the language of the workplace. After the issue of the second notice, the notices were consecutively covered in the Sorbian media (newspapers, radio and television) as the 'Sorbian Prohibition' incident, and prompted a series of protests against the centre in the form of letters to newspapers, public letters, and demonstrations.

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[8] Original: Belehrung   Wiederholt weisen wir darauf hin, dass die Umgangssprache während des Dienstes in Gegenwart Behinderter und nicht sorbisch sprechender Mitarbeiter in deutscher Sprache zu führen ist.

[9] Original: Betriebsinformation   Aus gegebenem Anlass weise ich darauf hin, dass Dienstanweisungen insbesondere die vom 27.11.2003 durch alle im Unternehmen tätigen Mitarbeiter zu befolgen sind. Verstöße gegen Dienstanweisungen ziehen arbeitsrechtliche Konsequenzen nach sich.

[10] Original: Information   Die Belehrung vom 27. November 2003 und die Betriebsinformation vom 07. Juni 2004 behalten inhaltlich weiter ihre Gültigkeit und werden ergänzt durch den folgenden Wortlaut: „Die Umgangssprache während des Dienstes darf keinen Anwesenden von der direkten oder indirekten Kommunikation ausschließen."

The state authorities responded to the demands of the Sorbian national organisation and sent a recommendation advising the centre to reconsider the expressions used (Feb 2005), after which the centre released the third notice. This only served to heighten the protests, and the incident was also reported in the local German media. Finally, after several months the centre took the notices away, while not officially renouncing its content. The tensions seem to have continued latently but released later on when the chief of the centre changed (2011). The new chief, a German, made part of the first message in Sorbian, showing comprehension and sympathy to the Sorbs. And in May 2013 the prohibition of Sorbian was officially cancelled so that this incident finally got part of "history".

But let's return to the issue here. The management processes here from both sides can be seen in figures 5 and 6. The repeatedness of the management processes (notice 1 to 3) suggests already a cyclical character of this case. Here we will narrow the focus to the language management process of the employers who posted the notices, and reinvestigate the management process with a particular focus on the post-implementation stage.

1. Noting
   ►*The Use of Sorbian in the presence of Germans*
2. Evaluation
   ►*negative evaluation as a problem*
3. Adjustment
   ►*posting notices*
4. Implementation
   ►*notice 1, 2, 3*

Figure 5   Processes of LM: Employers

1. Noting
     ►*Prohibition of Sorbian in the workplace*
2. Evaluation
     ►*negative evaluation as a problem*
3. Adjustment
     ►*protest actions*
4. Implementation
     ►*public announcement, protest letters, demonstrations*

Figure 6   Processes of LM: Employees

If we arrange the developments of this incident from the perspective of the employer, we can assume that there were four management processes. Let us look at the process from the first notice. The direct trigger was when a disabled resident (a German) of the centre complained to the employer that Sorbian speaking staff members were talking in Sorbian in her presence. The use of Sorbian by staff was hence noted as a deviation from the norm, and evaluated negatively. Then an 'instruction' was issued against the deviation which constituted the adjustment procedure, and this was implemented using a notice (the first notice).

As it happens, after the notice was issued, a conversation in Sorbian took place again in the presence of a German. The trigger here was also the disabled bystander to the conversation between the staff conducted in Sorbian informing the centre authorities. At this stage, it was elected to issue another notice which was implemented (second notice).

For these two management processes mentioned above, concrete interactions are indentified as the trigger. A process then took place which proceeded from noting the

deviation to implementation. However, the second process was not merely a repetition of the same kind of management process, but rather it was based on the negative evaluation of the *lack* of efficacy of the first notice. According to the employer's explanation in the Sorbian newspaper interview, there were opinions that the staff members responsible should immediately receive an admonitory warning, but there were also other opinions that such an action was too severe. Through adjustment of these opinions, the measure of issuing an unspecified notice while using stronger language was taken, which alluded to 'consequences under the labour law' . In other words, we can view the evaluation from the management process of the first notice linking to the content of the second notice.

The third notice was issued due to the protests caused by the second notice, and the intervention of the state authorities. Here we can also interpret the situation such that the implementation of the second notice was evaluated, and the readjustment and implementation of the third notice was connected to this feedback. However, because the third notice caused even greater problems, the management process of the third notice was evaluated, and a fourth management process began, in which all three of the notices of concern were removed from the bulletin board, and the usage of notices itself was abandoned.

Management Process 1

Deviation → Noting → Evaluation → Adjustment → Implementation (First Notice) → Feedback

Management Process 2

Deviation → Noting → Evaluation → Adjustment → Implementation (Second Notice) → Feedback

Management Process 3　　　　　Adjustment → Implementation (Third Notice) → Feedback

Management Process 4　　　　　Adjustment → Implementation (removal of the notices)

Figure 7　Four Management Processes at the Employers level[11]

So we can assume a stage of "feedback" in each case (Figure 7). Here, the incorporation of the evaluation of the post-implementation stage allows us to ascertain the mutual relations between the management processes. Rather than being mutually independent, management processes are thought to be based on the evaluation of previous processes, and this perspective enables us to understand the processes as interconneted. In our case, by adding notices and explanations, the centre tried to control the situation. But it only accelerated the protests. So, the misevaluation of the effect of the implementation seems to be at the heart of the problems here.[12]

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[11] Chronologically, the occurrence of feedback became evident after the commencement of the next management process, but as a model it is logically located at the end of each process.

[12] In the case here, an integration of the employees perspective would show that the way of communication using one way "notices" while avoiding direct dialogue was part of the problem itself (Kimura 2007).

So, incorporating the meta-management process of feedback into language management can be regarded crucial to handle the processes of language management in the case at hand. The processes can be summed up as a cycle (Figure 8). In our case, feedback seems to be directly connected to re-adjustment. But in other cases, feedback could certainly be related to other stages as well.
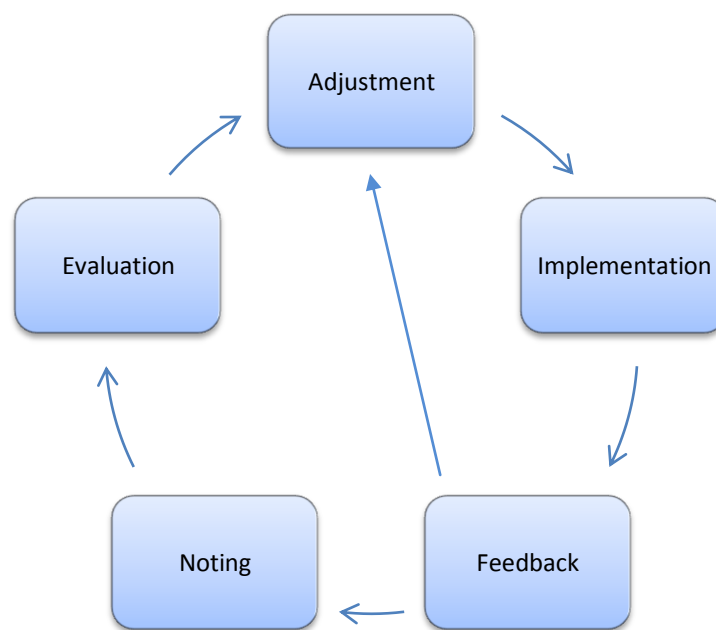

Figure 8   Language management cycle

4. Conclusion

So far, this paper proceeded to consider a more macro application of the LMT through a test-case that indicates the significance of incorporating feedback, or evaluation of the implementation, or better, of the management process into the discussion of language management. The merit of including a post-implementation or meta-management stage can be maintained practically and theoretically. Practically, including a

post-implementation or meta-management stage can strengthen "deep concern" (Lanstyák) about implementation. As shown in our case here, it can contribute to better understand the link *between* management processes. And even if it is a single management process without cyclical recommence, to draw attention to the possibility of a feedback being performed could provide a more profound understanding of the management itself. It can be just a usual part of the management process. Isn't it something we do normally in our daily communication practices? Additionally, at the macro-level it can incorporate the policy evaluation stage which is a well established stage in political processes. In instances where no policy evaluation is performed, or the evaluation is misguided (as in the case above), this can be pointed out as part of the problem.

The theoretical merit of a process model that includes meta-management evaluation is that it would increase the compatibility with other more macro-level models and facilitate a dialogue with other approaches and even other disciplines concerned with management processes. In short, it would contribute to the three strategies of LMT which Neustupný (2004) proposed in searching the position of LMT among other theories:

(1) To develop common networks with other theories of language management.
(2) To actively search for the possibility to utilize components of other language management theories.
(3) To uphold the General Theory of Language Management unless evidence becomes available that some other theory better performs the role of a general theory.

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