Language maintenance as a process: elements of ecclesiastical language management among Catholic Sorbs

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Abstract

In contrast to language shift, language maintenance appears to be a static phenomenon. Yet this paper displays language maintenance as a process, applying the Language Management Theory. On the ground of a case study at a Catholic Sorbian parish in eastern Germany, the study shows that the Sorbian language is maintained in the church through numerous minute interventions at different levels. The findings suggest that the actual process of language maintenance and shift is much more complex than the conventional dualism of "top-down" vs. "bottom-up" assumes. It is argued that in order to get a more reliable understanding of how language maintenance and shift is attained, it is necessary to pay due attention to the interplay of various processes between and within simple and organized management.

Keywords: language maintenance; language management; Sorbian; Catholic church.

1. Process orientation in the research of language maintenance and language shift

Researching language maintenance and shift has become an important discipline within sociolinguistics in recent decades. Sloboda (2009) does, however, draw attention to the observation that elaboration on, and the analysis of various factors contributing to the maintenance or relinquishment of language often take centre stage.[1] The actual process by which language use shifts has not, by contrast, been sufficiently researched. He subsequently advocates language management theory as an approach to investigating language shift as a dynamic process.

Within language management theory (cf. Nekvapil 2009, 2012) it is the process that remains front and centre, which in the theory's underlying model is examined by way of the following phases: Noting (e.g. of a deviation from norm) -> evaluation -> adjustment design -> implementation. One further characteristic of the theory is that the normal dualistic division of labour in sociolinguistics between research concerning "language behaviour" on the one hand, and "language policy" as an intervention in language behaviour on the other, is nullified (Kimura 2005a). Instead, all meta-linguistic activities become integrated into the framework of language management. In this regard, a differentiation is made between meta-linguistic activities (which accompany the use of language in a specific situation, and those which are "trans-situational" and attempt to a lesser or greater extent to render an organised effect on language use, as different types of language management (Nekvapil 2009:2). The former is referred to as "simple management" and the latter "organised management". Nekvapil (2012:17) offers the following summary of the relationship between simple and organised management: "the two types of language management may be intertwined with one

another dialectically: organized management influences simple management, and yet organized management results from simple management." Such a didactic relationship is also affirmed by Sloboda (2009).

The following study links in with the work by Sloboda in that the approach of language management regarding the question of language maintenance and shift is applied. In contrast to Sloboda's investigation in Belarus, in which the issue of language shift played a central role, the focus here, however, is on language maintenance. It is clear that language shift is a process. For Sloboda, the priority lay in the purposeful investigation of the process. The idea that language maintenance is also a process is, however, not so unequivocal. This study aims to draw attention to the point that not just language shift, but also language maintenance should be perceived as the result of processes.

In order to highlight the procedural character of what is ostensibly static language maintenance, we wish to draw particular attention to the processes behind specific actions and interactions. Thus, this paper provides an important supplementation to Sloboda's paper, which first and foremost presents the language shift processes within a family over the course of several years in connection with their societal environment. Especially because a fundamental premise of language management theory is that "all language problems have their base in actual interaction acts" (Neustupný 2003: 126). That specific actions form the basis of language management cannot be stressed enough, considering how often this basic fact was (and is) neglected in discussions about language policy.

The aim of this study is to shed light on the interaction between language-maintaining processes at different levels using a case study, and to unearth

further research perspectives on language maintenance and language shift. In addition, language acts should also be examined in the authentic, socio-cultural and communicative context.

2. Language maintenance among Catholic Sorbs

The case study is about Sorbian, a West Slavic language[2] with roots in the region of Lusatia, situated in the east of Germany. In recent decades the number of people speaking Sorbian has continually decreased. While a comprehensive analysis of the Sorbian linguistic region, which was conducted in the mid-1950s, estimated the number of people speaking Sorbian to be approximately 80,000 (Elle 1991), it has since been assumed that the number of those individuals "in possession of sufficient Sorbian language skills to make active communication possible" (Elle 2000: 18) dropped to less than 20,000 by the turn-of-the-century. All those able to speak Sorbian today can also speak German fluently. Norberg (1996a, 1996b) has succeeded in clearly depicting the language shift process from Sorbian to German across the generations in a village in lower Lusatia. When addressing our own question, it should also be added that this investigation does not concern process-oriented research in terms of language management theory, due to the fact that the work sets its sights on the role played by different factors, and not on the procedural flow itself.

An analysis of the language situation in Lusatia reveals that Sorbian has been particularly well preserved among Catholic Sorbs and in Western Upper Lusatia. Today, the predominantly Catholic region is the only geographical area in which Sorbian is used as an everyday language across all generations. Elle (1991) estimated that at least

two thirds of individuals categorised as active Sorbian speakers originate from this area. That is remarkable considering that following the Reformation more than 90% of Sorbs converted to Protestantism. Given the level of language maintenance, the Catholic region is ideal for a case study, in order to ascertain how a small language can be maintained.[3]

Given that societal conditions among Catholic Sorbs do not differ significantly from neighbouring Protestant regions, the assumption must be made that the underlying causes of language maintenance are linked with the difference in denomination. The question as to how language maintenance among Catholic Sorbs is linked to their religion has been the subject of particularly extensive discussion by Jaenecke (2003). She explains that the Sorbian language has witnessed particularly effective maintenance among Catholic Sorbs, due to the fact that it represents a prerequisite for a person's affiliation with the religious community. Even though numerous specific examples have been provided in her ethnological study, the approach taken is generally factor-oriented, and the processes behind language acts in the church are not the subject of extensive analysis. In order to ascertain exactly how the link to parish affiliation actually works with the Sorbian language, we intend to take a closer look at specific language acts.

From a whole range of potential communication situations, we will focus our attention on Mass and on first communion teaching (Holy Communion lessons). Mass not only forms a central part of church life, it also represents the largest (and perhaps only) public speaking space in which Sorbian is regularly used. This subsequently means that Mass is not only an opportunity to use a language, it also plays a defining role in the process of language maintenance within the context of the Sorbian

language.[4] And communion lessons are therefore important, given that tomorrow's parish members are to be introduced into the practices of the church, including Mass.

The data used in this study stems primarily from diary entries and recordings made during a two-month field research in a Catholic Sorbian church community in the spring of 2001. The key focus was on adopting a participatory observation role: on the street, in people's homes, in the pub, in the village youth club and in other places where people convene, in the preschool, in the school, and last but not least in the church. Wherever possible, the researcher tried to attend all church-related and other public events at local level. The discussions about the situations being observed, which took place either during encounters or as part of prearranged meetings, can best be described in methodological terms as *follow-up interviews*. The observations and conversations were recorded either during the encounter itself or directly after in the form of a diary entry. Audio recordings were also made and transcribed during both church and other institutional events – with the permission of the event organisers – including Mass or communion lessons, which are then discussed in the following. Furthermore, during larger-scale events such as Mass, questionnaires were distributed containing questions about the place of residence and linguistic background of participants.[5]

3. Language acquisition and use in the community in question

Before we turn to the topic of ecclesiastical language management, let us first take a brief glance at the linguistic prerequisites and underlying linguistic tendencies in the area under observation. This allows for both the context and characteristics of the ecclesiastical language management to be understood more clearly.

The parish in question has approximately 600 members and comprises 15 localities in which the proportion of Catholics averaged approximately 30%. Five of the localities with a relatively strong congregation of Sorbian speakers[6] represent three quarters of parish members, and thus form the core of the parish community. In all of these places there are more Catholics than those who speak Sorbian, i.e., as a rule every Sorbian-speaking individual is Catholic, but not every Catholic speaks Sorbian. This subsequently means that there are also community members whose native tongue is German, and who have varying levels of linguistic skill in Sorbian.

The Sorbian language has to date been predominantly passed on from within the family. The notion that both spouses are able to speak Sorbian is, however, practically a prerequisite for the use of Sorbian as the principal family language. In linguistically mixed families, it is predominantly German that is spoken as a rule. A Sorbian-speaking woman describes the use of language in her family by explaining that they of course (original: "*wězo*") speak German at home, given that her husband is German. Table 1 reveals the tendency of language use among Sorbian-speaking and German-Sorbian-speaking families with children, whereby I have channelled my focus towards the results of language use in the family, i.e. the acquisition of the Sorbian language by children. The reality of language use is, of course, more complex and less adept to a categorical representation. The term "Sorbian family" denotes those families in which both parents are Sorbian native speakers, whereby the term "German-Sorbian families" is used when the native tongue of one of the parents is German.

Table 1 Language usage tendencies in families with children younger than 20 years of age, in the five core localities (compiled by author; March 2001)

	Predominantly Sorbian	Both languages	Predominantly German	Total
Sorbian families	39 (195)	1 (4)	0	40 (199)
German-Sorbian families	0	3 (13)	33 (130)	39 (143)

Note 1　Number of families (in brackets: number of family members)

Note 2　Families in which neither spouse speaks Sorbian, and those households with children below kindergarten age are not included.

Note 3　The information is broadly based on the linguistic categorisation of children in kindergarten and in school, who were confirmed or relativised based on the self-assessments of those families affected.

Kindergartens and schools also play an important role outside of the family with regard to language acquisition. These institutions not only shoulder responsibility for expanding the linguistic skills set of Sorbian-speaking children, they also provide an opportunity for those children who do not speak Sorbian at home to learn the language. During the research and observation period at the kindergarten in the local parish, there were 20 children, 10 of whom were categorised by key workers as Sorbian-speaking, and 10 who were categorised as German-speaking. The colloquial language employed by the kindergarten staff is, in principle, Sorbian, even with children from German-speaking homes. Up until the point in time at which research was commenced, there were two types of class in the Sorbian schools: so-called "A

Classes" in which Sorbian was adopted as the teaching language and which were primarily aimed at Sorbian speakers, and "B Classes" in which Sorbian language tuition was also offered to children with no prior knowledge of Sorbian. At the time this research was conducted, bilingual classes for all children had just been introduced among the younger classes.[7] All children from Sorbian-speaking families attended a Sorbian school, which in the vast majority of cases was a Sorbian primary or middle school in the vicinity. As a rule, they attended the A class. Furthermore, children from German-speaking families, particularly those from the core localities of the church parish and those with a Sorbian-speaking parent, visited the Sorbian school, predominantly the B class. Table 2 reveals the number of pupils per class type. 10 children attended the Sorbian grammar school in the town of Bautzen/Budyšin.

Table 2 Pupils from the parish attending the Sorbian primary and middle school in the vicinity. (compiled by the author; March 2001)

	Summe
A-Klasse	41
B-Klasse	22
Zweisprachige Klasse	11 (7)

Note   For those children in years 1 and 2 bilingual classes had already been introduced. In these classes, the brackets represent the number of children with Sorbian as the family language.

The following tendencies were revealed with regard to the daily use of language. Firstly, and with a limited number of exceptions, only native speakers actively communicate in Sorbian. The majority of those who only learn Sorbian when attending kindergarten and/or school seldom use the language in their everyday lives. Several

German-speaking individuals explained to me that they prefer to speak German from the very start, due to the fact that they are prone to making grammatical and other errors when speaking in Sorbian. Secondly, Sorbian is only spoken when the answer may also be expected in Sorbian, i.e. as a rule among native speakers. German is spoken, even with those who understand Sorbian. Here is an example from a diary entry: After Mass, 12 adolescents got together including a German speaker, who understands Sorbian well. They talked in German. In response to a question by the author, a Sorbian-speaking adolescent confirmed that even with Germans in the area, who understand Sorbian, a lot of German is still spoken because those Germans speak German. The German-speaking adolescent who was also present said: "This has essentially become normality". Receptive bilingualism in which each and every individual speaks in his or her mother tongue, does not appear well-established at all, even if the linguistic skill sets of those involved would allow for such an option.

In general, the principle therefore applies that Sorbian is spoken "among themselves", but German is spoken within a mixed group. This linguistic behaviour appears to be so imperative that its occurrence is independent of both the speaker's ethnic and national credentials. Even among "conscious" Sorbs, who for example join Sorbian associations, such a behavioural trait of avoiding to speak Sorbian with non-natives was observed. This tendency can be understood as a component part of socio-cultural and communicative management, in order to be integrated into German-speaking society with the minimum level of friction.[8]

It can subsequently be determined that although, on the one hand, for all those growing up in the community the opportunity exists to learn Sorbian (something that the vast majority also take advantage of), its actual use is limited to communication

between native speakers, meaning that the real terms application of Sorbian is relatively confined in comparison to its potential use. The fact that Sorbian has, in spite of such developments, succeeded in being maintained in certain localities as the general language of colloquial communication, is attributable to the circumstance that Sorbian speakers form the overwhelming majority in these areas.

4. Language management in relation to Mass

Let us now turn our attentions to ecclesiastical language management. The use of language during Mass in each parish can, in principle, be understood as a form of organised management, while the use of language in communion lessons is not set, and is subsequently more aligned with simple management. Neither the globally active Catholic Church nor the diocese into which the parish is integrated applied an explicit and direct language policy at the appointed time of research, in relation to the choice of a communal language in the parish churches situated in the Sorbian-speaking region, meaning that we were able to concentrate our efforts here on local conditions and circumstances.[9]

As a first step, let us focus our attention on Mass. Mass is the church's primary event, and attending Sunday Mass is considered mandatory for every Catholic. In general, only a minority of parish members regularly visit Sunday Mass in Germany. By contrast, participation in Mass among Catholic Sorbs is relatively high. In the church parish in question, average participation among community members across a five-year period before the analysis and research (1996-2000) stood at 63%.[10] At this point, a differentiation must be made between Catholic-Sorbian core localities and the

surrounding areas. Although the association with the church in peripheral regions is generally weak, attendance to Sunday Mass, in particular in the core localities where the vast majority of the population is Catholic, can be interpreted as a social norm. This was clearly revealed by the surveys conducted during field research: participants originated almost exclusively from the core localities.

Sunday Mass plays a critical societal role that stretches beyond its religious significance, as it represents an opportunity for a key proportion of parish members to meet on a regular basis. It is not only a place where the latest news and information is exshiftd both before and after Mass, local events such as, for example, village club meetings and get-togethers can also be announced at the end of the service. Buchholt (1998: 344) who examines shifts in the social networks of a Catholic-Sorbian village, underscores the point that following the end of the GDR, the majority of existing communal structures in the village were lost, whereby the church represented the "only exception". The church can be labelled a central place where a sense of community is established above and beyond private contacts, and this particular function is most evident in Sunday Mass.

Let us observe the choice of language during Mass from the vantage point of the management process. To begin with, there is the question of norms. Jaenecke (2003: 334) has determined the following with regard to the use of language among Sorbs in the Catholic Church: "The Sorbian language has established a presence in almost all areas of religious life; any exceptions are scrutinised by the priests and parish members."

Among Catholic Sorbs it can be seen as norm (or at the very least as something worth striving for), that the Sorbian language is used in the church. This norm can be

explained by the fact that, among Catholic Sorbs, faith has long been closely associated with ethnic traditions. A more detailed look at this socio-cultural aspect cannot be undertaken here.[11] Reference is only made to the finding by Walde (1993: 40), who elaborates in a research report on the connection that still exists today: "When answering the question of what exactly the ethnic characteristic of Catholic Sorbs is, or how the unifying attribute of all Catholic Sorbs can be defined, attention falls first and foremost – as something that almost all representatives of the younger generations have stated – to religious life."

The use of the German language is subsequently to be viewed as a deviation from norm, even though the permeation of this norm differs depending on the parish community. Table 3 shows the time and language of Mass in the respective parish. The data reveals that every Mass is held in Sorbian, with the exception of the second and fourth Saturday in the month. Both these represent deviations from the norm. In order to comprehend how such an exception was allowed to materialise, we must first cast a glance over its history, in order for us to arrive at today's language management at the time of the analysis.

Table 3   Time and language of Mass   S=Sorbian   G=German

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	
—	7:00 S	7:00 S	16:15 S	19:00 S	19:00 S [G(2.+4.)]	7:00 S	9:00 S

The introduction of German into Mass can be traced back to the Third Reich. Up until 1940 when – as with many other Sorbian communities – the Sorbian priest was expelled and replaced with a German Priest, the language used to preach and sing was, in

principle, Sorbian.[12] During the time when a German Priest was appointed, preaching was in German, although singing continued to be permitted in Sorbian. After the War, in July 1945, the Sorbian priest returned to the parish. The "exceptional circumstances" of using German could not, however, be reversed in their entirety. By the end of the Second World War, groups of so-called resettlers were arriving to the parish from former German regions in the East. In this context, the number of parish members increased from 683 in the year 1939, to 971 in the year 1950. In the beginning, an additional German church service was held for the German new arrivals every Sunday, including hymn singing and announcements in German. Over the course of time, the number of resettlers decreased; as a consequence the German-speaking proportion of ecclesiastical events reduced to a minimum. The current setup can be traced back to the year 1973. Following the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) it became possible to also celebrate Sunday Mass on a Saturday evening. The work group of Catholic-Sorbian priests at the time decreed the introduction of Saturday evening Mass during their norm in June 1972 (Kilank 1973, document 58). Saturday evening Mass was introduced in the parish in question from Pentecost 1973 onwards. One reason for the introduction of Saturday evening Mass was that those who had to work on Sundays should also have the opportunity to attend Mass. In addition, the priest who held office at the time offered the justification that for those German speakers who predominantly made their way to the parish to attend Mass from outer localities would find Saturday evenings more agreeable than early Sunday mornings (*Katolski Posoł* 5.8.1973). Since then, German Mass, which until that point had been held every fourth Sunday in the morning, was now held on the second and fourth Saturday in the evening.

This language management adopted by the parish at the time represents a significant

balancing of different interests. On the one hand, the interests of German-speaking parish members are accounted for. On the other hand, the fact that German Mass was not held every Sunday, underscores the point that Sorbian is the principal ecclesiastical language of the parish. The arrangement that it was not possible in this parish to participate in a German Mass every week implies that those German speakers who wished to participate in Mass in their parish every week, would also participate in a Mass held in Sorbian. German speakers, who by contrast wanted to participate in German-speaking Mass on a regular basis, were de facto forced to rely on German Mass held in neighbouring parishes. This subsequently lends credence to the idea of the selective integration of German-speaking parish members into Sorbian parish life. While a select few German speakers from outside of the locality of the church did indeed visit Mass held in neighbouring communities, at the point in time of research approximately 20 of the 80 participants in Saturday Mass were from families where German was predominantly spoken. This meant that those who spoke no or very little Sorbian at home would also be integrated into the Sorbian-speaking sphere.[13]

Certain comments that were made during the period of research revealed that this linguistic arrangement was not, however, an ideal setup for the priest appointed at the time of the investigation. It concerned the participation of Sorbian speakers in German Mass. Before a German-speaking Mass held on Saturday, the priest commented: „Dźensa su němske kemše. Němske kemše za katolskich Serbow." (Today is German Mass. German Mass for Catholic Sorbs.) This is a reference to the overwhelming majority of participants in Saturday Mass who speaks Sorbian. On another occasion, he mentioned during a conversation after Saturday Mass that the participants were almost all Sorbs, with only a few Germans. But that it was challenging to shift what his

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predecessors had introduced. In his view, holding Mass a total of two times on Saturday and Sunday would be sufficient. But if Mass on Saturday evening were to be eradicated, a few would complain that "our Mass" had been done away with.[14] Therefore, in the course of the priest's tenure there have been no shifts made to the language used in Mass. A deviation from norm was both noted and evaluated, but there was no move to draft and implement measures in relation to the official use of language.

That does not, however, mean that no additional management approach was implemented. A select number of key points were noted in the Mass, that facilitated the promotion of the Sorbian language.

A difference between Sorbian and German Mass did concern the role of altar boys. Jaenecke (2003: 228-229) highlights that intercessory prayer by altar boys also fulfils the function of practising Sorbian. This subsequently means that Mass is a contributing factor to Sorbian linguistic training. This is all the more noteworthy given that there are minimal opportunities outside of the school environment in which Sorbian can be publicly read out. In the parish in question, reading aloud by altar boys was only done in Sorbian. During German evening Mass, intercessory prayer was only read aloud by adults. The priest mentioned that, thanks to the inclusion of altar boys in Sorbian Mass, an opportunity was also deliberately created for German-speaking altar boys to practice Sorbian. The priest saw it as an opportunity to promote and build on their Sorbian language skills. In this instance, it is possible to speak of organised communication management: Measures were implemented in relation to participatory roles in Mass, in order to familiarise tomorrow's parish members with the Sorbian Mass.

One further difference concerns the treatment of the respective other language during Sorbian and German Mass. The consistency with which the Sorbian language is applied

is noteworthy. Parish announcements were only published in Sorbian, and even during German-speaking Mass, announcements were made in the Sorbian original. During Sorbian Mass, however, even texts and quotes originally published in German were read aloud in Sorbian translation such as, for example, pastoral letters by the Bishop or pleads to donate to Catholic aid organisations. Such endeavours are impressive considering that all those present also understand German. In everyday situations, German-speaking statements or texts used in the course of Sorbian conversation are typically also quoted in the German original. During Sorbian Mass, only two German sentences could be heard throughout the entire period of research. Once, when the priest mentioned during the announcement of the first survey to be conducted by the author among the Mass attendees, that German speakers would also be able to answer the questionnaire without any problem, due to the fact that the questions were also in German. The other time when, following a reading of the Sorbian translation of a bishop's pastoral letter, the German original had been printed and made available at the entrance to the church. It is apparent that both statements do not form part of the regular flow of Mass, and instead occur as part of simple management. The announcements in Sorbian were, by contrast, a fixed component part of German Mass, and can be viewed as organised management. The measures aimed at preserving the norm of conducting Mass in Sorbian can also be denoted as a form of organised management, due to the fact that translations are generated by the "Cyrill-Methodius Association" ("Cyrill-Methodius-Verein") prior to the language act, for all Sorbian parishes.

In sum, it may be postulated that this approach to managing language use during Mass stood in notable contrast to the principle of everyday language selection. In

contradiction to everyday life beyond the scope of the church, during which the use of the German language was maximised in most instances, the use of language in Mass under the given circumstances can best be characterised as an attempt to maximise the Sorbian linguistic sphere. Where the management approach finds its limitations in the official use of language, individual measures are adopted during Mass to promote the Sorbian language. It creates the impression that an attempt is being made to compensate the declining presence of the Sorbian language beyond the church, to the greatest extent possible within the church. During this process, the interests of German-speaking individuals are taken into account through the organised use of language and simple management in the form of German sentences used in Mass. In such instances, a deliberate deviation from norm was permitted in order to accommodate German speakers.

In conclusion, it should also be mentioned that the integration of German speakers into the Sorbian linguistic sphere of the church was not only facilitated by the priest, but also by the parish members themselves. Here is an example from the church choir. During a rehearsal for a Mass dedicated to the silver anniversary of a married couple that speaks German at home, a choir member posed the question as to whether they should also sing a German hymn. The objection was made that the couple was, however, participating in a Sorbian Mass. It was subsequently decided to stick to Sorbian hymns.

5. Preparing for first communion

Communion lessons represent an area of interaction which is characterised by a direct association with Mass. These preparatory lessons play a crucial role in a person's

introduction to parish life. It is of particular significance for communion lessons that the language used during Mass in the parish is predominantly Sorbian. During the course of research, one particular "problem" posed by the maintenance of this norm was that, of the eight pupils from the parish in their third year of school, who were to be prepared for their first communion, three of the pupils predominantly spoke German at home. In contrast to the normal solution at other places outside the church, where those involved simply used German if the group comprised a mix of languages, measures were taken on two levels in this case.

The first was to recommend participation in German-speaking communion lessons in a neighbouring parish for a pupil who found it difficult to keep up with lessons in Sorbian. In response to a question by the author, the priest also explained that, for the sake of one participant, the teaching language would not be shiftd to German for everyone. With the other two, the decision was made to conduct the lesson in Sorbian in view of the fact that their family backgrounds were characterised by a Sorbian influence, and that they received Sorbian language lessons in school (B class). They were subsequently welcomed into the lessons held in the church parish. As a result of pupils learning terms and expressions during their communion lessons, this educational process also fulfilled the function of linguistic training. This function is all the more significant for both non-native speakers, in view of the fact that it is their only lesson in a specific subject area that is held in Sorbian.

We now turn our attention to the second level, which comprises the communicative and linguistic strategies applied in the course of interaction.[15] During the lesson which was held once a week for one hour in the afternoon, the significance and procedure of Mass and confession (Sacrament of Penance) were revealed to the pupils in the form of

dialogues between the priest and schoolchildren. In the majority of cases, it was the priest who would ask questions, which were then answered by the pupils. The lesson language was Sorbian throughout. In the process, the priest endeavoured to ascertain that both German speakers were able to follow the learning process well. This involved the priest continually querying the pupils' understanding of what had been said (example 1), or encouraging both pupils to respond if they failed to offer an answer. As part of this approach, for example, both German speakers were deliberately given the opportunity in the final lesson to formulate whole sentences themselves, or to repeat important formulations used in the practice of religion (example 2). This allowed the priest to ensure that the pupils would be able to apply the Sorbian expressions.

Example 1   P: Priest   Jan, Anne: German speaking pupils

P: *Hdyž sy ty přeprošeny, Jan, na jedne narodniny pola někoho, rozumiš narodniny?*

        [When you are invited, Jan, for someone's birthday, du you understand birthday?]

P: *Što ty sobu wzaš?*

        [What do you take with you?]

Jan: *Dary.*

        [Present]

(...)

P: *Tym chudym dać, ći, kotřiž njejsu… Anne, rozumiš? Haj?*

        [Give to the poor people, that means …. Anne, do you understand? Yes?]

Example 2

P: *Jan, praji hišće jónu.*

[Jan, say it again.]

Jan: *Moja posledna spowjedź bě před sydom njedźele.*

[My last confession was ago seven weeks.]

P: *Njedźelemi.*   {corrects grammatical error}

[Seven weeks ago.]

P: *A hdyž sće hotowi, potom prajiće?*   {P looks to Annne}

[And when you are finished, you say?]

Anne: *To běchu moje hrěchi. Jězus smil so.* (…)

[These were my sins. Jesus, have mercy on me.]

P: *Potom ja praju: Chwaleń Jězus Chryst. A Jan wotmołwi?*

[Then I say: May Jeus Christ be praised. And Jan responds?]

Jan: *Na wěki amen.* (…)

[Forever, amen.]

It was noticeable that even the German-speaking children made every effort to comply with expectations. It was Anna — who obviously found it difficult to speak Sorbian freely, and who seldom offered a response to the priest — but who almost always volunteered when the exercise involved reading aloud. It was even the case that she would sometimes raise a hand to read before the priest had even asked who would be willing to read the text.

And how about deviations from norm? The use of German was seen, as a rule, as a deviation, and measures were put in place to revert back into Sorbian. If, for example, an answer was offered by a pupil in German to a question by the priest, the respondent was asked to offer the answer in Sorbian (example 3) or, if a pupil's knowledge of a

certain word could not be expected, it was repeated by the priest in Sorbian (example 4). Both strategies — i.e. a follow-up question and a translated repetition — were all observed a total of six times during the four lessons that were recorded.

Example 3   German passages are underlined.

P: *Hdy my swjećimy, zo je Jězus na křižu zemrěł? Kajki dźeń to budźe?*

        [When do we commemorate that Jesus died on the cross? What day is it?]

Anne: *Karfreitag.*

        [Good Friday.]

P: *Kak to serbsce rěka? Wulki*

        [How do you say it in Sorbian? Great...]

Anne: *pjatk.*

        [Friday.]

Example 4

P: *Što je wón potom činił? Potom je wón tón chlěb*

        [What did he do then? The bread was]

Anne: *geteilt.*

        [shared.]

P: *Haj, łamał, my prajimy.*

        [Jes, broken, we say (in Sorbian).]

    There were, however, instances in which a deliberate deviation from norm was made by the priest, or when a deviation was explicitly granted. It occurred on three occasions

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that the priest repeated difficult words in German (*połnomóc/Vollmacht* [power of attorney]*, wuhnać/verfolgen* [persecute]*, swjećena woda/Weihwasser* [holy water]). If pupils failed to offer an answer to a question, and it was suspected that the reasons behind it were attributable to language, it occurred a total of five times that the priest explicitly encouraged German speakers to answer in German. It should be noted that such encouragement was also expressed in Sorbian (example 5).

Example 5

P: *Jenož wino? Anne, što hišće wjac? Wino a ... Nó, praji němsce.*

       [Only wine? Anne, what else? Wine and ... Sure, say it in German.]

In sum, it can be concluded that an effort was made to maximise the Sorbian linguistic sphere during the Communion lessons. In contrast to the practice applied in schools in which, in principle, only Sorbian speaking pupils were admitted to the A classes which use Sorbian as the teaching language, here the attempt was made to integrate as many pupils as possible into the Sorbian lesson. Such selective integration concerns organised management as a precursor to interaction. During the lesson itself, communicative and linguistic measures were taken in order to preserve Sorbian as the lesson language on the one hand, and to ensure that the German speakers could follow the lesson, on the other. Instead of switching to German as is otherwise standard practice outside the church, German was used to facilitate and promote an understanding in the lesson. It is highly unusual that German speakers are expected to communicate in Sorbian during the lesson. As we have already witnessed, in everyday life in the region it is not even expected of German speakers to possess a passive

understanding of Sorbian. In this case, participants are conversely prepared in order that they may actively participate in church activities conducted in Sorbian.

Such preparation contributes to establishing a sense of inclusion among German speakers in the Sorbian Mass. The Mass for schoolchildren held in Sorbian on Thursday afternoons can be seen as the result of this language management. During this Mass, among the average of 35 participating children, 4-11 pupils were from B classes. A German-speaking adolescent said to me that he feels more at home during Sorbian Mass, due to the fact that he is more used to it.

6. Outlook

This study has led to the conclusion that the maintenance of Sorbian as an ecclesiastical language in the parish is not to be viewed as a static condition which is simply being passed on, but rather that the close association of parish members with the Sorbian language is being maintained by way of its active promotion at various levels. The striking linguistic maintenance of the Sorbian language in the church is consequently the result of a long line of constant processes involving targeted and simultaneously flexible measures, which prevent deviations from the norm of using Sorbian or which react to such, but which also in part act as a deliberate trigger in order to integrate German speakers. The implementation of such measures can help achieve a maximisation of the Sorbian linguistic sphere. The individual measures that we have observed here may create the impression that it concerns trivial details. The significance may not, however, be underestimated. Without such small individual measures, the German language would continue its incessant dissemination, leading to

the all-out marginalisation of the Sorbian language. In view of the critical role played by the church within the Sorbian language, any decline in the Sorbian language within the church would have catastrophic consequences for the maintenance of Sorbian.

This study was only able to focus its attention on certain, centralised elements of ecclesiastical language management within a parish. In order to be able to evaluate the language maintenance process among Catholic Sorbs in its entirety, research efforts must also be conducted in relation to other communication situations and other parishes. It may, however, be assumed that the process of language maintenance stands in close association with various measures, which counteract the tendencies that denote a decline in the Sorbian language.

Let us now consider the theoretical implications of this study. The processes of language management observed in this study draw attention to the mutual support between organised and simple management. For example, we have been able to highlight the collaborative nature of language management during Mass, and language management as part of Communion teaching. The measures employed at a micro level to promote the Sorbian language during communion teaching are contingent on the use of language in Mass at a macro level. Then again, Sorbian can be maintained as a language used in Mass, in view of the fact that conditions have been put in place to ensure that the greatest possible number of young parish members, including German speakers, can participate in Sorbian Mass.

A similar form of collaboration also applies to various management processes belonging to the same type within both of the communications situations analysed here. Language management in Mass was not only limited to the use of the declared language of Mass, but also contained measures that aimed to minimise the effects of the

unwelcome tendency that Sorbian speakers partly participate in German-speaking Mass. These measures aimed at promoting the use of Sorbian in Mass lend support to the objectives strived for, according to which Sorbian should be maintained as the primary language of Mass. And conversely, the fact that Sorbian is the declared main language of Mass is certainly a prerequisite for measures preferring Sorbian during Mass. In this regard, the organised measures employed at various levels are contingent on one another. Several management processes were also identified within the scope of communion teaching. As part of the simple management approach, those measures which served to promote Sorbian and those which encouraged the use of German complemented one another well.

It was revealed that management processes – whether they be simple or organised in nature – can mutually influence and shape one another at different levels. This finding does entail general implications for ongoing research efforts into language maintenance and shift. If the application of language management theory in this research area is characterised by the examination of how language maintenance and shift actually occur, it cannot be deemed sufficient to contrast simple and organised management as processes that are "bottom up" and "top down". Far rather, such endeavours must be shaped by the need to reveal the interdependent relationship between various simple and organised management processes. If we succeed, then it may be said with confidence that we are much further along in our efforts then a mere listing of factors, and that we have a clearer understanding of how language maintenance and shift occur. In the same way as language management theory has dispensed with the traditional dichotomy in sociolinguistics between language behaviour and language policy, by focusing on the interaction between different levels, it also demands a departure from

the normal dualism between *"top-down"* and *"bottom-up"*, in order to be able to account

for the more complex reality.[16]

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1   A recent article offering an overview of this research discipline deals primarily with various factors and their significance (Potowski 2013).

2   Slavic studies typically differentiate between Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian as two West Slavic languages. In this case, the term "Sorbian" is used to refer to both. Specifically, the case study relates to Upper Sorbian.

3   More recent investigations have shown, however, that the Catholic region has not been spared from the tendency of assimilation (Walde 2004).

4   Kimura (2005b) specifically draws attention to the importance of Mass as an area of life in which Sorbian is continuously spoken. For information on the importance of Mass and communion lessons with regard to language maintenance, see Jaenecke 2003: 222-232, 265-266.

5   The questionnaires were distributed to all participants and then collected at

the exit. The priest allocated a certain amount of time for these to be filled out. The response rate was between 90% and 100%.

6   "Sorbian-speaking" is used in the following in relation to people whose native tongue is Sorbian (as in their first language). "German-speaking" also refers to all those whose native tongue is German.

7   A select number of subjects are also taught in separate groups in these classes depending on the native tongue.

8   Kimura (2005b) draws attention to widespread linguistic ideologies, which justify the process of adaptation to German with terms such as "necessity", "politeness" or "tolerance".

9   Liddicoat and Baldauf (2008) draw attention to the significance of local language policy, which to date has often unjustifiably been the victim of misjudgement and marginalisation within language policy research. The approach taken by language management can contribute to overcoming this weakness of language policy research.

10   This data is based on a census, which is conducted twice a year and submitted to the Bishop's Ordinariate. The census results and statistics relating to community member numbers can be found in the parish archive.

11   Walde (2000) explains the historical development of the Catholic-Sorbian environment using a discursive analysis of the Catholic-Sorbian publication "Katolski Posoł", the first issue of which was published in 1863, and which still exists today.

12   Until Sorbian was introduced as a liturgical language following the Second Vatican Council of 1965, Latin played an important role in Mass. Here, however, our efforts are focused on the relationship between the national language of German and Sorbian.

13   A third form of participation characterised by attendance to Mass every second week, had barely been implemented during the research period.

14   Here, German words are included in the Sorbian version. It can be deduced here that it concerns German speakers.

15   Due to the fact that the communicative strategies and the language selection are relevant in the following, an orthographic transcription has been used.

16   These characteristics of language management theory are in harmony with other approaches adopted in language policy research, which plead for a comprehensive understanding of language policy (cf. for example McCarty 2011). A process of convergence and mutual enrichment would, on balance, greatly benefit research.