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Language Practices in a Family of Prussian Language Revivalists: Conclusions Based on Short-Term Participant Observation

Introduction

The Baltic Prussian language belongs to the group of the Western Baltic languages, and until the late 2000s it was considered to be extinct. However, owing to the revivalist movement, its SIL International classification was changed from *extinct* to *living* in 2009 (*SIL International*, 2021); Ethnologue classified the language as *dormant* (*Ethnologue*, 2021). One of the most common hypotheses is that the language became extinct in the seventeenth or the early eighteenth century as a consequence of the Teutonic Order’s conquest and Christianization of the thirteenth century, followed by several centuries of assimilation of the native Baltic Prussians with colonists, mainly from Germany, Poland and Lithuania. The new Prussian society became multiethnic – the land was colonized by the Germans, Poles, Lithuanians and many others (including some French, Austrian, Dutch or even Scottish settlers).

Written sources of the Old Prussian are scarce. However, some important monuments of the language have been preserved, such as three Lutheran catechisms from the sixteenth

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century, a Prussian-German glossary from the fourteenth century, and a wordlist made by a German monk, Simon Grunau (Palmaitis, 2007a, pp. 7–9). The traces of the language have survived in the local toponymy (collected and analysed by Georg Gerullis in *Die altpreußischen Ortsnamen*) (Gerullis, 1922) and in some Teutonic documents, which served as the main source for Reinhold Trautmann's analysis of Old Prussian anthroponyms (*Die altpreußische Personennamen*), originally published in 1925 (Trautmann, 1974).

The project of the reconstruction of the language, based on relatively sparse sources, was developed in the 1980s. The initiators of this undertaking were the linguists Vytautas Mažiulis, Letas Palmaitis (also known as Mikkels Klussis) and Vladimir Toporov. What started as an exercise in Baltic and comparative linguistics turned into a revivalist project in the following years. Surprisingly, there have appeared some L2 users of the reconstructed language (sometimes referred to as New Prussian), who share a sense of Baltic Prussian identity and wish to express this bond by language practices.

So far, there have been no attempts of research on language practices in the families of Baltic Prussian revivalists, or on their former and current Internet language practices (arguably the most important way of maintaining a connection between members of the learners' community), neither from the linguistic nor the sociolinguistic point of view. Filling this research gap is important as it could show how far the boundaries of a language reconstruction and revival project can extend. It is also an interesting instance of a small community where until the birth of the first "native speakers" every actor of the revival project was actually a "new speaker" themselves, a category which Noel P. Ó Murchadha et al. define as follows:

At its most basic level, the designation "new speaker" refers to social actors who use and claim ownership of a language that is not, for whatever reason, typically perceived as belonging to them, or to "people like them". (Ó Murchadha et al., 2018, p. 4)

Even though the story of the Prussian language revival differs significantly from the trajectories and, probably, the perceived ethnic "authenticity" of other well-known European language revival projects – such as Manx or Cornish,¹ with thousands of possible descendants of users of the original language living in one area – the case of the Baltic Prussian movement shows how an experimental online language community can evolve:

¹ For a general discussion on language death, revitalization and revival, and for more detailed information about the case of Cornish language revival, see Chapters 4–6 in Jones & Singh, 2005.

how it can become a small, yet living both online and offline language community. This case also shows how such involvement can affect the daily family practices of the revivalists, including code-switching and coining new borrowings from their “native languages” and adapting them to the revived language. This article can probably open a new microfield of study: the revived Baltic Prussian community.

During the last several years I have seen that the issue of the Prussian language movement has been treated rather as a pastime and thus ignored by researchers. However, disregarding the possible dispute about the “authenticity” of the language community, there is no doubt that, at least for three families with Baltic Prussian as their home language, the project has become a serious way of expressing their identities. Speaking the language on a daily basis, treating it as a way of expressing one’s identity and teaching it to one’s children goes beyond the usual behaviour of a group of hobbyists, which is surprising, considering that most of the revival actors have no direct or strong proof of their Baltic Prussian roots.

A Brief History of the Baltic Prussian Language Revival

Until the early 1980s there were few linguists who conducted research on the Prussian language. One of the first known attempts to collect and organize the monuments of the language was Johann Vater’s *Die Sprache der alten Preussen* [The Language of the Old Prussians] of 1821 (Vater, 1821). Another paper, which can be viewed as an attempt to analyse its traits, was Georg Nesselmann’s *Forschungen auf dem Gebiete der preußischen Sprache* [Research in the Field of the Prussian Language] (printed in Königsberg in 1871) (Nesselmann, 1871). It was a rather short publication consisting of a list of East Prussian dialectisms of allegedly Baltic Prussian origin (with basic information on their variants, localization and etymology), including also some words from the preserved written monuments of the language. Two years later the same author released the first complex book on the topic: *Thesaurus linguae prussicae*, which contains nearly 250 pages of the analysis of the Old Prussian words attested in written monuments and dialectal phrases (Nesselmann, 1873).

The next milestones in Prussian studies were Reinhold Trautmann’s *Die altpreußischen Sprachdenkmäler* [Monuments of the Old Prussian Language] of 1910, *Die altpreußischen Personennamen* [Old Prussian Personal Names] of 1925 (1974), and Georg Gerullis’ *Die altpreußischen Ortsnamen gesammelt und sprachlich behandelt* [Old Prussian Place Names Collected and Treated Linguistically] of 1922 (Gerullis, 1922). The pre-war development of research on the Prussian

language by German scholars may be partially due to the then fashion of the inhabitants of East Prussia to be interested in the former population of Baltic origin. East Prussian activists were also interested in Old Prussians, as was the case of the Mazurian activist Kurt Obitz and representatives of the Lithuania Minor movement (Szymanowicz, 2007, pp. 29–32).

To show the scale of the decreasing numbers of pre-WWII inhabitants in former East Prussia – who are also perceived in public discourse as the most “entitled” to rightfully claim to be, at least to some extent, the cultural descendants of the Old Prussians, as many of Old Prussians assimilated into the later East Prussian community) – let me mention the estimates concerning the Mazurians, living in the southern part of the region (today in Poland) from at least the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries.² According to pre-war estimates, there were about 250–400 thousand Mazurians living there (Perzowa, 1987, p. 21), and according to the Polish 2011 census – there were less than 1,500 (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2013). Even adding those who declared themselves as Polish or German, there are not more than 10 thousand Mazurians in the region today (Sakson, 1987). The current inhabitants of the southern part of the former East Prussia almost entirely stem from the post-war resettlers from *Kresy* (eastern borderland regions of the Second Polish Republic) and the new colonists from Mazovia or other Polish regions. The northern part, which now belongs to the Russian Federation, is mostly inhabited by Russians (86%), Belarusians (less than 4%) and Ukrainians (less than 4%); less than 1% identify themselves as Germans (Russian Federal State Statistics Service, 2011). These numbers show that the continuity of settlement in the region was entirely broken, and that the possible genetic descendants of the Old Prussians, intermixed during many centuries with the Polish, German and Lithuanian colonists in East Prussia, live mostly outside the region due to post-war deportations and economic emigration. Yet, these events did not stop the revivalists’ interest in the language.

The new wave of research on the Baltic Prussian language emerged in the 1970s. William Schmalstieg published *An Old Prussian Grammar* in 1974 (Schmalstieg, 1974), followed by *Studies in Old Prussian* two years later (Schmalstieg, 1976). However, it is three linguists living in the Soviet Union: Vladimir Toporov, Vytautas Mažiulis and Letas Palmaitis who can be considered key proponents of research on the Prussian language and, most importantly, of its reconstruction.

As we can read in Palmaitis’ introduction to the Prussian-Polish, Polish-Prussian edition of *Etteikātas prūsiskas billas wirdeīns* (*Dictionary of Revived Prussian*), the idea of the reconstruc-

² See Białuński, 2019 for more information about the history of settlement in Mazuria, including the role of the Old Prussian community in the ethnogenesis of the Mazurians.

tion was born in 1983: Palmaitis and Toporov's memorandum "From the Reconstruction of Old Prussian Towards the Recreation of the New Prussian Language" proposed the reconstruction project as "a moral compensation for the lost European nation, following Toporov's well-known opinion that the death of the Old Prussians is a loss for humanity" (Palmaitis, 2007b).

Although the original idea was only to conduct a scientific reconstruction of the language and to make a symbolic humanitarian gesture, in the 1990s it turned out that there were some enthusiasts from Poland, Germany, Russia and Lithuania who went further than that. Some of them sought reconnection with their homeland, others declared their Baltic Prussian roots, still others wanted to learn the language because of their religious identity based upon pre-Christian beliefs.

As there were only about 2,000 attested Old Prussian words and roots – including about 1,800 roots attested in Prussian texts and glossaries; the other several hundred could be obtained from toponyms and anthroponyms (Palmaitis, 2007a) – linguists had to develop some rules of the derivation and coining of new words (based on the available data and comparative linguistics). As proposed, remnants of the Old Baltic language should be searched for in German, Curonian, Lithuanian and Polish dialects of East Prussia. Some terms connected with the development of the industrial revolution were created in a way similar to how they evolved in the Latvian language. Both Latvian and Old Prussian had been under German cultural pressure, and thus it seemed justified for the revivalists to follow this way of expanding vocabulary, assuming that the mechanisms of borrowing these words in the areas penetrated by German language and culture were universal.

Another category of lexical borrowings are internationalisms, which are similar in most European languages. They include scientific terms borrowed from Latin and Greek, but also terms referring to new technologies and cultural phenomena which were coined in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the Anglo-Saxon world.

The reconstructed language has been based on the grammar and phonology of the Sambian dialect, as it is attested in the most important monuments – the three Lutheran catechisms of the sixteenth century. The words and phrases attested in other dialects, for example in the Elbing Vocabulary, written in the Pomesanian dialect, have been reshaped in order to match the Sambian-based standard.³

³ The basic rules of the creation of the New Prussian written standard and the implementation of internationalisms, unattested roots and reconstructed words borrowed from the local Lithuanian, German and Polish dialects are briefly described in the above-mentioned foreword to the Prussian dictionary.

The fall of communism followed by the spread of the Internet in Poland, Russia and Lithuania led to the emergence of some Internet communities of learners and speakers of the language. Some online discussion fora were established, such as forum.prusai.eu and prusai.org, and some of the discussions were held in e-mail groups. Several regionalist and scholarly societies were set up in Poland, for example Pruthenia and Borussia; they provided academic support for the revivalist societies such as Prusaspīrā in Poland and Twānkstas Prūsa in the Kaliningrad Region (Russia). Each of these communities has up to thirty members. One initiative worth mentioning is the German society Tolkemita, which uses a similar, yet distinct variety of the reconstruction, based on the works of Günther Kraft (also known as Günther Kraft-Skalwynas) (Kraft, 1995). Another attempt at reconstruction based on the same historical written sources is Joseph Pashka's Sudovian language, which, however, remains unused. An attempt to reconstruct the Prussian language has also been made by the Prus Association in Poland; it is basically a variation on Kraft-Skalwynas' reconstruction.

These small communities have also met offline: they organized language camps, where they could learn and practise the language, and their members visit one another from time to time to maintain strong contact. This, however, is still a considerable problem in their everyday life: they live in several countries, mostly in Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Latvia and Germany. The borders and distance between them have led to the formation of independent concepts of the reconstruction and orthography. Both Prusaspīrā and Twānkstas Prūsa, for instance, based theirs on the reconstruction proposed by Mažiulis and Palmaitis, but the latter community has developed its own spelling system, which differs mainly in the way of rendering vowels; it has also slightly altered the grammar rules of the adjectives and some verbs.⁴ However, these differences, in the opinion of the revivalists with whom I discussed this issue, did not result in the loss of mutual intelligibility.

To the best of my knowledge, there are currently at least three families who use Prussian as their home language and four children being raised bilingually in these families. One of the families lives in Poland, so their children are Polish-Prussian bilinguals; the other two families live in Russia and their children are Russian-Prussian bilinguals, or even Russian-Prussian-Lithuanian trilinguals. Reportedly, no children of members of the Lithuanian and German revivalist societies speak the language.

⁴ These differences can be observed by comparing the words and their declensions and conjugations in the respective dictionaries on their websites: prusaspira.org (a dictionary of the Polish community, based on Palmaitis' dictionary) and twanksta.org (reformed standard of the language, used by the Prussian-speaking community in the Kaliningrad Region).

The communities have developed several websites such as prusaspira.org and twanksta.org. They offer learning tools, articles written in Prussian, games and online dictionaries with automatic declension of the words. There are also several Facebook groups devoted to the language and a YouTube channel called *Prūsiska Tāliwidāsna* [Prussian Television] (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqhLH_SLh3apNZjSruEXZMg).

Several books have been published in the Baltic Prussian language – dictionaries, a collection of biographies and modern literary texts (*Prūsiska Chrestōmatija*), and the translation of *The Little Prince* (Szatkowski, 2015) by Piotr Szatkowski (the author of this article), who has also been a non-core member of the Prusaspirā society since about 2009. The initial strive to develop the author's regional identity, demonstrated by learning, promoting and using the Prussian language, has later evolved into more sociolinguistic interest in the mechanisms, various strategies (including modern ones, such as the use of the Internet) and challenges of the language revival process.

At the moment, it is estimated that the movement has about 15–20 active users of the language. There could be, however, several hundred people who tried to learn it and used it for some time since the early 1990s. As a result of revivalist efforts, the language status was changed by SIL International from *extinct* to *living* in 2009 (SIL International, 2021).

The Present Study

The fieldwork for the present study was conducted during two short stays with one of the first Prussian-speaking families in the twenty-first century. I spent time with them in June 2019 (Gdańsk) and July 2021 (Toruń). The data was collected using participant observation. I made field notes after or during the daily activities, such as common meals, playing, evening talks, a walk, and so on. The research questions were as follows:

- (1) Which languages are used by the family? In which contexts?
- (2) Does code switching occur in the family's communication?
- (3) If so, what are the strategies of dealing with code switching?
- (4) Are there any differences in language use of the L2 parents and the L1 child?
- (5) Are there any traces of occasional or constant borrowings from the dominant Polish language in the family language of my participants?

At the time of the first stay, the family consisted of three people: father (F), mother (M) and a daughter aged four (D). A second daughter was born between the two meetings (D2). Both parents are between 30–40 years old; their native language is Polish, but as a result of their language activism, they decided to change their home language to the reconstructed (New) Prussian, in which they chose to communicate most of the time with each other and with their children. The older daughter is therefore the second person in the twenty-first century for whom Prussian is the native language (the first one is a girl from the Kaliningrad Region, who is a few years older). However, the daughter also speaks Polish. She uses it with her extended family (grandparents, aunt and uncle, cousins), with the friends of her parents who do not have a command of Prussian, and with her peers at nursery school.

Her little sister is too young to speak more than several basic and distorted words in both languages; however, she understands most of the basic messages spoken in Polish and Prussian (connected with feeding, playing, animals, basic household items, home space and surroundings). She understands Polish because of contacts with her extended family and Polish-speaking friends; she also attends a nursery school with Polish as the language of instruction. Therefore she communicates some basic needs using distorted words coming from both Polish and Prussian. The usage of both languages indicates that she is probably aware that her parents understand messages in both language codes.

During the study, what could be observed was the parents' tendency to use Prussian not only in the presence of the children, but also in all possible contacts as long as the interlocutor knew the language. This also applied in my case. Therefore, as a user of Prussian, I also participated in the conversations in Prussian, which probably influenced the shape of trends and practices.

Switches to Polish occurred when one of the interlocutors did not understand Prussian – one case in point was a visit by a Polish-speaking guest, which resulted in an instant and intuitive switch to Polish, both by the parents and the older daughter. Similar switches were made during telephone conversations with people who did not speak Prussian. I did not observe any instance of involuntary mixing of the codes during the process of deliberately changing the code. The deliberate switch between the languages was always highly effective, it happened without any interruptions of mixing the two codes.

An interesting case was the use of Polish when ordering a meal at the bar. Both me and the family spoke Prussian consulting dishes and ingredients and after that we translated the results of this discussion to communicate with the employee taking the order. From the ergonomics'

point of view, it could have been more convenient to completely switch to Polish, as all participants of the conversation knew the language, but this did not occur. This can be explained by the desire to practise Prussian (the community of Prussian speakers meet quite rarely) and the intention to keep the arrangements that had been made for the meeting.

The other cases of using Polish by the parents were the Polish words they used when they did not know the Prussian equivalents. Two such examples were the words *zwolnienie* 'sick leave' and *przedstawicielai* 'representatives', which were spontaneously put into a conversation in Prussian about the labour market. It is worth noting that the second example consists of the Polish root *przedstawiciel* and the plural masculine Baltic ending *-ai*.

There were also situations when the parents spontaneously used Polish and then consciously switched back to Prussian. I noticed only three such occurrences during the two days (i.e. when the parents used Polish without such intention), which proves a high commitment and a high level of self-control, aimed at preserving the use of Prussian in the environment overwhelmingly dominated by Polish (Polish-language media, external environment, Polish-speaking friends and family).

The way the parents used the Baltic Prussian language displayed syntactic, semantic, phonetic and lexical influences of Polish. An example of the syntactic and semantic ones is the extension of the use of the Prussian preposition *na* 'to' (phonetically identical with Polish *na*). Despite the identical pronunciation of the preposition in both languages, in Prussian it is used strictly to determine the location of an object (or a person) in relation to another object. This preposition, however, has gained a wider application in the idiolect of F and M – they also use it to define an activity or purpose: *na zukkans* can mean the standard 'on fish' (in the sense of the position in relation to another object, e.g. 'there is something on a fish'), but also purpose ('to go fishing', literally 'to go on fish') and 'during the fishing'. In the second case, this form contradicts the standard usage (agreed by common practices of the language societies): *per zukkans*, and in the third case, the use of the verb participle *zukkawintei* 'fishing'. The two latter uses of the preposition *na* have been borrowed from Polish.

An example of lexical borrowing is the word *kibels*, idiolectically adopted in this family. This word is not found in any modern Prussian dictionary, but its creation probably stems from everyday language practice: the word *kibel* is used in informal Polish for 'toilet'. The idiolectal Prussian word *kibels* contains the inflective masculine nominative suffix *-s*, suggesting a high level of grammaticalization of the loan word. In dependent cases, it is modified according to the standard Prussian declension patterns used in words with pho-

netically similar endings: gen. *-as*, dat. *-u*, acc. *-lin* (cf. the declension of the New Prussian word *mantels*).

Another example of inflectional adaptation of a Polish root can be found in one of the following statements made by the mother:

- (1) M: Tenēi segēi stawīdāns darans.
They are making such gifts.
- (2) M: As etwerre dwarrens.
I open the door.

In the first case, she did not fill a lexical gap (no dictionary equivalent that can be used in a given context) – there is a Prussian word for a gift: *dajā*. However, she was probably too focused on the transmitted information and used the Polish *dar* ‘gift’ with a typically Prussian inflectional ending *-ans* for the accusative plural.

The second case is an example of semantic interference. The speaker used the word *dwarrens*, which is the pl. acc. form of *dwarrens*, meaning ‘gate’ in New Prussian (reconstructed from the Old Prussian word *dauris* from the Elbing Vocabulary). She intended, however, to use this word in the meaning of ‘door’ probably because of the phonetic similarity to the Polish word *drzwi* ‘door’. In some rare situations, when constructing or recalling a Prussian word or construction would interfere with the flow of the conversation, the parents use unmodified Polish terms. I noted examples like *ubezpieczenie* ‘insurance’ or *koniec łańcucha pokarmowego* ‘the end of the food chain’.

Similar, naturally occurring adaptations of Polish roots can also be observed in the daughter’s speech:

- (1) D: Wirst tū mennei dāwuns stawīdāns cukkerikans?
Will you give me this kind of candies?
- (2) D: Mazzi as želkans?
Can I have some jelly candy?

The pl. nom. word *cukkerikai* (and its pl. acc. form *cukkerikans*) derives from the Polish *cukierki* ‘candy’. The standard New Prussian word for candy is *bumbōns* (singular) and *bumbōnai* (plural), from the German *Bonbon*, as reconstructed by Palmaitis (the word is not attested in Old Prussian sources) (Palmaitis, 2007b, p. 43). The proposed change of German *-n-* to *-m-* in the first part of the word is probably supposed to reflect local Polish phonetic adaptations (cf. *bombon*, *bómbón* in Mazurian). One of the strategies of obtaining lacking internationalisms

is to observe their way of adaptation in East Prussian dialects of German, Polish and Lithuanian. The pl. acc. form *želkans*, in turn, derives from the Polish word *želki* 'jelly candy' and has no standard New Prussian equivalent, so it appeared naturally to fill a lexical gap.

The family members also use some other adaptations from Polish, including borrowings like *pampērai* 'disposable nappies', from the Polish *pampersy* (deriving from the well-known brand Pampers), or loan translations like *kīrsastūndis*, derived from the Polish *nadgodziny* 'extra hours, overtime'. The Polish term *nadgodziny* consists of *nad* 'over' and *godziny* 'hours', and the spontaneously coined Prussian adaptation consists of their equivalents: *kīrsa* and *stūndis*.

Although the phonetic features of Prussian as spoken in the family undoubtedly require a separate and comprehensive study, it can be noted here that some general characteristics in this respect include a frequent lack of vowel length and tones in diphthongs (replaced by a dynamic accent as in Polish), and the lack of palatalization of consonants following the vowel *e*, which is recommended in the reconstructed form of the language, among others in the introductory remarks to the *Dictionary of Revived Prussian* by Letas Palmaitis (Mikkels Klussis). Another observed tendency was the use of the paroxytonic accent (as in Polish), while the New Prussian language has a free accent (i.e. no universal rule, the accent depends on the word and its declension).

Some interesting mechanisms can be observed in the parents' relations with the daughter. They try to encourage her to speak only Prussian to them; this encouragement was mainly voiced by the father:

- (1) F to D: Labbai, adder bilāis prūsiskai.
Good, but speak Prussian.
- (2) M to D: Kāigi sta ast bilītan prūsiskai?
How is it called in Prussian?
- (3) F to D: Ni izpresta, bilāis stan prūsiskai.
I don't understand, say it in Prussian.

Another strategy involves correcting the daughter's vocabulary and syntax (in the following examples including code mixing or switching, the words or sentences in Polish are marked in italic):

- F to D: A kelli as turēi *latka*?
Literally: And-how-much-I-had-years?
- D to F: Kelli mettan wūran as bēi?
Literally: How-many-years-old-I-was?

The construction “to be X years old” has been adopted in the New Prussian standard from German. This borrowed way of constructing a message about one’s age is also known in Kashubian and Mazurian. The daughter used a typical Polish construction instead, including the verb *turītun* ‘to have’, Pol. *mieć*.

In these situations, the daughter reacted by switching the language code from Polish to Prussian or repeating the constructions proposed by the father.

Another observed strategy aimed at “restoring” the conversation in Prussian is to constantly respond in Prussian, even if the child includes some words or sentences in Polish:

D: *Ja ci pokażę to.*
I’ll show you that.

M: *Ka sta ast?*
What is it?

D: *Gumika!*
A rubber!

The daughter is probably aware that her parents are bilingual, so she freely switches the codes knowing that they understand both of them:

- (1) D (about the cat, in the presence of the parents):
Tū pergūbusi... Moje maleństwo.
You have come... My little one.
(Running around the cat):
Uwięziłam kattā na zawsze!
I’ve captured the cat forever!
- M: *Ni prawerru tīt spīlitun sen kattā.*
You can’t play with the cat that way.
- D: *Chciałam tylko jej pokazać, że też jestem kotkiem...*
I just wanted to show it that I’m a cat, too.
- (2) D: *Māmi, ona wyrzuciła moje żelki.*
Mommy, she threw my jelly candy away.
- (3) D: *Mūti, tāti nie pozwolił mi.*
Mom, dad didn’t allow me.

In these examples it is important to notice not only the mixed code and code switching, but also the usage of the word *kattā* ‘cat’ in the accusative: *kattān*. It was used with the correct Baltic Prussian accusative ending even though the rest of the sentence was in Polish, as if the Polish and the Prussian parts of the sentence had been treated or created separately.

The girl quite freely switched codes between Polish and Prussian during conversations and games. The context seemed to play the key role here: the games learned at a Polish-language nursery school, and thus strictly contextualized in language, were often played using Polish or a mixed code:

- (1) D: *Muszę zrobić babkę z piasku.*
I have to make a mud pie.
- (2) D: *As ni wīrst aupallusi... To jest za małe.*
I won't find it... It's too small.
- (3) D: *As ni kłamię.*
I'm not lying.
- (4) D: *Tū wīrst lazinnuns tīt, ale ni tīt. A ja pójdę naprzód.*
You will lay this way, but not this way. And I will go straight forward.
- (5) D: *Sūit! Dabber rēizan... Sto razy!*
Enough! Once more... A hundred times more!
- (6) D: *Ja was będę prowadziła. Tīt ēimai!*
I will lead you. So, let's go!
- (7) D: *Sta būlai per īdin, adder... jest z kolcami.*
It would be good for eating, but... it has spikes.
- (8) D to M: *As wīrst gūbusi per tāli, be będę chciała nō tin.*
I'll be going for too long and I'd like "to go on you" (to be carried by you).
- (9) D to F and M: *As ēima bandātun, ile ja ważę.*
I'm going to check how much I weigh.
- (10) D to M: *Proszę, nie wyłączaj tego.*
Please, don't turn it off.
- (11) D: *Adder tenēi bēi biskin zielone.*
But they were a little bit green.
- (12) D: *As mīri, kāi biskin ast jāu wieczór.*
I think it's a little bit of evening already.

The above examples indicate the predominance of code switching over code mixing (which occurred more rarely), as the inclusions of the second code usually featured a whole grammatical sentence and did not involve grammatical or at least phonetic assimilation. Here I follow Bokamba's definition of difference between code switching: "the mixing of words, phrases and sentences from two distinct grammatical (sub)systems across sentence boundaries within the same speech event", and code mixing: "the embedding of various linguistic units such as affixes (bound morphemes), words (unbound morphemes), phrases and clauses" (Bokamba, 1989, p. 278).

However, there were two cases of sentences that could be identified either as a mixed code or code switching: Examples 3 and 4 above. The switch can occur when the user finds words to express a need or describe a situation more easily in another code; it is often preceded with a pause, as in Examples 2, 5 and 7. It can also occur in the contexts which are restricted mainly to one code – as it is here, Polish is used in the nursery school, which means that the context of playing with toys and engaging in various games is predominantly Polish, as can be seen in Examples 1 and 6.

Conclusions

The language practices and features of language use in the family of Prussian language revivalists that was observed should be analysed considering two different categories of speakers: one of them is the parents, conscious activists devoted to the promotion of the Prussian language, and the other is the children, for whom Prussian is the home and native language. The parents try to use Prussian consciously in a way that is consistent with the proposed standard. They use it at home on a daily basis – they clearly prefer Prussian in this setting. The Polish inclusions stem either from their insufficient language competence in the domain that is being discussed – an issue which is consistently addressed by, for example, consulting the online dictionary – or from the fact that the intended recipients of the message do not have a command of the language. Another factor at play is temporary lack of “self-control”, when the complexity or importance of the message is so high that it requires the use of Polish.

The older child, in turn, a native speaker of both languages, uses the two codes freely and in a non-ideological way (which is quite obvious in the case of a person at such a young age), switching between them and mixing them as she sees fit. The switching and mixing of codes is spontaneous, most likely conditioned by the more frequent use of one of them in a given context, or even in given collocations, a richer vocabulary and better language experience in a given code in a given topic (e.g. some collocations that make the utterance shorter), or external stimuli in the form of parental incentives to encourage or discourage the use of a given code in a given situation.

The language practices in this family of Baltic Prussian revivalists and in the community of like-minded people can be perceived as an interesting, yet uncommon example of the most basic stage of reversing the language shift (Fishman, 1991, pp. 88–89). As it is here, this means acquisition of the language by adults and passing it to the next generation – moving

on from the stage where the language is dead to one where it can be classified as at least dormant. This case study may add some new data on language revival characteristics to Zuckermann's newly proposed discipline of "revival linguistics" and on the ways of implementation of two of his language revivalism principles (Zuckermann & Walsh, 2011, p. 117):

If your language died → Stop, revive, survive!

If you revive your language → Embrace the hybridity of the emergent language!

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Language Practices in a Family of Prussian Language Revivalists: Conclusions Based on Short-Term Participant Observation

The Prussian language (ISO code: prg) is a Baltic language considered to be dead since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Baltic Prussians, closely related to Lithuanians and Latvians, had been conquered and Christianized by the Teutonic Order by the end of the thirteenth century. Since then, the ongoing process of assimilation led to the extinction of the ancient language, attested only by a few glossaries and three translations of the Lutheran catechisms from the sixteenth century. The language remained unused until the 1980s, when a group of scholars began its reconstruction. Some years later, the revival movement emerged, consisting of activists living in Poland, Russia (Kaliningrad Region), Lithuania, Latvia and Germany, claiming their Old Prussian roots or spiritual connection to the land and/or the people. Their efforts resulted in changing the language status from *extinct* to *living* in 2009 (SIL International) and to *dormant* (Ethnologue). There are at least three children using Prussian as their L1 language; there are also modern translations, poems, Facebook groups and a YouTube channel. This study is based on short-term participant observation of language practices in one of the Prussian-speaking families and considers examples of Polish lexical and grammatical influences, code switching and code mixing.

Keywords:

Prussian language; Baltic languages; language revival; language activism; language practices; code switching; code mixing

Praktyki językowe w rodzinie rekonstruktorów języka pruskiego – wnioski z krótkotrwałej obserwacji uczestniczącej

Język pruski (kod ISO: prg) należy do rodziny języków bałtyjskich. Uznaje się go za język wymarły najpóźniej od początku XVIII wieku. Bałtyjscy Prusowie, spokrewnieni z Litwinami i Łotyszami, zostali pod koniec XIII wieku podbici, a następnie stopniowo schrystianizowani przez zakon krzyżacki. Rozłożony w czasie proces asymilacji kulturowej i językowej spowodował wymarcie starego języka pruskiego, poświadczanego zaledwie kilkoma słowniczkami, frazami i trzema szesnastowiecznymi tłumaczeniami katechizmu luterńskiego. Język pruski nie był w użyciu aż do lat 80. XX wieku, kiedy grupa badaczy rozpoczęła proces jego rekonstrukcji. Kilkanaście lat później uformował się oddolny ruch mający na celu wskrzeszenie języka, w którego skład wchodziły aktywiści z obszarów dzisiejszej Polski, Rosji (obwodu kaliningradzkiego), Litwy, Łotwy i Niemiec. Osoby te często deklarowały posiadanie staropruskich korzeni bądź poczucie duchowego dziedzictwa ziemi i ludu Prusów. Ich wysiłki doprowadziły do zmiany statusu języka pruskiego z wymarłego na żywy (SIL International) i „uśpiony” (ang. *dormant*) (Ethnologue) w 2009 roku. Dziś żyją co najmniej trzy nieletnie osoby, dla których język pruski jest prymarnym językiem kontaktów domowych. Społeczność posiada strony i grupy na Facebooku, kanał w serwisie YouTube, tworzone są wiersze, tłumaczenia i muzyka w tym języku. Artykuł powstał po dwukrotnych odwiedzinach u dwujęzycznej prusko-polskiej rodziny używającej zrekonstruowanego języka pruskiego, by udokumentować niewynikające z proponowanego standardu języka pruskiego polskie wpływy leksykalne i gramatyczne, a także w celu przyjrzenia się rodzinnym praktykom językowym oraz zjawiskom zmiany i mieszania się kodów językowych.

Słowa kluczowe:

język pruski; języki bałtyjskie; rewitalizacja językowa; aktywizm językowy; praktyki językowe; zmiana kodu językowego; mieszanie kodów

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