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**A NEW ROLE FOR LOW GERMAN? LANGUAGE INSERTION AS
BILINGUAL PRACTICE IN THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE
SHIFT**

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Manuscripts

1 A new role for Low German?
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3 A NEW ROLE FOR LOW GERMAN? LANGUAGE INSERTION AS BILINGUAL
4 PRACTICE IN THE PROCESS OF LANGUAGE SHIFT
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8 ABSTRACT
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10 This article analyses language insertion as a bilingual communicative practice,
11 applying a functional, speaker-focused approach to the study of sociolinguistics
12 and language contact. The article is based on a study of contact phenomena in a
13 formerly diglossic region in Northern Germany, where the previously spoken
14 language – Low German – is in the process of being replaced by the dominant
15 standard variety, German. It examines regional publications in order to
16 establish the linguistic techniques by which Low German elements are
17 incorporated into the Standard German texts and the communicative purposes
18 that they serve. The paper concludes that in the process of language shift an
19 emblematic repertoire from Low German is created which can be applied into
20 the dominant contact language, German, for specific communicative purposes.
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38 Keywords
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40 Language contact, language shift, Low German, language mixing, language
41 insertion, bilingual advertising.
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1 A new role for Low German?
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3 Ausgehend von einer funktionalen, sprecherzentrierten soziolinguistischen
4 Herangehensweise werden im folgenden Artikel bilinguale Einfügungen als
5 Form mehrsprachiger kommunikativer Praxis untersucht. Die Studie analysiert
6 Kontaktphänomene in einer vormals diglossischen Region Norddeutschlands,
7 in der die gesprochene Sprache Niederdeutsch zunehmend von der dominanten
8 Kontaktsprache Deutsch ersetzt wird. Im Artikel werden regionale
9 Publikationen untersucht, um die sprachlichen Techniken heraus zu arbeiten,
10 mit denen niederdeutsche Elemente in den Text integriert werden und welche
11 kommunikativen Funktionen mit ihnen verbunden sind. Der Artikel kommt zu
12 dem Ergebnis, dass während eines Prozesses von fortschreitendem
13 Sprachverlust ein emblematisches niederdeutsches Repertoire geschaffen wird,
14 das für spezifische Funktionen in die dominante Kontaktsprache Deutsch
15 eingefügt werden kann.
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3 INTRODUCTION AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC BACKGROUND
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5 This article investigates language shift among Low German speakers in
6 Northern Germany. It raises the question of how the individual and the speech
7 community react to the fact that one of their languages is continuously losing
8 importance as means of communication in day-to-day interaction.
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15 Less than 150 years ago, the Northern German area was host to clusters
16 of multilingualism. The Low German varieties¹ served as a spoken and the
17 emerging German Standard language as a written and high variety in well-
18 established diglossic speech communities. Other languages also played a role
19 in day-to-day communication and in the formation of national and regional
20 identities and allegiances, both politically and culturally. In the north of the
21 region, Frisian, Danish, Low German and Standard German were used
22 alongside each other. In the east, Low German and Standard German were in
23 contact with Slavic languages. In the west, for example in the region of East
24 Frisia and in parts of Westphalia, Dutch, Low German and Standard German
25 served as means of communication in different domains, as did a Jewish
26 variety based on Western Yiddish (Reershemius 2007; 2004). Since then, the
27 previously multilingual landscape of Northern Germany has changed
28 dramatically in an accelerating process of language shift and language change,
29 in which smaller varieties have been lost and Low German is currently
30 threatened by decline. Two representative linguistic surveys conducted in 1984
31 (Stellmacher 1995) and 2007 (Möller 2008) show that Low German has lost
32 more than half of its active speakers in less than thirty years, mainly due to the
33 fact that speakers no longer raise their children with Low German. If these
34 trends continue it is foreseeable that within a relatively short time Northern
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3 Germany will have become monolingual, in the sense that it will be dominated
4
5 by regional varieties of spoken Standard German (see, e.g., Herrgen 2006).
6
7

8 At the same time, recent studies (Arendt 2010; Möller 2008;
9
10 Reershemius 2002) show that attitudes towards Low German have become
11
12 overwhelmingly positive. What used to be seen as a stigma is now considered
13
14 an important part of regional culture and heritage, and the regional
15
16 administration supports the use of Low German in education and the workplace
17
18 (Nath 2003; 2004). Low German has become increasingly popular and visible
19
20 (Bundesrat für Nedderdütsch 2009; Reershemius in print b), apparently
21
22 serving new, symbolic functions. At the moment, speakers of Low German
23
24 find themselves in a complex situation. The surveys suggest that they cherish
25
26 Low German. However, the old fear that Low German could be an obstacle to
27
28 education and prevent success in a rapidly modernizing society is deeply
29
30 rooted.² Thus, they may not speak the language with their children any more,
31
32 but an increasing number of Northern Germans, not necessarily Low German
33
34 speakers, engage in what Shandler (2005) calls postvernacular cultural
35
36 practices:³ Low German amateur theatre in the region is extremely popular,
37
38 primary schools organize Low German reading competitions on a regular basis,
39
40 and local newspapers and magazines present columns in Low German. Folk
41
42 music with Low German lyrics is very popular. There are a few, but regular,
43
44 broadcasts in Low German by some of the regional radio stations. Recently,
45
46 too, the Internet has begun to play a role in the Low German speech
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48 communities not only in East Frisia but across Germany, Europe and in
49
50 diaspora communities in the United States (Zurawski 2007; Reershemius in
51
52 print a). All these efforts and activities have in common the fact that they fall
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54 mainly into a very specific part of an individual's or a community's activities:
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3 it is the domain of culture, entertainment and leisure, and has little connection
4
5 with day-to-day life (see, e.g., Schröder 1997; Peters 1998); in fact, there is a
6
7 tendency for speakers to reject the use of Low German when it is not connected
8
9 with these domains or used as a vernacular among friends, family and
10
11 neighbourhood (Reershemius 2002).
12
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14
15 This article examines one of the linguistic solutions speakers of Low
16
17 German find to this dilemma as they try both to live in their language and to
18
19 keep up with a society in which that language is rapidly losing its significance
20
21 as a day-to-day means of communication. It asks how Low German is used and
22
23 applied at a time when it is being abandoned as a vernacular, and how these
24
25 practices might influence the regional varieties of spoken standard German.
26
27 The theoretical background of the study is a functionalist approach to
28
29 sociolinguistics and the study of language contact, focusing on the bilingual or
30
31 multilingual speaker who engages with language as social activity and uses
32
33 language to achieve communicative goals (Matras 2009).
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39 The analysis focuses on regional publications from East Frisia, a
40
41 peninsula in the most north-westerly part of Germany bordering the
42
43 Netherlands, which has approximately half a million inhabitants. The region
44
45 has been chosen for three reasons. Firstly, East Frisia is one of the northern
46
47 German areas where Low German varieties, although threatened by language
48
49 shift, still play a considerable role in day-to-day life (Stellmacher 1995).
50
51 Secondly, in East Frisia more than 600 years of language contact led to the
52
53 development of a form of Low German distinct from neighbouring varieties,
54
55 with Frisian and Dutch components, mainly in the lexicon (Versloot 2001;
56
57 Ebeling 2001a; Ebeling 2001b; Reershemius 2004). Thirdly, people living in
58
59 the region see it as a cultural, if not political, unit.
60

A new role for Low German?

Figure 1: Map of East Frisia



Linguistic changes correspond with social and economic transformation in the region, which was formerly almost entirely dependent on agriculture but now relies heavily on service industries and the public sector, with manufacturing industries accounting for only one quarter of the gross domestic product. Since the 1980s tourism has gradually become one of the most important pillars of the region's economy. This has led to specific forms of commodification (Heller 2000 and 2003) of Low German, which has begun to play a role in the design of a regional image constructed for purposes of tourism marketing and identity building alike. Low German has also become more visible in public space, for example in street signs, advertisements or house names (Reershemius in print b). Thus, while declining dramatically in terms of the number of active speakers and communicative domains, Low

1 A new role for Low German?

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3 German is becoming more visible, more popular, an economic commodity and
4
5 increasingly connected with issues of regional identity construction.
6

7
8 The present article focuses on the incorporation of Low German in
9
10 otherwise Standard German East Frisian publications, in order to analyse the
11
12 new role of the formerly spoken variety. The corpus of data analysed consists
13
14 of twelve issues of a glossy regional magazine, written by professional
15
16 journalists and writers, which means that the study analyses forms of bilingual
17
18 writing. According to the definition given by Adams (2003: 30-31), a bilingual
19
20 text is a text written in two languages. Adams distinguishes between mixed-
21
22 language texts, in which two languages are merged to form a single product,
23
24 and those texts “in which some sort of juxtaposition of two separate versions is
25
26 the norm”.⁴ Whereas oral bilingual practices occur on a semi-conscious,
27
28 intuitive level in interaction, the process of writing differs considerably from
29
30 speaking inasmuch as writing texts, especially when intended for publication,
31
32 involves a high level of conscious planning. The conscious and strategic
33
34 insertion of elements of a minoritized variety into a dominant written standard
35
36 language can thus be categorized as a bilingual linguistic practice comparable
37
38 with, yet distinct from, practices such as borrowing and oral code-switching.
39
40 The incorporation of, for example, Low German into otherwise Standard
41
42 German texts is a deliberate and carefully planned act. As a linguistic practice,
43
44 language insertion – written and oral – is part of the overall bilingual activity
45
46 that can be summarized as language mixing. In his analysis of mixed
47
48 languages, Matras (2009: 288–307) underlines that the emergence of such
49
50 varieties is due to conscious, indeed deliberate, acts by speakers who apply
51
52 parts of the lexicon of a minoritized variety into the dominant matrix language.
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54 Matras also stresses that mixed languages appear on a continuum, or functional
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3 cline. At one extreme there are mixed languages which have developed into
4 fully fledged community languages, for example Michif in Canada (Bakker
5 1997) or Ma'a in Tanzania (Mous 2003). At the other end there are varieties
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10 “whose use is limited to a number of narrow and specialised communicative
11 functions” (Matras 2009: 291), for example cryptolects like Jenisch (Yenish) in
12 Austria, Switzerland and south-west Germany, or Angloromani, “a style or
13 register that consists of the occasional insertion of a Romani-derived word into
14 English” (Matras et al. 2007: 142). The practice of bilingual language insertion
15 can be compared with the processes leading to the emergence of mixed
16 varieties, albeit on a different scale, since only a limited set of lexical items,
17 phrases, greeting formulae, sayings and proverbs are embedded into the matrix
18 language, as will be shown in the following section. However, it remains to be
19 asked whether the practice of language insertion can also contribute to the
20 emergence of new regional varieties or ethnolects when an iconic repertoire
21 (Coupland 2003) drawn from a minority or lesser used language is integrated
22 into a dominant matrix language for purposes to be specified.
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43 LOW GERMAN IN A REGIONAL MAGAZINE 44

45 In a situation of language contact between an autochthonous minority language
46 (Gardner-Chloros 2009) and a dominant standard variety, hybrid bilingual texts
47 tend to be stigmatized due to normative and puristic attitudes prevailing both
48 towards written forms of the standard and towards the minority language.
49
50 Therefore, bilingual texts tend to be highly marked and do not occur across all
51 genres of texts in equal measure. In the following section, insertion of Low
52 German elements into standard German texts will be analysed in twelve issues
53 of a regional monthly glossy magazine *Ostfriesland Magazin* ‘East Frisia
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1 A new role for Low German?

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3 Magazine' (OM). OM has been published since 1984, a period that roughly
4
5 coincides with the development of tourism in mainland East Frisia. A statement
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7
8 by the editor of OM in the jubilee edition for the magazine's twenty-fifth
9
10 anniversary indicates that the aim of OM is to report on the region for visitors
11
12 and locals alike (OM 4/2009: 46). Articles in OM are displayed among glossy
13
14 photographs, which show the region from the most positive perspective. OM
15
16 provides a vehicle for the regional economy by contributing to tourism
17
18 marketing and giving local businesses advertising space. It also covers cultural
19
20 events and developments or recent achievements in the region, for example
21
22 wind-power technology or a modern shipyard building luxury cruise ships. The
23
24 magazine is published in Standard German, but Low German is applied
25
26 consciously to very specific journalistic genres and discursive domains: in
27
28 twelve issues between July 2008 and June 2009 seventeen reports were
29
30 dedicated to Low German or Low German literature and theatre. In addition,
31
32 every issue contains two to three texts written in Low German, and normally
33
34 includes a Low German cartoon and a Low German column, confirming the
35
36 findings of the 2007 survey which state that the most popular literary text
37
38 genres in Low German are newspaper columns and short humorous texts
39
40 (Möller 2008: 39). Other Low German texts in the twelve issues examined
41
42 include three letters to the editor (two of them in a jubilee edition), several
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44 poems, the winning texts of a Low German literary competition and an
45
46 interview with a language activist who responds in Low German to questions
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48 put to her in Standard German. Thus, on average, every issue contains two to
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50 three texts in Low German and one to two articles on topics related to Low
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52 German, adding up to approximately five pages of each issue of the
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54 approximately 130-page magazine.
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6 INSERTION OF LOW GERMAN IN EDITORIALS AND TOPICAL ARTICLES
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8 A distinction must be made here between Low German for readers of Low
9 German and Low German for readers of Standard German. The Low German
10 column is clearly addressed to readers of Low German. The majority of Low
11 German occurrences in OM, however, are aimed at readers of Standard
12 German with some, little or no knowledge of Low German. This apparent
13 paradox can be explained by looking at the application of Low German
14 elements in Standard German texts in more detail. Low German elements tend
15 to be used only for certain text genres, mainly editorials and those articles
16 which deal with a distinct complex of subjects, especially local folklore,
17 regional history of the last hundred years and entertainment. Eight out of
18 twelve editorials contain Low German elements, normally a single word or
19 phrase. These words and phrases belong to a set of frequently used Low
20 German items, for example *Krintstut* ‘raisin bread’, *Kluntje* ‘rock candy’ or
21 *schöfeln* ‘ice-skating’, which keep recurring. Since OM addresses not only
22 locals but also visitors, the lexical items are normally placed in quotation
23 marks to indicate their distinctiveness and interrupt the flow of reading, as
24 shown in example 1, where the Low German element is underlined:
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50 1 *Die lieben Kleinen buddeln im Sand, backen Kuchen, bauen*
51

52 The dear little ones dig about in the sand, make sand cakes, build
53

54 *Burgen und manschen mit “Puttjeklei”.*
55

56 sand castles and slosh about with mud.
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3 Example 1 is an excerpt from an editorial in the August issue (OM 8/2008: 3),
4
5 which deals with the pleasures of life on the beach. The Low German element
6
7 *Puttjeklei* ‘mud’ would not be an obstacle for monolingual readers of Standard
8
9 German since its meaning can easily be derived from the context. For bilingual
10
11 readers it adds a further dimension to the sentence about children playing on
12
13 the beach because it semantically belongs to Low German children’s talk
14
15 (Doornkaat-Koolmann 1882: 780). The Low German word is presented as a
16
17 quote. The quotation marks indicate that the element is interrupting the flow of
18
19 reading but also convey the additional connotation of ‘they say’ or rather ‘they
20
21 used to say’, in the old days when everybody spoke Low German as a matter of
22
23 course.⁵ In three out of twelve issues, the editorial contains a Low German
24
25 proverb or aphorism, also a form of quoting the accumulated wisdom of a
26
27 distinct culture, with a tendency to appear at the end of the text, summing up
28
29 the content without adding new information. Thus, the language of the
30
31 editorials manages to draw on the regional language in a way that avoids
32
33 incomprehensibility for monolingual readers but claims a certain degree of
34
35 distinctiveness by hinting at the regional language.
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43 In OM, Low German elements can be found in topical articles which
44
45 deal with a specific cluster of issues such as local history and folklore, local
46
47 cuisine, art and entertainment. In their study of two Irish-language newspapers,
48
49 Kelly-Homes and Atkinson (2007: 39) make a similar observation: the use of
50
51 the Irish language is mainly restricted to what the authors call *traditional*
52
53 *domains*: “Traditional domains were considered to be music, arts events,
54
55 literature, language industry and education.” Articles in OM which belong to
56
57 such traditional domains also draw on the linguistic technique of quoting
58
59 elements of Low German, for example by applying proverbs and sayings in
60

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3 Low German, as in example 2, from a report on contemporary local art, where
4
5 one of the pictures introduced has a Low German proverb as a title (OM
6
7
8 4/2009: 194):
9

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11
12 2 *Well neet will dieken, de mutt wieken.*
13

14
15 ‘He who does not help to maintain the dykes will have to leave’
16
17

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19 This saying echoes one of the best-known stereotypes of the region, familiar to
20
21 all locals and most tourists and usually referred to as a way of explaining the
22
23 regional mentality.
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26
27 Far more often than sayings, however, the topical clusters of articles use
28
29 quoted speech in Low German, for example in a report about a faith-healing
30
31 eighty years ago (OM 7/2009: 54–57). In this story, a girl with severe walking
32
33 problems is taken to a healer after various failed attempts by the medical
34
35 profession to find out what is wrong with her. The healer examines the child,
36
37 smiles and then delivers her diagnosis in Low German:
38
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41
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43 3 *“Dat sitt nich in de Kneei und ok nich in de Foot! Dat sitt hooger,*
44

45
46 “‘It [the problem] doesn’t sit in the knees and not in the foot. It sits
47
48 higher up,
49

50
51 *dat Kind hett de Hüft ut’t Lidd!’*
52

53 the child has a dislocated hip!’”
54
55
56

57 Thus, the surprising twist of the story is delivered in Low German. The article
58
59 is written in Standard German and would be perfectly comprehensible without
60
the element of quoted speech since the main facts of the story are explained in

1 A new role for Low German?

2
3 Standard German. The Low German quote does, however, add a certain
4
5 element of authenticity to the story; it functions as a contextualization cue
6
7 (Gumperz 1982). The availability of a second language – Low German – to the
8
9 author of the story, and the fact that a considerable number of the intended
10
11 readers of OM will be able to comprehend it in a certain context, mean Low
12
13 German is used here as a stylistic device (see, e.g., Auer 2007). This technique
14
15 is applied frequently in the narrative sections of articles in the twelve issues
16
17 analysed.
18
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20

21
22 Another technique observed is fictitious quoted speech in Low German,
23
24 for example in an article about a gardener who succeeded in planting a
25
26 beautiful garden against the odds in a challenging environment, observed
27
28 critically by her neighbours (OM 6/2009: 118):
29
30
31
32
33

34 4 *Die gab's zwar in Parkanlagen, aber in einem Privatgarten?*

35
36 'Those could be found in parks, but in a private garden?

37
38 *Unvorstellbar! SO'N TÜDELKRAM!*

39
40 Impossible! Such a nonsense!
41
42
43
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45

46 By adding the Low German element to the fictitious neighbours' voices, the
47
48 author contrasts the enterprising gardener who tries to do new things with her
49
50 more conventional, old-fashioned (and Low German speaking) neighbours.
51
52 Again, Low German is used as a stylistic device in this example. In OM, for
53
54 editorials and articles dealing with traditional domains the quoting of single
55
56 words, phrases, proverbs, sayings and elements of reported speech is one of the
57
58 bilingual techniques by which Low German is implemented into the Standard
59
60 German text.

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3 The majority, 53%, of Low German elements applied in the Standard
4 German texts in the twelve issues of the magazine between July 2008 and June
5 2009, however, are namings: amateur theatre groups, musicians, museums,
6 hotels, restaurants, cafes, events, societies and associations in the region have
7 given themselves Low German names, for example *Dörpmuseum* ‘village
8 museum’, *Theatergruppe “Antjemöh”* ‘theatre society “Old Antje”’,
9 “*Strandlooper*” ““beach runner”” (a monthly calendar of events) and so on,
10 with a preponderance of compound nouns consisting of one Low German and
11 one Standard German element. Most of the cases of namings add quotation
12 marks to their Low German name.
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28 29 INSERTION OF LOW GERMAN IN ADVERTISING

30
31 The average issue of OM contains 169 advertisements, of which 7% entail one
32 or more Low German elements. The above-mentioned linguistic technique of
33 naming in Low German also plays an important role in advertising in the
34 magazine. The object of advertising is given a Low German name, such as
35 *Café Störnhuus* ‘Café Storm House’ (OM 9/2008: 81) or *Marianne’s Schapp*
36 ‘Marianne’s Wardrobe’ (OM 7/2008: 2). In her analysis of multilingual
37 advertising, Piller (2001) points out that the vast majority of instances where a
38 language other than the dominant one is applied are in the names of products.
39
40 Based on a study of public signage and advertising in the city of Amsterdam,
41 Edelman (2009) confirms these findings and underlines the fact that the readers
42 of names on advertisements do not necessarily have to understand their
43 meaning. The names’ main purpose is to evoke certain connotations, which are
44 associated with a specific language. The Low German elements in
45 advertisements therefore do not need to convey factual information, a task that
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3 is normally fulfilled by those parts of the ads written in Standard German. This
4
5 also applies to advertisements in OM where Low German elements are
6
7 involved. While the factual information about the products is given in Standard
8
9 German, the products are named in Low German, often with reference to
10
11 bygone times. This is no coincidence but part of a pattern: whereas English
12
13 elements in German advertising as a whole indicate a future orientation (Piller
14
15 2001: 165), the use of Low German is oriented on the past and evokes the
16
17 return to a traditional, almost pre-modern society. Studies of multilingual
18
19 advertising confirm that the main role of inserted language elements is to evoke
20
21 specific connotations and stereotypes which are normally connected with a
22
23 specific language and culture (Kelly-Holmes 2005, Luna and Peracchio 2005a;
24
25 2005b).

26
27 Slogans in Low German do not play a major role in the corpus analysed
28
29 here, although they are the main focus in experimental studies into bilingual
30
31 consumer behaviour (Luna and Peracchio 2005a; 2005b). In a few cases,
32
33 however, Low German slogans are applied in the corpus, for example in the
34
35 otherwise Standard German advertisement by an estate agent *Dat is mien*
36
37 *Tohus anne See!* ‘This is my home at the seaside’ (OM 7/2008: 117). The
38
39 slogan is superimposed onto one of the photographs, very appropriately, since
40
41 its effect is not only based on the content of the sentence but is also pictorial,
42
43 visualizing the distinctiveness of the region by depicting its regional language
44
45 in addition to the landscape, very much in an ornamental way.

46
47 A number of advertisements in the magazine use the Low German
48
49 greeting formula *Moin!* (e.g., OM 9/2008: 81) or the adapted version *Moin,*
50
51 *moin!* (e.g., OM 10/2008: 26). The Low German greeting *moin!*, short for
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53 *moien dach* ‘beautiful day’, is evidently distinct from the otherwise common
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1 A new role for Low German?
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3 formulae used for greetings in Northern Germany *Guten Tag!* ‘good day’ or,
4
5 more informally, *Hallo!* ‘hello’.⁶
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8 To summarize, bilingual advertising in the magazine using Low
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10 German applies three linguistic techniques in order to implement Low German
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12 elements into Standard German texts: quoting, naming and greeting. These
13
14 techniques are basic bilingual techniques which serve multiple purposes.
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16 Firstly, they help to present the region as bilingual, thus adding another distinct
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18 feature to the image created. In their studies of British television holiday
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20 programmes, Jaworski, Ylänne-McEwen, Thurlow and Lawson (2003a; 2003b)
21
22 emphasize the role of *linguascapes* in presentations of tourist destinations:
23
24 concentrating on the most basic phatic and instrumental formulae in the
25
26 language other than English, such presentations provide viewers with a flavour
27
28 of the local language, thus accentuating another distinctive aspect of the region.
29
30 Clearly, such presentations of distinctive linguascapes will need to avoid any
31
32 impression of potential communicative problems between hosts and tourists,
33
34 since that might discourage visitors from choosing to travel to this particular
35
36 area. But it is not only tourists who might find this image of a multifaceted,
37
38 bilingual culture attractive; it also appeals to the sense of pride that local
39
40 readers – monolingual or bilingual – may feel. The insertion of Low German
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42 elements into the Standard German texts of OM reinforces constructions of
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44 regional identity.
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52 Secondly, bilingual readers will appreciate Low German references,
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54 since they add a stylistic dimension to the otherwise Standard German texts, as
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56 in example 1, and may trigger what Matras, Gardener, Jones and Schulman
57
58 (2007) in their analysis of emblematic language use call the *emotive mode*.
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Because the use of minority in-group languages is normally restricted to the

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3 more private communicative domains such as family, friends or
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5 neighbourhood, the application of elements from the minority language in the
6
7 dominant contact languages triggers the special, intimate knowledge connected
8
9 with these domains and forms a special bond between speaker and hearer, in
10
11 this case between writer and reader, who then communicate in an emotive
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13 mode (Matras et al. 2007: 143).
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20 CONCLUSION: LANGUAGE INSERTION AND THE ENREGISTERMENT OF AN
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22 EMBLEMATIC REPOSITORY
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24 The analysis of regional publications from East Frisia has shown that the now
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26 minoritized former spoken variety, Low German, is frequently inserted
27
28 consciously and deliberately into certain journalistic and literary genres, mainly
29
30 editorials, articles dealing with traditional domains, and advertisements. These
31
32 genres have in common that they either address their readers directly
33
34 (editorials, advertisements) or have a strong narrative component (articles on
35
36 traditional domains). It is important to note that the phenomenon is less likely
37
38 to occur in genres related to more factual content, for example articles dealing
39
40 with contemporary affairs, the economy and other aspects of modern life.
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45 Three linguistic techniques were identified by which Low German elements are
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47 inserted into the otherwise Standard German texts: quoting, naming and
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49 greeting. These techniques are basic forms of bilingual practices which allow
50
51 speakers, semi-speakers and even non-speakers of Low German to consider
52
53 themselves part of the regional community (or regional speech-community).
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56 Thus, the functions of language insertion as shown above are threefold. Firstly,
57
58 it enables the region to be presented to the outside world and to prospective
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60 visitors with the additional feature of a bilingual culture, by creating a

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3 linguascape that reinforces the attractions of the landscape. Secondly, the
4
5 image created by insertion of Low German, providing distinctiveness without
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7
8 risking Otherness, is adapted by locals in order to construct a form of regional
9
10 identity. Thirdly, language insertion as shown in the examples discussed above
11
12 allows members of a formerly bilingual speech community to preserve
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14
15 elements of the variety they are in the process of losing.
16

17 As shown in the textual analysis above, language insertion draws on a
18
19 limited set of single nouns, some verbs, phrases, sayings, greeting formulae,
20
21 proverbs and – in more narrative contexts – short passages of quoted speech or
22
23 consciously transferred grammatical structures. In his study of the use of Welsh
24
25 in a Welsh-American community newspaper, Coupland (2003) makes similar
26
27 observations, referring to an “iconic repertoire”. Matras et al. (2007: 149)
28
29 analyse the emergence of Angloromani and state that a limited set of “core
30
31 vocabulary, a few productive rules of vocabulary formation and a few
32
33 fossilized expressions” are taken from Romani and incorporated into English as
34
35 the matrix language. This basic vocabulary forms a pool of synonyms which is
36
37 applied to the matrix language when speakers attempt to evoke the emotive
38
39 mode – a special bond between speaker and hearer which refers back to a
40
41 previous stage in the process of language shift, when the minoritized language
42
43 was reduced to serving as a vernacular in more private domains of
44
45 communication like family, friends and neighbourhood.
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52 These observations also apply to the analysis of Low German–German
53
54 contact phenomena. Recent surveys show that Low German is in decline even
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56 as the spoken variety of the private domains. However, a certain limited
57
58 repertoire of Low German elements is being preserved and inserted
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60 deliberately into Low German texts. The question arises, then, whether

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3 language insertion of a Low German repertoire could have the potential to
4
5 establish a new regional variety of German in the formerly bilingual speech
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7 communities.
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10 The present article focuses on written language. A larger-scale study
11
12 looking at spoken varieties of Standard German in Northern Germany would
13
14 be desirable in order to establish whether language insertion as part of language
15
16 mixing could have the potential to trigger new regional varieties of spoken
17
18 German or provide Northern German speakers of German with a specific
19
20 register (Matras et al. 2007) to be applied for the specific communicative
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22 purpose of evoking the emotive mode.
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27 Secondly, the discussion of the textual analysis in this article has
28
29 highlighted the fact that the phenomenon dealt with is by no means restricted to
30
31 Low German–Standard German language contact: Angloromani, Irish, Welsh
32
33 and Yiddish have been indicated as examples of languages involved in similar
34
35 or identical processes. A comparison of case studies covering a range of
36
37 minority languages in the process of language shift towards a dominant contact
38
39 language would help to answer the question of whether language insertion as
40
41 part of language mixing needs to be established as a distinctive component of
42
43 the process of language shift and change.
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49 NOTES

50
51 ¹ An ongoing argument among linguists, language activists and speakers of
52
53 Low German centres on the question of whether Low German is a language or
54
55 a dialect. Considering the well-established problems within the linguistic
56
57 discipline in defining the terms language and dialect satisfactorily, the
58
59 argument seems somewhat superfluous. Nevertheless, because the debate is
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4 ideologically highly loaded in the Low German speaking communities, it keeps
5 resurfacing. Schröder (2004: 35) distinguishes between the perception of most
6 speakers, that Low German is a language, and the prevalent view among
7 linguists that the Low German varieties are part of the diasystem of the
8 German language in the widest sense. However, when the European Charter
9 for Regional or Minority Languages was signed by the German government in
10 1999, Low German was recognized as a regional *language* worth preserving,
11 supporting and promoting, explicitly not as a dialect (Goltz, Lesle and Möller
12 2008).
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26 ² The discourse of Low German as an obstacle in the education especially of
27 disadvantaged social groups goes back well into the nineteenth century, and
28 was expressed for example by Ludolf Wienbarg (1834) in his pamphlet “Soll
29 die plattdeutsche Sprache gepflegt oder ausgerottet werden? Gegen Ersteres
30 und für Letzteres”.

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37 ³ Shandler claims that a variety which is no longer used as a vernacular may
38 nevertheless have certain important purposes: it can gain in symbolic value
39 what it has lost in communicative functions. Individuals may not be able to
40 speak or fully understand a language, but they still consider themselves to be
41 members of a certain speech community and engage in postvernacular cultural
42 practices like performing in amateur theatre, engaging in discourses about the
43 language, using or making translations, learning the basics of the language in
44 evening classes or surrounding themselves with objects related to the language.
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56 All it takes to become part of a postvernacular language community is the
57 decision of an individual to participate.
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4 ⁴ Reh (2004) points out that sociolinguistic research has focused on oral
5
6 bilingualism and widely ignored its written forms. This claim is confirmed by a
7
8 look at recent handbooks, textbooks and general introductions to bilingualism,
9
10 multilingualism and language contact: apart from the analysis of borrowing,
11
12 bilingual writing hardly features at all or is subsumed under bilingual practices
13
14 in general.
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18 ⁵ The presentation of elements of the minoritized language in quotation marks
19
20 was also observed by Coupland (2003: 171). In his analysis of Welsh elements
21
22 in the Welsh-American community newspaper *Y Drych*, Coupland stresses that
23
24 this practice indicates that the Welsh language element is not simply used but
25
26 deployed.
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30 ⁶ See also Coupland (2003), who observes that one of the ways to incorporate
31
32 Welsh elements into the otherwise American English community paper *Y*
33
34 *Drych* is the use of salutations.
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