

LANGUAGE IN THE PERIPHERY: POLISH IN LATGALIA

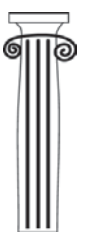
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Language is one of the elements of nationality, and today, when most countries are multilingual and also multinational, it is the key element for understanding of the national identity. In its history, the mankind has undergone numerous territorial and political changes, which contributed to the fact that nationals of any particular country can be found in other countries all around the world. At times the number of people with ethnic roots that differ from nationals of a particular country is quite considerable and forms a minority. Polish minority in Latvia appeared in the 16th century, when the territory was incorporated in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The Polish language in Latvia, and especially in Latgalia, which belonged to the Commonwealth for two centuries, has had its own development and today differs from standard literary Polish spoken in the mainland Poland. The author of the paper gives an insight into the history of Poles and Polish in Latvia and discusses the research on the Polish language in Latgalia that has been conducted so far.

The key element that is needed for language maintenance is its users; thus, first of all, it is necessary to turn to historical events and sequence that brought Poles into Latgalia. Latgalia is one of the four historical regions of Latvia – a Baltic country that was inhabited by Finnish and Baltic tribes, and then held by the Dutch and German conquerors. In the 13th century, the Livonian Brothers of the Sword established their brotherhood in Latvia and until 1561 controlled the territory. In 1561, Livonia got under the rule of Zygmunt August and a sixty-year long period of Polish rule began in the entire Latvia. However, in the 17th century, due to military activities the territory was divided between Poland and Sweden, leaving present Latgalia under the rule of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. After the first partition of Poland in 1772, Latgalia was assigned to Russia and since 1802 has been referred to as the Dvinsk Province (Łaniecki 1996(1), 4-5). When Latvia proclaimed its independence in 1918, Latgalia was under this name recognised as one of the regions of the newly established state, and after the Second World War as a part of Latvia was incorporated into the Soviet Union. Today Latgalia remains one of the four regions of



Latvia, its ethnic composition probably being one of the most complex throughout the country.

A very important factor for the development of the Polish language in Latvia is the timing, when particular waves of Poles arrived from their fatherland to get permanent residence in the country (*Polacy na Łotwie* 2008). The first wave consisted of Polish nobility and gentry that came from Polish ethnical districts apportioned with land on the territory in question. Another layer of arrivals are participants of national rebellions, who sought asylum by hiding from the Czar's army in the territories that were not so heavily inhabited as elsewhere. The third group is formed of peasants, who came to independent Latvia in the 1930s for seasonal work in agriculture and stayed here for good. Then there is an insignificant number of Poles, who came to Latvia at the beginning of the Second World War, escaping from Nazi invaders and, finally, the fifth group of Poles, who mainly came from the territory of Belarus to seek employment after World War II. Considering all these immigrants, it can be concluded that the first group that encompassed Polish nobility and gentry, as the largest and the initial one, had the decisive role in the dissemination and maintenance of Polish in Latvia and mainly in Latgalia, whereas the next three groups formed a qualitative but not quantitative addition to the linguistic development and situation of Polish. Still, the last group of Poles that arrived in Latvia from Belarus is strongly connected with the appearance of the so called 'simple speech' in Polish *mowa prosta* (Ostrówka 2005) that is a mixture of Russian, Belarusian and Polish languages used by common predominantly rural inhabitants in the former lands of Polish Commonwealth.

As far as the number of Poles permanently living in Latvia is concerned, the changes that occurred in the last hundred years are not considerable. In 1920 there were roughly 54,567 Poles that constituted 3.42% of all inhabitants and the majority of them – 30,313 lived in Latgalia, where they made 6.10% of all inhabitants. It can be concluded that the number of Poles living in this territory was higher than the average in the country as a whole, but Poles lived mainly in the largest cities of the region (Cynarski 1925, 15–19). According to some sources, in 1920 in Daugavpils there were 8,178 Poles, which constituted 28.2%, but in 1930 there were 9,007 Poles, which, despite the rise in number, constituted only 20.8%; on the contrary, in Kraslava there were 14.2% of Poles in 1920 and 29.5% in 1930 (Eberhardt 1997, 287–309). After Latvia regained its independence in 1991, there were 2.7 million inhabitants and 2.3% of them were Poles (Łaniecki 1996(2), 3). In 2006 Daugavpils had 108,206 inhabitants and 16,126 Poles (14.9%), but the former territory of Poland in 2006 was inhabited by 24,423 Poles, which constitutes 10.4% of the whole population of the region (Kruczewski 2007, 52).

Factors that are crucial for the development and vitality of any language are the availability of education, literature and periodicals in the language in question, as well as the language of church or the language used in religious ceremonies and active social life. Poles in Latvia during the time of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth



had a number of schools, where Polish was taught among other languages and that during the Polish and Russian rule were mostly run by missionaries or religious orders such as Jesuits (Giżycki 1915, 2–7). During the Russian rule in the 18th century, Polish was not taught and even abolished, but with the emergence of the Republic of Latvia a new era for education in the Polish language began. In the period between the 1st and 2nd World Wars there were 45 Polish schools in Latvia, but in 1999 there were only six Polish schools left (Pujsza 1999, 19–20). Considering publications in Polish, the first Polish-Latin-Latvian dictionary was published as early as in 1563 (*Polacy na Łotwie* 2008) but a more extensive dictionary containing 14,000 entries was Elgers' "*Dictionarivm Polono-Latino-Lottaucum*" that included Polish, Latin and Latvian languages and was published in 1683 (*Tulkojošās vārdnīcas*). Books and magazines of local and foreign authors were published, too. One of the first and very significant periodicals published in the 19th century was "*Rubon*" edited by Kazimierz Bujnicki, which published writings of regional intelligentsia. After Latvia gained its independence, the first Polish weekly newspaper was "*Głos Polski*" (*The Voice of Poland*) published in 1922–1923, which mainly dealt with politics; then there were "*Tygodniki Polski*" (*Polish Weekly*), "*Dzwon*" (*The Bell*), "*Nasz Głos*" (*Our Voice*), "*Nasze Życie*" (*Our Life*) – central newspapers read by the Polish minority, describing their life and providing current information (Jekabson 1991, 21–24). Immediately after Latvia regained its independence in 1991, the newly established Union of Latvian Poles started publishing "*Polak na Łotwie*" (*The Pole in Latvia*). The periodical is published every two months until today, and is the voice of Latvian Polish speaking community. During the 20th century, Polish with varied success and degree of authorisation was taught in schools, used in church and in social life, surviving due to the strong will of Polish people, who continued to use their language in the family and among friends, cultivating Polish traditions and Catholic religion.

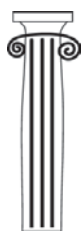
There is no need to dwell on the fact that languages behave differently depending on their environment, circumstances, geopolitical situation and a variety of other factors. Even within one country, the national language has dialects and vernaculars, but considering the same language spoken elsewhere in the world it can have a number of dialects that are still different. According to professor Ananieva from Moscow State University, any language can have a peripheral zone, where it interacts with other languages used in the given territory thus forming a peripheral dialect (Ананьева 2008). A peripheral dialect *sensu stricto* would appear only in the borderland of any particular country or a territory that is in another country close to the border, however, in the recent years scientists have been using the term *peripheral* to describe also language communities that appear in places far more distant than it was initially presumed¹. Due to the previously described geographical and political situation, the territory of the Polish language was for some time far larger than it is now, and on the former territory of Poland that now belongs to Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine, a peripheral Polish dialect (*polszczyzna kresowa*) is spoken.

¹ For example, Karaś speaks about peripheral Polish in Syberia: Karaś, H. *Kresowe odmiany polszczyzny*. Available at: <http://www.gwarypolskie.uw.edu.pl>



Linguists mainly distinguish two varieties of the mentioned dialect: the southern peripheral Polish, which is spoken on the territory of Ukraine, and the northern peripheral Polish, which is spoken in Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia (Karaś). Considering the northern peripheral Polish dialect (*poszczyzna północnokresowa*), Turska outlined three main Polish-speaking regions: the region of Vilnius, the region of Smalvos (including a small part of borderland in Latvia and Belarus) and the region north and north-east of Kaunas (Wiemer 2003, 124), while she almost totally disregarded the territory of Latgalia, today inhabited by a considerable percentage of Poles. Many scientists admit that, while a significant amount of research has been conducted on the southern peripheral Polish and northern peripheral Polish in Belarus and Lithuania, there are very few that treat the Polish peripheral dialect spoken in Latvia and Latgalia in particular. Małgorzata Ostrówka is one of the pioneers studying, as she names it, the Latvian northern peripheral Polish dialect (Ostrówka 2005(2), 88). In her article *Polish Regiolect in Latvia* she names a few scientists that conducted research on the topic in question – Wecesław Werenic in late 60s described linguistic situation in Daugavpils and Kraslava districts, Józefa Parshuta from Riga examined vernacular Polish spoken in Dravinieki village, Halina Karas described Polish used by intelligentsia in Daugavpils and Riga. There can be no doubt that the subject of the northern peripheral dialect in Latvia is slightly touched upon in works on dialectology of other authors, like Ananieva or Wiemer², but the most extensive research has been carried out by Ostrówka, who wrote her doctoral dissertation on the subject in 2001. When describing the Latvian northern peripheral Polish dialect, there are five main areas, where Ostrówka has determined differences from the standard Polish: phonetics, word-formation, inflection, syntax and lexis (Ostrówka 2005(2), 95–97). As far as phonetics is concerned, the main processes are reduction of middle vowels, mainly *e*, in non-stressed positions, for example: *ni mogę, miśane, pżyżyli* instead of *nie mogę, mieśane, pseyżyli*; and vowel reduction characteristic to Russian (*akanie*), where /a/, /o/, /e/ are reduced to (a) in non-stressed positions, like in *jakaż zajęcia mieli, sieli pszenica, tym uczniom* instead of *jakież zajęcia mieli, sieli pszenicę, tym uczniom*. Considering word-formation, Ostrówka determines three main characteristic features: descriptive constructing of superlative forms (similar to Russian), namely, *same ładne* instead of *najadniejszy*; joining of standard Polish word roots with foreign affixes, for example, *blek'itnieńki, mal''us'eńki*; and, finally, formation of the third person singular and plural pronouns in Genitive using suffixes *-ny, -na, -ne* like in *jejny, ichny* (this phenomenon can also be traced in dialects of Belarusian and Russian languages). In inflection, there are such occurrences as the shift of grammatical gender of nouns: *ta bydła, długa życ'a* instead of *to bydło, długie życie*; the fluctuation of endings in the Genitive Case singular, mostly in the noun *kościół* (*church*) like in *do kościołu* instead of *do kościoła* and in nouns *zy špital'u, z ranu, du dynegurgu*; ending in *-a* instead of *-u*, like in *do poćónga, białego doma*; the use of

² Some information on peripheral Polish dialects among other sources can be found in Анањева, Н.Е. 2004. *История и диалектология польского языка* (2 изд.). Москва: УРСС, or in previously mentioned Wiemer, B. 2003.



genderless ending *-i/y* in the Nominative Case of nouns of all genders, for example, *i dñi byli i nocy, dwa xšeśniki moje, syny moje* instead of *i dnie były i noce, dwie xšeśniaczki moje, moi synowie*. Finally, considering syntax, there are also a number of traces that distinguish the Latvian northern peripheral Polish dialect from the standard Polish. One of the elements that have undergone changes is the accommodated form of grammatical case, for example, *zapytać u kogo* instead of *zapytać kogo* or *czekać kogo* instead of *czekać na kogo*. Ostrówka stresses that it is the syntax of the given dialect that has acquired most features of the Latvian language. For example, the discussed dialect uses sentences with *trzeba + Dative + infinitive*: *mnie trzeba zaraz plita palić* instead of *muszę zaraz palić pod kuchnią*. Another feature common for the northern peripheral Polish dialect is *u + Genitive*, like in *u mnie była maszyna* instead of *miałem auto*. Lexis of the Latvian northern peripheral Polish includes assimilated vocabulary from Russian (*maszyna, koniecznie*) and Latvian (*kapuswetki*) languages as well as Polish archaisms that did not survive in standard Polish. The presented research has given a thorough insight in the Latvian northern peripheral Polish dialect spoken by the eldest generation of speakers, but disregards other generations of users.

In general, it is clear that Polish in Latvia is a commonly used language that has many speakers, schools, literature and is maintained due to the efforts of its users, as well as social organisations originating from Poland. The Polish language spoken in Latgalia can be referred to as the Latvian northern peripheral Polish dialect, and while it has traces of the northern peripheral Polish, it is also strongly conditioned by the environment of its usage. The author of the paper claims that, in order to understand the true nature of the current Polish spoken in Latgalia, a comparative research encompassing all generations of speakers is necessary.

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KALBA PERIFERIJOJE: LENKŲ KALBA LATGALOJE

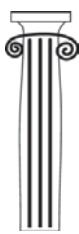
Santrauka

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: *šiaurės periferinis lenkų kalbos dialektas, Latgala, lenkai Latgaloje.*

Turint omenyje dabartinę socialinę-politinę situaciją, akivaizdu, kad daugumas šalių, regionų ir teritorijų yra daugianacionaliniai ir daugiakultūriniai; Latgala, vienas iš istorinių Latvijos regionų, nėra išimtis. Čia kasdien kalbama latvių, rusų, lenkų, lietuvių ir kitomis kalbomis ir šių kalbų dialektais. Atskirta nuo savo pagrindų, nuo oficialios teritorijos, kiekviena kalba patiria pokyčių, o jos kitimas yra smarkiai veikiamas kitų ją supančių kalbų; todėl ji ima savarankiškai funkcionuoti periferijoje.

Lenkų gyvenančių Latgaloje, tautinė mažuma, kuri sudaro apie 10 % gyventojų skaičiaus, istoriškai susiformavo, kai 1569 m. ši teritorija buvo inkorporuota į Lenkijos–Lietuvos respubliką. Du šimtmečiai lenkų valdžios paliko ženklus pėdsakus etninėje regiono sandaroje ir lėmė įvairius lingvistinius procesus lenkų kalboje naujomis aplinkybėmis. Tai atskyrė ją nuo tos lenkų kalbos, kuria yra kalbama Lenkijoje.

Daugelyje mokslinių lenkų kalbos dialektologijos tyrinėjimų analizuojami periferiniai dialektai Baltarusijoje, Ukrainoje ir Lietuvoje, paprastai nekreipiama dėmesio į lenkų kalbą, kuria kalbama Latgaloje. Šio straipsnio autorė pateikia trumpą lenkų tautinės mažumos istoriją Latvijoje, ypač Latgaloje, ir pristato kalbininkų atliktą vadinamojo Latvijos šiaurės periferinio lenkų kalbos dialekto tyrimą.



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Summary

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Considering the current socio-political situation, it is clear that today the majority of countries, regions and territories are multinational and multicultural; Latgalia – one of the four historical regions of Latvia – is not an exception. Latvian, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian and other languages along with their dialects are spoken here on everyday basis. When separated from its core, meaning the official territory, any language undergoes changes and its development is heavily influenced by other languages surrounding it and it starts to function on its own in the periphery.

The Polish minority living in Latgalia, which constitutes approximately 10 per cent of all inhabitants, was formed historically, when in 1569 the territory was incorporated into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Two hundred years of Polish rule left visible traces in the ethnic composition of the region and gave grounds for various linguistic processes that occurred in the Polish language under new circumstances, differentiating it from the Polish language spoken in Poland.

The majority of research on Polish dialectology treats about peripheral dialects in Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania, generally disregarding Polish spoken in Latgalia. The author of the paper provides a brief insight into the history of Polish minority in Latvia, and Latgalia in particular, proceeding to the presentation of the research that has been conducted by linguists on the so called, Latvian northern peripheral Polish dialect so far.

