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Polish Spoken Language and Belarusian Dialects in Lithuania: Preliminary Considerations on Selected Areal Aspects

Abstract. Research on the Polish language in Lithuania has a long tradition. Halina Turska made the first area division in the 1930s. In general, most researchers of Lithuanian Polish refer to this division to this day. This division was made based on selected phonetic and grammatical features, on the one hand, differentiating them from the standard Polish language, and on the other, three areas from each other (the Vilnius area, the Kaunas area, and the Smalvos area). In the 1990s, new areas for the Polish language in north-western Belarus were defined by I. Grek-Pabisowa (mainly based on the frequencies of selected features). Over the course of over 30 years, a vast amount of material has been collected in the form of interviews recorded in Lithuania, north-western Belarus, and Latvia which allows analyzing new aspects, including areal issues. On the one hand, these are recorded interviews in Polish, on the other hand, in the Belarusian dialect. Conducting field research in Lithuania since 2009, I have collected over 130 hours of Belarusian dialects and several hours of Polish. The preliminary analysis of the material showed many features common to Belarusian dialects and Lithuanian Polish, covering specific areas.

Keywords: Belarusian dialects; Polish spoken language in Lithuania; Baltic-Slavic linguistic borderlands; areal linguistics.

1. Introduction

Research on the languages of the Baltic-Slavic borderland has a long tradition, and this area is being dealt with by numerous linguists from Poland, Belarus, Lithuania, or Latvia. Their research results in a number of monographs and hundreds of articles. Some of them have dealt not only with the speech structure of the population under study, but also with areal aspects. It should be noted, however, that the researchers of Polish analyzing the Polish language of this borderland did not analyze these areas more broadly concerning the areas of occurrence of features in neighboring Belarusian dialects. The same applies to Baltic studies. Baltic linguists have not conducted in-depth studies of features in Lithuanian and Latvian dialects relative to contemporary Belarusian dialects.

The idea of writing this article was born more than ten years ago, with the publication of the *Atlas of the Baltic languages* (BVA, 2009; BVAFL, 2013). During the presentation of the new publication, the authors of the *Atlas* drew attention to the shared acreages of some lexemes, covering parts of Lithuanian and Latvian dialects and Slavic languages (e.g., Stafecka, 2018). In the case of some maps, the researchers of Belarusian language immediately see parallels with dialectal areas of Belarusian. For example, a map showing the area of occurrence of the word ‘clover’ (*koniczyna* in Polish) may serve as an example. The lexeme *kaniušina* areally can be referred to the southwestern dialect of Belarusian, while *klevers*, *kleveris* to the northeastern dialect of Belarusian (comp. with Russian *klievier*) (BVAL, 2013, p. 318).

Area issues concerning the languages and dialects of the broadly understood Baltic-Slavic borderland were also of interest to researchers working on the TriMCo project¹. Convergence processes in the areal aspect of this borderland, using methodological considerations, also in relation to Belarusian dialects, were considered, among others, by B. Wiemer and A. Erker (Wiemer & Erker, 2012).

Polish spoken language on this territory has formed on the Baltic (mainly Lithuanian) and East Slavic (mainly Belarusian) substrate, which is reflected in the specificity of the speech of local Poles and Polish speakers. What differentiates local Polish from the standard Polish language are primarily Baltic and East Slavic features. Therefore, it is understandable to attempt to re-

¹ This project was carried out at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz under the supervision of Prof. B. Wiemer. See more: <https://www.trimco.uni-mainz.de/>.

late the area of many phonetic-grammatical, syntactic, and lexical features of the Polish language of this borderland to the area of occurrence of similar features in local Belarusian.

This article is an introduction to the planned in-depth areal research on the common areas of occurrence of the same features in the dialects of the two languages – Belarusian and Polish. Areas of occurrence of selected phonetic-grammatical, syntactic, and lexical features of spoken Polish in the Belarusian-Lithuanian borderland will be compared with contemporary Belarusian dialects.

The material basis consists of published materials, dictionaries, atlases, monographs, and selected scholarly articles (see research status below). An important supplement is also the author's materials collected in the course of field research – more than 130 hours from the area of Lithuania, more than 300 hours from the area of Latvia, and about 100 hours from the area of northeastern Poland.

2. State of research

Polish language has lived to witness a number of monographs, several dictionaries, and hundreds of articles². Spoken Polish in the area of Lithuania and the Belarusian-Lithuanian borderland was of interest to many linguists. From the interwar period, the works of Halina Turska should be mentioned first and foremost, such as *O powstaniu polskich obszarów na Wileńszczyźnie* (Turska, 1982). Great interest in borderland Polish began in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the political changes and the possibility of conducting research for Polish linguists in the area of the USSR, and this has continued until today. In 1993, a monograph by Zofia Kurzowa (1993) came out. Other important works were written at the Faculty of Polish Studies at Warsaw University, such as the monographs by Halina Karaś and her team (Karaś, 2001; 2002; 2017). Many monographs have been published at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Maryniakowa, Grek-Pabisowa & Zielińska, 1996; Grek-Pabisowa & Maryniakowa, 1999; Grek-Pabisowa, 2002; Zielińska, 2002; Morita, 2006; Grek-Pabisowa, 2022). There has also been a number of book publications on the Polish language in Lat-

² Given the very rich literature on the subject, only selected publications, mainly books and dictionaries, are mentioned in this section.

via and northwestern Belarus, such as Kuņicka (2020), Konczewska (2021), Żebrowska (2019), and Kozłowska-Doda (2021).

From the point of view of the issue addressed in this article, the dictionaries of the Polish language functioning in Belarus, Lithuania, and Latvia are of great importance, on the basis of which it is possible to determine the area of occurrence of particular lexemes: *Słownictwo polszczyzny gwarowej na Litwie* (SPGL, 2006), *Słownictwo polszczyzny gwarowej na Brastawszczyźnie* (Rieger, 2014), *Słownik brastawski* (ŚlBrasł, 2009), or *Słownik mówionej polszczyzny północnokresowej* (SMPP, 2017). The latest state of research in this area is presented in an article by Golachowska et al. (2023).

The issue of Belarusian dialects in Lithuania has interested many Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Polish linguists (Halina Turska, Elżbieta Smułkowa, Valerijus Čekmonas, Mikola Savič, Petras Gaučas, Nijole Tuomienė, and others). In our case, for example, Valerijus Čekmonas' publications are worthy of attention. The linguist described, among other things, multilingualism in southeastern Lithuania, taking into account Belarusian dialects, areal aspects and Belarusian-Lithuanian-Polish contacts (Čekman, 2017; Čekmonas, 2017; Czekman & Giulumianc, 2017).

The first comprehensive description of the Belarusian language (including Belarusian dialects) was done by Vilnius-based researcher Liliya Plygavka, who published two books (Plyhauka, 2009; 2015). In recent years, two monographs by the author on Belarusian dialects in Lithuania have come out (Jankowiak, 2022; 2023).

From the point of view of the subject considered in this article, four publications will be of key importance: *Dialectological Atlas of the Belarusian language* (DABM, 1963), *Lexical Atlas of Belarusian folk dialects* (LABNH, 1993–1998), *Linguistic Geography and Grouping of Belarusian dialects* (LH, 1969) and *Dictionary of Belarusian dialects of Northwestern Belarus and its borderland* (SPZB, 1979–1986).

Area issues are also discussed, understandably, by Lithuanian dialectologists (e.g., Mikulėnienė & Meiliūnaitė, 2014; Kardelis, 2016; 2018). These publications contain many references to the Polish language and Belarusian dialects of this borderland.

3. Areal division of Polish spoken language and Belarusian dialects

The areal differentiation of the Polish language in the Baltic-Slavic borderland was one of the issues raised by linguists in their research. Halina Turska made the first division before World War II. She designated three areas – Vilnius, Smalvos, and Kaunas, based primarily on her fieldwork conducted in the 1930s (Turska, 1982, pp. 48–60). The researcher conducted her expeditions within the borders of Poland at that time, and the Kaunas area (then within the borders of Lithuania) was designated and described based on the research of historian J. Jakubowski. Most linguists still accept this division (with some modifications and details).

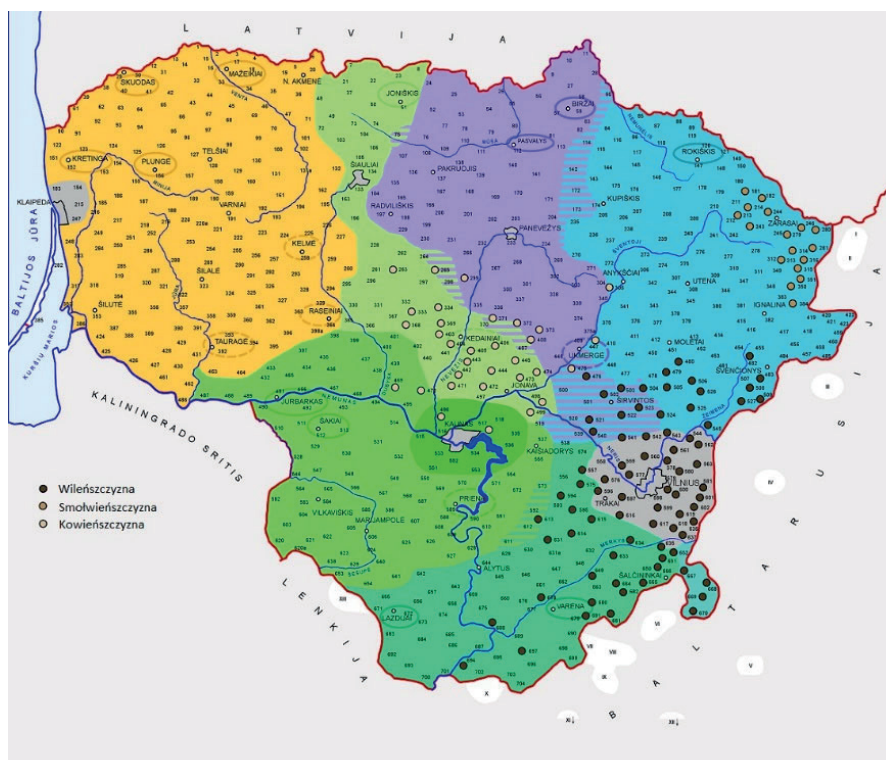
In the 2000s, Halina Karaś presented her division based on available literature and her field research (Karaś, 2002, pp. 22–25). She identified three areas with subdivisions:

- 1) Vilnius Region.
 - a. *Vilnius area* – Polish is used as the home language, with a weak knowledge of Lithuanian. This area also includes the southern part of the Trakai District and the eastern part of the Švenčionys region. For the most part, this area overlaps with the Vilnius area delineated by H. Turska.
 - b. *Eišiškės-Šalčininkai area* – the home language is usually “simple speech” (*mova prosta*, i.e., a Belarusian dialect). Polish serves as the official language, in religious spheres, and in education; there is minimal presence of the Lithuanian language.
 - c. *The area between Molėtai, Inturkė, and Jonava* – an area of Polish-Lithuanian bilingualism (within Lithuania’s borders until World War II).
 - d. *The Švenčionys Diasporic area* (from Švenčionys to Adutiškis) – predominance of Lithuanian-speaking population, with the Polish population dispersed.
- 2) Zarasai-Smalvos area – located at the border of Lithuania, Latvia, and Belarus, also known as the Daugavpils area, featuring a large Polish-speaking region.
 - a. Surroundings of Smalvos, Gaidė, and Meikštai – before WW II, these areas were within Poland’s borders, now part of Lithuania along the Belarusian border. This is part of the Smalvos area identified by H. Turska.

- b. The area around Zarasai – an area of Polish-Lithuanian bilingualism, before the war within Lithuania's borders. This area is somewhat broader than defined by H. Turska (who was unable to conduct research on the Lithuanian side in the 1930s).
- 3) Kaunas Region – an “archipelago of Polish linguistic islands”, also referred to as the Kaunas-Lauda or Kaunas-Žemaitija area, characterized by Polish-Lithuanian bilingualism.
 - a. “Immediate Kaunas Region” – north of Kaunas.
 - b. “Broad Kaunas Region” – the surroundings of Kėdainiai and Dotnuva, Liauda, the area from Jonava to Ukmergė and from Jonava to Šėta.

Halina Karaś conducted an areal division primarily based on the current sociolinguistic situation, referring to the pre-war division by H. Turska but elaborating and specifying it further.

H. Turska's division remains to be a point of departure for most linguists studying the Polish language in this border area. This is also true for the research conducted by the Vilnius linguist Kristina Rutkovska, who refined and clarified the areas defined by H. Turska based on her own studies. She developed a map with points indicating the presence of the Polish language and overlaid them onto the dot grids from the *Atlas of the Lithuanian language* (see: Rutkovska, WWW 1).

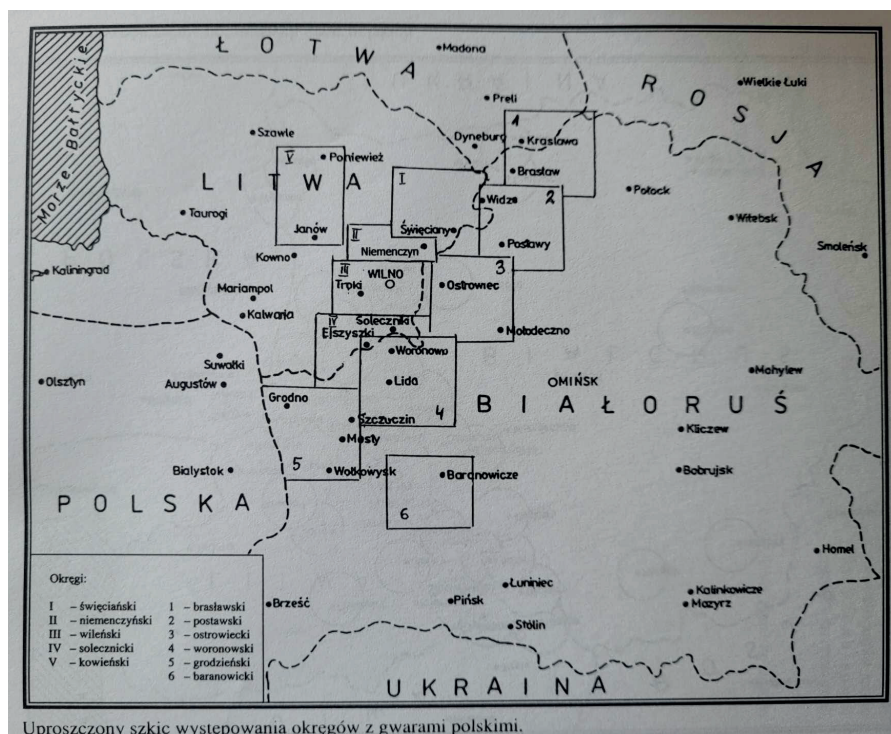


Map 1. Three areas of the occurrence of the Polish language in Lithuania: Vilnius, Smalvos, and Kaunas regions; source: <http://www.lenkutarmes.flf.vu.lt/apie/tarmes>

Another areal division was proposed by Iryda Grek-Pabisowa from the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (Grek-Pabisowa, 2002, p. 146). Based on selected phonetic features, the researcher distinguished 11 areas, five of which are in Lithuania:

- 1) Švenčionys
 - 2) Nemenčinė
 - 3) Vilnius-Trakai
 - 4) Šalčininkai-Eišiškės
 - 5) Kaunas-Panevėžys
- and six in Belarus:
- 6) Braslau
 - 7) Pastavy
 - 8) Astravec

- 9) Voranava
- 10) Hrodna
- 11) Baranavičy



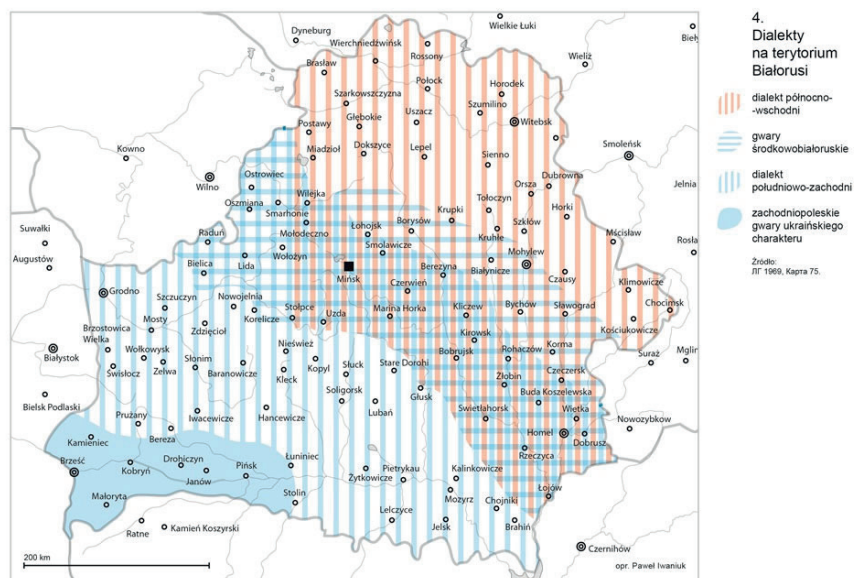
Map 2. The extent of Polish language regions in the Baltic-Slavic borderland, proposed by I. Grek-Pabisowa; source: I. Grek-Pabisowa, *Współczesne gwary polskie na Litwie i Białorusi. Fonetyka*, Warsaw, p. 156

The division proposed by I. Grek-Pabisowa has not been widely accepted by linguists working in this field.

As can be seen, the areas of the Polish spoken language proposed above were defined based on the sociolinguistic situation and selected speech features of the inhabitants. Naturally, they were delineated from the perspective of the Polish language, just as the description of characteristic features is relative to standard Polish. Below, areal aspects will be presented by relating selected features to the areas of their occurrence in contemporary Belarusian dialects of this borderland. So far, Polish linguists have not undertaken

a detailed description of the shared areas of selected features of Polish and Belarusian dialects.

In Belarusian dialectology, there are two divisions. The first, classical one, based on phonetic and grammatical features, divides Belarus into: the Northeastern dialect, the Southwestern dialect, and Central Belarusian sub-dialects. The second division is into so-called dialect zones (mainly based on lexis): Western, Eastern, Northwestern, Southeastern, and Central (Barszczewska & Jankowiak, 2012, pp. 120–131). Below, selected dialectal features – phonetic-grammatical, syntactic, selected lexemes – that, according to the author, are areally coincident in both Polish and the Belarusian dialects of the Baltic-Slavic borderland will be discussed. That is, selected features occurring in Polish will be mapped onto the areas of Belarusian dialects and dialectal zones.



Map 3. Classical division of Belarusian dialects; source: N. Barszczewska & M. Jankowiak, *Dialektologia białoruska*, p. 229

In this article, it is also worth paying attention to the range of occurrence of Belarusian dialects in the territory of modern Lithuania. Liliya Plyhauka

described this range based on previous research and her own field studies, especially those conducted in 2011–2013 (Plyhauka, 2015, pp. 66–71):

1. The eastern part of Vilnius district and the central part of Šalčininkai region – predominance of Belarusian dialects,
2. South of the Visinča River in the Eišiškės district, an area of intensive Belarusian-Lithuanian contact is observed,
3. Central part of Vilnius region – Belarusian is mostly spoken only by older people.

Lilija Plyhauka defined the borderline of the occurrence of Belarusian dialects as follows: Bujvydžiai – south of Nemenčinė, northwest of Sudervė and Riešė – west of Trakai – east of Daržyninkai – west of Kalesninkai. The linguist emphasizes, however, that they function primarily along the border. The Vilnius researcher defined the boundary line of the occurrence of Belarusian dialects in this way, following earlier researchers (V. Čekmonas, M. Savič, I. Kaval'čuk, and others). L. Plyhauka qualifies the Belarusian dialects as Western Belarusian, or historically South-Western dialect.

Since 2008, Lithuania has been explored by the author of this article from the perspective of the functioning of Belarusian dialects. The expeditions covered all the areas where Belarusian dialects occur, except for Trakai, which is planned for 2025. These were: Ignalina, Švenčionys, Vilnius, Šalčininkai, and Varėna regions (over 130 hours in total). The area of occurrence of “simple speech” was confirmed for the regions studied by previous linguists (Vilnius, Šalčininkai districts):

1. Vilnius district: widespread occurrence of Belarusian dialects in the eastern part.
2. Šalčininkai region: the author's dialectological expedition from 2024 showed that between Kalesninkai and Šalčininkai the Belarusian dialects are of a relic nature, the situation is slightly better in the vicinity of Deveniškės and east of Šalčininkai.
3. Varėna region – individual villages near the border with Belarus, relic character (only people of the older generation speak Belarusian).
4. Švenčionys region (from Švencionys to Adutiškis) and further along the border with Belarus), relic character, dialects being replaced by the Lithuanian language.
5. Ignalina region (Rimšė area) – relic character, dialects being replaced by the Lithuanian and partly Polish languages.

My research therefore covered a wider area, primarily taking into account the Varėna, Švenčionys and Ignalina regions, which had not been comprehensively studied by Belarusian and Lithuanian linguists before (Jankowiak, 2016; 2018b; 2020; 2021). Due to the fact that the presence of Belarusian dialects in Lithuania was confirmed by the author of the article for a wider area, it is necessary to specify the areal division made by earlier researchers:

1. Southwestern dialect of the Belarusian language: Varėna, Šalčininkai, Vilnius regions.
2. Central Belarusian subdialects: Šalčininkai, Vilnius, and partly Švenčionys regions.
3. Northeastern dialect of the Belarusian language: Ignalina and Švenčionys regions, area common with Belarusian dialects in Latvia (see: Jankowiak, 2018a).

4. Areal analysis of selected features

The Northeastern dialect of the Belarusian language covers northeastern Belarus, Belarusian dialects in southeastern Latvia, and northeastern Lithuania (Ignalina and Švenčionys regions). It comes into contact with the spoken Polish language used in Latvia, northern Belarus (Braslau, Miory, Pastavy, Miadziol), and in Lithuania (the area north of Adutiškis, including east and northeast of Ignalina). This area would thus coincide with the Smalvos region delineated by H. Turska, now often referred to as the Zarasai-Švenčionys region (e.g., according to H. Karaś).

Feature 1. Formation of names of younglings using the suffix -onak / -'onak

In Belarusian dialects, the formation of names for young beings using the suffix *-onak / -'onak* is characteristic of the entire Northeastern dialect, and distinguishes it from the rest of the country (cf. DABM, 1963, Maps 84, 85). This includes northern Belarus – from Pastavy northward and northeastward – Belarusian dialects in Latvia (author's materials), and Belarusian dialects in Lithuania within the Ignalina area and northeast of Švenčionys and Adutiškis (author's materials).

This feature has also been noted by linguists in the Polish language of this area, but with the suffix in the form *-onek*. Examples from the Braslau

area include: *cielionek* ‘calf’, *dziecionek* ‘child’, *kocionek* ‘kitten’, *porosionek* ‘piglet’ (SPGB, 2014, p. 79, 98, 130, 188). For Polish in Latvia: *cielonek* ‘calf’, *dziecionek* ‘child’, *kocionek* ‘kitten’ (materials by K. Kunicka, M. Jankowiak). Differential lexicons like the *Dictionary of Spoken Northern Borderland Polish* (SMPP, 2017) and the *Vocabulary of Polish Dialects in Lithuania* (SPGL 2006) do not present such material for northeastern Lithuania. Similarly, H. Karaś (2017) does not consider this word-formational feature. However, I occasionally noted such forms during field research in northeastern Lithuania (the triangle: Rimšė – Lake Drysviaty – Meikštai). It should also be emphasized that this method of forming names for younglings is typical of the Russian language, too.

The common area of occurrence for such forms in Belarusian dialects and the Polish language of this borderland is where the Northeastern dialect of Belarusian overlaps with the Polish of the Belarusian-Lithuanian-Latvian borderland – namely, northeastern Lithuania, northern Belarus, and southeastern Latvia.

Feature 2. Area of occurrence of the lexeme punia ‘farm building intended for storing hay and other items’

This lexeme is characteristic of the Northeastern dialect of the Belarusian language (DABM, 1963, Map 236; SPZB, IV, p. 187, 188). It occurs throughout this dialect area and parts of the Central Belarusian dialects. As shown on the map in the *Dialectological Atlas of the Belarusian language*, one could expect this word to function also in the Belarusian dialects of southeastern Latvia (confirmed by the author’s research; see Jankowiak, 2018, p. 85; 2024 and SPZB, IV, p. 188). In Lithuania, it should appear in Belarusian dialects north of the Vilia River and sporadically in the Vilnius region. The occurrence of the word *punia* is confirmed in the author’s materials (Jankowiak, 2022, p. 265), primarily for northeastern Lithuania and sporadically in other regions (cf. SPZB, IV, p. 188). Linguists consider the lexeme *punia* a borrowing from the Baltic languages (cf. Lithuanian *pūnià* ‘pigsty, barn, granary’; Latvian *pūne* ‘barn’).

The word *punia* also ought to be recorded in the Polish language of the Belarusian-Baltic borderland, primarily in the northeastern part of Lithuania and in Latvia. For Latvia, its occurrence has been confirmed in materials by M. Jankowiak, K. Kuņicka, in the publication by I. Grek-Pabisowa (2022

p. 198), and in the *Dictionary of Spoken Northern Borderland Polish* (SMPP, 2017, p. 940). For Lithuanian Polish, it appears in the author's own materials (triangle: Rimšė – Lake Drysviaty – Meikštai). The dictionary (SPGL, 2006) does not record this lexeme, nor do publications by H. Karaś (Karaś, 2001; 2002; 2017). In northern Belarus, it functions, for instance, in the Braslau region (SłBrasł, 2009, p. 137, 279).

The common area of occurrence for the lexeme *punia* in Belarusian dialects and Polish is northern Belarus (Braslau region) and southeastern Latvia. This word should also occur in Polish in Lithuania (Ignalina and Švenčionys regions), but available publications do not confirm this, except for the author's own research³.

*Feature 3. Area of occurrence of the lexeme redele / redali 'a wagon
with high ladders used for transporting hay'*

This lexeme, of Baltic origin (cf. Lithuanian *rėdelė* 'ladder wagon'), is noted by linguists in Belarusian dialects and Polish spoken of this borderland. In the Belarusian language, it is limited to northern Belarus, which is part of the Northeastern dialect of Belarusian, i.e., the Braslau and Miory regions: *рэдаль, рэдали* (*Sel'skaja haspadarka*, 2010, p. 349; SPZB, IV, p. 328). The area of its usage in Belarusian dialects in Latvia has been confirmed by the author's research (Jankowiak, 2024, surroundings of Daugavpils), as well as in Lithuania within the Ignalina region (Jankowiak, 2022, p. 316).

In the Polish language of the Belarusian-Baltic borderland, the lexeme functions in the forms: *redel, redele, redeli*. For the northeastern Lithuania area, its occurrence has been confirmed in the *Dictionary of Polish Dialects in Lithuania* (SPGL, 2006, p. 347), publications by K. Rutkovska (e.g., Rutkovska, WWW_2), and the author's materials. In the Polish of northern Belarus, its usage has been recorded in dictionaries such as (SPGB, 2014, p. 226; SłBrasł, 2009, p. 246). The word also appears in Polish in Latvia: author's materials (surroundings of Daugavpils).

Therefore, the common area of occurrence of the lexeme *redele* is the Belarusian-Lithuanian-Latvian borderland. However, the area of its usage is relatively limited and likely does not extend further into Latvia or Lithuania.

³ The lexeme *punia* is remembered by researcher Jadwiga Kozłowska-Doda from her childhood years. She comes from northwestern Belarus (Voranava), but she does not have it in her recordings of Polish from this area.

Central Belarusian Dialects

Central Belarusian dialects which historically have not developed into a distinct dialect function between the Northeastern and Southwestern dialects of the Belarusian language. Nevertheless, they are characterized by several features. Some of these occur both in Belarusian dialects and in the Polish language of the analyzed borderland.

*Feature 4. Pronunciation of stressed (a) before labial (ɸ) as (o), e.g.,
prouɸda 'truth', douɸ 'he gave' instead of praɸda, daɸ*

This feature is typical of Central Belarusian dialects but does not cover the entire area. It stretches from the vicinity of Minsk and extends northwestward through the Hrodna region and the Varėna district on the Lithuanian side. The range of occurrence in Belarusian dialects on Belarusian territory is shown in the (DABM, 1963, Map 28). In Lithuania, it was recorded by author in Belarusian dialects of some villages in the Varėna district (Jankowiak, 2023, pp. 57–58).

Researchers of Polish, in relation to the Polish language of the Belarusian-Baltic borderland, have not paid much attention to this feature so far. During my expeditions, I noted such forms in the speech of Poles in the Varėna district and in the localities of Razumna and Kamarauciškės. The lack of descriptions of this feature may be because Polish language studies were conducted primarily in regions where this feature does not occur in Belarusian dialects.

*Feature 5. Form of the verb in the 3rd person singular present tense, e.g.,
chodzia 'he walks', robia 'he does'*

This feature is typical for verbs of the first and second conjugations in Belarusian dialects functioning on the territory of Belarus (cf. DABM, 1963, Map 153). Such forms occur in a narrow strip from Homiel, between Mahiliou and Babruisk, the territory north of Minsk, further towards Lithuania northwestward between the Vilia and Biarezina rivers. According to the *Atlas*, on the Lithuanian side, they should occur in Belarusian dialects from the Vilia in the north to Dieveniškės and Šalčininkai in the south. It occurs universally in the Belarusian dialects of the Šalčininkai region (Jankowiak, 2020, p. 88).

Researchers of the Polish spoken language have also noted this feature. However, in Polish, it does not occur commonly and in some places only occasionally, such as in the Voranava region on the Belarusian side of the border (cf. Kozłowska-Doda, 2021, pp. 398, 399). The prevalence of these forms can be shown by analyzing the *Dictionary of Spoken Northern Borderland Polish*; on over 1,400 pages of the dictionary, the verb *chodza* ‘he walks’ appeared 11 times, *robia* ‘he does’ – 14 times, *mysła* ‘he thinks’ – 3 times, and *voža / wozia / woza* – not at all (SMPP, 2017). Such forms were noted in the Vilnius and Kaunas regions.

Analyzing the area of occurrence of these forms in Belarusian and Polish dialects of the analyzed borderland, it should be stated that they occur commonly in the former, while in Polish only occasionally. However, the area of occurrence coincides and extends to the Kaunas region.

Feature 6. Formation of names of younglings using the suffix –’o, e.g., dzicio ‘child’, cialio ‘calf’

The formation of names of young beings with –’o (дзіцё, парасё, ягнё, цялё) is one of the typical features of Central Belarusian dialects. It occurs commonly in Belarusian of the studied area, both on the Belarusian side (DABM, 1963, Maps 84, 85) and on the Lithuanian side (Jankowiak, 2022, p. 262). While the forms of names of young beings typical for the Northeastern dialect of the Belarusian language occur in Polish in Latvia or northern Belarus, those characteristics of Central Belarusian dialects were noted by Polish linguists sporadically. For example, for the form *dzicio* ‘child’, I recorded only one example in the *Dictionary of Spoken Northern Borderland Polish*; I did not note other names of young beings.

In the case of this feature, it is difficult to speak of a common area of occurrence, as it occurs very rarely in the Polish language of the Belarusian-Baltic borderland.

Southwestern Dialect of the Belarusian Language

This dialect covers southwestern Belarus, and its natural extension is Belarusian dialects functioning in northeastern Poland and in Lithuania (Vilnius, Šalčininkai, and Varėna regions).

*Feature 7. Form of the verb for the 1st person plural present tense, e.g.,
chadzimo ‘we walk’, rabimo ‘we do’*

This feature is typical for southwestern Belarus, including the Hrodna region (DABM, 1963, Maps 150, 151). It was commonly noted by Belarusian linguists on the Belarusian side of the border. On the territory of Lithuania, it occurs in the areas of the Šalčininkai region (western part) and the Varėna region (Jankowiak, 2018b, p. 207; author’s own materials).

Researchers of Polish language did not pay particular attention to this feature and did not describe it in detail. In the material collected by me, such forms appeared in the speech of Polish-speaking people on the border of the Varėna and Šalčininkai regions, e.g., in the village of Razumna: *dożywamo* ‘we live to old age’, *mamo* ‘we have’, *siedzimo* ‘we sit’, *nie zatrzymamo* ‘we do not stop’, *jedziemy* ‘we go’. In the village of Kamarauciškės, I noted the following examples: *mieszkamo* ‘we live’, *ociepliamo* ‘we heat up – e.g., a house with a stove’, *mamo* ‘we have’. Such forms were noted by researcher Jadwiga Kozłowska-Doda in the Polish language of northwestern Belarus, i.e., in the Voranava district (Kozłowska-Doda, 2021, p. 388). The linguist describes this ending in Polish in the Borderlands and emphasizes that it is an archaic feature, dating back to Proto-Slavic, which has been preserved in some Belarusian dialects. She further notes that statistically, the ending -mo in Polish is more often used in the speech of the Polish nobility than of the peasantry (Kozłowska-Doda, 2021 p. 404, 405).

Eastern Dialectal zone

In Belarusian dialectology, besides the classical division, so-called dialect zones are also designated, including the western and eastern zones, primarily defined based on vocabulary. They divide contemporary Belarus from north to south, and the range of occurrence of many lexemes reflects the border between Poland and the Belarusian SSR until 1939. The western dialect zone of the Belarusian language is characterized mainly by Polonisms and words identical to Polish; therefore, one lexeme typical for the eastern dialect zone will be discussed.

As seen in the *Atlas* (DABM, 1963, Map 334), the lexeme *chaziajin* (‘host’ or ‘master’) appears primarily in the eastern part of Belarus and rarely in the entire area. On the Belarusian-Lithuanian border, the equivalent *haspadar* dominates, with *chaziajin* occurring from the Vilia River northward. There-

fore, it can be inferred that this lexeme should also be present in Lithuania's territory, both in Belarusian dialects and in Polish – north of the Vilia River (Švenčionys and Ignalina regions). I have noted this lexeme in Belarusian dialects in Latvia and northeastern Lithuania, confirmed by materials I have collected over the past 20 years.

The common area of occurrence of the lexeme *chaziajin* in Belarusian dialects and Polish spoken should be northern Belarus, northeastern Lithuania, and southeastern Latvia. This word appears in the speech of Poles in the Braslau region and among Poles in Latvia (SPGB, 2014, p. 75; SMPP, 2017, p. 164; own materials).

Conclusions

This article has presented selected phonetic, morphological, and lexical features that demonstrate common areas of occurrence in Belarusian dialects and Polish spoken language of the Baltic-Slavic borderland, primarily the Belarusian-Lithuanian area. Polish linguists describing the Polish language functioning in contemporary northwestern Belarus, southeastern and eastern Lithuania, and southeastern Latvia usually focused on other aspects and areas. In this publication, a new perspective on Polish spoken language is proposed – highlighting certain regions concerning shared features with Belarusian dialects (often Belarusianisms or elements adopted through Belarusian influence).

The above considerations are general and serve as an introduction to further, more in-depth research planned by the author in this area. Even in the 1990s and 2000s, areal aspects from the perspective of shared regions with the Belarusian language were not the subject of comprehensive studies. The contemporary areal division of spoken Polish in Lithuania was made based on sociolinguistic conditions (e.g., the division by Halina Karaś) or the frequency of selected phonetic features (I. Grek-Pabisowa). Researchers of the Polish language of the Baltic-Slavic borderland did indicate areas of certain features in Belarusian dialects; however, this usually referred to selected aspects (cf. J. Kozłowska-Doda, K. Rutkowska, A. Żebrowska, and others).

Polish spoken language on this borderland was formed on a Baltic (mainly Lithuanian) and East Slavic (primarily Belarusian) substrate. Collecting research material and determining the range of features that are also characteristic of the Belarusian language and its dialects is therefore a natural di-

rection for further scientific research. This will allow us to capture processes occurring in the speech of the population of this borderland – often bilingual in Polish and Belarusian – and to understand why some features typical of Belarusian dialects occur commonly throughout the area in the Polish language of this borderland, some cover the entire area but function relatively rarely, or did not become established at all.

Since 1988, when Polish linguists were allowed to conduct research in Belarus and Lithuania, a vast amount of dialectal material from various regions has been collected. Unfortunately, comprehensive areal studies or even an atlas of the Polish language of this borderland are lacking, not to mention a publicly accessible corpus. Therefore, the author plans to systematically conduct further scientific expeditions to record the Polish language using a questionnaire focused on areal aspects, including those indicating common areas with Belarusian dialects. The first research in the Varėna region was conducted in August 2024, and further regions of Lithuania are planned for the upcoming years.

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