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Polish Spoken Language in Varėna District in Lithuania

Abstract. This article describes the Polish language in the Varėna district of southern Lithuania. Although the Polish language of the Baltic-Slavic borderland has been thoroughly described in numerous monographs and hundreds of articles, the Varėna district has remained largely unexplored. To date, no publications have addressed this topic. The material basis for the analysis are recordings collected during three dialectological expeditions (2014, 2023, and 2024). This amounts to a total of 45 hours and 16 minutes, of which approximately 13 hours and 20 minutes are devoted to Polish. The publication describes the sociolinguistic situation, family language, bilingualism (multilingualism), and knowledge of the official language. The second part of the article is devoted to the characteristics of selected linguistic features and vocabulary. Attention is also paid to loanwords from Lithuanian, Belarusian, and Russian languages.

Keywords: Polish spoken language in Lithuania; Polish-Belarusian linguistic contacts; Polish-Lithuanian linguistic contacts; loanwords.

1. Introduction

Research on spoken Polish on the Belarusian-Lithuanian-Polish border has a long and rich tradition. Many monographs and hundreds of articles have been written on this subject. All three areas of the Lithuanian Polish language (Vilnius area, Kaunas area, and Smalvos area) were described in the

late 1930s by Halina Turska (1982) in her extensive publication entitled: *O powstaniu polskich obszarów językowych na Wileńszczyźnie*.¹ After 1945, due to political and ideological reasons, research in this field was limited, and only a few articles were written by linguists from the Byelorussian SSR or the Lithuanian SSR. In the late 1980s, a political thaw occurred, and Polish linguists were given the opportunity to conduct fieldwork in some Soviet republics. Intensive dialectological research, the collection of material, and the description of the Polish language in Belarus, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Latvia began. Hundreds of texts have been published over the past three decades, including monographs (among others: Kurzowa, 1993; Dwilewicz, 1997; Grek-Pabisowa, 2002; Karaś, 2001; 2002; 2017; Morita, 2006; Zielińska, 2002). Separate periodicals and publishing series have also been devoted to the Polish language of this borderland, e.g.: *Studia nad polszczyzną kresową*,² and *Język polski dawnych Kresów Wschodnich*.³

Linguists have thoroughly researched the Polish language in Lithuania, both historically and contemporarily. However, there remain areas that are very poorly documented, such as the Polish language in the areas around Deveniškės, Eišiškės, and Salčininkai, as well as west of Kalesninkai. The Polish language of the Varėna district has not been the subject of comprehensive research or descriptions of its inhabitants' speech. Some information about the language of the Poles in this region can be obtained from the work of Wandalin Szukiewicz, who conducted ethnographic and archaeological research at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (cf. Konczewska, 2024; 2025, pp. 56–59). Among the villages located in the present-day Varėna district, he visited Kalviai, Rudnia, Būdos, Drucminai, Daržininkai, and Prauda. In 1997, a survey expedition was conducted by researchers from the University of Warsaw (Elżbieta Smułkowa, Małgorzata Litwinowicz, Justyna Straczuk) and the University of Vilnius (Halina Karaś, Krystyna Rutkowska). The researchers recorded people from 26 villages, including Dubičiai and Kalviai in the area of interest to us (Smułkowa, 1997, p. 402).

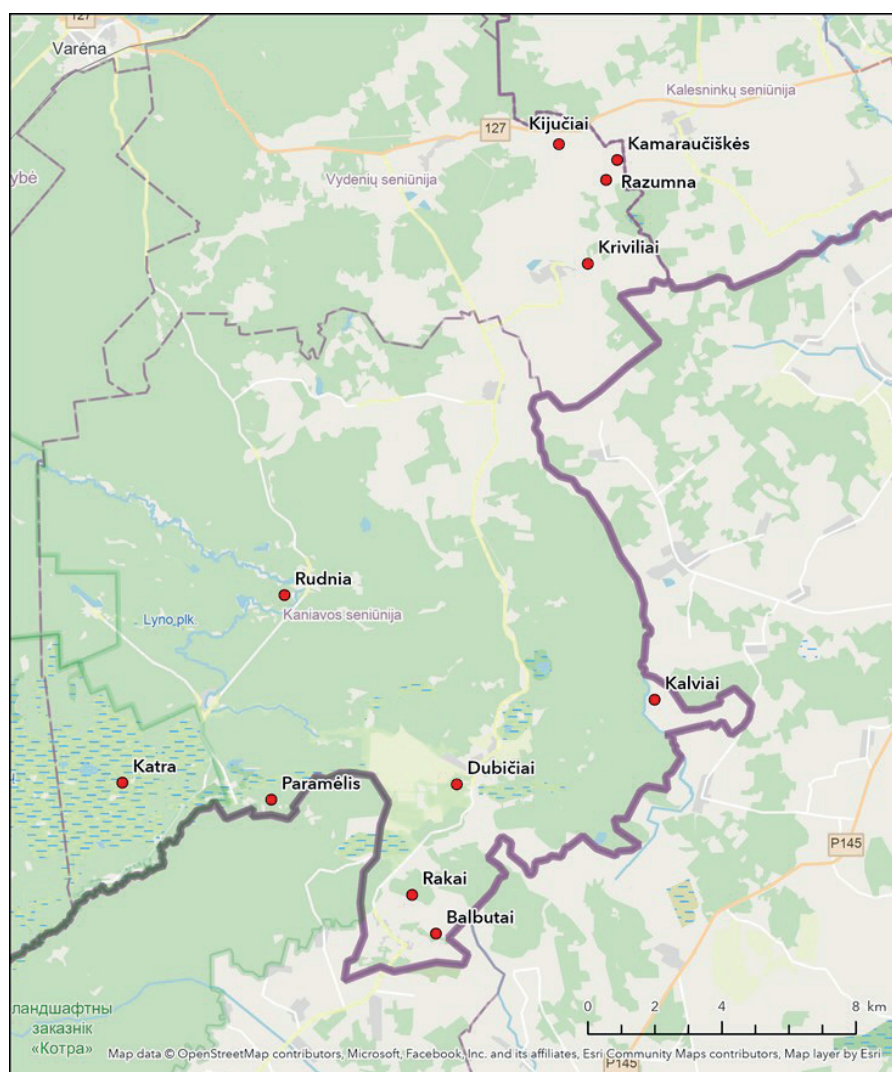
¹ Eng. *On the creation of Polish language areas in the Vilnius region*.

² Eng. *Studies on the Polish language of the borderlands*.

³ Eng. *The Polish language of the former Eastern Borderlands*.

2. Material Base

The material used in this article comes from three expeditions. The first was conducted in the summer of 2014. As part of the TriMCo (Triangulation Approach for Modeling Convergence with a High Zoom-In Factor) project, the author of this article and Helena Stetsko conducted a week-long expedition in the Varėna district, during which the following localities were surveyed: Kalviai, Balbotai, Rakai, Paramėlis, and Katra. We recorded a total of 21 hours and 35 minutes, most of which was in the Belarusian dialect and about a quarter in Polish. In 2023, an expedition was carried out as part of the Institute of the Lithuanian Language, in which the following people participated: Danguolė Mikulėnienė (head), Asta Leskauskaitė and Danutė Valentukevičienė (Lithuanian dialects), Mirosław Jankowiak (Belarusian dialects and Polish language), and Aidas Gudaitis (language of tombstone inscriptions). I then researched the following towns: Dubičiai, Kalviai, Kijučiai, Katra, Kamarauciškės, Kryviliai, Razumna, and Rudnia. I recorded a total of 15 hours and 19 minutes of Belarusian dialect and 4 hours and 22 minutes of Polish. The third expedition, also conducted by the author of this article (as part of a project implemented at the Institute of Lithuanian Language in Vilnius), took place in the summer of 2024. I then recorded Polish-speaking respondents in three villages: Balbutai, Kalviai, and Dubičiai (a total of 3 hours and 58 minutes). The collected material therefore totals approximately 45 hours and 16 minutes, of which approximately 13 hours and 20 minutes of Polish.



Map 1. Localities covered by the author's research in 2014, 2023, and 2024.

3. Sociolinguistic Situation

The Varėna district is located in southern Lithuania. Its administrative affiliation has changed over the centuries – it belonged to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and the Russian Empire. After World War II, following Lucjan Żeligowski's rebellion, the area

was militarily occupied by Polish troops and became part of the Polish state in 1922. During the interwar period, the official language was Polish, as were education and administration. After World War II, these lands became part of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, where two languages were used – Lithuanian and Russian. The situation changed with the collapse of the USSR. In 1990, Lithuania became an independent country, and Lithuanian became the sole official language.

The sociolinguistic situation of the Belarusian-speaking population in the Varėna district was described in detail in a monographic book devoted to Belarusian dialects in Lithuania (Jankowiak, 2023). The area of our interest has been most thoroughly researched from the point of view of the functioning of the Lithuanian language and Lithuanian dialects; these are works by, among others, V. Karaciejūtė, A. Leskauskaitė, D. Mikulėnienė, and N. Tuomienė. The researchers described in detail the structure of the local Lithuanian dialects. In 2025, Danutė Valentukevičienė defended her doctoral thesis at the Institute of Lithuanian Language (Valentukevičienė, 2025).

According to the 2021 census, the Varėna district had a population of 21,137, of whom 19,097 were Lithuanians, 1,349 were Poles, 252 were Russians, 135 were Belarusians, 38 were Ukrainians, 53 were others, and 206 were of unspecified nationality. It should be emphasized, however, that declared national identity does not always correspond to the language spoken. Many people who spoke Belarusian on a daily basis, including Catholics, declared Polish nationality. In turn, all Polish speakers considered themselves Polish:

Muj monś był z Biełarúsi, Póliak, ja Pól'ka, i tátuś, mamúsia, všýscy býli Póliácy [W 1943 Balbutai]⁴.

The village of Katra is currently inhabited by 16 people (compared to 19 in 2011). It is a completely Orthodox village, with the oldest generation speaking only the Belarusian dialect (they had no knowledge of Polish). Knowledge of Lithuanian was limited to basic phrases and words. The younger generation also speaks Lithuanian.

The village of Paramėlis had 20 inhabitants in 2011 and 8 in 2021. This is a mixed Catholic-Orthodox village, with a population declaring Polish and Belarusian nationality. The village is Belarusian- and Polish-speaking.

⁴ The abbreviations adjacent to the respondents mean: M/W – man/woman, 1943 – year of birth, Balbutai – current place of residence.

The village of Balbutai was inhabited by 39 people in 2011, and according to the 2021 census – 30. It is a village of mixed religion (Catholics and Orthodox) with Polish language and Belarusian dialect. In the past, the population was predominantly Polish, Catholic, and spoke Polish.

The village of Rakai is inhabited by Orthodox and Catholic Christians; in 2011, there were 114 people, while the 2021 census recorded 81 residents. The Belarusian dialect predominates among the older generation, and many also speak Polish. Lithuanian is primarily spoken by the younger generation.

The village of Dubičiai is the municipality's center. In 2011, it had a population of 291 people, and the 2021 census recorded 216 people. Most families speak Lithuanian, and a dozen or so people speak Polish and the Belarusian dialect. The village has a Catholic church, a school, and a cultural center.

The village of Kalviai was a strongly Polish place, where Polish was spoken and Catholics lived. Currently, Polish is the dominant language, with many people speaking the Belarusian dialect. Lithuanian is spoken by visitors who have purchased houses for summer residences. In 2011, the village had 47 inhabitants; the 2021 census showed 35 people.

The village of Kriviliai is a larger settlement, currently inhabited by 319 people, up from 358 in 2011. The Lithuanian language is dominant there, but there are a few people who speak the Belarusian dialect and Polish. Center with a school, community center, and shops.

The village of Kijučiai currently has a population of 128 (as of 2021), up from 165 in 2011. It is inhabited by Catholics. The dominant language is Lithuanian, with a few people speaking Polish and Belarusian dialect.

In 2011, the village of Kamarauciškės was inhabited by 5 people; in 2023, there was only one Polish-Catholic couple living there, speaking Polish (also knowing the Belarusian dialect). The place was Polish-speaking before.

The village of Razumna is inhabited by Catholics who speak Polish and a Lithuanian dialect. In 2011, 25 people lived there, and the 2021 census recorded 10 inhabitants.

Polish is usually spoken by the oldest generation of interlocutors. They also often know the Belarusian dialect. The middle generation converses daily in Russian and Lithuanian. The local Belarusian-speaking and Polish-speaking population name their language “po prostu”, but it should be noted that from the point of view of the language structure, this name sometimes refers to the Belarusian dialect, and sometimes to the local variant of the Polish language. This is what a resident of Balbutai calls this language:

No tútaj juš po prostému fšýstko. Cály čas po prostému [...]. Rodzíce to po próstu [M]: Po-prostu means just Belarusian or just Polish? Tak z pól'ska [W 1943 Balbutai].

Some respondents described the language of their villages as “tutejšy” [Eng. “local”]:

To jak sie nazýva, po tutejšému, jak sie nazýva, ten táki jénzyk miešány trošéčke [M 1957 Dubičiai].

Some respondents also emphasized the “mixed” nature of their everyday language, usually defining it as a mixture of Belarusian and Polish, sometimes with some Russian elements:

Najviénczej rozmávia sie u nas všéńdzie, dzie tu rozmaviájo, to nie na čýstym pól'skim, a takim miešánym, jak to sie nazýva, Žýdzi nazyvájo my tutéjsi, i ten jénzyk táki miešány, táki podobny, bielarúski, pól'skie słowa [M 1957 Dubičiai].

Many of the oldest respondents did not know Lithuanian in the past. They only know basic words and phrases. This is especially true in the villages of Katra, Paramėlis, Rakai, Balbutai and Kalviai, Kamarauciškės and Razumna. Knowledge of the Lithuanian language is improving slowly but steadily:

Litfíni kážuť po litéfsku, a my ni bum-bum, áni ja, áni on nie umiémy po litéfsku ni gráma. Téras to juš tróške rozumiémy [W 1944 Kamarauciškės].

The middle generation and young people usually speak Lithuanian fluently, a language that is indispensable in the workplace and state institutions.

Many people talk to their animals in the local Belarusian dialect. However, one respondent emphasized that she talks to her dog in Lithuanian because he was adopted from Lithuanians:

To Lítvin, ja do niégo múvie po litéfsku, to cúrka pšyviézla tam, na rabóci páni dála, to on po litéfsku rozmáviaľ, to i ja juš po litéfsku. S sabáčkam dahavarúsia pa litéfsku [W 1943 Balbutai].

The Orthodox population, who declared Belarusian origin and spoke the Belarusian dialect, attended Orthodox churches in Pervamaisk or Matyli. After the collapse of the USSR and the emergence of the border, they moved to Druskininkai. The Polish-speaking population declares Polish nationality and is of Catholic faith. For many years after World War II, the Polish language played a significant role in the Catholic Church. After 1990, when Lithuania regained independence, the linguistic situation in the church changed. For example, in Dubičiai, the main language of worship is Lithuanian, although the Polish- and Belarusian-speaking population often prays in Polish at home and confesses in Polish. They also have Polish prayer books. Currently, people from villages Katra, Paramėlis, Balbotai, Rakai, and Dubičiai, go to church in Dubičiai (Lithuanian-speaking parish). In turn, believers from villages Kriviliai, Kijučiai, Kamarauciškės, and Razumna currently attend church in Kalesninkai, where the Polish language dominates the liturgy. The inhabitants of the village of Rudnia have their own church, where a priest of Lithuanian origin celebrates mass in Lithuanian.

In places with Slavic populations, such as Rakai, the cemetery is dominated by tombstones in Polish (among the Catholic population), with a significant number in Russian (among the Orthodox population). The number of tombstone inscriptions in Lithuanian increases each year. The choice of language on the tombstone depends mainly on the decision of the family of the deceased:

[MJ: Who chooses the language of the tombstone?] *Jak kto chce, jakí jest, jak kto chce* [W 1943 Balbutai].

In many places, gravestones in Lithuanian already predominate; for example, in the cemetery in Dubičiai the number of gravestones by language is as follows: in Lithuanian – 82,6%, in Polish – 16,8%, in Russian – 0,3% and unspecified – 0,3%. For comparison, in the village of Rakai – in Russian – 43,4%, in Lithuanian – 31,6%, in Polish – 19,7, unspecified – 2,6%, mixed – 1,6%, and other – 1,3%. In Kriviliai – 95,9% in Lithuanian and 4,1% in Polish.

Slavic-speaking villages, except for the eastern part of the region, are not compact. They are isolated villages located mainly near the border with Belarus, and they are surrounded by Lithuanian-speaking populations. The situation is slightly different in the villages located in the eastern part of the region where the heavily polonized area begins and continues eastward, through Eišiškės, Butrymonys, to Šalčininkai and Turgeliai.

Attitudes toward the Polish language are generally positive. It is considered beautiful, cultured, and the language of liturgy in the Catholic Church. Many people have family members living in Poland. However, respondents emphasize that their Polish differs significantly from that in Poland. Russian served as the official language during the Russian Empire and in the Lithuanian SSR after World War II. The middle generation typically speaks it fluently in everyday life. After 1990, when Lithuania regained its independence, the role of Lithuanian as the sole state language has steadily increased. The Belarusian dialect has the least prestige and is limited to family and neighborly contacts.

Table 1. Languages and dialects in the researched villages. Pluses indicate the prevalence of the language/dialect, i.e., +++ – commonness, predominance, + – functioning to a small extent.

	Lithuanian	Polish	Belarusian
Katra	+	-	+++
Paramėlis	+	++	++
Rudnia	+++	+	+
Rakai	+	++	++
Balbutai	+	++	++
Dubičiai	+++	+	+
Kalviai	+	+	+++
Kriviliai	+++	+	+
Kijučiai	++	++	+
Kamarauciškės	-	+++	+
Razumna	+	+++	+

4. Characteristics of Selected Phonetical-Grammatical Features

Selected characteristics of the pronunciation of the local Polish-speaking population are presented below. It should be emphasized, however, that there is considerable idiolectal variation, dependent on many factors, such as the respondent's origin, education, etc. Some features have a wide area of occurrence, others – only a limited one.

The structure of the Polish language in Lithuania has been described many times, including publications [Kurzowa, 1993, pp. 221–310; Dwile-

wicz, 1997; Grek-Pabisowa, Maryniakowa, 1999, pp. 19–48; Karaś, 2001, pp. 82–222; Grek-Pabisowa, 2002; Zielińska, 2002, pp. 80–129; Karaś, 2017, pp. 145–334; and other].

4.1. Phonetics

- Akanye (inconsistently), like: *pravastáŭny, addála, chadzili*. A feature typical of the Belarusian language and most of its dialects, as well as the Russian literary language. Examples founded in interviews:

Tútaj radzílusia, tútaj, vo, vyrósla, a monš muj byl z Bielarúsi [W 1943 Balbutai], *V kalchózie, mílieńki, v kalchózie pracováli* [W 1937 Kalviai], *Býla v tym Danbásie* [M 1957 Dubičiai], *Viéncej táta tarfiána ziémia* [M 1957 Dubičiai], *Aparácja robili na péncheš* [W 1944 Kamarauciškės].

- Asynchronous or non-nasalized pronunciation of nasal vowels /ą/ and /ę/:

Miénsa nie było, tyl'ko na sviénta [W 1943 Balbutai], *On pšýjdzie i jému tam zapláco* [W 1943 Balbutai]; *I rukámi réža. Kiédys tšéba było džéva cióngac na sánačkach* [W 1943 Balbutai], *Zbirájo (się) i spievájo* [W 1937 Kalviai], *Za nóga pšyvióńžeš švínia* [M 1957 Dubičiai].

- Semi-palatal pronunciation /s'/, /z'/, /c'/, /dz'/:

Dz'íádek dom budóvať [M 1957 Dubicze].

- Anterior lingual dental /l/ (consistently):

Tútaj juž Bolbóty [W 1943 Balbutai]

- Soft /l'/: *tyl'ko, kol'onía, niev'él'ki*

Nie dúža, tam tyl'ko żył moj dziádzia jéden. Jak przyjecháli, to kol'éjka stajála [W 1943 Balbutai], *Al'e téras juš mašýny. Óna ml'éko odbirála ot kruf. Dl'a l'údziej najmováli* [W 1937 Kalviai]; *Óna býla u škól'e tam* [M 1957 Dubičiai].

- Pronunciation of non-syllabic /ũ/:

Jézdzi cúrka, jákich kilomiétrau̯ dziésieńc. No, był chlieũ [K 1943 Balbutai], *A cukiérkaũ a píaćenia, a rúžne búlki tam* [W 1937 Kalviai].

- Realization of old /ě/ at the end of a word as /i/:

*Býla u **cháci*** [W 1943 Balbutai], *Pracavála u **kalchózi**. Na tej **lapáci** piékla* [W 1937 Kalviai].

- Pronunciation of /s/ as /š/:

*To ja jéšče chliep másłam **pašmarúje*** [M 1937 Kalviai].

- Narrowing (reduction) of /o/ to /u/ in unstressed position, usually before a stressed syllable:

*Jak mója **kulieżánka**. Do **kumúnii** ksionc od rázu* [W 1937 Kalviai].

4.2. Morphology

- Noun endings in the locative singular, typical of the Belarusian language, e.g.:

*My tútaj z **cúrkaj** żyjem* [W 1942 Balbutai], *Pracavála **dajárkaj*** [K 1942 Balbutai].

- The ending -aju in the instrumental case of feminine singular nouns, typical of the Belarusian language, e.g.:

*S **kótačkaju**, máju kótačku, to Katja, a sabáčka Foks* [W 1943 Balbutai].

- The ending of nouns in the nominative plural in -ie/-e and genitive plural (femininum) (typical for Hrodna-Baranavičy subdialects of South-Western dialect of Belarusian language):

Vnukié pšyjádo do bápci [W 1957 Dubičiai], *Lápci z tákiej **lazé**. Šelestuné nazýváli* [dzwoneczki wieszane koniom]. *Kumpiačkié na try dzielili* [W 1943 Balbutai].

- Past tense forms of verbs with a standardized ending, as in East Slavic languages, such as: *ja żyła* instead of *ja żyłam*:

*Osiemdziesięnt jéden rok, to ja juš **pożyła** tútaj* [W 1943 Balbutai], *Jak býli zdróvy, to jagódy **zbirála**, to jagódy jéšče **spšedavála*** [W 1937 Kalviai], *Sámi **piékli*** [chleb], *a téras **kupújem*** [W 1937 Kalviai].

- The ending -uv in the plural genitive of nouns where -i or Ø is in standard Polish:

Cúrka **golémbiuf** nakupovála [W 1937 Kalviai], Skončýlem dziésienć **kliásuf** [M 1957 Dubicze], Tam dúža býlo **mieškániuf** [M 1941 Kamarauciškės].

- No male-non-male distinction, like *konie byli* instead of *konie były*:
*Tam pólskie **terény** býli pšet vójno* [M 1957 Dubičiai].
- The ending of the first plural of present tense verbs is -mo:
*Gdzie my **mieškámo**?* [W 1944 Kamarauciškės].
- Common occurrence of diminutive forms, e.g.: *mílieńki*, *kościúlek*, *panóček*:
*I kónik **maładziéńki** był, adzín **slabiéńki** był* [W 1943 Balbutai].

4.3. Syntax

- Constructions using the preposition *pšy*, such as: *pšy Soviétach* 'in the Soviet times':
*Ciéńsko býlo **pšy** kolchózach* [W 1943 Balbutai], ***Pšy** mámie navučýlasie doić króvy* [W 1943 Balbutai].
- Participle ending in -všy:
*Toj dóktor už dávno **umáršy**, a ja juž dwadziésty siúdmy rok* [z rakiem] [W 1937 Kalviai], *Dóbže, že jéšče nie **vyžucífšy*** [M 1957 Dubičiai], *Ále, vo, **pšyjecháfsy** tútaj do Panóčaj, óni **pšyjecháfsy*** [W 1944 Kamarauciškės].
- Construction of the type: *choróvać čym* (standard Polish: *choróvać na co*) 'to be sick with what +Inst.'
Ja dúžo liat chorovála rákam [W 1937 Kalviai].
- A construction like *u mnie jest* instead of *ja mam* 'I have':
U nas býla króva [W 1937 Kalviai].
- A construction like *rozmaviać na języku* instead of *rozmawiać po*:
*Jédna grúpa býla **na jénzyku** litéfskim fšýstko, a jédna grúpa býla inżyniéruf, gdzie učýli **na jénzyku** rosýjskim i agronómuf* [M 1957 Dubičiai].

4.4. Pronunciation

The interlocutors' statements usually retain the stress typical of the Polish literary language, but, in some cases, it is consistent with the norms of East Slavic languages (e.g., Belarusian). Deviations from the Polish norm usually refer to words borrowed from Belarusian or Russian. Among the collected material, I found the following examples: *bylá* instead of *býła*, *ja samá* instead of *ja sáma*, *s króvami* instead of *s krovámi*, *patráű* instead of *pótraw*, *kvásili* instead of *kvasíli*, *sonsiád* instead of *sónsiad*, *na sánačkach* instead of *na sanéčkach*, *ja nie_viem* instead of *nie viem*, *nie chciál* instead of *nie chciál*, *umár* instead of *úmarł*, *prendzėj* instead of *préndzej*, *počekáj* instead of *počekáj*, and many others.

5. Vocabulary of Local Polish Spoken Language

Polish vocabulary includes many regionalisms. These are often words that have a different phonetic form than literary Polish, a different accent, or are identical to Belarusian or Russian, only adapted to Polish pronunciation. Polish vocabulary includes many regionalisms. These are often words that have a different phonetic form than literary Polish, a different accent, or are identical to Belarusian or Russian, only adapted to Polish pronunciation. The collected material included, among others, the following lexemes: *dževniány* 'wooden' (Pol. *drewniany*) [Dubičiai], *litėfka* 'Lithuanian woman' (Pol. *Litwinka*) [Dubičiai], *vasaló* 'merrily' (Pol. *wesoło*) [Balbutai], *pódvuz m* 'forecourt' (Pol. *podwórze n*) [Kalviai], *inákšy* 'another' (Pol. *inny*) [Kalviai], *pšechódni* 'transitional' (Pol. *przejściowy*) [Dubičiai].

The Polish language in Lithuania has been the subject of much research by linguists. These include dictionaries (Rieger et al., 2006 or Grek-Pabisowa et al., 2017). The specificity of the Polish language spoken on this borderland is evidenced primarily by numerous borrowings from Baltic languages and dialects, Belarusian dialects and Russian. Vilnius linguist Krystyna Rutkowska has written a number of articles on Baltisms in Lithuanian Polish (Rutkowska, 2004; 2006; 2008; 2015). I. Grek-Pabisowa and M. Ostrówka wrote about the influence of Belarusian dialects on the Polish language of the northern borderlands (Grek-Pabisowa & Ostrówka, 2018). The vocabulary of Belarusian dialects in Lithuania has been described in detail in the publication by the author of this article (Jankowiak, 2022).

Lithuanisms: Older borrowings from the Lithuanian language and its dialects refer to such thematic areas as: nature and landscape, plants, the animal world, humans (especially negative traits of character and appearance), and traditional agriculture. Younger loanwords are words related primarily to the administrative and public sphere. In the studied area, I noted, among others, the following Baltisms: *brazgùliai* ‘bells hung around the horses’ necks’ < Lith. *brazgùliai* [Balbutai], *délče* ‘the moon when it wanes after the full moon’ < Lith. *delčià* [Rudnia], *eliéktra* ‘electricity’ < Lith. *elektrà* [Kalviai], *genís* ‘woodpecker’ < Lith. *genỹs* [Balbutai], *gúšta* ‘nest’ < Lith. *gũžtà* [Kriviliai], *kalakút* ‘turkey’ < Lith. *kalakùtas* [Balbutai], *kúdra* ‘a small water reservoir’ < Lith. *kũdra* ‘wet place, swamp’, *kundziúk* ‘kindziuk, skilandis’ < Lith. *kindziukas* [Dubičiai], *kumpiák* ‘ham, the hip part of a pork carcass’ < Lith. *kuĩpis* [Dubičiai], *paršúk* ‘boar’ < Lith. *paršiukas* [Dubičiai], *svíran* ‘granary’ < Lith. *svirnas* [Balbutai], *kajmínas* ‘neighbour’ < Lith. *kaimýnas* [Balbutai], and many others.

Borrowings from Belarusian: Borrowed vocabulary from Belarusian and its dialect frequently appears in my respondents’ speeches. It primarily refers to the world of plants, animals, traditional farming, and household. Sometimes, these words also appear in both languages, but differ only phonetically, such as Bel. *načóũka* vs. Pol. *nočúvka* ‘wooden trough’. A high percentage of Belarusianisms is found primarily among Poles, who often speak Belarusian daily with some family members and neighbors in the countryside. During fieldwork, I noted, among others, the following lexemes: *bójka* ‘butter churn’ < Bel. (масла)бойка [Kalviai], *chryščóny* ‘baptized’ < Bel. хрышчоны [Balbutai], *doždž* ‘rain’ < Bel. дождж, *jon* ‘he’ < Bel. ён [Balbutai], *halínka* ‘small twig’ < Bel. галінка, *hrúdká* ‘chicken breast’ < Bel. грудка [Balbutai], *humnó* ‘thresing floor’ < Bel. гумно [Balbutai], *karšún* ‘hawk’ < Bel. каршун [Balbutai], *miasný* ‘meat’ < Bel. мясны, *tut* ‘here’ < Bel. тут [Balbutai], *janá* ‘she’ < Bel. яна, *pógžeb* ‘cellar’ < biel. погрэб [Balbutai], *prodavác* ‘sell’ < Bel. прадаваць [Balbutai], *prymák* ‘a man living in his in-laws’ house’ < Bel. прымак [Balbutai], *sála* ‘backfat’ < Bel. сала [Balbutai], *Siómuchá* ‘Pentecost’ < Bel. Сёмуха [Balbutai], *taksáma* ‘also’ < Bel. таксама [Balbutai], *tá-maka* ‘there’ < Bel. dial. тамака [Kalviai], and many others.

Borrowings from the Russian language. Russian began to exert a more intense influence on the speech of the local population, particularly after World War II, when it served as the second official language in the Lithuanian Soviet So-

cialist Republic. Besides words used in everyday life, these primarily include words related to the administrative and public sphere, socialist vocabulary, and the kolkhoz-sovkhoz economy. In the collected material, Russianisms are much fewer than Polonisms. The following Russianisms were excerpted e.g.: *baliéžnia* 'sickness' < Rus. *болезнь* [Kamarauciškės], *bal'nica* 'hospital' < Rus. *больница* [Kamarauciškės], *chvácit* 'to be enough' < Rus. *хватит* [Balbutai], *cietrádž* 'notebook' < Rus. *тетрадь* [Balbutai], *dáže* 'if' < Rus. *даже* [Dubičiai], *dobáviać* 'to add' < Rus. *добавлять* [Dubičiai], *família* 'surname' < Rus. *фамилия*, *kalchóz* 'collective farm' < Rus. *колхоз* [Balbutai], *miéždu námi* 'between us' < Rus. *между нами* [Kamarauciškės], *niedziélia* 'week' < Rus. *неделя* [Kalviai], *obščiežysje* 'dormitory' < Rus. *общежитие* [Dubičiai], *prošétšy* 'having passed' < Rus. *прошедши* [Balbutai], *pryjátny* 'pleasant: about man' < Rus. *приятный*, *skóra* 'ambulance' < Rus. *скорая* [Balbutai] *sótka* '1/100 hectare' < Rus *сотка* [Balbutai], *úksus* 'vinegar' < Rus. *уксус*, *vapščé* 'at all, whatever' < Rus. *вообще* [Balbutai], *vlašć* 'authority' < Rus. *власть* [Balbutai], *zakázňik* 'nature reserve' < Rus. *заказник* [Dubičiai], and many others.

Conclusions

In modern Lithuania, Polish has been in use for decades. It has several variants: written, spoken, urban, and rural. It occurs widely and compactly, primarily in the Vilnius region and in the present-day Šalčininkai region. It is also present in the Kaunas and Smalvos regions. The Varėna district has remained unexplored in this respect until now. In the area of interest, the Polish language did not occur, and there is no occlusion. The terrain (dense forests and swamps) meant that the Slavic population primarily inhabited villages bordering present-day Belarus. In the past, these villages were socially and economically linked to centers in the south (now within Belarus). From the north, they were surrounded by Lithuanian-speaking people. The exceptions are the towns located in the eastern part of the region – Razumna, Kamarauciškės, and Kijučiai, from which to the east extends the area of dense settlement of the Polish-speaking population.

The Polish language is only spoken currently by a few people, mainly the oldest generation and a few people from the middle generation. The place of the Polish language here is taken primarily by Lithuanian. There are currently no Polish schools in the study area, and Catholic parishes are mostly Lithuanian-speaking. The role of the Polish language will steadily decline.

The Polish language in the study area is relatively diverse, depending on the place of residence, the respondent, and the surrounding linguistic situation. A number of features typical of the vast area of Polish in the northern borderlands can be listed, such as the akanye, the non-syllabic /u/, soft /l'/, and others. Some features have a limited, local scope, such as the first-person plural forms of verbs: *robimo*, *palimo*. In the case of vocabulary, it is worth emphasizing the preservation of old Baltic words (most of which also appear in local Belarusian dialects) and words of Belarusian origin. The number of Russian words is decreasing. On the other hand, there is a growing number of loanwords from Lithuanian, which refer to the public-administrative sphere and technological innovations. As in the case of the Polish language in other regions of Lithuania, the local Polish language was shaped primarily by the old Baltic substrate as well as numerous borrowings from East Slavic languages and dialects (mainly Belarusian, less from Russian).

The article presented here is a preliminary reconnaissance study for a planned, extended study of spoken Polish in the Varėna district. The analyzed Polish dialects require description not only because they have not been studied before, but also because it is important to preserve them and provide information about the disappearing element of the intangible culture of Poles in this area for future generations.

LIST OF VILLAGES:

Official name (Lithuanian)	Polish name
Balbutai	Bołboty
Dubičiai	Dubicze
Kalviai	Kowalki
Kamarauciškės	Komarowszczyzna
Katra	Kotra
Kijučiai	Kijucze
Kriviliai	Krzywile
Paramėlis	Paramok
Rakai	Raki
Razumna	Rozumna
Rudnia	Rudnia

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