

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Vilnius, Lithuania, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous buildings and a prominent church spire in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent white rectangle containing text.

Plenariniai pranešimai

Plenārsēžu referāti

Plenary papers

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Studying Old Latgalian texts – motivations, sources and methods

Old Latgalian, or Old Written High Latvian, is a language variety cultivated from the middle of the 18th century until the ban of printing in Latin letters (1865-1904). It is based on High Latvian dialects and one of the sources of the Latgalian written language. Texts in this variety have been studied relatively little and less systematically compared to texts in Old (Low) Latvian and Old Lithuanian. This talk will argue for the importance of Old Latgalian texts for Baltic studies and general linguistics. It will give insights into the variety of extant texts, present results of the author's current research, and discuss how to work with this material in our digital age.

Comparing Old Latgalian texts with those published at the same time in the Old Low Latvian Written language gives us important insights into the impact of the cultural context and diverse contact languages on developing written languages, not only in vocabulary, but also in syntax and the expression of grammatical categories. For example, while Old Low Latvian had developed a stable system of definite articles, there is almost no trace of it in Old Latgalian. Word order in the noun phrase had largely been fixed in written Low Latvian of the 18th and 19th century, while Old Latgalian uses the position of modifiers for emphasis and contrast in a way similar to Latin and contemporary Polish. There are significant differences in the use and form of passive constructions and in the area of modality. An interesting aspect of the vocabulary is loan verbs from Polish and other Slavic languages not shared with Low Latvian. These are often the same as found in Old Lithuanian, which shows Latgalian as belonging to the Polish-Lithuanian cultural space.

While the *corpus* (in the philological sense) of Old Latgalian texts is not extensive, it comprises various discourse types and genres, which is important for an understanding of the development of literacy and for studying language change. It includes translations (mainly from Latin and Polish, but also from German and Low Latvian) and original texts. The existence of various catholic catechisms reflects missionary activities in Central and Eastern Europe and are another feature that makes Latgalian distinct from Low Latvian and similar to Lithuanian.

Many Old Latgalian texts are available in digital copies. However, only one – the oldest book, *Evangelia Toto Anno 1753* – has been compiled into a public corpus (now in the sense of corpus linguistics). For further studies that meet the standards of modern linguistics, it is necessary to prepare more texts in machine-readable form. A corpus containing exclusively Old Latgalian texts with subcorpora of individual texts or groups of texts according to genre and other features will enable a wide range of empirical studies as well as lexicographic work.

A greater availability of, and a greater interest in Old Latgalian texts will be beneficial for traditional fields of Baltic linguistics – dialectology, historical morphology and other diachronic studies – as well as for more general studies in areas such as colonial linguistics or the development of literacy and written languages.

Recent publications by the author related to the topic

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| <p>Nau, Nicole. 2022. Zur Integration slawischer Verben und verbaler Wortbildungselemente im Lettgallischen. In: Stephan Kessler, ed. <i>Contributions to Baltic-Slavonic Relations in Literature and Languages</i>. Berlin: Logos Verlag, 87–109.</p> <p>Nau, Nicole. 2022. Constructions with 'take' in Latgalian: the limits of diachrony. <i>Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus</i> 65, 55–65.</p> <p>Nau, Nicole. 2023. Differential impact of colonial languages on written languages: A case study from Latvia in the early</p> | <p>19th century. In: Nataliya Levkovych, ed. <i>Diversity in Contact</i>. Berlin: De Gruyter, 3–90.</p> <p>Nau, Nicole, and Tomasz Wicherkiewicz. 2024. Social Values of an Added Literacy: The Case of Latgalian. <i>Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development</i>, 1–15.</p> <p>Nau, Nicole. <i>Forthcoming</i>. Latgaliešu svēto rakstu valoda no "Evangelia Toto Anno 1753" līdz lietotnei "Latgalian Bible". To appear in <i>Linguistica Lettica</i>.</p> |
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The accentuation of disyllabic endings in Lithuanian

Despite its striking archaism, Lithuanian accentuation has undergone profound structural changes throughout its history. One of the most visible changes is that affecting disyllabic endings, which are stressed on the suffixal element in Old Lithuanian (*mergómis* in Daukša's *Postilla*, 1599: 555₃, 568₄, 570₃₀), but on the final syllable in Modern Lithuanian (*mergomis*). This difference is not anecdotal; it could involve the transition from a morphemic accent (linked to the suffix) to a local accent (linked to a particular position in the word), cf. Garde (1968: 106) and Petit (2018) for the distinction between morphemic and local accent. The purpose of this talk is to determine the origin of this structural change. A morphemic accent can be ascribed to Indo-European, linked to the accentual properties of morphemes. In the case of disyllabic endings combining a suffix and an ending, the accent was clearly associated with the suffix, not with the final syllable, as shown by Homeric Greek (κεφαλῆσι) and Vedic Sanskrit (*prajābhis*). The Old Lithuanian data show a predominantly suffixal accent, with very few examples of an accent on the final syllable (e.g. *biłomús* in Daukša's *Postilla*, 1599: 199₆); the case of the inessive is different, showing both accents in equal proportions in Old Lithuanian (e.g. *dięnóie* in Daukša's *Postilla*, 1599: 293₄₇ / *dienoié* in Daukša's *Postilla*, 1599: 109₁₄, 256₉, 312₇, 312₈, 312₃₀, 424₃₀). Between Old Lithuanian and Modern Lithuanian, the accent has visibly shifted to the final syllable. The Slavic data are hybrid, showing a suffixal accent in some types (Old Russian женáми), a final accent in others (Old Russian ночьюí).

The origin and development of these variations remain a subject of debate today. Generally speaking, it has been considered that some of the changes observed result from particular accentual rules that have led to the accent being shifted from its original position. Some scholars admit that the suffixal accent may result in Balto-Slavic from Hirt's law in certain forms and paradigms, with secondary analogical extensions (cf. Jasanoff 2017: 107-108 and Villanueva Svensson 2021: 9). For Lithuanian, Nieminen's law could also explain certain facts (cf. Villanueva Svensson 2021). Other scholars believe, on the contrary, that the accent was originally suffixal and was attracted to the final syllable in certain forms, in Slavic by Dybo's law, and in Lithuanian by Saussure's law (cf. Olander 2013: 412, cf. also 2004, 2007a). This presentation attempts to evaluate these different explanations by tracing the evolution of disyllabic endings from Indo-European to Lithuanian, highlighting how purely accidental changes in accent could have led to more profound structural changes.

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The Circum-Baltic area and the ways to explore it

The *Circum-Baltic (CB) area* – a term coined in Dahl & Koptjevskaja-Tamm (1992), perhaps after *baltischer Sprachbund* in Jakobson (1931[1971]: 137), – is an established linguistic area along with the Balkan or Mesoamerican linguistic areas (for other terms and subareas see Matthiassen 1985; Stolz 1991; Nau 1996).

My goal is to discuss new and potentially promising approaches to linguistic areas in general and to the Circum-Baltic area in particular. I will discuss their advantages and disadvantages. I will proceed as follows. I will first briefly review standard approaches to linguistic area as well as the state of the art of the research of the Circum-Baltic area and then discuss two methods to exploring areal effects and language contact.

Standard approaches crucially rely on lists of linguistic traits that are in one way or another similar across subsets of the languages of the area and are less or not at all characteristic of the surrounding languages not included in the area (see the overviews of such lists for the CB area in Koptjevskaja-Tamm & Wälchli 2001 or Seržant 2025). While the list approach provides a good approximation of what may single out the languages of a linguistic area against a broader geographical background, it has a number of limitations. For example, there is no clear baseline and, thus, objectivity on what counts as *similar* and what counts as *different* and different researchers may evaluate the same phenomenon as belonging to or not belonging to an area. Furthermore, typologically frequent and, foremost, universal features are excluded from descriptions of linguistic areas for obvious methodological reasons. However, universally preferred traits may likewise be borrowed and may spread through language contact even easier than rare features because typologically preferred features are typically those that are preferred by human processor and are more efficient in processing (Seržant, accepted). There are other problems with standard approaches but the crucial one is the methodological requirement that the phenomenon must be similar across the languages of the area. However, the similarity requirement is even theoretically impossible to fully meet because languages never have exactly the same categories and there will always remain to be some discrepancy between these, even after long-standing and intensive contact.

The way out of the first problem is to set up an objective and measurable baseline for comparison and lift the similarity requirement towards the requirement for a detectable diachronic movement *towards* the languages of the area. I will illustrate this method, *the distance-based approach* in the presentation (Seržant et al., accepted).

Another problem is common inheritance. I argue that common inheritance likewise should not be a priori excluded from effects of language contact and, thus, areal effects. To the contrary, genealogically closely related languages may retain the same set of inherited properties precisely due to intensive contacts between them. I will discuss another method that help providing measurable evidence for contact effects in inherited phenomena (following Seržant 2021).

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Georg Mancelius's *Lettus* (1638): Sources and influences

Although Georg Mancelius's dictionary *Lettus* (1638), together with the other parts of the convolute, is a foundational text in Latvian lexicography, relatively little attention has been paid to its sources. The origins of the German lemma list in the *Lettus* have not been previously documented. Similarly, the structure of the thematic dictionary *Phraseologia Lettica* has been broadly described as "arranged thematically according to contemporary lexicographical traditions" (Zemzare 1961), without specific source analysis. The ten appended dialogues have been associated with the popular genre of the time (Krēsliņš 1992), and some scholars have suggested possible links with the works of Comenius or Erasmus (Kessler 2018).

This paper presents preliminary findings from a broader study investigating Mancelius's lexicographical sources. By reviewing key works on early modern German dictionaries (Claes 1977; Jones 2000; Henne 2001; Müller 2001) and consulting digitized historical lexica, it becomes evident that the German lemma list in *Lettus* draws primarily from two sources: (1) Heinrich Decimator's *Sylva vocabulorum* (first published in 1578) and (2) the anonymous *Lexicon trilingue* (first published in 1586), specifically its German-Latin supplement *Index Germanicolatinus*. These findings provide a more concrete understanding of how Mancelius compiled his lexical material.

While the structure of *Phraseologia Lettica* shares thematic divisions common in the period, no direct source with an identical chapter structure or sequence has been identified. Mancelius's work includes not only lexemes and collocations but also extended phrases, many of which seem to reflect local realities. This suggests that Mancelius significantly adapted or supplemented his sources with original material, a claim supported by statements in his own preface.

The ten dialogues, rich in local references and pragmatic expressions, are undoubtedly Mancelius's own composition. In the final dialogue, he even refers to himself indirectly. These dialogues align with pedagogical traditions in 16th- and 17th-century multilingual Europe, including works like *Parlement nouveau* (1637), *Dictionarium Hexaglosson* (1611), and *Colloquia Sex Lingvarum* (1614).

The final component of the publication, *Die Sprüche Salomonis*, is Mancelius's own Latvian translation of the Book of Proverbs, based on Martin Luther's German Bible. As noted by Jānis Krēsliņš (1992), this translation coincides with the Swedish edition *Salomons Ordspråks Bok* (1632), also printed in Riga – suggesting a broader regional interest in vernacular biblical texts.

This presentation will contextualize *Lettus* within early modern lexicographic traditions, revealing Mancelius's role not only as a compiler but also as a creative contributor to Latvian linguistic history.

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