Nicole Nau: Background and principles for the transliteration of the Latgalian texts from Ulanowska 1891, 1892, 1895

The database „Dziedzictwo językowe Rzeczypospolitej" contains songs, proverbs, riddles and tales collected by the Polish ethnographer Stefania Ulanowska at the end of the 19th century. The texts – in Latgalian with a Polish translation – were originally published in three volumes of the journal *Zbiór Wiadomości do Antropologii Krajowej* (1891, 1892, 1895) of the Akademia Umejętności at Kraków in Poland. At that time, Latgalian orthography had not yet been standardized, though the growing number of books written in Latgalian especially during the first half of the 19th century show certain writing conventions which certainly were known to Ulanowska. The prohibition of printing in the Latin alphabet, which lasted from 1865 until 1904, disabled further standardization and other language planning activities for almost 40 years, including the period of Ulanowska's fieldwork in Latgalia.

Latgalian writing was based on the Polish writing system of the 18th and 19th century. This can be seen, for example, in the use of the letter combinations <cz>, <sz>, the use of the letter <i> to mark palatalization, or in the the letter < ł >, which, however, had a value different from the one it has in contemporary Polish. While the "Polish system" rendered Latgalian consonants quite well, there are several problems with writing vowels and diphthongs, which are more numerous in Latgalian than in Polish. Vowel length was not indicated although it is distinctive, and the letter <o> was used for both the short vowel /o/, for example, in <dorbs> 'work, job' (noun), and the diphthong /uo/, for example in <strodot'> /struoduotʲ/ 'to work' (verb). Furthermore, as the letter <i> is used both for a vowel and to mark palatalization, the letter combination <ie> can have three readings: as a short vowel (for example in <b**ie**ja> => beja 'was'), as a long vowel (<b**ie**deiga> => bēdeiga 'sad'), or as a diphthong (<m**ie**rsi> => miersi 'you will die'). Compare the following fragment from Ulanowska's collection with our transliteration (Ulanowska 1895, 475):

> 6. Bieja motia i miejta i kuciejtia, motia bieja waca
> a miejta bieja natiekla. Ka jos motia syŭta strodot', to jej nait
> iz dorbu i soka tąj: „Diel kam strodot'? Mani wiejrs iz-wieźś,
> kuciejti wyłks ap-jeźś, a tu, mamień, nu-miersi!" — Da-it zima —
> ni ap-ad kuciejtis wyłks ni nu-mierst motia, ni miejtys wiejrs na

> 6. Beja muote i meita i kuceite, muote beja vaca
> a meita beja natekle. Ka juos muote syuta struoduot, to jej naīt
> iz dorbu i soka tai: „Deļ kam struoduot?" Mani veirs izvezs [izvess],
> kuceite vylks apjēzs [apēss], a tu, mameņ, nūmiersi!" – Daīt zīma –
> ni apād kuceitis vylks ni nūmierst muote, ni meitys veirs na

Our transliteration has been based on the current Latgalian orthography, which uses the letters of the Latvian alphabet plus the letter <y>. Vowel length is indicated by a macron. Palatalization of consonants before front vowels is never indicated, palatalization in other positions is only indicated in the case of <ņ> and <ļ> (this restriction is motivated by the restriction to letters of the Latvian alphabet)[1].

The most important principles of our transliteration are shown in the following tables.

Table 1: Transliteration of consonants and semivowels

Ulanowska	Transliteration	Example Ulanowska	Transliteration of example
b, p, m	b, p, m		
w	v	waca 'old' (f.sg.)	vaca
t, d	t, d		
s, z, c	s, z, c	wacs 'old' (m.sg.)	vacs
ś, ź, ć	s, z, c	aćś 'eye'	acs
cz	č	czetri 'four'	četri
sz	š	szmuks 'pretty, handsome'	šmuks
ż	ž	żogors 'twig'	žogors
r	r		
ł	l	gołwa 'head'	golva
l	ļ or l	laŭdś 'people'	ļauds
		gailś 'rooster'	gaiļs
		kaŭli 'bones'	kauli (before front vowel)
n	n		
ń	ņ	akmińś 'stone'	akmiņs
ni	ņ	sieniok 'earlier'	seņuok
j	j or i	juoja 'rode'	juoja
		treis 'three' 'money'	treis (diphthong)
ŭ	v or u	naŭda 'money'	nauda
		praŭda 'truth'	pravda (Slavic loanword)
		Diŭs 'God'	Dīvs (morpheme boundary)

The diacritic ' as a marker of palatalization is always ignored in the transliteration.

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[1] With respect to palatalization the "Polish" writing system of the 19th century was more accurate than modern orthography.

Table 2: Transliteration of vowels (disregarding length)

i, y, u	i, y, u		
o	o or uo	moti 'hair'	moti
		moti 'mother' (acc.sg)	muoti
e	e or ie	lełs 'big'	lels
		ziemi 'ground' (acc.sg)	zemi
		kleti 'barn' (acc.sg)	klieti
a	a or e	kalwś 'smith'	kaļvs
		piala 'mouse'	pele

The ambiguity of <o> and <(i)e>, which may designate a monophthong or a diphthong, has already been mentioned above. Another problem is raised by the Latgalian phoneme /æ/ (phonetic realizations vary across dialects). Ulanowska often writes it as <a> following an <i> which indicates palatalization of the preceding consonant, or following <l> (see example <piala> in Table 2, representing /pʲælʲæ/). In modern orthography this vowel is rendered by the letter <e>, which therefore becomes ambiguous again, as it also designates the mid front vowel /ɛ/.

Ulanowska's use of the letter <a> for /a/ as well as /æ/ makes the combinations <la> and <nia> ambiguous: they may be transliterated as <ļa> or as <le> and <ņa> or <ne>, respectively. The decision can only be made on morphological grounds. For example, the genitive singular of the masculine noun <cielsz> 'way' is <ciela>, which has to be transliterated as <ceļa> as the genitive ending is /a/. In contrast, the feminine noun <saŭla> is transliterated as <saule>. In a few cases where the correct transliteration could not be decided on, both variants are given in the transliteration, for example <gala> 'meat' = <gaļa/gale>.

A related case in Ulanowska's texts is the writing of <ra> instead of <re>, for example <nidra> for *nīdre* 'reed'; in the transliteration a corrected form is given in brackets: *nīdra [nīdre]*.

In the second part of the collection (1892), which contains the songs, proverbs and riddles, Ulanowska uses a macron on vowel letters – not to indicate vowel length, but most probably to indicate word stress. These diacritics are ignored in the transliteration; see the following example:

Original (Ulanowska 1892, 192)	**Transliteration**
202. Wācs, kaj mōss.	202. Vacs, kai moss [mozs].
203. Wādars kaj būca, a sīrds kaj tōpa.	203. Vādars kai buca, a sirds kai topa.
204. Wādars na śpīgiels, ku āp-jedia, tys īz-gajsa.	204. Vādars na spīgels, kū apjēde [apēde], tys izgaisa.

This example shows a further phenomenon that has to be mentioned. Ulanowska's writing often (tough not always) reflects phonological processes, especially assimilation. In such instances the form is transliterated faithfully, but a non-assimilated and morphologically more transparent form is added in brackets. In the above example the form *mozs* 'small' consists of the stem *moz-* and the ending -s for nominative singular masculine (compare the feminine form *moza*).

Forms in brackets are also added when we felt that the form given by Ulanowska was highly unlikely to have been used by one of her informants – native speakers of a central Latgalian dialect. While Ulanowska evidently tried to fix the texts as they were spoken, she was not a native speaker and she was sometimes influenced by a writing tradition that reflected other dialects or even Low Latvian forms.

The aim of our transliteration is to make the texts easier to understand, especially for readers with a knowledge of Latvian, and to facilitate searching in the database.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

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