



К вопросу о хронологии формирования польских диалектов в Литве

Ушинскиене Виктория

Вильнюсский университет, Вильнюс, Литва

On the Issue of the Chronology of Polish Dialects Formation in Lithuania

Ušinskienė Viktorija

Vilnius University, Vilnius, Lithuania

Аннотация

Статья посвящена систематизации основных подходов к вопросу об этапах формирования польских диалектов в Литве. Она содержит критический обзор концепций, выдвинутых известными исследователями периферийных польских говоров: Х. Турской, З. Курцовой и др.

Abstract

The article deals with the systematization of the main approaches to the chronology of Polish dialects formation in Lithuania. It includes systemic survey of the concepts made by important researchers of the borderland Polish dialects, such as: H. Turska, Z. Kurzowa and others.

Ключевые слова: польские говоры Литвы, северный периферийный диалект.

Keywords: Polish dialects in Lithuania, Northern Kresy (Borderland) dialect.

(1) Currently Poles make up 6.7% of the Lithuanian population. Polish is represented by a number of territorial and functional dialects. In the field of culture and education the local variation of the standard Polish is prevailing (e.g. *cultural dialect*). In everyday communication, especially in rural areas in the northern part of Vilnius County, in the southern part of Širvintos district and in Zarasai district (Turmantas), the so-called *Northern Kresy (Borderland) dialect* is widely spread. The entire southern part of Vilnius County, Šalčininkai district and the eastern part of Trakai district are inhabited by Poles (according to their self-identification) whose mother tongue is *prostamova*, a subdialect of Belarusian. Polish is spoken there mainly by the older generation.

(2) Certain **preconditions for the formation of the Polish cultural dialect** in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) emerged at the turn of the 13th-14th centuries, however, the decisive conditions for its development were formed in the 16th century. It occurred due to the regular communication between the Polish and Lithuanian-Ruthenian gentry after the signing of the



Union of Lublin. The unification of the states created the conditions for the free movement of the population, which resulted in the influx of Polish colonizers (the gentry, citizens and the clergy) on a thinly populated territory of the GDL.

Another serious consequence of the unification of Poland and Lithuania was the gradual adoption of Polish culture by the gentry of the GDL. This process is characterized as complex and is directly related to Lithuanian conversion to Catholicism in 1387. The fact that Polish was the language of the royal court was also of great importance since the magnates and rich burgesses were more actively using Polish treating it as the most prestigious in the multicultural environment of the GDL (Kurzowa 1993, 17-43). Since the second half of the 17th century, Polish had become the main written language of the GDL.

(3) While the history of Polish cultural dialect in Lithuania does not cause any disputes, the question of the time of **rural subdialects formation** has not received yet a clear interpretation. It is claimed that there were not Polish-speaking territories outside the towns and gentry's manors before the end of the 18th century (Jurkiewicz 1994, 252-255).

(3.1) **H. Turska** was the first linguist to mark the borders among rural Polish-speaking territories in Lithuania. During her field studies in the 20s-30s in the 20th century, she defined three Polish-speaking enclaves: Vilnius, Kaunas and Smalvos (Turska 1939/1982, 21). She suggested that there were some utilitarian considerations explaining why Polish was included in peasants' everyday life: (1) it enabled them to develop business communication and (2) to improve their social status, since Polish was considered as the language of the gentry and church. According to Turska, the majority of the polonized rural population consisted not of Belarusians (Ruthenians), but rather of

Lithuanians. The survey carried out by Turska showed that **the shift from the ethnic language in the areas of Lithuanian substratum began in the third quarter of the 19th century**, and it was so rapid that people born in the 80s-90s of the 19th century could hardly understand Lithuanian (ibidem, 21, 60). On the contrary, in the areas of Belarusian substratum Polish did not cause any difficulty in perceiving it since it was a mere cultural dialect used for external communication, and it did not require rejection of native (Belarusian) language. Complete polonization concerned only the Belarusian population living in the Lithuanian-Belarusian borderlands.

(3.2) Turska's ideas were supported by a majority of leading scholars (e.g. Werenicz, Kurzowa, Rieger). However, at the turn of the 20th-21st centuries, her ideas were criticized by some Polish researchers. Thus, **I. Grek-Pabisowa** (1992, 60) suggests that there could exist quite early, about the 16th century, rural settlements coming to Lithuania from Poland. Furthermore, **I. Maryniakowa** (1999, 163-178) declares for autochthonic origin of Polish dialects in Vilnius County. Her position is motivated by the similarity of features of Polish dialects in Lithuania with the ones in Podlasie and Mazovia (Poland). Both the researchers believe that the process of polonization of peasants in the GDL started no later than in the 16th century when it was developing its strength under the influence of the Catholic Church and the gentry's estates, which resulted in the second half of the 19th century in the formation of the Polish-speaking areas. Otherwise, the researchers claim that Polish would not survive under the pressure of Russification. However, Turska states that the policy of Russification contributed to strengthening of the Polish position as a powerful tool of resistance.



(3.3) Polish slavist **J. Rieger** (1995, 33-38) declares against Grek-Pabisowa's and Maryniakowa's concepts. Underlining the importance of the gentry's estates as a source of distribution of Polish in rural areas of GDL, he severely criticizes the idea of peasants' migration from Poland to Lithuania. Thus, he emphasizes the absence of sufficient arguments (Rieger 1995, 32-33).

Rieger's critical remark is supported by **E. Koniusz** (2001, 94, 134-135). She studied the material presented by J. Karłowicz who created in 1866 the card index of the dialecticisms of Lithuanians that could hardly speak Polish. The analysis of this material allowed to detect a number of Lithuanian borrowings belonging to the 19th century where the influence of Belarusian was not found. So, the source of this material was most likely subdialects of the recently (in the second half of the 19th century) polonized peasants which emerged on the ethnically Lithuanian territory.

According to Rieger and Koniusz, Grek-Pabisowa's and Maryniakowa's concepts require serious historic evidence, however, the state of the research on migration of the lower and middle class from ethnic Poland to the GDL shows that it is insufficient yet. In his turn, **J. Jurkiewicz** (1994, 252-255) states that currently historians don't have enough sufficient evidence that would allow to establish a direct link between peasants' migration (before the end of the 18th century) and the formation of the Polish-speaking enclaves in Lithuania.

(4) Thus, the conclusions are as follows:

(4.1) Historical circumstances in the GDL created special relationship between the local Polish subdialects and the standard (cultural) dialect. In conditions of the autochthonic development of the language its official sub-system is formed

on the basis of the dialects, while in Lithuania we can observe the reverse process as the Polish standard dialect was formed there much earlier than the rural dialects.

(4.2) The areas of Polish rural subdialects had been formed in the GDL about the second half of the 19th century as a result of the gradual polonization of the Lithuanian and Belarusian countryside. The attempts of several scholars to shift the time of their formation to an earlier period of time, namely to the 16th-18th centuries, seem to be insufficiently convincing.

References [Литература]

- Grek-Pabisowa* I. *Język polski na Kresach północno-wschodnich. Legendy a rzeczywistość // Z polskich studiów slawistycznych*. VIII. 1992. C. 55–62.
- Jurkiewicz* J. *Osadnictwo polskie w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w świetle badań historycznych // Acta Baltico-Slavica*. XXII. 1994. C. 237–255.
- Koniusz* E. *Polszczyzna z historycznej Litwy w „Słowniku gwar polskich”* Jana Karłowicza. Kielce: Akademia Świętokrzyska im. Jana Kochanowskiego, 2001. 222 c.
- Kurzowa* Z. *Język polski Wileńszczyzny i kresów północno-wschodnich XVI–XX w.* Warszawa—Kraków: PWN, 1993. 501 c.
- Maryniakowa* I. *Związki polszczyzny północnokresowej z Podlasiem i Mazowszem // Acta Baltico-Slavica*. XXIV. 1999. C. 163–178.
- Rieger* J. *W sprawie genezy i ewolucji polszczyzny w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim // Studia nad polszczyzną kresową*. T. VIII. 1995. C. 31–38.
- Turska* H. *O powstaniu polskich obszarów językowych na Wileńszczyźnie // Studia nad*



polszczyzną kresową T. I. 1982
[reprint of 1939]. C. 9–121.