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# Bringing Latgalian into schools: Visions, needs, and obstacles

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# Structure of this talk

1. Schools and lesser-used languages
2. The Kashubian example
3. Current problems for Latgalian in education
4. Teaching material
5. Standardization and the inner diversity of Latgalian



## What schools are for

«Around the world, government policies are increasingly repurposing schools vis-à-vis LUL, giving them a mandate to **promote, develop, and revive** these languages instead of using schools as a tool of assimilation that suppresses, excludes, and homogenizes [...].

By teaching with the LUL as the medium of instruction, or with LUL acquisition as the purpose of instruction, **schools help to legitimize the tongue** and often **introduce** it to a student who rarely encounters it in her home environment.»  
(Brown 2010)



**What languages are used in schools**  
(apart from the national language)?

**What is Latgalian?**

lesser-used languages (LUL)

minority language

regional language

heritage language

dialect

foreign languages

=> additional languages



## Additional languages

«We have adopted this term to refer to all languages in use in a society, apart from the official, national or dominant language(s) (hereafter referred to as *dominant* languages). In other words, they include what are sometimes referred to as *regional or minority languages* – the languages of long-established communities (e.g. Saami in Finland or Basque in Spain); *migrant languages* – the languages of more recently established communities, immigrants and refugees (e.g. Panjabi in the UK, Turkish in the Netherlands, etc.); *non-territorial languages* – the languages of travellers and historically displaced groups (e.g. Romani and Yiddish, across Europe); and *sign languages* – the languages of deaf people and hearing people who communicate with them (e.g. the various sign languages in use in Europe).» (McPake et al. 2007)



## Kashubian - a success story?

In Poland, there has been a dramatic revival of the Kashubian language, involving teacher training, materials development and widespread provision of language classes and bilingual education (Wicherkiewicz, 2006). In the communist era, Kashubian was considered as a distinct 'dialect' of Polish; until 1989, use of the word 'language' in connection with Kashubian was prohibited. Since then, the linguistic status of Kashubian has changed significantly, and it is now officially recognised as a regional language. A corresponding shift in public perspectives has also occurred over the past decade or so: Kashubian is no longer considered 'rural' and 'backward' but rather a source of local identity and pride. Kashubian was introduced into schools in 1991, and currently, is being taught to almost 6000 children by over 120 qualified teachers.

(McPake et al. 2007)



# Kashubian in education in 2018/2019

<https://cie.men.gov.pl/sio-strona-glowna/dane-statystyczne/jezyki-obce-dane-statystyczne/>

Type of school	Number of pupils	Number of schools
Przedszkole [preschool]	344	5
Szkoła podstawowa [primary]	18689	331
Gimnazjum [lower secondary]	274	28
Liceum ogólnokształcące [upper secondary]	380	15
Technikum	496	12
Szkoła specjalna przysposabiająca do pracy	6	1
Branżowa szkoła I stopnia	207	9
	<b>20396</b>	<b>401</b>



## Wicherkiewicz (2006)

«Over the last 13 years, the most important obstacle to education through or in Kashubian has been abolished, namely, the traditional school system. It was the school that imposed the conviction of the superiority of 'urban Polish' culture to the 'rural Kashubian' one. Pupils and parents blamed the 'backwardness' of Kashubian for the poor career prospects of their children. A change in the mentality has certainly taken place.

Further development of Kashubian education is undoubtedly conditional on efforts by regional activists and the further training of qualified teachers. Crucial in that respect will also be the ratification of the *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages* by Poland [...]».





## Differences in status – how important are they?

Kashubian: Status as Regional language in national and European legislation

- Ustawa o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym, 6.1.2005
- European Charter of Minority and Regional Languages, ratified 2009

Latgalian: only „written Latgalian” recognized as „historical variety of Latvian” in the national language act (with state commitment to protection)



## Latgalian in education – achievements and current activities

*The Latgalian language in education in Latvia*. 2009. (Mercator Regional Dossiers: Latgalian.) Compiled by Sanita Lazdiņa, Heiko F. Marten and Ilga Šuplinska. Leeuwarden.

Pošeiko, Solvita. 2017. The development of the Latgalian written language. In: *The language situation in Latvia 2010-2015. A sociolinguistic study*, ed. in chief Gunta Kļava, 173-193. Riga.

**Project CoLing:** Minority Languages, Major Opportunities.  
Collaborative Research, Community Engagement and  
Innovative Educational Tools  
<https://coling.al.uw.edu.pl/>



## What is needed to strengthen Latgalian in education?

List of problems and wishes, collected in discussions with teachers and language activists in summer 2018 and spring 2019.

Three groups of problems – solutions to be expected from different agents: politicians, activists, educators, specialists of applied linguistics, linguists (specialists of Latgalian), language cultivators



## Problems reported: 1. The place of Latgalian in the school system

- ❖ **no clear place in school curricula**, only taught in selective classes and extracurricular activities
- ❖ presence of Latgalian in schools **depends on initiatives** of individual teachers **and attitudes** of school boards;
- ❖ educators are **unsure about** or afraid of **using Latgalian in class** (this is noticed already in preschool education);
- ❖ Some parents are afraid that the use of Latgalian may prevent children to acquire correct Latvian.



## 2. The educational process

- ❖ Lack of modern language teaching materials, especially for teenagers;
- ❖ lack of teaching aids with Latgalian as language of instruction for subjects other than Regional studies;
- ❖ lack of teacher training: teachers are not prepared to teach Latgalian or use Latgalian as language of instruction;
- ❖ large differences regarding Latgalian background among pupils, even in one class (native language – heritage language – foreign language)



## Võro as a heritage language in Estonia (Brown 2010)

«Given these sociolinguistic dynamics, the youngest generation learns Võro, a Finno-Ugric literary language more closely related to Finnish than standard Estonian, as a heritage language, rather than via mother-tongue instruction.»



## We could say the same about Latgalian:

«Given these sociolinguistic dynamics, the youngest generation learns ~~Võro~~ **Latgalian**, a ~~Finno-Ugric~~ **Baltic** literary language more closely related to ~~Finnish~~ **Lithuanian** than standard ~~Estonian~~ **Latvian** [is], as a heritage language, rather than via mother-tongue instruction.»

**But that is not true for all pupils! There are still native speakers among the young generation.**



### 3. The inner diversity of Latgalian and attitudes towards it

- ❖ Spoken varieties (local dialects) differ from the written (literary) variety;
- ❖ only orthography is standardized, but in morphology and syntax there are many open questions for the standard;
- ❖ teachers and parents have strict ideas about correctness;
- ❖ the similarity of Latgalian and Latvian may lead to mixing of the languages and furthers a strong influence of Latvian on Latgalian grammar and lexicon.





## Available teaching materials

There are a few teaching aids for Latgalian that have been approved for use in schools and some others that may be used additionally. Examples from recent years:

Cibuļs, Juris & Leikuma, Lidiņa. 2014. *Skreineite*. [Elementary reading and writing for preschool and primary education]

Leikuma, Lideja & Dundure, Veronika & Vulāne, Anna. 2017. *Oluteņš. Latgalīšu rokstu volūda 4. klasei*. [Textbook for Latgalian within Regional studies in upper primary education]

Šuplinska Ilga & Rundāne, Līga & Andrejeva, Aelita. 2017. *Gostūs pi Boņuka. Stuoosti bārnim par Latgolū*. [Book with games for more informal learning about Latgalian language and culture; intended age group 6-12]



## What kind of teaching material is needed?

- ❖ Teaching aids directed to teenagers, meeting their interests and needs;
- ❖ materials that show Latgalian in contexts other than regional cultural history;
- ❖ audio and video material designed for language learning;
- ❖ teaching aids with Latgalian as language of instruction for subjects other than Regional studies (for example, biology, history);

... needed

- ❖ material that can be adapted to different needs (different levels of knowledge in one class);
- ❖ a communicative approach to grammar;
- ❖ teaching aids that respect the inner diversity of Latgalian.



## **How can more materials be produced and published with restricted resources?**

- ❖ using modern technology and online tools for the production of materials;
- ❖ using websites for the distribution of materials;
- ❖ teachers share materials they produced for their classes
- ❖ pupils produce their own materials and learn by exploring (e.g. making dictionaries, flash cards, quizzes);
- ❖ ...



# Example for the use of an online tool: Livonian vocabulary in Memrise

https://www.memrise.com/course/2013932/lib 67% Suchen

MEMRISE Home Courses Groups Subscribe

Courses > Languages > Other > Other Language

**Lībiešu valoda - Līvō kēļ**

Vārdnīca radīta lībiešu bērnu un jauniešu radošajā vasaras skolā Mierlinkizt, izmantojot bērnu zīmējumus kā attēlus un "memus", kā arī viņu ierunātās vārdu izrunas.

Created by ReinisZumbergs

Share Tweet

Levels (10) ⚡ Difficult words

97 / 101 words learned (0 in long term memory) 0 ignored

Options ⚡ 0 🔊 ⌂ Review (97) Learn

1. Lietvārdi - Attēli

2. Lietvārdi - 2

3. Skaitļa vārdi

4. Īpašības vārdi

5. Darbības vārdi

**Leaderboard**

Week Month All Time

1.		piilaans	134,749
2.		zaigina74	123,715
3.		srolanh	82,623
4.		katrinaskuj	82,338
5.		Martins_ta	77,723
6.		Linards_Lie	64,130

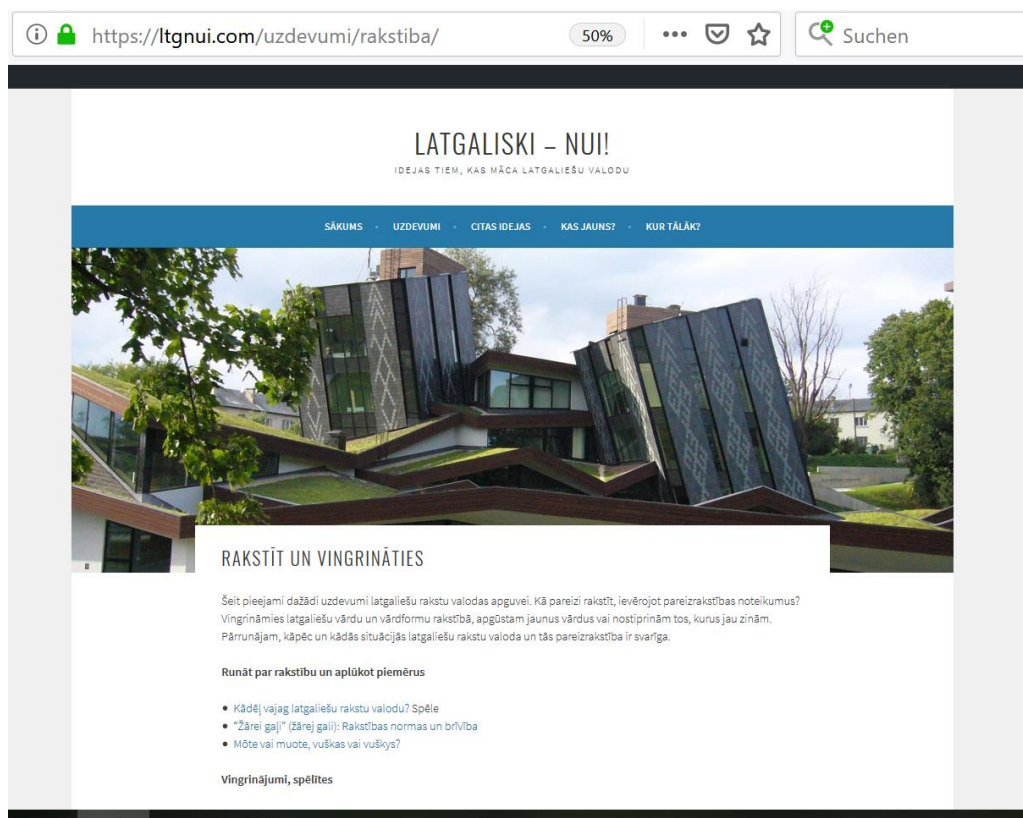
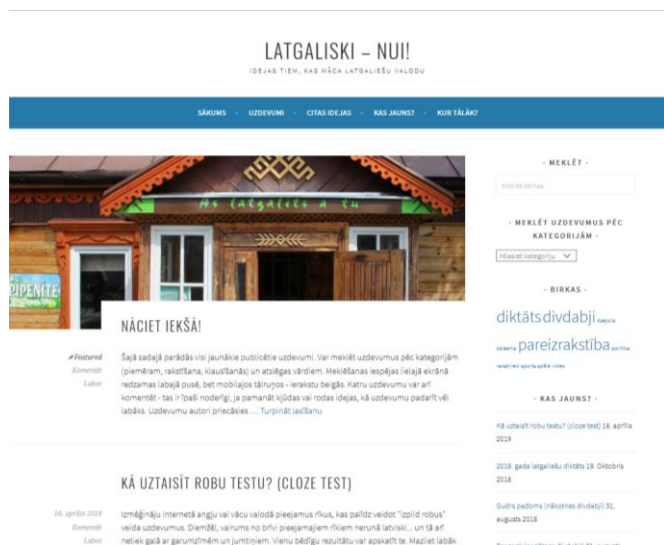
🔊 🔊 🔊

**bōjk**

bāka



# A website with Latgalian teaching materials: [ltgnui.com](https://ltgnui.com)







# Platform COLINGUA.EU (work in progress)



CoLing project ▾

Labā prakse ▾

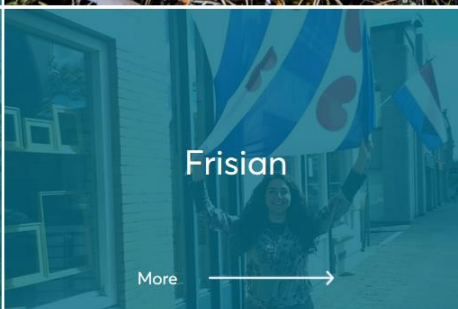
Mācību materiāli

Saistītie projekti

Veiksmes stāsti

Saziņai

Latviešu



colingua.eu/lv/teaching-materials/latgalian-2/



## Latgališu valodas mācību līdzeklis "Vasals!"

Grāmatā "Vasals!" (2003, Lidija Leikuma, Juriš Cibulš) lietota tā sauktā Pītera Stroda pareizrakstība, kas papildināta ar vairākiem tuvinājumiem tautā runātajai valodai. Šī grāmata ir pirmais mēģinājums sniegt vispārēju pārskatu par latgališu rakstu valodas (nereti arī izloksņu) fonētiku un gramatiku.



## Vuicīs runuot latgaliski! (VIDEO)

Latgališu valodas apmācības video izveidojusi biedrība "Bruoli un Muosys", tie sagatavoti par dažām tēmām. Personu vītnīkvuordi Skaiteišona Pīdereibys vītnīkvuordi Alfabets Profesejis Drēbis Lomuošonus Kruosys Cylvāka augums Latgališu izteicīni Laika skaiteišona Svātki i tūs svieteišona Nūdereigi vuordi komunikacejai dzejžaceja ci...



## Kā latgaliski pareizi pierakstīt mēnešu nosaukumus?

"Tāvam divpadsmit dālu. Sevcuram dālam vuords." Itaidu meikli 1928. godā Bierzpiļs pogostā sovulaik pīrakstejs tūlaik školnīks, piecuok jurists Stanislavs Apšēnīks. Pareizuo atbilde tai i ir – mīenešu nūsaukumi. Latgaliski mīenešu nūsaukumu raksteiba mejusēs leidza ar laiku, bet kai tod...



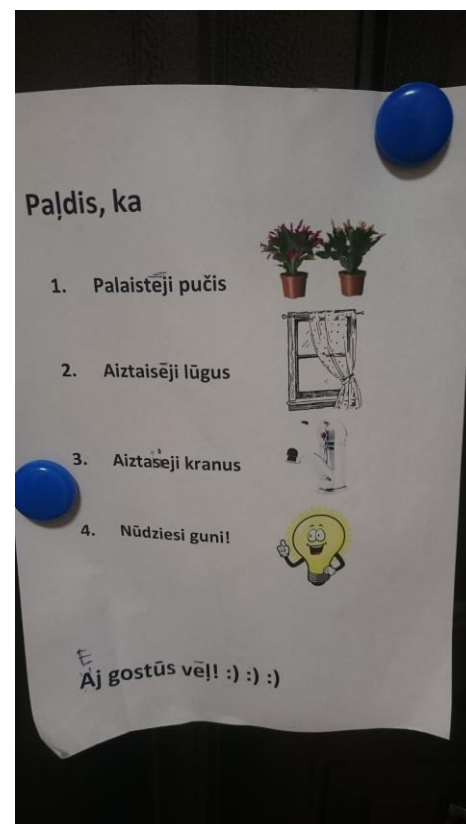


## But: How can we produce teaching materials when the language is not fully standardized?

**Orthography:** standard is codified, but still lacks implementation

- many speakers don't know how to write correctly
- there are often mistakes in writing that appears in public space (social media, announcements, advertisements, song texts...)

=> that's why we need schooling





## Grammar and lexicon

Elementary questions have not been normed, e.g.:

- dative of 'we' – *mums* or *myusim*?
- 'is not' – *nav*, *nava*, *navā*, *navaida*?

Or there is a norm, but many active speakers use different forms:

- 'we can' – *mes varim* or *mes varam*?
- *cepam gaļu* or *galī*? *Rēzeknē* or *Rēzeknī*?

**Lexical** variation leads to heated discussion about good, correct words (*dvors* or *sāta*? *da* or *leidz*? *maut* or *peļdēt*?)



## Further standardization is necessary, but...

- ❖ We cannot wait until everything has been standardized – the language may die out in the meantime!
- ❖ Focussing on norms and correctness may discourage young people from using the language and make fluent elder speakers unsure of their competence.
- ❖ Regional variation (dialects) makes Latgalian richer; the same may be true for other types of variation, if accepted.
- ❖ Many questions may not be ready for selecting one normative variant, at least not with a democratic approach.
- ❖ Much more research on the actual usage of Latgalian as well as on the users' attitudes towards variation is needed.



## Ressources needed for research and material development

- ❖ A comprehensive dictionary listing Latgalian words with inflectional forms, syonyms, most important variants and recommendations for use. Should be available online (such as *tezaurs.lv*).
- ❖ A better, bigger electronic corpus of modern written Latgalian (MuLa-1 is good, but not enough).
- ❖ A database or corpus of spoken varieties of Latgalian.



## References

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**Paldies par uzmanību!**  
**Paļdis par viereibu!**

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