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VARIATION IN PODLACHIAN INSTRUMENTAL SINGULAR ENDINGS: *-OJU* OR *-EJU*?

Abstract: This article investigates variation between the instrumental singular endings -oju and -eju in contemporary Podlachian. The phenomenon is examined against the background of East Slavic nominal morphology and analysed on the basis of a corpus of published Podlachian literary texts. Special attention is given to nouns with soft or historically soft stems (masculine and feminine), where the competition between the two endings is most evident. A comparative perspective shows that Podlachian diverges both from Ukrainian, where instrumental endings remain more consistently stem-conditioned, and from Belarusian, which exhibits a pattern of regularization. Corpus evidence indicates that within the set of morphologically eligible variable forms, instrumental singular forms in -oju predominate, while -eju remains morphologically viable. The findings suggest that the distribution of the two endings is no longer governed primarily by phonological criteria, but rather by analogical extension, lexical persistence, and authorial or codificatory preferences. This variation thus represents a systematic feature of contemporary Podlachian morphology and its developing written norm.

Keywords: Podlachian, instrumental singular, morphology, language variation, East Slavic, codification, microlanguage.

1. Introduction

This article examines variation between the instrumental singular endings *-oju* and *-eju* in contemporary Podlachian. Its aim is twofold: first, to situate the Podlachian pattern within the wider historical development of East Slavic instrumental singular morphology; second, to analyse the distribution of both endings in a corpus of published Podlachian literary texts. Special attention is paid to nouns and adjectives whose stems end in soft or historically soft consonants,

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since it is precisely in these environments that the competition between the two endings is most noticeable.²

For the purposes of this article, **Podlachian** is understood as the East Slavic vernacular (lect) of the southern part of Podlaskie Voivodeship together with its current written elaboration. In dialectological scholarship, the varieties in question have been classified as Belarusian–Ukrainian transitional dialects, dialects with Ukrainian features, or Ukrainian dialects (Glinka, Obrębska-Jabłońska & Siatkowski, 1980). In local usage, however, speakers refer to them more broadly as *svoja mova*, *naša mova*, *po-svojomu*, or *po-našomu*. Contemporary Podlachian writing therefore emerges at the intersection of inherited vernacular practice, regional self-identification, and explicit codificatory effort.

This broader linguistic situation cannot be understood solely through traditional dialectological classification, since the Podlasie region is also shaped by competing ethnolinguistic frameworks, speaker perception, and differing forms of linguistic self-identification (Woolhiser, 2018). Furthermore, contemporary written Podlachian is inseparable from conscious standardizing activity, especially in the domain of orthography and language elaboration (Maksymiuk, 2018). For broader discussion of contemporary Podlachian language practices, see also Karpíšek (2024, 2025).

The immediate impulse for the present study was Jan Maksymiuk's discussion of a codificatory problem of Podlachian morphology³: whether forms such as *zemloju* and *zemleju* should be treated as parallel variants or whether one of them should be preferred in a normalized written standard. This question is important not only from the perspective of codification, but also from the perspective of grammatical description. For that reason, the alternation provides a useful entry point into the broader issue of how a newly elaborated written microlanguage reorganizes inherited morphological variation into an emerging norm.

The present paper proceeds in two stages. It first outlines the relevant historical and comparative background and briefly characterizes the instrumental singular in Podlachian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian. It then presents a corpus-based analysis of published Podlachian literary texts and evaluates the distribution of masculine and feminine nominal endings *-oju* and *-eju* in actual usage. The principal purpose of the study is to describe the present state of the variation as precisely as possible and to determine what this variation reveals about ongoing morphological tendencies in Podlachian.

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³<https://svoja.org/hromada/maksymiuk-jan/zemloju-cy-zemleju>

2. Historical background and comparative perspective

In order to understand the later East Slavic opposition between the two forms, it is necessary to distinguish between the inherited Proto-/Common Slavic nominal stem classes and the subsequent reshaping of their instrumental singular endings in East Slavic. Forms such as *ženoju* (женою) and *zemleju* (землею) should not be interpreted as the unchanged continuation of a single Proto-Slavic opposition; rather, they reflect an Old East Slavic stage in which older inherited formations had already been restructured and redistributed. This is crucial for the present analysis, since the Podlachian material does not belong to a single historical nominal type. Rather, it concerns three different historical nominal types: first, the productive *ā-/jā-stems*, which in the synchronic description also include masculine nouns of the soft *-ā-/jā* type; second, nouns of the *ĭ-stem* type; and third, *r-stem*, most notably the noun *māti*.

In the productive *ā-/jā-stems*, the later East Slavic opposition between *-oju* and *-eju* developed within a class that had already undergone secondary expansion and redistribution of instrumental singular endings. This historical background is relevant for Podlachian forms such as *babúloju* / *babúleju* and also for masculine nouns of the *-ā-/jā* type, such as *Kóloju* / *Kóleju* or *sudijóju* / *sudijéju*, which show that the alternation is not confined to feminine nouns alone.

The situation is different in nouns of the *ĭ-stem* type. Here Podlachian variants such as *sóloju* and *sóleju* should not be treated as archaisms preserving an older stage than *solju* / *colью*; rather, they represent later analogical remodelling. A different case again is represented by relic consonantal paradigms. The noun *māti* does not belong to the *ĭ-stem* class, but continues the old *r-stem* type. Forms such as *máteroju* and *mátereju* are therefore especially significant, because they show that the analogical expansion of the later instrumental endings reached even morphologically isolated relic paradigms.

Within Old East Slavic, instrumental singular forms came to display a distribution closely associated with stem type and, synchronically, also with the hardness or softness of the final consonant. In broad terms, nouns with hard stems were associated with forms in *-oju*, as in *женою* and *рукою*, whereas nouns with soft or historically soft stems were associated with forms in *-eju*, as in *землею* and *свечею*. In later East Slavic development, however, this contrast ceased to function with equal strength across all nominal classes and varieties. In modern Ukrainian, the distribution has remained comparatively stable, so that hard-stem forms regularly take *-oju*, whereas soft and historically soft stems generally take *-eju* (Pavlenko, 2010; Pliushch,

2010; Pugh & Press, 1999). Belarusian does not preserve the opposition between *-oju* and *-eju* as a comparatively stable reflex of stem type. Although forms in *-oju* became widely generalized in the nominal system, third declension and other inherited formations continued to preserve distinct realizations, and declension class remained an important structural parameter of the system (Belaruskaia hramatyka, 1985; Tsivanova & Yaloŭskaia, 2004; Bethin, 2022).

In contemporary Podlachian (Maksymiuk, 2024), instrumental singular forms in *-oju* occur not only where they are historically expected, but also in environments traditionally associated with *-eju*, especially after soft and historically soft consonants, but also in nouns of the *ĭ*-stem type and even in relic paradigms such as *máti*. The opposition between the two forms is therefore not merely a marginal historical residue, but a particularly revealing locus of current morphological stabilization.

3. The distribution of *-oju* and *-eju* in Podlachian, Belarusian, and Ukrainian

In contemporary Podlachian, the alternation between *-oju* and *-eju* is not confined to a single narrow lexical group. Its most observable locus lies in feminine nouns whose stems end in soft or historically soft consonants, but the phenomenon is not limited to one morphological type. On the contrary, it affects also masculine nouns ending in *-a* and extends across historically different paradigms. Hence, the Podlachian material already suggests that the distribution of the two endings in such forms can no longer be described as purely phonologically conditioned.

This distribution points to a significant restructuring of the inherited East Slavic pattern. In Podlachian, the instrumental singular endings *-oju* and *-eju* have spread across morphological paradigms regardless of the original phonological properties of the stem, which indicates a tendency toward analogical levelling and increased productivity of the ending *-oju*. The latter was likely strengthened by its formal identity with hard-stem instrumental singular formations. From this perspective, the crucial development is not the complete disappearance of the older opposition, but rather its weakening: the original distinctions based on stem-final hardness, softness, or historical softness are no longer consistently maintained. As a result, ending in soft consonants such as [zʲ], [sʲ], [dʲ], [tʲ], [nʲ], [lʲ], [j], [tsʲ], [dʒʲ], as well as in historically soft consonants such as [ʒ], [ʃ], [tʃ], [dʒ], and in some cases [r], may now vary between *-oju* and *-eju*.

The extent of this analogical spread becomes visible already in masculine nouns of the first declension belonging to the soft *ā-/jā*- stem type, such as *Kóla* and *sudijá*.

In the instrumental singular, these forms may occur both as *Kóloju / Kóleju* and as *sudijóju / sudijéju*. These examples are important because they show that the alternation is not confined to feminine nouns alone, even though feminine forms remain its most salient domain. The same tendency is visible in feminine formations of the productive *ā-/jā*-stem type, where parallel forms such as *babúloju / babúleju* demonstrate that the expansion of *-oju* has reached precisely those environments in which one might historically expect *-eju* to remain more stable.

First Declension Paradigm Soft Consonant in Podlachian (Masc.)

Nominative	Kól-a		sudij-á	
Instrumental	Kól-oju	Kól-eju	sudij-óju	sudij-éju

The historical depth of this expansion becomes even clearer in other nominal types. In Podlachian, the alternation is not limited to the productive feminine *ā-/jā*-stem domain but also reaches nouns of the *ī*-stem type and relic consonantal paradigms. Thus, forms such as *sóloju / sóleju* show that the later *-oju / -eju* opposition has spread into a class whose older inherited Slavic pattern is represented by forms of the *solju / солью* type, as attested in standard Belarusian, Russian, and Ukrainian.

Forms such as *máteroju / mátereju*, by contrast, are significant for a different reason: they show that the same analogical expansion reached even the isolated paradigm of *máti*, historically belonging to the old *r*-stem type. These examples are analytically important because they indicate that the alternation between instrumental singular endings *-oju* and *-eju* is not simply a matter of local fluctuation or isolated lexical irregularity. The repeated occurrence of both forms suggests that the phenomenon has a broader morphological relevance. It should therefore be treated as a genuine issue of Podlachian morphology rather than as a random collection of variants.

Third Declension Paradigm in Podlachian (Fem.)

Nominative	nôč		myš		sól	
Instrumental	nôč-oju	nôč-eju	myš-oju	myš-eju	sól-oju	sól-eju

Nominative	chôt'		próstyn		mát-i	
Instrumental	chôt'-oju	chôt'-eju	próstyn-i-oju	próstyn-i-eju	mát-er-oju	mát-er-eju

Belarusian provides a useful comparison precisely because it does not pattern in the same way. In standard Belarusian, forms in *-oju* are widely generalized in the first declension: thus, nouns such as *kniha* yield instrumental *knihaju*, and similar formations occur also after soft or historically soft consonants, as in *miažóju* or reduced *babúlaju*. Masculine personal nouns of the soft *ā-/jā-* type likewise take *-oju*, for example *suddzióju*. Third-declension nouns form the instrumental singular as *прыстанню*, *дэталлю*, or *аповесцю*, while the irregular noun *маці* yields *мацерай / мацераю*. Similarly, *sol* 'salt' gives *sólly*, preserving a form ultimately continuing the older *-ju* type rather than converging with the Podlachian extension of *-oju*. It is also worth noting that modern Belarusian often prefers shorter instrumental singular forms beside the fuller variants, for example *dušój* or *dziadúlaj*. These examples show that Belarusian has regularized the system differently: it has generalized *-oju* in some domains, but it has not produced the same broad overlap between *-oju* and *-eju* that characterizes Podlachian.

Second Declension Paradigm in Belarusian (Fem.)

Nominative	мяжа	лінія	жняя
Instrumental	мяжой (-ою)	лініяй (-яю)	жняёй (-яю)

Third Declension Paradigm Soft Consonant in Belarusian (Fem.)

Nominative	прыстань	дэталь	аповесць
Instrumental	прыстан(ь)ню	дэтал(ь)лю	аповес(ь)цю

Declension of *maci* (mother; irregular) in Belarusian (Fem.)

Nominative	маці	
Instrumental	мацерай	мацераю

Ukrainian, by contrast, preserves the inherited distribution more consistently. In the instrumental singular, hard stems regularly take *-oju*, whereas soft and historically soft stems typically take *-eju*. This can be observed in pairs such as *knyha* — *knyhoju* versus *dušá* — *dušéju* and *zemlá* — *zemléju*. The same principle applies to masculine nouns of the *ā-/jā-* stem type, so that *suddiá* yields *suddéju*, not parallel to Podlachian *sudijóju / sudijéju*. Older nominal types likewise remain morphologically distinct: *máty* forms instrumental *mátir'ju*, while *sil* 'salt' yields *sillju*.

From the comparative perspective, Podlachian differs from Ukrainian in that the older stem-conditioned distribution is no longer maintained with comparable consistency, and from Belarusian in that the productive ending *-oju* has spread more broadly across historically heterogeneous paradigms without eliminating the competing form *-eju*.

First Declension Paradigms: Soft Group in Ukrainian (Fem.)

Nominative	ткал-я	наді-я
Instrumental	ткал-єю	наді-єю

First Declension: Mixed Group Paradigms in Ukrainian (Fem.)

Nominative	миш-а	круч-а
Instrumental	миш-єю	круч-єю

Third Declension Paradigms in Ukrainian (Fem.)

Nominative	піч	вісь	мати
Instrumental	печ-ю	вісс-ю	матір'ю

The adjectival material points in the same direction, although it is less extensive than the nominal evidence. In Podlachian, adjectival instrumental singular forms strongly prefer *-oju*. Here too, the variation is found above all in stems ending in soft or historically soft consonants, that is, in the same structural environments as in the nominal system. Nevertheless, variable formations such as *čužeju*, *sinieju*, and the unsystematic *čysteju* show that the opposition is not entirely absent from adjectival morphology. These forms are worth retaining in the discussion not because adjectives are the main site of the phenomenon, but because they confirm that the analogical pressure favouring *-oju* is not limited to nouns alone. At the same time, their relative rarity shows that adjectival variation is secondary to the nominal system and should be treated as supporting rather than central evidence.

4. Corpus and methodology

The analytical part of this article is based on a corpus of published Podlachian literary texts and focuses on the distribution of instrumental singular forms

ending in **-oju** and **-eju**. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive description of all extant Podlachian texts, but to establish a sufficiently rich empirical basis for identifying recurrent morphological tendencies in contemporary written usage. More specifically, the analysis seeks to determine how frequently the two endings occur in nouns and adjectives and whether their distribution points to stable lexical or morphological preferences.

The corpus was assembled purposively from accessible published texts in order to represent as many authors as possible and to capture a reasonable range of contemporary written Podlachian usage. The principal criterion of inclusion was that the text should be written in authentic Podlachian. In practical terms, this meant that the corpus included texts written in any of the three dialectal types discussed above, although the variety usually described as a dialect with Ukrainian features is represented most strongly, since it accounts for the largest share of currently available Podlachian literary production. Only published texts, whether printed or electronic, were included. Stylized or merely occasional imitation of Podlachian was not accepted as sufficient grounds for inclusion. Local authors writing in standard Belarusian or standard Ukrainian were therefore excluded.

The corpus includes both original writing and translations, since both types of text are relevant to the formation of the written norm and to the circulation of morphological variants within it. It comprises texts published between 1986 and 2023; however, the material is treated here as a unified body of contemporary written Podlachian, since the aim is not to trace diachronic change, but to identify the distribution of the competing endings in available literary usage. The analysed corpus spans published Podlachian literary texts from Havryluk (1986) and Žabinska (1989) to more recent works by J. Maksimjuk, H. Maksimjuk, Platonišyn, Pleva, and Dydenko. Full bibliographic details of all primary texts are provided under **Sources**.

The analysis was conducted manually and was limited to forms belonging to lexical and morphological environments in which variation between the instrumental singular endings *-oju* and *-eju* is in principle possible. In other words, the corpus did not include all instrumental singular forms attested in the selected texts, but only those nouns and adjectives whose stem structure allows competition between the two endings. Every attested occurrence of such a form was counted, including repeated occurrences of the same lexical item within the same text. The extracted material was subsequently orthographically normalized in order to ensure consistent comparison of equivalent forms across the corpus.

Such a corpus necessarily has limitations. Since Podlachian does not yet have a fully developed searchable corpus and since appropriate computational tools remain limited, the present study proceeds through a manually assembled literary sample rather than through exhaustive corpus extraction. The results should therefore be understood as a structured exploratory analysis of currently available texts, not as a statistically exhaustive survey of all written Podlachian. At the same time, the breadth of the selected material makes it possible to identify robust tendencies in actual usage and to compare the relative productivity of the instrumental singular endings *-oju* and *-eju* across different authors and texts.

Table 1 records all attested instrumental singular tokens in morphologically eligible variable environments. For each text, it gives the total number of occurrences in *-oju* and *-eju* and thus provides the quantitative basis for the analysis that follows.

Title	-oju	-eju
<i>V neprominajučomu pochodi</i>	0	2
<i>Mamo, kim my je?</i>	3	1
<i>Nad dniom pochilana</i>	4	1
<i>Vinec — poema</i>	6	0
<i>Paemy</i>	6	0
<i>Bahrovy cień</i>	1	0
<i>Siva zozula</i>	64	10
<i>Miž zolotom i smertioju</i>	4	7
<i>Biélski hostinec</i> , 2006, (1–2)	3	0
<i>Biélski hostinec</i> , 2006, (3)	7	0
<i>Biélski hostinec</i> , 2006, (4)	3	0
<i>Šara hodzina abo Ostatni kljent</i>	0	1
<i>Biélski hostinec</i> , 2009, (5)	3	0
<i>Sviétto oseni</i>	0	1
<i>Biélski hostinec</i> , 2011, (2)	2	0
<i>Mieŝta v ŝimporŝyji i kul'tury nydł'aushkŝix biélorushyv</i>	17	0
<i>Kazki po svojomu</i>	6	0
<i>Ja lubju tebe, zemla</i>	9	2
<i>Na porozi // Ha porozi</i>	5	1
<i>Vesnianaja nôč</i>	8	43
<i>Maŝy prync</i>	5	1
<i>Tak rozkazuwali</i>	39	3
<i>Słova na viétrovi</i>	52	25
<i>Nasze seto, prawda i wydumane</i>	42	2

<i>Onde — po swojomu, Tutaj — po polsku</i>	8	1
Total occurrences	297	101

The results presented in Table 1 concern only those instrumental singular forms that belong to environments in which variation between *-oju* and *-eju* is in principle possible. The table therefore does not describe the instrumental singular system of Podlachian as a whole, but only the subset of nouns and adjectives in which the two endings may compete. Out of 398 attested tokens, 297 occur in *-oju* and 101 in *-eju*, which indicates that in potentially variable contexts the ending *-oju* functions as the dominant variant in the analysed corpus.

From a theoretical perspective, the coexistence of *-oju* and *-eju* in the same instrumental singular slot may be treated as overabundance (Lečić, 2015), that is, as the availability of two competing exponents for a single paradigm cell. Such a framing makes it possible to analyse the Podlachian material not as accidental fluctuation, but as a structured instance of inflectional variation. In Slavic morphology, comparable case-slot doublets have likewise been approached as distributionally conditioned rather than random.

The strong predominance of *-oju* within morphologically eligible variable environments is consistent with the interpretation of *-oju* as a more productive exponent in this domain. It is significant due to the fact that the counted material consists precisely of those forms in which historical or phonological conditioning might favour the preservation of *-eju*. The fact that *-oju* nonetheless prevails shows that its analogical expansion has advanced well beyond its historically expected environments. The relevant evidence comes above all from nouns and adjectives with soft or historically soft stem-final consonants, including masculine nouns of the soft *ā-/jā-* stem type, feminine formations of the productive *ā-/jā-* stem type, nouns of the *ī-* stem type, and relic paradigms such as *māti*. The quantitative imbalance between the two endings is therefore meaningful not in general instrumental singular morphology, but specifically in the domain where variation is structurally possible.

Forms in *-eju*, although considerably less frequent overall, remain morphologically viable and are not restricted to isolated residue. In the corpus, they appear above all in lexical and morphological environments that preserve stronger links to older declensional patterns, especially among nouns of the *ī-* stem type. This is particularly visible in forms such as *krovleju* ‘blood’ and *smertieju* ‘death’, but also in examples such as *cikavostieju* ‘interest’, *osenieju* ‘autumn’, *radostieju* ‘happiness’, and *pevnostieju* ‘certainty’. Particularly noteworthy is the noun *māti*, where the form *matereju* occurs with surprising frequency alongside *materoju*. In this case,

the evidence points not to marginal survival alone, but to genuine coexistence of both instrumental singular formations within one historically isolated paradigm.

In the course of the analysis, there were some atypical or unsystematic forms that deviate from established morphological patterns in Podlachian and are generally not found in spoken usage or extremely rare. Notably, incomplete *-oj* instrumental singular forms — characteristic of contemporary Belarusian but rare or essentially non-existent in Podlachian — appear in certain instances. For example, in *Na porozi*, forms such as *simijoj* (family) or *jablonioj* (apple tree) were employed to achieve rhyme, which fully justifies their use in this context. Apart from that, the form *čysteju* found in *Ja lubju tebe, zemla* was also surprising as it does not follow any pattern mentioned above and may thus constitute author's idiolect.

A similar observation can be made in *V neprominajučomu pochodi*, where forms without epenthesis, such as *krovieju* (instead of common *krovleju*; blood), appear alongside the original *i*-stem form *krovju* (blood) forms that presently possess the *-oju* or *-eju* endings respectively. This variation may reflect a stylistic choice influenced by the author's background, particularly his familiarity with standard Ukrainian, where *krovju* (кров'ю) is a fully standard form.

A similar phenomenon is observed in *Mieśta w zistoryji i kul'tury nuddlauskich bielorusycw*, where forms such as *Ruśsiu* 'Rus' and *sólłu* 'salt' appear. These forms align with Belarusian conventions, where they are fully standard, but remain foreign to Podlachian. Their occurrence may again be connected with the author's linguistic background. It should be noted that in the selected texts, D. Fijonik employs *-oju* forms exclusively, which suggests a strongly levelled idiolectal preference for the more productive variant rather than allowing firm conclusions about wider locality-level usage.

Consequently, the evidence points to a combination of influences: individual idiolect, the broader Podlachian tendency toward the more productive and more widely generalized ending *-oju*, and, to some extent, the influence of standard Belarusian or Ukrainian. The role of Polish is less clear. On the one hand, Polish should always be considered as the dominant contact language in the wider sociolinguistic environment; on the other hand, the Polish instrumental ending in *-ą* does not provide any straightforward formal model for the Podlachian variation. At most, one might speculate that the oral nucleus of final Polish *-ą* — phonologically /*ɔ̃*/ and often realized word-finally as [ɔw̃] — could create a weak phonetic attraction toward the back-vocalic option *-oju* rather than *-eju*. Such an effect, however, remains hypothetical, and in a phenomenon so strongly shaped by idiolectal variation it would be difficult to demonstrate on the basis of the

present material. Furthermore, forms in *-eju* remain present elsewhere in the corpus and therefore cannot be reduced to isolated idiolectal residue. Although they are considerably less frequent overall, they typically appear to some extent within longer texts.

This tendency is also reflected in the authorial distribution of *-eju* forms, which is not random. In the corpus, they occur most clearly in lexical and morphological environments that preserve stronger links to nouns of the *ĭ*-stem type. In Podlachian, this is particularly noticeable in forms such as *krovleju* ‘blood’ and *smertieju* ‘death’, but also in examples such as *cikavostieju* ‘interest’, *osenieju* ‘autumn’, *radostieju* ‘happiness’, and *pevnostieju* ‘certainty’. At the same time, authorial distribution remains important. The translations of Asia Janina Kondratiuk contain exclusively *-eju* forms, Justyna Korolko’s *Miż zolotom i smertioju* shows a slight predominance of *-eju*, and J. Maksimjuk’s translation *Vesnianaja nôč* contains *-eju* forms with marked frequency as a result of his deliberate choice. The distribution is therefore shaped not only by inherited morphology, but also by writer-specific and translation-specific practice. In a newly elaborated written variety, such effects are especially significant, since codification depends not only on formal selection, but also on acceptance and repeated usage by actual writers.

What came as a notable surprise was the frequency of occurrences containing the form *matereju* (mother) with the *-eju* ending. Data indicate that among authors who use this word, both forms — *materoju* and *matereju* — are equally acceptable, with little differentiation in usage. This flexibility is an intriguing feature specific to this word. In conclusion, the stated above suggests that while *-eju* forms are not dominant, they are nonetheless integrated into extended narratives, maintaining a presence in the language’s literary expression and speech alike.

5. Conclusion

In summary, the analysis indicates a significant preference for the **-oju** ending within the morphologically eligible variable forms examined here, suggesting a tendency toward its dominance in this domain. However, the continued, albeit less frequent, use of instrumental singular ending **-eju** demonstrates that both endings remain morphologically viable in contemporary Podlachian. This coexistence raises the question of whether one form will eventually prevail or whether both will continue to exist side by side as Podlachian evolves and moves towards standardization.

As Podlachian has yet to be fully standardized, it is understandable that some authors may seek linguistic inspiration or guidance from neighbouring,

established languages, most notably Ukrainian and Belarusian. In this evolving linguistic landscape, writers may feel that certain native forms lack the refinement or acceptance found in other Slavic languages, leading them to incorporate forms that are widely recognized in these established systems. Alternatively, given that certain forms may not be commonly used in speech, they may not feel natural in writing, and a “foreign” form is chosen instead. This phenomenon is significant in relation to the challenges faced by authors in crafting a distinct Podlachian linguistic identity, as they navigate the balance between preserving native forms and drawing on elements from related languages to lend legitimacy and structure to their work.

At the same time, the future development of Podlachian in this respect remains open. Continued codification and literary use may gradually strengthen one variant, but it is equally possible that both forms will remain in circulation, each supported by different lexical habits, authorial preferences, and stylistic tendencies. In either case, the present variation should not be regarded merely as an unresolved problem, but as a meaningful sign of a language still consolidating its written form. Future usage will determine whether this coexistence gives way to greater regularization or whether it comes to constitute one of the defining features of Podlachian’s emerging norm.

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ВАРИРАЊЕ НАСТАВАКА ЗА ИНСТРУМЕНТАЛ ЈЕДНИНЕ У ПОДЛАШКОМ; -ОЈУ ИЛИ -ЕЈУ

Резиме

Овај рад истражује варијацију између наставка -оју и -еју у инструменталу једине у савременом подлашком језику. Појава се сагледава у контексту источнословенске номиналне морфологије и анализира на основу корпуса објављених подлашких књижевних текстова. Посебна пажња посвећена је именицама с меким или историјски меким основама, гдје је конкуренција између ова два наставка најизраженија. Компаративна перспектива показује да се подлашки разликује и од украјинског, у којем су наставци у инструменталу једине досљедније условљени типом основе, и од бјелоруског, који показује другачији образац регуларизације. Грађа показује да унутар скупа морфолошки подобних варијабилних облика преовладавају облици на -оју, док облици на -еју остају продуктивни. Налази упућују на то да расподела ова два наставка више није првенствено условљена фонолошким критеријумима, већ је обликују аналогичко проширење, лексичка постојаност и ауторски или кодификациони избор. Ова варијација стога представља системско обиљежје морфологије подлашког језика и његовог развијајућег писаног стандарда.

► *Кључне ријечи:* подлашки језик, инструментал једине, морфологија, језичка варијација, источнословенски језици, кодификација, микројезик.