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# A contribution to the documentation of a nearly extinct language – Present Tense morphology in Modern Vilamovicean<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Vilamovicean is one of the most endangered languages in Europe.<sup>2</sup> This Germanic idiom,<sup>3</sup> spoken in the town of Wilamowice in Southern Poland, is nowadays

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Dr. Hab. Artur Tworek for his highly valuable comments on the previous version of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The term language is used in this paper as being synonymous with linguistic system. Accordingly, it does not make reference to the fact of whether – from a sociolinguistic and/or purely grammatical perspective – this system is a ‘genuine’ language, dialect, ethnolect or local vernacular. In this way, we follow the approach commonly used in linguistic typology. Note that the typological websites [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com) and [www.sil.org](http://www.sil.org) refer to Vilamovicean as a language. From a more internal linguistic perspective, Vilamovicean is usually treated as a colonial variety (regional vernacular or dialect) of German (see, for instance, Besch et al. 1983 and Lasatowicz 1992; cf. also footnote 3, below). However, one finds sociological, cultural and political reasons which may justify the view that Vilamovicean should be classified as a ‘genuine’ language. In this context, it is important to note that in 2006 the American Library of Congress provided Vilamovicean with its own language code (ISO 639-3) and that in 2013 the Academy of the Vilamovicean Language was established in Warsaw. Furthermore, the native speakers emphasize their own linguistic (and cultural) uniqueness and dissimilarity from German. They consider their tongue a language, clearly distinct and independent from German, and not a local variety or dialect. However, as already mentioned, this paper does not make any claim to determine the status of Vilamovicean and its relation to High German.

<sup>3</sup> There are two views concerning the dialectological classification of Vilamovicean. To be exact, the language is defined either as a member of the East Central group (Ostmitteldeutsch) of the Irmionic branch of languages (cf. Besch et al. 1983, Howe 1996, Harbert 2007, Lewis (ed.) 2009

actively employed by no more than forty fully competent native speakers, who are all more than eighty years old.<sup>4</sup> Given the most likely scenario, the tongue will be extinct within the next ten or twenty years. It is thus necessary to provide a comprehensive documentation and description of the Vilamovicean language, before it disappears.

In light of this necessity, the authors of the present paper have been engaged in a broad research project that consists of documentation and description of the Vilamovicean language as it is spoken in the contemporary times, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> This research project – in progress since 2004 – has principally consisted of extensive field work of which the main objective was the compilation of an enormous database. Currently, the compiled database includes hundreds of hours of audio and video recordings in which native speakers – from those who are the most proficient to those whose familiarity with the tongue is limited – are translating, telling stories, talking about their life, dialoguing with each other, singing, reciting poems and prayers, etc. This means that various real-life situations were constructed so that the total linguistic richness of this idiom could be revealed and, consequently, preserved. Furthermore, innumerable grammatical aspects have been investigated and discussed with the informants and the majority of the lexemes – in particular, all of the words that appear in Mojmir's dictionary (1930–1936) – have been recorded and thoughtfully discussed. Nowadays, this database – which will continue to grow and accumulate new evidence until the last Vilamovicean speaker passes away – constitutes a representative corpus on which the grammar book and the lexicon of this tongue are simultaneously being developed. As far as the grammatical description of the idiom is concerned, various issues have already been described and presented to scholars (cf. the following articles published by Andrason 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2013). Others are in press or in the process of receiving their ultimate shape before the publication.

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and Ritchie 2012:7, Kleczkowski 1920, 1921, Mojmir 1930–1936, Lasatowicz 1992, Wicherkiewicz 2003:5–14 and Ritchie 2012:9, 86), on the one hand, or as a member of the Istvaeonic (which consists of Dutch, Flemish and Afrikaans) or the Ingvaeonic (which includes English, Scots, Low German and Frisian) group of Germanic languages, on the other (for a more detailed discussion see Ryckeboer 1984, Morciniec 1984, 1995, Wicherkiewicz 2003:15–17 and Ritchie 2012:7–8). Following the former opinion, Vilamovicean shares its origin with Standard High German, Upper Saxon, Yiddish and other neighboring Upper Silesian languages, while, in accordance with the latter, it would be brought to Poland by settlers who came from the area of the Low Countries, being an old variety of Dutch, Flemish or Frisian. This second view is also commonly repeated by the local population. It seems, however, that the German 'connection' is more likely. Nevertheless, as correctly observed by Ritchie (2012:87), more research is needed in order to precisely determine the genetic and dialectal status of the Vilamovicean idiom.

<sup>4</sup> The total number of speakers (including persons who are less fluent and/or only understand Vilamovicean but do not usually employ it actively) approximates two hundred.

<sup>5</sup> This contemporary version of the language is usually referred to as Modern Vilamovicean in order to differentiate it from the variety spoken before the Second World War, so-called Classical Vilamovicean.

The compendious grammar of Modern Vilamovicean is expected, itself, within the next two or three years.

Recently, we have observed a significant increase in interest concerning Vilamovicean among European linguists and anthropologists, and – which is especially encouraging – among the younger generation in Wilamowice and Poland. This popularization of the tongue within the academic community and a possibility of its revitalization (since last year, the language has been taught by Tymoteusz Król to the young Poles in Wilamowice), made it clear that we should reveal further grammatical aspects of the Vilamovicean idiom before awaiting the publication of the grammar book in its final shape. Meeting these needs, the present article expounds part of our research outcome and documents, in an exhaustive manner, on the state of the morphology of the Present Tense, without doubt the most useful verbal construction taught currently to students.

It should be noted that neither linguists, interested in the tongue, nor Vilamovicean learners have thus far been bestowed with a grammatical aid (a scholarly paper, manual or chapter in a book) that would introduce a fairly comprehensive description of how the Present Tense is formed in the Vilamovicean language. In other words, no grammatical study published until now discusses in detail the morphological patterns of the Present Tense (cf. Kleczkowski 1920, 1921, Młynek 1907, Latosiński 1909, Lasatowicz 1992, Wicherkiewicz 2004, Ritchie 2012). To be precise, although Kleczkowski's grammar (1920) remains the most accurate and the most extensive description of the Vilamovicean language, the section dedicated to the morphology of the Present Tense is extremely short and superficial, limited to two or three sentences (cf. Kleczkowski 1920:142). The descriptions offered by Młynek and Latosiński, both published before Kleczkowski's book, in 1907 and 1909 respectively, are even more general. In these three publications, the analysis of the Present Tense is limited to the introduction of the set of personal endings that appear with the regular verbs only. This shallow treatment of the Present Tense did not change in the linguistic studies that have appeared after the fall of Communism. Namely, the three recent books dedicated to the Vilamovicean language pay very little attention to the question of how the Present Tense is derived (cf. Lasatowicz 1992, Wicherkiewicz 2004, Ritchie 2012). Although the first of them, i.e. the survey published by Lasatowicz, provides some interesting information and depicts the conjugation of regular verbs and the three auxiliaries (*zâjn*, *hon* and *wada/wan*), it cannot be regarded as a trustful representation of the Modern Vilamovicean idiom. To be exact, the data offered by Lasatowicz displays profound traces of Germanization of the linguistic variety used by her informant.<sup>6</sup> Wicherkiewicz's book from 2004 – a highly valuable source on the Vilamovicean literature and culture – focuses on the translation of the most important literary text composed more than a hundred years ago by Florian Biesik. Consequently –

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<sup>6</sup> It is important to notice that Lasatowicz does not provide the information concerning her informant(s).

and fully understandably – it reduces the treatment of grammatical subjects, including the morphology of the Present Tense, to a necessary minimum. Finally, the BA thesis written recently by Ritchie (2012) offers a meticulous discussion of the dialectological classification of the tongue. Nevertheless, the issue of morphology of the Present Tense – and of the verb in general – is almost entirely ignored. In fact, Ritchie (2012:82) limits himself to the statement that the area of the language that is poorest known and presently necessitates the most research is the verbal system, its morphological patterns included. From this review of the literature, it is evident that a detailed presentation of verbal morphology is urgently needed.

## 2. Evidence

As already explained, the evidence presented in this paper is extracted from the database, which has been in progress since 2006.<sup>7</sup> The main part of the data concerning the verbal morphology was collected in 2009, 2010 and 2011, during field work carried out in Wilamowice that involved some 40 informants.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The examples extracted from this corpus, which is aimed at reflecting and documenting the extraordinary variation and richness of the tongue, are twofold in nature. On the one hand, some forms were obtained non-deliberately. Namely, certain examples were identified from recordings where native speakers conversed spontaneously on a given topic, told stories, recited poems or sang songs. This class also includes cases where the informants were asked to translate sentences from Polish and/or German but these translations were originally related to research on other grammatical aspects and to the morphology of the present tense. On the other hand, some forms were deliberately obtained from informants. In most cases, a person was asked to use a given verb in the specific context (e.g. with the pronoun of the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular *yhy* 'I') or translate a concrete sentence with a verb which was being analyzed, so that the expected form would appear in Vilamovician. This means that all the forms provided in this article have actually been uttered by native speakers and audio recorded by the authors, both separately (a form by itself in isolation) and in a particular context.

<sup>8</sup> To be precise, the following native speakers – ordered by the year of birth – have been consulted: Franciszka Bilczewska fūm Frycki (1913–2012), Kazimierz Grygierczyk fūm Bieruniok (1913–2010), Anna Danek fūm Pejtele (born 1916), Zofia Danek fūm Stańcu (1917–2012), Franciszek Mosler fūm Mōzler (1918–2011), Helena Danek fūm Kwaka (1919–2012) Jan Biba fūm Tūma-Jaśki (1920–2011), Anna Sznajder fūm Pejter (1920–2012), Elżbieta Mynarska fūm Siōeba (born 1921), Helena Biba fūm Płaćnik (born 1922), Elżbieta Babiuch fūm Poūkner (1923–2010), Anna Foks fūm Prorok (1923–2011), Elżbieta Kacorzyk fūm Pūtrok (born 1923), Elżbieta Sznajder fūm Pejter (born 1923), Anna Zejma fūm Lūft (1923–2010), Elżbieta Matysiak fūm Hala-Mockia (born 1924), Anna Danek fūm Kūpsela (born 1924), Helena Gasidło fūm Biōeźniok (born 1924), Waleria Brzezina fūm Cepok (born 1925), Rozalia Kowalik fūm Poūermin (born 1925), Jan Formas (born 1925), Katarzyna Balcarczyk fūm Karol (1925–2013), Stanisław Foks fūm Lūft (born 1926), Elżbieta Formas fūm Mōzler (born 1926), Katarzyna Nowak fūm Tobys (1926–2010), Rozalia Hanusz fūm Linkūs (1926–2009), Anna Korczyk fūm Kołodziej (born 1927), Elżbieta Gasiorek fūm Anta (born 1927), Elżbieta Figwer fūm Bōba (born 1927), Anna Foks fūm Lūft (born 1927), Kazimierz Sznajder fūm Pejter (1927–2011), Ingeborg Matzner-Danek (born 1928), Helena Nowak fūm Holeczkla (born 1928), Jan Balcarczyk fūm Siōeba (1928–2013), Bronisława Pyka (born 1928), Helena Rozner fūm Bōba-Lojzka (born

One should note that, in light of the collected evidence and in an apparent contrast with other areas of the grammar, morphology of the Present Tense is quite constant, being shared in a virtually identical form by all the informants. This means that there are no great variations among speakers concerning the forms and that analogical leveling and other regularizing developments have been less marked than in the nominal and pronominal morphology (cf. Andrason 2010a, 2010b, 2011 and 2014, and Andrason/Król 2014). Consequently, the patterns described in this article are common to the immense majority of our informants and are also preferred by the most proficient speakers.

In the following sections, we will present all the types of Present Tense morphology: regular verbs (section 2.1), verbs that end in a dental consonant (2.2), verbs that end in *n* with a vowel lengthening (2.3), verbs with the alternation *er* – *yn* (2.4), auxiliary verbs *zājn*, *hon* and *wada/wan* (2.5), vowel mutation verbs (2.6) and praeterito-praesentia verbs (2.7).<sup>9</sup>

## 2.1. Regular verbs

All the regular verbs – which are, by far, the most frequent predicates in the Vilamovicean language – form their Present Tense by substituting the infinitive suffix (*-a* or *-n*) by the set of personal endings given below. It should be observed that the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular fails to be marked by any ending.<sup>10</sup>

1928), Emilia Biesik fūm Raczek (1929), Józef Gara fūm Tołér (1929–2013), Elżbieta Merta fūm Hala-Frana-Jaśkia (born 1929), Katarzyna Danek fūm Pejtela (born 1929), Elżbieta Nycz fūm Śleżok (1929–2007), Helena Dobroczyńska fūm Osiecon (1929–2012), Elżbieta Gandor fūm Baranła (born 1930), Zofia Kozieł fūm Šübert (born 1930), Anna Biba fūm Kūčlik (1930–2009), Hilda Kasperczyk fūm Ćiöe (1930–2005), Eugenia Foks fūm Bröda (born 1930), Rozalia Danek fūm Mjyra-Winca (born 1931), Elżbieta Nikiel fūm Linkūs (born 1931), Rozalia Węgradzka fūm Gadła (born 1931), Stanisław Zejma (born 1931), Stefania Kuczmierczyk fūm Jonkla (born 1932), Anna Nowak fūm Hala-Mockia (1932–2011), Emilia Danek fūm Biöeźniok (born 1933), Kazimierz Foks-fūm Baranła (born 1934), Anna Kuczmierczyk fūm Zelbst (born 1934), Anna Sznajder fūm Pejter (born 1934), Barbara Tomanek (born 1935), Elżbieta Sznajder fūm Freślik (born 1938), Stanisław Merta fūm Hala-Frana-Jaśkia-Hala (1955–2011), Janusz Brzezina fūm Urbon (born 1956).

<sup>9</sup> The authors follow the spelling convention which has first been proposed by Tymoteusz Król and then (in a slightly modified shape) employed by Alexander Andrason both in the work on the Vilamovicean grammatical manual and in all published articles and given talks (cf. Andrason 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2013, and Andrason/Król, forthcoming, Materials for the Vilamovicean Dictionary – the letter Z, in: *Annales Neophilologiarum* 7). This orthography has furthermore been used by Tymoteusz Król (2011) in his recently composed poem *S’lawa fūm Wilhelm*. In general terms, the spelling of the vowels reflects the Germanic and Polish tradition: *ā* [a], *a* [a] (by some speakers also pronounced as [ɔ]), *i* [i] or [ɪ], *e* [e] or [ɛ], *o* [o] or [ɔ], *u* [u], *ü* [y] or [ʏ], *ö* [ø] and *y* [ɨ]. The following graphemes stand for diphthongized sounds: *āj* [aj], *ej* [ej], *jy* [iɨ] or [iə] and *ou* [œy] or [œɨ]. The combination *iöe* is usually pronounced [ʏœɛ] or [ʏœə]. As for the consonants, four letters have been adopted from Polish: *c* [ts], *ł* [w], *ś* [ɕ] and *ć* [tɕ]. The letter *h* usually represents the sound [x].

<sup>10</sup> Compare with the ending *e* in German: *Ich mache* ‘I do’ or *Ich gehe* ‘I go’.

	SG	PL
1	–	-a / -n
2	-st	-t
3	-t	-a / -n

The distribution of the two alternative forms in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural is dictated by the shape of the infinitive: verbs whose infinitive ends in *a* take the ending *a*, while verbs whose infinitive ends in *n* adopt the ending *n*. This means that the forms of these two persons are identical to the shape of a corresponding infinitive. To illustrate these two patterns, the full conjugation of two highly common verbs (*moha* ‘to do’ and *gejn* ‘to go’) will be provided:<sup>11</sup>

	SG	PL		SG	PL
1	<i>mah</i>	<i>maha</i>		<i>gej</i>	<i>gejn</i>
2	<i>mahst</i>	<i>maht</i>		<i>gejst</i>	<i>gejt</i>
3	<i>maht</i>	<i>maha</i>		<i>gej</i>	<i>gejn</i>

If the personal pronoun follows the verbal form and takes an unaccented shape, it may be fused to the verb, yielding compounds that superficially appear to constitute a set of personal endings.<sup>12</sup> However, they are not correctly speaking endings, but rather weak unstressed pronominal suffixes which are agglutinated to the verb:

	SG	PL
1	-h	-wer
2	-sty	-ter
3	-tā	-as

It should be acknowledged that when the first person plural suffix is added to a verb in the Present Tense, the regular ending (either *a* or *n*) disappears. This means that the suffix *-wer* is added directly to the verbal root, yielding forms such as *hotwer* ‘we have’ (cf. *wjyr hon*), *gejwer* ‘we go’ (cf. *wjyr gejn*), *müswer* ‘we must’ (cf. *wjyr müsa*), or *kuzwer* ‘we talk’ (cf. *wjyr kuza*). All the remaining forms are merely fused complexes of a personal ending and a given unaccented pronoun with no odd or irregular phonetic adjustments. Nevertheless, the fused suffixes *h* and *s* typically show a certain peculiarity by being found only with verbal forms that end in a vowel or diphthong: *gejh* ‘I go’ and *mohas* ‘they do’ (cf. a highly common form *bejh* ‘I am’ a variety of *yhy bej*).

<sup>11</sup> The same set of endings is employed by vowel mutation verbs, in case they do not end in a dental consonant (cf. section 2.6, below).

<sup>12</sup> Some native speakers even regard them as personal endings.

	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	–	<i>mohwer</i>	<i>gejh</i>	<i>gejwer</i>
2	<i>mohsty</i>	<i>mohter</i>	<i>gejsty</i>	<i>gejter</i>
3	<i>mohå</i>	<i>mohas</i>	<i>gejtå</i>	–

In some cases, unaccented pronouns may also be prefixed to the verb, deriving a fused ‘prefix-conjugation’. This occurs uniquely with the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular as well as with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural: *hmah* ‘I do’ (cf. *yhy mah*), *smaht* ‘he does’ or ‘they do’ (cf. *zy math* and *zy maha*, respectively). Other frequent cases are *syj* ‘it is’ (cf. *ejs yj*), *skymt* ‘it/she comes’ (*ejs kymt* or *zy kymt*).

	SG	PL
1	<i>h-</i>	
2		
3	<i>s-</i> [fm/nt]	<i>s-</i>

## 2.2. Verbs that end in a dental consonant

Verbs that end in a dental consonant (*s*, *z*, *t*, *d* and palatal *ś* [ɕ]) follow the rules outlined above with certain phonetic adjustments in cases where the stem is followed by an ending in a dental, as well (i.e. either *t* or *st*). The verbs ending in *s* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular present the ending *st* (insetad of *sst*): *s* + *st* > *st* as in *hås* + *st* > *håst* [hast] (from the verb *håsa* ‘be called’). A similar adjustment may be found in verbs ending in *z* where the class *z* + *st* is pronounced as [st], although it is written *zt*: *kuz* + *st* > *kuzt* [kust] (from the verb *kuza* ‘to talk’). The entire conjugational pattern of the *s* and *z* verbs is as follows:

	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	<i>hås</i>	<i>håsa</i>	<i>kuz</i>	<i>kuza</i>
2	<i>håst</i>	<i>hast</i>	<i>kuzt</i>	<i>kuzt</i>
3	<i>håst</i>	<i>håsa</i>	<i>kuzt</i>	<i>kuza</i>

The conjugation of verbs that end in a class *Cs* (i.e. consonant + *s*), such as *kaksa* ‘cluck,’ is analogical to the pattern of the *s* verb. However, if the verb ends in a class *st* (such as *hüsta* ‘cough’), all the forms of the singular and the 2<sup>nd</sup> plural are identical:

	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	<i>kaks</i>	<i>kaksa</i>	<i>hüst</i>	<i>hüsta</i>
2	<i>kakst</i>	<i>kakst</i>	<i>hüst</i>	<i>hüst</i>
3	<i>kakst</i>	<i>kaksa</i>	<i>hüst</i>	<i>hüsta</i>

Verbs that end in a sibilant *ś* [ɕ] offer a similar conjugation in which the forms of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular as well as the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural are fully identical (see the conjugation of the verb *-tośa* ‘(ex)change’ below):<sup>13</sup>

	SG	PL
1	<i>toüş</i>	<i>toüşa</i>
2	<i>toüşt</i>	<i>toüşt</i>
3	<i>toüşt</i>	<i>toüşa</i>

Verbs ending in the consonant *t* show peculiarity in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural where the ending *t* merges with the consonant *t* of the stem: *wot* + *t* > *wot* [vot] (from the verb *wota* ‘wade, ford’). Verbs ending in *d* display the forms in *d* (pronounced frequently as [t]) in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and the 2<sup>nd</sup> plural: for instance, *boda* ‘to bathe’ gives *bod* [bot] ‘he bathes, you bathe’. The voiced *d* [d] reappears if it is followed by a vocalic ending, for example: *bodâ* ‘he bathes’ and *boder* ‘you bathe’).

	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	<i>wot</i>	<i>wota</i>	<i>bod</i>	<i>boda</i>
2	<i>wotst</i>	<i>wot</i>	<i>bodst</i>	<i>bod</i>
3	<i>wot</i>	<i>wota</i>	<i>bod</i>	<i>boda</i>

Fully analogical patterns are found in verbs that end in classes *Cd* or *Ct*, such as *falda* ‘fold, enfold’:

	SG	PL
1	<i>fald</i>	<i>falda</i>
2	<i>faldst</i>	<i>fald</i>
3	<i>fald</i>	<i>falda</i>

### 2.3. Verbs ending in *n* with a vowel lengthening in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular

A few verbs whose root ends in *n* – and thus whose infinitive shows the form in *-nn* – lengthen their root vowel in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular: *ann* [an(:)] ‘harvest’ becomes *yhy an* [a:n]. However, contemporarily in everyday speech, this difference in the length of the vowel *a* is not always respected so that the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular may also be pronounced as [an]. This lengthening may likewise surface as a

<sup>13</sup> This verb is a vowel mutation verb. However, the rules concerning the endings outlined in sections 2.1 and 2.2 are also valid for the verbs that display the mutation of the root vowel in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular (cf. section 2.6).



diphthongization of the root vowel; compare for instance the following forms of the infinitive with the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular: *grenn* ‘cry’ – *yhy grājn* ‘I cry’ and *śenn* ‘shine’ – *yhy śājn* ‘I shine’.

	SG	PL		SG	PL
1	<i>an</i>	<i>ann</i>		<i>grājn</i>	<i>grenn</i>
2	<i>anst</i>	<i>ant</i>		<i>grenst</i>	<i>grent</i>
3	<i>ant</i>	<i>ann</i>		<i>grent</i>	<i>grenn</i>

## 2.4. Verbs with the alternation *er/yn*

There are few verbs that display stem alternation *er/yn*. These predicates have the infinitive form ending in *yn* [in] which is the successor of an original class *ern*. Accordingly, such verbs originally had the morpheme *er* before the infinitive suffix *n*. In Vilamovicean, the original element *er* appears only in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, while in all the remaining persons the combination *erC* evolved into *yC*, just like in the infinitive form (cf. Kleczkowski 1920:142). This group is represented by *dułyn* ‘get crazy, mad’, *ergjyn* ‘get angry’, *fjydyn* ‘be in a hurry’, *hyngjyn* ‘be hungry’, *kymyn* ‘take care’ and *regjyn* ‘cackle’:

	SG	PL
1	<i>dułer</i>	<i>dułyn</i>
2	<i>dułyst</i>	<i>dułyt</i>
3	<i>dułyt</i>	<i>dułyn</i>

One should also observe that in the infinitive as well as in all the forms of the Present Tense, these verbs are regularly accented on the root vowel. Inversely, they never receive the stress on the syllable that precedes the infinitive suffix *n*. This rule also holds for the *er* verbs that show the class *jy* in the infinitive and all the persons except the 1<sup>st</sup> singular. In this manner, such predicates differ from the regular verbs that end in *jyn*. To illustrate this phenomenon, one can compare the conjugation and accentuation of two similar verbs: *régjyn* ‘cackle’ and *regjýn* ‘govern’. While the verb *régjyn*<sup>14</sup> puts the accent on the first syllable and shows the morpheme *er* in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, the verb *regjýn* is fully regular as far as the endings are concerned and leaves the syllable *jy* unaccented:

	SG	PL		SG	PL
1	<i>régjer</i>	<i>régjyn</i>		<i>regjý</i>	<i>regjýn</i>
2	<i>régjyst</i>	<i>régjyt</i>		<i>regjýst</i>	<i>regjýt</i>
3	<i>régjyt</i>	<i>régjyn</i>		<i>regjýt</i>	<i>regjýn</i>

<sup>14</sup> The diacritic sign put above the letters *e* and *y* is only used to overtly mark accentuation.

## 2.5. Three auxiliary verbs

Three verbs, which are extremely common in the Vilamovicean language, offer a highly irregular paradigm. These are typical auxiliary verbs: *zǎjn* ‘be’ (employed in order to derive Perfectum, Plusquamperfectum, Perfectum Futurum and Passive Voice; cf. Andrason 2010a, 2011, 2013), *hon* ‘have’ (employed in the Perfectum, Plusquamperfectum, and Perfectum Futurum; cf. Andrason 2010a, 2013) and *wada/wan* ‘will, become, is’ (an auxiliary of the Future Tense and Passive Voice; cf. Andrason 2011, 2013). The conjugation patterns of the verbs *zǎjn* and *hon* are as follows:

	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	<i>bej</i>	<i>zǎjn</i>	<i>ho</i>	<i>hon</i>
2	<i>byst</i>	<i>zǎjt</i>	<i>höst</i>	<i>hot</i>
3	<i>ej</i>	<i>zǎjn</i>	<i>höt</i>	<i>hon</i>

The verb *wada* is even more peculiar and, in all the persons, offers two alternative forms. Their distribution chiefly depends on whether the verb is used as a genuine auxiliary or, on the contrary, as a semantically full verb with the meaning ‘become’. In the former case, in which *wada* is regularly followed by an infinitive, the “short” forms appear. In the latter case, however, longer – phonetically less reduced – shapes are found:

<i>wada</i> as an auxiliary verb		<i>wada</i> as a semantically full verb ‘become’	
SG	PL	SG	PL
1 <i>wa / wǎ</i>	<i>wan</i>	<i>wad</i>	<i>wada</i>
2 <i>wyst</i>	<i>wat</i>	<i>wjydst</i>	<i>wad</i> <sup>15</sup>
3 <i>wyt</i>	<i>wan</i>	<i>wjyd</i>	<i>wada</i>

## 2.6. Vowel mutation (VM) verbs

The group of vowel mutation verbs includes predicates that display a vowel change in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. Some of the changes can be classified as umlauts (since they affect the dorsal property of the vowel), while others do not constitute exemplary cases of umlaut according to the standard synchronic (and not diachronic) view. In this class of verbs, all the forms of the plural and the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular are on the contrary unaffected by phonetic modifications. It should be emphasized that the personal endings of the VM verbs follow the rules previously outlined in sections 2.1 and 2.2. One may identify various subclasses

<sup>15</sup> The consonant *d* may be voiced [d].

of the VM verbs depending on the quality of the vowel that undergoes the mutation: thus, we find *a*, *å*, *i*, *o*, *ö*, *u*, *ü*, *iöe*, *ej* and *oü* verbs. The *a*, *å* and *i* classes are relatively numerous, while the remaining types are poorly represented. It must be acknowledged that our classes have been arranged as heuristic tools with a pedagogical objective: they are first of all expected to be useful in teaching Vilamovicean to contemporary Poles. As a result, they do not reflect the traditional classification of vowel mutations (and/or umlauts) in the Germanic family.

The predicates that constitute the most frequent subgroup of the VM verbs are *a* verbs, i.e. verb with the vowel *a* [a] in the root. This vowel offers five possible mutated forms: 1) *y* [i] (the most common type: *asa* ‘eat’ – *yst*, *fanga* ‘catch’ – *fýngst*, *fergasa* ‘forget’ – *fergyst*, *frasa* ‘eat, devour’ – *fryst*, *gan* ‘go’ – *gyst*, *kwala* ‘get swollen’ – *kwylst*, *masa* ‘measure’ – *myst*, *nama* ‘take’ – *nymst*, *rada* ‘sift’ – *rydst*, *štala* ‘steal’ – *štylst*, *šwala* ‘swell’ – *šwylst*, *trafa* ‘find, meet’ – *tryfst* and *trata* ‘walk’ – *trytst*; see also the auxiliary *wan* ‘will, is’ – *wyst*); 2) *ej* [ej] (*halda* ‘hold’ – *heldst* and *laza* ‘read’ – *lejzt*); 3) *jy* [iɪ] (*wafa* ‘throw’ – *wjyfst*; observe also that the verb *wada* ‘become’ also displays this type of vowel change: *wjydst*); 4) *i* [i] (*zan* ‘see’ – *zist*); and 5) *e* [e] (*baka* ‘bake’ – *bekst*).

<i>a &gt; y</i>	<i>a &gt; ej</i>	<i>a &gt; jy</i>	<i>a &gt; i</i>	<i>a &gt; e</i>
<i>nama</i>	<i>laza</i>	<i>wafa</i>	<i>zan</i>	<i>baka</i>
1 <i>nam</i>	<i>laz</i>	<i>waf</i>	<i>za</i>	<i>bak</i>
2 <i>nymst</i>	<i>lejzt</i>	<i>wjyfst</i>	<i>zist</i>	<i>bekst</i>
3 <i>nymt</i>	<i>lejzt</i>	<i>wjyfst</i>	<i>zit</i>	<i>bekt</i>

Verbs in the vowel *å* [a] typically show the mutation in *y* [i]. This group is fairly numerous and includes the following predicates: *bråh(j)a* ‘brake’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *bryhst*), *dråsa* ‘beat’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *dryšt*), *derštåh(j)a* ‘kill by biting’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *derštyhst*), *flåhta* ‘plait, cane’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *flyhst*), *målkja* ‘milk’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *mylkst*), *šålda* ‘insult, condemn’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *šylst*), *špråh(j)a* ‘speak’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *špryhst*) and *štåh(j)a* ‘bite’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *štyhst*).

<i>å &gt; y</i>
<i>šålda</i>
1 <i>šåld</i>
2 <i>šylst</i>
3 <i>šyld</i>

Certain verbs with the vowel *i* in the root show the mutated form *oü* [œy], for instance *bigja* – *boügst*. Other verbs of this group are *cin* ‘pull’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *coügst*), *ferdri-sa* ‘worry’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *ferdroüst*), *fligja* ‘fly’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *floügst*), *flisa* ‘dip’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *floüst*), *friza* ‘freeze’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *froiüst*), *feliza* ‘lose’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *fyloüzt*), *gisa* ‘pour’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *goüst*),

*krih(j)a* ‘crawl’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *kroühst*), *rihja* ‘smell’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *roühst*), *śisa* ‘shut’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *śoiüst*), *-śliša* ‘close’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *śloiüst*) and *-štiwa* ‘get dusty’ (2<sup>nd</sup> SG *štoüwst*).<sup>16</sup>

*i > öü*

*bigja*

1 *big*

2 *boügst*

3 *boügt*

Other simple vowels that appear in a verbal root are seldom mutated. A few verbs in *o* [o] are changed into *e* [e]: *fola* ‘fall’ – *felst*, *growa* ‘dig’ – *grywst*, *möla* ‘paint’ – *mylst*<sup>17</sup> and *wośa* ‘wash, clean’ – *west*. Verbs in *ö* occasionally display the vowel *y* [i]: *blöza* ‘blow’ – *blyzt*, *lön* ‘let, allow’ – *lyst*, *ślön* ‘slay’ – *ślyst* and *ślöfa* ‘sleep’ – *ślyfst*. Very few verbs in *u* are mutated into *y* [i]: *kuma* ‘come’ – *kymst* and *štusa* ‘pull’ – *štyst*. Lastly, verbs in *ü* may infrequently offer the vowel *i* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular: *rüfa* ‘scream’ – *rifst*.<sup>18</sup>

*o > e*

*wośa*

*ö > y*

*ślön*

*u > y*

*štusa*

*ü > i*

*rüfa*

1 *woś*

2 *weśt*

3 *weśt*

*ślö*

*ślyst*

*ślyt*

*štus*

*štyst*

*štyst*

*rüf*

*rifst*

*rifst*

Predicates that contain a diphthong as their root vowel may also undergo a vowel mutation. Namely, verbs in *iöe* [ʏøœ] show the form *je* [je] in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular: *fiöen* – *fjest* ‘go, travel’ and *triöen* ‘carry, bear’ – *trjest*. Very rarely, verbs in *ej* [ej] change this diphthong into *äj* [aj]: *lejgja* ‘lie, be reclined’ – *läj(g)st* (the *g* [g] may be lost). Finally, a few verbs in *oü* can display two possible mutations: in *je* [je] (for example, *hoün* – *hjest* ‘cut, crop’ and *loüfa* ‘run’ – *ljefst*) or in *iöe* (*loühta* ‘shine, glitter’ – *liöehst*).

*iöe > je*

*triöen*

*ej > aj*

*lejgja*

*oü > je*

*loüfa*

*oü > iöe*

*loühta*

1 *triöe*

2 *trjest*

3 *trjet*

*lejg*

*läj(g)st*

*läj(g)t*

*loüf*

*ljefst*

*ljeft*

*loüht*

*liöehst*

*liöeht*

<sup>16</sup> The verbs *cün* and *ślišta* also offer alternative forms *cist* and *ślist*, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> The form *mölst* is also possible.

<sup>18</sup> There is also a non-mutated variant *rüfst*.

## 2.7. Praeterito-praesentia

Praeterito-praesentia verbs constitute a group of predicates that employ the morphology of the Strong Preterite in order to derive a present meaning. This means that some verbs that morphologically are, in fact, Preterite are employed as forms of the Present Tense. By doing so, they show the endings characteristic of the Preterite and the ablaut, typical to the Preterite of Strong Verbs. To be exact, as far as the Vilamovicean language is concerned, two properties distinguish praeterito-praesentia from other verbs. First, the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular is identical to the 1<sup>st</sup> person and shows no personal ending. Second, the forms of the Present singular correspond morphologically to the forms of the Preterite singular of the “normal” strong verbs while the forms of the Present plural are equivalent to the Preterite plural of the rest of the strong verbs. This phenomenon is fully analogical to the behavior of the praeterito-praesentia in the Germanic family (Streitberg 1900:324–326, Krahe 1963), in Gothic (Streitberg 1920, Krause 1968), in Old High German (Braune/Ebbinghaus 1981, see also Von Kienle 1969), in Old Norse (Iversen 1994) and Icelandic (Kress 1963).

The Vilamovicean language possesses all the prototypical praeterito-praesentia predicates – most of them modal – that are available in other Germanic languages: *wysa* ‘know’, *djyfa* ‘need to’, *kyna* ‘can’, *teygja* ‘be suitable’, *zula* ‘shall, will’, *mygja* ‘may’ and *müsa* ‘must, have to’.

However, due to various changes, the endings of the Preterite are very similar to those of the Present Tense in Modern Vilamovicean and, as already mentioned, the sole difference is the lack of the ending *t* in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular so that the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons singular are identical. The remaining personal endings are indistinguishable from the endings that are found in the regular Present:<sup>19</sup>

	SG	PL
1	–	-n / -a
2	-st	-t
3	-Ø	-n / -a

Thus, the conjugation of the verb *kyna* ‘to be able, can’ – as far as the personal endings are involved – is highly similar to that of the regular Present. It is the mentioned ablauting singular-plural pattern (corresponding to the singular-plural ablaut in the Preterite) that visibly distinguishes these verbs from other predicates in the Present Tense.

	SG	PL
1	<i>kon</i>	<i>kyna</i>
2	<i>konst</i>	<i>kynt</i>
3	<i>kon</i>	<i>kyna</i>

<sup>19</sup> The different set of personal endings may still be clearly perceived in Icelandic (see, for instance, the 2<sup>nd</sup> PL *uð* and 3<sup>rd</sup> PL *u* in praeterito-praesentia versus *ið* and *a* in the regular Present).

All the ablauting forms of the praeterito-praesentia verbs are listed below. It should be noted that, in some cases, two alternative forms of a given verb are possible.

Infinitive	SG	PL
<i>wysa</i>	<i>wās / wā</i> <sup>20</sup>	<i>wysa</i>
<i>djyfa</i>	<i>djef</i>	<i>djyfa</i>
<i>kyna</i>	<i>kon</i>	<i>kyna</i>
<i>teygja</i>	<i>teyg/ toüg</i>	<i>teygja</i>
<i>zula</i>	<i>zo / zul</i>	<i>zula</i>
<i>mygja</i>	<i>miöe / möht / myht</i>	<i>mygja</i>
<i>müsa</i>	<i>mü(s)</i> <sup>21</sup>	<i>müsa / misa</i>

Finally, one should note that although the verb *wela* ‘to want’ is not a verb that historically belongs to the class of praeterito-praesentia, it is frequently treated together with this type of verb. In the Vilamovicean language, as a typical member of the praeterito-praesentia class, it displays a different vowel in the singular (*wyl*) and plural (*wela*) and typical suffix-less ending in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (*wyl*).

### 3. Conclusion

This paper provided an exhaustive description of the morphology of the Present Tense in the Vilamovicean language as it is spoken in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, at the threshold of its extinction. Complying with the documenting and descriptive needs, the article recorded all the devices (such as endings and vowel alternations) currently employed in the derivation of the Present Tense. Our results show that, as far as the formation of the Present Tense is concerned, the language follows the rules that are typical of most Germanic languages and, in particular, of the West Germanic branch. To be exact, it displays several characteristic personal endings, the vowel mutation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular, phonetic peculiarities of verb ending in a dental consonant, irregular conjugation of the auxiliary verbs *zājn* and *hon* and a peculiar behavior of the praeterito-praesentia verbs. All of these traits have their evident cognates in German. However, Vilamovicean also shows certain particularities that differentiate it from the German language: the lack of ending in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular and two alternative forms in the 1<sup>st</sup> and

<sup>20</sup> The form *wā* is particularly common in the negative expression *wānyst* ‘I don’t know’.

<sup>21</sup> The presence of the consonant *s* is optional. It seems that *s* is more frequently lost if the verb *müsa* is followed by an infinitive.

3<sup>rd</sup> plural (*n* or *a*); the lengthening/diphthongization of the root vowel in verbs ending in *n*; the development of the class *erC* in *yC* so that the original morpheme *er* appears only in the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular; two conjugational patterns of the verb *wada/wan*; agglutination of the unstressed personal pronouns to the verb and their possible reinterpretation as endings; prefixation of the personal pronouns of the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular, 3<sup>rd</sup> person feminine singular and 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural to the verb.

We hope that the outcome of this study, besides bestowing scholars with a detailed documentation of the Present Tense morphology in the Vilamovicean language, will also influence the revitalization of this tongue. Our review may hopefully help the students of the Vilamovicean idiom to assimilate the formation of the Present Tense in a correct manner that also reflects the most uncorrupted variant of the vernacular. By doing so, our paper will contribute to the preservation of the morphological complexity of the Vilamovicean language and, inversely, contravene an intense regularization principle that nowadays operates in Vilamovicean (cf. the regularization of the nominal and pronominal morphology in Andrason 2014 and Andrason/Król 2014).

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