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Native v. Borrowed in Latvian: Debate and Action at the End of 19th Century

The birth of Standard Latvian is usually associated with the second half of 19th century, some sources specify that 1880s and 1890s crowned the first stage of standardization process started by the Young Latvians. As a proof of that accomplishment linguists almost invariably mention more or less general characteristic features, e.g. sufficiently wide sphere of functioning, developed basic norms of spelling and pronunciation, unity of written and spoken form etc. Besides, school and university textbooks also acknowledge contribution of some personalities like poets and writers, and especially those who enriched the vocabulary with new words.

The beginning of standardization activities in 1850s and 1860s has attracted greater attention of researchers than the end of the period. In particular, relatively little is written about the details of standardization process and language development, discussions and concord or clash of opinions. Recent studies of Latvian terminology development in the 19th century have shown that some almost axiomatic assertions are not true. By the same token a more thorough investigation of the last two decades of 19th century have revealed not only new linguistic facts, but also rather surprising insights.

The aim of the paper is twofold. Firstly, it focuses on the opinions expressed at the time about the relation between native and foreign (borrowed) elements in Latvian. The majority of debaters agreed with the principle already stated by Atis Kronvalds: whenever there is an appropriate Latvian word (or a good possibility to coin one) the preference should be given to the native word. This problem was also closely connected with foreign proper names (to use them in original form or transcribe according to certain rules).

Secondly, the paper provides numerous illustrations of real language use reflecting relations between foreign and Latvian language units, and potential of Latvian word-formation, e.g. introduction of foreign words together with possible Latvian equivalents or short explanations and introduction of new Latvian coinages in order to replace older loanwords (e.g. *glezna* v. *bilde*, *svaigs* v. *frišs*, *šūna* v. *celle/kanniņa*, etc.). The same process can be traced in the beginning of the 20th century.