Neonyms in the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms: Probability and Reality

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Abstract

This paper examines the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms to evaluate its effectiveness as a resource for identifying and analysing neonyms. Neonyms, or terminological neologisms, are distinguished from general neologisms by their systematic and deliberate creation for specific terminological needs. The research reveals that a significant portion of neonyms is derived from indigenous Lithuanian elements. The analysis also identifies prevalent word-formation patterns, while noting the emergence of hybrid neonyms and blends. Despite certain limitations in the Database's search functionalities, it remains a valuable tool for researchers and practitioners in the field of Lithuanian neonomy and terminology overall.

1. Introduction

The terminology of the Lithuanian language dates back to the 16th century. Since then, numerous dictionaries have been published, and legal terminology has been the focus of significant scholarly attention. Today, terminology is considered a major branch of linguistics and an area of practical activity. Like other interdisciplinary sciences, it poses several challenges. The integration of digital technologies for the collection and identification of terms, as well as for the development of terminographic resources and the learning of specialized terminology have become common practices. There is an ongoing search for more user-friendly and efficient digital tools for the recognition, extraction, management and analysis of terms, such as terminological databases, specialized text corpora, ontologies, etc. [1], [2], [3]. Although Lithuanian is classified as a low-resource language, digital tools for the collection and analysis of Lithuanian terminology have already been developed. These include the Term Bank of the Republic of Lithuania[2], the Corpus of Academic Lithuanian (CORALIT)[3], the dictionaries on the integrated Lithuanian language and writing resources information system Raštija.lt[4], etc.

The development of the scientific language is invariably accompanied by the need to create clear, precise and linguistically correct new terms. This is usually due to extra-linguistic conditions, such as technological and social changes. "The most representative linguistic units of this change are lexical units, as advances of all kinds, especially scientific and technological innovations are expressed through terms" [4]. New terms, otherwise known as neonyms, are units of special neology. It is, therefore, important to understand the relationship between a neonym and a neologism. Firstly, not every neonym is a neologism; many more neologisms are included in general neology, where they can, like new terms, have a referential function (referential neologisms). However, there are also many that are very spontaneous, imaginative, authorial, and occasional, which is not a feature of a neonym. More general neological resources, such as dictionaries of neologisms, are also very

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helpful in getting a clearer picture of the neonym. Although there are no large dictionaries of Lithuanian neologisms, the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms[5], which has been under development at the Institute of the Lithuanian Language since 2011, is a very valuable resource. As the authors themselves write about the database, "The aim of this work is to create a database that will continuously accumulate new lexis of the Lithuanian language and eventually reveal a systematic view of this lexis, as well as provide practical information to users of the Lithuanian language, which is not available in other lexicographic sources" [5].

The aim of this research is twofold: firstly, to ascertain whether the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms (hereinafter, the Database) is a suitable source for the search and analysis of neonyms, and secondly, to determine the linguistic features of the creation of the new terms found in this Database.

Despite the existence of numerous studies that have used the Database as a foundation [6], [7], [8], no research has been conducted from the perspective of terminological needs. This underscores the novelty of the present paper, which is poised to offer significant contributions not only to terminologists, translators, and educators, but also to language technologists, planners and developers of open big data, a crucial element in the advancement of sophisticated artificial intelligence.

2. New terminological items in Lithuanian Database of Neologisms

2.1. Concepts

Neology, understood as the study and application of new words and terms, is a field that is becoming increasingly diverse. This diversification is characterised by the proliferation of its various aspects and studies in different languages, as well as the emergence of a growing number of names for neology concepts. Since the late 20th century, the term "neonymy", later „neonym", has been proposed as a designation for new terms. While the novelty of neonyms is accentuated ("Neonyms are understood as terms in the neologistic phase of the lexical life cycle" [9]), their designation as real neologisms among all lexical innovations is arguably the most suitable for them, as they are the most probable candidates to become fixed in language. In the ISO standard [10], the new term is also referred to as "neonym", "neoterm" and "terminological neologism". In this article, these terms are used interchangeably. These terms are distinguished from "neologisms" by their deliberate nature, the need for specialists in a particular field to name a newly emerging concept, and the observance of systematicity, stability, correctness, and other characteristics [11], [12], [13].

The term "neonymy" is particularly apt for the analysis of names of the new concepts, as it is in these databases of new words and dictionaries that neonyms are documented in the first instance and have not yet been lexicalized elsewhere. For this reason, it is more accurate to speak of neonyms as terminological candidates rather than new terms. It should be noted that the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms has been maintained for more than 10 years, and it is possible to guess, or to ascertain by checking various terminographic resources that some neonyms should be, and are, already included in the specialised dictionaries or the Lithuanian Term Bank (e.g., *jutiklis, nanoplastikas, spausdintuvas, spinduliuotė* – Eng. *sensor, nanoplastics, printer, radiation*, etc.), and can, therefore, be referred to as actual newly coined terms rather than potential terms.

2.2. Methodology and results of the neonyms selection process

The search engine in the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms produced an initial list of 430 new words by mid-January 2025 based on the criteria "scientific text", "administrative text" and "noun". Following a review of the list, 26 words with the additional tag "not new but unfixed" were immediately filtered out. However, given that not all features in the database are automatically

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searchable, it was necessary to manually refine the list through the following steps: 1) merging grammatical or spelling variations that were presented in separate database items, e.g., *tinklalapis* (Eng. *webpage*) and *tinklapis* counted as one term; 2) excluding 35 neosems, i.e., words with new meaning; 3) eliminating neologisms, which are figurative names for festivals found in administrative texts, but are certainly not neonyms (e.g., *šokoladienis, pižamadienis* – Eng, *Chocolate Day, Pyjama Day*, etc.); 4) eliminating non-normative terms (new loanwords are not required in terms of terminology because they already have existing Lithuanian equivalents).

The Database, where permitted by standard language norms and usage trends, provides normative evaluations of neologisms along with recommendations on the use of new loanwords. Nine incorrect terms (e.g., *apletas, longseleris, pičas, spaikbolas* – Eng. *applet, longsaler, pitch, spaykball)* have been excluded, even though they have already been used in scientific and administrative sources.

In the context of evaluating the suitability of a general database for term analysis, the consideration of term usage emerges as a pivotal element. The Database possesses the capability to undertake automated searches for neonyms, with the parameters including usage, source type (news, blogs, social media, book, etc.), and source.

A notable feature of the database is its ability to provide illustrative examples of usage. These examples are invaluable in comprehending the new terminological item, even when a definition is provided. For example, the neonyms for music are *beltingas, honkitonkas, konsortas, kumbia* (Eng. *belting, honky tonk, concort*, Span. *kumbia*); for transport, *aštuonsraigtis, evakuatorius, survejeris* (Eng. *octocopter, evacuator, surveyor*); for medicine, *gydūnas, rankystė, malformacija* (Eng. *healer, handedness, malformation*), etc.

The majority of all neonyms are unambiguous, narrowly specific in meaning and devoid of stylistic connotations. However, it is notable that some neonyms are marked as being used in several fields, e.g., *eurolektas* (Eng. *Eurolectus*) – 'administration, linguistics, law'. If such a wide range of usage could be more specified, it would facilitate the identification of the primary field of usage of a neonym.

It should be noted that selection bias in the Database could also affect the linguistic analysis and results but this aspect is outside the scope of the current paper, and could be considered in future research.

Following a review and subsequent cleansing of the automatically compiled list of neonyms in the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms, the sample of the study was reduced to 352 terminological items. They are analysed in the following section in the light of the possibilities offered by the Database and the traditions of neologism research, from the point of view of origin and formation, as is usual in the study of the ways in which new terms are coined.

3. Linguistic peculiarities of Lithuanian neonyms

3.1. Origin

One of the more challenging questions in neology and neonymy concerns the origin of neologisms and neonyms. While the etymology of a word is typically determined by the language it is being used in, in neology and neonymy, the primary question is whether a new word is more or less an adaptation of a new borrowing, or whether it was made in a particular language, in this case Lithuanian, and can be considered a new word. It is crucial to note that a neonym can be created not only from the base words and formants of one's own language, but also from roots, suffixes and other affixes borrowed from other languages according to the Lithuanian patterns of formation.

The Database of Lithuanian Neologisms does not yet have a fully accessible option to automatically filter terms by type (whether they are a new formation or a new loanword), but it is possible to select words by the language. Thus, the total number of neonyms created in the Lithuanian language is 217 (61.6% of all examples). Of these, 135 (38.4%) are considered to be new borrowings, of which 111 (82.2%) are derived from English (e.g., *disneilendizacija, fleimingas,*

genderlektas – Eng. *disneilendisation, phleiming, genderdialect*). The remaining terms originate from other languages, e.g., French (6.7% of borrowings – 9 terms, e.g., *enflorāžas, parafarmacija* (Eng. *enflorage, parapharmacy*), and borrowings from other languages (15 neonyms from Japanese (*surimis*), Latin (*aviariumas*), German (*rotbandas*), etc.), which account for 11.1% of the new loanwords.

Among the 217 neonyms created in Lithuanian, 180 (83%) lexical items are created from elements that are purely Lithuanian, e.g., *veltūnai* (Eng. *dreads*); *šlapbalė* (Eng. 'a place installed on the street to soak up rainwater, as well as for it to evaporate'); *ženklodara* (Eng. *branding*), etc. There are also 35 (16%) words of mixed origin, i.e., hybrids, where one element is Lithuanian and the other is from another language (*agromiškininkystė, biodegalai* – Eng. *agro-forestry, biofuel*). There are also two neonyms (2%) in Lithuanian that are derived from loanwords: *adhominizmas* (from Latin *ad hominem*) and *ksenotradicija* (from Greek ξένος – *foreigner* and Lat. *traditio*).

This distribution only proves that when Lithuanians create new names for concepts, they first look for resources in their own language and are inventive with indigenous words and formants. It is also clear that, if they decide to borrow a neonym, they prefer English.

3.2.   Word-formation

Morphological word formation is traditionally considered one of the most common ways of creating new Lithuanian terms, and suffixation significantly exceeds prefixation and paradigmisation in the number of derivatives [14], [15]. Morphological-syntactic formation, on the basis of which many compounds are formed, also plays an important role. It is, therefore, understandable that there is a need to search the database of new words for neonyms that have been formed in one way or another. However, this is not possible in this Database. Therefore, in order to find out whether the trends of word-formation are changing, the received list of neonyms has to be marked manually.

Following a thorough investigation, it was determined that of the 180 Lithuanian derivatives, 76 (42.2%) are suffixal neonyms (e.g., *atidėjinys, stindiklis, pastoliavimas, tartuvas* – Eng. *provision, gelling agent, scaffolding, pronouncer*), 73 (40.6%) are compounds (*balsadėžė, brūkšniažodis, jausmaženklis* – Eng. *ballot box, hyphen-word, emoticon*), 20 (11.1%) – flectional derivatives (e.g., *įveika, stabdas, perbrauka* – Eng. *overcoming, emergency brake, strikethrough*) and 11 (6.1%) terminological items have been made with prefixes (e.g., *antbačiai* – Eng. *boot swaps*).

The present data confirm the general trends in the formation of Lithuanian terms but simultaneously demonstrate the increasing prevalence of neonyms formed by combining two words. Given the rising number of composites, it is unsurprising that the analysed sample also contains derivative contaminants, which, not only in terminology, but also in general, are not considered true derivatives and their creation is not encouraged. However, nowadays, there is a real breakthrough in the creation of blends in various languages, including Lithuanian [16], [17], so the fact that only 3 examples (*keistonomika, oropokalipsė, padangomatas* – Eng. *freakonomics*, 'a terrifying vision of the end of the world brought closer by air pollution', 'special container for collecting used tires'), were found among the hybrid neonyms already confirms that contamination as a way of creating terms is a good example of the economy and creativity of a special language, and that contaminated terms already exist and may become more popular in the future.

With regard to the Database's capacity to search for neonyms by word-formation category, this is, regrettably, not a possibility, since other neologisms are not marked as the names of actions, characteristics, actors, places, tools, and so forth. Nevertheless, it is possible to select neoterms by entering the affix or neoclassical element with an asterisk in the search string. For instance, if it is known that in Lithuanian nouns denoting a place are frequently formed with the suffix *-ynas*, requesting **ynas* will yield a list of neonyms with this ending (as the suffix *-ynas* is ambiguous, the list has also been checked for the meaning and definition): *duomenynas, frazynas, išteklynas* (Eng. *electronic data collection, phrase collection, a set of resources*), etc.

4. Conclusional remarks

The Database of Lithuanian Neologisms proves to be a valuable resource for the identification and analysis of neonyms, despite certain limitations in its search possibilities. The Database is not comparable to the Lithuanian Term Bank which is a collection of approved terms by the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language. Nevertheless, the Database of Lithuanian Neologisms can be considered as a working tool for terminologists, linguists and language planners for initial insights into newly coined terms.

The importance of distinguishing between neonyms and general neologisms is obvious, and revealing the nature of neonyms in terminological contexts is crucial for the understanding of new concepts.

The findings reveal that a significant portion of neonyms is created from indigenous Lithuanian elements, showcasing the creativity and vitality of the Lithuanian language. Additionally, the prevalence of compounds and suffixal formations aligns with traditional Lithuanian formation trends in terminology, while the emergence of blends indicates evolving linguistic practices. Overall, the Database offers substantial insights into the dynamic process of new term creation in Lithuanian, contributing to the broader field of neology and terminological studies. Future enhancements to this unique digital resource could enlarge its utility for researchers and practitioners in the neonymy and terminology.

Declaration on Generative AI

The author(s) have not employed any Generative AI tools.

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