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Creatively hateful labelling of the "Other": Neologisms in internet comments

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Abstract: So far, neologisms have been analysed in relation to hateful and aggressive content to a very limited extent and often in a fragmented manner. This paper focuses on the language of "othering" as a central component of hate speech, examining it in Lithuanian internet comments. Special emphasis is placed on neologisms, which serve as creative linguistic forms used to express "othering". The dataset consists of 10,662 comments, totalling 284,226 tokens. In order to assess the level of creativity associated with different degrees of hostility, the data encompasses neutral comments, offensive comments, and those containing potentially illegal hate speech. The research findings are presented by examining the distribution of neologisms across the three types of comments and analysing the types of neologisms employed to create novel forms referring to the Other.

Keywords: hate speech, neologisms, creativity, corpus, the Other, internet comments, Lithuanian

1. Introduction

Modern societies are marked by collective anxiety due to rapid social changes, which have given special impetus to the sharp rise of a socially and culturally constructed phenomenon known as "othering", which is not a new phenomenon but has gained special importance in modern times due to polarization. Othering is generally understood as the practice of entrenching social group dichotomies through language use and discourse practices (e.g. van Dijk 1993, 1997; Reisigl and Wodak 2001). This paper explores the language of othering as a central component of hate speech in contemporary discourse (cf. Burnap and Williams 2014, 2016, as cited in Alorainy *et al.* 2018) and examines its expression in Lithuanian internet comments with a particular emphasis on neologisms, which are here considered as creative linguistic forms used to express othering.

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The concept of the Other[2] has gained special significance in recent decades, but neither the phenomenon nor the concept is new and has been addressed from different scholarly perspectives. It was initially developed as a philosophical concept by French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas in his work *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence* (1981, first published in 1974) and has been explored not only in philosophy but also in anthropology, sociology, and social psychology. Due to scope constraints and the linguistic focus of this paper, research on the Other in these disciplines is not reviewed here. Since the present paper applies a linguistic perspective to othering, it draws on how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) adopts this concept, relating it to power, ideology, and discourse practices that contribute to the construction of social groups as "Others", marginalizing them and maintaining unequal power relations (e.g. van Dijk 1993, 1997; Reisigl and Wodak 2001).

Othering, defined as the practice of articulating divisive opinions between the in-group ("us") and the out-group or exophoric group ("them", or the Other), has been extensively discussed in CDA (e.g. Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 1997, 2008; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2009, to name just a few). In this framework, the term is used when discussing broader concepts of marginalization, dehumanization, or the state of some groups being fundamentally different from the Self. The relationship between the Other and the Self is seen as a relationship between the dominated and the dominator and thus is associated with hegemony, power enactment, and strict social hierarchy (van Dijk 1997).

By being different, the Other is considered inferior or alien to the dominant group, or the Self, which can lead to stereotyping and social polarization. As CDA research shows (e.g. van Dijk 1997, 2008; Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2009), in media, politics, and other contexts of public communication, the Other is typically represented in a negative light, through language use that marginalizes, dehumanizes, and reinforces the binary opposition between the two groups. Groups typically examined in CDA research as the Other are distinguished "on the basis of a variety of factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, region, social class, nationality, language/dialect, gender and sexual orientation" (KhosraviNik 2010: 55), which aligns with the groups typically protected by hate speech laws (for more detail, see Section 2.1).

Narratives based on the "us" versus "them" dichotomy frame the Other as an enemy, whereas the "we" is sacralised, which helps to unify and unite "the heterogeneous group against the 'symbolic

[2] In theoretical and philosophical contexts, some social theories, and Critical Discourse Analysis, the term *the Other* is often capitalized to indicate that this term is a distinct concept referring to an individual or group that is defined in opposition to *the Self*.

enemy,' giving a halo of heroism to the cause" (Romero-Rodríguez *et al.* 2023: 108). As Romero-Rodríguez *et al.* note, "[t]his has been the logic of the dehumanization process of almost all wars and the current basis of populist discourse, regardless of its ideology" (Romero-Rodríguez *et al.* 2023: 108). Through repetition of discursive abuse, such social polarization strategically simplifies and reduces the complexity of social structure to two opposing sectors, which leads to inevitable social fragmentation.

In the framework of CDA, the analytical categories that are well suited and adopted for the purposes of the present study are those proposed by van Dijk (1997) and Reisigl and Wodak (2001). In his analysis of the production and reproduction of prejudice and racism in political discourse, van Dijk (1997) distinguishes two major strategies: positive self-presentation and negative other presentation (see also van Dijk 1993), the latter of which will also be relevant in the present paper as neologisms under investigation are almost exclusively used for negative other presentation.

The categories adopted from Reisigl and Wodak (2001) include referential strategies (i.e. those of naming and categorizing social actors), predicational strategies (i.e. attribution of negative or positive traits and actions to the named actors), argumentative strategies (i.e. *topoi* used to justify positive and negative attributions), perspectivization (i.e. ways of expressing the discourse producer's involvement and viewpoint), and intensification/mitigation (i.e. strategies used to strengthen or soften the viewpoint) (Reisigl and Wodak 2001). Regarding neologisms in this study, referential and predicational strategies will be of primary importance.

Thus, the analytical framework in this paper resorts to CDA as the primary theory of othering language and integrates van Dijk's socio-cognitive and Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) socio-historical approaches. Since in the analysis the importance of dysphemisms emerged, the study also resorts to works on X-phemisms (e.g. Allen (2012) and related works; for more detail, see Section 2).

By adopting the approach of CDA to the practices of othering, this paper examines how language use contributes to the construction of social groups as "Others," marginalizing them and maintaining unequal power relations. The primary focus is on the practice of labelling the Other through neologisms, thereby assigning out-groups to certain categories as deviant, inferior, or outsiders. Although this paper adopts a micro-lens and primarily focuses on micro-analysis, it also draws some broader implications about how certain groups are framed to legitimize and reinforce negative attitudes toward them.

So far, neologisms have been analysed regarding hateful and aggressive content only to a very limited extent and predominantly in a fragmented manner, as will be demonstrated in Section 2. Neologisms

are one of the features sometimes used in automatic hate detection models (cf. Schmidt and Wiegand 2017), but in general have not yet received much attention in previous hate speech research.

The present analysis addresses three research questions:

(1) What is the distribution of neologisms in hate speech, offensive comments, and neutral comments in the dataset used for the present study?
(2) What types of neologisms prevail in terms of the part of speech? Do euphemistic forms or dysphemisms dominate?
(3) How do neologisms contribute to the othering of the group they refer to? What discursive practices do they constitute? What social practices do they reflect (e.g. dehumanising, delegitimation, vulgarisation, social marginalisation, stigmatisation, shaming, etc.)?

To answer these questions, the research integrates both quantitative and qualitative analysis, but the latter is of primary importance.

To contextualise the present study within the existing body of research, the paper first addresses some definitional issues related to hate speech and provides some background highlighting the main trends in prior research (Section 2). In Section 3, the data and methods are presented. Section 4 reports and discusses the main results regarding the research questions presented above. Finally, some conclusions are offered in Section 5.

2. Related work

2.1. Hate speech: Some definitional issues

As a general rule, research on hate speech is based on its legal definition. However, it is important to note that there is no single universal, or internationally accepted legal definition of hate speech, which generates significant debate in the area. Definitions vary in different jurisdictions (for a comprehensive overview, see, for instance, *Global Handbook on Hate Speech Laws*[3]), and even within a single jurisdiction, there is often ambiguity, grey areas, and controversy. This is exemplified by the fact that, in Lithuania, for instance, courts at different levels relatively often render varying decisions in hate speech cases[4].

Different national and international documents, along with an extensive body of research, have addressed the criteria for distinguishing between **lawful hate speech**, which is socially unacceptable but not criminalized, and **hate speech as criminal behaviour** punishable by law. The challenges of drawing these boundaries have been explored

[3] *Global Handbook on Hate Speech Laws* (2020), https://futurefreespeech.org/global-handbook-on-hate-speech-laws/.
[4] Some of these decisions are available on the public portal of law cases at https://eteismai.lt/.

in numerous studies; therefore, a detailed overview of these debates is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, only the most important aspects are highlighted here (for a thorough discussion, see Guillén-Nieto 2023; for an analysis of covert hate speech, see Baider and Constantinou 2020).

One of the key international documents defining hate speech is the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (2020; henceforth, UN Strategy)[5], which defines it as the following:

> Any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor. This is often rooted in, and generates, intolerance and hatred, and in certain contexts can be demeaning and divisive. (UN Strategy 2020: 10)

According to this strategy, as shown in Figure 1, for an act of communication to qualify as hate speech, three components must be present: an act of communication (in any mode), the use of pejorative or discriminatory language, and a target of the attack – an individual or a group – based on their identity (often referred to as "protected characteristics").

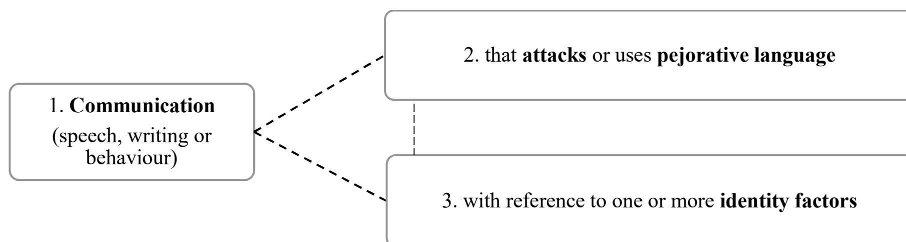

Figure 1: The obligatory components of hate speech under the UN Strategy (2020: 10)

The main identity factors that are widely recognized and are listed in the UN Strategy include "language; political or other opinion; belief; national or social origin; property; birth or other status, including indigenous origin or identity; caste; disability; health status; migrant or refugee status; place of residence; economic and social situation; marital and family status; sexual orientation; gender identity; intersex status; age; albinism; and HIV status" (see also ARTICLE 19). Generally, the UN prioritize groups facing vulnerability due to deep-rooted or historical stigmatization, discrimination, long-lasting conflicts (such as disputes over land or other resources), and exclusion from the

[5] The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (2020), https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/UN%20Strategy%20and%20PoA%20on%20Hate%20Speech_Guidance%20on%20Addressing%20in%20field.pdf.

political, economic and social spheres of society (UN Strategy 2020: 11). As explained in Section 3, these protected characteristics largely align with those defined in Lithuanian law.

Both scholarly research and formal documents emphasize that hate speech can vary in degrees of severity and forms a continuum, which the UN Strategy represents by distinguishing three levels of hate speech:

1. **Top level**: "direct and public incitement to genocide" and "advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence" are prohibited under international law.
2. **Intermediate level**: certain forms of hate speech may be prohibited, but only if restrictions are provided by law, pursue a legitimate aim (e.g. respect of the rights of others, or the protection of public order) and are necessary and proportionate.
3. **Bottom level**: legal restrictions should not be imposed on the dissemination of lawful expressions that are, for example, offensive, shocking or disturbing. (UN Strategy 2020: 5)

Thus, from a legal perspective, it is important to note that not all hate speech constitutes a crime, and only the most severe forms are criminalized and prohibited by law, as represented in Figure 2 (the continuum of these levels of hate speech are also represented in ARTICLE 19's Hate Speech Pyramid).

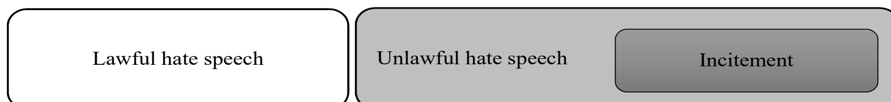

Figure 2: Degrees of severity of hate speech (UN Strategy 2020: 12)

The most severe level includes "direct and public incitement to commit genocide, "any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence", and "all dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred, incitement to racial discrimination, as well as all acts of violence or incitement to such acts against any race or group of persons of another colour or ethnic origin" (UN Strategy 2020: 12-13).

Lawful hate speech encompasses offensive, shocking or disturbing expressions that do not incite violence or hatred; denial of historical events (e.g. Holocaust denial) unless criminalized by national laws; blasphemous speech; and disinformation (UN Strategy 2020: 14). In the European Union, distinctions between lawful and unlawful hate speech are outlined in:

- Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)[6], which guarantees the right to freedom of expression, but allows

[6] Article 10, ECHR Guide, https://ks.echr.coe.int/documents/d/echr-ks/guide_art_10_eng.

restrictions for the protection of public safety, order, health, or morals, and the rights of others.

- Case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)[7], which has established distinctions between lawful (e.g. hate speech that incites violence or hatred) and unlawful hate speech (e.g. speech that merely offends, shocks, or disturbs).
- EU Framework Decision on Combating Racism and Xenophobia (2008)[8], which requires Member States to criminalize certain forms of hate speech.

While lawful hate speech raises concerns related to intolerance, it should be addressed through means other than legal regulation (e.g. media and information literacy).

The UN and EU practices of determining whether an expression of incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is severe enough to qualify as a criminal offence depends on whether it meets all the criteria in the six-part threshold test defined in the Rabat Plan of Action[9]. The criteria include: (a) the context of the expression; (b) its speaker, (c) their intent; (d) its content and form; (e) its extent and magnitude; and (f) the likelihood, including imminence, of inciting actual action against the target group.

More specific criteria used for classifying data in this study are outlined in Section 3, where the operational definition of hate speech, as formulated in Lithuanian legislation, is provided and the main criteria are listed. In the next section, we turn to a discussion of how neologisms may relate to hate speech and language aggression[10].

2.2. Neologisms in relation to language aggression and extremist discourses

As has already been mentioned, research on **neologisms in hate speech** is scarce. In some studies, they are mentioned in passing, and there is just a paucity of works where they are addressed in a more systematic manner. For example, among different other forms used in offensive language and hate speech in German, Paasch-Colberg *et al.* (2021) consider derogatory group labels realised as neologisms or

[7] Case law of the European Court of Human Rights, https://www.echrcaselaw.com/en/.

[8] EU Framework Decision on Combating Racism and Xenophobia (2008), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32008F0913.

[9] See https://www.ohchr.org/en/freedom-of-expression.

[10] The term "language aggression" is generally used as a broad umbrella term encompassing different forms of language use that cause harm, intimidate, denigrate, and dehumanize an individual or a group, instigates violence and justifies discrimination against an individual or a group. It can manifest in a diversity of forms, including insults, name-calling, threats, or other verbal attacks. Language aggression, often rooted in biases such as racism, sexism, or homophobia, tends to involve power dynamics, as it is typically aimed at asserting power, control, or dominance. It can be overt or or covert, and intentional or unintentional.

wordplay, but they do not examine them in greater detail. What they observe is that these forms, being temporary and instable, are difficult to distinguish from common racial insults and form a grey area when distinguishing between offensive language and hate speech. An interesting observation that they arrive at is that "[w]hile the use of offensive language is constitutive for 'raging hate,' the type 'call for hate crimes' is characterized by a quite rational language" (Paasch-Colberg *et al.* (2021: 177). This differentiation between different types of hate needs to be further reconsidered to determine if neologisms are more associated with 'raging hate' (thus offensive language) or whether they are also indicative of calls for hate crimes (thus hate speech).

A more systematic account of the use of blending to create nicknames in cases of verbal aggression is provided by Beliaeva (2022). The findings of this research indicate variations in the context between blends and their non-blended equivalents, highlighting distinctive characteristics in the application of blended words referring (usually derogatively) to people. As her research suggests, when in a lexical blend a personal name is combined with another word, it is more likely that the blend will have a derogatory meaning.

Expressive German adjective and noun compounds in aggressive discourse have been investigated by Korecky-Kröll and Dressler (2022) in two Austrian corpora. Their results show that, interestingly, expressive noun compounds are more frequent in aggressive discourse, while expressive adjective compounds have a higher overall frequency.

A variety of studies examined neologisms on the internet but **without directly relating their use to language aggression**. For instance, by applying the web-as-corpus and Twitter-as-corpus method, Würschinger *et al.* (2016) present a study of the spread of three new coinages which emerged in 2015 and encode the same meaning: *rapefugee, rapeugee,* and *rapugee*. These recent neologisms, formed by blending the nouns *rape* and *refugee*, are used as competing derogatory propaganda terms by opponents of policies that welcome asylum-seekers. Although these terms can be associated with discursive violence and hate speech, Würschinger's *et al.* (2016) research does not establish this link directly. Instead, their focus is on the dynamics of the use of these neologisms (namely usage intensity over time and usage types) rather than their relation to abusive verbal content.

Khalfan's *et al.* (2020) study of neologisms is even more distant from hate speech as it aims to explore neologisms related to Covid-19 through the perspective of the language-mind relationship. In their research, they selected eight scientific and pop-culture neologisms from online dictionaries and Twitter to assess the motive of their creation. Their goal was to examine the selected neologisms in terms of linguistic relativity and determine if their use was illustrative of language influence over perception, or vice versa.

Šetka Čilić and Ilić Plauc (2021) examine neologisms in four different social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Their focus lies on the morphological processes involved in creating neologisms, but again the expressive-evaluative content or abusive potential of neologisms is not covered.

An interesting research trend that does not directly relate verbal aggression and neologisms but will be important when interpreting the results of the present study is the trend showing that aggression is related to narcissism. Among other important findings, the systemic review provided by Lambe *et al.* (2018), suggests that narcissism is relevant in understanding aggression and violence. Their review discovered that narcissism was consistently related to violence in clinical samples. This trend can be useful in understanding the use of neologisms in hateful and offensive online content.

2.3. Neologisms and dysphemisms

The present study applies a general linguistic definition of neologisms usually understood as newly coined lexical units in a language, which can be words or phrases. In terms of word formation types, the following categories of neologisms are distinguished:

- **Novel Sense**: an existing word acquires a novel meaning.
- **Multiword Expression**: two or more words are combined to describe a novel concept.
- **Compounding**: stems of two existing words are combined, thus creating a single new word.
- **Affixation:** a suffix or prefix is added to an existing word to create a new one.
- **Blending**: parts of two or more words (sounds or syllables) are combined to create a novel term.
- **Loanwords**: novel words are loaned from other languages.
- **Clipping**: novel words are created by shortening existing words.
- **Phonetic spelling**: neologisms are created by intentionally misspelling a word frequently for effect (e.g. *bruv* from 'brother'). (based on McCrae *et al.* 2017: 196-197)

In this study, when the origin of the neologisms could not be conclusively established, such items were categorised as "Unknown".

Phonetic spelling is a dubious category in the present data. On the one hand, deliberate misspellings are really numerous in the data and can be related to creativity; however, they do not strictly fall under phonetic spelling. These misspellings involve symbol deletion or insertion, serving purposes such as playfulness, emphasis, or disguising offensive content. Although they can demonstrate creativity and are relevant in an analysis of hostile online discourse, they deserve special attention due to their prevalence and distinct nature. To limit the scope of the current analysis, they are not analysed in this paper.

Considering their meaning, neologisms are classified into denominative and stylistic. Those that are created to label new concepts, objects, and realities (i.e. to fill in some lexical gaps) are termed "denominative" (or referential), while those that are coined to introduce novel and expressive forms in communication are referred to as "stylistic" (or expressive) (e.g. Díaz Hormingo 2012). Neologisms intended for referential use typically include technical terminology within a specific domain, while stylistic neologisms commonly appear in literary contexts or emotionally charged discourse (Nissan 2014a, b). In this study, as will be demonstrated in Section 4, only stylistic (expressive) neologisms are relevant.

Another important distinction regarding the types of neologisms is between euphemisms, dysphemisms, and orthophemisms, collectively referred to under the umbrella term of X-phemisms (e.g. Allan and Burridge 1991, Jamet 2018, Casas Gómez 2012). Dysphemisms have unfavourable connotations, include such categories as insults, impolite words, derogatory language, which is deliberately straightforward, and thus are face threatening. They primarily aim at offending (though in some contexts they can display intimacy) and are typically employed to break social norms (Allan 2012: 5). A dysphemism adds a harsh or irreverent tone to the expression and may be used for emphasis, humour, or to express disdain or contempt. Euphemisms, in contrast, involve the substitution of an indirect or a less offensive expression for one that may be considered taboo language, and thus are usually used to maintain social harmony. Orthophemisms are used to maintain neutrality, i.e. they are neither overly polite and softening (as euphemisms) nor offensive and intense (as dysphemisms). They do not carry clear emotional connotations, either positive or negative, and therefore are more literal, direct and formal than euphemisms or dysphemisms. To illustrate the three categories, Burridge (2017) provides three ways of referring to death: *pass away* (euphemism), *snuff it* (dysphemism), and *die* (orthophemism).

X-phemisms "motivate language change by promoting new expressions, or new meanings for old expressions, and causing some existing vocabulary to be abandoned" (Allan 2012: 5). Following Jamet (2018: 4), even though euphemism or dysphemism are not treated as word-formation processes, speakers' intention to use or avoid using taboo language plays a main role in enlarging the lexicon.

In this paper, dysphemisms are of central importance. To determine them, the following definition provided by Allan and Burridge (1991) will be used:

> A dysphemism is an expression with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum or to the audience, or both, and it is substituted for a neutral or euphemistic expression for just that reason. (Allan and Burridge 1991: 26)

Dysphemisms, just like euphemisms, are deliberate choices between alternative expressions from a set of cross-varietal synonyms (Allan and Burridge 1991)

In the current research on offensive and hateful strategies of "othering", it is important to consider the following characteristics of dysphemisms pointed out by Allan and Burridge (1991: 43):

- dysphemisms have unpleasing connotations that are lacking in their neutral (i.e. non-dysphemistic) counterparts;
- like euphemisms, dysphemisms are motivated by fear and distaste, but also by hatred and contempt; and, in contrast to euphemisms, they are motivated by the desire to offensively demonstrate such feelings and to downgrade the denotatum or addressee (when deliberately used);
- like euphemisms, they may function as in-group identity markers and even to amuse an audience.

Following Allan and Burridge (1991: 26), dysphemisms are used when talking about opponents, subjects the speaker wishes to express disapproval of, and matters they aim to diminish in significance. For example, they are commonly employed by political groups when referring to their opponents (ibid.).

Allan and Burridge (1991) distinguish several major categories of dysphemistic terms commonly encountered in informal personal disputes, which often serve as insults:

- Comparisons of people with animals conventionally ascribed certain behaviours, e.g. calling someone *a louse, snake, ape, monkey*;
- Epithets derived from tabooed bodily organs, bodily effluviae, and sexual behaviours, e.g. *shithead*;
- Ascriptions of mental or physical inadequacy, e.g. *idiot, cretin, maniac.*
- Terms of insult or disrespect, some of which invoke slurs on the target's character: e.g. *biddy, crone, hag.*

These will serve as the basis of my categorisation of dysphemisms in the empirical analysis (Section 4). However, two presumptions must be emphasized: (a) these dysphemistic terms and categories, are not necessarily universal, as they are culture- and language-specific, and may not always be dysphemistic even within the same language; thus, context is crucial when interpreting them, and (b) they do not always constitute hate speech, either on their own or in broader context.

Expressive creativity of X-phemisms has been observed by some authors (e.g. Allen 2012, Díaz Hormingo 2012, Casas Gómez 2012), but it has been researched to a limited extent and, to the best of my knowledge, has not been related to hate speech.

3. Data and methods

The database used in this study comprises 10,335 online comments, totalling 282,063 tokens, which were posted in response to 24 news reports discussing controversial topics related to one of the potential target groups of hate speech (or the Other) as defined by Lithuanian law (Article 170 in the Criminal Code[11]). Specifically, these target groups were identified based on the definition provided by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Lithuania (2023). According to this definition, potential targets of hate speech include individuals or groups targeted due to their real or perceived personal characteristics or status, such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation (as can be seen in Section 2.1., these are in line with the key internationals documents). While the data was intended to represent various groups, the predominant categories of the Other that surfaced in the data were groups delineated by national or ethnic origin, race, and religion, as well as individuals distinguished by gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

To determine how much the use of neologisms is associated with the severity of hostility expressed against the Other, the data includes:

- neutral comments (neither hateful, nor offensive),
- offensive comments (including lawful hate speech against a certain protected group and any form of profanity, insults, or derogatory remarks that may not necessarily target a specific group), and
- comments containing potentially unlawful hate speech (see Table 1).

103 comments in the dataset are qualified as having features of unlawful hate speech, which constitutes 1% of all the comments. Lawful hate speech and neutral and unclear comments (i.e. those that could not be attributed to a clear category) distribute almost equally (50% and 49% respectively).

	Number of comments	**%**
HS	103	1
Offensive	5,212	50
Neutral/Unclear	5,028	49
Total:	**10,335**	**100**

Table 1: Composition of the dataset

[11] For its latest version at the time of writing this paper, see https://e-seimas.lrs.lt/portal/legalAct/lt/TAP/ed8fd250bb5611ec9f0095b4d96fd400.

The classification was done by the author of the paper alone following the legal definition of hate speech and the criteria identified by Sellars (2016). The operational definition of hate speech used in this study is the legal definition provided by the Prosecutor General's Office of the Republic of Lithuania (2023), which is as follows:

> Hate speech is all forms of expression (linguistic, visual, etc.) that incites, encourages, promotes, disseminates or justifies violence, hatred or discrimination against a person or a group of persons, or that denigrates a person or a group of persons on the basis of their actual or perceived personal characteristics or status, such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

To further distinguish between lawful and unlawful hate speech, eight criteria provided by Sellars (2016) were adopted:

(1) **Targeting of a group, or individual as a member of a group** (to meet the definition of hate speech, the speech should target a group or an individual as they relate to a group);
(2) **Content** in the message that expresses hatred;
(3) The speech **causes a harm;**
(4) The speaker **intends harm or bad activity;**
(5) The speech **incites bad actions** beyond the speech itself;
(6) The speech is either **public** or directed at a member of the group;
(7) The **context makes violent response possible;**
(8) The speech has **no redeeming purpose**.

The final decisions regarding illegal hate speech can only be made by the court, so the categorisation here remains tentative. It aims to represent a continuum of varying degrees of hostility (discussed in Section 2.1.) but does not aim to make any definitive distinctions.

To identify neologisms, several reference sources were used, one of them being the online language corpus LtTenTen14 (981 517 649 words). A word was considered a neologism if it did not occur in the corpus at all or its relative frequency was lower than 5 occurrences per one million words. In addition, the constantly updated Lithuanian Database of Neologisms[12] was used, alongside two dictionaries of Lithuanian slang[13].

[12] Lietuvių kalbos naujažodžių duomenynas (Lithuanian Database of Neologisms), https://ekalba.lt/naujazodziai/

[13] Lietuvių žargono bazė (Lithuanian Slang Database). (2010). Vilnius University; *Youth Dictionary*; http://zodynas.kriu.lt/.

4. Results

4.1. Frequency of neologisms

This section addresses RQ1, which aimed to assess the overall frequency of neologisms in the dataset and their distribution in comments of different degrees of severity. It also aims to answer RQ2 and considers the major types of neologisms used.

First, the analysis has revealed that not all comments, and in fact, most of them, do not contain neologisms. As shown in Table 2, neologisms occur in 556 comments (totalling 16,498 tokens), accounting for only 5.4% of all the comments in the database. Thus, only this subset of the data is used for further detailed analysis of neologisms. An interesting trend that emerged in quantitative analysis is that neologisms are almost never used in neutral or unclear comments, but clearly prevail in hostile content, including offensive comments and especially hate speech.

	Number of comments	**%**
HS	19 (out of 103)	18.4
Offensive	536 (out of 5,212)	10.3
Neutral/Unclear	2 (out of 5,028)	0.04
Total:	**556**	**5.4**

Table 2: Distribution of neologisms across different categories of comments based on the degree of hostility

The comparison of hate speech and offensive language has revealed that the difference between the two is mainly in frequency. The types of neologisms, meanwhile, appear to be similar in both categories, i.e. they are mainly used to name or address the target, as in example (1), which represents potentially illegal hate speech:

(1) ciu/rkos isisiautejo. reikia tramdyti laukinius **pitekantropus**, kaip ir visa mongoloidini **huil/ostana**.
‘chiurkas have gone wild. wild **pithecanthropes** need to be tamed, like all mongoloid **khuil/ostan**.’

Pithecanthropes, which is an archaic term used to refer to extinct species of early humans that were thought to be intermediate between apes and humans, here is employed with a novel meaning to refer derogatively to Asian people. The noun *khuil/ostan* (from Russian *khuilo* ‘dick’ and the Lithuanian suffix -*stan* ‘place’ originating from Persian) is a pejorative placename used to refer to the place of origin of the Other. In both offensive and hate speech comments, such neologisms are primarily used to strengthen the expressive-evaluative impact of the comment. The key factor distinguishing comments as potentially

illegal hate speech rather than merely offensive content is the presence of a verb denoting an act of physical abuse or discrimination, such as taming, killing, cutting off some organs, or driving away from the country. Interestingly, in the present data, neither of such verbs is a neologism. When verbal neologisms are coined, similarly to nominal forms, they are employed for expressive purposes, usually to make insulting generalisations about improper behaviours of the Other (see Section 4.4.). Therefore, the current findings suggest that neologisms are associated with both 'raging hate' (thus offensive language) and calls for hate crimes (thus hate speech), but novel verbs are not used to refer to actions called for (cf. Paasch-Colberg's *et al.* 2021: 177).

The results show that only stylistic (expressive) neologisms occur in the data. Since no major pragmatic or semantic differences have emerged between neologisms in the two types of comments, it is assumed here that **the difference lies in the likelihood of encountering them in hate speech rather than in the types of neologisms used. Therefore, further analysis will consider all negative content together**. I use the cover term "negative content" here to refer to any material that expresses animosity or hostility towards individuals or groups, including a wide range of expressions, from derogatory remarks and inappropriate offensive content to direct threats.

The neologisms identified in this study mainly include nouns and noun phrases (N = 358), which can be proper names (discussed in Section 4.2) or common names (examined in Sections 4.2-4.8), but the latter clearly prevail. Some of the neologisms consist of verb phrases, although these are fewer in number compared to nouns (N = 58), with adjectives being even less prevalent (N = 7): *tolerastiška* (*toler-* as in 'tolerant'+ the element -*ast*- from *peder**ast**as* 'pederast'+ the adjectival suffix -*iškas*), *ruSSofašistinis* ('ruSSian-fascist'). Verbal neologisms are primarily used in vulgar references to sexual acts, anal pastimes, and sexual deviance, especially when talking about LGBT+ but not only (for more detail, see Section 4.4.).

The high frequency of neologisms in the nominal form indicates, as will be demonstrated in further analysis, that most of them are forms of naming and addressing the Other and thus are an important part of referential strategies (in Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) terms) used to create the distance between the ingroup and the outgroup. Since neologisms are used both for naming and addressing an outgroup, they are used either in the Nominative case (as in examples (3)-(4)) or in the Vocative form, e.g. *vatagalvi* 'wool-head'.

Another general trend that emerged in the data is that an overwhelming majority of neologisms are dysphemistic, and only a paucity can be classified as euphemisms. The latter include the following items:

(2) kokio organo: literally meaning 'what an organ'; the noun *organas* 'organ' is a euphemism used instead of the taboo noun *bybio* 'penis' in the conventional swear *kokio bybio* roughly corresponding to the English 'What a fuck'

(3) važiuok ant vyriško lytinio organo: literally meaning 'go on a male organ' used instead of the conventional swear *eik nachui*, roughly corresponding to the f-word in English

(4) netradicinių malonumų kultivuotojai: 'cultivators of unconventional pleasures', which is a vulgar reference to homosexual people

(5) šokoladinio cecho mėgėjai 'lovers of the chocolate factory'

However, in all these instances, the expressions can still be considered offensive and harsh, since, despite the use of softening lexical items, they do not make the negative opinions more tentative and still convey them in an offensive, disagreeable, hateful, or angry manner. Examples (4) and (5), for instance, are similar to the English expressions *arselicker, brown-nosing*, and *brown-tonguing*, considered by Allan and Burridge (1991) as euphemistic dysphemisms. In this paper, this type of dysphemisms will be treated as a subcategory of dysphemism, and the rest of the analysis will focus on neologisms used as dysphemisms without systematically drawing finer distinctions between more specific categories. Euphemistic dysphemisms will be touched upon only in passing where relevant.

4.2. Naming and addressing the Other with proper nouns

This and subsequent sections address RQ3 by examining more specific strategies of othering and the types of dysphemistic neologisms used to name, address, and describe the Other. It is important to emphasize that, although examples are sometimes quoted as single words or phrases, as the focus in this analysis is on neologisms, this does not imply that any single item, in isolation, constitutes lawful or unlawful hate speech. These terms are used in hateful comments and form an integral part of a broader argumentative structure.

In general, as mentioned earlier, either common nouns or proper nouns are used to name and address the Other. The present study mainly focuses on the former, but proper names also constitute an important part of derogatory epithets used in internet comments and are a noteworthy manifestation of internet users' creativity when expressing hostility. When proper names are dysphemistically used to refer to opponents, the real person's name is remodelled, usually through compounding or blending, to include a denigrating morphological element. Most typically, these proper names include names for politicians, but some of them refer to journalists, social activists, and cultural figures. These dysphemisms involve very

different word-formation types and both Russian and Lithuanian language resources.

When derogatory names are coined for Lithuanian politicians, these include the least pro-Russian and the most pro-Western politicians who support democratic values and/or are known for their criticism of Russian politics. Most commonly, these are lexical blends consisting of a personal name and a taboo word, resulting in derogatory names. For instance, there is a wide range of names for Vytautas Landsbergis (examples (6)-(8)), a pro-Western politician who played a leading role in restoring Lithuania's independence from the Soviet Union. He subsequently became the first Chairman of the Supreme Council of Lithuania after the country regained independence.

(6) Lanzhabibas: a phonological adaptation of Landsbergis' surname with most probably an affectionate suffix borrowed from Arabic *habibi* 'my dear'

(7) Lenzbyrbis: a phonological adaptation of Landsbergis' surname with a noun deriving from the verb *birbinti* 'have sexual intercourse'

(8) Lanbezda: *Landsbergis* + *bezda* 'fart'

Some last names are prone to become dysphemisms because of their meanings. For instance, the President Dalia Grybauskaitė's family name originates from the noun *grybas* ('mushroom'), which commenters remodel into *grybiena* ('mycelium'); *Grybukė* ('mushroom' in the diminutive form, which here does not express endearment but is pejorative instead); *Grybanistano režimas* ('Grybanistan regime'), where the first item consists of the root *Gryb-* and the suffix *-stan*, which is commonly found in the names of countries in Central and South Asia.

A journalist whose name is most used in a dysphemistic form in the data is that of Andrius Užkalnis. The name is remodelled into denigrating forms by making some vulgar allusions through phonological similarity to such vulgar references as *užpakalis* ('bum') in *Užpakali*, *Kuškalnis* (*kušio* + *kalnas*, 'hairy mound' referring to the vagina), and *Užpakalinis* ('of the bum').

Not only are individual politicians referred to dysphemistically, but also countries, as in the examples below, where country names are modified so that they invoke associations with high immigration rates:

(9) Airabija: *Airija* 'Ireland' + *Arabija* 'Arabia'

(10) Eurabija: *Europa* 'Europe' + *Arabija* 'Arabia'

(11) *Kabulistanas* (*Kabul-* + *-stanas*), used as a general term to refer to a country with high immigration rates.

The noun *Geiropa* (the Lithuanian adaptation of *Gay* + [*Eu*]*ropa* 'Europe') is used to refer to Europe as the Other, seen as generally tolerant to LGBT+ people. As Scheller-Boltz (2018: 175) observes, the blend *Geiropa* serves not only as a geographical reference but also carries symbolic and ideological weight. This blend is typically used pejoratively, reflecting the speaker's intolerance towards non-traditional sexual orientations and legal systems supporting equality, such as same-sex marriage and adoption rights for same-sex couples in some countries.

What the analysis of dysphemistic proper names demonstrates is that othering is achieved through remodelled person's names, usually those of politicians, and country names. In the category of politicians, pejorative names for Putin prevail. Dysphemistic names for Lithuanian politicians, journalists and activists predominantly include nominations of those persons who support minority rights and are pro-Western. Neologisms for country names most typically include denigrating names for Western democratic countries, especially those countries that have higher immigration rates and are active advocates of human rights.

4.3. "Othering" through racial and ethnic slurs

In internet comments, speakers demonstrate their creativity in developing a broad range of dysphemistic neologisms used to refer to outgroups distinguished based on their race or ethnicity. In cases of references to Muslims, it can also be said that these nominations are made based on religion. In the current data, several outgroups clearly prevail: Muslims, Asians, Russians, and to some extent African Americans.

Dysphemistic epithets used to refer to **Muslims** are of different degrees of conventionality. There is a set of novel lexical units which, in recent decades, have become relatively established slurs, such as *muslimas* and its different alternative orthographic forms, all of which involve clipping: *musiai, muziai, muzziai*, and *muslai*. This term was recorded in the Lithuanian Database of Neologisms in 2013 and, as indicated in the database, is typical of the usage of Lithuanian emigrants in English-speaking countries. It is formed by adding *-as*, an inflection marking the number and gender of the noun, to the English word 'Muslim', which is a linguistic adaptation to fit the Lithuanian grammatical structure. This slur is a dysphemistic neologism, but it has become relatively widespread (thus, can be considered established or semi-established) and is no longer an indicator of individual creativity.

In addition to such (semi-)established neologisms, there are single occurrences, which can be categorized as nonce items, i.e. words

coined for a specific purpose but not used beyond a specific context.

In some instances, an existing word is given a novel meaning to make a dysphemistic reference. For instance, the noun *kebabas* ('kebab') is used in a novel way as a dysphemism referring to a person of Asian origin (most likely, because of the associations of the dish with the Middle East and Central Asia).

Some dysphemisms are loanwords with opposite connotations compared to the original word. For instance, the term *chabibas* is most probably the Lithuanianised endearment form borrowed from Arabic *Habibi* 'my dear', which underwent the process of pejoration. Its related form *chabibys* is almost identical in spelling but considerably more dysphemistic than the afore-mentioned form. In the latter neologism, the original word is reanalysed leaving the initial letters *cha-* and adding a phonologically similar but semantically and pragmatically very different constituent *bibys* ('dick'). It can thus be seen as a blend of *habibi* and *bibys*, resulting in a vulgar insult for the Other (for an analysis of derogatory meanings of blends referring to people, see Beliaeva 2022; for similar processes in cases when diminutives change to pejoratives, see Tarasova and Sánchez Fajardo 2022).

Some dysphemisms involve proper names converted to common nouns, as in *Abdula* (used for generic reference to a Muslim) or *abdula abdurachmanas*, as well as dehumanising nouns, as in *Islamistas-bezdzionzmogis* ('Islamist-monkeyman'), *baobabai* ('baobabs'), and *babuinija* ('baboonia', or 'land of baboons').

Dysphemistic epithets for **Russians** tend to include some elements from the Russian language:

(12) Zasransko gyviai 'creatures of Zasransk'; in Russian, *zasrany* 'shitty' is a derogatory term that roughly means 'a worthless person'. Zasranskas derogatorily refers to Russia, and the entire expression negatively denotes Russians.

(13) Jamėlios: Jamelia is a variation of a character in Russian folklore, named Ivan the Fool

(14) Šarikovas: a surname-like form, which likely derives from the character Sharikov in the Soviet novel *Heart of a Dog* by Mikhail Bulgakov. In the novel, Sharikov is a character who undergoes a transformation from a dog into a human through a scientific experiment and is depicted as crude, uncultured, and lacking intelligence. In the data, the derivatives *shariklandas* / *šariklandas* 'Sharik-land' are used to refer to Russia.

As the reference sources used in this study (see Section 3) suggest, none of these words appears to be an established or a semi-established neologism. Although in Russian some of these items may exist not only as proper names but also general terms (e.g. 'Sharikov'), in Lithuanian they are not common. For instance, *šarikovas*, used in the data to refer

to Russians in a derogatory way, recontextualizes the literary meaning of the word to target Russians collectively and reflects negative ethnic stereotyping, thus denigrating the Other. It constructs Russians in a derogatory light by invoking negative connotations associated with the literary character Sharikov, as a brutish and uncultured creature, more animalistic than human. The proper name of a literary character thus becomes a generic collective noun used to dehumanize Russians and reinforce stereotypes. Such instances can be seen as borrowings recontextualized to fit local derogatory purposes and show how linguistic elements cross boundaries and gain new connotations in different socio-cultural settings.

In the current data, a neologism that occurs more than once to refer to people of **Asian** origin is the slur *babajus*. It can be considered an established neologism, which is used as a pejorative Lithuanian term (originated most probably among Lithuanian migrants in London) to describe individuals perceived as having a Middle Eastern or South Asian appearance, associated with Islam, and of Arab or Pakistani descent, particularly those from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh (documented in the Lithuanian Database of Neologisms in 2011). The suffix *-us* for masculine nouns is added to conform to the Lithuanian language system, and the origins of the root element *baba-* are unclear but possibly derived from similar-sounding words in languages associated with the Middle East and South Asia.

To refer to the Asians, some nonce words are also used, such as the compound *čiurkabiesas* (*čiurka*, a conventional slur term for a person of Asian origin + *biesas*, a non-standard loanword from Russian meaning 'devil'). This compound is yet another references demonising the outgroup. The same noun *čiurka*, but in a modified orthographic form characteristic of computer mediated communication (*Tsiurka*), is used in another compound *Tsiurkistanas*, which is a general reference to Asia or any Asian country. The second element -*stanas* is a common morpheme used in dysphemistic coinages for country names. It probably originates from its association with the originally Persian suffix *-stan*, meaning 'land' or 'place of'. In Lithuanian discourses of othering, it is used to create pejorative or mocking versions of country names, to express disdain, contempt, or stereotypes associated with those countries and their people.

Some denigrating compounds are also used to name **African Americans**. These words contain an element that refers to their African origin and/or the skin colour, as in examples (15)-(17):

(15) negroafrikiečiai: *negras* 'negro' + *afrikiečiai* 'Africans'

(16) afrikasnukiai: *Afrika* 'Africa' + *snukiai* 'snouts'

(17) juodaruriai: *juodas* 'black' + *ruris*, derivative of 'ass'; compound meaning 'someone with a black ass'

In addition, the existing word *ruberoidas* ('ruberoid', roofing material, typically black) is used with a novel meaning referring to persons with dark skin.

Another standard method of constructing new racial and ethnic slurs is multiword expressions, when a combination of two or more words is used to describe an outgroup, for instance, *kai kurių spalvų bei rasių žinduoliai* 'mammals of certain colours and races'. This term can refer to the Other of different origins.

Neologisms used as insulting racial terms contain references to some group properties (e.g. physical characteristics, such as skin colour, or character traits, such as rudeness), vulgar elements, taboo body-parts, and animals with unfavourable connotations, this way dehumanising or stereotyping them in a negative way.

4.4. Dysphemistic neologisms for LGBT+ people

To enhance the emotional impact and expressiveness, commenters often employ a wide variety of dysphemistic neologisms to refer to and/or address LGBT+ people. As will be shown in this section, these neologisms have highly vulgar implications and typically refer to maledictory sexual acts and anal pastimes of the Other. They often include references to bodily effluviae, animal terms, and references to abuse. These neologisms express hatred, resentment, contempt, and hostility against the Other.

4.4.1. Maledictory sexual acts and anal pastimes of the Other

To express strong disapproval of the LGBT+ community, commenters use a diversity of neologisms to dysphemistically refer to sexual acts and anal pastimes of the group in highly resentful ways. The dominance of such neologisms indicates the prevalent framing of the group through references to indecent sexuality and perversion. In fact, there are hardly any other categories of neologisms used to name or describe the group. This practice stigmatizes, shames, and vulgarizes the group.

Perhaps the only neologism that has no sexual implications is the (semi-)established neologism *vaivorykštiniai* 'the rainbow-coloured', originating from the association of the rainbow flag with the LGBT+ community. On the surface level, it may be seen as a euphemism or a more neutral term to describe LGBT+ individuals. However, the highly negative contexts in which it occurs indicate that the term carries strong denigrating connotations. It is not used to convey a sense of acceptance or respect, nor to promote a more inclusive and affirming attitude towards the community; rather, it is

employed only for ridiculing the group. As the data shows, the term is used exceptionally by homophobic speakers and can be categorised as a euphemistic dysphemism.

Perhaps the largest category of dysphemistic neologisms includes references to **anal sex**, some of which also have strong implications of brutal behaviours, as in (18)-(26):

(18) **šikn**iniai/ **užpakal**iniai/ 'assholers'

(19) **subin**inis (gyvenimas) 'assholery (life)'

(20) **subin**dulkintojai 'ass-fuckers'

(21) žopofilai 'assphiles': *žopa* 'ass' (a loanword from Russian) + *filai* 'philes'

(22) iš…staskyliai 'fucked holes'; the dots substitute the letters *-pi-*, which are part of the taboo verb *pisti* 'fuck'

(23) *drask*aliai 'rippers'

(24) iš*draskyt*a**šikn**iai/iš*plėšt*a**šikn**iai 'torn asses'

(25) **užpakal**iukų santechnikai 'ass [in the diminutive form] plumbers'

(26) **subin**birbiai/**subin**krušiai: *subinė* 'ass' + *birbti*/*krušti* 'fuck'

As can be seen in the examples above, these neologisms tend to include taboo body-part terms, such as *šikna, užpakalis* or *subinė* 'ass' (highlighted in bold), and verbs referring to physical abuse, such as *draskyti* 'rip' and *plėšti* 'tear' (marked in italics). Example (25) illustrates a metaphorical reference to copulation, employing imagery related to plumbing.

Some neologisms consisting of multi-word expressions appear euphemistic, such as *razynkų kopinėtojo iš rudojo taško Specas* 'a specialist in digging raisins from the brown spot', but the imagery used in such phrases is so suggestive that they are still offensive and highly derogatory. Such instances, as has already been mentioned, can be treated as euphemistic dysphemisms.

Not only are dysphemistic nouns used to name or address the group, but also a variety of **verbs and verb phrases** are employed to refer to the act of anal sex. As has already been mentioned, verbs as neologisms are less common than nouns, but they still constitute a relatively large group. When used, they are primarily employed as vulgar terms, often to refer to anal sex. On the basis of nouns used to refer to taboo body-parts, three main types of expressions can be distinguished: (a) container metaphors where the penis is referred to as a container, primarily a bottle, but sometimes also a jar, (b) taste metaphors comparing faeces to sweets, such as honey and chocolate, (c) colour-based expressions, mainly including references to *brown-eye* for 'anus':

(a) container metaphors:

(27) ant butelio sėdėti 'to sit on the bottle'

(28) sodinti ant butelio 'to seat someone on the bottle'

(b) taste metaphors:

(29) medų kopinėti 'dig honey'

(30) pravalyti šokolado cechą 'clean out the chocolate factory'

(31) baksnotis į šokolado cechą 'poke into the chocolate factory'

(c) colour-based expressions:

(32) į rudą akį varytis 'to do it in the brown-eye'

(33) rudą akį išdraskyti 'to rip the brown-eye'

Expressions in (29)-(31) include maledictory references to faeces (cf. Allan and Burridge 1991), which will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.7. What needs to be shortly noted here is that metaphoric references to faeces containing references to sweets strengthen the shocking and repulsive contrast between pleasant products, such as chocolate or honey, and faeces, which perhaps universally denote something undesirable, disgusting, messy, and stinky (Allan and Burridge 1991). All these expressions are figurative insults, which use very suggestive physical imagery to strengthen the revulsion to the entire group and the sexual acts associated with them.

In general English, as Allan and Burridge (1991) observe, terms of insult referring to the female sex organ have a wider range than those referring to the male sex organ. However, in comments targeting minority groups, especially LGBT+ people, references to the penis and especially anus clearly prevail. This can be explained by what Allan and Burridge observe in general English: "The most severely tabooed body-parts are the anus and genitalia, and they provide the figurative insults, epithets, and expletives based on body-parts" (1991: 143). Thus, hateful and offensive comments appear to resort to the most tabooed topics to strengthen the impact of negative attitudes about the Other.

4.4.2. References to sexual deviance

A strong repulsion to the LGBT+ group is also invoked by making references to deviant sexual behaviours, especially paedophilia, which helps to delegitimise the group. The most common conventional terms for these purposes are the nouns *pedofilai* 'paedophile' and *pederastai*

‘pederasts’. These dysphemistic terms are strengthened by using them in novel morphological, orthographic and/or phonological forms, e.g. *p.e.d.e.r.a.s.t.p.e.d.o.f.i.l.a .i*, *pyyyydarasai*, *federastas*, *pedrylos*, and the diminutive form of the latter noun *pedryliukai*. The noun *pederast* is also converted to the verb *pe de ra si ntis* ‘engage in pederasty’, spelled in the current data with spaces between syllables.

A relatively established dysphemism in this category is the noun *agrastas* ‘gooseberry’. It is an existing word with no negative connotations in general Lithuanian, but in slang it denotes ‘gay, homosexual people’. The origin of the term is motivated by its phonological similarity to *pederastas*; the identical string of letters *rastas* in both terms makes them rhyme, thus also making them similar in their referential meaning in specific contexts. Due to the absence of a semantic relationship between the two words, *agrastas* may be considered a euphemism. However, just as in the case of some previous examples, the interpretation of the term in the contexts under analysis is unambiguous, leading to clearly negative attitudes towards the group. Therefore, this noun can be considered a euphemistic dysphemism.

Sexual deviance is also expressed through dysphemistic neologisms which invoke references to sex with animals. These abusive terms are used not only in relation to LGBT+ people but also when expressing strong disagreement with opponents. Therefore, this aspect is further discussed in a separate section (Section 4.5), alongside other uses of animal terms in neologisms.

4.5. Animal terms

In both offensive and hateful comments, a number of newly coined insults ascribe some abnormalities to the Other by using animal terms, thus dehumanising the group. They are used for two main purposes: (a) either to assign some animal characteristics to the target or (b) in references to sex with animals, to disparage and delegitimise the opponent or a minority group (often LGBT+ but not necessarily).

Animal characteristics assigned to the Other are physical characteristics of appearance, lack of intellectual capacities, or unpredictable (thus, animalistic) behaviours. The animals that appear to prevail are goats and roosters (especially in relation to sexual activities) and monkeys (especially in racial slurs and in neologisms assigning intellectual abnormality to the target):

(34) kukariekai tu / kakarieku tu ‘you rooster’ (mimicking the sound of a rooster; literally ‘cock-a-doodle-doo’)

(35) beždžionė su granata ‘monkey with a grenade’

(36) koloradine lerva 'Colorado potato beetle larva' (*koloradka* is the black-orange ribbon, a symbol of Russian military imperialism, generally associated with a pro-Russian stance; an allusion to the Colorado beetle, a black-and-orange striped insect, a major pest of potato crops)

In addition, terms and expressions coined to refer to sex with animals involve compounds or phrases where one element is *ožys* 'goat' or *asilas* 'donkey', for example, *ožkamylys* 'goat lover', *ožkų rurintojas* 'goat assholer', and *ožkapisys* 'goat fucker'. Such references can also take the verb form, as in *ožkoms rudes bučiuot* 'kiss the goat's brown hole' or *gali savo kislake asiliukus dulkint* 'you can fuck donkeys in your kishlak (a rural settlement of semi-nomadic people in Central and West Asia)'.

Neologisms referring to sexual activities are used to highlight the mental or physical abnormality of the Other, which are further discussed in the next section.

4.6. Naming mental or physical abnormality of the Other

Novel pejorative terms intended to insult, demean, or marginalize the target by associating them with mental illness, intellectual deficiency, or irrationality are classified here as dysphemisms related to mental abnormality. Typically used to refer to mental or cognitive incapacity of the target, these terms perpetuate stigma, reduce the target's identity to a perceived 'abnormal' mental state, and thus undermine their credibility and legitimacy.

Mental abnormality is assigned to very different groups in both offensive comments and unlawful hate speech; basically, any group of the Other can be referred to using terms expressing foolishness, often resulting in supposedly antisocial behaviours (cf. similar results in general English in Allan and Burridge 1991). Abnormal mental or physical characteristics are referred to in denigrating epithets employed as "racist dysphemisms, and dysphemistic epithets based on behaviours Speaker disapproves of, such as homosexuality, ideology, etc." (Allan and Burridge 1991: 141).

A diversity of terms is used to refer to the Other as being mentally retarded. Very often such neologisms include references to faeces or other materials, such as cotton wool, wool, dung, or fur (indicating that the person's brain is made of this material) as well as many other aspects (regarding the theme of foolishness in relation to name-calling, see also Ljung (2011) and Vasilaki (2014)). Here are some examples illustrating some main trends:

(37) vilnasmegeniai 'cotton-brains'

(38) mėšlagalviai / mėšlaprotis 'dung-heads'

(39) vatagalvi (Voc.) ‘cotton-head’

(40) kailiagalvis ‘fur-head’

(41) sušvinkęs kruopmaiši ‘stinky bag of grits’

(42) debiloidai ‘debiloids’

(43) avily (Voc.) ‘beehive’

(44) avigalvizmas ‘sheep-head thinking’

(45) protelių suutėlėjimas ‘lice infestation of the brain’ (‘brain’ in the diminutive form)

The terms of mental abnormality are so diverse that they could be a focus of a separate analysis; hence, due to space limitations, they cannot be covered here in detail.

4.7. References to bodily effluviae

As Allan and Burridge note, within a human being, there is an opposition of the body versus mind, the animal versus the intellectual: the aspect of humanity associated with animal characteristics is looked down upon, and those bodily functions, behaviours, and actions perceived as animalistic rather than intellectual (such as bodily functions) are the ones commonly expressed in expletives and terms of abuse (1991: 143). According to them, English expletives and terms of abuse tend to invoke “the most revolting bodily effluvia – faeces – and to a lesser extent, urine, fart, vomit, and perhaps sperm” (1991: 143). The same effluviae are invoked in dysphemisms used to name, address, or describe the Other:

(a) References to urine

(46) myžalo puta ‘piss froth’

(47) smegenų plovimo Sysalas ‘brain washing piss’

(48) čiulpk sysalą ‘suck the piss’

(49) primyžtaklyniai ‘with a wet crotch’

(50) prilesęs savo airiško myžalo ‘full of his Irish piss’

(51) savimyžos ‘those peeing on themselves’

(b) References to faeces

(52) šudnosiukas ‘shit-nose’

(53) apsikakoje jus tolerastai ‘you shitty tolerasts’

(54) stenkites netriest ryzom ismatom per ausis ‘try not to shit in red faeces through your ears’

(55) atrieksiu gabala savo rytinio šūduko 'I'll break off a slice of my morning shit'

(56) šūdo minkytojai 'shit kneaders'

(57) tolerastinės išvietės turinys 'content of the tolerast outhouse'

(c) References to saliva

(58) atvipėlių seilėtekis 'retards' drooling'

These dysphemisms are used for disapprobation of the Other by deliberately including taboo words in some novel combinations in compound forms and multi-word expressions. The vivid and unpleasant imagery of filth and decay are associated with abnormality and moral decline creating an image of the repulsive Other. Such framing of the Other is typical of propaganda, where the group is dehumanised and framed as being unworthy of understanding, tolerance, or empathy.

4.8. References to ideologies and political trends

A large number of neologisms have been identified to refer to ideologies and political trends that the speaker disparages. These terms are so numerous that it is impossible to analyse them thoroughly here; therefore, only some major trends will be outlined.

A large set of neologisms includes *-astas/-antas* derivatives to refer to opponents of homophobes, such as *tolerastas* ('tolerast'), a blend of 'tolerant' and 'pederast', where the second element entails vulgar implications on the coinage. This word has become an established neologism to refer to a highly tolerant person and is part of Russian hate speech lexicon; the term implies "a tyranny of minorities over a majority's right" (Patin 2017). The term is used as a base word for other derivatives, e.g. *tolerastiškas* 'tolerastic', *tolerastizmas* 'tolerastism', *tolerastija*. By analogy, words with a similar denotation and connotation have been developed using different roots, such as *liberastai* 'liberasts' or *pedetolerastai* 'pedetolerasts'. Morphologically the most complex verbal derivative identified in the data is *nusi-apsi-persi-prisi-užsi-susi-išsi-įsi-atsi-toleravome*, which contains a variety of prefixes indicating the perfective aspect of the verb, has negative connotations, and roughly means 'we have reached the most extreme form of tolerance'.

There is a diversity of dysphemistic neologisms to refer to globalization and the Western value system, especially those related to human rights: *kosmopolitinė briuselio subinė* 'cosmopolitan Brussles' arse' and *durniaglobalizacija* 'idiotic globalisation'. A number of such terms include an element that refers to an extreme political regime or some political figures associated with mass atrocities, e.g. *Hitlerio,*

Mao Dzeduno ideologiniai ligoniai 'Hitler's, Mao Zedong's ideological patients', eurokomjaunuolis, *tolerastinius eurokomsomolcai* 'tolerast Euro-komsomol', and *neokomsomolcas* 'neo-Komsomol'. Many of these units include references to Communist realia. For instance, *eurokomsomolcai* is a blend of Euro and *komsomolcas* derived from 'Komsomol', the youth division of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union.

The Other is often framed as having foreign values by developing terms related to fascism. Such terms can be related to the typical propaganda technique *reductio ad hitlerum*, e.g. *hitlerizuotų smegenų ligoniai* 'patients with hitlerised brains', *žemakakčiai fašistėliai* 'low brow fascists', *levofašistinė sistema* 'leftist-fascist system'.

On the opposite end of the opinion spectrum, there are numerous derogatory terms used to refer to a pro-Russian stance. One of the most typical terms is *vatinka*, a recent neologism denoting a pro-Russian person. It originates from the Russian word denoting a type of a warm jacket with cotton wool padding used for work in the Soviet times. This novel slur has also recently entered the Russian and Ukrainian languages, where, as Knoblock (2022) shows, it underwent a semantic shift and acquired new negative meanings, which can now be used to name or address the opposing groups in hostile communication.

Having become an established neologism, in Lithuanian hostile discourse, it can be used in different derivative forms, such as *vatinis* 'made of cotton wool', *vatos gabale* 'piece of cotton wool', *vata* 'cotton wool', *vatinukai/vatuk* (diminutive), *vatinis asile* 'cotton donkey', *vatinka prasrutusi* 'shitty vatinka'. An alternative form of the term is *fufaikė*, another loanword from Russian, which can be used in the clipped form *fufi* or with suffixes, as in *fufaikiniai* and *fufaikinas*. Similarly, to Russian and Ukrainian, this word can be used in neologisms used to refer to any opponents, including pro-Western people, e.g. *eurovatnykas*.

5. Conclusions

The analysis aimed to assess the distribution of neologisms in hate speech, offensive comments, and neutral comments (RQ1), as well as to examine the types of neologisms used when talking about the Other (RQ2). Finally, the study aimed to determine how neologisms contribute to the othering of the group they refer to and what discursive practices they constitute (RQ3).

The findings reveal that neologisms are prevalent in offensive and especially hateful comments but are not characteristic of neutral ones. The dataset including hate speech is too limited to provide more conclusive generalisations, and the results of this study need

to be tested on a larger dataset, but it appears that there is a higher likelihood of encountering neologisms in hate speech than offensive language. The types of neologisms, however, do not seem to differ between the two categories.

Neologisms in both offensive language and hate speech are negatively connoted dysphemistic expressions, which mainly constitute nouns used as insults and pejorative epithets. Verbal neologisms are less numerous and are mainly used to talk about sexual acts and sexual deviance of the Other. As such, neologisms in this study can be mainly related to referential and predicational strategies. They are mainly used to dehumanise, stigmatise vulgarise, and shame the Other, thus contributing to social marginalisation of the group.

To sum up, all these practices are linked by a more general practice of polarisation. The construction of a negative group image (or the Enemy) can be seen as a key polarising strategy, particularly in discriminatory discourses and hate speech. New words and expressions are mainly used for expressive-evaluative purposes and perpetuate discriminatory and derogatory attitudes towards outgroups and opponents. In other words, neologisms in internet comments mainly introduce synonymy for addressing and naming the Other in highly derogative and abusive ways.

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