

Nýyrðavefurinn: A Website for Collection and Dissemination of Icelandic Neologisms

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Abstract. We introduce a new website for collection and dissemination of Icelandic Neologisms. As well as fulfilling a duty by law of the hosting Institute to research neology, and collect and publish neologisms, the platform is intended to serve as a central repository of Iceland neologisms, as well as a platform for the public to submit neologisms they know, use or have stumbled upon. By engaging users in multiple ways we hope to gain even further insight into the use of new words, phrases or new senses of older words.

Keywords: Icelandic, neology, lexicography, dictionaries, citizen science, crowdsourcing.

1 Introduction

Neologisms are newly coined lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire a new sense. The lexical units can be words, word-combinations or fixed phrases. Neologisms can be coined in a variety of ways. They can for instance be coined by specialists in a certain field so they can discuss their field in their own native language, by translators translating foreign neologisms, or when language users create new words and expressions every day for new things and old. Some of these words can be slang, seldom used in written texts, but others are accepted in formal texts. But what they have in common is the effort to fill lexical gaps [1].

In Iceland there is a lot of interest in neologisms. A common Nordic opinion poll in 2002, which was a part of the research project revealed that Icelanders, along with the Faroese, had the most positive attitudes toward the coining of neologisms in the native language [2]. Indicative of this general interest is the participation in three neologism competitions in 2006, 2008 and 2010, where up to 2400 suggestions were submitted [3].

In the other Nordic countries neologisms are collected by public institutions specializing in language policy or lexicography. In Denmark, *Dansk Sprognævn* and *Det Danske Sprog- og Litteraturselskab*¹, in Sweden *Institutet för språk och folkminnen* collects neologisms² and in Norway, *Språkrådet* does the same³. Their

¹ <https://www.dsn.dk/arkiv/nyeord/>

² <https://www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/sprak/nyord.html>

³ <https://www.sprakradet.no/Spraka-vare/Norsk/Nyord/nyord/>

efforts are publicized on their websites and in all three cases the public is encouraged to submit new words or expressions. In Iceland this has not been the case. One institute has according to law the role to do research on the Icelandic language, including research on lexicography, language use and neology. This is *The Árni Magnússon Institute for Icelandic Studies (AMI)* [2]. Under a directive in effect until 2016, *The Icelandic Language Council*, which is now located at AMI, specifically had amongst other duties the role of collection and dissemination of neologisms as was specifically stated in the directive on the council:

The Icelandic Language Council shall collect and publish neologisms and additionally assist in choosing new words and coining neologisms. Proposed suggestions that are found useful shall be recorded. Furthermore the council shall endeavor to observe and monitor which neologisms gain a foothold in the language.⁴

AMI has kept records of neologisms and neologism suggestions before. There was a system called *The Neologism Journal*, but that had very limited possibilities for search and was only used in-house. *Nýyrðavefurinn*, the new website introduced in this paper and opened by AMI in November 2018, is the first organized effort of the institute to fulfill its duties both in collecting and disseminating neologisms. As well as having an accessible user interface for browsing and searching through the database, the platform provides users with a tool to submit neologisms, which then will be reviewed by experts who review them and publish online if they fulfill the criteria of having become established or of being in common use for a period of time.

2 Collection of Neologisms

In recent years there has not been any systematic collection of neologisms in Iceland. Some incidental efforts have been made, for instance competitions for good words for certain things gaining hold in society or culture. In 2014 there was a competition for an Iceland neologism for the English word takeaway. The word "útréttur" was chosen, but four years on it does not seem to have taken hold. There may be many reasons for that, but one of these reasons can very well be the lack of a platform for the dissemination of good neologisms. By opening *Nýyrðavefurinn*, our new platform, neologism collection and dissemination is formalized within AMI.

The material published on the platform will mostly be from three different sources. AMI has a collection of neologisms which has been recorded from people emailing or calling the institute with suggestions, and from efforts in the early 2000s to collect and record neologisms systematically. Experts at AMI have also started crawling large new text corpora for neologisms and this will be an important source of very

⁴ *Íslensk málnefnd skal annast söfnun nýyrða og útgáfu þeirra og jafnframt vera til aðstoðar við val nýrra orða og við nýyrðasmíði. Tillögur, sem fram koma og nýtilegar þykja, skulu skrásettar. Auk þess skal nefndin leitast við að fylgjast með því hvaða nýyrði ná festu í málinu.*[3]

recently coined lexical units. Last but not least submission by users will be published on the platform.

The neologisms are categorized in three different classes: word formation (compounds, derivational suffixes, etc.), usage (slang, terminology, general language, etc.) and domain (sports, technology, food, etc.).

3 The Platform

Searching and entry format

Each entry in the database will be published in a standard format showing the head-word, definition, date of first known use and possibly a link to the oldest written usage of the neologism, categorization, word class, and gender and number where applicable. Furthermore, to engage the users there is a voting system, where users can upvote or downvote entries and word senses. The voting can give us an idea of what words are popular and even if some categories of words are more interesting to users than others. There will also be a comment section for all words. We believe that by allowing users to comment we can get feedback that may be valuable. To try to discourage less relevant comments, all users who comment will have to sign in using their e-mail address.

Users are able to search for words by typing in a form which autocompletes and gives a list of head-words in the database. Users are also able to browse the latest additions, most popular, least popular and the neologisms with the liveliest comment threads.

Collection of neologisms

When asking users to submit new words we ask them for the following information on the neologism: The lexical unit, word class, gender, number, definition, origin, date when the user first saw/heard it, derivation from which foreign language, foreign language equivalent, the sentence where the user saw or heard the neologism, if the word was used in media, then where and when. Furthermore the user has to give basic information about herself: name, year born, email address, postal address, post code and town.

By asking for this detailed information and not just simply for the word and minimum information on the word, we hope for more sophisticated submissions and fewer made-up ones from whimsical users.

We believe that by trying to get users involved in the project, in the spirit of citizen science, either in ways with a low threshold like upvoting and/or downvoting, or by commenting or submitting words, we will be able to gather a group of committed users as well as the occasional submission and feedback from others, giving us valuable information on the usage of neologisms.

When an editor has approved submitted neologisms they get an approved mark so all users can see they are endorsed by the platform. The approved neologisms can also be found through málið.is, a portal for multiple dictionaries and databases on Icelandic language use [4]. By connecting the platform to málið.is it gets instant publicity as up to 5000 users access málið.is every week. The effect of using málið.is to publicize language material became apparent when Íslenskt orðanet, an onomasiological dictionary was added to málið.is and had its usage triple in a few weeks. This will also mean more access to the neologisms.

4 Licensing

A subset of the database will be made available for download with an open license. This subset will include grammatical information and categorization, for possible usage of the data in language technology or research.

5 Conclusion and Further Work

In the first weeks after opening the platform in november 2018, we had around 100-300 visitors each day and as of february 2019, the website lists more than 240 neologism sent by users.

Next steps include adding data to the platform by crawling text corpora for neologisms and to publicize the platform in order to make it known to all interested parties in Iceland. By publicizing the platform we will hopefully be able to gather even more interest in neology locally. Finally, when the platform has been live for 6-12 months we intend to do a survey of how well we managed to engage the users, what works well and what we should change.

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