On discontinuative action nominals in Lithuanian: Addendum et corrigendum to Arkadiev (2011)

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In my paper (Arkadiev 2011, 57–58) dealing with aspecual uses of the Lithuanian ‘external’ prefix be- I say that action nominalizations cannot co-occur with be- in its continuative meaning. I based my observation on the fact that the native speakers of Lithuanian whom I had consulted had rejected such word forms as *tebe-niegoj-im-as cnt-sleep-nml-nom.sg (intended meaning ‘the fact of being still asleep’) and ne-be-dainav-im-as neg-cnt-sing-nml-nom.sg (intended meaning ‘the fact of being no longer singing’), my examples (37a, b) from Arkadiev (2011, 58).

However, this statement of mine has to be qualified in the light of the data from Lithuanian corpora. The Corpus of Lithuanian Language (1.klt, tekstynas.vdu.lt) attests about twenty deverbal event nominals formed by the productive suffixes -im-, -ym- containing the negative continuative (discontinuative) prefix nebe-¹, all in all yielding about 40 examples. Most such nominals are attested just once; those which are found in more than one context include nebegalėjimas ‘the fact that one is no longer able’ (from galėti ‘can’, 7 examples), nebeaitikimas ‘the fact that there is no longer a correspondence’ (from atitikti ‘correspond’, 2 examples), nebedalyvavimas ‘the fact of no longer participating’ (from dalyvauti ‘participate’, 2 examples), nebesiškikėjimas ‘the fact of no longer trusting’ (from pasitikėti ‘trust’, 2 examples), and nebeteikėjimas ‘the fact of no longer believing’ (from tikėti ‘believe’, 2 examples).

¹ It must be noted that since ttr does not have morphological annotation, I had to limit my searches to the nominative singular forms of deverbal nominals (i. e., strings ending in imas and ymas); of course, more data would have been yielded by searching for other case-number forms.
Some illustrative examples of the use of such discontinuative deverbal nominals are given below. They clearly indicate that the discontinuative operator introduced by the prefix *nebe-* falls in the scope of the nominalization.

(1)  
Ty̞l-a,  
*stoj-us-i  
po  
silence-NOM.SG set-PST.PA-NOM.SG.F after  
kvišinanči-o  
triuš̃-o,  
atrod-ē  
kaip  
deafening-GEN.SG.M noise-GEN.SG seem-PST(3) as  
*ne-be-gyven-im-as.*  
NEG-CNT-live-NML-NOM.SG  
‘The silence which arose after the deafening noise seemed like when life stopped.’ (lit. no longer living)

(2)  
atmint-is —  
tai  
ne  
vien pasyv-us  
memory-NOM.SG that NEG just passive-NOM.SG.M  
*ne-be-galėj-im-as  
atiskraty-ti  
vien-q  
NEG-CNT-can-NML-NOM.SG throw.off-INF one-ACC.SG  
kart-q  
jau  
jisrėž-us-io  
time-ACC.SG already cut.into-PST.PA-GEN.SG.M  
įspūdži-o,  
impression-GEN.SG  
‘Memory is not just no longer being able to get rid of an impression that had already once become etched.’

(3)  
Žem-ē,  
kaip  
 Kempin-ē,  
permerkt-a  
land-NOM.SG as sponge-NOM.SG soaked-NOM.SG.F  
krau̞j-u,  
J-i  
vert-a  
krau̞j-o!  
blood-INS.SG 3-NOM.SG.F worthy-NOM.SG.F blood-GEN.SG  
Ir  
aukščiausi-a  
j-os  
kain-a —  
and  
highest-NOM.SG.F 3-GEN.SG.F price-NOM.SG  
*ne-be-sugrįž-im-as  
j-on!  
NEG-CNT-return-NML-NOM.SG 3-ILLAT.SG.F  
‘The land, like a sponge, is soaked with blood. It is worth blood! And the highest price for it (i.e. land) is being no longer able to come back to it.’

All this suggests that, though certainly infrequent, discontinuative event nominals are a productive and robustly established phenomenon of Lithuanian grammar. This is in sharp contrast with positive continu-
ative event nominals in tebe-, for which my statement from the 2011 article still holds: I could not find a single example of event nominals with the prefix tebe- in LKT, and similar results are yielded by Google searches: while such discontinuative event nominals as nebėgalėjimas ‘no longer being able’ or nebetikėjimas ‘no longer believing’ are attested by hundreds of examples, their positive counterparts *tebėgalėjimas and *tebetikėjimas do not occur on the Internet at all.

In addition to that it is worth mentioning that the discontinuative nebė- can even marginally co-occur with situation-denoting nominals with no direct or morphologically productive relation with verbs. Thus, on Google one can find such nouns as negeroras ‘that one no longer wants’ (from noras ‘wish’, a morphologically opaque nominalization of norėti ‘want’, ca. 50 examples) and even nebėūpas ‘that one no longer is in a mood’ (from ūpas ‘mood’, 2 examples), cf. the following sentences:

(4) pirm-iejį požymi-ai, jog laik-as į 
   first-NOM.PL.M.DEF sign-NOM.PL that time-NOM.SG in 
   mokykl-q ... ne-be-nor-as ei-ti į 
   school-ACC.SG NEG-CNT-wish-NOM.SG go-INF in 
   daržel-i, miego-ti piet-u mieg-o. 
   kindergarten-ACC.SG sleep-INF noon-GEN.PL sleep-GEN.SG 
   ‘the first signs that time has come (for the child) to go to 
   school are when (the child) no longer wants to go to kinder-
   garten, to sleep after lunch.’ (www.pasvalys.lt)

(5) Va ir baig-ė-si mano dviratuk-as, su 
   so and finish-PST(3)-RFL my bicycle-NOM.SG with 
   krev-u kažkaip ne-be-ūpas važiuo-t. 
   crooked-INS.SG.M somehow NEG-CNT-mood-NOM.SG drive-INF 
   ‘So here my bicycle has come to an end, I am somehow not 
   in a mood to ride a crooked one.’ (http://www.gerasdviratis. 
   lt/forum/viewtopic.php?f = 6&t = 21294)

Here again, there are no corresponding nominals with the positive 
continuative in tebe- (though one example of tebėnoras ‘continuous 
wish’ is found on Google, it cannot be considered fully significant). 
Such a sharp contrast between the negative and the positive variants 
of the Lithuanian continuative morphological marker with respect to 
event nominals constitutes a further argument (in addition to those
adduced in Arkadiev 2011, 54–55, 69–72) that the complex prefixes tebe- and nebe- do not just differ in polarity, but are in fact synchronically non-compositional morphological operators with distinct morphosyntactic properties.

To conclude, this shows how important it is not to base one’s statements about (non)existence of particular linguistic phenomena just on elicited data and native speaker judgments, but to take into account corpus evidence as well.

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ABBREVIATIONS

acc — accusative, cnt — continuative, def — definite, f — feminine,
gen — genitive, illat — illative, inf — infinitive, ins — instrumental, m — masculine, neg — negation, nml — nominalization, nom — nominative, pa — active participle, pl — plural, pst — past tense, refl — reflexive, sg — singular.

REFERENCES