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REFLEXIVE NOUNS IN LITHUANIAN

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Very few grammars and/or textbooks of Lithuanian even mention this category of nouns. There are many reasons for this omission: a) all reflexive nouns are secondary, i.e., they are all derived from the appropriate reflexive verbs; b) they can easily be replaced or substituted, by several other nouns with almost identical semantic range, or the same meaning; c) in some dialects of Lithuanian, most of these reflexive nouns are not used at all; d) these reflexive nouns, in most cases, are rather long, at least four syllables, and e) their inflection, i.e., declension differs somewhat from the declension of regular nouns.

Even in our book, the *Introduction to Modern Lithuanian* (four editions: 1966, 1972, 1980, and 1990) which is really a fairly complete grammar of Lithuanian, reflexive nouns were somehow forgotten, although, until now, nobody has missed them... And there are people who studied this *Introduction* very thoroughly. I am reminded of one of my graduate students (at the University of Rochester, N.Y., USA) who studied this textbook so diligently that his book, although sturdily bound, just fell apart into separate leaves yellowed from his fingers... But even this totally devoted student — who is now a professor of linguistics himself — did not notice this very insignificant lacuna in our grammar, namely the absence of the discussion of the reflexive nouns of Lithuanian.

Well, what are these mysterious reflexive nouns of Lithuanian?

Mostly these are nouns of action derived directly from reflexive verbs, with the suffix *-im-*, or *-ym-*, plus the o-stem ending *-as* and then the reflexive particle *-is* for the nominative singular, and the reflexive particle *-si* for all the other cases. Examples: *elgtis* 'to behave (oneself)': *elgimasis* (*elg-im-as-is*) 'behavior'; *blaškytis* 'to be restless': *blaškymasis* / *blašk-ym-as-sis* / 'being restless, restlessness', etc.

One has to remember that with the prefixed verbs the reflexive particle *-si-* always comes between the prefix / *ap-*, *at-*, *i-*, *iš-*, *nu-*, *pa-*, *par-*, *pra-*, *pri-*, *su-*, *už-* and the main verb; then the noun, morphologically, becomes a regular first declension noun in *-as*, and is declined regularly. One example: *pasiryžti* 'to dedicate oneself': *pasiryžimas* 'dedication, determination, perseverance'. Compare:

<i>Singular</i>		<i>Plural</i>	
N. <i>namas</i>	: <i>pasiryžimas</i>	<i>namai</i>	: <i>pasiryžimai</i>
G. <i>namo</i>	: <i>pasiryžimo</i>	<i>namų</i>	: <i>pasiryžimų</i>
D. <i>namui</i>	: <i>pasiryžimui</i>	<i>namams</i>	: <i>pasiryžimams</i>
A. <i>namą</i>	: <i>pasiryžimą</i>	<i>namus</i>	: <i>pasiryžimus</i>
I. <i>namu</i>	: <i>pasiryžimu</i>	<i>namais</i>	: <i>pasiryžimais</i>
L. <i>name</i>	: <i>pasiryžime</i>	<i>namuose</i>	: <i>pasiryžimuose</i>

N.B. The vocative case of these nouns is not used. The plural cases are also rather rare.

A propos, the fact that *ryžimasis* and *pasiryžimas* mean almost the same is one of the causes that the true reflexive nouns are rather seldom used. They might, however, be used in special discussions, e.g., in some psychological and/or psychiatric texts where *ryžimasis* may be used with a more general meaning of "dedication, determination, perseverance", and *pasiryžimas* may be used in a more specific sense, i.e., to denote a single event.

However, a few truly reflexive nouns are used in Standard Literary Lithuanian, and a few of them even in colloquial Lithuanian. Therefore, one should know how they are declined. As we have mentioned before, the rules are very simple: a) for the nominative singular, add *-is* to the ending *-as*; b) in all the other cases, add *-si* to the regular case ending; c) in the plural, only the nominative and the genitive cases are used. (If one really needs other plural cases, another similar noun, with a prefix, is used). Here is a sample of the declension:

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
N. veržimasis	veržimaisi
G. veržimosi	veržimūsi
D. veržimuisi	-----
A. veržimąsi	-----
I. veržimusi	-----
L. veržimesi	-----

If, in some rare cases, one would feel the need for a plural, let us say, the accusative plural which, theoretically, would be **veržimussi*, then this impossible form will be replaced by some prefixed form derived from the same reflexive verb *ryžtis* 'to be determined', like *pasiryžimas* 'determination, dedication'.

We would like to mention one more practical example. Let us take the verb *jaudintis* 'to be nervous, to be anxious, to be excited'. Now, this verb is used very often both in written as well as in spoken Lithuanian, in all kinds of situations. Two reflexive nouns, derived from *jaudintis* are also commonly and frequently used: *jaudinimasis* 'the action of getting nervous', and *susijaudinimas* 'getting nervous'. In most cases, these two nouns are almost interchangeable, but, for example, in experimental psychology, there may be a difference in meaning, in which case the unprefixated *jaudinimasis* may mean anybody any time getting nervous, anxious, excited, whereas the prefixed *susijaudinimas* may refer to one particular case.