Proposal to modify Rule 6, Rule 10a, and Rule 12c of the International Code of Nomenclature of Prokaryotes

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According to the current versions of Rule 10a and Rule 12c of the International Code of Nomenclature of Prokaryotes, names of a genus or subgenus and specific epithets may be taken from any source and may even be composed in an arbitrary manner. Based on these rules, names may be composed of any word or any combination of elements derived from any language with a Latin ending. We propose modifying these rules by adding the text, currently part of Recommendation 6, according to which words from languages other than Latin or Greek should be avoided as long as equivalents exist in Latin or Greek or can be constructed by combining word elements from these two languages. We also propose modification of Rule 6 by adopting some of the current paragraphs of Recommendation 6 to become part of the Rule.

According to Rule 10a of the International Code of Nomenclature of Prokaryotes (Lapage et al., 1992), the name of a genus or subgenus may be taken from any source and may even be composed in an arbitrary manner, as long as it is treated as a Latin substantive. This implies that genus and subgenus names may be composed of any word or any combination of word elements derived from any language as long as the ending is derived from Latin.

To our opinion an undesirable situation may be created in which names can be validly published that, except for the Latin ending, do not reflect the way genus and subgenus names are commonly formed. We therefore propose emending Rule 10a with the following text derived in part from Recommendation 6:

‘Words from languages other than Latin or Greek should be avoided as parts of genus or subgenus names as long as equivalents exist in Latin or Greek or can be constructed by combining word elements from these two languages. Exceptions can be made for names derived from typical local items such as food, drinks or geographical localities for which no Latin or Greek names exist or for names based on acronyms’.

Among the examples cited in Rule 10a, ‘Ricolesia’, a name without standing in the nomenclature used as the current example for an arbitrary name, may be replaced for example with Desenzia.

We also propose adding to Rule 6 a paragraph that will prevent creation of new names of prokaryotes that end on -myces, -phyces, -phyta, or -virus to avoid confusion with the names of eukaryotic or virus taxa, as earlier recommended by Trüper (2001). This rule is not retroactive.

Similarly we propose a modification of Rule 12c as follows to restrict the unlimited formation of arbitrarily composed specific epithets:

‘A specific epithet may be taken from any source and may even be composed arbitrarily. Words from languages other than Latin or Greek should be avoided as parts of a specific epithet as long as equivalents exist in Latin or Greek or can be constructed by combining word elements from these two languages. Exceptions can be made for names derived from typical local items such as food, drinks or geographical localities for which no Latin or Greek names exist or for names based on acronyms’.

As ‘Shigella etousae’, currently given as an example for an arbitrarily composed specific epithet, has no standing in the nomenclature, we propose instead:

‘Example: safensis in Bacillus safensis, arbitrarily derived from SAF (the spacecraft-assembly facility at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, CA, USA)’.

To further promote the preferential use of Latin and Greek elements when naming new taxa, we propose modifying...
Rule 6 by adopting some of the current paragraphs of Recommendation 6 (De Vos & Trüper, 2000; Labeda, 2000) to become part of the Rule. The proposed new version of Rule 6 and Recommendation 6 is as follows:

‘Rule 6. The scientific names of all taxa must be treated as Latin; names of taxa above the rank of species are single words. When proposing new names, the etymology must be provided. Words from languages other than Latin or Greek should be avoided as long as equivalents exist in Latin or Greek or can be constructed by combining word elements from these two languages. Exceptions: names derived from typical local items such as food, drinks or geographical localities for which no Latin or Greek names exist.

Names that end on -myces, -phyces, -phyta, or -virus should not be used to avoid confusion with the names of eukaryotic or virus taxa. This rule is not retroactive’.

‘Recommendation 6. To form new prokaryotic names and epithets, authors are advised as follows:

(1) Avoid names or epithets that are very long or difficult to pronounce.
(2) Make names or epithets that have an agreeable form that is easy to pronounce when latinized.
(3) Do not adopt unpublished names or epithets found in authors’ notes, attributing them to the authors of such notes, unless these authors have approved publication.
(4) The Greek K and Z and the Medieval Latin J (for consonantic I) should be maintained to avoid confusion.
(5) The abbreviation M.L. stands for ‘Medieval Latin’ not ‘Modern Latin’. For the latter, N.L. (‘Neo Latin’) is to be used.
(6) When arbitrary names (cf. Rules 10a and 12c) are formed, this has to be indicated and such names have to be easy in spelling and pronunciation.
(7) Authors should not name organisms after themselves or after co-authors. If genus names or specific epithets are formed from personal names they should contain only the untruncated family (rarely the first) name of one person’.

We submit these proposals to be discussed at the upcoming meetings of the International Committee on Systematics of Prokaryotes.

References


