



DOI: 10.22363/2687-0088-2021-25-1-24-42

Research article

COVID-19 trending neologisms and word formation processes in English

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Abstract

The surge of new words and phrases accompanying the sudden COVID-19 outbreak has created new lexical and sociolinguistic changes that have become part of our lives. The emergence of COVID-19's coinages has remarkably increased to establish a trending base of global neologisms. The present study attempts to investigate the nature of the new English words and expressions that emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. It also identifies the type of word-formation processes that contributed to the emergence of these neologisms in the English language. The researchers compiled a corpus of 208 COVID-19-inspired neologisms from different sources, including social networking websites, search engines, blogs, and news articles. The analysis revealed that word-formation processes were so varied to cover all possible forms of derivation, including affixation, compounding, blending, clipping, acronyms, among others, along with dual word-formation processes, with compounding and blending being the most discrete. The findings showed that the flux of new terms demonstrates the creativity and vitality of the English language to respond to emerging situations in times of crisis. The study recommends that further research be carried out on the new terms that have been transferred to other languages as loanwords, loan-translations and loan-blends.

Keywords: *COVID-19, neologisms, language change, word-formation processes, English*

For citation:

Al-Salman, Saleh & Ahmad S. Haider. 2021. COVID-19 trending neologisms and word formation processes in English. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 25 (1). 24–42. DOI: 10.22363/2687-0088-2021-25-1-24-42

Научная статья

COVID-19 как причина возникновения неологизмов и словообразовательных процессов в английском языке

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Аннотация

В период коронавирусной эпидемии в язык вошло множество неологизмов, связанных с COVID-19 и свидетельствующих о новых словообразовательных тенденциях. Цель настоящего исследования – рассмотреть природу новых слов и словосочетаний, возникших

в английском языке в результате кризиса, связанного с пандемией. В процессе исследования выявляются типы словообразования, лежащие в основе этих неологизмов в английском языке. Авторами составлен корпус из 208 неологизмов, связанных с COVID-19, которые были собраны из различных интернет-источников: социальных сетей, поисковиков, блогов и новостных статей. Анализ показал, что в их основе лежат различные способы словообразования, включая аффиксацию, словосложение, контаминацию, усечение, акронимию, а также сложные словообразовательные модели, среди которых особо выделяется сочетание словосложения и контаминации. Результаты исследования показали, что поток новых лексем свидетельствует о креативности английского языка, его способности реагировать на кризисные ситуации. Перспективой исследования является анализ неологизмов, усвоенных другими языками в качестве заимствований, калек и гибридных образований.

Ключевые слова: *COVID-19, неологизм, языковые изменения, процессы словообразования, английский язык*

Для цитирования:

Al-Salman S., Haider A.S. COVID-19 trending neologisms and word formation processes in English. *Russian Journal of Linguistics*. 2021. Vol. 25. № 1. P. 24–42. DOI: 10.22363/2687-0088-2021-25-1-24-42

1. Background

Language is a social fact, which is prone to change, development, and evolution. The dynamic nature of languages enables them to cope with upheavals, events, and unforeseen circumstances. Language change is a universal property of living languages. This change is typically influenced by multiple factors ranging from formal linguistic aspects of phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics to non-linguistic factors of social and pragmatic aspects of language use and cultural interaction. The sudden COVID-19's outbreak, which brought unprecedented health and life threats, grave socio-economic implications, and challenges (see Haider & Al-Salman 2020), has also impacted language.

Innovations triggered by social and political events are typical of any time, especially in times of war, natural disasters, etc. However, the case for COVID-19 is markedly different in its being of global spread. The pandemic left 213 countries hard-hit by the devastating effects of the vicious and highly infectious virus (Lu et al. 2020). The social, economic, psychological, educational, and mental health effects are universal, and so are the linguistics innovations and coinages, which have been shared by most of the world's languages as loanwords or through translation. From the outset, the state of emergency triggered by the coronavirus pandemic has set the scene for coining new terms associated with material changes that have become part of people's everyday use worldwide. According to Lawson (2020: 1), the novel coronavirus has dictated its terms, forcing people to adapt to the new situation by using specific terms which help them “make sense of the changes that have suddenly become part of our everyday lives.”

The research problem in this study focuses on the nature of the new English words and expressions which emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. It also investigates the type of word-formation processes that contributed to the creation of these neologisms in the English language. On this premise, the present study addresses the following questions:

- 1) What are the most trending English neologisms emerging during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- 2) What are the most dominant word-formation processes which characterized the COVID-19-stimulated neologisms?

2. Review of literature

Crystal (2008: 329) describe neologisms as “‘nonce words’ in that of the many neologisms created, adapted, mutilated, very few survive. A nonce word is a linguistic form which a speaker consciously invents or accidentally does on a single occasion”. When these nonce formations come to be adopted by the community, they cease, by definition, to become neologisms. According to Durham (2018: 1), “a neologism is a new word or a new way of using a word and is not yet commonly accepted. To survive its infancy, it needs to identify a durable, meaningful concept, and the word/usage has to be relevant”. As such, words like *pandemic* and *keyworkers* do not qualify as neologisms proper as they have been in use before the COVID-19 outbreak. In the context of coronavirus, the question to ask is how much longer the COVID-19-inspired neologisms would remain in use after the post-pandemic era. Historically, the language changes manifested in the lexical innovations and neologisms following the coronavirus spread are not unusual. From a linguistic point of view, language change and development are natural linguistic phenomena and are unstoppable (Hickey 2001). This may be explained through viewing language as a social fact that can be easily influenced by social, political, and other events, especially those that affect whole communities and not individuals (Bauer 2007, McMahon & McMahon 2013). The COVID-19 crisis has been so overwhelming that it has impacted the international community indiscriminately.

Constructing new words in world languages varies, depending on the readiness of the receiving language to accommodate ready-made whole lexical units to their repository. For example, there are languages, which are receptive to new words and expressions from other languages without resistance. On the other hand, there are languages, which react differently to the integration of foreign words in their linguistic repertoire, considering it an invasion and a threat to the purism of the linguistic system of that language. Instead, those languages resort to accepting new words and concepts through loan translations to create neologisms where internal morpho-phonemic and word-formation mechanisms are utilized (Muhvić-Dimanovski 2004: 139). In this context, it should be pointed out that it is not the ‘languages’ which react differently, but people who speak them. Within the language group itself that supposedly accepts the new lexical units, there might be some people who strongly object to the practice, seeking to protect the ‘purity’ of their tongue. It is basically a representation of the approaches of prescriptivists vs. descriptivists.

Linguistic creativity is not a novelty as it has been a common practice in other periods of history. Lexical innovations are part of language change, and they are a true expression of how language reflects the way we interact with the world. For

example, after WWII, the term *RADAR* ‘Radio Detection and Ranging’ was introduced (Akmajian et al. 2017). Recently and amidst the row over the UK's leaving the European Union, some neologisms have entered the English language, such as *Brexit*, of which other derived innovations of *brexiteers* and *regrexit* have emerged (Lalić-Krstin & Silaški 2018). It is noteworthy; however, that, based on the definition of neologisms, the term *Brexit* and its derivatives, which have been used as a trending vogue, may not gain global currency as neologisms, but will perhaps, continue in the UK socio-historical context for only some time. The trending role of neologisms was the subject of a study by Hamdan & Al-Salman (2021), whose findings indicated that the use of neologisms in social media applications has gained momentum and zest. Their list of coined ICT and social media terms such as *e-mail*, *user-name*, *Internet*, *save*, *copy*, *paste*, *delete*, *attachment*, *screenshot*, *hashtag*, *selfie*, *Snapchat*, *share*, etc. have been integrated into the Arabic language morpho-phonemic and syntactic systems through undergoing different word-formation processes.

Lexical innovations associated with health pandemics are common, as is the case with the abbreviations and/or acronyms for *HIV* ‘Human Immunodeficiency Virus’, *SARS* ‘Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome’, *MERS* ‘Middle East Respiratory Syndrome’, among others. However, the creation and spread of the corona-inspired terms has been fast and commonly adopted globally. The coronavirus discourse has become the one and only talk of the world in different fields, including health, economy, tourism, trade, industry, transportation, psychology, etc. The COVID-19 crisis made all people voice their concerns over the same enemy and thus use the same language, which unites them against the unknown killer virus. A sort of rapprochement among peoples of the world has arguably taken place, driven by the health emergency and reflected in the widespread adoption of coronavirus terminology. This is due to a digitally connected world with highly sophisticated technology, which was not equally available with the outbreak of some other health threats.

For the purposes of the current study, we decided to include terms that are not necessarily novel COVID-19 terms, but, according to Crystal's 2008 definition, are ‘nonce’ words that have been reintroduced during the coronavirus crisis for different social/communicative functions. The coronavirus-inspired changes in our lifestyle have been accompanied by upheavals in the language. Becker (2020) reports that the Texas Medical Center has compiled a glossary of terms, which help acquaint people with the coronavirus pandemic. The challenges and consequences of coronavirus will need special terminology to describe the mutations in the virus itself and how the different sectors will create new terms to cope with these developments. Just as pharmaceutical industries have been racing to register a vaccine for the killer virus, lexicographers are as keen to coin new terms as innovations in specialized and general-purpose dictionaries. For example, Merriam Webster's made an unscheduled update for words connected with the disease (Merriam-Webster 2020) and added some new COVID-19-related entries such as

COVID-19 index case. Some other definitions have been revised to suit the COVID-19 context, such as *community spread*; *contactless delivery*; *herd immunity*; *presumptive positive case*; *PPE* ‘personal protective equipment’; *PUI* ‘person under investigation’; *shelter-in-place*; *super-spreader*; and *WFH* ‘working from home,’ to mention a few.

In the same fashion, The Oxford English Dictionary was updated with new terms, which have become quite familiar in the context of the coronavirus global crisis (Oxford English Dictionary 2020). For example, the word *COVID-19* was only coined in February 2020 but has become so dominant in global discourse. Furthermore, collocations with the word *coronavirus* have significantly increased to include *COVID-19 pandemic*, *coronavirus outbreak*, *spike in cases*, *peaked*, *face-masks*, *test positive*, *self-isolation*, *super-spreader*, *lockdown*, *closures*, etc. This accelerating increase in the terminology of the COVID-19 pandemic is consistent with the social pressure caused by the virus.

New additions to dictionaries usually come in stages, but the COVID-19 sudden outbreak forced a rapid pace of lexical innovations to cope with the fast developments of the corona crisis in all sectors at a global level. It happens that some of the new terms come as neologisms par excellence, which are coined for the first time, such as *COVID-19* and *nCoV*. In contrast, others have revised definitions such as *coronavirus*, which is the broader name for the family of viruses that includes COVID-19, *social-distancing*, *self-isolating*, etc. Some of the new terms have been old coinages. Such terms were not originally coined for the coronavirus pandemic but have recently been put to modern use and became prominent after the virus outbreak. As the languages we speak are changing over time (Burrige & Bergs 2016), words and terms are likely to undergo linguistic changes of revised definitions as a result of major changes in our life and due to contact between languages (Hollett 2020). For example, an *elbow bump*, which used to be a sort of celebration like *high five*, has, in the coronavirus context, become a greeting to avoid shaking hands.

Thorne (2020) remarkable work on COVID-19-inspired terms is a valuable contribution to lexicologists and lexicographers. He compiled a massive list of diversified glossaries of terms, which are compatible with the new circumstances caused by the pandemic. His lists included coinages expressing concepts in everyday use including slang, nicknames, describing new realities, security measures, demographics, jargon, clichés, catchphrases, etc. Of the long list of lexical innovations compiled by Thorne (2020), the following words and expressions may be cited: *Pan cession* ‘a pandemic-associated widespread economic recession’; *Nostalgia (Times)* ‘the notion that we may look back fondly upon the period of confinement’; *Smizing* ‘smiling with the eyes, as when wearing a facemask’; *Infits* ‘outfits worn in conditions of confinement’; *Yoba-dobbing* ‘reporting someone’s antisocial behavior to authorities’; and *Mock down* ‘a term trending in November 2020 and again in January 2021 indicating a lockdown that is insufficiently enforced and/or widely disregarded.’

Like all other challenging circumstances throughout history, COVID-19 has its own share in the creation of new concepts and terms expressing those challenges, which have become part of our everyday conversation. From a historical linguistics perspective, neologisms, which are the result of linguistic change, are mainly the product of the following set of word-formation processes: 1) coinages, 2) affixation, 3) compounding, 4) blending, 5) clipping, 6) backformation, 7) borrowing, 8) abbreviation, 9) acronyms, 10) folk etymology. Besides, there are dual word-formation processes, such as 1) compounding + affixation, 2) blending + affixation, 3) clipping + compounding (Ten Hacken & Thomas 2013, Liu & Liu 2014, Bizhkenova, Sultanbekova & Koshekova 2017, Ratih & Gusdian 2018).

3. Methodology

Since the focus of this paper is on the English language, it is worth noting that through the ages, English has demonstrated an insurmountable capacity for adaptability and coping with global events and subsequent changes (Hundt, Mollin & Pfenninger 2017). Language will never stop changing, and English is a changing language; it is flexible and adaptable to the needs of its users (Romaine 1983, Aitchison 2001, Scott-Phillips & Kirby 2010). According to Rao (2019: 65–6), “in order to maintain international relationship in science, technology, business, education, travel, tourism and so on, English serves the purpose as a common language and a global language.” This privilege is attributed to the richness and depth of English, which is evidenced in the lexical repository of new entries in English language dictionaries.

The data collection process consisted of compiling a corpus of 208 COVID-19-inspired neologisms from different sources. The researchers asked 93 faculty members, researchers, graduate, and post-graduate students specialized in Linguistics to build up a list of new COVID-19-related words/phrases they come across while watching TV, reading newspapers, using social networking websites (Twitter, Facebook, blogs, YouTube...), among other activities, from April 1, 2020, to July 30, 2020. The researchers checked the compiled lists to filter out repeated and irrelevant terms, in addition to reviewing different articles published in newspapers, blogs, and other websites on how coronavirus has led to the creation of new words and phrases (CBC Radio 2020, Khadgi 2020, Lawson 2020, Mahdawi 2020). The researchers have then checked whether the compiled words like *quranteam*, *covidiot*, etc., are already listed in online dictionaries (Webster’s, OED...).

Drawing on Thorne (2020) ongoing project to track the language of the COVID-19 crisis and his ten-tier categorization of the data, the authors divided their compiled corpus of data into five main lexical categories according to usage: 1) nicknames, 2) homeworking and teleconferencing, 3) demographics and safety/security measures, 4) describing new realities, and 5) other (see Appendix for a sample). This classification shows how those emerging neologisms have become integrated into the language as part of the everyday use

for social and communicative purposes. This aspect of language change has its sociolinguistic implications as it depicts the discourse functions of neologisms as a manifestation of language change. For example, some communities have given *Miss Rona*, *Rona*, *Lady Rona*, *Roni*, and *Rone* as personified ‘nicknames’ for the virus. Expressions such as *Telecommuter core*, *Locktail hour*, *Zoom mullet*, *Homeference*, *Quarantrolls*, etc., were used under the category of ‘homeworking and teleconferencing’ terminology. The coronavirus slang expressions included *Miley Cyrus* (UK rhyming slang), *covidiot*, *morona*, *Sanny* (Australian), *De-roning*, *Iso* (Australian). Examples of ‘demographics’ included *coronials*, *Gen(eration) C*, *Quaranteens*, *boomer remover*. Examples on ‘safety/security measures’ were found in *Elbump*, *COVID waltz*, *Ronadobbing* (Australian), *Corona-shaming*, etc. Expressions about ‘new realities’ included *Quarantimes*, *BCV*, *B.C*, *Coro apocalypse*, *Loxit*, etc. Examples on ‘other expressions’ included *covideo party*, *corona bonus*, *drivecation*, *Zonotic*, etc.

After a thorough investigation of COVID-19-motivated lexical innovations in English and for the data analysis process, the authors were guided by the following types of word-formation processes: (1) single word-formation processes and (2) double word-formation processes.

4. Analysis

Since one of the objectives of this study is to examine the most dominant word-formation processes that characterized the COVID-19-stimulated neologisms, the two types of word-formation processes mentioned above are discussed below.

4.1. Single word-formation processes

Single word-formation processes include coinages, affixation, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, borrowing, abbreviation, acronyms, and folk-etymology.

4.1.1. Coinages: It is the invention or creation of totally new terms either deliberately or accidentally (Yule 2020). The most discrete and dominant lexical addition throughout the coronavirus pandemic is the coinage *COVID-19*. Not only that the term has been recognized by lexicographers and was added to English language dictionaries as a new dictionary entry, but it has equally been adopted as an undisputed neologism, a coinage in other world languages. On May 26, 2020, Merriam-Webster made an unscheduled update to its dictionary, “COVID-19 crisis catalog: A glossary of terms”, in response to the pandemic, where the entry *COVID-19* was the most dominant. Furthermore, and according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), “The most striking change has been the huge increase in the frequency of the words coronavirus and COVID-19 themselves.” Before 2020, *coronavirus* was relatively rare outside medical and scientific discourse, while *COVID-19* was only coined in February; however, the two terms came to dominate global discourse nowadays. The Arabic language, for example, has fully adopted

the term and has been integrated into the Arabic language orthography as *كوفيد-19* [kufed-19], with the English phoneme /v/, which does not exist in the Arabic language phonemic system, being replaced with its voiceless counterpart /f/.

4.1.2. Affixation: As a word-formation process, affixation involves adding bound morphemes to existing roots, which results in newly created derivatives. Based on the compiled list of neologisms, the word *masklessness*, which means ‘wearing no face-covering,’ is a case in point. In this example, a double-affixation occurs where the adjective-forming suffix *-less* is added to the root *mask* (n.), and then another noun-forming suffix *-ness* is added to the stem *maskless* (adj.) to create the word *mask-less-ness* (n).

4.1.3. Compounding: It is the process of combining two words (free morphemes) to create a new one. Examples of this process include *coronacoma* for ‘the period of shutdown or that long quarantine sleep’; *coronaviva* which means ‘an oral examination or thesis defense taken online during the lockdown’; and *zoom bombing* which means ‘hijacking and/or interrupting videoconferencing on the Zoom platform.’ It is noteworthy that while viewing such coronavirus-related compounds as neologisms, we cannot confirm the ability of these terms to survive the passing of the COVID-19 crisis. These terms may be best described as ‘nonce’ words, which have an extremely limited and contingent currency, and they usually disappear as soon as the social conditions change.

4.1.4. blending: It is a word-formation process where parts of two or more words combine to create a new word whose meaning is often a combination of the original words. The following examples may be cited: *coronials* (Corona + millennials), referring to ‘kids who were conceived by their parents during the quarantine that resulted from the coronavirus. Most of these babies are born post-December 2020. They may also be referred to as COVID-kids’. Another example is *coronacation* (Corona + vacation) which is defined as ‘a vacation that takes place because of cheap flights and hotels that exist because of the 2020 coronavirus’. The same applies to *quaranteens* (quarantine + teens), which refers to ‘the generation who will become teenagers in 2033/2034’; and *Loxit* (lockdown + exit) ‘the process of exiting from lockdown impositions.’

4.1.5. Clipping: It is a word-formation process, which is also known as truncation or shortening. It results in the reduction of a word to one of its parts. An example is found in the clipping *rona* from ‘coronavirus’, and *pandy* from ‘pandemic.’

4.1.6. Backformation: It is the process of forming a new word by removing actual or supposed affixes from another word. An example is found in the verb *vaccinate*, a backformation from the noun ‘vaccination,’ and also in the verb *sedate* from the adjective ‘sedative.’

4.1.7. Borrowing: It is the process through which a word is adapted for use in another language. According to Crystal (2010), present-day English, which is currently the world’s largest donor of vocabulary to other languages, was an insatiable borrower from 120 different languages, including Arabic, French,

German, Greek, Italian, Russian (Nordquist 2019). An example of borrowing in the coronavirus context is found in the word **unlockdown** which is the process of relaxing or ending social and physical restrictions, or the period following their ending, equivalent to, or translation of the French *déconfinement*. According to Roig–Marín (2020: 2) “*Covid* has been borrowed as an Anglicism and users of languages with grammatical gender like French, Catalan, Spanish, and Italian have tended to prefer the masculine gender because of its associations with (*corona*)*virus*, masculine in those languages.”

4.1.8. Abbreviation: It is the shortened form of a written word or phrase. Examples from the COVID-19 crisis are found in *BCV*, *BC* which refers to ‘(the period) before Corona (virus)’; *nCoV* ‘the coronavirus in technical designation or shorthand’; *PUI* ‘Person Under Investigation’; *WHF* ‘Working From Home’; *PUM* ‘Person Under Monitoring’; and *PPE* ‘Personal Protection Equipment.’

4.1.9. Acronyms: It is an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of other words and pronounced as a word. In the coronavirus context, examples are found in *COVID-19* ‘Coronavirus Disease 2019’; *ARDS* ‘Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome’; and *WHO* ‘World Health Organization.’

4.1.10. Folk etymology: It is a change in the form and/or meaning of a word resulting from a mistaken assumption about its composition or meaning. An example is found in **the word pando (Australian)** referring to the ‘coronavirus pandemic’; **Nightingales**, first used as a nickname for those singing or performing morale-boosting music from balconies, in gardens, later abandoned when the Nightingale emergency hospitals were opened across the UK. Another example is found in the word *scarring* ‘long-term negative effects resulting from initial harm suffered during social and/or economic upheaval, but now it has a new use through association with Corona.’

4.2. Dual word-formation Processes

Based on the COVID-19 list of neologisms available, our findings identified three types of dual word-formation processes, namely, compounding and affixation, blending and affixation, and clipping and compounding.

4.2.1. Compounding and affixation: In this process, the new word exhibits two processes, namely compounding and affixation. For example, **circuit-breakers** ‘i.e., halting an exit from lockdown by closing re-opened venues or ceasing re-started activities,’ consists of the compound ‘circuit-break’ + a noun-forming suffix *-er*, followed by the plural-marking suffix *-s* to create the new word **circuit-breakers**. **The same applies to the compound lockdowners** (lock + down + *-er* + *s*), ‘individuals coping with life in conditions of isolation.’

4.2.2. Blending and affixation: New words can also be created by blending + affixation. For example, the word *quaranteams* defined as ‘groups forming and performing music or competing in quizzes virtually during lockdown,’ where a combination of the two words ‘quarantine + team’ results in the new blend *quaranteam*, and ending up with the plural forming suffix *-s* to create *quaranteams*.

The same applies to *covidpreneurs* that refers to ‘individuals or businesses succeeding in thriving and innovating in a pandemic environment.’ The example represents a two-word combination of ‘coronavirus+ entrepreneur’ to form the blended word *covidpreneur*, and then adding the plural-forming suffix *-s* to produce *covidpreneurs*.

4.2.3. Clipping and compounding: This dual word-formation process is exemplified in the creation of words such as *ronadobbing* (Australian) for ‘informing on those contravening crisis-related restrictions.’ In this example, the two full words ‘Corona + dobbing’ combine to form the new word *coronadobbing*, and then the word *corona* undergoes a process of clipping to generate the clipped form *rona*, which together with *dobbing* create the neologism *ronadobbing*.

5. Discussion

The COVID-19-related neologisms compiled in the current study reflect the speed and increasing volume of the lexical innovations. Crystal (2020: 1) reports that “there are already some initial collections of English COVID neologisms online, and the numbers are rising.” For Ro (2020: 1), “the only actual new word added to the dictionary is ‘Covid-19’. The others are pre-existing terms that have gained new resonance”. For example, the abbreviation *WFH* ‘Working From Home’ dates back to 1995. Many of these terms are not genuinely novel, being around for many years, e.g., *self-quarantine*, *social distancing*, and *social isolation*. However, their being reintroduced shows that not only does social change bring about new words and terms in the form of neologisms or coinages, but it also reintroduces some pre-existing words that have gained new resonance in the time of major social crises, as in the COVID-19 case. According to Hollett (2020: 1), “we have to learn new habits, and with new habits, we learn new words.” For example, “in the past ‘self-isolation’ used to describe countries that kept themselves separate, but now if someone has or thinks they might have the coronavirus, they ‘self-isolate’ and keep themselves apart from their family” (Hollett 2020: 1). In other words, while a good number of words are brand new, some of the terms such as *hunkering down*, *cabin fever*, *stir crazy*, *uncertain times*, have resurged during the COVID-19 (Crowe 2020).

The findings of the present study lend support to the thesis that linguistic change and creativity is a universal property of language, which reflects global societal changes. The term *COVID-19* which was first coined in February 2020 had gained unprecedented momentum and frequency, topping the 2020 lexical innovations, even the most popular 2019 *Brexit* entry. The widespread of the COVID-19 neologisms, many of which have not yet entered the dictionary, is attributed to the fast spread of the pandemic globally and the extremely powerful influence of social media.

An important finding of the present study is exploring the pragmatic dimensions of some COVID-19-inspired terms. A case in point is the concept of *social distancing*, which has changed the way people feel about their personal

space. For example, maintaining a *safe distance*, avoiding *close contact*, *wearing a mask*, *using sanitizers*, and *self-hygiene* can save lives. These terms have become part of people's everyday life. *Staying home* if you are unwell, *self-quarantine*, *avoiding handshake*, *elbow-pump*, etc., are among the many terms which have acquired social currency during the pandemic to shape and regulate social interaction in everyday life. The new social practices caused by COVID-19 are most likely to affect people's social habits and daily interactions in the short term, if not in the long term for many.

The importance of the COVID-19-inspired neologisms derives from its global dimension, which makes it crucial for the entire international community to follow the latest developments concerning updates on coronavirus cases worldwide. This makes it necessary to have a constant follow-up, updates, and exchange of data at a global level. For this to happen, a unified terminology to unite peoples of the world fighting the devastating virus was of paramount importance. In other words, coinages, new lexical entries, abbreviations, etc., should be made available to all parties concerned without delay. Consequently, word-formation processes of all types were so crucial in the rapid dissemination of information and data globally.

The word-formation processes discussed in the 'Analysis' section above demonstrate how the coronavirus-based terminology has found its way into languages of the world. This lends support to the thesis that neologisms are a true manifestation of language change and language development. The impact and effectiveness of the emerging terminology and the lexical innovations are most evidently reflected in the bulk of word-formation and derivational processes cited. The fact that ten word-formation processes have been represented in the compiled list of COVID-19 neologisms is enough evidence of the role of lexical innovations in historical linguistics. These processes were comprehensive enough to include all levels of linguistic theorizing, namely: 1) coinages, 2) affixation, 3) compounding, 4) blending, 5) clipping, 6) backformation, 7) borrowing, 8) abbreviation, 9) acronyms, and 10) folk etymology. Furthermore, three additional dual word-formation processes, namely, compounding and affixation, blending and affixation, and clipping and compounding, were also well represented. These derivational and word-formation processes are in the core of research on historical linguistics as they shed light on the process of language change over time, and more so about the relationship between language variation and social change.

Interestingly, some word-formation processes such as compounding and blending were more dominant than the others. This is attributed to the fact that these two are perhaps the most productive word-formation processes which have been most popular throughout. In other words, most of the terms and lexical entries are not necessarily new; they have already been there, but they were reintroduced within the COVID-19 context.

Historically, significant social, political, and other upheavals, including pandemics, leave their footprints on language through their short-term and long-term effects. As is the case with the COVID-19 lexical innovations and neologisms,

other major world events such as the industrial revolution, WWI, and WWII, global pandemics like *HIV*, *SARS*, *MERS*, and social media applications have brought with them new concepts, terms, and lexical innovations whose survival and frequency of use varied over time. In this context, the question to ask is how much longer the COVID-19-inspired neologisms would remain in use after the post-pandemic era. As Ro (2020) put it, words that describe lasting behavioral changes such as *zoombombing*, being influenced by *photobombing*, which invades somebody else's video call, are expected to continue. Historically, coinages such as *Radar*, *Xerox*, etc., are but true examples of surviving neologisms.

On the other hand, and as we indicated earlier, some words which have been around for years, such as *self-isolate*, *self-quarantine*, *social distancing*, *social isolation* have changed their usage during the coronavirus crisis. Nowadays, the abbreviations *WFH* and *PPE* have become popular words in social media due to COVID-19. These and other examples, such as *lockdown*, *social distancing*, *super-spreader*, etc. show how social media and blogs have played a vital role in spreading and adopting new words and expressions. In the same vein, Crystal (2020) comments on the possible chances of survival for neologisms by saying:

“I sympathize with our poor lexicographers, as there's no way of knowing whether these novelties are going to remain part of the language or whether they will silently disappear once the crisis is over. However, we're told today by the WHO that the virus may be with us for good, so may be the associated vocabulary, playful as well as serious, will stay too.” (Crystal 2020: 1).

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this piece of research is to investigate the nature of the new words and expressions (i.e., neologisms) which emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. It also identifies the type of word-formation processes that contributed to the emergence of these neologisms in the English language.

The results of the present study have most clearly shown that the size and pace of COVID-19-inspired lexical innovations and manifestations have most rigorously dominated global discourse. Historically, lexicographers who track and correlate the volume of new lexical entries in dictionaries with social, political, or economic events confirm that, unlike previous world events, COVID-19 has brought significant linguistic changes at all levels.

The pragmatic dimensions of some of the COVID-19-inspired terms, such as *social distancing*, have been particularly important. The international community has witnessed drastic changes with regard to reshaping social communication habits. For example, strict adherence to matters of personal space, avoiding greetings through handshake, reconsidering seating arrangements in public gathering and events, and other manifestations of social interaction have emerged as new globally-acknowledged social habits. In addition, quarantine, self-isolation, personal hygiene, and sanitation practices have equally been enforced and observed to acquire social currency worldwide.

The power of circulation and dissemination of those coinages and neologisms was so rapid and massive for several reasons; first, the graveness of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the international community indiscriminately, with the skyrocketing number of cases, fatalities, and the devastating impact of the pandemic on the global economy. Second, social media has been so effective in speeding up the mobility of these lexical innovations.

To conclude, the search for COVID-19-inspired neologisms has proven to be a relevant research topic par excellence as it translates the linguistic, social, health, and other changes brought by the coronavirus global crisis. The question of how much longer would the COVID-19 neologisms remain in use after the post-pandemic era is still unknown.

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Appendix

Sample glossary of COVID-19-inspired neologisms

No.	Socio-pragmatic functions	Listing of neologisms and word-formation processes	
		Listing of neologisms	Word-formation process
1	Nicknames	COVID-19	coinage
2		Rona, Lady Rona, roni, rone	clipping
3		the Rona	clipping
4		the pandy	clipping
5		the pando	folk etymology
6		nCoV	abbreviation
7		Boomer remover	compound
8		Nightingale	folk etymology
9		Homeworking & teleconferencing	WFH, wfh
10	Covidpreneurs		blending & affixation
11	Zoom bombing		compounding
12	Quarantini		blending
13	Locktail hour		blending
14	Telecommuter core		compounding
15	Quaransheen		blending
16	Coronaviva		compounding
17	Quaranteams		blending & affixation
18	Quaranqueens		blending & affixation
19	Quarantrolls	blending & affixation	

No.	Socio-pragmatic functions	Listing of neologisms and word-formation processes		
		Listing of neologisms	Word-formation process	
20		Quarantunes	blending	
21		Quaranzine	blending	
22		Coronalit	compounding & clipping	
23		Corona-fi	compounding & clipping	
24		Zoom mullet	compounding	
25		Isobaking	blending	
26		Homeference	blending	
27		Zoomed out	compounding	
28		Zoom fatigue	compounding	
29		The wipe-away	compounding	
30		Toxic productivity	compounding	
31		Demographics & Safety/security measures	Coronials	blending & affixation
32			Gen(eration) C	Compounding & clipping
33			Quaranteens	blending
34			Elbump	blending
35			Coronadodge	compound
36			Covid waltz	compound
37			Ronadobbing	compounding & clipping
38			Corona snitching	compounding
39			Covidobbing	compounding
40			Coronagrass	compounding
41			Corona-shaming	compounding
42			Masklessness	affixation
43			Whack-a-mole	compounding
44			Describing new realities	Quarantime
45		Coronatimes		affixation
46		BCV, BC		abbreviation
47		Coronapocalypse		compounding
48		The coronopticon		compounding
49		Coronanoia		blending
50	Coronasplaining	blending		
51	Coronaspiracy theories	blending		
52	Lockdowners	compounding & affixation		
53	Coronaclickbait	compounding		
54	Loxit	Blending		
55	Loxino	blending		
56	Circuit-breakers	compounding & affixation		
57	Unlockdown	loan translation (from French 'deconfinement')		
58	Coronaphobia	compounding		
59	Coronavirus bubbles	compounding		
60	Coronawashing	compounding		
61	Corona crunch	compounding		
62	Corona coaster	compounding		

No.	Socio-pragmatic functions	Listing of neologisms and word-formation processes		
		Listing of neologisms	Word-formation process	
63		Cleanliness theatre	compound & affixation	
64		Vaccine nationalism	compounding	
65		Scarring	folk etymology	
66		Security theater	compounding	
67		Lockstalgia	blending	
68		Clandestine barbers	compounding	
69		Other	Coronavirus	compounding
70			Covideo party	blending
71			Covexit	blending
72			Blursday	blending
73			Zoombombing	compounding
74			Corona speck	compounding
75			Drive-thru testing	compounding
76			Covidivorce	blending
77	Coronacation		blending	
78	Covid-10		folk etymology	
79	Doom scrolling		compounding	
80	Corona moaner		compounding	
81	Coronababies		compounding	
82	Coronacoma		compounding	
83	Nurcorana		blending	
84	Corona niggers		compounding	
85	Corona Bonus		compounding	
86	Herd immunity		compounding	
87	Index case		compounding	
88	Novel coronavirus		compounding	
89	PPE		abbreviation	
90	Physical distancing		compounding	
91	Self-quarantine:		compounding	
92	Shelter-in-place		compounding	
93	Super-spreader		compounding	
94	Social distancing		compounding	
95	PUM		abbreviation	
96	PUI		abbreviation	
97	Situation report		compounding	
98	Transmission		affixation	
99	Zonotic		affixation	
100	Contactless delivery		compounding & affixation	
101	Quarantini		blending	
102	Zoom-room		compound	
103	Hamsterkaufing		Borrowing (from German)	
104	Drivecation		blending	

Article history:

Received: 14 September 2020

Accepted: 22 January 2021

История статьи:

Дата поступления в редакцию: 14 сентября 2020

Дата принятия к печати: 22 января 2021

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