

COVID-19 TERİMLERİNİN OLUŞUM SÜRECİ

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Özet

Yeni kelime ve deyimlerin ortaya çıkışı, toplum dilbiliminin sürekli olarak ilgilendiği bir konudur. 2019'un sonlarında başlayan COVID-19 pandemisi, dil ve iletişim üzerinde belirgin etkiler yaratmıştır. Araştırmacılar, salgın döneminde küresel çapta oluşan neolojizmleri analiz etmeye artan bir ilgi göstermektedir. Bu çalışma, COVID-19 salgını sırasında İngilizcede ortaya çıkan yeni terimlerin oluşum süreçlerini incelemektedir. Krishnamurthy'nin (2010) neolojizm sınıflandırmasına dayanarak yapılan incelemede, en yaygın stratejinin kelime türetimi olduğu, bunu ödünç alma ve sözcüksel sapma süreçlerinin izlediği tespit edilmiştir. Kelime türetimi içinde ise en sık kullanılan yöntem olarak birleştirme öne çıkmıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, kriz dönemlerinde dilin ihtiyaçlara hızlı bir şekilde uyum sağladığını göstermektedir. Gelecekteki araştırmalar, bu yeni terimlerin diğer dillere nasıl çevrildiği üzerine odaklanacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Toplum dilbilim, yeni sözcük üretimi, afet dili, Covid-19.

NEOLOGISM OF COVID-19 TERMS

Abstract

The surge of new words and phrases is a continuing concern of sociolinguistic studies. The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in late 2019, has led to significant changes in language and communication. Researchers have shown an increased interest in establishing a trending base of global neologisms for the pandemic. This study aims to examine the creation of the new English terms emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Krishnamurthy's (2010) taxonomy of neologisms, it was observed that word formation was the most common strategy, followed by borrowing and lexical deviation. Regarding the subcategories of word formation, compounding was the most prevalent strategy. The findings proved the quick response of language to respond to the requirements of emerging situations in times of crisis. Further studies would concentrate on the translation of these new terms into other languages.

Key words: Sociolinguistics, neologism, disaster language, Covid-19.

1. INTRODUCTION

Starting in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic caused many negative impacts in various areas across the globe. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has experienced many compulsory changes including economy, health, tourism, and education. Some strict rules such as social distancing, home-office working, and distanced learning have been implemented to decrease the number of people affected by this pandemic.

The wake of the pandemic has also brought about the creation of new words in many languages basically in English as the lingua-franca of the medical and technological world. These new words related to the pandemic cover a lot of different things, from medical terms like "COVID-19" and "asymptomatic" to ideas that are made up by society, like "social distancing" and "lockdown." The speed with which these new words and phrases spread across languages was parallel with the speed of the virus. This shows how important language is in navigating and making sense of the pandemic.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the world witnessed great changes that touched almost every aspect of human life. Many areas of life, businesses, and industries around the world were drastically changed by the COVID-19 outbreak. Linguistically speaking, this results in the emergence of new words or new lexical meanings for existing words related to the pandemic. The phrases "social distancing," "self-quarantine," "flattening the curve," "super spreader," and "contact tracing" quickly became commonly used words.

Covid-19 has been one of the deadliest global pandemics. Thus, there were an increasing number of studies being conducted on the COVID-19 discourse from different linguistic frameworks and perspectives one of which was the neologism of the pandemic words (Akut, 2020; Asif et al., 2021; Borankulova & Proshina, 2021). From a linguistic perspective, the current study sought to reveal the neologism of Covid-19 terms in English. It is assumed that it would contribute to the literature of neologism studies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

All languages are dynamic and creative because they improve day by day to meet the requirements of human needs. The field that examines these improvements is called neologism. Neologism is an important idea in the study of language. It means formatting new words or phrases or giving old words new meanings. This happens a lot when technology changes, culture shifts, or new things happen. Neologisms are language tools that keep up with changing facts and ideas within a language. This helps people talk about new ideas and problems in current times. The creation of new words and phrases shows how alive a language is and how well it can adapt to changes in its users' social and environmental situations.

A neologism is defined as "a new word, usage, or expression" in Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Gove et al., 1993, p.1516). Qaisar (2015) states that neologism contributes to the formation of new words and the formation of new forms of existing terms. In a language, it identifies and supports the formation of new words. Within the framework of social and cultural conditions, neologism also draws attention to the contemporary points of view. Broadly speaking, each new word or phrase created is called a neologism. Mweri (2021) explains that the word neologism is rooted in the Greek root neo-, meaning 'new' and logos, meaning 'word.' Neologism includes coining or inventing new words or phrases and the use of words in new senses. If a new word or a phrase is coined and used or when an existing word or phrase acquires a new meaning, a neologism is formed and the process is called a neologism.

Fisher (1996) explains the factors of a word to be considered a neologism. For a word to be considered a neologism, it needs to have a permanent frequency over a specific period of time as well as the distribution in various communicative contexts. Availability refers to the retrieval of words in mind and familiarity means the subjective impression of words also

influences whether a new word is a neologism. Lei et al. (2021, p. 2) define neologism as the emergence of a new word as a result of the introduction of a new concept in a language. In such cases, “the concept has no a priori lexicalized form to be associated with, it is possible that multiple competing word forms coexist during the emerging stage of the word”. Hence, the focus of emergent neologism studies is language changes due to replacement changes.

Khan (2013) explains that new word creation, or neologism, is an important way to study how language changes over time. Usually, this happens when we try to create new words to describe new ideas or things, especially when there isn't a word that perfectly describes our thoughts or experiences. Borrowing words from other languages, making acronyms, or changing words are all means of creating new words. Krishnamurthy (2010) suggests a taxonomy of creating neologism.

- Forming words: Adding on, coining, joining, and mixing are some of the ways that new words can be made. One way to make a new word is to put two or more words together. The word "infodemic" is made up of the words "information" and "epidemic."
- Borrowing: Adding words from other languages to our own is another way to make neologisms. When we take a language, we can use words that don't have clear meanings in that language. For example, the word "quarantine" comes from the Italian word "quarantene."
- Lexical Deviation: This is another way that new words are made up. They come up with new words that didn't exist before. People often use neologisms to come up with brand-new words to talk about new ideas or events. For example, the word “infodemic” emerged and gained popularity during COVID-19. It was coined to describe the rapid spread of misinformation and rumors related to the pandemic, occasionally on social media platforms. The word combines the prefix “info-” meaning information and the suffix “-demic” meaning an epidemic or widespread incident. The creation of this new word reflects the need to describe a novel phenomenon that had not previously been captured by the existing lexicon of the English language.

The studies about the neologism of Covid-19 terms have concentrated on different linguistic aspects of the pandemic. Akut (2020) investigated the morphological structures of the neologisms during the COVID-19 pandemic through textual analysis consisting of five Internet articles about the outbreak of the corona virus. Findings showed that most of the neologisms are nouns. The common morphological processes forming new words were compounding, blending, and affixation. Lei et al. (2021) focused on the word-creation strategies of COVID-19 neologisms in Chinese and found the pervasive use of categorization, avoidance, and synthesis. Asif et al (2021) studied the Covid-19 terms based on three components of neologism: word formation, borrowing, and lexical deviation. The word formation created new nouns, adjectives, and verbs. The abbreviations and acronyms were also utilized to form COVID-19 terms.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study paid close attention to the neologism of COVID-19 words in English. The descriptive results related to the neologism of Covid-19 were explained by examples in the following section.

3.1 Data Collection

The dataset was compiled from a glossary published by the UK Parliament. This dataset was used to examine the strategies of COVID-19 neologism in English, which was the first aim of this article. The glossary was available at <https://post.parliament.uk/covid-19->

glossary/#Understanding-the-biology-of-the-virus. In this glossary, the neologisms of COVID-19 were categorized under 11 subheadings but the last 3 of them are abbreviations and organization names so they were not exposed to analysis. There were a total of 182 new words in the glossary.

- Terms used to describe the biology of the virus
- Terms used in understanding how COVID-19 spreads
- Terms used in research about COVID-19
- Terms about research publication status
- Terms about statistics
- Terms used in drug development
- Terms about COVID-19 treatment
- Terms used to discuss the immune response to COVID-19, immunizations, and vaccines

3.2 Data Analysis

The first concern of the study was to examine the newly emerged COVID-19 neologisms in English. To examine the COVID-19 neologisms in English, the English dataset was taken into account based on Krishnamurthy's (2010) taxonomy of neologism. The taxonomy, includes three main categories:

- Word Formation: This category means the process of making new words through different ways of combining letters, adding suffixes, coining, and using acronyms. Mood elements, or morphemes, are the smallest pieces of meaning in a language. Compounding, mixing, affixation, coinage, and making acronyms are all types of word building. When people borrow words from other languages to make speaking easier, they change the vocabulary of the language they are borrowing from. "Covidiot" and "Covidient" could be shown as an example. "Covidiot" is a mix of "COVID-19" and "idiot," it refers to someone who doesn't follow health or safety rules during the pandemic. "Covidient" is a word made up of "COVID-19" and "obedient," meaning someone who follows orders. (Asif et al., 2021)
- Borrowing: Adopting words from another language is what borrowing means. In some cases, this is necessary to explain new ideas or technologies, or the copied word simply better describes the idea of words already used in the borrowing language. For example, the word "corona" comes from Latin and means "crown," which is how the virus looks under a microscope. This example of borrowing shows how languages change to fit new situations by adding external terms. (Asif et al., 2021)
- Lexical Deviation: Creating completely new words or using existing words in unusual ways is called lexical deviation. Beyond the normal rules of word creation, this process of neologism creates new words to describe things or ideas that didn't have a language representation before. For instance, the word "infodemic," which is a combination of "information" and "epidemic," shows a change in word usage. It refers to the widespread spread of information that is often not true or verified during an epidemic or crisis. This word describes a new reality that has come about because of the overwhelming amount of information available online during health problems.

Firstly, the English data including 182 words were copied to an Excel File, and how these words were created was decided by using the neologism strategies suggested by Krishnamurthy (2010). All the instances of these categories were counted, and the results were shown in tables by indicating the frequency counts and percentages and explained with examples. To ensure reliability, 10% of the results were checked by an expert who held a PhD degree in linguistics.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The ultimate concern of this study was to figure out the neologism strategies of COVID-19 words. POST-Parliament, the UK Parliament's body that provides independent, balanced, and accessible analysis of public policy issues relating to science and technology, was chosen as the main source of the COVID-19 dictionary examined in this study. Unlike other sources, this option is chosen primarily because, unlike other sources, this source provides a sequential and annotated list of words. Words collected from this official website were categorized according to the neologism strategy used to create them.

Table 1 indicates the overall distribution of the neologism categories found in the data. The most used strategy was *word formation* with 68.86 %. It was followed by *borrowing*, which came in second place with a percentage of 24.04. The *lexical deviation* ranked last with 7.10%.

Table 1. Categorical distribution of neologism subcategories

Categories	F	%
Word Formation	126	68.86
Borrowing	44	24.04
Lexical Deviation	13	7.10
Total	183	100

The *word formation* had the highest percentage compared to others because, during the pandemic, lots of new words are needed to describe different situations. It is the processes that enable us to create new words with already existing grammatical resources in a language. In addition, it covers a variety of particular strategies for the construction of new words. Following word formation, *borrowing* which means adopting words or sentences from one language into another was the second most frequent category of neologism. This shift in language often happens when new technologies, cultural events, or, as happened with the pandemic, medical conditions, and how people react to them are first described in a different language. For example, “lockdown” is a word that comes from English but has been used in many other languages to describe the protective steps taken to stop the virus from spreading. Also “fomite” which means tinder is an example of borrowing from Latin. Changing current words to give them new meanings or using words in unusual ways is called *lexical deviation*. The language used in this area is often creative and funny, showing how people change their language in official and private settings to reflect new facts and shared experiences. For example, “covidiot” mixes “COVID-19” with “idiot” to describe someone who doesn't follow health advice about the coronavirus. In a fun but critical way, it brings attention to people's careless actions during the pandemic. Another example is “maskne” which is a mix of “mask” and “acne,” meaning acne or skin irritation that happens when you wear a face mask. The word “humorously” refers to a small but common problem during the outbreak.

The overall picture of the analysis showed that *word formation* strategy paved the way for the creation of many words about the pandemic. It has eight sub-categories as displayed in Table 2. The most frequent word formation sub-category was *compounding* which has a 71.90 %, which was followed by *an acronym* (10.74%). The suffix took third place in the table with 5.79 % and the *phrase* had a percentage of 4.96 %. Sharing the same percentage of 2.48, the following were *prefixes* and *hyphenated*. *Affixation* and *blending* were the last two categories with 0.83 %.

Table 2. Categorical distribution of word formation sub-categories

Categories	F	%
Compounding	87	71.90
Acronym	13	10.74
Suffix	7	5.79
Phrase	6	4.96
Prefix	3	2.48
Hyphenated	3	2.48
Affixation	1	0.83
Blending	1	0.83

As it is seen from the table, during the COVID-19 outbreak, compounding was the most common type of neologism word creation. It refers to the construction of new words by combining two or more words. For example, the phrase "social distancing" clearly conveys the idea of keeping physical distance between people to stop the spread of viruses. Another example is that "hand sanitizer" is a compound word combining "hand" and "sanitizer," referring to a substance used to kill germs on the hands. Its meaning can be understood across countries and languages (Denzin, 2012). Another example of compounding from the COVID-19 epidemic is "contact tracing". This compound term combines "contact," meaning physical closeness or interaction, with "tracing," meaning tracking or monitoring. Regarding the grammatical construction of these words, "social distancing" was compiled by a combination of adjective + noun, while "hand sanitizer" and "contact tracing" had a pattern of noun + noun.

The acronym refers to the creation of a word formed from the initial letters of a phrase, with each letter typically representing a word. In our case, "PPE" stands for "Personal Protective Equipment", which became a common term during the pandemic making it easier for many people to understand and use during the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic also created "NPI," an abbreviation for "Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions". NPIs are non-vaccination and medication activities that individuals and communities may do to reduce the development of diseases like COVID-19.

The affixation adds a prefix or suffix to a root word to form a new term or change its meaning. With the prefix "tele-" (meaning distance) added to "health," "telehealth" refers to remote healthcare services. Another COVID-19 term is "antisocial." During the wake of the pandemic, "anti-" was used to describe health-related practices like avoiding close contact. The suffix is an affix that is added to the end of a root word to form a new word, often changing the word class. For example, "maskne," combines "mask" with "-ne," as a variation of "-acne." "Maskne" is acne or skin irritation caused by long-term face mask use. Due to extensive mask usage to prevent viral transmission, this neologism addresses a new health issue. Blending is the process of merging the sounds and meanings of two or more words to create a new word. In this case "Quaranteen" could be a blend of "quarantine" and "teen," referring to a teenager spending a lot of time in quarantine.

Hyphenated are the words that are connected by a hyphen to form a new term, often bringing together adjectives or nouns that function together as a single concept. "Drive-through testing" is a hyphenated term example that refers to the method of conducting medical tests without the need for patients to leave their vehicles. Another COVID-19 pandemic hyphenated word is "self-quarantine." This phrase combines "self," suggesting the individual's engagement, with "quarantine," which means isolating oneself to prevent virus spread. The "self-quarantine" hyphen emphasizes personal responsibility since people voluntarily isolate themselves after virus exposure or while waiting for test results.

5. CONCLUSION

The current study examined the neologism of the Covid-19 pandemic in the English data including 182 words from the website of the UK Parliament. The analysis was carried out on Krishnamurthy's (2010) taxonomy of neologism. Word formation was the most common style of neologism for English COVID-19 words in English. The pandemic requires precise language, from medical terms to new social norms, therefore this strategy creates new words through numerous procedures. In the epidemic, word formation was common, requiring linguistic inventiveness and adaptation. The second most used neologism strategy was *borrowing*. The technique entails using foreign terminology when English does not have them. The quick transmission of information in a worldwide environment makes cross-linguistic impact vital. The use of foreign phrases shows how language boundaries may be crossed to fulfill crisis vocabulary needs. Though rarely used, *lexical deviation* contributed to the creation of new COVID-19 terminology. This method uses new terms or adapts old ones to describe new events. As a result of the epidemic, these phrases capture unique social and cultural behaviors and experiences.

These findings are consistent with previous research (Akut, 2020; Asif et al., 2021; Borankulova & Proshina, 2021), which emphasizes the need to develop new vocabulary during crises. They emphasize how language evolves quickly to meet emerging requirements, reflecting societal changes and obstacles. For example, the development of terminology like "infodemic" or "covidiot" demonstrates the integration of societal experiences with language invention, a trend that has been witnessed in earlier pandemics or worldwide catastrophes.

Future studies might look into how these neologisms are adapted and translated between languages, with an emphasis on the difficulty of maintaining semantic and cultural nuances. Furthermore, comparing neologisms from other sources, such as social media or news outlets, may give further insight into the dynamics of word development in crisis situations. Such research would help to better grasp the larger significance of neologisms for global communication and cultural exchange.

The data of the study were limited to an English official glossary. The comparison of neologism of the Covid-19 pandemic taken from different sources such as news websites and social media may be a fruitful area for future studies. Besides, the analysis of translation strategies of these words in different languages may be another area of interest.

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