

Секция «Современные лингвистические исследования разноуровневых единиц языка:
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English neologisms created by the coronavirus

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With the advent of new things, technologies, or social phenomena, we need new lexical units to name them. Over time, some new words become common and are firmly fixed in the language of everyday communication (they are included in the active vocabulary).

The aim of the research is to find out how the current pandemic is reflected in the English language.

The relevance of the research is determined by the constant development of the language, the occurrence of new lexical units that change the vocabulary of the language.

The tasks of the research are:

- To extract a continuous sample of words new to the language;
- To analyse the morphemic structure of the extracted lexical units;
- To find out which type of word formation is the most productive as far as the new pandemic-related terms are concerned.

A neologism is the name for a newly coined term, word, or phrase, that may be in the process of entering common use, but has not yet been accepted into mainstream language. Neologisms are accepted in the standard language only if they are felt as necessary.

Neologisms show us that language is a constantly developing and expanding system. Neologisms reflect the ability of a language to develop simultaneously with the development of the society, its culture and technologies.

The global coronavirus pandemic has put the lives of hundreds of thousands of people at risk and has badly affected the economy of many countries. The pandemic gave rise to the creation of a number of original neologisms in the English language. The disease is called COVID-19, which is an abbreviated form of coronavirus disease 2019.

In the media, social networks (Twitter) and online dictionaries (Urban Dictionary, Merriam Webster), we have found a number of neologisms associated with the coronavirus.

Modern English has many ways of word formation, which include, in particular, affixation, conversion, word composition and others. Not all of these methods are used to the same extent, and the specific weight of each of them in the word-forming process is not the same.

Having studied the morphemic structure of the neologisms under analysis, we have noticed that most of them are formed by blending - connecting the truncated bases of two or more lexical units. Neologisms formed by the method of blending illustrate the manifestations of the principle of saving language effort.

For instance, there are such neologisms as:

- Coronallennial (coronavirus+millennial): a generation of children conceived during self-isolation.
- Coronaphobia (coronavirus+phobia): the fear of the coronavirus.
- Covidiot (Covid-19+idiot): someone who is either overly careless or succumbs to panic in an exaggerated form due to the coronavirus.
- Coronapocalypse (coronavirus+apocalypse): the end of the world caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Quarantech(quarantine+technologies): gadgets and apps that help you kill time in self-isolation
- Quaranteam (quarantine+team): 1) the people you chose to live with during the quarantine; 2) a general chat where issues related to the pandemic are discussed; 3) a group "grab" for example, toilet paper in a store.
- Quarantips (quarantine+tips): advice on clothing, food, and lifestyle that is given to people who are in self-isolation.
- Quarantrends(quarantine+trends): activities that have become fashionable for people who are in self-isolation.

Word composition (compounding) is one of the most traditional, universal and common ways of word formation, which consists in combining two or more stems in order to form a new word. The criteria for identifying such compounds may vary from the uniting stress to solid spelling or hyphenated spelling. We have found the following compound neologisms:

- Quarantine shaming: indicative criticism of people who violate the quarantine and leave the house. The goal of quarantine shaming is to raise awareness about the coronavirus and the rules for surviving the pandemic.
- Coronavirus baby: a baby conceived during quarantine.
- Boomer remover: an alternative name for a coronavirus that mainly affects the baby boomer generation-individuals born between 1946 and 1964.

Another productive way of forming neologisms is abbreviation. It reflects the tendency to save efforts. As a rule, truncations predominate the other types of shortening (abbreviations and acronyms). A special feature of truncations is their use in the framework of colloquial speech. So the word “quarantine” is shortened to “quar” by many native English speakers, the expression “in isolation” is shortened to “in iso”, and the word “coronavirus” is shortened to “rona” or “the Rona”.

Another way to form new words in English is analogy. We have found only one neologism formed in this way:

- Coronator(the word is created on the analogy with the word“terminator” and is meant to evoke allusions to the eponymous hero): entity, the person who defeated the coronavirus.

Some neologisms are formed by means of conversion. Conversion is the transition of a word from one part of speech into another. Conversion as a way of creating new words is inferior to other types of word formation. We have found some examples of converting nouns into verbs:

- To coronavirus: to stay at home for fear of the coronavirus.
- To self-quarantine: to avoid contact with other people.

Our research has also allowed us to identify an example of the semantic extension of meaning. For example, to be crowned, which literally means “to be enthroned”, is used in the meaning “to be infected with the coronavirus”.

Thus, we can see how quickly the English language reacts to new social phenomena by creating new words to describe them. As the undertaken research has shown, a variety of word-building mechanisms are employed in order to enrich the English vocabulary with coronavirus-related neologisms, the most productive one being blending.

References

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