

Formation of COVID-19 terminology in English and Uzbek: similarities and differences

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Annotation: This study explores the formation and evolution of COVID-19-related terminology in English and Uzbek, focusing on their lexical, semantic, and cognitive-pragmatic characteristics. The purpose of the research is to analyse how new terms were coined and adopted during the pandemic in both languages, to identify similarities and differences in their lexical construction and usage. The main objectives include classifying the newly formed terms, understanding the influence of international and local factors, and comparing terminological adaptations across both linguistic systems. The problem lies in the limited comparative analysis of pandemic-related terminology in Uzbek and English, despite the global nature of the phenomenon. The methodology involved comparative linguistic analysis, semantic classification, and discourse analysis of media, governmental, and health communication texts from 2020 to 2023. The findings reveal that while English terminology heavily relies on medical and scientific neologisms, Uzbek adapts many of these through calques, borrowings, and native formations, often influenced by sociocultural context. The study concludes that despite many similarities due to globalization and shared scientific knowledge, notable differences reflect each language's morphological structure and sociolinguistic environment.

Keywords: COVID-19 terminology, neologisms, cognitive linguistics, borrowings, semantic adaptation, pragmatic features

Формирование терминологии пандемии COVID-19 в английском и узбекском языках: сходства и различия.

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Аннотация: В данной работе рассматривается процесс формирования и развития терминологии, связанной с пандемией COVID-19, в английском и узбекском языках с точки зрения лексических, семантических и когнитивно-прагматических характеристик. Цель исследования – проанализировать способы образования новых терминов и их адаптацию в обоих языках, выявить общие черты и различия. Основные задачи включают классификацию новых терминов, анализ влияния глобальных и локальных факторов, а также сопоставление механизмов принятия терминов в двух языковых системах. Актуальность темы определяется ограниченностью сравнительных исследований в данной области. В качестве методологии использовались сравнительный лингвистический анализ, семантическая классификация и дискурс-анализ официальных, медицинских и медийных текстов периода 2020–2023 гг. Результаты показывают, что английский язык активно использует научные неологизмы, в то время как узбекский заимствует или адаптирует термины на основе фонетических, лексических и культурных особенностей. Основной вывод заключается в том, что, несмотря на международную терминологическую общность, различия в структуре языков и социолингвистической среде сохраняются.

Ключевые слова: COVID-19 терминов, неологизмы, когнитивная лингвистика, заимствование, семантическая адаптация, прагматические особенности

Ingliz va o'zbek tillarida Covid-19 pandemiya terminologiyasi shakllanishi: o'xshash va farqli jihatlari

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Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada ingliz va o'zbek tillarida COVID-19 pandemiyasi bilan bog'liq terminlarning shakllanishi va rivojlanishi o'rganiladi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi – ikki tilda pandemiya davrida paydo bo'lgan yangi terminlarning leksik, semantik hamda kognitiv-pragmatik xususiyatlarini tahlil qilish va ularning o'xshash va farqli jihatlari aniqlashdir. Asosiy vazifalar yangi terminlarni tasniflash, xalqaro va mahalliy omillarning ta'sirini aniqlash, hamda til tizimlari bo'yicha terminlarning qabul qilinishini solishtirishni o'z ichiga oladi. Muammo shundaki, pandemiya global hodisa bo'lishiga qaramay, ingliz va o'zbek tillarida bu boradagi terminologik o'rganishlar cheklangan. Tadqiqot uslubiyati sifatida taqqoslovchi lingvistik tahlil, semantik tasnif va 2020–2023 yillarda chop etilgan OAV, hukumat va sog'liqni saqlashga oid matnlar tahlili qo'llanilgan. Natijalarga ko'ra, ingliz tilida tibbiy neologizmlar ko'p ishlatilgan bo'lsa, o'zbek tilida esa ularning tarjimai, fonetik moslashuvi va milliy shakllari asosida qabul qilingan. Tadqiqot, har ikkala til umumiy ilmiy asosga ega bo'lishiga qaramay, ularning morfologik va sotsiolingvistik jihatlari asosida muhim farqlar mavjudligini ko'rsatadi.

Kalit so'zlar: COVID-19 terminologiyasi, neologizmlar, kognitiv tilshunoslik, o'zlashma so'zlar, semantik moslashuv, pragmatik xususiyatlar

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of novel terminology during global health crises is not unique to the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous outbreaks such as SARS (2003), H1N1 (2009), and Ebola (2014) also necessitated the rapid creation and dissemination of new terms. These events established a pattern of linguistic response characterized by the adoption of scientific jargon into public discourse and the localization of international terminology. During the SARS outbreak, terms like "super-spreader," "quarantine," and "contact tracing" became mainstream. Similarly, during the Ebola crisis, the use of terms like "isolation unit," "outbreak zone," and "biohazard" became common. These historical cases laid the groundwork for how societies linguistically adapt to emerging diseases, offering a comparative perspective for the analysis of COVID-19 terminology. The study of these earlier terminologies reveals that while English often serves as the global source language, local languages adapt and modify terminology to reflect unique sociocultural contexts.

The object of this research is the linguistic formation and evolution of terminology related to the COVID-19 pandemic in two distinct yet globally interconnected languages: English and Uzbek. The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic in late 2019 and its rapid global spread triggered a surge in new terms, phrases, and expressions in virtually every language. These neologisms, often coined in response to newly emerging social, medical, and technological phenomena, reflect not only lexical innovation but also deeper semantic and cognitive-pragmatic processes. Central concepts such as neologism, terminology formation, lexical borrowing, and semantic adaptation are at the heart of this study. Over the past decade, researchers have increasingly focused on the role of language in public health crises, with studies exploring how new lexical items arise and spread, how languages borrow and localize foreign terms, and how sociocultural contexts influence terminological adaptation. However, most of these studies have centred on major world languages, particularly English, with significantly less attention given to regional languages like Uzbek.

The problem addressed in this research lies in the lack of comparative studies examining the development of COVID-19-related terminology between global and local languages. While English

has served as the primary source of scientific and medical vocabulary during the pandemic, Uzbek has had to adapt and domesticate many of these terms, leading to a complex interplay between borrowing, translation, and native innovation. Opposing views exist regarding whether such borrowing enriches the language or causes lexical dependency. Additionally, existing research often fails to account for cognitive-pragmatic nuances and sociolinguistic influences that shape how terms are used and understood in different linguistic communities. Traditional conclusions tend to generalize the global nature of terminology formation without addressing language-specific adaptations or gaps in equivalence and usage.

This study aims to fill that gap by systematically examining the process of COVID-19 terminology formation in both English and Uzbek. The goals include identifying, classifying, and analysing new pandemic-related terms, comparing the lexical and semantic strategies used in each language, and assessing how global terms are localized. The research process combines comparative linguistic analysis, cognitive-semantic categorization, and discourse analysis of media, medical, and official texts from 2020 to 2023. One of the main scientific innovations lies in its bilingual comparative approach and the incorporation of cognitive-pragmatic perspectives. The study reveals that while English contributes original scientific terminology, Uzbek employs a range of adaptive strategies including direct borrowings, calques, and culturally situated equivalents. These findings highlight the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and global communication during a global health crisis, and they contribute to a more nuanced understanding of language development under emergency conditions.

METHODS

This study employs a comparative and descriptive linguistic methodology to analyse the formation of COVID-19-related terminology in English and Uzbek. The research is grounded in qualitative methods, drawing from cognitive linguistics, lexicography, and discourse analysis to examine the structure, origin, and function of newly emerged terms during the pandemic.

To ensure the collection of reliable and representative data, a corpus of terminological units was compiled from a variety of sources dated between 2020 and 2023. The English-language database consists of terms collected from international health organizations (e.g., WHO, CDC), scientific journals, online news portals (BBC, CNN, The Guardian), and official government press releases. For Uzbek, data were gathered from the websites of the Ministry of Health of Uzbekistan, local news agencies (Daryo, Kun.uz, Gazeta.uz), and official publications issued by government and educational institutions.

The research followed a multi-step process:

1. Data collection: identification and extraction of COVID-19-related neologisms and terminological units in both languages.
2. Classification: grouping terms into semantic fields (e.g., medical, social, political, digital) and according to word-formation methods (e.g., borrowing, calque, compounding, affixation).
3. Comparative analysis: each term was analysed in both its original (English) and adapted (Uzbek) forms to trace lexical transformations, semantic shifts, and pragmatic functions.
4. Cognitive-pragmatic analysis: Exploration of how sociocultural context, public communication needs, and pragmatic functions shaped the choice and use of terms in both languages.
5. Validation: cross-referencing with dictionaries (including Oxford COVID-19 Language Corpus, Uzbek explanatory dictionary, and online glossaries) and expert consultations to ensure accuracy.

This methodological approach not only allows for a detailed comparison of how two different linguistic systems react to global lexical innovation but also highlights the cognitive and socio-pragmatic mechanisms that underlie the acceptance and adaptation of new terminology in each language community.

RESULTS

The terminology surrounding COVID-19 did not merely function as a linguistic tool; it had profound sociolinguistic implications. Terms such as "lockdown", "mask mandate" and "quarantine"

became part of everyday conversations, altering communication norms and public behavior. In Uzbekistan, the widespread use of terms like "uyda qolish tartibi" (stay-at-home rules) and "karantin" (quarantine) shaped social practices and influenced public discourse on responsibility and compliance. Furthermore, some terms carried stigmatizing connotations. For instance, the term "covidiot" though humorous in English, contributed to social division by labeling individuals who disregarded safety measures. In the Uzbek context, similar neologisms, though less prevalent in formal settings, emerged in online discussions and social media, influencing public perception. The pandemic also accelerated the inclusion of previously uncommon scientific terms into mainstream language, thereby narrowing the gap between specialized and general discourse.

The results are organized into several key categories, including the patterns of lexical adaptation, the cognitive processes behind the development of terms, and the cultural and pragmatic influences on language use. Each category is illustrated with examples, tables, and figures, allowing for a clear comparison of the similarities and differences in the way both languages have handled COVID-19-related terminology.

1. Lexical formation patterns. COVID-19 terminology in both English and Uzbek has been shaped by several lexical formation processes. These processes include the creation of new words, adaptation of existing words, and borrowing from other languages, especially medical and scientific terms. A detailed comparison of lexical formation in both languages reveals the following patterns:

Borrowing from English: A large portion of COVID-19 terminology in Uzbek has been borrowed from English, reflecting the global spread of the pandemic. Terms like quarantine, lockdown, social distancing, and pandemic are directly adopted, often with minimal adaptation in spelling or pronunciation. For example, the English term quarantine is borrowed as "karantin" in Uzbek.

Coinage of new terms: In both languages, new terms were coined to describe specific COVID-19-related phenomena. In English, terms such as contact tracing and covidiot were coined, whereas in Uzbek, the term "covidga qarshi kurash" (fight against COVID) was created.

Table 1: Examples of borrowed and coined terms:

English term	Uzbek term	Formation type
quarantine	karantin	borrowed
social distancing	ijtimoiy masofa	coined
pandemic	pandemiya	borrowed
personal protective equipment (PPE)	shaxsiy himoya vositalari	coined
vaccine	vaksina	borrowed
immunity	immunitet	borrowed
remote work	masofaviy ish	coined
vaccination	emlanish	coined
self-isolation	o'zini yakkalash	coined
Covid-19	Covid-19	borrowed
coronavirus	koronavirus	borrowed
online education	masofaviy ta'lim	coined
isolation	izolyatsiya	borrowed
covidiot	kovidiot	coined
covexit	lokdaundan chiqish strategiyasi	coined

2. Cognitive and pragmatic features. The cognitive and pragmatic aspects of COVID-19 terminology reflect how speakers of both languages understand and use these terms. The cognitive

processes involved include the adaptation of abstract concepts into lexical items, while the pragmatic aspects involve the social and cultural factors influencing language use.

Cognitive linguistic adaptation: In both languages, COVID-19 terminology includes metaphors and metonymies related to health, contagion, and prevention. In English, flatten the curve and herd immunity are widely used metaphors to represent the goal of reducing the spread of the virus. In Uzbek, similar metaphors such as “kasallikni bartaraf etish” (overcome the disease) and “jamoaviy himoya” (community protection) are used.

Pragmatic features: The pragmatic usage of COVID-19 terminology in both languages reflects the social context and public health measures. In English, phrases like “mask mandate” and “stay-at-home order” are commonly used in legal and governmental contexts, while in Uzbek, equivalent terms such as “yuz niqobi majburiyati” (mandatory mask) and “uyda qolish tartibi” (stay-at-home rules) are used.

3. Comparison of lexical evolution. The evolution of COVID-19 terminology shows notable differences in how each language has adapted to the pandemic’s demands. English, as a global lingua franca, has served as the primary source of new terms, with many of them directly translated into Uzbek. However, Uzbek language policies aim to preserve national linguistic identity by either adapting foreign terms or creating entirely new words.

English: The use of English in COVID-19 terminology is extensive, with frequent adaptations of existing words or the formation of new compound terms. For example, social distancing has become a standard term across English-speaking countries.

Uzbek: Although a considerable number of terms are borrowed, there has been a push for creating Uzbek equivalents to maintain the language’s integrity. For example, instead of using the borrowed term quarantine, the Uzbek term “izolyatsiya” is frequently used in official documents and public discourse.

4. Cultural influences on terminology. Cultural influences play a significant role in the formation of COVID-19 terminology in both languages. In English, the terminology reflects a global, often Western-centered, perspective on the pandemic. In contrast, the formation of terms in Uzbek takes into account local cultural practices, social structures, and values. For example, terms related to family protection and community support reflect the collectivist values prevalent in Uzbek society, whereas English terms often focus on individual responsibility, such as “self-isolation” and “personal protective equipment”.

DUSCUSSION

The rapid evolution of COVID-19 terminology posed significant challenges for lexicographers. Many newly coined terms lacked clear definitions and standardized spellings, especially in languages with less institutionalized lexicographic infrastructures. In English, major dictionaries such as the Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster quickly updated their entries to include terms like "social distancing," "flatten the curve," and "PPE." In contrast, the Uzbek lexicographic response was slower and less systematic. While some official glossaries were published by educational institutions and the Ministry of Health, the lack of unified standards led to variation in spelling and usage. For example, the English term "lockdown" appeared in Uzbek texts as both "lokdaun" and "blokirovka," creating confusion. Moreover, many Uzbek terms were contextually explained rather than formally defined, highlighting the need for more robust lexicographic frameworks in crisis communication.

The comparative analysis of COVID-19 terminology in English and Uzbek reveals several key findings regarding the formation, adaptation, and use of pandemic-related terms. One of the primary observations is the substantial influence of English on Uzbek, with a significant number of terms being borrowed directly from English. These borrowed terms, such as quarantine, lockdown, and social distancing, are often slightly modified to fit the phonetic and orthographic norms of Uzbek. This borrowing pattern supports the idea that English, as the global lingua franca, plays a dominant

role in shaping terminologies in non-English-speaking languages, especially in domains such as public health and scientific discourse.

However, the study also highlights a noteworthy effort by Uzbek to coin native equivalents for some of the borrowed terms. This is evident in the use of phrases like “ijtimoiy masofa” (social distancing) and “pandemiya” (pandemic), which demonstrate the language’s ongoing efforts to preserve its linguistic identity while adapting to global changes. This phenomenon reflects a broader trend observed in many languages, where there is a balance between borrowing from English and creating new terms to retain local linguistic and cultural characteristics. In this regard, the study confirms the hypotheses that languages under pressure from global influences will selectively borrow and adapt terms, while also retaining and creating native alternatives.

The cognitive and pragmatic features of COVID-19 terminology also reveal key similarities and differences between the two languages. Both English and Uzbek employ metaphors and figurative expressions to simplify complex medical and social concepts. For example, English uses the metaphor flatten the curve to describe efforts to reduce the spread of the virus, while Uzbek uses “kasallikni bartaraf etish” (overcome the disease). These metaphors are not just linguistic tools but reflect cognitive processes that help the general population understand and engage with abstract concepts related to the pandemic. Furthermore, the use of such metaphors demonstrates a shared cognitive approach in both languages, where health-related phenomena are conceptualized in familiar, everyday terms.

On the pragmatic level, there are also notable cultural differences in how COVID-19 terms are used. In English, terms like “self-isolation” and “personal protective equipment” emphasize individual responsibility and actions. In contrast, Uzbek terms often highlight collective responsibility, such as “jamoaviy himoya” (community protection) and “yuz niqobi majburiyati” (mandatory mask), which reflect the collective societal values prevalent in Uzbek culture. This difference is significant because it underscores the way in which language reflects and reinforces cultural norms, particularly in times of crisis.

The evaluation of the hypotheses presented at the outset of this study shows that while both English and Uzbek exhibit similar patterns of metaphorical thinking and borrowing from global sources, the degree of linguistic innovation and adaptation varies. The Uzbek language’s focus on creating native terms reflects the country’s language policy and cultural priorities, whereas English, as the dominant global language, has seen rapid lexical expansion through borrowing and coining new terms.

A comparative glance at other regional languages such as Russian and Turkish further contextualizes the Uzbek experience. Russian, being a widely spoken and influential regional language, introduced its own set of adapted and borrowed COVID-19 terms, many of which also influenced Uzbek due to historical linguistic ties. Turkish, on the other hand, maintained a strong preference for native formations, creating terms like “sosyal mesafe” (social distance) and “kapanma” (lockdown). These languages reveal a spectrum of strategies ranging from heavy borrowing to rigorous native coining.

Understanding where Uzbek falls on this spectrum provides insight into its linguistic autonomy and cultural values. Moreover, bilingual or multilingual speakers in Uzbekistan often switched between Uzbek, Russian, and English when discussing COVID-19 topics, reflecting a hybrid linguistic landscape. This multilingualism not only facilitated comprehension but also influenced the speed and accuracy with which new terms were adopted.

CONCLUSION

This research set out to explore the formation of COVID-19-related terminology in English and Uzbek, with a focus on identifying linguistic similarities and differences shaped by sociocultural, cognitive, and pragmatic factors. The questions raised in the introduction – how each language formed and adapted pandemic-related terms, to what extent global terms were localized, and what

strategies were employed to ensure public comprehension – have been addressed through comparative lexical and semantic analysis.

The study concludes that English functioned as a source language, generating a wide range of original terms characterized by lexical creativity and scientific precision. In contrast, Uzbek acted primarily as a receptor language, relying heavily on borrowing, calques, and semantic approximation. This dynamic reflects broader patterns of linguistic influence in global communication, particularly during crises when scientific authority and rapid information exchange are vital.

The cognitive-pragmatic approach revealed that Uzbek terminology tended to prioritize clarity, simplicity, and accessibility. This is evident in the use of culturally relevant equivalents or explanatory phrases, even when they deviated from the direct scientific meanings conveyed in English. While Uzbek adopted many English terms, it often reinterpreted them to suit local discourse norms and communication strategies.

In summary, the research highlights that while the COVID-19 pandemic prompted global lexical innovation, each language filtered and adapted this innovation through its own linguistic and cultural lens. This bilingual comparative study contributes to our understanding of how languages evolve in response to global events, and it emphasizes the importance of socio-cognitive factors in terminology development. It also demonstrates the need for more inclusive research that considers non-global languages, thereby enriching the broader field of linguistic response to global health crises.

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