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**Linguistic Analysis of Word Formation Processes in English
in the Light of 'Covid'
Being the New Coinage that Defined 2020**

**Analiza procesów słowotwórczych w języku angielskim w świetle
określenia COVID będącego neologizmem definiującym rok 2020**

Abstract

The study attempts to explore word formation processes in English such as coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, conversion, acronym and derivation. The outbreak of Covid-19 from a linguistic point of view is strictly connected with the emergence of Covid-19's coinages establishing a trending base of global neologisms. The present study focuses on the investigation of English word formation processes and the nature of the new English words and expressions emerging in the wake of Covid-19 crisis.

Key words: *word formation processes, neologisms, Covid-19.*

Abstrakt

Praca ta ma na celu przedstawienie procesów słowotwórczych w języku angielskim takich jak neologizm, zapożyczenie, scalenie/łączenie, skrócenie, derywacja

wsteczna, konwersja, akronim i derywację. Wybuch epidemii Covid-19 z lingwistycznego punktu widzenia jest ściśle związane z powstaniem nowych pojęć dotyczących Covid-19, tym samym tworząc nowy trend dla tego typu neologizmów na świecie. Ten artykuł skupia się na omówieniu procesów słowotwórczych w języku angielskim oraz naturze neologizmów pojawiających się wraz z kryzysem wywołanym przez pandemię Covid-19.

Słowa kluczowe: *procesy słowotwórcze, neologizmy, Covid-19.*

Languages evolve and adapt to new realities and circumstances. A characteristic feature of all human languages is the potential to create new words. New words come into existence through word formation processes. A word formation process is basically known as the phenomenon incorporated into human's life. One of the definitions presented by Wikipedia (en.m.wikipedia.org) states that word formation is an ambiguous term since it can refer to the processes through which words can change (i.e. morphology) or the creation of new lexemes in a particular language. Various scholars provide numerous definitions of this idea. A word formation process is a way to create new terms from existing materials. (Trask1997) Hacken and Thomas (2013) underline that a word formation process deals with producing new words according to certain rules. Additionally, Plag (2003) claims that the feature of this process is to produce new words from other existing words. Bauer (1983) states that a word formation process can be productive or non-productive. A productive word formation process will be appropriate to apply in the production of new materials, whereas a non-productive word formation process is not applicable in the production of new materials. Consequently, it can be summarized that a word formation process is productive if it is appropriate to be used to create new words. Harley (2006) stresses that newly formed words are the ones which are created thanks to the manipulation of the existing words.

Types of word formation processes

Throughout the history of any language new words have been incorporated into the language through various processes. Yule (2004, p. 63) claims that we may have no idea of the origin of a new word but we have no difficulty coping with its various forms,“(...) you can very quickly understand a new word in your language (a neologism) and accept the use of different forms of that word. This ability must derive in part from the fact that there is a lot of regularity in the word formation processes in your language”. According to Yule, the most

common word formation processes are: coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, conversion, acronyms and derivation.

Coinage is viewed as the least common word formation process. It deals with the invention or creation of totally new terms either deliberately or accidentally (Yule, 2020, p. 63). What is more, a newly coined term comes into existence without using other word formation processes and often from seemingly nothing. A coinage is often called a neologism and, consequently, neology is the word formation process of inventing entirely new words. Yule states (2006, p. 53) that this is a very rare and uncommon method to create new entries. However, people, especially in the media, often try to outdo each other with better words to name their products. These trademark names being used by the masses become “everyday words of language”. The term coinage can also refer to the extension of a name of a product from a specific reference to a more general one, for example: Kleenex, Xerox, Kodak. Among the most common examples of coinages found in everyday English we have aspirin, Frisbee, escalator, laundromat, zipper, nylon and google.

Borrowing is known as one of the most productive word formation processes consisting in taking words from other languages. The English language has adopted a distinctive number of foreign words including alcohol (Arabic), boss (Dutch), croissant (French), piano (Italian), pretzel (German), robot (Czech), tycoon (Japanese), yoghurt (Turkish), zebra (Bantu). Yule in his book also describes a special type of borrowing which is known as loan-translation or calque.

In this process there is a direct translation of the elements of a word into the borrowing language. An interesting example is the French term *un gratteciel* which literally translates as ‘a scrape-sky’, or the German *Wolkenkratzer* (‘cloud scraper’), both of which were used for what, in English, is normally referred to as a *skyscraper*. The English word *superman* is thought to be a loan translation of the German *Übermensch* and the term loan word itself is believed to have come from the German *Lehnwort*. (Yule, 2006, p. 65)

On the other hand, Suzanne Kemmer (2000, p. 107) uses the term ‘foreign word’ to refer to borrowings: “When most speakers do not know the word and if they hear it think it is from another language, the word can be called a foreign word”.

Linguists generally distinguish two types of borrowing, i.e. direct and indirect. The former is further divided into cultural borrowing, code borro-

wing and therapeutic borrowing. Whereas the latter is divided into calque (loan translation), loan shifts and loan blends.

Compounding can be defined as putting two separate words together to form a new word. Compounds can be written as one word (*hairpin*), with a hyphen (*hair-pin*) or separately (*hair pin*). (Bauer, 1983 in Danks, 2002, p. 47) Compounds may be composed of various parts of speech. Martin Hewings (2007, p. 38-40) presents some possible combinations: noun+noun (*pillar-box, lipstick*), noun+ing form (*house-hunting, bird-watching*), -ing form+noun (*sitting room, freezing point*), verb+noun (*control tower, think tank*), adjective+noun (*absolute zero, blind spot*), adjective+ing form (*central heating, global warming*), past participle+noun (*lost property, split infinitive*) noun+past participle (*poverty-stricken, home-grown*), noun+adjective (*sky-high, camera-shy*), adverb+past participle (*fully-grown, well-dressed*), adverb+ing form (*well-meaning*). Additionally, Plag (2002, p.170) argues that compounds may even consist of more than two members, for example: *first-degree burns, ballroom dancing, ball-point pen, drop-down menu, real estate agent, pick-up truck, sell-by date, payback period, white blood cell, safety deposit box, dual carriageway*.

What is more, the compound elements can be divided into left-hand and right-hand members, where the former is mostly a modifier of the latter which is very often called *the head*. In English the structure of compounds presents the right-hand rule. (Williams, 1981, p. 248 in Plag 2002, p. 173) Basically, it means that if the head is a noun then the compound belongs to the noun category of words (*water dispenser*). Consequently, if the head is a verb then the compound belongs to the verb category of words (*skydive*).

Blending is defined by Yule (2004, p. 66) as a process involving the combination of two separate forms to produce a single new term. The prime feature of blending is that only the beginning of one word is taken to be joined to the end of the other word. Some common examples are: *smog* ('smoke'+ 'fog'), *brunch* ('breakfast' + 'lunch'), *motel* ('motor'+ 'hotel'), *telect* ('television'+ 'broadcast'), *internest* ('internet'+ 'nest'). Algeo (1977, p. 107) presents the division of blends, based on how blending is formed, organized into three groups:

1. Phonemic overlap: a syllable or part of a syllable is shared between two words, for example: *scanxiety* – phoneme 'an' shared by 'scan' and 'anxiety'.
2. Clipping: the shortening of two words and compounding them:
 - 2.1 back-clipping: the beginning of a word is retained, for example: 'renovation' and 'vacation' become *renovacation*

- 2.2 fore-clipping: the final part of the word is retained, for example: 'prom' and 'proposal' become *promposal*
- 2.3 middle clipping (syncope): the middle part is retained, for example: (in)*flu*(enza)
- 2.4 complex clipping: clipped form is used in compounds
- 3. Phonemic overlap and clipping: shortening of two words to a shared syllable and then compounding: *grumpa* ('grum(py)'+'(grand)(pa)')

Clipping is defined by Bauer (1986, p. 233) in Danks (2003, p. 35) "as the process whereby a lexeme (simplex or complex) is shortened, while still remaining the same meaning and still being a member of the same class form". Additionally, Bauer (1994, p. 40) in Jamet (Lexis Special Lexicology and Phonology 2009) states that "...clipping frequently does change the stylistic value of the word". Once a word is clipped, it gets the status of being autonomous and can be combined with other word-formation processes, for example the word *brother* can be clipped to *bro* and then combined with other morphemes to become *broccasion*, *bro-choice rally*, *brotime*. All the properties of the full form can be adopted to the clipped form, i.e. noun – *bro*s (plural), adjective – *broing*, verb *don't bro me*. There are four types of clipping, i.e. back-clipping (apocopation), for example *binos* ('binoculars'), fore-clipping (aphe- resis), for example *loid* ('celluloid'), both initial and final part of the word (syncope), for example *jam* ('pyjamas'), *fridge* ('refrigerator'), median clipping, for example *paratrooper* ('parachute trooper'). Back-clipping seems to be the most dominant type compared to other clipping types.

Backformation, according to Yule (2004, p. 67), is "a very specialized type of reduction process". Typically a word belonging to one category (for example, a noun) is shortened to form another word (for example, a verb). The prime examples of this process are: *donate* from 'donation', *opt* from 'option', *emote* from 'emotion', *enthuse* from 'enthusiasm', *babysit* from 'babysitter'. Yule (2004, p. 67) also mentions

(...) a particular type of backformation, favored in Australian and British English, produces forms technically known as **hypo-corisms**. First, a longer word is reduced to a single syllable, then *-y* or *-ie* is added to the end. Perhaps the most familiar versions of this process are the words *movie* ('moving pictures') and *telly* ('television'). It has also produced *Aussie* ('Australian'), *Barbie* ('barbecue'), *brekky* ('breakfast') and *hankie* ('handkerchief').

Conversion is another word formation process also known as category change or functional shift. The process itself focuses on a change in the func-

tion of a word without any reductions, i.e. different syntactic categories are expressed by the same morphological structures. Numerous nouns such as *vacation*, *bottle*, *butter*, *paint*, throughout the process of conversion, start to be used as verbs, for example: He is *painting* the bedroom walls; I have *battered* my sandwich; They are *vacationing* in England. The process may also involve syntactic change of a verb into a noun, for example: *to guess* – *a guess*, *to spy* – *a spy*, *to must* – *a must*. Additionally, phrasal verbs can be converted into nouns, for example: *to print out* – *a printout*, *to take over* – *a takeover*; verbs into adjectives: *to see through* – *see-through materials*, *to stand up* – *a stand-up comedian*. Reversely, adjectives can become verbs, for example: *dirty* – *to dirty*, *empty* – *to empty*, *total* – *to total*; or adjectives can become nouns, for example: *crazy* – *a crazy*, *nasty* – *a nasty*.

Acronym is explained by Bauer (1983) in Danks (2003, p. 98) as “a word coined by taking the initial letters of the words in a title or phrase and using them as a new word, for example Strategic Arms Limitation Talks gives SALT”. Moreover, Quirk (1985, p. 1581-2) points out that acronyms “may include other than initial letters to make them more word-like, for example radar (radio detecting and ranging), yet at the same time may also omit some non-lexical words in the source phrase, for example laser Light Amplification by the Stimulated Emission of Radiation.”

Derivation is perceived as the most common word formation process. Yule (2004, p. 69) defines it as being “accomplished by means of a large number of small ‘bits’, i.e. affixes of the English language. which are not usually given separate listings in dictionaries”. There are four basic categories of affixes in English, i.e. prefixes, suffixes, infixes and circumfixes.

Prefixes are the morphemes which are attached to the beginning of the root word. According to Plag, prefixes are classified into the following groups:

- prefixes of attitude: pro-, contra-, anti-, co-, counter-, (*prochoice*, *antisocial*, *contraception*, *cooperate*, *counteract*);
- reservative and deprivative prefixes : un-, de-, dis-, (*untie*, *defrost*, *disqualify*);
- negative prefixes: a-, dis-, un-, in-, il-, im-, ir-, non-, (*amoral*, *disagree*, *unfair*, *improper*, *insane*, *illegal*, *irregular*, *nonsmoker*);
- pejorative prefixes: mis-, mal-, pseudo-, crypto-, (*miscalculate*, *malpractice*, *pseudo-intellectual*, *crypto-Catholic*);
- locative prefixes: ante-, circum-, extra-, in-, inter-, intra-, mid-, out-, over-, retro-, sub-, super-, supra-, sur-, tele-, trans-, ultra-, under-, (*anteroom*, *circumnavigate*, *extracurricular*, *indoors*, *international*, *intramural*, *midway*, *outdoors*, *over-through*, *retroflex*, *subway*,

superstructure, supranational, surtitle, television, transatlantic, ultraviolet, underground);

- prefixes of size, degree and status: arch-, macro-, micro-, mega-, mini-, over-, under-, hyper-, co-, pro-, vice-, (*archbishop, macro-economics, micro-computer, megastore, miniskirt, overcook, undercook, hypercritical, co-founder, pro-vice-chancellor, vice-president*);
- prefixes of time and order: ante-, ex-, fore-, mid-, neo-, post-, pre-, re-, (*antedate, ex-wife, foretell, midnight, neo-colonialism, post-bar, pre-arrange, reapply*).

Suffixes are the morphemes which are added to the end of the root word. Plag (2003) divides suffixes into: verbal, nominal, adjectival and adverbial:

- verbal suffixes: -ify, -ize, -ate, en, (*simplify, civilize, dehydrate, darken*);
- nominal suffixes: -ant, -er, -ing, -ee, -ed, -eer, -ery, -ist, (*informant, worker, gardening, employee, the unemployed, volunteer, bakery, dentist*);
- adjectival suffixes: -able, -al, -an, -ed, -en, -ese, -esque, -fold, -ful, -ic, -ical, -ing, -ish, -less, -like, -ly, -some, -ward, -y, (*readable, criminal, Indian, talented, wooden, Chinese, picturesque, twofold, cheerful, energetic, historical, amusing, childish, harmless, childlike, daily, troublesome, backward, sleepy*);
- adverbial suffixes: -ly, -wards, -wise, (*lately, downwards, clockwise*).

Furthermore, there is one more division of suffixes, i.e. inflectional and derivational. All the above listed suffixes belong to the group of derivational suffixes, whereas there are only eight inflectional morphemes in English, which are: -er, -est, -s, -s (genitive), -es (plural), -ing, -ed, -en. Inflectional suffixes never change the grammatical category of a word, their function is to mark the tense, aspect, plurality, case or comparison.

Infixes are rarely found in English; they are a type of affixes which can be inserted inside another word. Yule (2004, p. 69) underlines that “it is possible to see the general principle at work in certain expressions, occasionally used in fortuitous or aggravating circumstances by emotionally aroused English speakers: *Hallebloodyluhjah!*, *Absogoddamlutely!*, and *Unfuckinbelievable!*”.

Circumfixes are attached both initially and word finally. They are essentially made of both a prefix and suffix. What is more, the attachments are always used simultaneously and that is why they belong to a separate category, for example the combination of in- and -ness (*incompleteness*), im- and -ion (*imperfection*), in- and -ion (*inconsideration*), un- and -ness (*unfitness*), un- and -able (*unbearable*), im- and -able (*impracticable*), il- and -ity (*illegality*), im- and -ity (*immortality*), dis- and -ment (*disillusionment*), bi- and -ment (*bewitchment*), in- and -ly (*indifferently*).

'Covid-19' – the new coinage that defined 2020

Language should be viewed as a social fact, which undergoes changes, develops and evolves. Since the nature of all languages is dynamic then it enables them to cope with unforeseen circumstances, upheavals or unknown events. Languages change through time and space due to different factors ranging from linguistic factors of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics to non-linguistic factors of social and cultural interaction. The sudden Covid-19's outbreak has impacted language as well. The pandemic left 213 countries hard-hit by the devastating effects of the vicious and highly infectious virus. Linguistic innovations and coinages are universal. What is more, they have been shared by most of the world's languages as loanwords or through translation. The coronavirus pandemic has established the scene for coining new terms. According to Lawson (2020, p. 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 new terms, linguistically known as neologisms, emerged globally during the outbreak of Covid-19. According to Stenertorp (2010) "a neologism is a lexeme that is not described in dictionaries". The two neologisms 'covidiot' and 'covidient' emerged during the outbreak of Covid-19. 'Covidiot' is a mixture of *coronavirus* and *idiot* and it depicts a person who does not abide by directives and orders such as social distancing and, consequently, behaves like an idiot. 'Covidient' is a combination *coronavirus* and *obedient* and defines a person who follows the directives and orders issued by the state during the pandemic. Some additional examples of frequently used words in social media, comments and reports are 'self-quarantine' and 'self-isolate'.

The medical terms have appeared frequently during the outbreak of Covid-19, especially in the social media and press conferences globally. Thanks to the social media we are accustomed to such words as *lockdown*, *epidemic*, *pandemic*, *super spreader*, *self-isolation*, *self-quarantine*, *social distancing*, *community spread*, *droplet transmission*, *emerging disease*, *solitary confinement*, *animal-human*, *interface*, *incubation period*.

Word formation processes described in the previous section can be observed on numerous words frequently used in the pandemic:

Covid-19 – **acronym** (Coronavirus Disease 2019)

maskless, *masklessness* – **affixation**

coronaviva, *zoom bombin* – **compounding**

coronials ('corona'+ 'millennials') – **blending**

coronavacation ('corona'+ 'vacation') – **blending**
quaranteens ('quarantine'+ 'teens') – **blending**
loxit ('lockdown'+ 'exit') – **blending**
rona (from 'coronavirus') – **clipping**
pandy (form 'pandemic') – **clipping**
vaccinate (from 'vaccination') – **backformation**
sedate (from – 'sedative') – **backformation**
unlockdown – **borrowing from French**
ARDS – 'Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome' – **acronym**
Covidpreneurs – **blending and affixation**
Quaranteams – **blending and affixation**
Homeference – **blending**
Coronapocalypse – **compounding**
Coronaspiracy theories – **blending and compounding**
Lockdowners – **compounding and affixation**
Coronaphobia – **compounding**
Covideo party – **blending and compounding**
Coverxit – **blending**
Corona moaner – **compounding**
Coronababies – **compounding**
Contactless delivery – **compounding and affixation**
Social distancing – **compounding**
Coronacoma – **compounding**
Drive-thru testing – **compounding**
Lockstalgia – **blending**

Conclusion

The purpose of this study has been to explore the linguistic analysis of neologisms related to Coronavirus (Covid-19). A new coronavirus disease Covid-19 which has emerged as a respiratory infection, turning later into pandemic, has had a great impact on our physical condition simultaneously being the outlet for the expansion of numerous neologisms of the language. The theoretical framework of this study is based on the analysis of nine word formation processes in English, such as coinage, borrowing, compounding, blending, clipping, backformation, conversion, acronym, derivation. The study has also presented various examples of neologisms coming into existence as the consequence of the outbreak of Covid-19. It can be observed that not all types of the word formation processes presented have been involved in

the creation of neologisms related to the pandemic. Bauer (1994) summarizes that 'neologisms should continually take a shot at understanding them and also know the approaches to present them in a simple and readable way. At the moment when a word is coined, it may not be possible to tell what its eventual status will be in a language: it may become part of the norm of the language and turn out to have been a neologism, or it may not, and remain as nonce word'.

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