

**PANDEMIC AND POST-PANDEMIC NEOLOGISMS: CHANGES IN THE
VOCABULARY OF ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES**

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Abstract. This study provides a comparative sociolinguistic and structural analysis of lexical innovations generated within the English and Uzbek vocabulary systems during the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent post-pandemic era. Serving as a massive global catalyst, the pandemic demanded immediate linguistic adaptation to articulate unprecedented biological, socio-behavioral, and digital realities. By analyzing specific word-formation mechanisms – such as direct lexical borrowing, conceptual compounding, morphological blending, and neosemantization – this paper illustrates the distinct pathways of language evolution under crisis. The findings reveal that while English acted primarily as a global lingua franca and conceptual donor, the Uzbek language dynamically synthesized native structural elements with international loanwords to construct a highly localized, functional vocabulary system that continues to shape post-pandemic communication.

Keywords: pandemic, neologism, COVID-19, English language, Uzbek language, vocabulary change, lexical innovation, digital communication.

Language is an inherently dynamic system, serving as a mirror to the social, political, technological, and cultural shifts of human civilization. While lexical evolution typically progresses gradually over generations, historical anomalies such as wars, massive technological breakthroughs, or global health crises can compress these timelines into months. The most profound linguistic catalyst of the early 21st century was undoubtedly the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic was unique because it caused an instantaneous, synchronized transformation of daily life across the entire globe. Overnight, billions of people were forced to master complex epidemiological concepts, transition to remote digital environments, and enforce unprecedented social boundaries. This sudden behavioral shift created a severe communicative deficit: existing vocabularies lacked the precise tools to describe these newly emerging routines and psychological states. To fill this void, a massive wave of newly coined words and phrases – neologisms – flooded daily communication channels.

As the preeminent global lingua franca, the English language functioned as the epicenter of global terminology production. Simultaneously, local languages worldwide rapidly adapted to manage the crisis. The Uzbek language presents an illuminating case study of this adaptive process. Driven by rapid globalization, national digital transformation, and intensive media engagement, the Uzbek lexicon evolved by seamlessly blending international nomenclature with internal morphological structures.

This article investigates the structural and sociolinguistic transformations triggered by pandemic and post-pandemic neologisms within the English and Uzbek languages. It focuses on the specific word-formation processes that took place, their semantic adaptation, and their lasting stability in contemporary post-pandemic speech.

In modern lexicology, a neologism is any newly created word, phrase, or expression that enters a language to capture new conceptual realities, physical inventions, or cultural phenomena.

Linguists categorize neologisms not only by their structural origin but also by their evolutionary life cycle, which traditionally progresses through three specific developmental stages:

1. Creation	Initial coining by media, scientists, or speakers.
2. Diffusion	Widespread adoption across various social layers.
3. Institutionalization	Permanent inclusion in dictionaries & daily speech.

The pandemic created an exceptional linguistic environment where words skipped the slow diffusion phase entirely, leaping from institutional creation to absolute global institutionalization in a matter of weeks.

To process this rapid conceptual expansion, both English and Uzbek relied on five core linguistic mechanisms: Lexical Borrowing: The adoption of a word directly from a donor language, with or without minor phonetic adjustments. Compounding: Joining two or more existing free morphemes to form a unified, novel semantic concept. Blending (Portmanteau): The morphological merging of fractional parts of two distinct words into a single unit. Abbreviation and Acronymy: Reducing extensive syntagmatic phrases to optimize communicative economy. Semantic Shift (Neosemantization): Infusing long-established lexical units with entirely new contextual meanings.

The English language experienced an unprecedented lexical expansion during the pandemic, forcing major institutions like the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) to break tradition and release specialized, monthly updates to track the vocabulary surge.

The most immediate change in the English lexicon was the “demarginalization” of specialized medical terminology – the process where technical technolects are abruptly adopted into mainstream popular speech: COVID-19 / Coronavirus: The official acronym (Coronavirus Disease 2019) and the broader virological term moved from clinical laboratories to universal daily use in early 2020. Social Distancing & Self-Isolation: Previously obscure public health strategies underwent an extensive semantic expansion, transforming from technical instructions into highly regulated, everyday behavioral norms. Contact Tracing: A compound phrase that evolved from an administrative epidemiological practice into a central topic of national public policy and digital surveillance debates. PPE (Personal Protective Equipment): A highly technical clinical initialism that became a household acronym overnight due to global supply shortages.

Simultaneously, the psychological weight of prolonged isolation, strict lockdowns, and digital exhaustion sparked a wave of popular, humorous linguistic creativity. English speakers heavily favored blending to express complex psychological states:

Neologism	Morphological Formula	Semantic & Contextual Blueprint
Covidiot	Covid + Idiot	A derogatory term for individuals who ignore public health directives and safety protocols.
Quarantini	Quarantine + Martini	An informal term for alcoholic beverages consumed at home during periods of mandatory lockdown.
Zoom Fatigue	Zoom (Brand) + Fatigue	The acute cognitive and physical exhaustion caused by back-to-back virtual meetings.
Coronacation	Corona + Vacation	An ironic term for an enforced, often unproductive period away from school or work due to pandemic closures.
Maskne	Mask + Acne	A distinct dermatological condition referring to skin irritation caused by prolonged mask wear.

These colloquialisms showcase the therapeutic power of language, where community-driven wordplay serves as a shared cognitive coping mechanism during times of collective trauma.

The Uzbek language responded to the global crisis through two distinct pathways: it absorbed international terminology to ensure global compatibility, and it activated internal morphological rules to create culturally clear, localized terms.

As information poured in through global networks, international media, and intermediary languages, Uzbek rapidly integrated global neologisms: Koronavirus, Pandemiya, Antivaktyer: These terms were imported wholesale into official media and conversational Uzbek, preserving their international phonological structures with minor local adaptations. Lokdaun (Lockdown): This term was adopted as a direct phonetic loanword. It was favored over traditional terms like karantin (which already existed in Uzbek) to explicitly communicate a complete, state-mandated shutdown of businesses and movement. Antitana (Antibody): A structural calque (loan translation) where the international prefix anti- was combined with the native Uzbek root tana (body), creating an accessible medical concept for the general public.

To make complex social and public health concepts easy for the general population to understand, Uzbek activated nominal compounding: Masofaviy ta'lim / Masofadan turib ishlash: Structural compounding that translates the concepts of “distance learning” and “working from home”. By using the native root masofa (distance) paired with grammatical suffixes, Uzbek successfully captured the shift to digital workspaces. Ijtimoiy masofa: A direct conceptual calque of “social distance”. This phrase instantly became a structural fixture on public transport signage, commercial floors, and legal decrees throughout the country. Niqob rejimi: A compound meaning “mask mandate” or “mask regime”, synthesized to clearly communicate the legal obligation to wear face coverings in public venues. Onlayn-muloqot: A hybrid blend that combines the borrowed technological modifier onlayn with the native noun muloqot (interaction/communication).

In Uzbekistan, digital platforms – specifically state informational channels and community networks on Telegram – played a primary role in stabilizing these neologisms. Government slogans and public health alerts quickly turned into fixed phrases with heavy socio-legal weight: “Uyda qoling!” (Stay at home!) and “Biz yengamiz!” (We will overcome!)

These phrases operated as programmatic syntagmatic neologisms, functioning less as simple commands and more as national symbols of civic responsibility during the emergency.

Contrasting the linguistic strategies of English and Uzbek during this period reveals key differences in how each language evolves under societal stress:

Directional Flow of Influence: English served primarily as the donor language and global generator of conceptual terms, driven by its status in international scientific research and big tech. Uzbek operated as an adaptive recipient language, rapidly localizing these global inputs to keep its public informed and safe.

Morphological Preferences: English speakers relied heavily on highly creative, casual blending (infodemic, coronials) to express psychological experiences. Conversely, Uzbek leaned much more toward structural compounding (ijtimoiy masofa) and direct phonetic borrowing (lokdaun), prioritizing semantic clarity, administrative precision, and official alignment.

Socio-Semantic Convergence: Despite their structural differences, both languages successfully reshaped existing terms via semantic shifting. For instance, quarantine in English and karantin in Uzbek were both elevated from rarely used, specialized clinical words into foundational elements of daily, mainstream vocabulary.

As the acute crisis passed, the vocabulary systems of both languages underwent a natural filtering process. Highly contextual, trend-dependent colloquialisms (such as *quarantini* or *coronacation*) have largely faded into historical slang.

However, a substantial core of these neologisms has achieved permanent institutionalization in both English and Uzbek. This lasting inclusion reflects a permanent structural shift in how our post-pandemic society operates:

Language	Permanently Institutionalized Post-Pandemic Terms
English	Hybrid work models, Zoom fatigue, Long COVID, Health pass, Remote onboarding.
Uzbek	Masofaviy ishlash (Remote work), Onlayn-ta'lim (Online education), Antivaksyer (Anti-vaxxer).

The study of pandemic and post-pandemic neologisms demonstrates that language evolution is deeply connected to societal change. The vocabulary systems of English and Uzbek proved remarkably resilient, expanding their structures rapidly to process a transformed world.

Ultimately, this comparative analysis highlights that regardless of their structural and morphological differences, human languages share a universal ability to innovate under pressure. As digital interaction and global networks continue to bring communities closer together, the rapid cross-pollination and lexical agility documented during the pandemic will remain a defining trait of modern world languages.

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