

Doomscrolling or Joyscrolling? A Study of English Lexical Innovations of 2020-2022

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Abstract

The years 2020-2022 experienced a number of world-shifting events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, a global economic recession, the racial justice movement, the US presidential election, and extreme climate conditions. Since no social phenomenon can avoid being represented in language, these episodes have influenced the language system, language use and discursive practices. The English linguistic landscape has not been spared the impact of the aforementioned events. The article focuses on analysing the meaning and formation of new coinages in the English language that reflect the changes in society within the specified timeframe. The data used for this study were collected from 2020-2022 updates to online dictionaries which include new words, revised versions of existing entries and new word suggestions. The research data were analysed both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The study singled out five lexical categories of neologisms based on the thematic criterion: 1) discrimination, 2) the influence of famous people, 3) climate change, 4) lifestyles during the COVID-19 outbreak, 5) the business world and employment. The classification manifests that these coinages have become integrated into the English language as part of everyday use for social and communicative purposes. The research findings show that the most productive word formation processes that contribute to the creation of the selected neologisms include compounding, blending, and compounding + affixation.

Keywords: neologisms, lexical categories, social changes, word formation processes, online dictionaries

1. Introduction

It is widely assumed that new words emerge “due to developments in social life, culture or science, and are usually directly attributable to their specific era” (Kalinowska, 2016). Neologisms of 2020-2022 are attracting considerable interest due to the fact that not only do they mirror our constantly changing environment but also reflect our attitude to it. Since the last three years have been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has produced significant impacts on people’s lives and generated a lot of new concepts and words in languages all over the world, the lexical innovations related to coronavirus have been the object of a number of studies.

Besides the COVID-19 pandemic, the years 2020-2022 certainly experienced a number of other world-shifting events, such as a global recession, widespread protests over systemic racism and injustice, the US presidential election, and extreme climate events – from catastrophic floods to devastating wildfires. The English linguistic landscape has not spared the impact of these happenings. However, in contrast to COVID-related vocabulary that has been studied by many researchers (Bharati, 2020; Khalfan, Batool, & Shehzad, 2020; Mweri, 2021; Al-Salman & Haider, 2021), there is still a need for discussion on the neologisms related to other socially significant changes during this period of time. Hence, this study seeks to obtain data which will help to address this research gap.

The aim of our study is to enhance the existing research on lexical innovations during the COVID-19 pandemic by analysing the meaning and formation of new coinages in the English language that reflect the changes in our social reality caused by major global events of 2020-2022. The contributions made should be of wide interest as the vocabulary of the English language tells the story not only of the English-speaking world within this timeframe, but also of humanity as a whole. The main advantage is that we are able to trace the flexibility of language in response to civilization’s evolution and global challenges.

2. Theoretical Background

In so far as no social phenomenon can avoid being represented in language, the socially significant events in 2020-2022

have impacted the language system, language use and discursive practices. In their paper of 2020, Alyeksyeyeva, Chaiuk, and Galitska argue that conceptualisation of new phenomena requires either new words/expressions or reconsideration of old words/expressions endowed with new meanings. It should be mentioned that the term “neologism” is generally understood to mean a new word or sense of a word (Peprni, 2006). Hence, new phenomena and neologisms are as related to each other as supply and demand.

The conventionalization of linguistic innovations, i.e. the (non-)spread of their use among speakers until they have become part and parcel of the English language, has been traditionally studied as ‘institutionalization’ and ‘lexicalization’, focusing on morpho-lexical and social aspects (Kerremans, 2015). Semantic ambiguity and a high metalinguistic usage constrain conventionalisation, whereas the first or frequent use in more formal types of source, the authority or prominence of the coiner and first users, the nameworthiness of the represented concept or its salience in society, and the early development of syntagmatic lexical net-works are the criteria that facilitate conventionalisation (Schmolz, 2016). As the word gradually becomes institutionalized (familiar to more and more speakers), its form and meaning stabilize. Ambiguity is reduced and the lexeme develops semantic autonomy and context-independence, so that speakers can recognize and identify its meaning effortlessly (Schmid, 2008). As to the term ‘lexicalization’, Schmid (2008) uses it to denote the emergence of specific semantic, orthographic, phonological or syntactic properties of the complex lexeme, which require it to be listed as an entry in the lexicon of the language.

In their analysis of the burgeoning usage of neologisms in contemporary English, Behera and Mishra (2013) describe the following phases of the life cycle of a neologism: unstable (very new or being used only by a small sub-culture), diffused (having attained a noteworthy incidence of use, but not yet having gained pervasive acceptance), stable (recognizable, being in vogue, and perhaps, gaining lasting acceptance), dated (the point where the word has entered formal linguistic acceptance and even may have become a cliché), and passé (the use of the neologism is avoided when it becomes culturally dated).

It is worth mentioning that there are different approaches to classification of word formation processes. A recent review of the literature on this topic found that Wei Liu and Wenyu Liu (2014) distinguish the following word formation patterns: compounding, blending, affixation, acronyms, conversion, clipping, old words with new meaning, and “hard to define” category. Ratih and Gusdian (2018) suggest the following classification: affixation, folk etymology, compounding, abbreviation, acronyms, borrowing, blending, clipping, and back-formation. Moreover, the authors add the list of the following double formation processes, such as folk etymology + compounding, compounding + affixation, blending + affixation, and clipping + blending. Meanwhile, in addition to the above-mentioned categories, Ary Sobarna and Hannan (2022) use the term “purposeful misspelling” as one of the ways to produce new words. The findings of these studies provide theoretical background for our investigation.

3. Literature Overview

The last three years have witnessed a huge growth in the number of coronavirus-related words. Hence, COVID-19 vocabulary became the object of attention of linguists all over the world.

In particular, Bharati (2020) explores some of the most common English words and expressions that have emerged with COVID-19 or already established lexical units that have acquired new meanings in the context of pandemic communications. According to the researcher’s findings, there are just a few pure neologisms related to coronavirus and not many of them have found entry in dictionaries. Yet, a large number of older established terms, most of which belong to the theme of epidemiology and disease control, such as *self-isolating*, *pandemic*, *quarantine*, *lockdown*, *etc.*, have come into light with the spread of COVID-19.

Mweri (2021) analyses data from social media, daily newspapers and other writings that revolve around the issue of coronavirus. She concludes that changes in the English language occasioned by the pandemic lie primarily within the scope of lexicology, e.g., *coronapocalypse*, *coronageddon*, *corona fatigue*, *COVID beard*, *covidiot*, *moronavirus*, *virtual happy hour*, *etc.* Unlike grammatical and phonological structures of language that are relatively stable and take time to alter, vocabularies can change quickly both in words and in meanings.

Khalfan et al. (2020) examine COVID-19 neologisms, such as *quarantine and chill*, *coronial*, *coronacation*, *infodemic*, *community spread*, *etc.*, through the lens of the language-mind paradigm, from the point of view of linguistic relativism. The usage of corona neologisms in social media discourse has been studied according to a Systemic Functional Linguistics’ framework for identifying patterns of tone, message and purpose. The authors observe a cyclic relationship which can explain the influence of language over thought and perception and vice versa.

Alyeksyeyeva et al. (2020) explore the new social and cultural trends caused by the pandemic through neologisms. The authors view the novel lexical units (e.g., *covadults*, *key workers*, *coronacocooing*, *coronabesity*, *coronadating*, *Wuhan shake*, *homeference*, *coronarelationship*, *etc.*) coined during the COVID-19 outbreak and forming so-called

Coronaspeak as a shortcut to cultural changes that include medicalization of everyday discourse, perception of the pandemic as a turning point in history, introduction of new social groups, reconceptualisation of old notions, and emergence of new communication patterns.

More research concentrates on the word formation processes in neologisms created during the coronavirus crisis. For example, Akut (2020) focuses on textual analysis of Internet articles to determine the morphological processes involved in the formation of new words because of the COVID-19 outbreak. The results demonstrate that the studied neologisms are composed of meaningful units embodied in the free and bound morphemes following the general structures of English vocabulary. Asif, Zhiyong, Iram, and Nisar (2021) provide a linguistic analysis of new coinages related to COVID-19 based on the neologism model of Krishnamurthy (2010) and the onomasiological theory of Stekauer (1998). The authors point out that the word formation of new lexemes related to coronavirus utilized the form of nouns, adjectives and verbs, with abbreviations and acronyms also being relatively common. Al-Salman and Haider (2021) focus on the nature of the trending English neologisms emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which include such lexical items as *Miss Rona*, *locktail hour*, *Zoom mullet*, *covidpreneurs*, *quarantrolls*, *coronaviva*, *boomer remover*, *elbump*, *loxit*, *covideo party*, etc. The findings of this research show that the most dominant word formation processes that contribute to the creation of these neologisms include affixation, compounding, blending, clipping, and acronyms.

There are some publications dealing with the study of hashtags related to COVID-19 in online discourse on social media platforms. Al-Azzawi and Ali-Haleem (2021) examine the use of coronavirus related hashtags on Twitter. They conclude that social media in general, and hashtags in particular, have a significant influence on spreading the new words and expressions, since their ease of use encourages users to create, alter, and adopt newly coined lexemes as part of their online communication. Shri Vaishali and Rukmini (2021) investigate the linguistic patterns of hashtags on Instagram from an anthropological perspective to understand people's linguistic behaviour and lifestyles during the current global pandemic. The conclusion has been drawn that the archival and emotive qualities added to hashtags' searchability and accessibility make them a potential source for linguistic anthropological study of the COVID-19 crisis.

Authors also engage in analysing neologisms related to coronavirus in various types of discourse. Orel Frank (2021) presents a study of lexical changes that the tourism discourse has undergone in the ongoing COVID era. She explores the new vocabulary from the point of view of the socio-cultural challenges tourism industry is facing. A comparative analysis of the linguistic influence of the pandemic on the use of the specific legal and medical terminology in journalistic discourse and the way they affect each other has been carried out by Trzaskawka and Kic-Drgas (2022). The scholars examine the degree of hybridity of the selected material taking into consideration the interdisciplinary nature of the issue.

Attention has also been paid to corona neologisms in different languages. Zholobova (2021) analyses the Spanish COVID-19 neologisms and occasionalisms from semantic and morphological perspectives. Illic-Plauc and Setka-Celic (2021) describe linguistic innovations in the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian languages during the coronavirus pandemic. Their study sheds light not only on the meanings of the new lexemes and their structure and function, but it can also serve as a basis for compiling a special COVID-19 glossary in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A cross-linguistic study of the English and Ukrainian coronavirus neologisms has been conducted by Goltsova and Chybis (2021).

Despite the considerable interest in exploring new vocabulary which emerged in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, there is still a need for analysis of neologisms that appeared in 2020-2022 as the result of changes in society and lifestyle.

4. Method

The corpus of the data used for this study consists of 58 neologisms that reflect the changes in society and lifestyle in the English language in 2020-2022 collected from seven online dictionaries (including both the corpus and new word suggestions), namely Oxford English Dictionary [OED], Merriam-Webster Dictionary [WBD], Macmillan Dictionary [MD], Cambridge Dictionary [CD], Collins English Dictionary [CED], Urban Dictionary [UD], and Wiktionary [WD]. The reason behind this decision is that first of all, online dictionaries are considered to be "huge linguistic databases" and, secondly, allowing their special teams to contribute new words and phrases, they "reflect the way language is used" (Kalinowska, 2016). The selection of neologisms for this study was based on their novelty (for the chosen period of time), social significance of the represented phenomena and acceptance by the dictionaries or proposals in dictionary blogs.

In this research, the data were analysed both in qualitative and quantitative terms. Through a descriptive qualitative method, we explained the emergence of newly coined words and analysed their structure and semantics. This method allows us to relate ideas, perceptions, associations and opinions that cannot be measured in numbers but are represented in words (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). Since frequent use of neologisms facilitates their conventionalization, a quantitative approach was employed. For this purpose, we used News on the Web corpus that contains billions of words of up-to-date data from online newspapers and magazines.

According to Creese (2018), neologisms gain great popularity through repetitions of use in the media. Hence, this is often where language users come into contact with a new word for the first time. Creese (2018) claims that lexicographers decide whether a new word or meaning is considered suitable for acceptance into a dictionary taking into consideration the frequency and breadth of use of a coinage, and the length of time it must have been in circulation. Moreover, some dictionaries are more open to neologisms than others. With this in mind, the data collection process began with searching for neologisms in 2020-2022 updates to online dictionaries which include new words, revised versions of existing entries and new word suggestions. It is worth mentioning that not all lexical items added to dictionaries are new to the English language, some of them are based on older concepts. Lexicographers may spend dozens of years to track the word until the moment it becomes a part of collective vocabulary and is included into the dictionary. For example, the word *body shaming* was added to Merriam-Webster Dictionary in 2020, although the first known use of this word was in 1996. In contrast, many coronavirus-related neologisms had been in circulation for a short period of time before they were added to online dictionaries. Whatever the fact is, all these words and expressions acquired social currency and reflect global changes in the life of humanity in 2020-2022.

The next stage was data classification. In this stage, the compiled corpus of data was divided into five main lexical categories based on the thematic criterion: 1) discrimination, 2) the influence of famous people, 3) climate change, 4) lifestyles during the COVID-19 outbreak, 5) the business world and employment. The classification shows that these coinages have become integrated into the English language as part of everyday use for social and communicative purposes. After the data were classified, we analysed their formation and meaning in the context of major world events of 2020-2022. After that the frequency of use of the new lexical units was measured. In the last stage, we reviewed the results and made conclusions.

5. Results and Discussion

Stepanyan (2019) noted that language helps its bearers to categorize the world around them and reflects the social and historical experience of a given society. Nowadays we can often witness different types of *discrimination* or participate in the fight against inequality. New experience leads to appearance of new forms of expression that in the course of time are added to dictionaries.

Lookism is a discriminatory treatment of a person whose body image differs from the socially accepted standard of beauty. Hence, such items as *body shaming* (MWD) and *fat shaming* (MWD) appeared in the dictionary and online media. These words exhibit two word formation processes, namely compounding and affixation. *Body shaming* consists of the compound “body shame” + a suffix *-ing*. The same applies to the word combination *fat shaming* (“fat” + “shame” + *-ing*).

At the same time, socially responsible companies support the movement of *body positivity* (OED). This term is created by compounding and affixation. A combination of two words “body” + “positive” and a noun-forming suffix *-ity* results in the new compound *body positivity*. Having realized that diversity sells, fashion brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, UGG, and Nike launched adaptive clothing collections while Victoria’s Secret decided to join the “inclusive revolution”.

In the USA the word “gentleman” means a male member of the Senate or the House of Representatives. To promote gender equality, Oxford English Dictionary added a new entry *gentlelady* (OED) to refer to a female member. The example represents a two-word combination of “gentle” + “lady” to form the compound noun *gentlelady*. At the same time, it is suggested to use purposeful misspelling of the English word “women” – *womxn* (OED) in order to omit the suffix *-man*.

In addition, gender-neutral lexical items such as *freshperson* (“fresh” + “person”) to refer to a first-year student (OED) and *gentleperson* (“gentle” + “person”) to describe a human-being of noble birth or high social standing (OED) can be used instead of masculine gender nouns “freshman” and “gentleman”. In these examples, compounding occurs where two words are linked to create new terms *freshperson* and *gentleperson*.

Racism remains to be one of the most pressing issues of our time. After Floyd’s death, the movement “Black Lives Matter” became widely supported all over the world. Therefore, a new abbreviation was added to the dictionary of the English language – *BLM* (CED). Instead of the acronym “POC (People of Colour)”, one can use *BIPOC* that stands for “Black, Indigenous, People of Colour” (MWD) to emphasize that all these groups of people face equal levels of injustice. The word *folx* (MWD) produced by purposeful misspelling was added to Merriam Webster Dictionary to denote the inclusion of groups commonly marginalized.

Hence, modern progressive society tries to avoid various types of discrimination based on race, color, sex, and appearance. The fight against this destructive social phenomenon in all its manifestations is reflected on a linguistic level in revised versions of dictionaries.

Proper names are often considered to be cultural codes. Consequently, investigation of neologisms with anthroponymical components allows us to reveal *the influence of famous people* on the society they live in and the language they speak.

In her analysis of morphological aspects of eponymous lexemes, Lalic-Krstin (2004) reveals the following word formation processes: conversion, suffixation, composition, clipping, blending, acronymy and backformation. Popescu (2008) concludes that eponyms may accept affixes or become parts of compound nouns, which concurs well with our findings.

In 2020 the neologism *covexit* was formed by blending words “covid” and “exit”. This lexical item is used to refer to a gradual disengagement from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (CED). Similarly, a slang term *mexxit* (blending “Meghan” + “exit”) was coined after the decision of Meghan Markle and Prince Harry to withdraw from royal duties which was announced in January 2020 (CED). When the Duke and Duchess of Sussex left royalty, a new compound verb *meghanmarkle* (“Meghan” + “Markle”) was added to Macmillan Dictionary with the meaning “to leave the place where you are not respected enough or feel uncomfortable or there is a threat to your health or your family” (MD).

On January 20, 2021 Joe Biden was inaugurated as the 46th president of the United States of America. His politics in the sphere of healthcare was called *Bidencare* (WD) because it was based on Obamacare. The neologism was coined by adding a blended constituent -care (from “healthcare”) to the surname of the politician.

It is important to note that society invented a new tool to stop offensive or harmful behavior of public figures and celebrities by means of calling for accountability or boycotting their work – *cancel culture* (MWD). The compound term is formed by combining two free morphemes “cancel” + “culture”.

One of the global humanity’s problems is *climate change*. On the one hand, we can observe a devastating impact of humans on the environment. On the other hand, climate change is threatening human health. Therefore, *eco-anxiety* (MD) is on the rise in all corners of the world. In this example, affixation occurs where the prefix -eco is added to the word “anxiety”, which results in the newly created derivative *eco-anxiety*.

Eco-activists raise the question of the fight against *fast fashion* (the compound “fast” + “fashion”), i.e. rapid production of inexpensive clothing by mass-market retailers in response to the latest trends (OED), and try to implement sustainable fashion trends. It is common knowledge that the more we produce, the more we pollute.

To understand the scale of disaster, a new sub-entry was added to the Oxford English Dictionary – *embodied carbon*, which undergoes a double word formation process, namely compounding + affixation, where the affixed form “embodied” (*em-* + “body” + *-ed*) is combined with a word “carbon”. It is used to refer to greenhouse gas emissions captured and retained during the life cycle of the vegetation of an area (OED).

Every year dictionaries record new words regarding waste handling, e.g. freeganism, plogging. Among the updates we revealed a new entry – *garbageologist* created by blending and affixation, where a combination of two words “garbage” + “archaeology” is followed by a noun-forming suffix *-ist* to produce the neologism. This word denotes an anthropologist or archaeologist who studies a community or society through systematic analysis of what is thrown away as garbage (OED).

Since 2019 the spread of coronavirus all over the world has resulted in human mobility restrictions. Nowadays, the disappearance of humans from natural environments is to be known as *anthropause* (CED). This phenomenon has a positive impact on nature. The term is formed by affixation where the prefix *anthro-* is added to the root “pause”.

It is worth mentioning that some extreme environmentalists support the idea of conducting excessively authoritarian practices in the name of ecology. To refer to this ideology, the affixed word *ecofascism* (prefix *eco-* + “fascism”) is used (CED).

Our *lifestyles during the COVID-19 outbreak* has undergone significant changes. In pre-pandemic times, we followed social etiquette rules for personal space with family, friends, coworkers, and strangers. It was mainly aimed at the achievement of psychological comfort. Nowadays *social distancing* (MD) or *physical distancing* (OED), as well as *face covering* (MD) and *shielding* (MD), is a matter of life and death. Hence, these lexical items appeared as new entries in dictionaries. The word *shielding* (“shield” + -ing) is coined by affixation while the word combinations *social distancing* (“social” + “distance” + -ing), *physical distancing* (“physical” + “distance” + -ing) and *face covering* (“face” + “cover” + -ing) are created by compounding and affixation.

Maintaining a six-feet distance became *the new normal* (the compound “the” + “new” + “normal”) (CD) of modern society. The pandemic changed the way we interact. Keeping your *support bubble* (OED) or *social bubble* (MD) helps to reduce the transmission of infection. The lexical items *support bubble* (“support” + “bubble”) and *social bubble* (“social” + “bubble”) are formed by compounding where two full words are combined.

Moreover, during Coronavirus’s peak and, in some countries, even after it, mask wearing was or is still mandatory in certain places and has now become part of our daily routine. However, besides the benefits of wearing a mask, there are also side effects, one of which is known as *maskne* (blending “mask” + “acne”), i.e. spots or acne on somebody’s face

appeared as a result of frequent or prolonged wearing of a face mask. This neologism appeared in 2020 and is fixed in MD and CED.

To keep people safe and contain the spread of the virus, digital contact tracing apps have been developed and widely used. Through these apps people get notifications about self-isolation. Receiving excessive number of such alerts has been named *pingdemic* (blending “ping” (to receive messages with official information sent on electronic device) + -demic (from “pandemic”)) (CD).

In pre-pandemic times, humankind suffered from flu seasons, however, after the global outbreak of coronavirus, scientists have been concerned about *twindemic* (UD). This coinage results from blending two words “twin” and “pandemic”.

One of the best ways to spend holidays is travelling. As human mobility is one of the key drivers of the spread of COVID-19, humanity faces strict travel restrictions. Amidst these changes, according to Orel Frank (2021), tourism vocabulary has been enriched by newly coined lexical items. Revised versions of online dictionaries include coinages to refer to different ways of spending vacations. The blend words *coronacation* (“coronavirus” + “vacation”) (CD) and *staycation* (“stay” + “vacation”) (OED) are used to describe a holiday at home. Meanwhile, *drivecation* (blending “drive” + “vacation”) (CD) means the use of a caravan, caravanette or camper van parked on one's drive as temporary pretend holiday accommodation.

In addition, to describe an extreme fear of travelling, the word *hodophobia* was added to CD. This neologism is created by blending the Greek word “hodós” (a way, road) and “phobia”. On top of that, pandemic lockdowns also resulted in frequent *ghost flights* (empty or with few passengers) (WD; CD). Two free morphemes “ghost” and “flight” are combined to form the new compound *ghost flight*.

Since 2019, lockdowns have forced people to slow down and start *WFH* (an abbreviation for working from home) (MWD). Luckily, modern technologies gave humans as social beings different possibilities to interact. In 2020 the verb *Zoom* (OED), which underwent conversion, was added to the Oxford English Dictionary to refer to communication with a person over the Internet, typically by video-chatting, using the Zoom application. Surprisingly, a remote worker who feels exhausted after attending multiple Zoom meetings is now jokingly called a *Zoombie* (blending “Zoom” + “zombie”) (UD) who usually wears a *Zoom shirt* (the compound “Zoom” + “shirt”) (MD).

Furthermore, in 2020 such a word as *zoombomb* (CD), that is defined as “to take part in a video conference to which you have not been invited, often with the intention of interrupting and annoying the people in the meeting”, was coined by joining two free morphemes “zoom” and “bomb”.

Even though social media platforms give people opportunities to connect with their relatives, friends, and other people, *fexting* (blend of “fighting” and “texting”), “arguing by text messages” (CD), can ruin the relationship.

Šetka Čilić and Ilic Plauc (2021) claim that neologisms are especially useful in denominating inventions, new phenomena, or old ideas that have taken on a new cultural context. Since COVID-19 is a challenge for humanity, people are constantly searching for information about this disease. Hence, the process of checking the Internet for news about a bad situation, especially in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic, came to be known as *doomscrolling* (“doom” + “scroll” + -ing) (MD) or *doomsurfing* (“doom” + “surf” + -ing) (MD). Both words exhibit a double word formation process, namely compounding + affixation. Meanwhile, a derivational compound *sofa-surfing* (“sofa” + “surf” + -ing) (OED) is used to refer to the action or habit of engaging in passive or sedentary activities such as watching television.

The opposite of doomscrolling is *joyscrolling* (MD), i.e. checking the news and social media feeds for stories that make you feel happy. This neologism is created by compounding and affixation where a two-word combination “joy” + “scroll” is followed by the suffix -ing to produce the compound-derivative *joyscrolling*.

Quarancleaning (MD) is also one of the ways of keeping oneself busy during self-isolation. This lexical item is produced by two word formation processes, namely blending and affixation, where a combination of two words “quarantine” + “clean” results in the new blend *quaranclean* and ends up with the suffix -ing to create *quarancleaning*.

Forced to stay at home for a lot of time, people realized the benefits of spending time in the fresh air. Thus, the compound *awe walk* consisting of two words “awe” + “walk” (CED) is used to refer to a walk performed while focusing on the wonder of nature.

COVID-19 and the rise of popularity of social media have also impact on *the business world and employment*. For example, back in 2020, *meme stocks* (UD; WD) emerged. At first, it was thought that they would be limited to the pandemic, however, now they have become generally used and accepted. The neologism *meme stock* is formed by joining two free morphemes “meme” + “stock”.

Cryptocurrency is not a new concept in global economy. But such well-known types as Bitcoin, for instance, suffer

from high volatility. That is why a *stablecoin* (the compound “stable” + “coin”) (CED) has come into play.

Inflation continues to hit the headlines, introducing new concepts, such as *ripflation* (blending “rip” + “inflation”) (i.e., use of inflation as an excuse for increasing prices more than necessary to rip off the customers) (CD), a very similar one is *greedflation* (blending “greed” + “inflation”) (i.e., increasing prices more than necessary to “make as much money as they [companies] can”) (CD) and *skimflation* (blending “skimp” + “inflation”) (when the quality of goods and services suffer because of higher costs and as a result “consumers get less for the same price”) (CD).

The world of work is now undergoing certain changes: some employees are demonstrating *anti-ambitions* (the affixed form *anti-* + “ambition”) (CD); have been working alone from home lacking socializing, thus turning into *ghost colleagues* (the compound “ghost” + “colleague”) (CD); are practicing *quiet quitting* (the derivational compound “quiet” + “quit” + *-ing*) (trying to do as little as possible without enthusiasm) (CED).

In the UK, people over-50 are resigning and reluctant to seek a job. This phenomenon was dubbed as *silver exodus* (CD). The compound noun is created by linking two words “silver” + “exodus”.

To combat fatigue at workplaces and create opportunities for the employees to respite, such innovation as a *nap box* (CD) (the compound “nap” + “box”) has been introduced.

Table 1 presents the results of analysing word formation processes involved in the creation of the English neologisms that reflect the changes in our social reality caused by major global events of 2020-2022.

Table 1 Word formation of English lexical innovations of 2020-2022

No	Category	Lexical innovation	Word formation process
1	Discrimination	BIPOC	Acronym
2		BLM	Abbreviation
3		Body positivity	Compounding + Affixation
4		Body shaming	Compounding + Affixation
5		Fat shaming	Compounding + Affixation
6		Folx	Purposeful Misspelling
7		Freshperson	Compounding
8		Gentlelady	Compounding
9		Gentleperson	Compounding
10		Womxn	Purposeful Misspelling
11	The Influence of Famous People	Bidencare	Blending
12		Cancel culture	Compounding
13		Meghanmarkle	Compounding
14		Megxit	Blending
15	Climate Change	Anthropause	Affixation
16		Eco-anxiety	Affixation
17		Ecofascism	Affixation
18		Embodied carbon	Compounding + Affixation
19		Fast fashion	Compounding
20		Garbageologist	Blending + Affixation
21	Lifestyles during the COVID-19 Outbreak	Awe walk	Compounding
22		Coronacation	Blending
23		Covexit	Blending
24		Doomscrolling	Compounding + Affixation
25		Doomsurfing	Compounding + Affixation
26		Drivecation	Blending
27		Face covering	Compounding + Affixation
28		Fexting	Blending + Affixation
29		Ghost flight	Compounding
30		Hodophobia	Blending
31		Joyscrolling	Compounding + Affixation
32		Maskne	Blending
33		Physical distancing	Compounding + Affixation
34		Pingdemic	Blending
35		Quarancleaning	Blending + Affixation
36		Shielding	Affixation
37		Social bubble	Compounding
38		Social distancing	Compounding + Affixation
39		Sofa-surfing	Compounding + Affixation
40		Staycation	Blending
41		Support bubble	Compounding
42		The new normal	Compounding
43		Twindemic	Blending
44		WFH	Abbreviation
45		Zoom	Conversion
46		Zoom shirt	Compounding
47		Zoombie	Blending
48		Zoombomb	Compounding
49	The Business World and Employment	Anti-ambition	Affixation
50		Ghost colleague	Compounding
51		Greedflation	Blending
52		Memestock	Compounding
53		Nap box	Compounding
54		Quiet quitting	Compounding + Affixation
55		Ripflation	Blending
56		Silver exodus	Compounding
57		Skimpflation	Blending
58		Stablecoin	Compounding

We revealed that the most productive word formation processes are compounding (31%), blending (24%), and compounding + affixation (21%). The study discovered that affixation (9%), blending + affixation (5%), purposeful misspelling (3%), abbreviations (3%), acronyms (2%), and conversion (2%) represent minor ways of producing new words in the analysed material (see Table 1). These results widen our knowledge of the English lexical innovations of 2020-2022.

Guerra (2016) claims that one of the factors that is considered in terms of identifying neologisms in a given language by some scholars is “frequency of use”. That is why to provide adequate interpretation of the findings, we decided to combine qualitative analysis with quantitative one. To obtain the results, we used the NOW (News on the Web) corpus that contains 16.4 billion words of data from web-based newspapers and magazines from 2010 to the present time. The information was retrieved between August 11 and August 16, 2023 (see Table 2).

Table 2. The frequency of use of English neologisms of 2020-2022

№	Entry/query	FREQ	№	Entry/query	FREQ
1	anthropause	139	30	hodophobia /-ic /-e (-s)	3
2	anti-ambition	19	31	joyscrolling	3
3	awe walk (-s)	101	32	maskne	873
4	Bidencare	74	33	meghanmarkle (-s, -ed, -ing)	78
5	BIPOC	no matches	34	Megxit	2703
6	BLM	28033	35	meme stock (-s)	10153
7	body positivity /body positive	8669	36	nap box (-es)	17
8	body shaming /-e (-s, -ed) /-er (-s)	6325	37	physical distancing /physical distance (-s) /physically distance (-s, -ed)	62571
9	cancel culture	17498	38	pingdemic	724
10	coronacation (-s)	13	39	quarancleaning	2
11	covexit	8	40	quiet quitting	3 897
12	doomscrolling / doomscroll (-s, -ed) /-er (-s)	1695	41	ripflation	1
13	doomsurfing	26	42	shielding /shield (-s, -ed)	386435
14	drivecation (-s)	5	43	silver exodus	1
15	eco-anxiety	1060	44	skimplation	no matches
16	ecofascism /-ist (-s)	130	45	social bubble (-s)	1548
17	embodied carbon	1270	46	social distancing /social distance (-s, -ed) /socially distance (-s, -ed)	402709
18	face covering (-s)	68120	47	sofa-surfing /sofa-surf (-s, -ed)	346
19	fast fashion	11541	48	stablecoin (-s)	33819
20	fat shaming /-e (-s, -ed) /-er (-s)	1534	49	staycation (-s)	16466
21	fexting	85	50	support bubble (-s)	2634
22	folx	719	51	the new normal	40482
23	freshperson (-people)	21	52	twindemic	809
24	garbageologist (-s)	no matches	53	WFH	14955
25	gentlelady (-ies)	59	54	womxn	1937
26	gentleperson (-people)	26	55	Zoom (-s, -ed, -ing)	344476
27	ghost colleague (-s)	4	56	Zoom shirt (-s)	40
28	ghost flight (-s)	280	57	Zoombie (-s)	65
29	greedflation	421	58	zoombomb (-s, -ed) /-er (-s) /-ing	917

This table illustrates the frequency of use of all morphological variations of the lexical items under analysis listed in online dictionaries as well as different forms of their parts of speech. The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that the neologisms *social distancing* and *shielding* are most frequently used in web-based periodicals. Meanwhile, no matches were revealed for the slots *garbageologist* and *skimplation*. It is worth mentioning that the source of uncertainty is in the method used to calculate lexical items. For example, the words *Meghan Markle* and *Zoom* were used in most cases as nouns, not verbs. The abbreviation *BLM* has a wide range of meanings. The frequency search resulted in no matches for the acronym *BIPOC* in the corpus, whereas its full form *Black, Indigenous, People of Colour* is used in online media discourse.

6. Conclusions

In this article, we focused on the structure and semantics of new English words and expressions that appeared in 2020-2022 as the result of changes in society and lifestyle. The neologisms compiled in the present study reflect the

increasing volume and rapid dissemination of the lexical innovations in the English language triggered by the significant social, political and economic events within the specified time period. The paper uses descriptive qualitative and quantitative methods. The corpus of data was divided into five main lexical categories based on the thematic criterion: 1) discrimination (“inclusive revolution” resulted in introduction of new lexical items that are considered less offensive for people of all genders with different backgrounds and physical appearance), 2) the influence of famous people (eponymous neologisms reflect the influence of politicians and show-business celebrities on the society they live in and the language they speak), 3) climate change (appearance of new words reveals ecological mindset shift), 4) lifestyles during the COVID-19 outbreak (revised versions of online dictionaries include coinages to refer to changes in everyday routine and ways of spending vacations that help people reduce the transmission of coronavirus), 5) the business world and employment (neologisms as a mirror of changes in global economy and labor efficiency).

The dominant word formation processes involved in the creation of new coinages under analysis are compounding, blending, and compounding + affixation. The findings of the research indicate that the English lexical innovations of 2020-2022 are far more about reinvention than actual creation. They demonstrate the vitality of the English language to reflect the major preoccupations of the time.

A quantitative approach to the study of neologisms made it possible to reveal that the frequency of use of a newly coined word depends on the variety of contexts where it can be found. The corpus search showed that the novel words which were coined for the first time (*ripflation*, *joyscrolling*, *ghost colleague*, etc.) are less common in web-based periodicals than those which have revised definitions and were reintroduced within the context of major world events of 2020-2022 for different social and communicative functions (*social distancing*, *shielding*, etc.).

The evidence from this study proves that the social environment shapes our language. New challenges result in rethinking values. Therefore, to a large extent, newly coined words describe sudden changes in the environment and rapid changes in social attitudes.

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Authors contributions

Dr. Mariana Karanevych prepared the introduction and conclusions, presented theoretical background, contributed to the methodology, singled out some categories of neologisms, carried out qualitative and quantitative analysis, worked on editing the text of the article, and compiled the list of references.

Dr. Oryslava Ivantsiv wrote the abstract, contributed to the introduction and conclusions, dealt with literature overview, described the methodology, carried out qualitative and quantitative analysis, reviewed and edited the text, and compiled the list of references.

Dr. Oksana Kutsa singled out some categories of neologisms, selected and systemized part of the research corpus, carried out qualitative analysis, contributed to the methodology, reviewed and edited the article, structured and organized the list of references.

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