

## **Lexical innovations in Response to the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Comparative Linguistic Analysis between Arabic and English**

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New events and discoveries bring new concepts, and the unexpected need to talk more often about things never previously in focus, both of which factors create a need for new lexical resources. The COVID emergency was just such an occasion and has promoted a slew of lexical innovation in English and many other language like Arabic. This study attempts to collect all the examples that have been mentioned in the (small) existing literature on this, together with new ones observed by the researchers in Twitter, journalistic sources and academic articles in both English and Arabic. A linguistic analysis demonstrates which are the most and least popular means of lexical innovation that English and Arabic speakers rely on in modern English and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in such a situation. Blending in English, for example, although often classified in textbooks as a marginal type of wordformation, emerges as one of the most popular means of innovation within general English. On the other hand a great deal of conventional compounding which is often listed as 'new' with COVID, is in fact only new in general English. It turns out to have already been current for some time in specialist medical or epidemiological English. Such examples then exemplify a form of borrowing, where another variety of the language had previously coined a suitable lexical form.

Since the international language of medicine is English, one might expect that technical terms of Arabic medical language would include a number that are borrowed from English, or are loan translations (calques). In fact the key words *COVID* and *Corona* have both been borrowed, with Arabic spellings that reflect some differences in pronunciation required by normal Arabic phonology: كوفيد /ku:fi:d/ كورونا /ku:ru:na:/. Also in Arabic we may spot new compounds that are fully literal translation of the English term such as *social distancing* and some that are fully Arabic such as 'institutional isolation'.

This study therefore looks both at the English solutions adopted, and explores what another major language of the world, Arabic, has done in this situation.

Keywords: lexical innovation, COVID, blending, lexical borrowing

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