

Koronapolszczyzna

Vocabulary of the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus pandemic

Summary

The authors of the monograph present the results of lexical research on the Polish language during the COVID-19 pandemic, conducted from March 2020 until March 2024. The material comes from online texts, which were not selected in terms of genre or style and pragmatics. The material was compiled in separate databases illustrating three trends in linguistic phenomena resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic: 1) supplementing the vocabulary with new linguistic units (broadly understood neologisms); 2) internal borrowing, i.e. the spread of certain units from specialized ones in the general language, related to such subjects as medicine and, more broadly, with biological sciences of Polish varieties (this phenomenon is often accompanied by their partial determinologization); 3) a sudden increase in the textual frequency of lexemes that have long been present in general Polish, but are rarely used in non-epidemic situations. In the subsequent chapters of the book, the above-mentioned phenomena are presented (the first in detail, the next two selectively, only to highlight the problems), and the Polish language of this period was called *koronapolszczyzna*. The material, including approximately 1,800 lexemes, phraseologies and collocations, was verified in the Polish language corpora MoncoPL and Odkrywka (FBL Riserch) and in selected dictionaries: the latest general ones, as well as specialized (mainly medical) and social dictionaries. *The Coronavirus Corpus* and English lexicons were used in determining the influence of the English language.

The structural axis of the description of neologisms (1,570 new words and word combinations) is the thematic division of vocabulary (Chapter 2), for which the point of reference is Barbara Batko-Tokarz's concept (2008, 2018, 2019). These neologisms belong to all 7 spheres distinguished in this classification. Most of them appear in Sphere no. I – *MAN AS A PHYSICAL BEING* (623), then in Sphere IV – *MAN IN SOCIETY* (343), in Sphere II – *MAN AS A MENTAL BEING* (260), in Sphere III – *DAILY LIFE OF HUMANS* (107), in Sphere VII – *PHYSICAL CATEGORIES* (83), and the least in Sphere V – *MAN AND TECHNOLOGY* (16) and in sphere VI – *MAN AND NATURE* (3). Of the 45 thematic fields designated by Batko-Tokarz, 9 are empty: *BODY CARE*, *MILITARY AND WAR*, *CONSTRUCTION*, *INDUSTRY*, *ENERGY*, *SKY AND THE UNIVERSE*, *WEATHER*, *THE WORLD OF PLANTS* and *THE WORLD OF ANIMALS*. These areas of life turned out to be less important in the situation of the global SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.

In addition to the neologisms presented in individual thematic fields, adjectives (approximately 10% of the material) were placed in a separate group because their diverse lexical connectivity would make it difficult to classify them thematically. Most are emotionally neutral words, and only sometimes, when influenced by the context, are they evaluative and expressive, while a few are systemically evaluative and strongly emotionally colored.

The book also includes remarks on the mechanisms of creating new words and word combinations in the Polish language. Among the word-formation structures, the most numerous set consists of compounds with the first element *korona-*. The model of these composites was used to create potential formations without visible formal and semantic limitations, triggering great creativity in language users. According to this pattern, in the Polish language, there were many more word-formation constructions than adhesions and compounds with their semantic equivalent *covid-*. For derivatives, the most characteristic suffixes are: *-owiec*, *-ka*, and for univerbisms *-(ów)ka*. When creating some neologisms, language game mechanisms were used to temper difficult situations with humor.

A large part of neologisms belonging to the Polish language are words and word combinations taken over or probably taken from English (although their parallel native provenance cannot be ruled out). Among the 441 (28% of Covid-neologisms) loanwords (including internationalisms) there are structural-semantic calques (193), semi-calques (163), proper loanwords (84) and 1 semantic calque.

In the set of collocations, the most common bases were lexemes naming the most important pandemic realities, i.e. the nouns *COVID-19*, *covid*, *koronawirus*, *pandemia*, *wirus* and adjectives: *covidowy*, *koronawirusowy*, *pandemiczny*.

Among the less numerous semantic neologisms, two groups can be indicated: neo-semanticisms, which arose as a result of semantic derivation or English semanticization: 1) from lexemes stabilized in the Polish language before the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and 2) from words that appeared in the Polish language only in connection with the pandemic.

There are also other new phraseologisms related to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Some of these are serial in nature (e.g. the names of territorial zones distinguished due to the degree of restrictions introduced during the pandemic or the names of documents applicable to travelers), while others turned out to be ephemeral (e.g. related to the presidential elections in May 2020). On the fringe of phraseology there are terminological combinations that have also enriched the Polish language.

The monograph contains many occasionalisms. Their inclusion resulted from the desire to show the Polish language during the pandemic not only from a linguistic point of view but also in terms of psychological, sociological and cultural aspects.

The description of the material in the chapter on internal borrowings from the medical language (Chapter 3) shows that during the pandemic, general Polish was enriched with many specialized terms, mainly older loanwords from English, whereas words, combinations and collocations with increased text frequency (Chapter 4) are related to medicine, and economic, social and political life. They rarely concern only the pandemic period or its long-term effects, as they are most often related to both that period and the time after it. Only political vocabulary was solely related to the pandemic reality.

Translated by Rob Pagett