

# THESIS - Vol. 9, No. 2, Autumn 2020



International Research Journal

ISSN: 1848-4298 (Print)

ISSN: 2623-8381(Online)

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#### How to cite this article:

Janusheva, V. (2020). The Macedonian Language in Regard to Covid-19. *Thesis*, 9 (2), 243-261.



Published online: December 23, 2020.



Article received on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, 2020. Article accepted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2020.



Conflict of Interest: Author declare no conflict of interest.

## The Macedonian Language in Regard to Covid-19

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#### Abstract

The new disease that appears in December 2019 affects all spheres of people's everyday living and functioning. Bearing in mind that language reflects social phenomena and that lexicon is the most flexible language segment, new words and phrases inevitably enter the lexicon on a daily basis. These novelties generate new problems not only in the lexicon but in other language segments as well. Thus, this paper addresses the new words which emerge from the disease presence as well as the problems caused by their occurrence and use, in regard to the Macedonian orthography, morphology, syntax and lexicology. This is a qualitative research that has a descriptive design, and the corpus consists of numerous articles issued in electronic newspapers. Analysis and synthesis are the methods used for processing the data and reaching conclusions. The research results indicate that the Macedonian language lexicon undoubtedly is enriched with new words. However, this extension in the lexicon has plenty of orthographic, morphological and syntactic implications related to the Macedonian language norm.

Keywords: COVID-19, Macedonian language, implications.

## Introduction

The mutual connection between the society and the language, which is the most sophisticated means used in communication, is seen in the way the language reflects all social phenomena and thus, constantly changes in order to satisfy the needs of all its users. As Koneski (1987) said the most open and flexible part of the language which is subjected to change over time is the lexicon. Therefore, some words become a part of the passive lexicon, some words disappear, some words develop new meanings, and some words enter the language as new words (neologisms). Nowadays, we can see these new words and trace the way they change the language and cause further implication on all language segments.

As Minova-Gjurkova (2003) states, these changes in the lexicon related to the new words are most evident in the scientific language, in the conversational style and in the language of the press. They undoubtedly enrich the language given that borrowing is one of the ways of enrichment of the language lexicon is. On the other hand, these changes in the lexicon have to be in accordance with the language norm. Therefore, the writers and editors of an article in an online newspaper have to be fully aware of the significance of the language they use. Improper language solutions regarding various language segments can affect people's everyday written practice and encourage the use of incorrectly written words. As said by Minova-Gjurkova (2003), the language of the press should keep, preserve and actualize the Macedonian language norm.

The role of the proofreaders should also be stressed. They should have an important and inevitable role in shaping the text to convey a message which contains language that is in accordance with the norm. However, it has to be acknowledged that their essential role is diminished. Although each online newspaper has a proofreader, the deviations from the standard

norm are so obvious, and this imposes issues that are not part of this research.

Regarding the Macedonian language during the period of this crisis, it can be seen that the lexicon has never changed so fast, that new words have never emerged with such speed, and that the implications of the crisis on each language level have never been so obvious, thus facing the Macedonian linguists with the need to propose correctly written solutions for them. Surely, these changes and these new words have to be in accordance with the Macedonian language norm, and have to be adapted in the already existing categories of the Macedonian language.

#### Previous research in the field

Bearing in mind that this disease appeared at the end of December 2019, so far there have been no articles in the Macedonian linguistics focusing on the new lexicon connected with it, and the implications they produce. Therefore, the results cannot be compared with the results of new articles. However, many universities, faculties and other institutions are realizing that the end of this disease is uncertain, as such they will start to organize online conferences on this topic, and results are yet to come. What follows is a short survey of previous researches related with the issues that have been elaborated in this paper.

Macedonian standard norm regarding all language segments is in the centre of a lot of Macedonian linguists and researchers. Various language aspects regarding the language norm have been elaborated so far, and they indicate that little attention is paid when it comes to the language used in the articles of electronic newspapers. Dilemmas regarding the use of the capital or small letters in the Macedonian written practice have been analysed by some researchers (Miovska, 2000;

Pandeva, 2011; Janusheva, 2019a; Janusheva). Further, some researchers stress the relevance of distinguishing orthographic and the punctuation marks, such as dash and hyphen (Jurukovska, 2016; Janusheva & Jurukovska, 2016). Furthermore, English language influence on Macedonian language is interesting for a number of researchers (Makarijoska, 2009: Gruevska-Madzovska, 2010; Karapejovski, Janusheva, Ivanovska & Bosilkovska, 2018; Janusheva, 2019a; Janusheva). Additionally, the orthography of the compound nouns has been elaborated (Janusheva & Jurukovska, 2017), the foreign words, new words (neologisms) and loan words (Janusheva & Jurukovska, 2015; Lazarevska & Janusheva, 2019), as well as the issues connected with acronyms (Janusheva, 2019b).

On the other hand, in contrast to the Macedonian language, there are countless researches on neologisms in other languages, especially in English, which clarify the complex nature of these words, and are relevant for this research too (Niska, 1998; Jansses, 2005; Zhakhanova & Luchkova, 2013; Konoplekina, 2017 and many others).

## Methodology of the research

This is a qualitative research that has a descriptive design, and the corpus consists of the new words which are present in numerous articles issued in electronic newspapers. Analysis and synthesis are the methods used for processing the data and reaching conclusions.

## Results and discussion

In continuance, the research results and the discussion are presented.

*The notion korona-virus (coronavirus)* 

According to the World health organization (WHO), coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that can cause various diseases, such as Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS-CoV) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-CoV). From here, it is obvious that the two diseases are caused by coronaviruses. Thus, the WHO definition proves that the name corona*virus* has been present for quite a long time and is well known in the medical world and beyond, especially in the countries that were affected by them. The WHO also states that the term corona stands for parts of a body, which have a form resembling a crown. This statement is in correlation with Merriam Webster's online dictionary which claims that "The word was introduced by a group of virologists as a short article "Coronaviruses" in the "News and Views" section of Nature (vol. 220, no. 5168, November 16, 1968, p. 650"). In the opinion of these eight virologists, these viruses are members of a previously unrecognized group which, according to them, should be called the coronaviruses, to recall the characteristic appearance by which these viruses are identified in the electron microscope."

In regard to the Macedonian language, it has to be stressed out that the word *korona* (*corona*) is not a new word. This word is registered in the Tree volume dictionary (in this paper the edition from 1986 is used, although this Dictionary was published in 1961/1965/1966) from the beginning of the Macedonian language development, in the Monolingual Macedonian language dictionary (2005), and in Belchev's dictionary of foreign words in the Macedonian language (2002)

as a synonym of the word kruna (crown) meaning 'golden corona (crown) or a type of hat with precious decorations for monarch as a symbol of authority and dignity'. Furthermore, the word korona (corona) has also Latin origin (Belchev, 2002). This indicates that the compound word korona-virus (coronavirus) is structured of one Latin loanword virus (loaned almost 60 years ago) and one domestic word, korona (corona), which has existed in the passive lexicon. In their everyday communication, Macedonians use the word kruna (crown) instead of korona (corona), although they both have the same meaning. From this, it is obvious that as a compound the word corona-virus (coronavirus) in the current meaning is a new word in the Macedonian language. This is, in fact, a new type of neologism, according to Janusheva and Jurukovska's classification of neologisms (2015), in which one of the components is an actualized word from the passive lexicon and the other one was borrowed long time ago.

### The term COVID-19

In addition, the WHO claims that the *corona-virus* we are facing today is, in fact, a novel *corona-virus* n(CoV) which has not been previously identified in humans. Therefore, it should be clear that the term *corona-viruses* refer to the family of viruses and not to the disease. This novel *corona-virus* causes the disease which is named *COVID-19*. Like the term *corona-virus*, the term *COVID-19* is also a neologism and what is said about the term *corona-virus* also applies to *COVID-19*, with regard to its appearance and presence in the Macedonian language as well as its frequent use. In addition, it can be said that the Macedonian language is enriched with another acronym, because *COVID-19* is, in fact, an acronym where CO stands for *corona*, VI for *virus* and D for *disease*. As for the number 19, it refers to the year 2019, when the virus was first discovered. Given that the Macedonian language has various acronyms in regard to the way they are created,

Unlike other neologisms which are hard to track in relation to the period they have entered the language, which is confirmed by Janusheva and Jurukovska's research (2015), this case proves that neologisms may enter the language almost instantly, in Macedonia in the mid of December, when the first diseased patient was recorded Italy. As neologisms, these words have another peculiarity. Namely, it is also known that neologisms do not become instantly a part of the active lexicon and are not used frequently right after their entrance by almost everyone (Niska, 1998; Zhakhanova & Luchkova, 2013; Janusheva & Jurukovska, 2015; Konopelkina, 2017). However, these neologisms prove that to be wrong, because they become a part of the everyday communication in all spheres of people's living and functioning among medical specialists as well as among ordinary people. Bearing in mind the research conducted by Niska (1998), Janssen (2005), Zhakhanova & Luchkova (2013) and Janusheva & Jurukovska (2015), in which they actualize, among others, the lexicographic and the time criterion, and where they claim that a neologism has to be in use for at least 15 to 20 years and after that it is not considered as a neologism any more, it is clear that regarding the Macedonian language, if a new dictionary comes to light before 2030, these two words will still be regarded as neologisms.

Moreover, the appearance of these two words has an implication on the orthographic level. The newspapers are

overloaded with the word koronavirus (coronaviruse) which contains two words (nouns) that are written solid/closed. English influence can be seen here, and this is in correlation with the research of many researchers who stress the English language impact (Makarijoska, 2009; Gruevska-Madzovska, 2010; Karapejovski, 2012; Janusheva, Ivanovska & Bosilkovska, 2018, Janusheva, 2019a; Janusheva). Namely, the Orthography of the Macedonian language (2017, pp. 57-80) regulates the orthography of the compound nouns which are written solid/closed, with a hyphen and as two separate words. In this case, the Macedonian term korona-virus contains two separate words, such as korona (crown) and virus (virus). According to the Orthography (2017, p. 62), two nouns that refer to one notion, i.e. the first noun complementing the meaning of the second, should be written with a hyphen. Thus, the proper and right orthography is korona-virus (coronavirus), with a hyphen. This suggests that the word korona-virus (coronavirus) is a compound noun and this result is in accordance with Janusheva & Jurukovska's research (2017).

As for the word *KOVID-19*, it is already said that it is a new acronym in the Macedonian language. However, it is very obvious that in the newspapers, at least two orthographic variants are noticed, i.e. the word is written in five capital letters or the word is perceived like a common word and not like an acronym, thus written in small letters. It is not unusual for an acronym to be perceived as a regular word (Janusheva, 2019a) due to increased frequency of use, as in the acronym LASER which is accepted as a common noun and written in small letters like the general nouns. In this case, the period of time is especially relevant. Namely, it is assumed that a period of time has to pass in order for an acronym to become an ordinary word used in everyday communication. Here, we face another peculiarity, namely we see that after several months of use, this

acronym began to be comprehended as a separate word. Hence, the two variants can be accepted. From here, if it is perceived as a regular word and not as an acronym, then the question arises why it is written with first capital letters? Undoubtedly, the English language influence is present, which is in correlation with the researches conducted by Miovska (2000), Pandeva (2011), Janusheva (2019a) and Janusheva. As a name for a disease, it should be written with first small letter, *kovid-19* (*covid-19*) and not *Kovid-19* (*Covid-19*), except where it is placed at the beginning of a sentence. However, as an acronym it should be written as KOVID-19 and this is the recommended form.

The presence of these two words has many other implications. On the word-formation level, due to the frequent occurrence and use of these two words, a lot of compound nouns with a first component korona (corona) or kovid (covid) have been noticed in newspapers as well as in everyday communication, such as: 'korona izbori' [corona elections] (25.5.2020); 'korona kriza' [corona crisis] (20.5.2020); 'korona povratnik' [corona recidivist] (28.5.2020);'corona-uredba' [corona-statute] (Pochivalec, 'korona - krizata' [the corona - crisis] (Pochivalec, 30.5.2020); 30.5.2020); 'koronazharishte' [coronafocus] (4.6.2020); 'korona bran' [corona wave] (Bozhinovska, 6.6.2020); 'korona panika' [corona panic] (11.6.2020); 'Korona dijalozi' [Corona dialogues] (11.6.2020); 'korona-hibernacija' [corona-hibernation] (Frangovska, 21.5.2020); 'kovid-menadzer (covid-manager) (10.5.2020); 'kovid krizata' [the covid crisis] (Mirchevski, 28.5.2020); 'kovid-stresot' [the covid-stress] (Frangovska, 21.5.2020); 'kovid koordinatori' [covid coordinators] (3.6.2020); 'kovid-koordinator' [covid-coordinator] (Damchevska, 3.6.2020); 'kovid – koordinatori' [covid – coordinators] (Damchevska, 3.6.2020); 'kovid klaster' [kovid cluster] (5.6.2020); 'Kovid-19 pik' [Covid-19 peak] (5.6.2020); 'Kovid mapata' [The Covid map] (6.6.2020); 'Kovid zarazata' [the Covid infection] (6.6.2020); 'Kovidgrad' (Covid-city] (B. A., 11.6.2020); 'Kovid-proboj' [Covid-breakout] (11.6.2020) etc.

Given that these are new words, they still have to respect the rules of the Macedonian language norm, but it seems they have not. Although there are rare exceptions regarding the orthography of these compounds, almost all of them are written incorrectly, they are written as solid: 'koronakrizata' [the coronacirsis] or separate words 'korona krizata [the corona crisis]. Both ways are incorrect. As seen above, according to the Orthography of the Macedonian language, the two nouns in the compounds should be separated with a hyphen. This refers to all new words with the first component korona (corona) or KOVID-19. However, here, the English language influence in the orthography is obvious. These results are in line with the researches conducted by Janusheva & Jurukovska (2017), Janusheva, Ivanovska & Bosilkovska (2018), Janusheva (2019a) and Janusheva.

The appearance of these two words has morphological implications as well. In one of the sources, this following sentence was noticed 'Brojot na smrtni sluchai od kornavirus vo Italija se zgolemil denes za 92...' [The number of death cases from coronavirus in Italy increases to 92...] (25.5.2020). The article was published on May 25, and it is clear that the notion korona-virus (coronavirus) refers to COVID-19. However, this is not morphologically correct because, as shown in the preceding, there are three known diseases caused by the corona-virus, SARS, MERS and COVID-19. Thus, this means that the noun korona-virus (coronavirus) used in the article without the definite article, refers to all three diseases and not only to KOVID-19, which is actually the case.

*The notion karantin (quarantine – verb)* 

According to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, the word quarantine is both a noun and a verb, and its first known use is from 1801 in the meaning 'to detain or exclude by quarantine'. As for the Macedonian language, there is no such verb, only the noun 'karantin' (quarantine) exists with the meaning 'isolation of people sick with contagious diseases in order to protect and to restrain the spread of the epidemic disease'. However, in one newspaper, the verb karantinira (to quarantine) is noticed: 'Ako vladite vo Germanija, Rusija ili Amerika go karantiniraat sekoj shto kje se vrati vo nashata zemja, togash turistite nema da dojdat ovde' [If the German, Russian and America's government quarantines anyone who will return in our country, then the tourists will not come here] (6.5.2020). Here, English influence can undoubtedly be seen and again, this is in accordance with many researches (Makarijoska, 2009; Gruevska-Madzovska, 2010; Karapejovski, 2012; Janusheva, Ivanovska & Bosilkovska, 2018, Janusheva, 2019a; Janusheva). Further, in relation to the future of this word, it is most likely that it will not have a very frequent use, primarily because its appearance has been recorded only once from the beginning of the crisis, and it has not spread further among the Macedonian language speakers until now. They rather use the English word 'lock down' which is only transcribed in Cyrillic letters as lok daun. As it can be seen in Merriam Webster's online dictionary, the noun lock down has a similar meaning with the noun quarantine, 'an emergency measure or condition in which people are temporarily prevented from entering or leaving a restricted area or building during a threat of danger', meaning that both notions refer to the same thing.

As it is seen, in Macedonian 'to be in quarantine' means that people who have contracted a contagious disease are isolated in order to contain the disease spread. According to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, the noun quarantine has four

meanings, with the third meaning being similar to the Macedonian one 'a restraint upon the activities or communication of persons or transport of goods designed to prevent the spread of diseases or pests', and this period lasts 40 days. However, in newspapers and everyday use of this word, it is obvious that it extends its meaning, because it is quite obvious that karantin (quarantine) refers to healthy people as well, or even to all people who live in one country or in restricted areas of that country. As for the period of quarantine, it varies and depends on each country's government decisions regarding their perception of the seriousness of the situation. However, this new word can easily adapt to the Macedonian language norm, to the group of verbs which end in the suffix -ira(-izira) as daunlodira (to download). Still, it is a new and foreign word and it confirms Lazarevska & Janusehva's research (2019) that various foreign and new words in the Macedonian language have a different status and that there is a difference between the foreign words and the loan words, although in everyday communication these two notions are perceived as referring to the same one.

## The term pik (peak)

The use of this term has increased during this crisis. It is an English noun which, according to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, has 5 meanings, and among them: 'the highest level or greatest degree'. According to the same dictionary, peak is also a verb with several meanings, and entry 2 refers to it as an intransitive verb meaning 'to reach a maximum as of capacity, value or activity' and a transitive verb meaning 'to cause to come to a peak, point or maximum'. It can be said that in the Macedonian language, this term is taken directly from the English language, again with Cyrillic transliteration, and taking into account that it is absent from the monolingual dictionary, it still remains a neologism, i.e. a new word. Although this word has been present

in the Macedonian language for a while, and has occasionally been used mostly in newspapers and everyday people exchanges, nowadays this word has reached its most frequent use and, thus, become a part of the common language. In the Macedonian language, *pik* (*peak*) is used only as a noun and there is no record of its use as a verb '*Pominat e pikot na zarazata*' [*The peak of the infection is over*] (Spasovska, 27.4.2020).

## Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn from the research. First of all, new words will continue to enter the Macedonian language since it is an inevitable phenomenon. They will proceed to produce implications in the Macedonian language system and challenge the Macedonian linguists who have to find ways to adjust them to the Macedonian language system and Macedonian language norm as well. Second, the analysed words are indicative of the presence of English language influence, especially in relation to orthography, but also other language segments. This is not uncommon. Yet this should urge the Macedonian linguists to find out solutions to decrease this impact and preserve the Macedonian language norm. Third, profound and significant insights that diminish and disprove all that has been said about neologisms until now can be traced. Namely, the exact time when these new words entered the lexicon is known (mid-December 2019) and their mass and frequent usage has been recorded on a daily basis among scientists, journalists, and ordinary people as well, which is not specific and common in the case of other neologisms that have made their way into the Macedonian language. Finally, bearing in mind the research results related to the introduction of new neologisms in the Macedonian language, it can be concluded that only time will

show what will happen with regard to the status of these new words.

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## **Excerpts**

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