

# Occasionalisms in Social Networks During the Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** This study explores and analyses occasionalisms that were created by social network users during the COVID-19 pandemic. The theoretical framework of this research is based on observing the concepts of occasionalism, neologism and nonce word.

**Purpose:** To indicate occasionalisms in the Russian and English languages and compare them in terms of word-formation, frequencies, part of speech and meanings, thus making a contribution to the understanding of how occasionalisms emerge in these languages.

**Method:** A qualitative and quantitative content analyses are used for data collection. The sample is obtained from different social networks ('Facebook', 'Twitter', 'Reddit' and 'VK'). Results: Occasionalisms are created mostly through blending, compounding, and affixation. Mixed word-formation methods are also used. The most used parts of speech appear to be nouns and adjectives. The most Russian occasionalisms are ironic, expressive and attract attention, while English occasionalisms are not that expressive as they refer to medical or political concepts. Borrowings from English in the Russian occasionalisms are also indicated. The glossary of 106 occasionalisms in the Russian and English languages is introduced at the end of the study.

**Conclusion:** The results might expand the knowledge of new vocabulary items in the field of lexicology and stylistics, and have practical implications in language teaching and translations, as occasionalisms may frequently create obstacles for foreign language students and translators. They also may serve as a basis for further studies on neologisms, occasionalisms and nonce words generated during the pandemic and cover the gap in comparative studies of the Russian and English occasionalisms. In addition, the obtained results might be beneficial for future research in sociolinguistics and sociocultural linguistics providing greater awareness of the linguistic and sociocultural factors that impact the adoption and use of occasionalisms in both languages.

## KEYWORDS

occasionalisms, COVID-19 pandemic, nonce words, word-formation, social nets, language of the internet, word coinage

## INTRODUCTION

It is widely recognised that society is going through an unending cycle of changes, affecting the language that reflects human reality. The language is dynamic and reflects human reality being constantly affected by changes in society. Therefore, not only the phonetic system is modified, but also morphological structures are transformed. The most vivid changes are traced in the vocabulary. The dynamics of language can be observed through appearing words (Arndt-

Lappe, Braun, Moulin, & Winter-Froemel; Vdovichenko & Kudritskaya, 2020). People coin new nominations and phrases in order to describe emerging concepts, their feelings or emotions in response to surrounding changes. Major changes in the vocabulary happen during significant socio-political events (Arnold, 2011). People share their coinages on the Internet and social networks, which give potential for extending vocabulary as new words and phrases are created every day around the world. Internet users coin new nominations for several reasons: to

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<sup>1</sup> Has been banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>2</sup> Has been banned in the Russian Federation.

denote a concept; to make a joke, to appear ingenious, or to express their feelings through a new lexical unit (Goel et al., 2016; Rúa, 2010). Moreover, globalization is another factor that has also contributed to the development of new lexicon to define evolving technologies, products, and lifestyles. For example, English words such as *hashtag*, *selfie*, and *smartphone* have become part of the global vocabulary due to their relation to social media and technology (Katamba, 2005). Thus, there are a number of factors which provoke the emergence of new words and facilitate the evolution of the language.

Social networks have become one of the main platforms where people could share their opinions and thoughts during the COVID-19 pandemic. People started to communicate online due to the danger of the spread of the virus. The pandemic has led not only to the global changes in medicine, education, politics and society, but also to the outburst of new words (Egorova, Krasheninnikova & Krasheninnikova, 2021). People had to define new concepts, things, and phenomena that they encountered. It was necessary to share their fears and concerns during anxious and disturbing circumstances. Orel and Vasek (2021) claim that social networks are 'the major drivers of the production' of new words. 'A new lexical world to explore' has been opened to linguists due to the pandemic<sup>3</sup>. According to Thorne (as cited in Moran, 2020)<sup>4</sup>, thousands of new words have been created over the last two years, which provided ample opportunity for linguistic research. For example, Twitter<sup>5</sup> users are 'the most active, flexible, and ingenious language creators' (Orel & Vasik, 2021). However, these Twitter<sup>6</sup> users might use other platforms and coin new words there respectively.

Scholars still debate the topic of defining a new word that was coined. Feldman (1957) was the first linguist who used the term '*occasionalism*'. According to Ahmad (2000), *occasionalism* refers to 'a linguistic form which a speaker consciously invents or accidentally does on a single occasion'. However, other researchers use the term '*nonce word*' or '*nonce formation*' (Crystal, 2008). There are also scholars who 'combine this concept in a broad way under the term "*neologism*". The first part of the paper 'The notion of occasionalism, nonce word and neologism' explores the distinction between these terms.

Some linguistic studies addressed the issue of new lexical units which emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of them produce evidence that a lot of new English and Russian words and phrases have been created due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, previous research focused on one

language instead of comparing occasionalisms in different languages. There is value in extending the present research to examine the difference in Russian and English occasionalisms in the discourse of social networks. Comparing occasionalisms in these two languages within the context of COVID-19 may highlight peculiarities of word formation processes, and demonstrate how Russian speaking and English-speaking users of social networks reacted to the pandemic through the linguistic means.

This study aims to investigate occasionalisms in the Russian and English languages that were coined during the COVID-19 pandemic in social networks and compares them in terms of frequency, parts of speech, word-formation processes, and meanings.

Specifically, the study focuses on the following research questions:

- RQ1: What English and Russian occasionalisms appeared during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- RQ2: What are their meanings, parts of speech and word-formation processes?
- RQ3: How can English occasionalisms be compared to Russian ones?
- RQ4: Are there equivalents of English occasionalisms in the Russian language?

In addition, the novelty of this paper stems from the lack of research on new words, particularly occasionalisms, which were coined in various social networks in both Russian and English languages during the COVID-19 outbreak. In this study, comparative analysis is conducted in order to indicate differences in occasionalisms in these languages.

Respectively, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: The most common part of speech is a noun. New words which are created are frequently nouns as new objects are usually denoted.
- H2: There are no significant differences in English and Russian occasionalisms due to globalisation and the development of the Internet which leads to word borrowing.

<sup>3</sup> Crystal, D. (2020). *Covocabulary: Fifteneightyfour*. Cambridge University Press. <http://www.cambridgeblog.org/2020/05/covocabulary/>

<sup>4</sup> Moran, P. (2020). *1.Covidiots? Quarantinis? Linguist explains how COVID-19 has infected our language*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-april-22-2020-1.5540906/covidiots-quarantinis-linguist-explains-how-covid-19-has-infected-our-language-1.5540914>

<sup>5</sup> Has been banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>6</sup> Has been banned in the Russian Federation.

H3: Most coined occasionalisms express the author's emotion or attitude to the denoted referent.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Notion of Occasionalism, Nonce Word and Neologism

This study relates to the research area that explores the coinage of new words. For decades, linguists have attempted to define the concept of new words that appear in the language. These works suggest different terms in both Russian and English languages, particularly 'occasionalism' ("occasional word"), "neologism" and "nonce word".

The term "occasionalism" was first suggested by Russian scholar, Feldman (1957), who focused on the analysis of occasional words that were coined by Russian writers and poets. Occasionalisms have an inseparable connection with context. However, that connection with context prevents occasionalisms from becoming a part of the language (p. 65). Hence, it is necessary to distinguish occasionalisms and neologisms, as the latter are placed in dictionaries, while occasional words remain new ones (p. 66). According to Lopatin (1973), *neologisms* are "new words which usually stop being recognised as new ones, their originality disappears", while occasionalisms remain new formations and they are not used in people's speech on a daily basis. Neologisms appear in the language for several reasons (Kondrasheva & Tinina, 2019):

- (1) Appearance of new reality, object or notion that is to be defined;
- (2) Necessity to denote referents that already existed but did not have any designations;
- (3) Appearance of one word denoting the concept instead of a word phrase;
- (4) Necessity to highlight the transformation of a concept in the changing society;
- (5) Influence of other cultures on the language.

These findings indicate that reasons for coining new words, both neologisms and occasionalisms, are identical. Thus, both terms can be regarded as parts of the same continuum and are closely interconnected since occasional words might transform into neologisms over time having lost their novelty.

Previous studies observed occasionalisms in literature as there was no possibility to find them on the Internet. According to Feldman (1957), the most frequent usage of occa-

sionalisms in the Russian literature is observed in the works by Mayakovsky, e.g., *поцекистей (potsekisteii)*, and Saltykov-Shchedrin, e.g., *душедрянствовать (dushedryanstvovat)*. In terms of world literature, occasionalisms are widely used in German and Japanese literature. The study proposes that even though occasionalisms have their own author, some of them might be created by multiple people simultaneously and left unnoticed (p. 65). However, occasionalisms are generally viewed as "individual or authorial" (Vdovichenko & Kudritskaya, 2020). An author usually shows their interpretation of an existing view of the world through creating an occasionalism.

A Russian linguist, Lopatin, (1973) defines occasionalism, which comes from Latin "*occasio*" meaning "*occasion*", as a word that was created once, on an occasion (p. 63). Occasionalisms tend to be expressive, full of meaning and emotion, but they do not come into common use (p.65). For instance, the Russian poet Mayakovsky created occasionalisms with the intention to make his poetry more aesthetic. He did not want to add new words and contribute to the Russian vocabulary (Vinokur, 1943, p. 31, as cited in Lopatin, 1973, p. 65). Another reason for creating occasionalisms is suggested by Terry (2021). The author assumes that occasionalisms are coined to add humour to a spontaneous conversation. Occasional words might be created everywhere, e.g., in everyday speech, works of fiction, publicistic texts (p. 69). They remain occasional, while neologisms become generally accepted by speakers (Pahomova, 2013, p. 80). Nevertheless, some people consider both terms as interchangeable.

Furthermore, the term '*nonce word*' was suggested by a British linguist Crystal (2008). Nonce word is defined as the lexical unit that "a speaker consciously invents or accidentally uses on a single occasion" (Crystal, 2008, p. 329). In contrast, a nonce word or a formation which has been accepted and used in the language transforms into a neologism. Poix (2018) refers to '*nonce formation*' as the process of coinage and '*occasionalism*' as a result of this process. Nykytchenko (2015) affirms that nonce words are complex for both comprehension and translation (p. 37). Authors put their meaning into a word which makes it difficult to both understand and translate. The study proposes that nonce words will henceforth be referred to as occasionalisms, meaning "author's word formations designed to convey expression, as a rule, in fiction" (p. 38). Taken together, these findings highlight that two notions, occasionalism and nonce words, are completely identical.

Debate still exists regarding the exact definition for the phenomenon of creating new words. There is little agreement on the term that should be used in referring to emerging words that are created by authors. This research follows Lopatin's (1973) definition of occasionalism, as it is accurate. The terms "occasionalism" or "occasional word" shall be used in this paper, designating new words that were cre-

ated in order to make the text or situation more humorous, ironic, or expressive. Occasional words are not included in dictionaries. Therefore, previous studies on occasional words have left several questions unanswered. Despite the definitions that are given in these works, it remains largely unclear what is the generally accepted criterion that would indicate the difference between neologisms, nonce words and occasionalisms.

## Features of Occasionalisms

The question of identification of new formations in modern linguistics still causes a lot of disagreement (Egoshina, 2007). Some use the term “neologism”, others refer to “nonce word” or “occasionalism”. Hence, characteristics of occasionalisms were introduced by scholars. Apart from that, criteria of differentiating between neologism and occasionalism were elaborated.

Two functions of occasionalisms are described by Poix (2017), who explored neology in children’s literature:

- (1) Hypostatization (making a fictional object real). Occasionalisms are useful when it is necessary to name animals, e.g., *wargs*, vegetables, e.g., *snozzcumber*, or people, e.g., *Muggles*. This function is considered as a primary one in the fantastic world of children’s literature. The context (an illustration or text) should be provided for the reader to understand the concept.
- (2) Attention-seeking devices (foregrounding occasional formations). Children might not be able to detect occasionalisms as they are too opaque. It is important to highlight them by making them lengthy as they would “automatically stand out as attention-seeking devices” (p. 9). Research on functions of occasionalisms is seriously limited to children’s literature, having little reference to other occasionalisms, especially those which appear on social networks.

Two features of occasionalisms were revealed in a study by Alieva (2016): expressiveness and uniqueness. These two characteristics indicate occasionalisms as a group of words, showing their essence and purpose in the linguistic environment. Occasionalisms are “unexpected and unpredictable” for those who perceive the text (p.35). Expressiveness is connected to the expression of various emotions, e.g., irritation, reproach, anger, indignation, joy and fun. For instance, authors use occasionalisms to make their statements more expressive and original, increasing readers’ interest: ‘It was all going to be so simple, if only it could be, so many if *only’s*’ (Fowles, 1980).

Occasionalisms are clearly new words that are created in a specific situation (Vdovichenko & Kudritskaya, 2020). For example, the word *трампопокалипсис* was created by Russian journalists to describe problems that arose in con-

nection with the election of Donald Trump to the president of the United States in 2016 (Yudina, 2020). Babenko (1997) distinguished three degrees of occasionality: 1) standard potential words; 2) partly non-standard formations; 3) non-standard formations. It is also emphasised that interpreting words with second and third degrees of occasionality might cause difficulties. This is crucial because we might indicate occasionalism by the complexity of translating it, while neologisms already have translations into different languages.

Belova (2009) concluded that there are eleven main criteria for the delineation of occasionalism and neologism according to Feldman (1957). Four of them are pointed out as the main ones in the article:

- (1) Affiliation of a word to the language or speech.

A neologism is ‘a fact of system of the language’ (Feldman, 1957, p. 64), e.g., *defriend*, *captcha*, *MOOC* (Liu & Liu, 2014), while an occasionalism is ‘a fact of speech that has not entered into the language’ (Hanpira, 1966).

- (2) Derivational productivity.

Occasionalisms are created through word-formation. In contrast, neologisms mostly might appear through borrowing from different languages, e.g., *бренд*.

- (3) Accordance with the system of language.

Some processes of coining occasional words are beyond any rules of the language, e.g., *кое-какность*.

- (4) Dependence on the context.

Occasionalisms are bound to a particular context and are often unclear outside it. For instance, the whole Lewis Carroll’s poem ‘Jabberwocky’ consists of occasionalisms, meanings of which are impossible to understand separately:

‘Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.’

Mattiello (2017) also confirms the principal role of the context in the interpretation of occasionalisms, while for other new word-formations such as analogies its importance is less essential.

Recognizing new words demands certain skills and knowledge. Katamba (2005) claims that speakers need to be aware of the word structures to be able to generate and understand words. In particular he is putting forward the idea of the importance of two types of morphological knowledge: 1) the ability to analyse words and define their meanings by

determining the various elements related to each other; and 2) the ability to define the meaning by recognising standard work-construction rules of the language employed (p.7).

While neologisms, as facts of the language, are not attached to the context, the meanings of occasionalisms should be observed in the context, e.g., *законьячиваться* (Aksenov, as cited in Belova, 2009; Cain et al., 2004) means to become browner, which is clear from the context. Deciphering the meaning without context would be unsuccessful. Context also contributes to incidental acquisition of nonce words (Reynolds, 2020). In addition, Lykov (1976) affirms that neologisms might be used separately from the context, while occasionalisms are attached to the context or a speech (p. 19). Although scholars attempt to implement machine tools in order to translate occasionalisms (Colb, Dressler & Mattiello, 2023), this trend still needs more time and research to develop. These results highlight the importance of following the criteria during the process of finding occasionalisms in the practical part.

According to Kuharenko (2011), occasionalisms are coined for communicative situations only, and they are not repeated beyond these occasions. However, functional expendability coexists with the fact that different authors might use the same occasionalism. It is unlikely that the original author of an occasionalism can be found on social networks. Moreover, people who use occasionalisms might have heard them somewhere else, even in life.

These results suggest that there are different characteristics of occasionalisms. Some of them may be important in the process of separating occasionalisms from neologisms.

## Ways of Word-Formation

Ample research has been done on the word-formation processes. According to Zemskaya (1992), occasionalisms appear in the language through three main ways:

- (1) Word-formation derivation is defined as creating new words from existing morphemes, following existing rules. Most common ways are the following: a) suffixation; b) prefixation; c) prefix-suffixal; d) compounding; e) blending; f) conversion.
- (2) Semantic derivation means creating a new meaning of an already existing word based on similarity of a new concept with the already known concept.
- (3) Borrowing words from other languages or dialects, jargons, etc.

Zykova (p.70)<sup>7</sup> suggests to consider two ways used in the process of forming new words: word-derivation and word-composition. Word-derivation includes a) affixation, e.g., *googlers* and b) conversion, e.g., *It's not a who, it is a what*, while word-composition includes a) shortening, b) blending, e.g., *warbreaker*, c) acronymy, d) sound-interchange, e) onomatopoeia, f) back-formation and g) distinctive stress (p. 70-71). Mweri (2021) also pinpoints blending and acronymy as the most frequently used ways of generating new words during the Covid-19 pandemic. Blending or blends refers to the word-formation process which results in forming new words by blending existing ones: *camcorder* (*camera* + *recorder*), *infomercial* (*information* + *commercial*) (Akmajian et al., 2010, p. 28). Crystal (2011) also considers blending as one of the most common processes of word-formation. He points out that social media platforms have provided space for generating new blends such as *tweeps* (Twitter\_peeps) and *Facebookery* (Facebook + trickery). Besides blending, Crystal (2011) stresses an important role of compounding as well as abbreviations in the emergence of new words. These processes have become frequent in informal communication, especially among younger generations, due to the widespread use of social media. Social networks appear to serve as a venue for the evolution of language and a new lexicon creation. Compounding is defined as the process of combining two or more words to create a new lexical unit. The meaning of a newly created word is usually related to the meaning of its constituents (*black* + *board* = *blackboard*). Abbreviation is considered as a shortened or contracted form of the word where syllables are represented by first letters of each constituent (*ITV* - *Independent Television*). Another way of word-formation - eponymy - was described by Pavlík (2017)<sup>8</sup> as creating new words by using proper names as common nouns, e.g., *guillotine*, *wellingtons*, *Stalinism*. Personal names, place names, fictional characters, and historical events or periods can serve as a source for eponymies' origin.

Ratih and Gusdian (2018) indicated other ways of word-formation in the modern English language: a) folk etymology, e.g., *pando* refers to *coronavirus pandemic* (Al-Salman & Haider, 2021); b) back-formation. Double word-formation processes were also found; c) folk etymology + compounding; d) compounding + affixation, e.g., *lockdowners* (ibid); e) blending + affixation, e.g., *covidpreneurs* (ibid.) and f) clipping + blending. Apart from these, Liu & Liu (2014) introduced the following classification of ways of word-formation that are used in social networks: a) compounding, b) blending, c) clipping and d) old words with new meaning. Clipping is described as a process of forming new words by shortening the existing ones: *professor* - *prof* (Akmajian et al., 2010, p. 581). There are three types of clipping that can be defined: front-clipping, when the beginning of a word is contracted (*telephone* - *phone*); middle-clipping, when the

<sup>7</sup> Zykova, I.V. (2008) A practical course in English lexicology (6th ed.). Academia.

<sup>8</sup> Pavlík, R. (2017). *A textbook of English Lexicology I. Word structure, word-formation, word meaning*. Z-F Lingua.

middle of the word is clipped (*market - mart*); and back-clipping, when the end of a word is cut (*doctor - doc*). Khromyh (2016) distinguished other word-formation processes: a) abbreviation, e.g., *O.W.L.* meaning *Ordinary Wizarding Levels* (Skrylnik, 2017); b) onomatopoeia, e.g., *mwahaha*; c) changing of sounds, e.g., *wunk, smole* (p. 190).

As for the Russian language, Eismann (2015) defines three main factors which might influence word-formation processes. First, he points out individual innovation which is involved in creating new words and revitalising old ones. The second factor which contributes to the emergence of new words is cultural context. The scholar explains that new words might be coined in response to historical events and specific cultural occasions (like COVID - 19). Eismann (2015) adds that linguistic structures also play a crucial role in word-formation in the Russian language. The author emphasises how morphology, syntax, and semantics all contribute to the coinage of new words.

Although the findings are important, not every word-formation process mentioned is appropriate for occasionalisms. Changing punctuation alters the meaning of the whole phrase, while occasionalism refers to a word that was coined on a single occasion. Apart from this, word-formation processes in occasionalisms connected to the pandemic have been barely examined in previous studies.

## METHOD

### Design

The goal of this study is to explore occasionalisms in the Russian and English languages that were coined during the COVID-19 pandemic in social networks and compare them in terms of frequency, parts of speech, word-formation processes, and meanings. With this aim in mind, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Content analysis combines both types of methods for analysing large volumes of textual data. Social networks were used as a source for linguistic material for the analysis since they reflect all the transformations of the language, tracing the history of these changes. People use social media in order to be recognised and receive attention in different situations, especially in disturbing ones. Social networks are not only a platform for sharing personal lives, but also a place for sharing opinions, thoughts, and feelings. A living language can be explored through social networks. People coin new words so that their posts would be more ironic and expressive. Hence,

social networks have become the source of retrieving data for this research. One of the characteristics of occasionalisms is the dependence on the context (Belova, 2009) and it might be difficult to understand the meaning of a new word without context. Social networks provide an opportunity to find occasionalisms and observe them in the context.

## Instruments

### Online Dictionary Merriam-Webster

Occasionalisms usually do not compile dictionaries (Feldman, 1957). Therefore, words found in social networks were checked whether they were listed in the online dictionary, Merriam-Webster<sup>9</sup>. If not, they were considered as occasionalisms.

### Social Searcher Engine

The Social Searcher engine allows us to monitor all the mentions in social networks and calculate their frequencies. This study utilises the engine in order to observe all the mentions of the words found and how frequently they were used.

## Procedure

Social networks, such as Facebook<sup>10</sup> (deemed extremist in the territory of the Russian Federation), Twitter<sup>11</sup>, VK<sup>12</sup> and Reddit<sup>13</sup> were selected in order to collect the sample for the research. The sample was collected manually from users' posts from March 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021. The size of the sample was 8,462 users' posts. The large time frame was selected with the aim of gathering the newest occasionalisms. The users' posts were found through hashtags and keywords related to the pandemic, e.g., #COVID19, #coronavirus, #pandemic, #corona which were widely used to tag the messages on the chosen topic. Internet users communicated their opinions and feelings in their posts. Such posts might have contained users' expression towards the pandemic through a variety of linguistic means including word-formation. After this, the collected posts were observed for gathering occasionalisms which were used by users. Therefore, the words found were checked in the online dictionary, Merriam-Webster.

In the second phase, semantic and morphological analysis was conducted in order to indicate the meanings, parts of speech and word-formation processes. Grounded in the studies by Feldman (1957), Babenko (1997) and Belova

<sup>9</sup> Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved January 24, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

<sup>10</sup> Facebook. (2022). Facebook. Retrieved February 5, 2022, from <https://www.facebook.com/> (The access is restricted in the Russian Federation)

<sup>11</sup> Twitter. (2022). Twitter. Retrieved January 20, 2022, from <https://twitter.com/> (The access is restricted in the Russian Federation)

<sup>12</sup> VK. (2022). VK. Retrieved March 25, 2022, from <http://vk.com/>

<sup>13</sup> Reddit. (2022). Reddit. <https://www.reddit.com/>

(2009), context is important in defining the meanings of occasionalisms. Thus, the context was examined during the process of indicating meanings. Frequencies of the words found were calculated through the Social Searcher engine.

In the final phase, a glossary of English and Russian occasionalisms was created, which included meanings, frequencies, parts of speech and word-formation processes, based partly on studies by Zenskaya (1992), Liu & Liu (2014), Khromykh (2016), Skrylnik, (2017), Ratih & Gusdian (2018).

The choice of social networks as a source for the linguistic material for the analysis helped to discover and compare English and Russian occasionalisms in the context in which they emerged, facilitating their translation. Morphological analysis aided in exploring word-formation processes and decoding meanings of occasionalisms, thus establishing the reasons for their generation. Calculating the frequency of use was aimed at defining the most widely generated part of speech and confirming or refuting H01. Systematization of occasionalisms in a table demonstrated the dimensions that served for analyzing both English and Russian new lexical units. A comparative analysis was further conducted against these dimensions to answer research questions and substantiate the hypotheses. The sample of 8,462 enhanced the validity of the obtained results, though subjectivity could not be avoided completely since the authors interpreted the meanings of the occasionalisms themselves. The context mitigated the risk of biased interpretation but might not have entirely excluded it. Nevertheless, tracking frequency use and analyzing occasionalisms in context ensure minimal bias.

## RESULTS

The purpose of this research is to explore occasional words and phrases that were created due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The glossary of 106 English and Russian occasionalisms has been compiled based on the found occasionalisms.

### Occasionalisms in the English Language

The vital role of context (Feldman, 1957; Babenko, 1997; Belova 2009) in analysing occasionalisms has been proved. It is obvious what *covidiot* means, but when it comes to such occasionalisms as *covidocious*, it becomes difficult to guess its meaning. The context is important while decoding most of occasional words: "So... my doctor awarded me this cute mug. She coined the word "Covidocious," meaning someone who has survived Covid." Some of users indicate the meaning of occasionalisms in their posts. However, in some cases the explanation is missing:

"I've got the Rona again".

By the context, it might be guessed that *the Rona* means coronavirus, but is called as if it is a person. *The Pandy* is also used when referring to the pandemic. Hence, occasionalisms require context in order to be decoded by other people. Next, *coronic* means being infected by COVID-19. The word-formation process is an adjective-forming affixation: *coron-* + *-ic*. Some words mean desperate situation, panic during the pandemic: *coronapocalypse* and *coronageddon*. By creating such words, users try to convey their feelings and emotions about an upheaval, which corresponds to H03:

"Now we're in Coronageddon, I'm frequently on multi-hour video calls".

The way of formation of this word is blending: coronavirus + Armageddon. Blending appears to be the most common way of word-formation: coronation (coronavirus + vacation), covideos (covid + videos), coronallennial (coronavirus + millennial).

The word denoting occasionalisms during the pandemic was found in social networks: *coronaneologisms* (corona- + neologisms).

Next, most English occasionalisms which appeared in social networks are connected to some activities that have become unusual due to the new reality: *coviwedding* (wedding through a video call), *quarantinder* (searching for a partner on the dating app during the self-isolation), *quaranstream* (to stream music or videos during the self-isolation), *coronavacation* (having free time due to getting paid to be off work); *covidivorce* (a divorce after being together in one house for a long period during the self-isolation). Most of such words are created through blending as well: *covid + wedding*, *quarantine + tinder*; *quarantine + stream*; *coronavirus + vacation*.

In addition, some occasionalisms are found not to follow the patterns of having *-covid* or *-corona* morphemes: *rat-licker* is someone who catches or spreads disease, mainly intentionally. The word is created through compounding (*rat + lick*) + affixation (*-er*). *Upperwear* is the clothing that can be seen from the waist up during an online conference. Compounding is also used while creating the word (*upper + wear*).

Moreover, the focus on health is pointed out in occasionalisms, e.g., *coronainsomnia* (inability to sleep because of too much stress), *doomscrolling* (the activity of reading too much negative news which influences mental health). *Coronainsomnia* is created by compounding (*corona-* + *insomnia*) and *doomscrolling* is a result of compounding + affixation (*doom + scroll + -ing*). Table 1 illustrates the frequency of each word, definition, part of speech and word-formation processes that were used in creating the word in the English language.

**Table 1***Glossary of English Occasionalisms*

Word	Frequency	Meaning	Part of speech	Word-formation process
covidiot	643	a person who does not believe in the virus and endangers other people	noun	Blending
PPE	618	personal equipment aimed at minimising exposure to the virus	noun	Abbreviation
iso	616	short for isolation	noun	Clipping
N95	615	the type of a mask that is proved to be safer than the usual mask	noun	Eponym
QAnon	593	pro-Trump conspiracy theory claiming that that Donald Trump is working against a cabal of Satan comprised of his political opponents.	noun	Blending
anti-masker	545	a person who does not wear a mask	noun	Affixation
Qaren	506	a supporter of QAnon, especially a woman	noun	Eponym
covidism	495	irrational behaviour caused by the virus	noun	Affixation
doomscroll	468	to read too much negative news	verb	Compounding
doomscrolling	467	the activity of reading too much negative news	noun	Compounding + Affixation
quaranteen	444	people who were teenagers at the beginning of the outbreak in March 2020	noun	Blending
zoom-bombing	443	the sudden appearance of relatives or pets during a video meeting on Zoom	noun	Compounding
infodemic	436	an excessive amount of misinformation	noun	Blending
coronials	422	generation that was born during the COVID-19 pandemic	noun	Blending
coronaphobia	408	the fear of catching the virus	noun	Affixation
quarantine shaming	390	someone who do not obey social distancing rules	noun	Repurposing + compounding
coronapocalypse	387	all the panic during the pandemic	noun	Blending
coronacation	381	having free time due to getting paid to be off of work	noun	Blending
covideos	350	videos that people watched during the isolation in order to have fun	noun	Blending
coronavacation	316	having free time due to getting paid to be off of work	noun	Compounding
quaranstream	310	to stream music or videos during the self-isolation	verb	Blending
the Rona	309	name for coronavirus as if it is a woman	noun	Clipping
rat-licker	305	someone who catch or spread disease	noun	Compounding + Affixation
coronic	291	infected by COVID-19	adjective	Affixation
coviddating	278	dating during the isolation	noun	Compounding
coronageddon	251	all the panic during the pandemic	noun	Blending
coronacoaster	214	unstable emotional state due to the pandemic	noun	Blending
the Pandy	205	name for pandemic as if it is a person	noun	Clipping
qultist	182	A cult like follower of the QAnon movement.	noun	Affixation
upperwear	156	the clothing that can be seen from the waist up during an online conference	noun	Compounding
covidivorce	146	a divorce after being together in one house for a long period during the isolation	noun	Compounding
coronacut	132	haircut that was done as an experiment as no one would see it during the isolation	noun	Compounding
quarantinder	109	to search for a partner on the dating app Tinder during the self-isolation	verb	Blending
isobeard	100	a beard that is grown during the isolation	noun	Blending

Word	Frequency	Meaning	Part of speech	Word-formation process
quarantrends	86	trends that were created during the pandemic	noun	Blending
coronainsomnia	86	the inability to sleep because of stress	noun	Compounding
covidocracy	58	the government which takes measures to fight with the virus but also considers people's opinion	noun	Affixation
coronawar	52	the process of fighting with the virus	noun	Compounding
covidicide	33	being in a crowd of people without personal safety gear	noun	Affixation
coviwedding	31	wedding during the pandemic (mostly through video calls)	noun	Blending
coronallennial	13	generation that was born during the COVID-19 pandemic	noun	Blending
coronaneologisms	11	new words that were created during the pandemic	noun	Clipping + compounding
covidocious	8	having just recovered from the COVID-19 virus	adjective	Affixation

## Occasionalisms in the Russian Language

It should be noted that Russian occasionalisms turned out to be easier to find and indicate. They are expressive and ironic, immediately drawing attention to themselves. Moreover, they are more dependable on the context: *взапертыш* is not that easy to decode without additional information. It means a child that was born 9 months after the self-isolation. *Собяусвайс* is also difficult to understand.

«Иногородние рассказали: даже заказав *#собяусвайс* заранее, они не попали в метро. Карта в пропуске есть, но не срабатывает».

It is a digital pass introduced in Moscow during self-isolation. The word is formed through blending an eponym *Собя-* (proper noun *Собянин*, the surname of the mayor of Moscow) and a common noun *аусвайс* (an identification document that German authorities gave Soviet people during the occupation of Soviet Union during World War II aimed at identifying individuals from a Soviet background).

Irony is traced in the Russian occasionalisms: *коровавирус*, *пирожок с ковидлом*, *вирусатор ходячий*, *уханькаться* (get infected by COVID-19). The users of social networks tried to cope with such a situation through creating ironic words.

Authors used blending in order to mock people who disobey rules of self-isolation: *барановирусник* (*баран* + *-о-* + *вирус* + *-ник*), *голоносик* (*голый* + *носик*), *ковигист* (*ковид* + *пофигист*), *голомордый* (*голый* + *морда* + *-ый*). Overall panic was also highlighted by users: *ковидбесие* (*ковид* + *беситься* + *-ие*), *трагиковидия* (*трагедия* + *ковид*), *гречкохайп* (*гречка* + *-о-* + *хайп*), *инфодемия* (*информация* + *пандемия*), *макаронавирус* (*макароны* + *вирус*), *маскобесье* (*маска* + *беситься* + *-ье*). This proves the suggestion made by Eismann (2015) and Arnold (2011), who claimed that certain socio-cultural events coupled with a number of linguistic structures provoke generating new lexical units.

Activities during the pandemic were nominalized by the following occasionalisms: *зумиться* (to have Zoom calls), *расхламинго* (popular home activity connected to cleaning during the isolation), *думскроллинг* (reading too much negative news), *удалёнка* (distance format of studying or working). Notions defining people were created: *карантье* (a person renting a dog for self-isolation in order to go out), *ковидник* (a person who was infected with COVID-19), *антителец* (someone who has antibodies to the virus), *ковидёнок* (a child that was born during the quarantine), *ковидаст* (a person who neglects the danger of the virus), *прививочник* (someone who vaccinates), *ковид-диссидент*, *коронаскептик* (a person who denies the existence of the virus). Places acquired new names due to the pandemic: (*ресторан*) *Карантино* (a kitchen in the apartment during the period of the self-isolation), *масочная* (a place where one can get a mask), *ковидарий* (hospital for patients with COVID-19), *наружа* (outside the house), *ковидор* (the hall of the hospital where sick patients are held due to the lack of rooms), *коронавал* (a bunch of people wearing masks outside). Next, some other concepts were nominalized: *карантини* (an alcohol cocktail during an online conference), *самоизоленга* (social network feed during the pandemic), *карантэ* (an ability of self-control), *ковидопсихоз* (health issues due to the isolation), *социостанция* (social distancing). Table 2 illustrates the frequency of each word, definition, part of speech and word-formation processes that were used in creating the word in the Russian language.

## Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis of examples of the Russian and English occasionalisms in terms of parts of speech, word-formation processes, and frequency has revealed that the number of the Russian occasionalisms found in the study exceeds English ones. However, the frequency of usage of English words is higher than the Russian ones. That might indicate that Russian words are more occasional as one of the characteristics of occasionalisms is low frequency (Lopatin, 1973).

**Table 2***Glossary of Russian Occasionalisms*

Word	Frequency	Meaning	Part of speech	Word-formation process
карантино	280	kitchen in the apartment during the period of self-isolation.	noun	Blending
ковидный	367	relevant to coronavirus	adjective	Affixation
удалёнка	262	distance format of studying or working	noun	Clipping + Affixation
пирожок с ковидлом	254	ironic form of calling the virus	noun phrase	Blending
ковикулы	241	period of official self-isolation in March-April 2020, officially declared as non-working days	noun	Blending
карантини	230	an alcohol cocktail during an online conference	noun	Blending
санитайзер	229	hand sanitiser	verb	Borrowing
думскроллинг	225	reading too much negative news	noun	Borrowing
ковид-диссидент	221	someone who denies the presence of coronavirus	noun	Compounding + Borrowing
антипрививочник	209	someone who is against coronavirus vaccinations	noun	Affixation
карантикулы	208	period of official self-isolation in March-April 2020, officially declared as non-working days	noun	Blending
ковидиот	204	someone who does not follow the rules of social distancing and spreads the virus	noun	Blending
наружа	197	everything that is beyond house	noun	Repurposing
масочная	190	a place where you can get a mask		Affixation
ковидарий	190	hospital for patients with COVID-19	noun	Blending
ковидарность	186	solidarity with people who are in self-isolation	noun	Blending
самоизоленга	179	social network feed during the pandemic	noun	Blending + Affixation
короникулы	177	period of official self-isolation in March-April 2020, officially declared as non-working days	noun	Blending
полный ковидос	173	a phrase for describing the upheaval	noun phrase	Affixation
карантец	165	a phrase for describing the upheaval	noun	Blending
карантье	156	a person renting a dog for self-isolation	noun	Blending
ковидник	151	a person who was infected with covid-19 / a place where infectious people are kept	noun	Affixation
расхламинго	147	popular home activity connected to cleaning during the isolation	noun	Blending
постковидный	140	after COVID-19	adjective	Affixation
карантэ	132	an ability of self-control during the isolation	noun	Blending
зумиться	131	to communicate through Zoom	verb	Affixation
маскобесье	126	panic around masks and respirators, buying them in big quantities	noun	Blending
прививочник	126	someone who vaccinates	noun	Affixation
вируспруденция	124	the law connected to the pandemic	noun	Blending
коронавирие	123	a legend created during the pandemic	noun	Blending
гречкохайп	123	irrational panic around buying buckwheat	noun	Compounding + Borrowing
инфодемия	121	a huge flow of misinformation	noun	Blending
голомордый	120	someone who does not wear a mask in public	adjective	Blending + Affixation
коронаскептик	119	a person who denies the existence of the virus	noun	Clipping + Compounding

Word	Frequency	Meaning	Part of speech	Word-formation process
ковидопсихоз	119	health issues due to isolation	noun	Compounding
недокарантин	118	quarantine which is not that strict	noun	Affixation
антивакцинаторский	117	against vaccination	adjective	Affixation
антителец	117	someone who has antibodies to the virus	noun	Affixation
ковидёнок	114	a child that was born during the quarantine / diminutive form of coronavirus	noun	Affixation
коровавирус	112	ironic form of calling the virus	noun	Blending
ковидаст	110	someone who neglects the danger of the virus	noun	Affixation
коронапофигист	109	someone who neglects the danger of the virus	noun	Blending
ковидбесие	108	overall panic that was caused by the pandemic	noun	Compounding + Affixation
ковигист	106	someone who neglects the danger of the virus	noun	Blending + Clipping
макаронавирус	102	irrational panic around buying pasta	noun	Blending
уханькаться	100	to get infected by COVID-19	verb	Eponym + Affixation
ковидор	100	the hall of the hospital where sick patients are due to the lack of rooms	noun	Affixation
коронавал	100	a bunch of people with masks outside	noun	Blending
вирусовать	99	to spread the virus	verb	Affixation
барановирусник	99	someone who obeyed all the anti-epidemic measures	noun	Blending + Affixation
голоносик	83	someone who wears a mask at half-mast	noun	Blending
думскроллер	62	someone who reads too much negative news	noun	Borrowing
корониал	49	someone who born during quarantine	noun	Borrowing
вирусатор ходячий	46	ironic form of calling someone who spreads the virus	noun phrase	Affixation
собяусвайс	33	digital pass introduced in Moscow during the self-isolation	noun	Eponym + Blending
ковидироваться	14	cover news (political or social) for coronavirus news	verb	Affixation
социстанция	13	social distancing	noun	Blending
короналогизмы	4	new words that were created during the pandemic	noun	Blending
ковидоневроз	3	health issues due to isolation	noun	Compounding
взапертыш	2	a child that was born 9 months after self-isolation	noun	Affixation
ковидеоклуб	2	watching a movie through Zoom call	noun	Blending
ковидосвадьба	2	wedding that is celebrated on Zoom	noun	Compounding
трагиковидия	2	a phrase for describing the upheaval	noun	Blending + Affixation

They are expressive and attracting attention, while the English ones are not that original, most of them are repeated.

In terms of parts of speech, Russian occasionalisms constituted 51 nouns, 5 verbs, 4 adjectives and 3 noun phrases. At the same time, 38 nouns, 3 verbs and 2 adjectives were indicated among English nonce formations. Thus, H1 has been proved since nouns appear to be the most frequently generated part of speech and nominalize places, people and concepts.

Next, word-formation processes are different in Russian and English lexical units. Russian occasionalisms were created through the following ways of word-formation:

1. Blending (25)
2. Affixation (18)
3. Compounding (2)
4. Borrowing (4)
5. Blending + Affixation (4)
6. Compounding + Borrowing (2)
7. Blending + Clipping (1)

8. Clipping + compounding (1)
9. Compounding + Affixation (1)
10. Eponym + Blending (1)
11. Repurposing (1)

By contrast, English occasional words were coined by the following word-formation processes:

1. Blending (16)
2. Compounding (9)
3. Affixation (8)
4. Clipping (2)
5. Compounding + Affixation (2)
6. Eponym (2)
7. Abbreviation (1)
8. Clipping + compounding (1)
9. Repurposing + compounding (1)

Both Russian and English occasional words were mostly coined by blending which confirmed previous findings (Crystal, 2011). Other ways of word-formation are compounding and affixation (Liu & Liu, 2014; Al-Salman & Haider, 2021).

Another difference to be highlighted is the fact that English occasionalisms have higher numbers of frequencies (the highest is 643), while Russian nonce words are not that common (the highest is 367). The most common occasional words in English are *covidiot* (643), *PPE* (618), *iso* (616), *N95* (615), *QAnon* (593), while the most frequent occasionalisms in the Russian language are *ковидный* (367), *Карантино* (280), *удалёнка* (262), *пирожок с ковидлом* (254), *ковикулы* (241). This might be connected to the fact that English words are more common in general as there are a huge number of English speakers around the world.

Furthermore, there are borrowings in Russian occasionalisms from English: *санитайзер* – *sanitizer*, *думскроллинг* – *doomscrolling*, *ковидиот* – *covidiot*, *инфодемия* – *infodemic*, *корониал* – *coronial*, *короналогизмы* – *coronaneologisms*. This might also stem from globalisation processes which was reflected in H2.

## DISCUSSION

The main purpose of this study was to indicate the English and Russian occasionalisms that appeared during the pandemic, their meanings, parts of speech and word-formation processes, and to determine if there are any similarities or differences and equivalents. Considering social networks as a focus of linguistic studies, VK, Facebook<sup>14</sup> (deemed extremist in the territory of the Russian Federation) and Twitter<sup>15</sup> might serve as great platforms for collecting data (Gabrielo-

va & Maksimenko, 2021). Nevertheless, few occasionalisms were found in Reddit.

The findings of the study indicate that occasionalisms are generated mostly through blending, compounding, and affixation. Mixed word-formation methods are also used for generating new vocabulary. The most used parts of speech appear to be nouns and adjectives as it was expected. Comparative analysis of occasionalisms in both languages has shown that while the most Russian occasionalisms are ironic, evocative and attracting attention, English occasionalisms seem to be less expressive since they are related to medical or political concepts. The results obtained suggest that most of the nonce formations are coined for the following reasons: 1) appearance of new concepts; 2) influence of other cultures and languages; 3) creating of one word that substitutes a word phrase; 4) necessity to underline changes in politics, society and economics. The findings almost correspond to the previous research by Kondrasheva and Tinina (2019).

Moreover, the analysis of morphological, semantic, and word-formation processes has revealed that the Russian occasionalisms turned out to be more rare, expressive and ingenious, while the English occasional words seem to be connected to medical terms or political phenomena. Thus, H03 has been partly confirmed by the Russian occasionalisms only. The reason might be linked to cultural differences and the authors' background, and their personal characteristics.

In summary, the findings of the current research demonstrate that the language is developing at a fast pace every day, especially during crucial events and situations. The COVID-19 outbreak changed people's communication (Piller, 2020) and led to the appearance of thousands of new words that people had never known before. They had to describe new reality, objects and concepts that were appearing. Apart from that, people conveyed their feelings, from fear to joy, in the words that they created. Adding humor to conversations appeared to be one of the reasons for generating new words as was suggested by previous studies (Terry, 2021).

The analysis of newly formed lexemes in Russian and English have confirmed the previous research and demonstrated new findings. Previous studies have already observed some English occasionalisms that were identified in current research, e.g., *zoom-bombing*, *coronials*, *coronaphobia* (Al-Salman & Haider, 2021), *coronapocalypse*, *covidiot* (Orel & Vasik, 2021). *In addition, some Russian occasional words found in this study were already identified in prior research: расхламинго, думскроллинг, ковидиот, карантье* (Gekkina & Kozhevnikov, 2021). However, there were occasionalisms that were first identified in the present study, e.g., *взапертыш, социстанция, трагиковидия*.

<sup>14</sup> Has been banned in the Russian Federation

<sup>15</sup> Has been banned in the Russian Federation

Most of the occasionalisms point at the connection to the virus, e.g., короникулы, *covidicide*. However, there are those that do not have *-covid* or *-corona* morpheme, e.g., *rat-licker*, расхламинго. Apart from that, the number of English speakers seems to be higher, especially on the Internet. In addition, there are a lot of borrowings of English occasionalisms when creating Russian occasional formations, e.g., ковидиот – covidiot, which is also encouraged by globalisation processes and reflected in HO2. That might facilitate the process of translation of occasionalisms.

## Limitations and Future Research Directions

An important limitation of defining new formations such as occasionalisms might reduce the level of objectivity of this study. Different points of view exist on defining the concept of new lexical units. The main characteristic of occasionalism is that they are not placed in dictionaries (Feldman, 1957). Moreover, it is difficult to say if they would be added to dictionaries in future. The complex situation with the restriction of social networks by the governmental institutions might also lead to limited findings. Identifying the geographical locations of those who created occasionalisms is impossible. The Internet allows people to stay anonymous, so most of them prefer to hide their locations. Another limitation pertains to the limited number of the examined word-formations and particular sources used for collecting occasionalisms. The study only assessed the occasionalisms found in Twitter<sup>16</sup>, VK, Facebook<sup>17</sup> and Reddit, which may underestimate those formations generated in other social networks. Future research could make use of other social networks and occasionalisms in other languages as well to assess the peculiarities of word-formation processes and occasionalisms through the prism of cultural differences. Since artificial intelligence is considered to be able to generate new words (Malkin et al., 2021), another direction for future research could be seen in exploring these new formations in comparison to those coined by humans.

## CONCLUSION

The obtained findings will extend the knowledge of new lexical formations in the field of lexicology and stylistics. The results of this study suggest new insight in the current research on neologisms, occasionalisms and nonce words that were created during the pandemic as there is a lack of comparisons of the Russian and English occasionalisms. The findings support the idea of globalization which interferes into the word-formation process. At the same time, the assumption of expressing author's emotions and attitude through occasionalisms has been approved by Russian word-formations only. Therefore, the findings of this

work might extend future research in sociolinguistics and sociocultural linguistics. Other occasionalisms from various media sources may be collected (TV channels, newspapers, YouTube channels, other social networks) in different languages in order to deepen the understanding of word-formation processes and cultural differences which impact these processes. Future works might observe whether these occasionalisms will be in common use as most of them are unlikely to remain in a permanent word stock. The topic of posts may be narrowed from COVID-19 to vaccination issues to analyse specific occasionalisms related to vaccination and anti-vaccination. The results might have important practical implications as a glossary of the Russian and English occasionalisms, which might assist people in learning definitions of unknown nonce words, is provided. Such words may also help dictionaries extend their thesaurus.

The question of defining occasionalisms and neologisms is still open. The issue of nonce formations is to be addressed. Apart from that, the Internet and social networks should be more explored as it is a great source of linguistic studies, reflecting a living language that has been constantly modified. Creating new words is like an art. People are able to build eloquent words that contain irony, panic, anger or fear. They share these coinages in social networks, letting other people embrace remarkable occasionalisms that might enter their vocabulary in future.

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## DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

None declared.

## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

**Elena Gabrielova:** Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Supervision; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

**Vitalia Lopatina:** Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Supervision; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing.

<sup>16</sup> Has been banned in the Russian Federation

<sup>17</sup> Has been banned in the Russian Federation

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