

A Linguistic Study on Sinhalese Neologism Related to COVID-19 with Special Reference to The Trilingual Dictionary Published by Department of Official Languages, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In late 2019, the respiratory infection known as COVID-19 spread around the world as a global public health hazard. The epidemic has a profound effect on social, economic, scientific, and linguistic differences. It is a fact that the lexicons of all languages are improving day by day. Accordingly, new terms emerged globally during the COVID-19 outbreak. In this regard, many researchers use the term “neologism,” which means the coinage of new words. Neologism plays a significant role throughout the epidemics. Thus, many new words have come into use in the Sinhalese language in the face of the epidemic, yet those words have not been included in the Sinhala-English language dictionaries, and this fact was identified as the research problem. The objective of this study was to identify the creation of new terms and reuse of existing terms in the Sinhala language related to the outbreak of COVID-19, which are not included in the Trilingual dictionary published by the Department of Official Languages—Sri Lanka. Data was collected through selected government notices, articles, social media, and selected government websites published from March 2020 to May 2021. Thus, the collected data were analyzed using the aforementioned dictionary, and new terms that were not included in it were identified. The findings of the study revealed that those terms could be analyzed based on the three components of neologism: word formation, borrowing, and lexical deviation. Furthermore, it was discovered that word formation is utilized in the form of nouns, adjectives, and verbs. The broader purpose of this study was to identify new terms that were added to the Sinhala language during the epidemic. Moreover, this study attempts to emphasize that those terms should be included as Sinhala headwords in the aforementioned Trilingual dictionary. This study will assist in writing and translating documents related to COVID-19 at present as well as in studying the history of this epidemic in the future.

Key words: COVID-19, Dictionary, Epidemic, Neologism, Sinhala language

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