## MAPPING NEOLOGISM IN THE URDU PRINT MEDIA

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### Abstract

*From the time of the Jam-i-Jahan Numa, the first ever attempt to inscribe Urdu prose for the print journalism, the language of Urdu Journalism has gone through a hard process of transformation. Following the shock delivered by Covid-19, the twenty first century has been the year of profound and rapid change for Urdu print media. The COVID-19 pandemic strongly impacted the media industry and affected journalists' work. Many vernacular newspapers have been severely affected by losses in revenues. Lockdowns and other restrictions helped in breaking old habits of journalism, and created new styles of expressions. It resulted in new linguistic coinages and adoption of new phrases across the globe.*
*The paper attempts to provide an in-depth analysis of the lexical innovations and word crafting of Urdu print media at a time where narratives and moods were related to the spread of COVID-19. The paper makes a comparative analysis of five Urdu print media platforms (Siasat Jadid, Qaumi Awaz, Rashtriya Sahara, Inqilab, and in dinon) to filter out the lexical innovation and word crafting related to the COVID-19 outbreak.*

**Keywords:**  Coinages, Neologism, Word Crafting, Communicative Load, Communicative Relevance, Urdu Print Media, Urdu News Media, Linguistic Innovation.

### Introduction

In its journey from 1822 when the first copy of *Jam-I Jahan Numa* was published from Kolkata, Urdu print media never faced a situation where word crafting (neologism) was so much essential to disseminate an honest communication about what is known and unknown about the pandemic and the virus. The language of newspapers is somewhat specific. This is caused by several reasons. One of them is that newspapers have always been written to be read, which means to communicate effectively. Obviously, the language of newspapers has not only been formed by desire to disseminate information to a larger audience. Cotter (2010:27) points out that the characteristics of

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newspaper language "are embodied in stylistic consistency, rhetorical accessibility, and brevity as well as appropriate story structure". He emphasizes that journalists work with a set of tendencies rather than rules and parameters. Among others, the most important tendencies are deadline and access to sources. It suggests that the language of newspapers is a very complex issue. It has its specific restrictions and limitations as well as possibilities and opportunities as it has to serve to a number of readers with a wide range of interests and needs which are not easy to fulfill. In spite of this, journalists have developed a style of expression commonly known as Journalistic style that varies both within a particular newspaper and two or more kinds of newspapers. A newspaper is written by a number of authors, so that there must logically be a little incoherence in terms of style.

The novel COVID-19 infection deeply affected language of news media globally. The Urdu print media is no exception because the diction and the style of expression is often called the mirror of time in which we live. New objects in different spheres arise from time to time and they need to be named. That is why no social development can exist without neologisms and coinage of new words. Though the neologisms dominate in the field of knowledge, newspapers and the language of media can also feel the necessity to express and interpret reality by new ways and create new words that would reflect it. The language of newspaper is considered as a blend of ideas and thoughts which automatically generates and coins new words to accomplish the needs of conversational situations. The strength of new words depends mainly on the accumulative power to communicate the intended meaning. In this backdrop, the paper attempts to analyze the linguistic processes of crafting new expressions related to COVID 19 in Urdu newspaper to measure out their communicative relevance of the coined expressions.

The first component of neologism is Lexical deviation. Lexical deviation processes are based on neologism, compounding, blending, affixation, coinage, and acronym. Neologism happens when a news-editor makes up a word which has not existed before. It is one of the more obvious ways in which a writer exceeds the normal use of the language (Leech, 2014). Lexical deviation tends to produce neologism which refers to "creation of new words where existing rules (of word formation) are applied with generalization".

The second component of this model is borrowing where the news editors intermix words from various sources for the acceptance of communication. According to the context and

situation they borrow words to make communication effective. Borrowing focuses a great impact on the corpus of the current study of Urdu newspaper.

**Neologism**

An example of neologism or the invention of new words is semantic deviation. A word is considered to be deviated if it violates the norm. In semantic deviation, it is important to deal with what Leech calls tropes (foregrounding or irregularities of content). According to him, they are classified largely into three sections:

1. **Semantic Oddity:**

   Semantic oddity means semantic bizarreness of expression. There are five types of semantic oddity: pleonasm, periphrasis, and tautology have semantic redundancy, and oxymoron and paradox have semantic absurdity, which entail irreconcilability of meaning or reference (ibid.).

2. **Transference Of Meaning:**

   According to Leech's classification, transference of meaning is classified into four types of figurative language: synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor and simile (ibid.)

3. **Honest Deception:**

   Leech classifies the term honest deception into three tropes:

(a) Hyperbole (Exaggeration)

(b) Litotes (understatement)

(c) Irony.

Leech (ibid: 171) defines these tropes as follows: they are all connected in that in a sense they misrepresent the truth: hyperbole distorts by saying too much, litotes by saying too little and irony often takes the form of saying or implying the opposite of what one feels to be the case. Honest deception means these three tropes misrepresent the truth for the sake not of deception, but of literary purpose.

During COVID 19 period the word 'quarantine' was frequently used as intransitive verb in English newspapers. The word quarantine has its origin from the Italian words "*quarantagiorni*" which means 40 days. In 1343 AD, the bubonic plague, infamously known as the Black Death, was ripping through the continent and the disease wiped out an estimated one-third of

Europe's population. However, in Urdu newspapersقرنطینہ were phonetically modified to be used as an equivalent of quarantine.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | بلوچستان میں حکومت کا 250 زائرین کو قرنطینہ میں منتقل کرنے کا فیصلہ | BBC |
| 2 | باپ قرنطینہ میں، معذور بیٹا بھوک سے ہلاک | BBC |
| 3 | دوران پرواز کورونا کی تشخیص، امریکی استانی کا جہاز کے ٹوائلٹ میں قرنطینہ! | BBC Urdu |
| 4 | دوران پرواز کرونا کی تشخیص:امریکی اسکول ٹیچر کوطیارہ کے بیت الخلا میں قرنطینہ کا تجربہ | سیاست حیدرآباد |
| 5 | بریدوار کمبھ سے دہلی واپس آنے والوں کے لئے 14 دن کا قرنطینہ ضروری: ڈیزاسٹر منیجمنٹ | قومی آواز |
| 6 | کویت میں داخلے کی نئی شرائط، ہوٹل میں قرنطینہ کے اخراجات مسافر کو خود ادا کرنے ہوں گے | قومی آواز |
| 7 | ٹیسٹ سیریز: چنئی میں انگلینڈ اور ہندوستانی ٹیموں کا قرنطینہ شروع | قومی آواز |
| 8 | چین: قرنطینہ کی وجہ سے شہربند،عوام میں ایک بار پھر بارٹرسسٹم رائج | سیاست حیدرآباد |
| 9 | بیٹی کو کورونا ، اسرائیلی وزیراعظم قرنطینہ میں | سیاست حیدرآباد |
| 10 | سوشانت سنگھ راجپوت معاملہ: بہار کے آئی پی ایس افسر قرنطینہ سے آزاد، ممبئی چھوڑنے کے احکامات | قومی آواز |

**Table 1: Examples of Urdu News Headlines:**

The headlines of Urdu newspapers presented above suggest that the expression قرنطینہ(An Arabicised form of Quarantine) has become part and parcel of everyday communication and, therefore, it occupies a prominent place in most of the Urdu newspaper. The term قرنطینہrefers to a strict isolation regime forced on people to put to a stop the spread of disease. The practice of quarantine specifically involves segregating people or groups of people who may have come into contact with a communicable disease but are asymptomatic, from others who have not been exposed so as to arrest the possibility of the spread of the communicable disease. However, an exact semantic equivalent of the word Quarantine in Urdu is the Urdu expression *Chilla (چلہ)*. In contrast, *Chilla* is a noun which

specifically refers to the act of living separately with a group of people for forty days. It is commonly used in religious discourse, and therefore most of the Urdu newspapers have preferred to use قرنطینہ in Urdu newspapers. The term قرنطینہ (quarantine) is an example of medical jargon that has been used over the years. However, due to the pandemic ravaging the world today as already existing words, they have gained more currency in their use due to the existing social situation. It has been strengthened by forming a compound like رضاکارانہ قرنطینہVoluntary quarantine (رضاکارانہ قرنطینہ) occurs when someone is not coerced into quarantine but does so, on his own volition out of abundance of caution. It is also called self-quarantine. This is a strategy that helps stop the disease from spreading. The term رضاکارانہ قرنطینہ is formed through the process of compounding, since it consists of two units رضاکارانہ, an adjective, and the noun قرنطینہ. The term رضاکارانہ قرنطینہtherefore acts as a noun modifier, thus رضاکارانہis an example of a compound noun. This is an example of already existing words that have gained more currency in their usage in Urdu newspapers due to the existing social situation – COVID-19.

The intended stylistic effect of the use of the expression قرنطینہ is to make texts appear more dramatic, interesting, and accessible and presumably, also to involve the reader emotionally. The aim of these Urdu newspapers is to not only maximize information density, but also to avoid stylistic formality in order to remain readable. It helps in developing a journalistic style to arouse readers' curiosity. The way each element of the CORONA news is ordered in many of the Urdu newspaper designate that it an attempt to simplify the news by providing sufficient background information to make the CORONA issue comprehensible for Urdu news readers. It is reflected in a prodigious display of clichés like قرنطینہin newspaper headlines presented in the Table I. A close look at these headlines puts forward the point that the style of these headlines looks to be highly conventional and unadventurous.

## Acronyms

Acronyms are orthographically-based, and, as such, differ significantly from most other word-formation processes (cf. Bauer 2002). In respect to pronunciation, they behave like ordinary words. They have somehow preserved their phonological value, thus words like AIDS /eɪdz/, laser /leɪzə/, TEFL /tefəl/ are pronounced in this expected manner. Acronyms are frequently formed on the basis of proper names, especially in case of organizations (cf. Jackson 1991), e.g., UNESCO (the

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) or NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization). Quirk et al. (2006) claim that there is a kind of acronymic convenience, i.e., acronyms are, at times, carefully coined to be easily remembered. To illustrate the point further, the paper attempts to present acronyms related to COVID 19

|   | Acronym | Full Form | Urdu Headlines | Newspaper |
|---|---------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| 1 | COVID 19 | Corona Virus Disease 2019 | ملک میں کووڈ ٹسٹ کرانے والوں کی تعداد میں اضافہ | سیاست حیدر آباد |
|   |         |           | کووڈ کی تینوں خوراک لینے والوں کو جاپان آنے کی اجازت :وزیراعظم | سیاست حیدر آباد |
|   |         |           | کووڈ ٹیکہ اندازی مہم میں 213.91 کروڑ سے زیادہ ویکسین لگیں | سیاست حیدر آبا |

**Table II Acronyms**

Acronyms seem to be quite productive in current English. They enjoyed widespread popularity all through the 20th century, many of them originating during the CORONA period. Moreover, acronyms are also considered to be "a direct response to the communicative habitat of the twentieth century" (Mair 2006: 38), i.e., they help us to make manageable the vast amount of scientific terminology we have to face. However, Urdu does not have a tradition of forming acronyms and, therefore, most of the Urdu newspapers retain the English acronyms in their news reports and headlines. The table presented below suggests that among innumerable examples of acronyms used in medical jargon, SARS denoting severe acute respiratory syndrome has been retained in Urdu newspapers.

| 2 | SARS | Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome | کیکوویکسن ٹیکہ سارس۔سی او وی۔2 دوسری شکل کے اثر کو کم کرنے میں معاون | قومی آواز |
|---|------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
|   |      |                                   | چین میں کورونا وائرس کیس سارس سے زیادہ ہوگئے | قومی آواز |
|   |      |                                   | ومی کرون کے بعد کورونا کی ایک اور نئی قسم کا انکشاف | قومی آواز |

**Table II (b) Acronyms**

The communicative strategy of Urdu newspapers to retain acronyms in their writings, have some adverse and damaging effect in the process of disseminating information. The Urdu news readers fail to comprehend the relevance and significance of SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) by reading the above headlines. Based on the analysis of the Urdu newspaper corpus, it was realized, that most of the acronyms were used without a Long Form (LF). This poses a difficulty for readers to validate Short Forms (SFs). The Urdu newspaper readers fail to reach to its possible LF. This motivates them to recognize SFs without the need to look at the possible LFs.

It is also pertinent to touch upon the sociolinguistic dimensions of acronyms, i.e., by pointing out that the use of them can be taken as a marker of social identity. Members of a certain group, but not outsiders, know what they are talking about when using an acronymic word. No-one else is familiar with them.

## Abbreviations

Abbreviations are similar in nature to acronyms as they also are composed of remaining parts of different words. Like acronyms, they also affect loss of material. However, not prosodic but rather orthographic boundaries play a prominent role in case of abbreviations. Although some linguists use synonymous terms such as alphabetisms when referring to abbreviated forms or even subsume them under the category of initialisms. The paper sticks to the usage of abbreviations in order not to interchange the terminology.

Abbreviations are pronounced as sequences of letters, e.g., DNA/diː eneɪ/ or UN/juː en/. They are normally written as the previous examples, nonetheless, occasionally, they could be spelt like ordinary words, as in deejay.

Abbreviations have come into vogue during CORONA period. A number of abbreviated forms have been coined to fill the lexical gaps in the medical field. However, the linguistic pattern of Urdu language does not encourage abbreviated expressions in writings, and therefore, most of the Urdu newspapers preserve and maintain English abbreviated expressions. A list of English abbreviated forms related to CORONA is given below to showcase their communicative relevance. Table III demonstrates the top nine abbreviated expressions of the COVID-19 outbreak from January to March. These abbreviated expressions have a statically significant frequency. All these abbreviated expressions occur in various patterns.

| WFH | "Working from Home" |
|---|---|
| PPE | "Personal Protective Equipment" |
| ARDS | "Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome" |
| CDC | "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention" |
| ARI | "Acute Respiratory Infection" |
| PUI | "Patient Under Investigation" |
| PCR | "Polymerase Chain Reaction" |
| CFR | "Case Fatality Rate" |
| WHO | "World Health Organization" |

**Table III: Abbreviations**

A cursory glance over the Urdu newspaper headings suggests that most of these newspapers prefer to retain the English abbreviated expressions in Urdu. Some of these examples are listed below.

| 2 | PCR | "Polymerase Chain Reaction" | بحرین اور اردن : 'پی سی آر' اور قرنطینہ کی شرط ختم | منصف |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | WHO | "World Health Organization" | ہفتے میں 55 گھنٹے سے زیادہ کام کرنا زندگی ایچ اوکیلئے خطرہ: ڈبلیو | سیاست حیدرآباد |
| | DCP | | ڈی سی پی ابھیشیک مودی نے فیتا کاٹا | اخبار مشرق |

Urdu newspapers played a vital role in the adoption of English abbreviated words and expressions. Thanks to the journalistic style of these newspapers, we are familiar with words such as lockdown, epidemic (وبا), pandemic (عالم گیر وبا), super spreader (سریع الحرکت) وسعت self-isolation, and self-quarantine رضاکارانہ)

(قرنطینہ) , and word chunks (collocations) such as social distancing, (اجتماعی فاصلہ) community spread, (جماعتی پھیلاؤ) cordon sanitaire ح (درمیان کے سرحد کے قو ں علا بای و غیر اور بای و) droplet transmission, کسی مریض کا جھوٹا استعمال کرنے سے چھوت پھیلنا flattening the curve, (خمدار خط کی ہمواریت) tsunamis of COVID-19 cases, emerging disease, solitary confinement, animal-human interface, incubation period, contain the outbreak and viral shedding.

## Compounding

Compounding has flourished during many centuries and remained highly productive to the present time for the simple reason that compounds are the easiest of all new words to create. Accordingly, it gives rise to a number of neologisms and particularly nonce-formations. A compound consists of usually not more than two *lexical bases* functioning both grammatically and semantically as a single item.

| English Expression | Component 1 | Component 2 | Urdu Compounds |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pandemic | عالم گیر | وبا | عالم گیر وبا |
| Superspreader | سریع الحرکت | وسعت | سریع الحرکت وسعت |
| Self-quarantine | رضاکارانہ | قرنطینہ | رضاکارانہ قرنطینہ |
| Social Distancing | اجتماعی | فاصلہ | اجتماعی فاصلہ |
| Community Spread | جماعتی | پھیلاؤ | جماعتی پھیلاؤ |
| Flattening the Curve | خمدار خط | ہمواریت | خمدار خط کی ہمواریت |

**Table IV**: **Urdu equivalents of Compounds**

## Conclusion

The paper has attempted to show that neologisms are a means of the updating of the lexicon. Moreover, they demonstrate language dynamics and its creativity. Neologisms occur within all areas of human activity, so that their description represents an inseparable part of linguistic research and thus is utilizable in practice. The theme deserves a much more concise compilation. This paper is only a small contribution to the comprehensive research of neologisms.

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