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# SEMANTICS AND STRUCTURE OF QUASI-TERMS OF THE PERIOD OF FORCED SELF-ISOLATION

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## Abstract

The article analyzes the problems associated with the formation of new nominations for the Russian language - stable combinations of the period of forced self-isolation and the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors believe that stable combinations belong to the group of quasi-terms and they are analized from the point of view of terminology. Calling these units quasi-terms, the authors rely on their characteristics (i.e. continuity, idiomaticity, stability of lexical and structural composition), yet for all that they keep their metaphorical properties and references to a specific concept. Special focus is on the fact that quasi-terms do not change their definitive and systemic characteristics outside the terminological field, and this distinguishes them from the terms proper, allowing them to be considered separately. Based on the analysis of extensive factual material (texts of bylaws, media articles, messages from the Internet forums), the authors attempt to create an up-to-date structural-semantic classification of quasi-terms, to determine specific implementations of the semantics of stable combinations and the variety of functions performed in speech. It is concluded that the study of the formation and functioning of quasi-terms during the fight against COVID-19 gives a linguist an exceptional opportunity to consider "in action" each element of the mechanism for the formation of terminological meaning, to identify as accurately as possible the stages of "transformation" of the component properties of terminological combinations.

*Keywords:* COVID-19, compound name, nomination, quasi-term, term, terminology

## 1. Introduction

The lexical system of the language is sensitive to all changes taking place in society. The emergence of new nominations that reflect these changes always attracts the attention of researchers and determines the vector of the development of linguistics at a particular stage. Today, we can say that the interest of many scientists is focused on resolving issues related to the description of the semantic and structural features of words and combinations that appeared or began to be actively used in the speech of Russians during the period of forced self-isolation and the fight against COVID-19. These units assigned new definitions, and as result they were immediately perceived by the society as a essential linguistic material to be widely used by indiduals. Studies of the linguistic nomenclature of these units are traditionally carried out in two directions: 1) functional-semantic (Danilenko, 1977; Murzin, 1984; Trubnikova, 2015) and 2) communicative-stylistic (Feschenko & Bochaver, 2016; Kostomarov & Leontiev, 1966; Krysin, 2016) ... Both directions are important and are aimed at a systematic description of new nominations. At the present stage, new approaches to the analysis of the formed terms and terminological combinations are being developed, which allows them to be adapted in scientific linguistic literature and introduced into the existing lexicographic base, making them the property of society.

## 2. Problem Statement

The units referred to in the paper nominated new concepts, and their relevance is beyond doubt. They "serve the sphere of the language as a whole, as well as individual micro-areas of society; therefore the consistency of new lexical units is also manifested in the functional sphere" (Alieva, 2003, p. 282), and "the functional approach to the study of neologisms proves that these units are used in certain spheres of communication" (Alieva, 2003, p. 282). As they are used in the sphere of social relations, these units, on the one hand, form a certain common "semantic field", thus approaching a group of social terms, and on the other hand, they have significant limitations to be referred to as terms. In our view, it is more logical to consider these linguistic units to be 'quasi-terms', rather than 'terms' in the traditional meaning, while bearing in mind their autonomous and neologic status. In fact, the novelty and uniqueness of quasi-terms causes our scientific interest in them.

## 3. Research Questions

These units can be defined as quasi-terms pursuant to Vinogradov, who writes that:

there are two sides to the formation and definition of a term, two points of view: structural-linguistic and conceptual, semantic, conditioned by the development of a system of concepts of a particular science, a particular production, craft. Both of these sides are interconnected and conditioned by history, culture and tradition. One side of the term is studied by specialists in this branch of knowledge, the other is studied by linguists (Tatarinov, 1996, pp. 264-265).

Of course, the areas where lexical units in question are formed could hardly be identified as branches of knowledge. They are more social aspects of life that have been in demand at a certain stage of the evolution of the Russian society and have been accelerated in the background of the COVID-19

situation. The above, however, does not alter the linguistic essence of the units in question and the significance of their descriptive analysis. In our view, the 'term' as a concept could be defined in line with Leichik (2006), who understands the 'term' as "a lexical unit of a certain language for special purposes, denoting a general - concrete or abstract - concept of the theory of a certain special area of knowledge or activity" (p. 32). The most relevant features of the term are its social regulation, thematic fixation and clearly limited scope of application, the exact ratio of the word and the nominated reality (object, phenomenon). The term is not characterized by subjectivity and various kinds of connotations. "The term is not individual, but social, therefore any term is correlated with terminology and any terminology is an institution of a certain social group" (Nasirova & Kirillova, 2016, pp. 43-44). In quasi-terms, these signs are partially "blurred", not manifested in some situations or areas, or are absent at all, or compensated by others. For example, the lexeme "*удаленный*" (distant) in the phrase "*удаленный работник*" (distant worker) activates the sema (component of the meaning) "move to a farther distance; distance" only within the semantic field of "forced self-isolation" and the components of the combination, while maintaining "semantic freedom", are reproduced as an integral unit. In other cases, and before the situation with the COVID-19 epidemic, the components (semes) "to force to leave, to leave from somewhere, to leave some place" were relevant for the lexeme "*удаленный*" (distant) fig. "to deprive somebody of the opportunity to participate in something., to do something.; to remove," so the components of combinations with the word "distant" remained free and were not fixed thematically and stylistically.

From that perspective this group of lexical units could be interpreted as quasi-terms without any controversy. Only interpersonal communication, where they function should be minded. However, grouping these lexical units based on the thematic principle enables to systematization, also helps to identify the features of semantics and structure, and determine the motivational components of each of the groups included in the general term field "forced self-isolation".

Researchers (sociologists, psychologists, linguists) explain the reasons for the emergence of these quasi-terms and combinations by the reasons associated with the changes that took place in Russian society during the restrictions of spring-autumn 2020, which became rather stressful for most of the population of Russia (Karasik, 2020). That is, from the period of "the beginning of restrictions", the speech usage of the population includes words and combinations that were not previously used or were used to a limited extent, containing specific images *(нулевой пациент, ковидная пневмония, ковидные осложнения, противоковидный штаб, социальное дистанцирование, подозрительные пациенты, актуальная COVID-информация)*. These new words cause a feeling of anxiety, confusion, disorientation, and uncertainty about future. Obviously, we can say that this type of speech behavior does not become characteristic of the overwhelming part of the population (it reflects very narrow linguistic phenomena that appeared only during the period of forced self-isolation), but it cannot remain without attention and should be described in scientific literature.

## 4.   Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this paper is to determine the linguistic status of new nominations. Calling the units quasi-terms, we rely on the features like their continuity, idiomaticity, stability of lexical and

structural composition, keeping their metaphorical properties, linking to a specific concept, often with a proper name. And if the specific qualities of the term reveal only within the terminological field, then the quasi-term does have the same definitive and systemic characteristics outside it on most of the cases. When comparing the actual terms and quasi-terms, we proceed from the interpretation of Reformatsky, who noted: "The specificity of the term is primarily in the precisely delimited sphere of its application, in the relationship of thing to word. Of course, every term is a word. But not every word is a term. "The same thing" can be a term or just a word, and this is not a consequence of a "point of view" or, in general, a subjective reaction to a given verbal object, but a consequence of the objective structural properties and characteristics of a given object. If a word is used only as a term (*эпентеза, вектор, бином, вагранка, форсунка, увула*) then there is no sense in looking for its differences from a simple word" (Reformatsky, 1968, pp. 165-166). … "The main tendency of the term is limitation of the lexical field and monosemicity ..." (Reformatsky, 1968, pp. 165-166).

Attempts to isolate and limit the spheres of functioning of quasi-terms draw us to different areas of life and human interaction: politics, economics, medicine, education, information resources and technologies, as well as more private spheres such as work, leisure, lifestyle, etc. Such "fragmentation" of linguistic material indicates the complexity and ambiguity of the phenomenon itself. Therefore, it allows us to use a broader approach to the analysis of linguistic units: quasi-terms and quasi-terminological combinations in our paper act as elements of the functional sphere of communication. They are realized as logical-grammatical (structural-grammatical) models and cognitive images (nominations *масочный режим, социальная дистанция, противоковидный дезинфектор* form an image of a limited space ("a person in in a limited space"); nominations *дистанционное обслуживание, бесконтактная доставка* form an image of simplicity of buying / purchase, etc. ). Such understanding is socially and personally oriented (Kiose, 2015): according to Solso (2006), "people, as a rule, have an egocentric view of the world, which is reflected in their mental maps" (p. 262).

Achieving this goal presupposes the solution of specific tasks, the main ones of which are: 1) highlighting the semantics of new nominations, 2) analyzing their structural features, and 3) determining their communicative and stylistic potential.

## 5.  Research Methods

To achieve the goal and solve the tasks, the following research methods are used in the work: theoretical analysis of linguistic, sociological, philosophical literature on the research problem; a descriptive method for highlighting culturally specific vocabulary, a method of lexicographic analysis developed by the Russian school of lexicography, a method of comparative analysis, known in the world lexicographic practice as dictionary criticism; normative-stylistic, allowing to analyze the selected lexical (lexical-phraseological) material from the standpoint of the current norms and to develop recommendations of a normative-stylistic nature based on the formed criteria.

An essential place in the work is taken by differential analysis of vocabulary, which is based on the statement that linguistic units are in a certain relationship with each other, form a system and can be identified and classified according to their place in the system. Based on this approach, the formation of thematic groups of the identified quasi-terms is carried out and the structural types of terminological

combinations are established - compound names. On the basis of the paradigmatic relations of linguistic units, the distinguishing features of these units (formal or substantive) are clarified.

## 6. Findings

The material for the study was stable combinations that we identified from by-laws, media articles published in recent months, messages from the Internet forums. Linguistic selection of current textual material made it possible to identify the most relevant thematic groups of stable combinations. These included:

- names of medical and epidemiological realities (коронавирусная инфекция, ковидная пневмония, ковидные осложнения, легочно-ковидные больные);
- names of restrictive measures (вынужденная самоизоляция, режим самоизоляции, вынужденные выходные, вынужденный отпуск (вынужденка), режим нерабочих дней, социальная дистанция, социальное дистанцирование, режим повышенной готовности, противоковидные ограничения, противоковидные меры, период ограничений, график прогулок, масочный режим, перчаточный режим, перчаточно-масочный режим, социальная разметка, *аэропортовый антиковид*);
- names of the structures of the period of restrictions ((противоковидный пост, противоковидная станция, оперативный противоковидный штаб, противоковидный госпиталь, противоковидная палата, ковидный госпиталь, ковидная палата, ковидная бригада, ковидный центр, ковидное гетто, чистая зона, красная зона, центр обсервации, COVID-лаборатория);
- names of individual social groups (группа риска, группа поддержки, *антиковид-партнер (специальный антиковид-партнер),* волонтеры COVID);
- names of a person's status during the period of restrictions (нулевой пациент, контактные лица, подозрительные пациенты, ковидный больной, больной / пациент с COVID / ковид, больной / пациент с подозрением на COVID / ковид, дистанционный работник, удаленный работник, *ковид-диссидент*);
- names of medical protective means, assistance and medical measures (средства индивидуальной защиты, противоковидная защита, противоковидный дезинфектор, тест-система ПЦР, аппарат ИВЛ, противоковидная терапия, противоковидные мероприятия, COVID-диагностика, противоковидная вакцина, антиковидный препарат (антиковид), ковидные койки, ковидные меры, помощь ковидным больным, антиковид-рацион);
- names of the results of antiviral manipulations (условно положительный результат, коллективный иммунитет, популяционный иммунитет, иммунитет толпы);
- names of the forms of work during the period of restrictions (удаленная работа (удаленка), удаленный режим работы, дистанционная работа (дистанционка), дистанционное обучение (дистанционка, дистант), дистанционное обслуживание, бесконтактная доставка);

- names of forms of information interaction during the period of restrictions(актуальная COVID-информация, COVID-информирование, информационная эпидемия (инфодемия), противоковидный гаджет, помощь больным с COVID / ковид);

- names of economic and quasi-economic realities (антикоронавирусный мораторий (на банкротство), *антиковид региональный (микрозаем), антиковид-поддержка, антиковид-выплата, антиковид-фонд, антивирусные деньги,* противоковидный набор, противоковидный портфель, стимулирующие COVID-выплаты, ковидные выплаты, противоковидные послабления, противоковидные субсидии, бесконтактная оплата, курс лимона, курс имбиря);

- names of time periods / periods associated with the spread of COVID-19 (*первая волна, вторая волна, третья волна [COVID-19 / ковид]*);

- names of forms of leisure activities and behavior of the population during the period of self-restraint: (*антиковид-пати, антиковид-граффити, антиковид-поведение, ковид-диссидентство*).

Obviously, the lexical units under consideration have somewhat unclear terminological status and "occupy a subordinate position in relation to terminology" (Tatarinov, 1996, p. 256). They are closer to professional jargon, as they have some characteristics of a metaphor (*удаленка, дистанционка, вынужденка*), but "depart from them as for the frequency and the scope" (Pozdnyakova & Jasim Muna Aref, 2013, p. 297). Unlike professional jargon that in used within specialists, the selected units are familiar to most of Russian society, but only some social groups use them in a limited way. Such nominations as *ковидная пневмония, ковидные осложнения, легочно-ковидные больные, ковидные койки, антиковид-рацион* have become topical.

The distribution of these lexical units according to the thematic principle makes it possible to systematize them, to highlight the peculiarities of semantics and structure, to determine the motivational components of each of the groups included in the general term field "forced self-isolation".

The analysis of the structure of new quasi-terms allows us to form three groups of units: 1) simple quasi-terms, consisting of one word - univerb (*антиковид, удаленка, дистанционка*) or abbreviation (*COVID / ковид, ПЦР*), 2) complex quasi-terms, consisting of a compound noun (*антиковид-поддержка, антиковид-выплата, антиковид-фонд, антиковид-пати, антиковид-граффити, COVID-информирование, COVID-выплаты, ковид-диссидент*), 3) quasi-terminological combinations.

Structurally, most quasi-terminological combinations are compound names (CN). "Compound names are distinguished from the general nominative composition of the Russian language on the basis of the common structural and grammatical organization of these units: they are organized according to the model of a substantive phrase" (Pozdnyakova & Chepkova, 2020, p. 110). Conventionally, this structural feature of CN can be represented by the following schemes: $N_1$ + SC (*противоковидный набор, противоковидный портфель, курс лимона, курс имбиря*), $N_1$ + SVC (*средства индивидуальной защиты, режим нерабочих дней*), where N is a noun; digital index is the ordinal number of the case; SC is subordinate component and SVC is a subordinate verbal complex. Having supplemented these symbols with the conventional designations of an adjective (adj.), numeral (num.), participle (P),

preposition (pr), adverb (adv), we are able to identify grammatical structures. The order of the components in the composition of the CN is restricted, which is also captured in the diagrams.

The analysis of the grammatical structures of the CN allowed us to determine the most productive structural types of quasi-terminological combinations in the synchronous-diachronic aspect. Here is the list of them.

1. Models with a central component $N_1$ and a dependent adjective (participle, ordinal numeral):

- $adj_1 + N_1$ (*ковидный больной, дистанционный работник, удаленный работник* и т.п.);
- $adj_1 + adj_1 + N_1$ (*оперативный противоковидный штаб*);
- $P_1 + N_1$ (*вынужденная самоизоляция, вынужденные выходные, вынужденный отпуск*);
- $num_1 + N_1$ (*первая волна, вторая волна, третья волна [COVID-19 / ковид]*);
- $adv + adj_1 + N_1$ (*условно положительный результат, условно отрицательный результат*).

2. Models with a central component $N_1$ and a dependent noun in the form of an oblique case. This structural type has varieties:

- $N_1 + N_2$ (*курс лимона, курс имбиря, иммунитет толпы*);
- $N_1 + adj_2 + N_2$ (*средства индивидуальной защиты, режим нерабочих дней*);
- $N_1 + P_2 + N_2$ (*режим повышенной готовности*)
- $N_1 + pr + N_3$ (*антитела к коронавирусу / ковид(у) / COVID-19*);
- $N_1 + adj_3 + N_3$ (*помощь ковидным больным*);
- $N_1 + pr + N_5$ (*пациент / больной с COVID / ковид*);
- $N_1 + pr + N_5 + pr + N_5$ (*пациент / больной с подозрением на COVID / ковид*);
- $adj_1 + N_1 + pr + N_4$ (*антикоронавирусный мораторий на банкротство*);

The semantic and grammatical properties of the above compound names are due to the specificity of their structural and grammatical organization. The analyzed CNs, which have the structure of a substantive phrase, in the language system act as units with the semantics of objectivity and have different content.

In the structure of CN, formed in line with to the $adj_1 + N_1$ model, "one property or quality is selected or being in focus, which is attributed to a word with an objective meaning. The ability of an adjective to merge semantically into a semantic whole with the defined noun" was described by Kozhin (1969, p. 36). This explains "the activity of adjectives (compound names): they (CN) are "applicable" to a large number of objects as fixators of a separate concept or that one which is transformed into a concept with a different volume of content" (Kozhin, 1969, p. 36).

In various types of scientific and professional speech, compound names are active, the main word of which is polysemantic and in some of its lexical and semantic forms is neutral. The adjectives give the terminological status to such compound names, which make it possible to significantly narrow and concretize the semantics of the reference word. So, for example, the following combinations are active: *противоковидная защита, противоковидные субсидии, бесконтактная оплата, информационная эпидемия* etc.

The above examples indicate that grammatically the main word of a compound name is not necessarily the same as for semantics. Therefore, "it is typical when CNs form is open, unclosed rows of

grammatically dependent, but semantically key words" (Chepkova, 2007, p. 87), for example: *противоковидный / антиковидный / коллективный / популяционный* **иммунитет**; *противоковидные / антиковидные / карантинные / ограничительные* **меры**. CNs of this type are formed according to semantic and grammatical models that are productive in the Russian language.

The sources of new quasi-terms should be mentioned separately. Many of them are units of proper Russian origin (*удаленка, дистанционка, вынужденка, больной с ковид*). A significant part is made up of calque from English. By means of calks, "foreign" words, expressions and phrases are adapted in the speech of native speakers. Some researchers (Krysin, 2016; Shansky, 1975) consider calques to be a kind of reaction of native speakers to an increased number of direct borrowings of foreign words that are used in everyday life and science.

It is worth mentioning that for the Russian language, calque formation is not the predominant way of assimilating foreign language vocabulary, as is observed, for example, in the Chinese language. However, the units that appear in specific historical periods, to a certain extent "stressful" for society, are interesting examples of "productive word-formation activity" (Feschenko & Bochaver, 2016, p. 17). This also applies to the English calks that appeared or updated during the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. We studied some of the units that became frequent in English and Russian and were recorded by the Oxford Dictionary of English (OED) [information on the official website of the OED from 09.04.2020] (New Oxford Dictionary of English, 2020; Oxford Dictionary of English, 2020). Such calks stand out, for example, in the following thematic groups:

- distance activities: social distancing (*социальное дистанцирование*), self-quarantine (*самокарантин, самоизоляция*), elbow bump (*толчок в локоть*);
- characteristics of a person during the period of isolation: patient zero (*нулевой пациент*);
- means of protection: PPE / personal protective equipment; (*индивидуальные средства защиты*);
- labor activity during the period of isolation: WFH / working from home (*работать из дома*), shelter-in-place (*жилье на месте / занять ближайшее укрытие*); в русском языке для этих номинаций более популярными оказались существительные, образованные на базе сочетаний: *удаленка – удаленная работа, дистанционка – дистанционная работа, дистанционное обучение, бесконтакт – бесконтактная доставка* и etc.;
- characteristics of information processes: infodemic (*информационная эпидемия*; the term appeared earlier in 2006 during the SARS epidemic), post-truth (*постправда*, the term appeared in 2016 but began to be widely used during the events of 2020), fake news (*фейковые новости*, the term first recorded in 2017, and also relevant during the fight against COVID-19);
- periodization of the spread of COVID-19: first wave (первая волна), second wave (вторая волна); these combinations existed in the Russian language, but in a different meaning not associated with diseases; at present, probably under the influence of English, they began to be used to nominate periods of illness, epidemic.

The formation of new meanings of words and expressions existing in the Russian language (including under the influence of calking) is a "growth factor" of the Russian vocabulary and an indicator

of its "linguistic openness" (Morkovkin et al., 2016). In this regard, fundamentally important measures are: 1) monitoring the replenishment of the lexical fund of the language, 2) the most accurate fixation of the meanings of the included units, 3) systematic updating of dictionary entries of existing (and current) Russian dictionaries [on the example of the model of updates of the Oxford Dictionary entries, which is carried out quarterly] (Oxford Dictionary Online, 2020).]

Examples of such cross-language interaction allow us to speak about the importance of social interaction in extraordinary world situations and "indicate the need for a comprehensive problem-oriented study of cultural transfer techniques in the context of multilingual exchange of expert knowledge" (Feschenko & Bochaver, 2016, p. 6).

## 7. Conclusion

Based on the research performed, the following conclusions can be made.

Changes in public and political life are definitely reflected in the vocabulary of the language. The changes that have taken place in Russian society during the COVID-19 have resulted in a whole group of words and phrases united by a common thematic feature - "forced self-isolation." These units, which we call quasi-terms, have practically lost their connotative component and began to be used as simple names for specific (in some cases, "professional") objects, phenomena and processes.

Some of the previously functioning lexemes and stable phrases during the period of forced self-isolation are modified semantically and develop new meanings or nuances of meanings.

Careful observation of the formation and functioning of quasi-terms of the period of the fight against COVID-19 gives a linguist an exceptional opportunity to consider each element of the mechanism for the formation of terminological meaning "in action". It helps to identify as accurately as possible the stages of the "degeneration" of the properties of components of terminological combinations, and to draw a conclusion about the role of extra-linguistic factors in the formation of the meanings of quasi-terms and quasi-terminological combinations.

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