# Social-cultural Dynamics and Language Innovations: A Lexicology of COVID-19 Neologisms in Kiswahili

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*Author's contribution*

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## ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, languages including Kiswahili had to adapt to a sudden influx of neologisms and scientific terms as health workers and governments strived to convey necessary advice to the public in order to contain spread of the disease. This article presents a sociolinguistic overview on social cultural dynamics and language innovations. It examines how social cultural undercurrents and society changes necessities language ingenuity to accommodate new morphological expressions, ideas and concepts. The focus is on COVID-19 neologisms in Kiswahili, their sense and usage during the coronavirus pandemic epoch as well as lexis's re-structuring and practice in Kiswahili. The data was collected from articles, books, online Corpus and social media. Random sampling method was used in creating a corpus for analysis. The study involved establishing a list of common English terms related to COVID-19 and their equivalents in Kiswahili. The findings revealed that social-cultural dynamics impact language innovations as shown in many COVID-19 neologisms and expressions generated during the corona pandemic period in Kiswahili. The neological processes and language innovations involved include borrowing, lexical deviation, blending as well as calquering.

*Keywords: COVID-19; lexicology; language innovation; neologisms; neological processes; socio-cultural dynamics.*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Sociologists define social dynamics as changes in human interactions and relations that transform cultural and social foundations including language. Society and culture influence the words that we speak, and the words that we speak influence society and culture. In March 2020, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic. This announcement shook the entire world and led the world to unchartered paths both in health, social dynamics and language. According to Asif et al. [1] new terms emerged globally during the outbreak of COVID-19 in the form of neologism, i.e. word formation, borrowing, and lexical deviation. Clearly, we added new words and expressions to our spoken languages. The effects of the pandemic on society and language have been clear not only in mainstream languages but also in vernacular languages across the globe. This scenario mirrors the fact that a language is considered as a composite of ideas and thoughts which inevitably creates and coins new words to achieve the needs of an ever changing society. Language is central to social interaction in every society hence social changes ultimately leads to language changes and innovations. Language and social interaction have a reciprocal relationship: language shapes social interactions and social interactions shape language [2]. The basic ingredient for social interaction is the words used in that language. The way we choose and arrange words allow us to share our ideas, thoughts, and feelings as well as respond to social dynamics. This may delve into lexicology which according to McArthur [3] is a branch of linguistics that deals with the study of nature, meaning, history and use of words and word elements. In other words, lexicology often requires looking into elements of the language system such as morphology, semantics, sociolinguistics, etymology and societal contexts.

Klein (2015) posits that "lexicology is the scientific investigation of the lexicon of a language, including, its historical development, its social stratification, its quantitative composition, or the way in which some thematic area is encoded". In language there is intermingling of ideas and thoughts which routinely creates new words to achieve the needs of conversational circumstances in an ever changing society. Sociolinguistic change mirrors social change whose modification occurs in the life of the entire community. Languages evolve and adapt to new realities and circumstances. According to Anissa [4], "every living language has a large number of operations which allows it to maintain its continuity. With the covid-19 pandemic, new lexical forms emerged forged from existing forms by derivation, composition, borrowing and telescoping, to describe and name new realities". "Language evolves over time and does not operate in a vacuum" [2]. Essentially, a language contains not merely a stock of words we commonly understand as lexis or vocabulary, but also linguistic innovations which are rich in history, culture and social dynamics that shape the language and its use.

The strands of linguistic innovation may include neologism, expansion of lexical and grammatical expressions, and evolution of new usage for existing language repertoire or creative encoding of meaning. This falls within the armpits of lexicology and neology. As already pointed out, lexicology is the part of linguistics that studies words, their nature and meaning. It may examine elements of words, relations between words and their contextual usage. On the other hand, neology is considered to be the generator of new forms, which constantly offers the lexical descriptions of new situations. Neologisms are therefore new words or word combinations that appear in a language due to the new developments and advancements in social life, culture technology and social dynamics. Existing words that acquire new meanings may also be regarded as neologisms [5,6].

"Language change involves modification of forms of language over a period of time. Such change may affect any parts of a language (pronunciation, orthography, grammar, vocabulary) and is taking place all the time. It may be abrupt or gradual" [7]. "Accounting for the mode of language change, extensive lists of drivers for diversity have been proposed and include factors such as population and community size, technological innovations, geography and ecology and a variety of social factors, among them, political complexity, society type, language maintenance and shift, and language and social identity" [8]. As society changes, language must evolve to provide tools for verbal interactions, in accordance with social dynamics and practice. Of necessity, social change goes hand in hand with linguistic change. "The language of a human being is considered as a creative entity which is very is dynamic and not static in order for a language to survive and grow" [1]. Such change is caused by both

internal and external factors. Internal change can mean the adaptation of both the meanings and forms of existing words and phrases while external change includes the borrowing of words and expressions.

Language change may occur either in the natural course or as a result of planned efforts [9]. By and large, it is thought that factors such as changes in technology, economic development, and health pandemic or climatic conditions cause social changes. This is called monistic theory which seeks to interpret social change in terms of one single factor. Social change goes hand in hand with language and cultural change. Languages act like living entities and evolve over time, adapting to new realities and circumstances around them. New words and expressions are constantly being added to both spoken and written language. In recent decades, it has been observed in the segment of language innovations related to epidemics and diseases such as yellow fever, SARS, AIDS and COVID-19 [1]. All these health situations have resulted in social and linguistic changes such as behavior modification, introduction of new vocabulary and sometimes new word structures and patterns.

Some linguistic studies that explore neologism related to (COVID-19) include Linguistic analysis of neologism related to coronavirus (COVID-19) by Asif et al. [1] which focused on the phenomenon of neologism to explore the creation of new words in English during the outbreak of COVID-19. The study examines new words and novel usage of words that developed during COVID-19 period in order to address the social-health situation that was rapidly changing. Another study conducted by Katermina and Yachenko [10] on the Axiology of COVID-19 as a Linguistic Phenomenon in English Mass Media Discourse concludes that global changes in the socio-economic life result in certain changes in the language structure because language is an instrument of verbal communication, and an important part of the culture.

According to Tan et al. [11] "scholars from different parts of the world have published linguistic research related to COVID-19 with macro- and micro-linguistic perspectives, ranging from corpus-based analysis to content analysis studies including the way government bodies communicated with the public, official announcements, parliamentary proceedings as well as comparative textual analysis on linguistic methods used in COVID-19 related studies".

From the literature reviewed not much has been done on how social-cultural dynamics impact language innovations in many African languages. This paper therefore, presents a sociolinguistic overview on social cultural dynamics and language innovations particularly COVID-19 neologisms in Kiswahili.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is grounded on sociolinguistics theory of language change. The sociolinguistics theory focuses on social and sociocultural factors underlying language diversification and change. It is premised on the works of Labov [12] and Trudgill [13]. Generally, all the natural languages are constantly developing and changing. Language changes affect all levels of the language system in response to various linguistic and non-linguistic factors. As new things are invented, as new practices become conventional, and as new conceptions emerge, new words must fill in the gaps in language and society. The focus of this paper is mostly on the morphological system especially the neological processes and language innovations related to COVID-19 neologism in Kiswahili. Krishnamurthy (2010) developed a model of neologism which is also used to highlight neologism processes in Kiswahili. The study focused on three components of neologism, i.e. calquering/lexical deviation, borrowing and blending.

The dynamism of language innovation is proportional to the appearance of new situations which the speaker might encounter [4]. Linguistic innovation and social changes therefore go hand in hand. Sinha [14] postulates that language as a social and semiotic system is not only grounded in embodied activities with the material and social-interactional world, but also mediate human cognition, informational repositories constitutive of culturally and historically emergent cognitive domains. It is shaped by society and social changes have an impact on language use as well as lexicology through the creation of new words in response to social cultural dynamics. Neologisms reveal the nature of language; that it is not something set in stone, but a changing domain, subject to variation, deletions, additions, and modification.

Random sampling method was used in creating a corpus for analysis. The data for the study was collected from articles, books, online Corpus and social media. The researcher picked common English words and expressions used during

COVID-19 related discourse on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and twitter as well as mainstream print and broadcast media. Subsequently, a list of twenty English terms related to COVID-19 was generated. The researcher's task was to establish their equivalents in Kiswahili. In order to produce these equivalents the research relied on online searches and translation of the English words and expressions. Simple entries of English etymology and Kiswahili neologism equivalents were thus established. Finally, the study focused on neological processes involved based on Krishnamurthy (2010) model of neologism. Subsequently, a discussion on neologism processes and usage was done tracing neologisms introduced to Kiswahili during the COVID-19 period, their English etymology words and the various neological processes involved in their creation.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Crystal [15] describes "language as the systematic, conventional use of sounds, signs or written symbols in a human society for communication and self-expression". It is through language that we communicate with the world, define our identity, express our history and culture, learn, defend our human rights and participate in all aspects of society. "Elements such as language, rituals, clothes, science, beliefs and values connect people together" (Roohul-Amini, 1989). Language is pivotal in helping people to preserve their community's history, customs and traditions, memory, unique modes of thinking, meaning and expression. They also use it to construct their future. Culture is learnt through relation with other people. Words are the most significant tools of cultural symbols. As society keeps on changing so does language. According to Agha, [16] "language is closely linked to our social relationships and is the medium through which we participate in a variety of social activities".

"Accounting for the mode of language change, extensive lists of drivers for diversity have been proposed and include factors such as population and community size, technological innovations, geography, ecology and a variety of social factors, among them, political complexity, society type, and social variables" [17]. These factors have affected many languages vocabulary adding new words and combinations to them, as well as new connotations to already existing lexemes. This study focuses COVID-19 neologisms in Kiswahili. We embark by examining neologisms related to COVID-19 in in Kiswahili language and their etymology.

Neologisms play a significant role in language change. As new words are created in the language, new vocabulary emerge, old words may acquire new senses the language becomes more responsive to social cultural dynamics. Table 1 presents a list of COVID-19 Kiswahili neologism and their English sources/ etymology.

According to Khan [18] neologism or coining new words is an important tool to study the variation or change in language. In embracing social and cultural dynamism, neologism also highlights the fluidity of language to cope with contemporary societal developments. Neologism is defined as a newly generated word or lexical item that may be in the process of switching in common life (ODE 2003). Rey (1995) discusses the concept of neologism and identifies three core areas of neology: formal neology, semantic neology and pragmatic neology. Formal neology is a result of application of grammatical rules to the morphology of a language such as suffixation and pre-fixation. Semantic Neology is a feature found in all neologisms which is used to express the meaning through borrowing and internal derivations. Pragmatic neology is identified on the basis of language use in communication. This means that neologism is to be used in a social context depending on its appropriateness in communication to create new words or new usage of existing words. The new words in a language create a system of encoding knowledge, ideas and facilitate communication about new phenomenon such as COVID-19.

According to Katermina, and Yachenko [10] vocabulary is recognized to be the linguistic field in which various changes occurring in the society's or ethnicity's culture are established in the most evident and direct way in a society. With the COVID-19 pandemic, new lexical forms developed to describe and name new realities corresponding socio-cultural dynamics. Table 2 presents a list of COVID-19 Kiswahili neologism, their English sources/ etymology and the neological processes involved.

**Table 1. COVID-19 Kiswahili neologism and their etymology (source: researcher data, 2022)**

| Neologisms | Etymology |
|---|---|
| Mwenye haonyeshi dalili zozote za ugonjwa. | Asymptomatic |
| Kuenea katika jamii | Community spread |
| Kuambukiza | Contagious |
| Virusi vya korona | Corona virus (COVID-19) |
| Kufungiwa | Confinement |
| Ugonjwa wa mlipuko | Epidemic |
| Kiwango cha vifo | Fatality rate |
| Kujitenga/ kutengwa | Isolation |
| Usawazishaji wa mchirizo. | Flatten the curve |
| Kusitisha safari za ndani na nje ya eneo fulani | Lockdown |
| Barakoa ya usoni | Face mask |
| Barakoa | Mask |
| Mkurupuko | Outbreak |
| Vifaakinga | Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) |
| Janga kubwa | Pandemic |
| karantini | Quarantine |
| Uchunguzi. | Screening |
| Kutotangamana na watu | Social distancing |
| Mwenye dalili za ugonjwa | Symptomatic |
| Uambukizaji | Transmission |

**Table 2. COVID-19 Kiswahili neologism, etymology and their neological processes (Source: researcher data, 2022)**

| Neologisms | Etymology | Neological processes |
|---|---|---|
| Mwenye haonyeshi dalili zozote za ugonjwa. | Asymptomatic | Calquering/ Lexical deviation. |
| Kuenea katika jamii | Community spread | Calquering/ Lexical deviation |
| Kuambukiza | Contagious | Lexical deviation |
| Virusi vya korona | Corona virus (COVID-19) | Borrowing |
| Kufungiwa | Confinement | Lexical deviation |
| Ugonjwa wa mlipuko | Epidemic | Alteration of existing words. |
| Kiwango cha vifo | Fatality rate | calquering |
| Kujitenga/ kutengwa | Isolation | Lexical deviation |
| Usawazishaji wa mchirizo. | Flatten the curve | calquering |
| Kusitisha safari za ndani na nje ya eneo fulani | Lockdown | calquering |
| Barakoa ya usoni | Face mask | calquering |
| Barakoa | Mask | Lexical deviation |
| Mkurupuko | Outbreak | Lexical deviation |
| Vifaakinga | Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) | Blending |
| Janga kubwa | Pandemic | Lexical deviation |
| karantini | Quarantine | Borrowing |
| Uchunguzi. | Screening | Lexical deviation |
| Kutotangamana na watu | Social distancing | calquering |
| Mwenye dalili za ugonjwa | Symptomatic | calquering |
| Uambukizaji | Transmission | Lexical deviation |

Language change is usually entrenched in socio-cultural change. Sociologists explain social changes as fluctuations in human interactions and relationships that transform cultural and social institution [19]. It is the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behavior, social organizations, value systems or language practices. The causes of social change are varied, and the processes of change can be either short-term or long-term developments. As society undergoes social changes, the linguistic forms and the social meanings, may also change. Neologism is the basis of new lexical items to capture the waves of social change within a speech community at a specific time. Aduda [20], argues that "neologism may denote new words borrowed from other languages and dialects, new words created through morphological processes operating in the language under study, words acquiring new senses and words produced as a result of speech defects". From the study, most COVID-19 neologisms in Kiswahili can be attributed to four neological processes. These processes include calquering, lexical deviation, borrowing and blending which are next discoursed.

To begin with, calquering can be defined as a word-for-word translation from one language into another. Crystal [15] states that "calquering is a term used in comparative and historical linguistics to refer to a type of borrowing, where the morphemic constituents of the borrowed word or phrase are translated item by item into equivalent morphemes in the new language". It is a type of loan in which words or phrases are borrowed from another language, with each of the elements of the phrase being translated to the target language respecting its syntactical structures. In this study most words and phrases are taken from English and then literally translated word-for-word into Kiswahili. Instances of COVID-19 neologisms in Kiswahili phrases that are calques translated from English include;

### 3.1 Mwenye haonyeshi Dalili Zozote Za Ugonjwa

This phrase is equivalent to the term "asymptomatic" which has no direct translation and needs to be explained. During the pandemic it was associated with mild symptoms, when the word actually means to be 'without' symptoms'. In the context of COVID-19, it meant a period of time when someone has the virus and is able to infect others and make them sick, but may not feel any symptoms. Though the concept of being asymptomatic is represented by a single lexeme in English; the equivalent in Kiswahili is an entire clause. This is an instance of structural or syntactic calque.

### 3.2 Kuenea Katika Jamii

This refers to community spread in English. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), community spread refers to the process of an infectious illness such as COVI-19 spreading through a large group of people in a general way, so that the source of the infection in a particular case is not known. The translation in this case is equivalent to the phrase in source language. This is an instance of phrasal calque derived from a phrase in English.

### 3.3 Kiwango Cha Vifo

This is the same as fatality rate. Fatality rate refers to the number of deaths from a specific cause. During COVID-19 outbreak, estimation of the case fatality rate was used as an indication of its severity of the disease. This is an instance of phrasal calque derived from a phrase in English. The translation is equivalent to the phrase in source language.

### 3.4 Kusitisha Safari Za Ndani Na Nje Ya Eneo Fulani

This clause is equivalent to lockdown in English. It refers to a situation in which people are not allowed to freely enter, leave, or move around in a building or area because of danger. During COVID-19 it was a period of time in which people were not allowed to leave their homes or travel freely, because of the disease.

### 3.5 Usawazishaji Wa Mchirizo

This is the same as flattening the curve in English which means slowing the spread of the epidemic so that the peak number of people requiring care at a time is reduced. It aims at preventing the rate or quantity from greatly intensifying or increasing within a short time. Just like in English the Kiswahili equivalent remains a phrase.

### 3.6 Barakoa Ya Usoni

Face mask was used as the umbrella term for all types of face coverings, from the custom-made

cotton scarves to disposable surgical masks and medical-grade N95 respirators. Ironically, notwithstanding the term most people only covered their mouths but the meaning imply covering the entire face and is translated as such into Kiswahili.

## 3.7 Kutotangamana Na Watu

This is a translation of social distancing which is the practice of maintaining a greater than usual physical distance from other people or of avoiding direct contact with people or objects in public places during the outbreak of COVID-19 in order to minimize exposure and reduce the transmission of infection. However, though this term seems disassociating with people it meant physical distancing in both source and target language. This shows that the translation was not just phrasal but semantic.

It is evident from the above examples that cases of COVID-19 calque neologisms involved loan translation where a phrase or word was borrowed from English whilst translating its components in order to create a new lexeme or expression with similar meaning in Kiswahili. Calque contributes to the richness of a target language by avoiding the direct use of foreign words. It is a construction, unlike a loan which is a phonetic and morphologic adaptation of a borrowed word. According to Katermina and Yachenko, [10], language is supplemented by new words throughout its existence though in the periods of social stability language development processes run gradually and steadily, but in the periods of social disturbance language development processes run faster, resulting to many new linguistic innovations that reflect the social cultural dynamics.

Another process of generating COVD-19 neologisms is lexical deviation. Lexical deviation refers to the act of going against the norms of language in regard to usage of words or lexicons in a language by changing the 'usual' word meaning or assigning it a new contextual meaning (Krishnamurthy, 2010). Lucinda (2005) asserts that "new words are not only coined to describe new things but also when those currently in existence cannot accurately express our sentiments. The words invented to describe our practices of the world inherently and concurrently reflect our attitude about the world". Lexical deviation shows that a word or phrase can have many different meanings and can be taken in different contexts but the real meaning in

a particular context can be different from apparent meaning. Any deviation in a language goes through the innovation phase followed by dissemination and actual usage. As illustrated, through various words such as social distancing, screening, flattening the curve and face mask discussed below the words depart from their normal standard meaning and adopt the new neological usage.

## 3.8 Mwenye Haonyeshi Dalili Zozote Za Ugonjwa

This descriptive phrase refers to someone who has the disease but doesn't develop any visible symptoms. During the pandemic it was associated with mild symptoms, when the word actually means to be 'without' symptoms' in Kiswahili. The term is directly translated from asymptomatic which literally means presenting no symptoms or evidence of illness or abnormality.

## 3.9 Usawazishaji Wa Mchirizo

During COVD-19 flattening the curve meant slowing the spread of the epidemic so that the peak number of people requiring care at a time is reduced. However, the Kiswahili translation 'Usawazishaji wa mchirizo' means synchronization or standardizing though it was accepted and used as an equivalent.

## 3.10 Barakoa Ya Usoni

Face masks were mostly used to cover the nose and the mouth during COVID-19 but the term implies a thing covering the entire face. However, in both English and Kiswahili it was accepted and used to refer to all types of face and mouth coverings.

## 3.11 Kutotangamana Na Watu

During the pandemic social distancing was the practice of maintaining a greater than usual distance from other people or of avoiding direct contact with people or objects in public places. Though term implied disassociating with people it meant physical distancing in both source and target language.

## 3.12 Kufungiwa

Kufungiwa is a literal translation of confinement which is the state of being forced to stay in a

prison or another place which you cannot leave. It implies being locked up. However, COVID-19 patient were not necessarily 'locked up' but they were restrained and not allowed to move freely.

### 3.13 Barakoa

Barakoa generally refers to a veil, mask or face covering. Nevertheless, during COVID-19 period it denoted a covering fitting over the nose and mouth to protect against the virus. Though there are different types of masks reference to it was only associated to the personal protective equipment worn as a public health measure to prevent the spread of coronavirus disease.

### 3.14 Mkurupuko

An outbreak is a sudden occurrence of something unwelcome, such as war or disease. Though the lexeme was in common use when referring to disease outbreaks and disasters, it came to be associated with coronavirus disease during the pandemic period. Mentioning the expression either in source or target language meant a sudden occurrence of COVID-19 in a new area.

### 3.15 Uchunguzi

Screening is translated as uchunguzi in Kiswahili. It may be testing, checkup or medical tests that doctors use to check for diseases and health conditions before there are any signs or symptoms. During COVID-19 period, screening was used almost exclusively to refer to testing for the coronavirus disease.

The third process of creating COVID-19 expressions in Kiswahili is borrowing. Language is indeed both a system of communication between individuals and a social phenomenon which keeps on responding to its socio-cultural environment. Language borrowing occurs when one language possesses words for which there are no equivalents in the other language. "Languages borrow primarily to communicate; borrowing, therefore, occurs out of necessity or need where a language does not have a readily available word for something" [21]. Borrowing may be direct or indirect. Direct borrowing, also called assimilator borrowing, is the type of borrowing where words are not subjected to major phonological or morphological modifications. The borrowed words retain their original form and meaning; some however have

little variation. Indirect borrowing, on the other hand, involves both phonological and morphological adaptation of the borrowed word to suit the target language [22].

Generally, borrowed words appear as similar as possible to the source words though at the same time adopting the morphology of the recipient language. The expressions that are borrowed are made to adapt to the phonological and morphological constraints of the target language, in this case Kiswahili. According to Arokoyo (2018) the essence of borrowing is to cope with new ideas and concepts that are unfamiliar to the receiving language. In this paper there are a number of loanwords which are etymologically originated from English. For instance virus vya korona (Corona virus) and karantini (quarantine) which undergo phonological and morphological modifications in order to assimilate into Kiswahili language.

"Finally Vifaakinga has been created in Kiswahili to refer to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) through blending. Blending is a type of word formation in which two or more words are merged into one so that the blended constituents are either clipped, or partially overlap" [23]. Coining a blend is an act of wordplay in the sense that it involves an intentional and formally ingenious way of associating the semantics of two or more words in a new morphological object as in vifaakinga which is made up from vifaa vya kujikinga (personal protective equipment). Natalia (2022) posits that blends are often used as expressive means in need for attention-catching linguistic means and expressions. The Kiswahili blend captures both the pragmatic and semantic function of the equipment in a single memorable word.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The influence of COVID-19 to sociolinguistics in general and to Kiswahili morphological change in particular is overwhelming as revealed by the neologisms that were created during the pandemic. The findings of the study reveal that many neologisms developed in Kiswahili during COVID-19 period. However, this was no exception in Kiswahili but the norm in many languages including English and Spanish. With the COVID-19 pandemic, new lexical forms emerged forged from existing forms by derivation, composition, borrowing and telescoping, to describe and name new realities. This may be attributed to the fact that human

language is considered as a creative entity which is dynamic so as to support a social-cultural dynamics. Hence, language users around the world can generate and coin new words as situations demand.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, languages including Kiswahili had to adapt to a sudden influx of neologisms and scientific terms as health workers and governments strived to convey necessary advice to the public in order to contain the spread of the disease. Many neologism were created in Kiswahili language during this period such as Mwenye haonyeshi dalili zozote za ugonjwa, kuenea katika jamii, kuambukiza, virusi vya korona, kufungiwa, ugonjwa wa mlipuko, kiwango cha vifo, kujitenga/ kutengwa, usawazishaji wa mchirizo, kusitisha safari za ndani na nje ya eneo fulani, barakoa ya usoni, barakoa, mkurupuko, vifaakinga, janga kubwa, karantini, uchunguzi, kutotangamana na watu, mwenye dalili za ugonjwa and uambukizaji. Some of the words were completely new innovations while others were existing words that got new usage in the context of COVID-19.

Most COVID-19 neologisms in Kiswahili can be attributed to four neological processes. These processes include foreign words adopted into Kiswahili usage, existing word that gained a new form or new meaning and other neological processes such as calquering, lexical deviation, borrowing and blending.

Finally, it is important to note that this study was limited in scope and its findings may not be generalized across languages or be used to make generalizations about Kiswahili neologisms. The study analyzed only twenty words and expressions related to COVID-19 discourse, which cannot be an exhaustive representation of all expressions related to the pandemic. A study based on a larger corpus is therefore recommended in order to provide more insight on social dynamics and Kiswahili neologisms. Nonetheless, this article provides a glimpse on social cultural dynamics and language innovations in Kiswahili as reflected by a sudden influx of neologisms and scientific terms during COVI-19 period. Indeed, it contributes to sociolinguistic discourse, language innovation and neologism processes.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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