

Gasparyan N.PhD Associate Professor
Armenia, Yerevan State University
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-1673-4012>**Ohanyan M.**PhD Associate Professor
Armenia, Yerevan State University
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4133-5432>
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17942556>**Abstract**

This study examines the societal impact of COVID-19 vocabulary in creative and manipulative discourses, including social media hashtags and slogans. The research emphasizes key public-health communication issues across all sectors, leveraging advanced technologies and focusing on creative linguistic choices. Using a multidisciplinary approach—grounded in linguistics and attentive to health, war, and socio-political realities—the paper presents a new perspective on innovative sociolinguistic developments and the digital communication of the "new normal" which has turned into "long COVID" today. The method of linguo-stylistic analysis, as the main part of the applied methodology, reveals the creative COVID ability dealing with persuasion, manipulation, social norms, and marketing strategies, highlighting "infodemic" digital manipulative communication. Linguistic features appear to even actively shape the extra-linguistic reality, promoting humor as a coping mechanism. A single image accompanied by brief text seems to be a key discourse feature that jointly influences modern crisis communication strategies.

Keywords: innovative digital communication, manipulative COVID discourse, creative metaphoric neologism, persuasive strategies, intertwined linguistic and extra-linguistic realities.

Introduction

The article argues that the COVID-19 long-lasting effect on health, due to which it is labeled today as "Long COVID", is characterized by a spread of very impressive new vocabulary: ingeniously coined neologisms, metaphors, euphemisms, puns, which can appear as pieces of humour, hashtags and slogans, and can be used inventively for multifaceted purposes creating emotionally charged contexts or humorous narratives. Even a single concept or terminological unit can attract attention and persuade that it is the only correct idea to follow, as it is "the best" for reaching "the most desirable" safe outcome. We intend to show that COVID hashtags and slogans, the metaphoric ones first of all, were among the most prominent forms of pandemic communication during the "New Normal" which were widely used by governments, health institutions, and social media platforms to convey urgent messages, promote behavioral norms, and construct collective emotional responses where language became a primary tool for shaping public understanding and behavior. Hashtags, initially designed to organize information, evolved during the pandemic into powerful mobilizers of communities, story-shapers, and trendsetters. Simultaneously, slogans — short, memorable phrases — were created to serve multiple functions. They were utilized by official campaigns and grassroots movements, spanning public health and social commentary to humor, to build morale, unity, and a sense of shared experience. They even appeared with the purpose of protest or manipulation, and were sometimes co-opted for commercial purposes. Thus, social media's linguistic creativity was instrumental in shaping public opinion and behavior, particularly regarding vaccination. The innovative use of language played a pivotal role in es-

tablishing a solid foundation for vaccination efforts, underscoring its ability to convey complex ideas in new and effective ways.

The reliance on digital communication has increased since lockdowns and social distancing measures accelerated the adoption of digital communication technologies (such as Zoom and online collaboration platforms) for work, education, and social-political interaction, leading to a shift from face-to-face to virtual communication. Governments and health agencies faced immense challenges in effectively communicating rapidly evolving information about the virus, prevention measures, and vaccines. This was complicated by the rise of misinformation and disinformation known as infodemics, which eroded trust and fueled skepticism, raising concerns about the potential impact on language development. The introduction of masks and specific COVID-19-related social behaviors altered nonverbal communication, highlighting the challenges of social isolation. The new social and linguistic behaviors, which have also impacted human identity, have started to shape innovative narratives through the extra-linguistic reality.

Methodology

The present multidisciplinary investigation aims to analyze the linguo-stylistic creative means in COVID-19 narratives, focusing on their long-term strategic function in crisis communication and on the potential manipulative effects on public perception by various groups. The research focuses on creative and manipulative aspects of COVID Discourse as novel frameworks. It examines how creativity manifests in various COVID narratives and how new coinages or stylistically charged meanings for established words can creatively intertwine linguistic and extra-linguistic realities.

Actually, the object of our new investigation is the obvious continuation of our earlier research [1,2]. The investigation employs linguo-stylistic analysis dealing with specific linguistic choices which create meaning, effect, and style in texts by examining the relationship between language form and communicative purpose, successfully helping to understand authorial intent of the non-literary text, reader response, and underlying message; careful sampling, and content analysis (with special reference to hashtags) [42]. To achieve our goal, we also employ discourse analysis to examine the language of COVID in its social, cultural, and political contexts, to understand how language constructs meaning, shapes reality, and conveys power. Additionally, a descriptive research design, as defined by Gummesson [3], is employed to explain the development and manipulative effects of COVID-19-related English phrases, names, and hashtags during the crisis, when a combination of a single image and a short text can be a characteristic feature of discourse.

Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on language, leading to a surge in creative, often informal usage as people were forced to confront new realities, anxieties, and a desire to communicate complex concepts. Many scientific articles, particularly in linguistics, communication studies, sociology, and public health, have extensively analyzed various aspects of the phenomenon.

Cohen [4] addresses the COVID-19 pandemic as a 'wicked problem' with conflicting challenges that require innovative solutions. She argues that the public health sector must support and expand these innovative efforts by implementing a novel problem-solving approach in times of uncertainty. Hence, effective responses and breakthroughs in managing such complex problems can be achieved through creativity and innovation. COVID-19 suddenly overwhelmed healthcare systems worldwide, leading to shortages of beds, medical equipment (like ventilators), and healthcare personnel, with a profound and multifaceted global impact. It unexpectedly resulted in the postponement of non-COVID-19-related treatments and diagnoses, including care for chronic diseases and other medical conditions [5].

Mental health crisis, another major problem, was associated with the pandemic lockdowns, social isolation, economic uncertainty, and fear of illness, leading to increased rates of anxiety, depression, and PTSD among both the general population and healthcare workers [6]. A later study in 2022 [7], referring to PTSD, mentions that "The arrival of the new normal, and the introduction of vaccines, are giving us a glimpse of the end of the pandemic. But we must consider the fatigue and consequences that this has provoked and is still provoking on mental health." This highlights that in the post-pandemic period, a strengthened network of mental health resources is of paramount importance.

Chanda et al. [8] mention that the pandemic disrupted essential services, including routine vaccinations, screenings, and treatment for other infectious dis-

eases (such as malaria, HIV, and tuberculosis), especially in resource-limited countries. The challenges led to a rollback of progress in these areas.

All of the factors above led to a focus on Public Health Literacy. The pandemic highlighted the critical importance of effective and timely public health messaging, as well as the need for improved health literacy to ensure that populations understood and adopted protective behaviors. To fulfill this, the WHO, governments, and international organizations, as well as Global media, social media, and other media services, got involved [9].

A close study of the literature and media resources reveals that new concepts, terminology, and slang words continue to emerge in the field nonstop, making it highly productive in linguo-stylistics, which focuses on the creation of new words, concepts, and sentences, thereby making language a dynamic and creative system [43].

The pandemic led to the rapid introduction and widespread use of new terms and phrases (e.g., "social distancing," "flatten the curve," "PPE," "quarantine," "infodemic", "Long COVID") that quickly became part of everyday communication across various languages. Many previously obscure medical terms entered everyday discourse, in which the shift in meaning and metaphors appeared to be central [10]. Existing words have gained new or stronger meanings and continue to be prominent in public discourse (e.g., "bubble," "unprecedented," "New Normal" took on intensified social significance); military metaphors (e.g., "fight," "battle," "war" against the virus) and disaster-related metaphors (e.g., "wave," "peak") have become dominant in COVID discourse.

Periods of major social upheaval are historically recognized as catalysts for rapid vocabulary formation and accelerated language change [11,12]. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic was precisely such a moment, igniting a linguo-semiotic explosion that fostered the creation of new, often slang, neologisms. Notably, 85% of modern English COVID vocabulary is recorded in slang dictionaries, such as Urban Dictionary [13]. Thus, the neologisms of this period are often vocabulary related to everyday life and express the linguistic realities inherent in the coronavirus pandemic and the biosphere of that period. However, it is worth noting that, even though the neologisms of the coronavirus period are mainly drawn from spoken language and slang, there are many linguistic markers related to both political and financial phenomena. This aligns with V.S. Yelistratov's view that slang becomes essential during times of societal instability, providing a crucial connection to existence [14]. Indeed, the proliferation of slang formations consistently coincides with societal "fermentation of minds" and other upheavals.

Creative COVID Language Analysis

As our study of the material shows, the key aspects of creative COVID language manifest through various stylistic devices [1,2]. The pandemic necessitated new terms and the repurposing of existing ones; the most frequent, coined inventively, were neologisms and metaphors [2]. Creativity is particularly evident in the creation of new words and phrases, achieved by combining parts of two words to form a new one [15].

I. Neologisms in the form of Blends/Portmanteaus:

“Coronacation”: Corona + vacation (forced time off due to the virus).

“Zoom-bombing” Zoom + bombing (uninvited intrusion into a Zoom meeting).

“Plandemic”: Pandemic + planned (conspiracy theory suggesting the pandemic was engineered).

“Infodemic”: Information + epidemic (overload of information, often misleading).

“Plandemic” and “Infodemic”, already defined in Wikipedia, denote *conspiracy theories, misinformation, and disinformation*, which have become significant challenges to address to prevent complications and avoid fostering fear. The focus of the world’s population has been — and continues to be — on understanding how the virus spreads and how it can be avoided. Developing negative emotions, particularly fear, contributes to cognitive processes, such as feedback, anticipation, and reflection, that may lead to creative behaviors and their outcomes, where mental health problems are not surprising at all. The research shows that fear is strongly associated with vaccination complications, anti-vaccine, and creative manipulation discourses. In Shahin Nazar & Toine Pieters’ article, the newly created concepts “Plandemic” and “Infodemic” refer to the development of fear, “Plandemic Revisited: A Product of Planned Disinformation Amplifying the COVID-19 ‘Infodemic’” [16]. The coinages appear in a new, highly informative sequence — “Plandemic”, “Planned Disinformation”, “Covid-19 Infodemic” — to unveil the reporter’s attitude towards fake information. In another headline, “Russia’s Fast-Track Coronavirus Vaccine Draws Outrage Over Safety” [17] by Ewen Callaway, the author expresses his negative standpoint on Russia’s coronavirus vaccine creation and qualifies it as an infodemic. In other words, COVID-19 triggered an unprecedented wave of public communication, compelling governments, health organizations, and the media to make significant choices about linguistic tools to influence public perception and behavior. Significantly, “Plandemic” and “Infodemic” were not merely neologisms but were intentionally engineered for strategic persuasion and can be viewed as COVID-19-related creative discourse markers worth analyzing from a discursive perspective. Moreover, in manipulative COVID discourse, hashtags can shape extralinguistic factors by focusing attention on ideas that may not reflect reality but are crucial to manipulators. They aim to prevent the public from following authority directions and instead encourage the steps manipulators want them to take.

Neologisms can also be formed by other creative means, like affixation (“Mask-wearing”, “unmasking”), compounding (“Social distancing”, “Work-from-home (WFH)”), and semantic shifts (“Flatten the curve” - a statistical/public health concept becoming a widespread idiom).

Our study establishes that COVID-19 neologisms successfully manifested in hashtags, specifically at an early stage of the pandemic, to fulfil a certain aim, as shown below:

1. Public health messaging like #Stay-HomeStaySafe, #WashYourHands, #SocialDistancing, #FlattenTheCurve.

2. Highlighting societal impacts and reflecting shifts in daily life, as in #ToiletPaperPanic or #NewNormal.

3. Spread of misinformation and disinformation #scamdemic, #plandemic, #coronavirus5G).

Anyhow, neologisms in hashtags and slogans were merely a social media tool—a rather impactful one—which will be discussed in this paper as well.

The Metaphorical Language as the Basis of COVID-19 Creative Discourse

The study of the material reveals that metaphors, highly effective at navigating complex situations due to their intertwined cognitive and pragmatic functions, foster a more profound comprehension in complex or ambiguous contexts. Their communicative value, particularly in COVID discourse, lies in their ability to reveal hidden aspects of concepts, convey nuanced ideas, and manage social interactions through veiled expressions or by extending word meanings to new domains. The “new normal” proved that metaphors serve crucial pragmatic purposes: metaphors in COVID narratives were used to impact and persuade, to guide how people respond to information and frame arguments, even in the absence of a shared logical structure. Additionally, metaphors created ambiguity, extended word meaning beyond the existing lexicon, offering sophisticated tools for negotiation and communication when directness was not feasible or desirable. Metaphoric neologisms, with highlighted creative-cognitive features, are powerful tools for several reasons: they can convey complex ideas in a single word or short phrase (conciseness); make the concept more memorable and easier to grasp (vividness); allow language to adapt and describe new phenomena or concepts (innovation), and, finally, can be handled to subtly influence perception by creating a particular image (persuasion). Metaphorical language, as we have successfully defined in our previous publications, has been extensively used to make the complex, invisible virus and its societal impact more comprehensible. Hence, metaphoric neologism, a powerful, COVID-19 language enriching means, is also a COVID-19 creative discourse marker, which helped people conceptualize, discuss, and cope with the unprecedented challenges brought by the pandemic [1,2]. Although it is said that COVID-19 has influenced the world and expanded the global English vocabulary on the topic, coined concepts and terms imitating English have appeared in many national languages [18].

Some prominent examples of metaphoric creativity that address fields such as war (military), disaster (natural phenomenon), medicine (biological), and journey (path) are successfully handled. “War” and “military” metaphors, the most pervasive, were used to frame the virus as an enemy to be fought, as in “fighting the virus,” “battle against COVID,” “frontline workers,” and “warriors.” A close consideration of military metaphors such as “bomb” or “invisible killer,” used in the media to describe the virus [19], reveals that metaphors can possess creative power—they can scare people and make them question whether the situation is

hopeless. To emphasize its powerful and ruinous impact, “disaster and “natural phenomenon” metaphors, such as “wave” (of infections), “tsunami” (of cases), “storm”, and “hurricane”, were used. The impacts of constant “war” and “tsunami” rhetoric, which is psychologically a carrier of negative potential, seem to make a firm ground for scaring and manipulative activity. Our study reveals that the speakers’ political orientation significantly influenced people’s reasoning about the pandemic. For instance, Panzeri et al. discuss how “the right-wing participants are more susceptible to COVID-19” and refer to it as “a pandemic war” [20].

“Medical/biological” metaphors, such as “immunity wall”, “herd immunity”, and “vaccine rollout”, seem to encourage and give hope of recovery. In contrast, “journey” and “path” metaphors, such as “light at the end of the tunnel” or “road to recovery”, seem to be restoring standard colors of life. However, the term “new normal” conveys a sense of a stable, non-disappearing situation and nostalgia for what had already changed radically. Nonetheless, dark humour and coping mechanism terminology are not unusual in creative COVID discourse. Even stress, boredom, and anxiety can be expressed creatively through memes, puns, and jokes, thanks to the flexibility of language usage. People become highly inventive in emergencies when these situations persist: even death and illness are viewed as coping mechanisms [21].

Depending on the speaker's intent and imagination, sometimes euphemisms (“social bubble” instead of strict isolation, or shortening “coronavirus” to “corona” for convenience) were used to soften what was said, or, there appeared dysphemisms (“Wuhan virus”) with negative, politicized connotation through more direct words, often for political/emotional impact aiming at hardening what had been uttered [22].

The Communicative Power of Hashtags and Slogans in “New Normal”

One of the most noticeable trends in language and communication during the COVID-19 pandemic was the rapid spread of hashtags and slogans across digital platforms, since not only global health systems and daily routines changed, but also the way people communicated. During a time of uncertainty and information overload, these short, memorable, and emotionally impactful phrases became essential for influencing behavior, which, in turn, shaped public perception. While some hashtags aimed to promote public health measures, others were strategically designed to influence public perception and behavior.

COVID-19 hashtag neologisms, abundant on social media, were a powerful tool with both positive and negative impacts during the pandemic: they enabled broad communication and community connection, while simultaneously contributing to the challenge of managing an overwhelming influx of information, some of which was harmful. The use of COVID-19 neologisms fueled tension, caused panic, and led to improper conduct due to their high degree of creativity. So, it is of utmost importance to establish their function and the communicative aim of the particular text they appear in, since neologisms, as our analysis demonstrates, appear in social spheres and media not just to

inform, but to inform impacting the community’s consciousness by inseminating fear (without vaccination they are going to suffer and die), initiating commercial dependence (they hastily bought corona items, vast quantities of food, toilet paper, stay-at-home clothes), causing obedience (people are compelled to admit the unlimited power of the authorities who are very much concerned with the state of health of the inhabitants). COVID neologisms were more than just creative language; they were a socio-political tool used to persuade people into taking actions such as staying home, practicing social distancing, and getting vaccinated. This linguistic creativity influenced people's choices by presenting certain behaviors as the only logical and safe course of action.

The analysis reveals that COVID-19-related hashtags and slogans significantly influenced public psychology and impacted the quality of communication, thereby becoming strategic tools for crisis communication. This transformation enabled the simplification of complex health messages into concise, impactful forms that effectively combined persuasion, identity building, and community solidarity. This approach creatively handles crisis communication, grouping and connecting posts across platforms in an indexical way to help form digital communities around shared concerns. Frequently in imperative forms, COVID-19 slogans, such as #Stay Home, #Wear a Mask, and #Wash Your Hands, display urgent commands rather than simple suggestions. They create a discourse of necessity and obligation by giving behavioral instructions.

The study confirms that metaphorical language played a key role in making complex scientific concepts accessible and memorable. For instance, #FlattenTheCurve conveys epidemiological data into a vivid, tangible image of infection control. Likewise, metaphors like “Frontline Heroes” recast healthcare workers as soldiers, evoking notions of battle, sacrifice, and national duty, simplifying intricate realities while also mobilizing emotional engagement [23; 24]. By framing health behaviors in an ethical manner (#Stay-Home, #SaveLives), public health discourse became a form of moral persuasion [25]. Slogans like “I Got Vaccinated” or “COVID Heroes” allowed individuals to signal responsible citizenship or solidarity with essential workers, helping to establish and reinforce social identities beyond providing information. In addition to their prescriptive and moral roles, COVID hashtags reflected linguistic creativity through humor. Neologisms such as “Quarantini,” “Coronacation,” and “ZoomFatigue” offered coping strategies by introducing humour into stressful situations. At the same time, solidarity-oriented hashtags such as #InThisTogether and #ClapForCarers helped facilitate shared rituals of hope and resilience, thereby strengthening communal bonds [26, 27]. Hashtags like #Scamdemic and #Plandemic employed metaphorical framing to elicit strong emotional reactions, such as doubt and skepticism, among the public. Such emotionally charged metaphors can prompt individuals to question official stories and health guidelines, thereby influencing public opinion and behavior.

The strategic use of hashtags like #TrumpLiedPeopleDied and #ChinaLiedPeopleDied served to blame and incite conflict. These hashtags not only targeted specific individuals or nations but also polarized public opinion, aligning individuals with particular ideological perspectives. Manipulating public perception through divisive hashtags can hinder collective action and undermine cohesive crisis communication efforts. Coordinated campaigns spread strategically designed hashtags, such as #5GCoronavirus and #HydroxychloroquineWorks, to spread misinformation. These campaigns often involved the use of bots and fake accounts to increase the availability of misleading content, distort the information environment, and make false narratives seem more believable and widespread, thereby complicating effective crisis communication [28]. The repetitive use of misleading hashtags helped normalize the misinformation. This erosion of trust in believable sources and official narratives is a significant concern in crisis communication, as it undermines the effectiveness of public health interventions. The manipulative use of hashtags during the COVID-19 pandemic, operating on public perception through several psychological mechanisms, had serious consequences for crisis communication.

1. Hashtags evoke strong emotions that can influence individuals' subsequent attitudes and behaviors, often bypassing rational analysis (Emotional Priming) [29].

2. The use of familiar and emotionally charged terms in hashtags can exploit cognitive biases, leading individuals to make judgments based on heuristic processing rather than critical evaluation (Cognitive Bias Exploitation) [30].

3. Specific hashtags, which are widespread, can create a sense of social consensus, encouraging individuals to conform to perceived majority opinions, even if those opinions are based on misinformation (Social Proof and Conformity) [31].

4. Overexposure to a particular hashtag can make people numb to its content, causing them to stop thinking critically about the information they see (Desensitization Through Repetition) [32].

The research also shows that many manipulation hashtags employ fear-based requests or appeals, such as #StayHomeOrDie or #CoronaKills, and imply a sense of urgency and danger. Others rely on social and moral pressure, as seen in hashtags such as #StayHomeSaveLives and #DoYourPart. In contrast, some manipulative strategies employ positive framing, fostering hope for the best, as seen in hashtags like #EverythingWillBeOk and #BackToNormalSoon. A significant number of hashtags pursue commercial motives under the pretext of promoting public health, such as #StayHomeShopOnline and #QuarantineAndChill. So, hashtags and slogans, as a groundbreaking tool of COVID-19 creative discourse, can be designed to widen social gaps, making it more challenging to achieve collective action and consensus during a crisis. By manipulating public perception through deceptive hashtags, they eroded trust in institutions and experts, complicating efforts to manage the situation effectively. The proliferation of manipulative hashtags eas-

ily clutters information environments, making it difficult for individuals to identify trustworthy sources and accurate information. It is apparent that COVID-19 hashtags, classified into several functional categories, fulfil a primary strategic function which can be detected with no effort at all:

- *Health and safety* measures focus on hygiene, distancing, and prevention, with hashtags like #StayHome, #WearAMask, #WashYourHands, #FlattenTheCurve, and #StopTheSpread [33].

- *Solidarity and community support* are evident in hashtags such as #InThisTogether, #TogetherAtHome, #StrongerTogether, and #CovidHeroes, which promote unity and collective responsibility [34].

- *The awareness & information campaigns category* was used by governments, the WHO, and NGOs such as #COVID19, #CoronaVirus, #SafeHands, #VaccinesWork, #MaskUp [33].

- *Economic and social impacts* highlighted the consequences of lockdowns and advocacy issues, such as #WorkFromHome, #RemoteLearning, #CancelRent, and #SupportLocal [33].

- *Vaccination and recovery* encouraged vaccination and returning to everyday life, as evidenced by the examples #GetVaccinated, #VaccineForAll, #BackToNormal, and #BuildBackBetter [35].

- Solidarity hashtags acted as digital rituals (#ClapForCarers, #InThisTogether) [34].

- Identity-building hashtags created symbolic distinctions between “responsible” and “irresponsible” citizens (#ImVaccinated, #CovidHeroes) [34].

- Humorous hashtags provided coping mechanisms, easing anxiety and fostering communal play [36].

Many hashtags adopted imperative forms (#StayHome, #StopCorona, #WearAMask), while others applied creative metaphors and neologisms (#FlattenTheCurve, #SleeveUp, #Quarantini). So, COVID-19 hashtags and slogans are a unique form of digital communication that highlight the connection between language, society, and crisis messaging. Using imperatives, metaphors, moral framing, identity-building, and humor, these language elements shape public understanding, promote social unity, and influence behavior. Groups such as governments, the WHO, and NGOs strategically use slogans to convey instructions and foster a sense of shared responsibility. Meanwhile, communities reinterpret these messages, share experiences, show solidarity, and add humor to make challenging situations more bearable. Therefore, studying COVID-19 hashtags and slogans provides valuable insights into how digital language acts as a tool for persuasion, identity formation, and emotional support during global crises. Ultimately, this analysis underscores the pivotal role of language in shaping human behavior, social identity, and community resilience during a global pandemic wielding considerable influence. Through emotional priming, polarization, the amplification of misinformation, the exploitation of cognitive biases, and the erosion of trust, these hashtags significantly shaped public discourse. Understanding the manipulative functions of hashtags is crucial for developing effective cri-

sis communication strategies that promote accurate information, foster confidence, and encourage collective action.

The conceptual act theory proposes that an emotional case occurs when information, whether internal or external, is made significant in relation to the situation [37]. Furthermore, Carter [38] explains that verbal play frequently used by people for humorous purposes, also brings them closer together and challenges the usual perspectives on matters. He further stated that inventive language serves not only a decorative purpose, but also a functional one.

Hashtags and slogans, employing playful, expressive, and evaluative language during the COVID-19 pandemic, emerged to facilitate crisis communication through social platforms. Cinelli et al assume that [39] social media information has the potential to influence public behaviour and attitudes by using social media platforms, including Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and many others, to disseminate significant amounts of content to counter the rumors and infodemic surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. A qualitative content analysis of archived Twitter posts reveals that humor served as a coping mechanism and a means of fostering social connection through a shared sense of community and solidarity. For instance, coining terms like "KokoVID" and "NCOV (Novel Coronavirus) helped to satirize and challenge public health guidelines, while also providing an outlet for frustration and anxiety. People of all walks of life shared various sentiments about their newfound time at home, such as #Covid19, #Covid-19, #Coronavirus, #StayHomeStaySafe, #StayHome, #QuarantineandChill, and #LockdownNow.

Humor, as a core linguistic element of emotion management [40], unites individuals through shared, relatable experiences, thereby making the crisis situation feel more manageable [41].

Findings

The COVID-19 pandemic generated a highly innovative, emotionally charged public discourse that fused health communication with strategic framing and marketing tactics to influence public perception and ensure compliance with guidelines.

The findings deal with

1. Linguistic Strategies and Emotional Appeal reveal that

- Messages intentionally used emotionally charged language to either build trust ("safe," "effective," "together," "freedom") or enforce compliance ("wave," "surge," "killer virus").
- Both positive framing ("return to normal," "saving lives") and negative framing ("crisis," "emergency") were employed, highlighting the use of linguistic polarization as a persuasive and manipulative tool.
- Vaccination drives utilized marketing-focused strategies and emotional triggers (e.g., #SleeveUp, #BackToNormal), positioning vaccination as both a medical necessity and a collective responsibility, effectively blurring the line between health communication and commercial marketing.

2. Lexical Innovation & Social Division

- Neologisms and Hybrids, new terms ("covidiot," "vaxxed," "doomscrolling," "quarantini") acted as markers for social categorization and reinforced in-group/out-group dynamics, fueling ideological divisions.

- The polarization in Social Media: was amplified on platforms where provocative language and hashtags mobilized both support and resistance.

3. Crisis Communication & Simplification

- Creative COVID discourse successfully merged crisis communication with marketing strategies, leveraging social media (metaphors, hyperbolic expressions, memes) for maximum reach, resonance, and memorability.

- Slogans and hashtags were crucial Strategic tools for emotional persuasion and behavioral influence, acting as marketing tools that subverted critical thought, covertly amplifying the messages' manipulative potential.

- The simplification of the Protocol by Health authorities deliberately incorporated slang, colloquialisms, and digital jargon into the official language. This blend enhanced accessibility, fostered a sense of closeness, humanized governmental messaging, and simultaneously increased its persuasive and manipulative potential.

So, the COVID-related discourse expertly blended creativity, emotional appeal, and persuasion, significantly blurring the lines between information and marketing, and health communication and manipulation, making language a powerful tool of public influence during the global crisis.

Conclusions

The research establishes that the creative COVID-19 discourse functioned as a multi-layered communicative phenomenon, combining:

- Lexical innovation and slang as tools for both solidarity and polarization;
- Marketing strategies in vaccination promotion and public health messaging;
- Emotional persuasion through slogans and emotionally charged vocabulary;
- Behavioral manipulation via hashtag campaigns and positive/negative framing;
- Humor and memes as mechanisms for information diffusion and collective coping.

The COVID-19 discourse represented a novel form of emotionally driven information dissemination that transcended traditional public health communication, strategically operating to:

- Establish intentional linguistic polarization on digital platforms, extending beyond protective health messaging to serve persuasive and manipulative ends.
- Integrate rhetorical mechanisms (metaphors, neologisms, hyperbole, personification) and emotionally colored lexis (slang, jargon) to create provocative contexts and hashtags, forming mechanisms for mobilizing support or propagating resistance against public health mandates (particularly vaccination campaigns).
- Construct a shared sociolinguistic narrative that emphasizes collective responsibility and sacrifice using creative COVID-specific vocabulary.

- Utilize emotionally charged, succinct slogans and hashtags with a dual function: informational conveyance and behavioral influence. This facilitated mass persuasion by bypassing critical cognitive processing, thereby covertly maximizing the manipulative efficacy of crisis messaging.

- Intensify in-group/out-group dynamics and foster ideological segmentation, with digital communication becoming the primary medium under conditions where social isolation served as a core extra-linguistic constraint.

The COVID-19 discourse, a significant communicative phenomenon marked by lexical innovation and the strategic repurposing of existing concepts, deliberately employed a persuasive, potentially manipulative language to rapidly disseminate narratives via digital media and actively shape social norms, emotional attitudes, and behavioral responses. Digital crisis communication, by integrating extra-linguistic reality into the discourse, determined these linguistic features. In manipulative contexts, elements like hashtags could influence extra-linguistic factors, directing audience attention toward desired ideas—even if not factually accurate—to guide public action. The continued evolution of this innovative language is anticipated to influence responses to future crises.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding Statement

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References:

1. **Оганян М., Гаспарян Н.** Значение метафорического неологизма в дискурсе COVID // *Пандемия-22: Преподавание, анализ, дискурс в естественном многообразии иностранных языков*. 2022. Москва: РУСАЙНС. С. 127–137.
2. **Gasparyan, N. and Ohanyan, M.** Metaphoric COVID neologisms and their translation peculiarities. *Armenian Folia Anglistika*, 2022, 18(2), 132–145. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.46991/AFA/2022.18.2.132>
3. **Gummesson, E.** *Qualitative methods in management research*. 1991, SAGE.
4. **Cohen, A.** How to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic with more creativity and innovation. *Population Health Management*, 2021, 24(5), 450–452. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1089/POP.2020.0119>
5. **Filip, R., Puscaselu, R. G., Anchidin-Norocel, L., and Dimian, M.** Global challenges to public health care systems during the COVID-19 pandemic: A review of pandemic measures and problems. *Journal of Personalized Medicine*, 2022, 12(8), 1295. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.3390/jpm12081295>
6. **Serafini, G., Parmigiani, B., Amerio, A., Aguglia, A., Sher, L. and Amore, M.** The psychological impact of COVID-19 on the mental health in the general population. *QJM: An International Journal of*

Medicine, 2020 113(8), 531–537. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1093/qjmed/hcaa201>

7. **Ausín, B., González-Sanguino, C., Castellanos, M. Á., Sáiz, J., Vaquero, C. and Muñoz, M.** The psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain: A longitudinal study. *Psicothema*, 2022, 34(1), 66–73.

DOI:<https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2021.290>

8. **Chanda, P. et al.** Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and malaria health services in sub-Saharan Africa – A situation analysis of the disruptions and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 2022, 124(12). DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijid.2022.03.033>

9. **Jallov, B., Peissi, D. and Lema-Blanco, I.** Public health literacy and community media in Europe. *Report for E3J*, 2023. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.32654.84806>

10. **Ceran Sari, G., Lauren, A.** A systematic review of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the learning environment of immigrant English learners in the United States. In: *The Handbook of Research on Establishing Digital Competencies in the Pursuit of Online Learning*, (2023) 350–374. IGI Global. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7010-7.ch018>

11. **Сенько Е. В.** *Неологизация в современном русском языке: Межуровневый аспект*. Москва: Наука, 2007.

12. **Amiruddin, N., Hakim, Y. A., and Sukmawaty, S.** COVID-19 blends: A new phenomenon in English neologisms. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*. 2022. DOI: <https://www.jlls.org/index.php/jlls/article/view/4164>

13. **Redkozubova, E. A.** COVID-vocabulary: Etymology and word-formation (based on Russian, English, German). *Humanities and Social Sciences*, (2020) 81(4), 193–200. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18522/2070-1403-2020-81-4-193-200>

14. **Елистратов В.** *Словарь русского арго*. Москва: Русские словари. 2000.

15. **Obayes, A.-A. Q. I. and Haleem, A. H.** Do you speak Corona?: Hashtags and neologisms since the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature & Translation*, (2021) 4(4) 113–122. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2021.4.4.12>

16. **Nazar, S. and Pieters, T.** Plandemic revisited: A product of planned disinformation amplifying the COVID-19 infodemic. *Frontiers in Public Health*, (2021) 9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.649930>

17. **Callaway, E.** Russia's fast-track coronavirus vaccine draws outrage over safety. *Nature News*. 2020. DOI: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02386-2>

18. **Blumczynski, P. and Wilson, M.** (eds) *The languages of COVID-19: Translational and multilingual perspectives on global healthcare*. Routledge, 2022. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003267843>

19. **Bylytsia, U., Bilyk, O., Doichyk, O., and Ivanotchak, N.** COVID-19 metaphoric blends in media discourse. *Studies About Languages*, (2022) 40 17–33. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.sal.40.1.30155>

20. **Panzeri, F., Di Simona, P. and Domaneschi, F.** Does the COVID-19 war metaphor influence reasoning? *PLOS ONE*, (2021) 16(4) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0250651>
21. **Hadžić, J. and Baralić, M.** Humor in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. *In medias res*, (2021) 10(19) 3069–3110. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46640/imr.10.19.8>
22. **Nisak, K., Harun, M., Iskandar, D. and Yusuf, Y.** Euphemism and dysphemisms in the comments column YouTube Serambinews. *JPPI (Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Indonesia)*, (2024) 10(3) 122. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29210/020242913>
23. **Rinaldo, C.** Metaphors and the coronavirus pandemic: Analysis of metaphors in Boris Johnson's official statements during the outbreak of coronavirus [bachelor's thesis, Università di Bologna] 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.32653.0560>
24. **Feifei, F.** Analyzing metaphor patterns in COVID-19 news pictures: A critical study in China. *PLOS ONE*, (2024) 19(2). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0297336>
25. **Wicke, P. and Bolognesi, M. M.** Framing COVID-19: How we conceptualize and discuss the pandemic on Twitter. *PLOS ONE*, (2020) 15(9). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240010>
26. **Obrenović, B., Godinić, D., Du, J., Tsoy, D., Khan, M. A. S., and Jakhongirov, I.** Sustaining company performance during the war-induced crisis using sourcing capability and substitute input. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, (2024) 26(12). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-023-03892-9>
27. **Sepahpour-Fard, M., Quayle, M., MacCarroll, P., Mannion, S., and Nguyen, D.** Identity emergence in the context of vaccine criticism in France. (2024). DOI: <https://arxiv.org/abs/2410.12676>
28. **Pérez-Sobrinho, P., Semino, E., Ibarretxe-Antuñano, I., Koller, V. and Olza, I.** Acting like a hedgehog in times of pandemic: Metaphorical creativity in the #ReframeCovid collection. *Metaphor and Symbol*, (2022) 37(2) 127–139. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10926488.2021.1949599>
29. **Stallbaumer, T.** (Social) media priming: The role of social media in priming biases and aggression in online news readership (Master's thesis). University of Arkansas. ScholarWorks@UARK. (2017). DOI: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/etd/2033>
30. **Kowald, D. and Lex, E.** Studying confirmation bias in hashtag usage on Twitter. In: *Proceedings of the 2018 International Conference on Social Media & Society*, (2018) 1–9. DOI: <https://arxiv.org/abs/1809.03203>
31. **Cherry, K.** The Bandwagon effect and how it affects behavior. *Verywell Mind*. (2015). DOI: <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-bandwagon-effect-2795895>
32. **Montell, A.** The big idea: The simple trick that can sabotage your critical thinking. *The Guardian*. (2024). DOI: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/article/2024/may/20/the-big-idea-the->
33. **World Health Organization.** *COVID-19 vaccination social media toolkit*. (2020). DOI: <https://www.immunizationmanagers.org/re-sources/covid-19-vaccination-social-media-toolkit/>
34. **Reuter, C., Kaufhold, M.-A., and Hegelich, S.** Crisis communication on Twitter during the 2015 refugee crisis in Germany. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, (2018) 26(4) 418–428. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12188>
35. **World Health Organization.** *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public*. (2020). DOI: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
36. **Chauhan, R. and Hughes, A.** Humor-based COVID-19 Twitter accounts. *ISCRAM Digital Library*. (2023). DOI: https://idl.iscrum.org/files/chauhan/2023/2536_Chauhan2023.pdf
37. **Barrett, L. F.** *How emotions are made: The secret life of the brain*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, (2017).
38. **Carter, R.** Common language: Corpus, creativity, and cognition. *Language and Literature*, (1999) 8(3), 195–216. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/096394709900800301>
39. **Cinelli, M., Quattrocioni, W., Galeazzi, A., Valensise, C. M., Brugnoli, E., Schmidt, A. L. and Scala, A.** The COVID-19 social media infodemic. *Scientific Reports*, (2020) 10(1). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-73510-5>
40. **Lindquist, K. A., MacCormack, J. K., & Shaback, H.** The role of language in emotion: Predictions from psychological constructionism. *Frontiers in Psychology* (2015) 6:444. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00444>
41. **Cahapay, M. B.** Trending phrases, names, and hashtags related to COVID-19 in the Philippines: The language of social crisis. *Muallim Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, (2020) 4(4) 1–9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33306/mjssh/91>
42. **Damkor Torkuma Tyonande** (2022) Lexico-stylistic analysis of Facebook postings on COVID-19 pandemic // *Journal of Languages Linguistics and Literary Studies* 2(1):16-22 DOI:10.57040/jlls.v2i1.137
43. **Antonio Lillo** (2023) *Coronavirus Rhyiming Slang: Some Jottings on the Words Spawned by the Pandemic* // *English Today* 39(3):224-229, DOI:10.1017/S0266078422000347