

Analysis of Lexico - Grammatical Features of Online News Reports on Covid-19 In Sri Lanka Between 2020-2021: A Corpus Linguistic Study

N. A. M. Hasitha Sewwandi Nawarathna

Department of English Language Teaching, University of Kelaniya

hsew191@kln.ac.lk / hasitha.sv96@gmail.com

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the healthcare sector and has also led to the emergence of new linguistic terms and modifications. The term 'Covid-19' became a widely researched word in linguistics as well as in many other disciplines. This corpus linguistic study aims to explore the Lexico-grammatical features associated with the word 'Covid-19' through a corpus of 35628 words compiled using Antconc. It was based on online news reports in English newspapers in Sri Lanka between 2020 and 2021. The selection of these two years is significant because the first Covid patient in Sri Lanka was discovered in 2020, and in 2021, the Covid vaccination was introduced to the country. This study has two objectives: first, to identify variations in lexical collocates found in news reports between 2020 and 2021, and second, to identify the lexico-grammatical characteristics associated with the term 'Covid-19' by examining its syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations using collocates, N-grams and concordance lines. The findings revealed that 'Covid-19' occurred 299 times as a noun in a corpus of 35628 tokens. The highest frequent lexical collocations with the term 'Covid-19' in 2020 emerged to be 'cases, pandemic, positive' and in 2021 'vaccine, patients, treatment', respectively. Statistics clearly indicate how news reports in 2020 mainly dealt with vaccination news, whereas in 2021, they primarily reported the number of positive cases, deaths, and regulations relevant to 'Covid-19'. It was also evident how different word classes have been chained within the corpus around the word 'Covid-19'. Therefore, this analysis aids in comprehending how lexico-grammatical characteristics and structures are related to the meaning-making process. Furthermore, this research contributes to the field of linguistics, shedding light on the evolution and usage of linguistic terms in the context of a global pandemic.

Keywords: Corpus Linguistics, Covid-19, Lexico Grammar, News Reports, Sri Lanka