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LEXICOGRAPHY FOR SOCIETY AND WITH SOCIETY – COVID-19 AND DICTIONARIES

Abstract   Not only professional lexicographers, but also people without a professional background in lexicography, have reacted to the increased need for information on new words or medical and epidemiological terms being used in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, corona-related glossaries published on German news websites are presented, as well as different kinds of responses from professional lexicography. They are compared in terms of the amount of encyclopaedic information given and the methods of definition used. In this context, answers to corona-related words from a German question-answer platform are also presented and analyzed. Overall, these different reactions to a unique challenge shed light on the importance of lexicography for society and vice versa.

Keywords   Lay-lexicography; professional lexicography; glossaries; general language dictionaries; neologism dictionaries

1.   Introduction

One positive aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic – at least in the eyes of a lexicographer – is the fact that collecting and explaining all the vocabulary that was used in context of the pandemic has brought dictionaries and their editors some new-found publicity and increased interest in their work.[1] The neologism dictionary published at the Leibniz-Institute for the German Language (IDS) at Mannheim is one striking example of a dictionary that was impacted by the multi-layered interaction between lexicographers and society.[2] On 7 December 2020, the German news programme "Tagesschau" included a report on new corona-related words published as part of this dictionary at the IDS.[3] This was later watched by an Australian PhD student in linguistics living in Great Britain who tweeted on 21 February 2021 about the expansion of German vocabulary (cf. Fig. 1). Her tweet went viral and was picked up by the British media, e. g. "The Guardian" on 23 February 2021.[4] Then, the German media noticed the British interest in German corona neologisms and published articles on this phenomenon, e. g. the news magazine "Der Spiegel" on 2 March 2021.[5] Within the next couple of days, a total of 16 interviews were given by IDS lexicographers and 35 press articles were published – equivalent to the number of press articles on the neologism dictionary that normally appear in a single year. In addition, the number of times the dictionary was consulted increased considerably in the days following the English media coverage, from approximately 800 page retrievals and 300 visitors to the site on average per day to 18,000 page retrievals and 15,000 visitors (on 1 March 2021) and 17,700 page retrievals and

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[1]   For other linguistic studies on the effects of the pandemic on German see Klosa-Kückelhaus (ed.) (2021), Standke/Topalović (eds.) (2021), Weinert (2021) and Wengeler/Roth (eds.) (2020).

[2]   For a discussion of "dictionaries in the public eye" see Curzan (ed.) (2021).

[3]   See https://www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/sendung/tt-7945.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[4]   See https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/23/from-coronaangst-to-hamsteritis-the-new-german-words-inspired-by-covid (last access: 15-03-2022).

[5]   See https://www.spiegel.de/wissenschaft/mensch/corona-wortschoepfungen-wo-wir-grossbritannien-in-der-pandemie-voraus-sind-a-7374e886-3556-4826-b987-6e894097ce0c (last access: 15-03-2022).

13,500 visitors (on 2 March 2021). Finally, in the fortnight following the appearance of the press articles on the dictionary, almost 120 suggestions for the inclusion of new corona-related words were submitted by dictionary users via an online form,[6] compared to fewer than 100 suggestions that usually reach the editorial team annually.

Fig. 1: Tweet by Liz Hicks from 21 February 2021 on new corona-related words in German

Overall, this dictionary project has profited considerably from the widespread media coverage throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, not only through increased user numbers and new information on good candidates for inclusion into the list of corona-related neologisms, but also by being able to inform the public more generally about its work in newspapers and magazines, in podcasts, or in other media formats and by raising the awareness of the usefulness of lexicographic work for society in general.

But it is not only professional lexicography that has risen to the challenge of explaining the meaning of words from epidemiological, clinical, or medical contexts to bewildered speakers of many languages around the world or of collecting all these new words that have suddenly emerged. Non-lexicographical experts, like journalists or administrative staff in public institutions, have also helped to spread information about the meaning and usage of many corona-related expressions (for different German examples, see Möhrs 2021).

In this study, data on lay-lexicographic German glossaries compiled in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is presented. Information about the number and types of entries (single words vs. multi-word units etc.) and the content of these publications is given. In a second step, these lay-lexicographic publications are compared to the responses of professional lexicographers to the increased need for word-related information during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as the updating of general language dictionaries or collection of corona-related neologisms, as well as the publication of articles, blogs etc. outside dictionaries on questions of lexical change during the COVID-19 pandemic and other topics.

The second part of this study focuses on comparing the methods of definition used by lay-lexicographers and professional lexicographers and on evaluating the amount of encyclopaedic information[7] given in their definitions of corona-related words. As far as the tech-

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6   See https://www.owid.de/wb/neo/mail.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

7   Wiegand (1998, pp. 47 ff.) discusses how difficult it is to actually differentiate between what he calls "Sprachlexikographie" (i. e. dictionaries) and "Sachlexikographie" (i. e. encyclopaedias) and that very often lexicographers need to give at least some encyclopaedic information when defining word meanings.

niques used in definitions are concerned, it is not only the definitions in professional dictionaries and glossaries produced by lay-lexicographers that are examined, but also the definitions found on websites like "gutefrage.net"[8] ('goodquestion.net') where users give answers to other users' questions, like "Was bedeutet Triage?" ('What is the meaning of triage?'). I will look into the form of the definitions (e.g. full sentence(s) vs phrase?) and whether or not they use the established lexicographic conventions for definitions that can be found in general monolingual dictionaries.

Overall, I hope to demonstrate through the data provided here how society is especially reliant on lexicographic traditions and lexicographic products in a context where speakers are confronted not only with an unprecedented situation in life, but also with the need to understand many terms previously unknown to them and a large number of new lexical items emerging in a short time span.

2. Lexicographic responses to users' needs in the COVID-19 pandemic

From the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, new words emerged in general language (foremost, the names of the new virus, *SARS-CoV-2*, and of the disease it causes, *COVID-19*), and specific terms taken from the medical or epidemiological context became part of everyday language. Speakers all over the world had to adapt quickly, sometimes needing help in understanding certain words or phrases, in correctly differentiating between them (e.g. *pandemic – epidemic*), and in using them correctly (grammatically, orthographically, etc.). This need was felt and reacted to by lexicographers around the world,[9] but also, for example, by people who are not lexicographic experts, like journalists:

In Germany, the first glossary of corona-related words and phrases was published in early March 2020 by the newspaper the "Süddeutsche Zeitung", even before the WHO officially declared the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic on 11 March 2020 (see Möhrs 2020). Some of the reasons for their publication were given, as shown in (1):

(1) Inzwischen kennen wir viele Begriffe rund um das Coronavirus und die Krankheit Covid-19. Viele Begriffe sind aber schwer zu verstehen und erklärungsbedürftig, zudem kommen ständig neue Fremdwörter hinzu. Die folgende Liste soll einige wichtige Begriffe […] erklären […].[10] ('By now we are familiar with many terms surrounding the coronavirus and the disease Covid-19. However, many terms are difficult to understand and need explanation; moreover, new foreign words are being added all the time. The following list is intended to explain some important terms […].')

Lexicographers from the "Digitales Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache" (DWDS) at the Berlin Academy of Sciences published a first version of their "Corona Glossar" in the middle

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[8] See https://www.gutefrage.net/ (last access: 15-03-2022).

[9] See the talks given at the "3rd Globalex Workshop on Lexicography and Neology – Focus on Corona-related Neologisms 2021, @AUSTRALEX 2021", https://globalex2021.globalex.link/ (last access: 15-03-2022).

[10] See https://www.nzz.ch/visuals/coronavirus-diese-20-begriffe-rund-um-covid-19-muessen-sie-kennen-ld.1553235 (last access: 15-03-2022).

of March 2020, which has been updated continuously since then.[11] In (2) they explain their actions:

(2)   Die COVID-19-Pandemie löst weltweit zahlreiche Prozesse des Wandels aus, die ihren Niederschlag auch in der Sprache finden. [...] Die Redaktion des DWDS sieht es als wichtige Aufgabe an, diese Veränderungen zeitnah zu dokumentieren und in die Wörterbucheinträge des DWDS zu integrieren.[12] ('The COVID-19 pandemic triggers numerous processes of change worldwide, which also find expression in language. [...] The editorial staff of the DWDS considers it an important task to document these changes in a timely manner and to integrate them into the dictionary entries of the DWDS.')

In the following section, more information on the reaction of journalists (acting as lay-lexicographers) and professional lexicographers to the challenge is presented and compared.

2.1 Journalistic glossaries with corona-related vocabulary

For this study, data from ten glossaries published on news sites from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland was collected and evaluated (cf. Table 1).[13] These lists were chosen because they address the general public, which is also the aim of general language dictionaries (see 2.2). In addition, general language and neologism dictionaries of German are mostly based on newspaper and magazine corpora. Thus, glossaries and word lists published by newspapers and magazines seemed the most obvious option for a comparison between professional and lay-lexicographic explanations of corona-related words.

Other glossaries specifically addressing children (e. g. "Corona-Lexikon: Sprichst du Coronisch?" by "BR Kinder"[14]) or written in simple language (e. g. "Lexikon Corona leichte Sprache" by "Task Force Leichte Sprache/Anne Leichtfuß"[15]) were excluded, as well as some stemming from a medical context (e. g., "Corona-Fachbegriffe kurz erklärt" by "Medizinische Hochschule Hannover"[16] [Hannover Medical School]) or published by the public authorities (e. g. "Glossar Coronavirus" by "Bayerisches Landesamt für Gesundheit und Lebensmittelsicherheit"[17] [Bavarian State Office for Health and Food Safety]). All of these are not comparable to glossaries from newspapers and magazines because of their different target groups and their terminological or official character, all of which might influence the selection of head words, the methods of definition, and the amount of encyclopaedic information given.

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[11]   Specific terminological dictionaries on corona-related terms have also been published quickly, e. g. "Corona-Terminologie Deutsch, Englisch, Französisch, Niederländisch, Polnisch, Russisch, Spanisch" by Bundessprachenamt (Federal Language Bureau) on 24 April 2020, see https://app.coreon. com/5ea2adb797e1040100eb7ff3/concepts/5ec2ac4d238bd30039949e9d (last access: 15-03-2022).

[12]   See https://www.dwds.de/themenglossar/Corona (last access: 15-03-2022).

[13]   I would like to thank Sara-Marie Weinkopf (IDS Mannheim) for her support in the compilation of all data.

[14]   See https://www.br.de/kinder/corona-lexikon-sprichst-du-coronisch-100.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[15]   See https://corona-leichte-sprache.de/lexikon/ (last access: 15-03-2022).

[16]   See https://corona.mhh.de/corona-glossar (last access: 15-03-2022).

[17]   See https://www.lgl.bayern.de/gesundheit/infektionsschutz/infektionskrankheiten_a_z/coronavirus/ covid_glossar.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

Newspaper/ Newsmagazine and title of glossary	Number of entries	Order of head words
Deutschlandfunk: "Covid-19-Glossar/Die wichtigsten Begriffe zur Coronavirus-Pandemie"[18]	28	alphabetical
Die Rheinpfalz: "Virus-Lexikon: Corona von A bis Z"[19]	26	
Der Spiegel: "Zentrale Begriffe der Coronakrise – und was sie bedeuten"[20]	16	
Tagesschau: "Die wichtigsten Corona-Begriffe"[21]	15	
T-online: "Alle wichtigen Begriffe rund um Corona"[22]	21	
Bild der Frau: "Coronavirus-Glossar: Diese Begriffe sollten Sie kennen"[23]	23	not alphabetical[24]
GEO: "Corona-Glossar: Diese Begriffe sollten Sie jetzt kennen"[25]	18	
Iserlohner Kreisanzeiger: "Coronavirus-Glossar – Begriffe, die Sie jetzt kennen sollten"[26]	11	
Neue Zürcher Zeitung: "Das Glossar zum Coronavirus – Corona-Impfung, Varianten, Übersterblichkeit und andere Begriffe, die Sie kennen müssen"[27]	31	
Profil: "Das Coronavirus-Glossar – Wichtige Begriffe aus dem Corona-Krisen-Vokabular einfach erklärt"[28]	7	
Total	196	

Table 1:   Overview of glossaries on corona-related words and phrases from German news websites

[18]   See https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/covid-19-glossar-die-wichtigsten-begriffe-zur-coronavirus-100.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[19]   See https://rp-online.de/panorama/coronavirus/coronavirus-lexikon-das-bedeuten-triage-inkubation-mortalitaet-und-co_aid-49588865 (last access: 15-03-2022).

[20]   See https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/corona-pandemie-glossar-zentrale-begriffe-in-der-corona-krise-und-was-sie-bedeuten-a-8f0d15a9-c7ed-4265-bf21-f8d7f6836292 (last access: 15-03-2022).

[21]   See https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/corona-pandemie-glossar-101.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[22]   See https://www.t-online.de/gesundheit/krankheiten-symptome/id_87524194/coronavirus-glossar-zu-wichtigen-begriffen-rund-um-corona.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[23]   See https://www.bildderfrau.de/gesundheit/krankheiten/article228837093/Coronavirus-Glossar-Begriffe-erklaert.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[24]   For details, see below.

[25]   See https://www.geo.de/wissen/gesundheit/22805-rtkl-kurz-erklaert-corona-glossar-diese-begriffe-sollten-sie-jetzt-kennen (last access: 15-03-2022).

[26]   See https://www.ikz-online.de/panorama/diese-begriffe-rund-um-das-coronavirus-sollten-sie-kennen-id228830547.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[27]   See https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/covid-19-glossar-die-wichtigsten-begriffe-zur-coronavirus-100.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[28]   See https://www.profil.at/wissenschaft/das-coronavirus-glossar/400877954 (last access: 15-03-2022).

Each chosen glossary explains up to approximately thirty corona-related head words[29]; as a whole, these lists comprise 112 different words or phrases. Table 2 gives information on how many head words or phrases are included in more than one of the glossaries (*COVID-19*, for example, is presented in all of the ten glossaries and *SARS-CoV-2* in eight of them) and differentiates between single word entries (e. g. *asymptomatisch* 'asymptomatic') and multi word entries (e. g. *aktive Fälle* 'active cases'). Most of the nouns in the glossaries are given in their singular form (e. g. *Boosterimpfung* 'booster vaccination'), but not all (e. g. *Coronaviren* 'corona viruses'), and a high proportion of the headwords stem from medical or epidemiological contexts (e. g. *Mortalitätsrate* 'mortality rate', *Containment* 'containment').

Some of the glossaries studied here not only contain encyclopaedic information or definitions, but also provide illustrations, e. g. the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* from Switzerland shows a graph depicting a human figure being injected with a syringe in its upper arm alongside the entry *Impfung gegen das Coronavirus* ('vaccination against the corona virus'). Only in one case is a hyperlink to another website given (from the head word *Desinfektion/Hygiene* in "Der Spiegel",[30] a German news magazine). None of the glossaries presents information on the syllabification, pronunciation, or grammar of the head words.

Numbers of entries	contained in one glossary	contained in up to 10 glossaries
	71.5 %	28.5%
Types of entries	single word entries	multi word entries
	83 %	17 %
Grammatical features	singular	plural[31]
	83.5 %	13%
General or specialized contexts	epidemiological or medical context	other contexts
	83%	17%

Table 2: Different head word types in corona glossaries from German new websites (N = 112)

While most of the head words are given in their typical German dictionary form (nouns: nominative singular, adjectives: without inflection, verbs: infinitive), something else is noteworthy: several entries in the glossaries explain more than one word, e. g. entries like *Ausgangssperren/Ausgangsbeschränkungen* ('curfews/restrictions on going out') in "Der Spiegel" or *Coronavirus/SARS-CoV-2/Covid-19* in the glossary of the Austrian newspaper "Profil". Unlike in professional dictionaries, these entries on (near) synonyms economize on space by presenting only one explanation for two or more expressions. Another difference to most general language dictionaries is that half of the glossaries evaluated for this study do not list the entries in alphabetical order, but in thematic order (e. g. in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung") or in no recognizable order at all (e. g. in "GEO") (cf. Table 1).

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[29] There are several German glossaries and word lists on corona-related words containing more entries than 30 (for more details, see Möhrs 2021). These were excluded here to restrict the material to a manageable size. Further studies may incorporate these other materials.

[30] This entry links to the web page of the "Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung" (Federal Center for Health Education).

[31] The remainder do not allow for a distinction between singular or plural, e. g. verbal phrases.

2.2 Responses from professional lexicography

In this section, three different ways of reacting to the increased demand for lexicographic information on (new) words used in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic are discussed: firstly, updating general language dictionaries in relation to corona-related entries; secondly, collecting and publishing neologisms and older words and phrases from the pandemic in specialized lists; and finally publishing articles or blogs etc. outside dictionaries on questions of lexical change during the pandemic.

Figure 2 shows the entry *Variantengebiet* in the DWDS,[32] which was updated on 24 August 2021. The older sense of 'region where off-piste skiing is possible' and the corona-related sense 'country or part of the country where a (dangerous, more infectious) variant of a pathogen is dominant (which is why special measures must be taken)' are given. Probably most of the general language dictionaries around the world (especially those published online) have been updated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in a similar way.

Variantengebiet, das

Grammatik	Substantiv (Neutrum) · Genitiv Singular: **Variantengebiet(e)s** · Nominativ Plural: **Variantengebiete**
Aussprache	[vaˈʀi̯antŋɡəˌbiːt]
Worttrennung	Va-ri-an-ten-ge-biet
Wortzerlegung	↗Variante ↗Gebiet

💬 Dieses Stichwort finden Sie im DWDS-Themenglossar zur COVID-19-Pandemie.

Bedeutungsübersicht ➕

1. Land oder Landesteil, in dem eine (gefährliche, infektiösere) Variante eines Krankheitserregers dominiert (weshalb besondere Maßnahmen ergriffen werden müssen)
2. [Skifahren] Bergregion, wo man abseits der Piste Ski fahren kann

Fig. 2: Entry *Variantengebiet* in the DWDS

In Figure 3, an extract with the entry *teamsen* ('to communicate by using the video conference system Teams®') from the glossary "Neuer Wortschatz rund um die Coronapandemie"[33] ('New Vocabulary surrounding the corona pandemic'), published as part of the German neologism dictionary at IDS Mannheim, illustrates how dictionary projects for German reacted quickly to language change in the pandemic by compiling lists relating to this specific area of vocabulary. Here, an existing format of entries, currently used to present a list of new words still being monitored for possible inclusion in the dictionary,[34] was adapted to present lexicographic information on new words and phrases from the pandemic.

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[32]   See https://www.dwds.de/wb/Variantengebiet (last access: 15-03-2022).

[33]   See https://www.owid.de/docs/neo/listen/corona.jsp#teamsen (last access: 15-03-2022).

[34]   See https://www.owid.de/docs/neo/listen/monitor.jsp (last access: 15-03-2022).

Tandemkind	Testrave	tracen
Teamlehrkraft	Testregime	Tracing
teamsen	Teststation	Tracingapp
		tracken
		Tracking
		Trackingapp
		Tragedisziplin
		Travelpass
		Trikini
		TTS
		Tübinger Weg
		Twindemic
		Twindemie

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>
> Telefonieren oder lieber **teamsen**? Das wird man immer öfter gefragt in Zeiten, wo das Home zum Office wird. [...] Über 44 Millionen Menschen weltweit **teamsen** bereits täglich. (www.wuv.de; datiert vom 15.05.2020)
>
> Erfasst: Dezember 2020

Testchaos

Fig. 3:   Extract from the "Neuer Wortschatz rund um die Coronapandemie", showing the entry *teamsen*

Several dictionary projects also published informative articles on the expansion of vocabulary during the pandemic or on the specific challenges involved in using corona-related words, for example as texts outside the dictionaries. In Figure 4, an article on the distinction between *Epidemie* and *Pandemie* from "Duden online"[35] is shown. In the introductory paragraph of this text, the Duden lexicographers explain their intention: "In Sachen Coronavirus werden wir mit einer Fülle von medizinischen Informationen konfrontiert, die oft eine

DUDEN   Wörterbuch   Ⓜ Textprüfung   Service   Sprachwissen   Dudenverlag

Epidemie oder Pandemie?

In Sachen Coronavirus werden wir mit einer Fülle von medizinischen Informationen konfrontiert, die oft eine gewisse Ratlosigkeit hinterlassen. Damit Sie zumindest sprachlich nicht ratlos sind, greifen wir ein paar passende Themen auf: Wir klären Sie über den Unterschied zwischen einer Epidemie und einer Pandemie auf.

Als *Epidemie* bezeichnet man eine in einem bestimmten begrenzten Verbreitungsgebiet auftretende ansteckende Erkrankung; eine Seuche, für die typisch ist, dass eine große Zahl von Menschen gleichzeitig befallen wird:

- *In rasender Geschwindigkeit breitet sich in den Erdbebengebieten zurzeit eine Typhusepidemie aus.*
- *Auch in den Entwicklungsländern verbreiten sich Handys wie eine Epidemie.*
- *Bei der WHO befürchtet man ein epidemieartiges Auftreten der Schweinegrippe.*

Der Begriff *Pandemie* benennt eine Seuche, die sich im Gegensatz zur Epidemie nicht auf ein begrenztes Gebiet beschränkt, sondern sich über ganze Landstriche, Länder oder sogar weltweit ausbreitet. Als Pandemien galten und gelten SARS, die Vogelgrippe, die Schweinegrippe und – ganz aktuell – die Erkrankung Covid-19. Durch die immense Zunahme des Flugverkehrs wird heutzutage aus einer Epidemie sehr schnell eine Pandemie.

Fig. 4:   Text on the difference between *Epidemie* and *Pandemie* in "Duden online"

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35   See https://www.duden.de/sprachwissen/sprachratgeber/Epidemie-Pandemie (last access: 15-03-2022).

gewisse Ratlosigkeit hinterlassen. Damit Sie zumindest sprachlich nicht ratlos sind, greifen wir ein paar passende Themen auf: […]" ('When it comes to coronavirus, we are confronted with a wealth of medical information that often leaves us with a sense of helplessness. To ensure that you are not left helpless, at least linguistically, we will take up a few appropriate topics: […]').

Overall, professional German lexicography did not change its traditional ways of listing words: new (predominantly single word) entries are given in their typical dictionary form (see 2.1), but they do not explain more than one word or more than one multi-word unit in a single article, as is the case in quite a number of entries in the newspaper glossaries (see 2.1). Neither do entries on new words differ from articles on older words (with new meanings) in their microstructure or data presentation (online). In the three German online dictionaries discussed here, new corona-related entries have also been fully integrated into the search options. Using external texts to give more information on specific groups of words is not a new feature in (online) lexicography either. More detailed studies are needed when it comes to the extent to which new terms are integrated into the dictionaries shown here compared to new words or meanings in general language. In the following section, differences and similarities between lexicographic, journalistic, and laypersons' methods of definition in corona-related entries are examined.

3.   Methods of definition

A central part of the micro-structure of most dictionaries is the lexicographic definition (Wiegand 1989, p. 531), given either as a phrase (mostly in general language dictionaries) or in a full sentence (mostly in learner lexicography).[36] There are two established lexicographic traditions for definitions in general monolingual dictionaries: giving a synonym (Haß-Zumkehr 2001, p. 28) or naming genus proximum and differentia specifica (ibid., p. 29). In addition, examples are used to illustrate meaning. In the following sections, the types of explanations given for head words in journalistic corona-related glossaries and in vocabulary-related questions and answers given by laypersons on the website "gutefrage. net" are analyzed. I will also evaluate the amount of encyclopaedic information contained in these definitions. Finally, the results are compared to the definitions provided in professionally compiled dictionary entries for corona-related words and phrases.

3.1.   Definitions in lay-lexicographic glossaries with corona-related vocabulary

General data on ten glossaries with corona-related vocabulary published by news websites in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland is presented above (see 2.1). In this section, the explanations given in all 196 entries for all of the 112 words or phrases in the glossaries are analyzed to find out which defining techniques they use and how much encyclopaedic information they contain. All definitions were coded according to the following criteria:
– formal type of definition (full sentence and/or phrase),
– purely encyclopaedic explanation or hyperlinks to other websites with encyclopaedic information,

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[36]   See Hanks (2016) and Wiegand (1989), for more information on various approaches to writing lexicographic definitions.

– lexicographic definitions (definitions with genus proximum and differentia specifica or synonyms),
– lexicographic definitions containing other lexicographic information (etymology, domain).

Table 3 summarizes the numbers.

Formal type of definition (N= 196)[37]	full sentence	phrase
	94%	14%
Purely encyclopaedic explanations vs. lexicographic definitions	encyclopaedic explanation	lexicographic definition
	24%	76%
Types of definitions (N= 144)	definition with genus proximum and differentia specifica	synonym(s)
	85%	15%
Other lexicographic information (N = 36)	etymology	domain
	75%	25%

Table 3: Different formal types of explanations and types of information in corona-related glossaries from German new websites

In over 90 cases, lexicographic definitions are supplemented by encyclopaedic information, e. g. in the explanation for *Inkubationszeit* ('incubation period') in (3) from the glossary in "Bild der Frau". Overall, 71% of all entries in the glossaries discussed here contain encyclopaedic information, sometimes long paragraphs with many sentences. In contrast, almost none of the glossaries use illustrations to convey information or offer hyperlinks to other online reference works (see 2.1).

(3)   Dies ist die Zeitspanne zwischen Infizierung und Ausbruch der Krankheit mit Symptomen. Je nach Erkrankung kann die Inkubationszeit zwischen einigen Stunden und sogar einigen Jahren (etwa bei der von HIV ausgelösten Krankheit Aids) liegen. Im Schnitt liegt die Inkubationszeit bei Covid-19 bei fünf Tagen, kann aber auch bis zu 14 Tage dauern. Manche Infizierte verspüren hingegen sogar gar keine Symptome.[38] ('This is the period of time between infection and the onset of the disease with symptoms. Depending on the disease, the incubation period can range from a few hours to even several years (for example, in the case of AIDS, a disease caused by HIV). On average, the incubation period for Covid-19 is five days, but it can last up to 14 days. Some infected persons, by contrast, experience no symptoms at all.').

In (3), the first sentence gives the lexicographic definition in the classic form of genus proximum (*Zeitspanne* ['period of time']) and differentia specifica as a prepositional phrase (*zwischen Infizierung und Ausbruch der Krankheit mit Symptomen* ['between infection and the onset of the disease with symptoms']). The next three sentences present encyclopaedic information. Example (4) with information on the word *Abstrich* ('pap smear') illustrates a purely encyclopaedic entry in one of the glossaries ("Rheinlandpfalz Online").

(4)   Damit der Test durchgeführt werden kann, benötigt das Labor Sekret aus dem Hals und der Nase, manchmal auch aus der Lunge. Dazu wird ein Wattestäbchen tief eingeführt und dann ins Labor geschickt. Bluttests auf Antikörper gibt es zwar auch schon, sie sind aber sehr un-

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37   In some cases, full sentences and phrases are combined in one entry.
38   See https://www.bildderfrau.de/gesundheit/krankheiten/article228837093/Coronavirus-Glossar-Begriffe-erklaert.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

sicher; außerdem könnten sie nur das Vorhandensein von (möglicherweise älteren) Antikörpern bestätigen und wären deshalb kein sicherer Hinweis auf eine akute Infektion.[39] ('In order for the test to be performed, the laboratory needs secretions from the throat and nose, sometimes also from the lungs. For this purpose, a cotton swab is inserted deeply and then sent to the laboratory. Blood tests for antibodies also already exist, but they are very unreliable; moreover, they would only be able to confirm the presence of (possibly older) antibodies and would therefore not be a reliable indication of an acute infection.')

Etymological information or information on synonyms is mostly included in the definitions as shown in examples (5) (entry *FFP* in "Bild der Frau") and (6) (entry *Mortalitätsrate* ['mortaliy rate'] in "T-online"). In (5), the first sentence explains that *FFP* is an abbreviation of English *filtering face piece*. In (6), the synonym *Sterberate* is given as an insertion in dashes.

(5)   FFP ist die Abkürzung für das englisch „filtering face piece", also filternde Gesichtsmaske, zu Deutsch genauer „partikelfilternde Halbmaske". Hier handelt es sich tatsächlich um eine Atemschutzmaske. Sie schützt den Träger je nach Stärke mehr oder weniger vor dem Einatmen von kleinen und kleinsten (FFP3) Partikeln, die die Gesundheit schädigen könnten.[40] ('FFP is the abbreviation for "filtering face piece" or, more precisely, "particle-filtering half mask". This is actually a respiratory protection mask. Depending on its strength, it protects the wearer to a greater or lesser extent from inhaling small and very small (FFP3) particles that could be harmful to health.')

(6)   Die Mortalitätsrate – auch Sterberate – bezeichnet die Anzahl der Todesfälle in einem bestimmten Zeitraum bezogen auf 1.000 Individuen einer Population. Als Zeitraum wird in der Regel ein Jahr definiert. Die Sterblichkeitsrate bei einer Infektion mit dem Coronavirus liegt laut Weltgesundheitsorganisation (WHO) bei bis zu drei Prozent (Vergleich Grippe < 1 Prozent).[41] ('The mortality rate – also the death rate – is the number of deaths in a given period per 1,000 individuals in a population. The period is usually defined as one year. According to the World Health Organization [WHO], the mortality rate for infection with the coronavirus is up to three percent [comparison: influenza < 1 percent].')

There is clearly a focus on encyclopaedic information in the corona-related glossaries published by journalists on German news websites analyzed here. In contrast to dictionary entries, the glossary entries are also almost exclusively written in full sentences or combine phrases and full sentences, while there are hardly any cases where the explanation is only given in a single phrase resembling a typical dictionary entry. Some kind of lexicographic definition of meaning is found in roughly two thirds of the entries, and other information typical for dictionaries (i.e. information on etymology or domain) is added in roughly one fifth of all entries.

When defining the meaning of the head word, the authors of the glossaries use only two traditional strategies of explaining meaning: defining by naming the genus proximum and differentia specifica or by naming synonyms (the latter, however, in only 15% of the cases). There are no cases where examples are used to illustrate meaning. Nevertheless, the lay-lexicographers at work on these glossaries are building on traditional ways of defining lexical meaning (as in other contexts where laypersons define words; see Klosa/Stähr 2019 and 2020).

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[39]   See https://rp-online.de/panorama/coronavirus/coronavirus-lexikon-das-bedeuten-triage-inkubation-mortalitaet-und-co_aid-49588865 (last access: 15-03-2022).

[40]   See https://www.bildderfrau.de/gesundheit/krankheiten/article228837093/Coronavirus-Glossar-Begriffe-erklaert.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

[41]   See https://www.t-online.de/gesundheit/krankheiten-symptome/id_87524194/coronavirus-glossar-zu-wichtigen-begriffen-rund-um-corona.html (last access: 15-03-2022).

3.2   Definitions on "gutefrage.net"

The website "gutefrage.net" offers the opportunity to anybody to ask any kind of question and is the largest question-answer platform in German, with 1.9 billion active users and up to 30,000 answers given a day.[42] More than 100 questions concern language, which is one of the most popular topics. For this study, "gutefrage.net" was searched for all 112 entries found in the journalistic glossaries of corona-related words and expressions (see 2.1). Only seventeen of these were contained in questions and answers on this platform[43] (cf. Table 4).

Word or phrase	number of questions	number of answers
Aerosol ('aerosol')	1	3
COVID-19	1	1
Epidemie ('epidemic')	3	8
exponentiel[les Wachstum] ('exponential [growth]')	2	5
Inkubationszeit ('incubation period')	1	1
Inzidenz ('incidences')	1	1
Latenzzeit ('latency period')	1	1
Letaliät ('lethality')	2	6
linear[es Wachstum] ('linear [growth]')	2	4
Lockdown ('lockdown')	2	8
Mortalität ('mortality')	2	6
Pandemie ('pandemic')	3	11
Schmierinfektion ('smear infection')	1	1
Shutdown ('shutdown')	2	8
Sterberate ('mortality rate')	1	3
Triage ('triage')	3	16
Tröpfcheninfektion ('droplet infection')	2	3
Total	30	86

Table 4:   Corona-related words and phrases explained on the question-answer-platform "gutefrage.net"

All the words and phrases that users wanted to obtain information about are terms from the medical or epidemiological context and hardly any are new words or expressions that came to prominence during the corona-pandemic. Three different types of questions can be found (in descending order of frequency):
– difference between A and B (e.g. *Was ist der Unterschied zwischen Pandemie und Epidemie?*)
– meaning of X (e.g. *Was heißt Triage?*, *Was bedeutet Shutdown?*, cf. Figure 4)
– definition of X (e.g. *Was ist Triage?*)

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[42]   See information on https://www.gutefrage.net/ (last access: 15-03-2022).

[43]   And not all questions were posted and answered during the COVID-19 pandemic, i.e. from January 2020 to March 2022, but some also before January 2020.

All the definitions found in the answers were coded according to the following criteria:
– answers containing no definitions (eleven answers, which consist, for example, only of a hyperlink to other websites, e.g. Wikipedia);
– formal type of definition (full sentence or phrase);
– definitions with encyclopaedic information or hyperlinks to other websites with encyclopaedic information;
– definitions presenting lexical information (definitions with genus proximum and differentia specifica or synonyms, examples);
– answers with other lexicographic information (etymology, domain).

Figure 5 shows a typical example of a definition in sentence form, listing synonyms as well as presenting encyclopaedic information.[44]
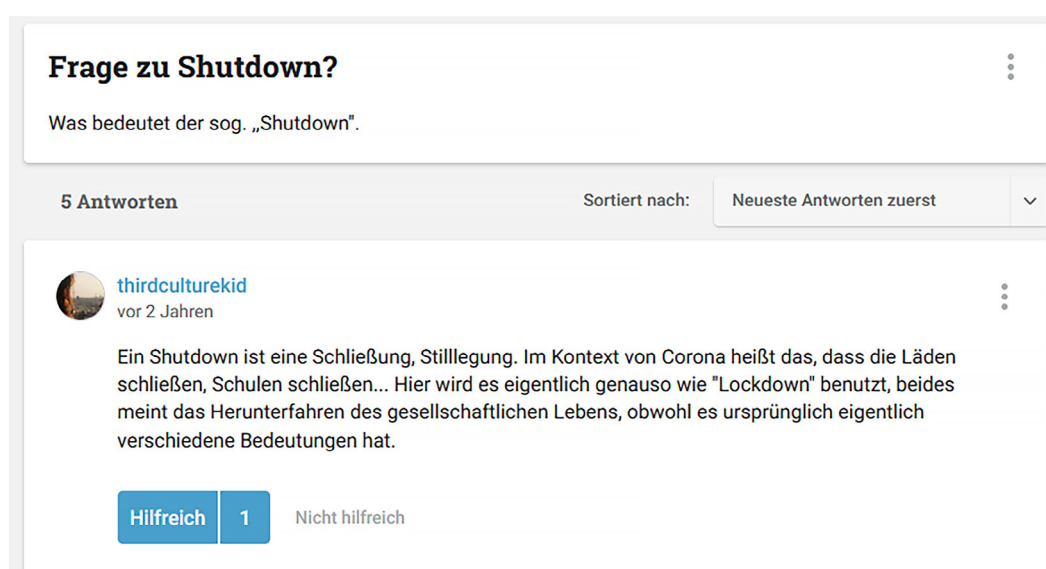

Fig. 5: Question on the meaning of *Shutdown* on gutefrage.net

The numbers in Table 5 illustrate that the answers given to questions in "gutefrage.net" evidently do not aim to be lexicographic definitions. They are predominantly written in full sentences and contain encyclopaedic information in over half of the cases. Purely lexical information is presented in less than half of the answers analyzed here, and other information typical for dictionaries is only added in fewer than 20% of the answers.

When defining the words that users asked for, three traditional strategies of explaining meaning are used to an almost identical degree: defining by naming the genus proximum and differentia specifica, by giving synonyms, and by showing examples of usage. Here (as in other contexts where lay people define words, see Klosa/Stähr 2019 and 2020), the users of the platform build on their knowledge of defining techniques possibly gained from teaching contexts or experience of dictionary usage.

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44   See: https://www.gutefrage.net/frage/frage-zu-shutdown (last access: 15-03-2022). Translation of the answer: "A shutdown is a closure, shutting down. In the context of corona, it means that stores are closing, schools are closing […] Here it's actually used the same way as "lockdown", both meaning the shutting down of social life, although originally it actually has different meanings."

Formal type of definition (N= 57)	full sentence	phrase	
	88%	12%	
Encyclopaedic information (N = 46)	explicit encyclopaedic information	hyperlinks to other websites with encyclopaedic information	
	70%	30%	
Lexical information (N = 36)	definition with genus proximum and differentia specifica	synonym(s)	example(s)
	34%	30%	36%
Other lexicographic information (N = 10)	etymology	domain	
	40%	60%	

Table 5: Different formal types of explanations and information in definitions on the question-answer-platform "gutefrage.net"

It is noteworthy that over half of the questions and answers analyzed cover two words. The newspaper glossaries presented in section 2.1 also contain some entries on two words or more, e.g. on *Schmierinfektion* ('smear infection') and *Kontaktinfektion* ('contact infection'). This might be an indication for lexicography that users not only try to find information on single words, but also on near synonyms or word pairs stemming from the same domain.[45]

3.3 Comparison to professional lexicography

As shown in section 2.2, German (online) dictionaries have been updated either by adding new corona-related entries or new meanings or by publishing word lists with vocabulary used in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In both scenarios, the dictionaries have not changed the ways they define head words. The example *Inkubationszeit* 'incubation period' from the DWDS (7) and the head word *Shutdown* ('shut-down') from the neologism dictionary published at the Leibniz-Institut für Deutsche Sprache (IDS) Mannheim (8) show that the definitions consist of phrases in which the genus proximum (*Zeit* or *Zeitraum* 'time (span)') is named and specified. There is no encyclopaedic information. In (7), the domain "medicine" is given. Both entries also contain examples to explain meaning and usage.

(7)   [Medizin] Zeit zwischen der Ansteckung mit einem Krankheitserreger und dem Auftreten der ersten Krankheitssymptome ('[medicine] time span between infection with a pathogen and the appearance of the first symptoms of the disease')[46]

(8)   Zeitraum, in dem fast alle wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Aktivitäten auf politische Anordnung hin stillgelegt sind (z.B. zur Eindämmung einer Seuche) ('period of time during which almost all economic and social activities are shut down by political order (e.g. to contain a disease)')[47]

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[45]   One notable exception is the German "Paronymwörterbuch", a corpus-based dictionary on easily confusable words published by the IDS Mannheim (see https://www.owid.de/parowb/, last access: 15-03-2022). Here, word pairs or triplets are explained contrastively in one dictionary entry. For more information, see Storjohann (2018).

[46]   See https://www.dwds.de/wb/Inkubationszeit (last access: 15-03-2022).

[47]   See https://www.owid.de/docs/neo/listen/corona.jsp#shutdown (last access: 15-03-2022).

Quite obviously, the authors of journalistic glossaries on corona-related vocabulary as well as the authors of answers to word-related questions posted on the question-answer plat-form "gutefrage.net" focus more on presenting encyclopaedic information than the professional lexicographers involved in German dictionary projects. When explaining word meaning, lay-authors prefer full sentences, but also fall back on traditional ways of defining words, while professional German lexicographers do not deviate from the conventional forms of definitions and the typical inventory of lexicographic information in their dictionaries.

4. Conclusion

To help users of German to understand and correctly use new corona-related words and the existing phrases and medical, epidemiological, political etc. terms being used more often in general language throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not only professional lexicographers who have reacted quickly, but the need to explain these words and phrases was felt in other parts of society as well. Thus, for example, journalists published glossaries and word-related questions were being answered on question-and-answer platforms. This study found differences concerning the explanation of word meaning and the amount of encyclopaedic information given in professional dictionaries, on the one hand, and in lay-lexicographic formats, on the other. An interesting question to be asked is how satisfied users are regarding professional lexicographic information in contrast to lay-lexicographic information (within the context of corona-related words). This is not part of this study but could be fruitfully pursued in future research.

Overall, general interest in (new) words or phrases and their meaning and usage in German was strong, as was interest in the ways that dictionaries reacted to this challenge. This was shown in one striking example (see section 1) where the British media picked up on a tweet concerning interesting new German corona-related words, leading to a drastic increase of page views in one German online dictionary in a short period of time. There is an interest in lexicography and lexicographical practice in society that manifested itself most obviously in the publication of glossaries etc. by non-lexicographers, but also in increased consultation of (online) dictionaries and in a higher demand for interviews on vocabulary developments in the COVID-19 crises. Both sides may profit: society, because reliable dictionaries reacting quickly to language change supports effective communication; and lexicography, because of the higher awareness of the usefulness of dictionaries, hopefully resulting in both strong sales of dictionaries and continued public funding for academic dictionary projects, as well as a general acknowledgement of the importance of lexicographic work.

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