

CORONA IN LATVIAN: NEOLOGISMS, PUNS, METAPHORS, AND OTHER MEANS OF EXPRESSION

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Abstract

The 2020 coronavirus pandemic has had its effect on language as well. New realities are being given new names, which often are based on the lexemes that denote the virus itself and the disease that it causes; some well-known words are getting new meanings, and the specialist lexis of individual fields, the military, medicine, and economy in particular, is becoming commonplace. The article introduces the latest phenomena (neologisms, personifications, puns, and so on) and the most prominent metaphors connected to COVID-19 in the Latvian language.

Key-words: *Latvian language, COVID-19, WordFormation, Euphemism, Impersonation*

Résumé

La pandémie de coronavirus de 2020 a eu d'effets sur la langue. Les nouvelles réalités reçoivent de nouveaux noms, qui se fondent souvent sur des lexèmes qui dénotent le virus en soi et la maladie qu'il provoque : certains mots bien connus acquièrent de nouvelles significations, et le lexique spécialisé de différents domaines, l'armée, la médecine et spécialement l'économie, devient commun. Notre article présente les plus fréquents phénomènes (néologismes, personnifications, jeux de mots, etc.) et les plus importantes métaphores liées au COVID-19 en letton.

Mots-clés: *langue lettone, COVID-19, formation des mots, euphémisme, personnification*

The 2020 coronavirus pandemic brought a number of unexpected changes in different areas of life. And language is no exception here: the new realities have birthed new names, words, phrases, figures of speech, metaphors we already know have gained new meanings, euphemisms and puns have become commonplace. The article addresses lexical, semantic, grammatical neologisms (compounds and phrases) in the Latvian language that are related to the COVID-19 pandemic¹. Some

¹ Just like many other languages (such as Dutch, English, German, Croatian), the Latvian language now has a special COVID-19 glossary accessible via Facebook. Unfortunately, contrary to other

of the neologisms inevitably become common in all languages, because everyone is fighting the same ‘enemy’ – the coronavirus, and ways to fight it or to avoid it are also more or less the same. The Latvian language has seen an influx of new international words, such as *kovidioti* // *covidioti* // *kovididioti*², *infodēmija*, *plāndēmija*, *testdēmija*; at different times, there have been incoming waves of English and Russian loanwords, such as *lo(c)kdauns* // *lockdowns* // *lock-down*, *anti-vaxxeri* // *antivakseri*, *anti-maskeri*, *pīķis* (<Eng. *peak* or Rus. *пик*), *pīķastundas* (< Eng. *peak hours* or Rus. *часник*), *namordņiks* // *morniks* ‘protective facemask’ (<Rus. *намордник* ‘muzzle’).

However, the coronavirus and the changes in life that it brings, and the restrictions in particular, have also sparked a wide-spread creativity in the users of the Latvian language as such.

I. NEW WORDS RESP. PHRASES

1. Containing the elements *kovid-* // *covid-* or *koron(a)-* // *coron(a)-*

Most of the neologisms in the Latvian language are based on the lexeme *kovid-* // *covid-* that denotes the name of the disease; this group is followed by neologisms based on the abridged name of the coronavirus, *koron(a)-* // *coron(a)-*, which is very characteristic of colloquial language³. Reading the news and the comments on Latvian news portals, social media, and forums creates an impression that language users are capable of adding *kovid-* // *covid-* or *koron(a)-* // *coron(a)-* to almost any word, yet most of the words are still occasional by nature. Could it be that forging covid-words has become some kind of sport for the people when many of them were forced to work/study from home or spend time in self-isolation/under quarantine? By the way, this creative process can be observed in other languages, too⁴.

languages, we do not have a special, widely accessible neologism database. As a result, this paper contains material that emerged in January–October of 2020 and has been collected by one person primarily from online sources; however, it should not be considered all-inclusive for the following two reasons: (1) one does not have the capacity to read everything that appears on online news portals, in the comments on individual articles, on various websites, forums, social media every day; (2) new words and other means of expression are (as of October 2020) still emerging in the said sources almost on a daily basis. One exceptionally ample source is the forum in the family-oriented *Cālis* (*Chicken*) section at the DELFI.LV news portal, where lively discussions of the coronavirus took place for the best part of 2020.

² Because there were two forms in circulation during the period covered in this analysis, in September, someone on the *Cālis* forum offered this classification: *Kovididioti ir divkāŗši kovidioti* ‘covididiots are double covidioti’. That said, *kovidioti* has different meanings in Latvian: some use this word in reference to people who are afraid of the coronavirus, others, to those who ignore it. The exact meaning in each case is down to the context.

³ It is also the abbreviation adopted in other languages, cf. Eng. *corona*, Ger. *Corona*, Lith. *korona*, Rus. *корона*.

⁴ As a case in point, as early as in the beginning of April Urban Dictionary offered around 30 English neologisms and phrases containing the elements *covid-*, *coron(a)-* each, and over 10 containing the element *quarant-* (Aleksaitē, Urnēziūtē, 19).

Compounds and composites. The material collected in the Latvian language proves what German researchers have said about words containing the element *corona-*: most of them are nouns (GFDS 2), with adjectives occurring much less often (GFDS 11). Here are but some of the examples⁵:

a) nouns resp. noun composites containing the elements *kovid-* // *covid-*:

kovidsērga // *covidsērga*⁶ ‘covid-disease’, *kovidkrīze* // *Covid-krīze* // *Covidkrīze* ‘covid-crisis’, *kovidlaiks* // *Covidlaiks* ‘covid-time’, *Kovidistāna* (COVID + *-stan*, a component in the names of some of the Asian countries)⁷, *Covidtante* ‘covid-lady’ (March 2 was the day when the first lady in Latvia was diagnosed with this disease), *kovidmuļķi un kovidnoziedznieki* ‘covid-fools and covid-criminals’, *covidhistēriķi un kovidpohujisti* ‘covid-hysterics and the covid-indifferent’, *covidlīķi* ‘covid corpses’, *kovidpiesardzība* ‘covid-caution’, *Covidmāte 1984* ‘covid-mother 1984’ (a disdainful name for the minister of health that contains a reference to the title of a book by George Orwell), *covidsekta* // *kovidiāņusekta* ‘a group of people who believe COVID-19 exists’, *covidpsihoze* ‘covid-psychosis’, *kovidrelīģija* ‘covid-religion’, *covidticīgie* ‘covid-believers’, *kovidbīstamība* ‘covid-hazard’, *pirmskovidlaikos* ‘before COVID-19’, *Covidlaipnība* ‘covid-kindness’, *skolaskovidkārtība* ‘the new school regime under the spread of the coronavirus’, *Covid-anekdote* ‘a joke about COVID-19’, *kovidbizness* ‘covid-business’, *kovidstulbums* ‘covid-dumbness’, *kovidballīte* ‘covid-party’, *kovidnoliedzējs* ‘covid-denier’, *Covidafēra* // *kovidafēra* ‘covid-scheme’, *covidmafija* ‘covid-mafia’, *kovidpornis* ‘COVID-19 perceived as pornography’, *kovidskursija* (covid + field trip) ‘a field trip resulting in more than 100 new cases of COVID-19 diagnosed at school’, and so on;

⁵ See also Liparte.

⁶ As this example and other examples indicate, the same notion can be expressed as a phrase or as a compound. Therefore, the budding database of Latvian covid-words also includes phrases.

⁷ This occasional, made-up international flight destination was depicted on a poster by GatisŠļūka, a Latvian caricaturist, which was published in July and bore the legend of ‘A new flight destination! Sunny Covidistan awaits you!’ This mirrors several news items of the period related to the overseas: Spain was listed as a no-go destination due to the threat of the coronavirus, yet Latvia’s national airlines announced flights to Barcelona; out of 13 new COVID-19 cases recorded one day, 5 were visiting workers from Uzbekistan, another 7, their contacts.



Pic. 1. © Gatis Šļūka. A poster.

b) nouns resp. noun composites containing the elements *koron(a)-* // *coron(a)-*:

koronpacients 'corona patient', *koronsimptomi* 'corona symptoms', *koronoptimisti* 'corona optimists', *koronasērga* // *koronaslimība* 'corona disease', *koronaažiotāža* 'ado about corona', *koronanojūgšanās* 'corona madness', *korontamponi* 'corona tampons', *koronodistancēšanās* 'corona distancing', *koronBārds* 'corona-beard', *koronopsihoze* 'corona-psychosis', *koronbriesmas* 'corona-threat', *koronahistērijas* // *pēckoronahistērijasekoloģija* 'corona hysterical // post-corona hysterical ecology', *koronoidiots* 'corona-idiot', *koronascirks* 'corona-cyrcus', *corona murgs* 'corona-nightmare', and so on.

There have been several compound adjectives containing these elements recorded as well: *KoronTrakāsDienas* 'corona-crazy days'⁸, *koronaslimie* 'corona-patients', *kovidslims* 'corona-sick', *kovidstulbs* // *koviddumjais* 'covid-dumb' (meaning someone who does not realise the threat of the coronavirus), *covidhistēriskatante* 'covid-hysterical lady', *covdebilaisvīruss* 'covidiot virus'.

⁸ Cf. the sale title in ads of Latvian retail chains: *Trakās Dienas* 'crazy days'. In an ad by the aforementioned caricaturist Gatis Šļūka, the coronavirus itself advertises for special low prices on buckwheat beginning in early March. This is a jab at the rush to buy buckwheat, toilet paper, and other goods that had engulfed Latvia and other countries.



Pic. 2. © Gatis Šļūka. An ad.

Even rarer are compound verbal (participial) forms used in an adjectival sense: *coronjukušie* ‘corona-mad’, *kovidcietušie* ‘corona-affected’, *kovidinficētie* ‘covid-infected’, *covidapstulbotie* ‘covid-stupefied’.

Derivatives. The Latvian language has a relatively small amount of derivatives with the root *kovid-* // *covid-* or *koron(a)-* // *coron(a)-*. The most prevalent of them is *covidnieks* // *kovidnieks*, which denotes both people who have contracted this disease, and the disease itself. When Latvia adopted the resolution to declare a national emergency on April 7, Jānis Belevičs posted a video on YouTube with the caption *Esjauirklāt. Kovidnieksirklāt* ‘I am here. Covidnieks is here’. This text spread across a particular demographic. A week later, a new account – that one supposedly of the virus itself – titled *Kovidnieks* was registered on Twitter; it posted: *Dažiemes Neeksistē ju, bet citi dēļ manis ir gatavi mirt.* ‘Some don’t believe I exist, but others are prepared to die for me’ (see Liparte, 31).

A person who has COVID-19 is occasionally also referred to as *koronnieks*, *koroninieks*, *coronņiks*, *Covidists*. One internet commentator who was outraged with the restrictions of the ordinary life called people who were imposing the restrictions *kovidists*, and another internet user referred to them as *kovidopāti*⁹; in turn, *antikovidists* is a commuter who does not wear a facemask. The whole situation has been called *covidiāde* ‘covidiaid’ on several occasions.

⁹ Cf. Eng. *coviopath* ‘A person who lacks a sense of social responsibility with respect to protecting others in their community from COVID-19, and therefore refuses to practice social distancing or temporarily give up their personal comforts for the greater good’ (www.urbandictionary.com).

The collective creative process called *Covid Apokalipses Scenārijs* ‘Covid Apocalypse Scenario’ that took place on the *Cālis* forum in March–April deserves a separate mention. During this event, people who have the coronavirus were dubbed *covidoņi* // *covidņi* // *covidaiņi* // *covidiāņi* // *kovidoņi* // *kovidņi* // *kovidāņi* (it would appear that every contributor used their own phonetic variation).

One typical trend of the Latvian language that comes from folklore is to give diminutive names to persons and things. So the coronavirus, too, has occasionally been ‘affectionately’ referred to as *koronīts*, *korončīks*.

It would appear that the root *covid-* has been used to create a verb (**kovidēt*), as there were discovered its participial form, *kovidēts* ‘incovidated, meaning someone who has COVID-19’ and derivative *at Covidēt* ‘de-covidate, undergo treatment for COVID-19’.

The lexeme *covids* has been jokingly given a surprise meaning in the Latvian language. On April 22, Raimonds Kreituss published a caricature on Facebook that showed a new unit of measure: 1 covid = 2 metres (under the Latvian guidelines, 2 metres is the distance people should maintain from one another to curb the spread of the coronavirus).

2. Containing other elements that denote COVID-19 (*kroņ-*, *vainag-*, *skorbuļ-*)

The word *corōna* is Latin for a ‘crown’ (CovSV). It is therefore no surprise that a lot of people use the word *kronis* ‘crown’ for this disease, for instance: *taskronis Itālijā plosās* ‘that crown is raging in Italy’. The lexeme is also used in compounds resp. phrases, yet they are much fewer in number, for instance: *kroņavīruss* // *kroņvīruss* ‘crown virus’, *kroņaslimnieks* ‘crown patient’, *kroņ(a)gripa* ‘crown flu’, *kroņakarte* ‘crown map’ (the map of the COVID-19 spread), *kroņ(a)krīze* ‘crown crisis’, *kroņveida diagnozēm* ‘crown diagnosis’. The occasional derivative *kronieši* ‘crown-bearers’ (meaning people who have COVID-19) has been noted as well.

Only a few occasional compounds containing *vainag-* ‘crown’, the Latvian equivalent of the element *corōn-* have been found, such as *vainagmireklis* ‘crown’ + ‘something you die from’ (a witty proposal for a Latvian name for the coronavirus).

Another name for COVID-19 that took deep roots on the *Cālis* forum was that of a different, make-believe yet terrible disease: *skorbul(i)s*¹⁰, which has produced a number of compounds: *Skorbuļēra* ‘skorbulera’, *skorbuļlaikā* ‘during the times of the scurvy skorbuls’, *pirms Skorbuļkrīzes* ‘before the skorbuls crisis’, *Skorbuļtests* // *skorbuļanalīzes* ‘a test for the skorbuls’, *Skorbuļslimnieks* ‘a person

¹⁰ Only those who have seen the popular Latvian film *Emīla Nedarbi* (*Emil’s Capers*, 1985) will know this name of the terrible, deadly make-believe disease. In *Emil of Lönneberga*, the book behind this film, the Swedish writer Astrid Lindgren writes about a very real disease: typhus.

who has the skorbuls’, *Skorbuļklepus* ‘skorbulcough’, *skorbuļjērs* ‘skorbuls-lamb’ (this last word was the product of an error in reading the title of one topic, *Skorbuļēra*, yet caught on and was developed to take on as many as two meanings – that of a person as a victim: *Mēsesam tie skorbuļjēri-kājēritiekamupurētiuzskorbuļa .. altāra* ‘We are the skorbuls-lamb; just like the lamb, we are being sacrificed on the altar ... of the skorbuls’, and the disease: *Varbūtesarī Beidzot to skorbuļjēru esmu noķēris? Pārisdienasbiju Tāds Mazlietsavārdzis* ‘Perhaps I have caught that skorbuls-lamb as well? I have been slightly unwell for a couple of days’).

3. Containing the element *karantīn-*

There are very few new compounds resp. composites in the Latvian language that contain the element *karantīn(a)-*, such as *Mūziķi visā Latvijā vienojušies „karantīnas izaicinājumā”* ‘musicians across Latvia unite for the “quarantine challenge”’, *karantīndienas* ‘quarantine-days’, *karantīnlaiks* ‘quarantine time’, *karantīnmaizītes* ‘quarantine-buns’. This may have to do with the fact that there was no national quarantine imposed in Latvia, and only persons that had been officially diagnosed with COVID-19 had to observe a quarantine regime.

4. Neologism chains from common words

Obviously, one word that gained a high amount of relevance against the pandemic backdrop was *pašizolācija* ‘self-isolation’ (first recorded in a dictionary in 2000). There was also a verb that contained this element and became quite popular: *pašizolēties*, as in *viņiem būs pa šjāizolējas* ‘they will have to self-isolate’. Its participial forms are quite common, such as: *neesmu redzējis nevienu policistu, vai viņi visi ir pašizolējušies?* ‘I haven’t seen a single police officer, are they all self-isolating?’, which are often used in an adjectival sense: *pašizolējušaisdēls* ‘self-isolating son’, *#Pašizolēts* ‘self-isolating’ (the title of a YouTube vlog). There are some nouns created with the element *pašizol-* as well: *pašizolnieks // pašizolants // pašizolāts* ‘self-isolator’.

Another word that became relevant at different times of the year (in spring and in fall, when facemasks were made mandatory to wear in public transport and elsewhere) was the old Latvian derivative *uzpurnis* ‘muzzle’, which in this context is often used in reference to the said masks. Some occasional verbs containing the element *uzpurn-* have been noted as well, such as *uzpurnēt // apuzpurnēt* ‘to put on a mask, literally, to put a muzzle on someone/thing’, *uzpurnoties // apuzpurnoties* ‘to put on a mask, literally, muzzle-up’, as in. *Kam bail, tie lai nēsā respiratorus – tas pasargās pašu. Tāpēc Nav jāuzpurnoVisi Pārējie.* ‘Those who are afraid should wear a respirator to protect themselves. Let’s not put a muzzle on everyone else’.

II. EUPHEMISMS AND ‘DAMNING’ LEXIS TO NICKNAME THE CORONAVIRUS

To nickname the coronavirus and the disease that it causes, especially before the pandemic was announced and during the early days of the pandemic, the Latvian language had a lot of euphemisms with a neutral (the pronouns *tas* ‘that’, *viņš* ‘it (masc.)’, the toponym adaptation *uhaņa* ‘uhan’ (after the name of Wuhan, the Chinese city where the virus originated), the names of other diseases such as (*kīniešu*) *iesnas* ‘(Chinese) snuffles’, *skorbul(i)s*), poetic (for instance, *ārzemjdraugs* ‘a friend from abroad’, „*sveiciens no Ķīnas*” ‘hello from China’, *nāvesplaujmašīna* ‘death’s mower’, *pastardienasbaisma* ‘doomsday horror’), or colloquial shade, including vulgarisms¹¹ (such as *draņķis* // *draņķība* ‘nasty thing’, *zaraza*, cf. Rus. *зараза* ‘infection, contagion’, *herņa* Lat. vulg. ‘nonsense’, cf. Rus. vulg. *херня* ‘something that is unpleasant, inappropriate, marginal; nonsense’, *sūds* // *sū* ‘shit’)¹².

Like elsewhere in the world, in Latvia, too, one can find a number of various conspiracy theories regarding COVID-19, disbelief in the virus, and efforts to ‘expose’ the allegedly man-made pandemic. This has a reflection in the language. The coronavirus and the disease caused by it are occasionally referred to as, for instance, *Politivīruss* ‘political virus’, *lohovīruss* ‘lokho-virus’ (<Rus. *лох* ‘a chump, a fool who lets himself be tricked’), *neesošvīruss* ‘non-existent virus’, *viltusvīruss* ‘fake virus’, *feikuslimība* ‘fake disease’, *feik-pandēmija* ‘fake pandemic’, *covidfeiks* (all<Eng. *fake*).

III. PERSONIFICATIONS AND PUNS

A typical folklore trait, personification of inanimate objects often has a place in the Latvian language these days as well. As often as not, personification is based on the grammatical gender of the noun, which is expressed through its ending. Yet a noun with the ending *-a* can be either masculine or feminine; as a result, one Latvian man has cleverly referred to the virus as a woman: *Holivudas seksa gigants Vainstīns Arī Esot Saslimis Ar Koronu... Nevienapasaulesvietenevarviņam Pretoties, pat korona ne...* ‘They say that Hollywood sex giant Harvey Weinstein has also contracted corona. No woman in the world can say “no” to him, not even corona’. Others perceive the virus as a man – most probably owing to the phonetic similarities between the word *vīruss*

¹¹ Even though the euphemism in Latvian is described as a word or a phrase used in the stead of some obscene, dirty word or phrase, also as a replacement for some intimate or taboo lexis, in this case obscenities as such can be euphemisms of the disease name, such as: *negribuslimot ne arkādāmhujņām no Hujņas*. ‘I don’t want to catch any *khuīnya* from *Khuyan*’; Lat. vulg. *huiņa* ‘something that is nasty, derisive, filthy; an improper thing; garbage; cf. Rus. vulg. *хуйня* (this word has lots of meanings, including ‘rubbish; nonsense; unpleasant circumstances, an unfortunate turn of events’). Here, we possibly have some sort of a pun as well: *Uhan* (see above) – *Khuyan*.

¹² For more on corona euphemisms and metaphors, see Liparte₂.

‘virus’ and *vīrus* ‘man, acc. pl.’ As a result, someone in Latvia proposed in early April that one way to check the rampant spread of the coronavirus would be through marriage: *Corona vīrusamvajagatrast Corona sievusu!!! ... untādu, laineļaujvazātiesapkārt!!!* ‘We have to find a corona-wife for the coronavirus, one that would keep him from prowling about!’ (Aleksaitē, Urnēžiūtē, 18).

Before the pandemic was announced, the coronavirus had even been declared a ruler: *pasaulēirieradiesjaunsvaldnieks – Kovids Deviņpadsmitais* ‘There is a new ruler in the world, Covid the Nineteenth’.

Latvian creativity also found an outlet in other puns. One of them was the ‘translation’ of the names of the state’s top officials during the pandemic: *Dumpisaicinasēdētājās, Kariņšsaglabātmieru, bet Viņķeleneizrautiesarvīniem. Kautkas mums navkārtībāaruzvārdiem!* The gist here is this: Dumpis (the chief infectious disease specialist with the Ministry of Health) encourages you to stay at home, Kariņš (the Prime Minister) wants you to stay calm, and Viņķele (the Ministry of Health) wants you to lay off wine. Yet all of these names are connected to common words, their meanings contradicting what they are saying: ‘Rebellion invites you to stay at home, Warmonger, keep peace, and Ms Cheap Wine¹³, lay off wine. There’s something wrong with our names!’ (Liparte₂, 34).

By the way, Latvia’s top-ranking officials also had amusing sayings during the pandemic; Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš, a philologist, was particularly known for his puns, such as *Covid-19 laipaliekjaņos, bet mēs – Jāņos*. ‘COVID-19 may be difficult to beat, but we will still be celebrating the Feast of St John’.

IV. SITUATIONAL METAPHORS (BASED ON MOVIES AND LITERATURE)

In addition to the world-famous military metaphors, the Latvian language uses the names of other diseases to describe the pandemic situation; on top of that, the situation is compared to being in a shadow or stoppage.

The shadow metaphors have been adopted from Latvian movies and literature – the aforesaid name of the disease, *skorbulis*, is a case in point here. *Nāvesēnā* (*In the Shadow of Death*) is a novella by Rūdolfs Blaumanis (1863–1908), a classic of Latvian literature. In it, the action takes place on an ice floe, which is being carried by the water further into the sea. A lot of people think that the current situation resembles that described in the novella. In his namesake text of April 24, the Adventist Rev Valdis Zilgalvis wrote that the choppy sea of the world is a cause for much greater concern, what with all the disasters, earthquakes, deadly diseases that chip away at the ice floe that carries us all. In his words, we are all in the shadow of death.¹⁴

¹³ Lat. Jargon *viņķelis*² ‘wine; cheap wine, (fem. *viņķele*).

¹⁴ For more on this and other metaphors, see Liparte₂.

One internet user described the situation on the *Cālis* forum on several occasions as being in the ‘shadow of a sword’, for instance: *Jā, bet tāirtānomāktībaZobenaēnā. Kadpalikusirūpevairstikai par eksistenciālo, būtisko* ‘Yes, but that is the depression of being in the shadow of a Sword. When all that’s left for you to do is to look after what’s existential, essential’. This could be a reference to the notorious sword of Damocles, or the namesake Latvian historical romance film (1976) portraying events that took place in Livonia during the Polish–Swedish war in 1620.¹⁵

At the beginning of the pandemic, one popular metaphor was that of stoppage, such as *stoplaiks* ‘stopped time’; *stopkadrasituācija* ‘still frame situation’. Some expressions were more poetic: ‘God has stopped the passage of the planet and is now checking the passengers’ tickets. You don’t even know whether you have one; whether you will be asked to get off, or allowed to stay. You simply get this weird sense of relief because of this pause. You don’t have to hurry to get places. Everyone is standing still right now. Everyone.’

Later, following the launch of the special *Apturi Covid* (Stop COVID) app that allowed softening the restrictions, the situation was being compared to George Orwell’s 1984, for instance: *Latvijaspremjerspažiņo, kaveids “kāpalaistbrīvība” ir “aruzliktāmmobilāsizsekošanasierīcēm.” GlužikāOrvela “jaunrunā” arottrādūvārdulietošanu, kurbrīvibairverdžiba – unuzliktvāžasir “palaistbrīvība”?* ‘Latvia’s prime minister says that one way to achieve “liberation” is to “attach tracking devices”. Just like with Orwell’s newspeak, which uses words in the opposite sense, where freedom is slavery, and to bond someone is to set them free?’ (journalist Sandris Točson Facebook). Later still, towards the fall, the prevalent metaphor was one that compared COVID-19 with religion.¹⁶

The examples gathered show that people tend to be creative inventing Latvian-language neologisms to name new realities both based on official names and on association. They also give new meanings to words, use puns, and play with the way the words sound. Only covid-words that are directly related to the pandemic (the disease per se and the situation it has created) are described here. In addition to those, there are neologisms that appeared during the period covered in this article but relate to other highlights of time, such as Easter, the general cleaning bee, the municipal elections in Riga, and so on. Notably, most of the neologisms are occasional in nature and appeared to denote specific realities and will most probably disappear as those realities go away or change.

¹⁵ Based on *Love is Stronger than Death*, a tragedy by the famous Latvian poet Janis Rainis (1865–1929).

¹⁶ These and other metaphors used in the Latvian language during the times of corona are slated to be included in the international databank *#ReframeCovid*.

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