

Epidemics past and present: from the plague in Makarska to the COVID-19 pandemic

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1. Introduction: Disease outbreaks, epidemics, and pandemics from Dante to the present day¹

Disease outbreaks and epidemics have always affected the daily lives of thousands of people. Numerous literary works are dedicated to them, e.g. *The Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio, *A Journal of the Plague Year* by Daniel Defoe, *The Plague* by Albert Camus, *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann, *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez, *The Eyes of Darkness* by Dean Koontz, *Kugina kuća* by August Šenoa, to name only a few. Writers anchor the experience of disease outbreaks and epidemics in our collective memory. This has not changed from Dante to the present day.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of daily life. It has rapidly impacted public health, education, and the economy, disrupting global trade, and travel². Many industries and sectors have been affected. The pandemic created a situation that had not been seen since the Second World War as everyone around the world was at risk of infection and people had to stay at home to avoid this danger.

The global influence of COVID-19 on language is clearly shown in many linguistic works, like the *Lexicography of Coronavirus-related Neologisms* by Klosa-Kückelhaus and Kernerman, published in 2022. Various linguists

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² See: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7147210/>.

have analyzed how COVID-19 has affected the way we think and speak. The language change triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic in conjunction with the restrictive measures to combat the pandemic is sometimes even compared to Orwell's Newspeak, which was used to control the thought process³.

The title of the novel *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel García Márquez strongly influenced the language used during the COVID-19 pandemic. The title of this novel was the source of many puns that frequently appeared in the media and social media, e.g. *Love in the time of Corona* > *Life in the time of Corona* > *Health in the time of Corona*, and were paraphrased even in scientific papers (e.g. *Metaphors in the time of Coronavirus*, Nerlich, 2020). Kristina Štrkalj Despot (2020) lists such puns in Croatian scientific papers and mentions that the phrase *u doba korone* 'in the time of Corona' has more than 4 million hits on Google.

Many literary works show the patterns of behavior during epidemics and disease outbreaks that we could observe in our everyday lives during the pandemic, such as hoarding, panic, fear for our lives and the lives of our loved ones, blame, sense of injustice, superstition, selfishness, heroism, fixation on the numbers of reported deaths, boredom during quarantine⁴. Some of these literary works seem very modern today. For example, the 1981 novel *The Eyes of Darkness* is about the Wuhan-400 virus, and excerpts from this book were very popular on social media. However, the symptoms described by the author Dean Koontz differ from the symptoms of COVID-19. In his novel, Wuhan-400 causes the secretion of a "toxin that literally eats away at brain tissue" and causes loss of control over bodily functions. "The victim simply has no pulse, no functioning organs and no urge to breathe"⁵.

³ See: <https://bjgplife.com/covid-19-orwell-and-the-media/>; <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-news-media-becomes-fluent-in-newspeak-11595284117>.

⁴ See: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/may/01/the-end-of-coronavirus-what-plague-literature-tells-us-about-our-future>.

⁵ See: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-factcheck-coronavirus-koontz-book-idUSKCN20M19I>.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, many new words (*busterirati* 'to booster', *delta-val* 'delta wave') and expressions (*lockdown-generacija* 'lockdown generation', *gripizacija korone* 'the transition from Corona to a state similar to the flu'), as well as additional meanings of the existing ones (*balon* 'balloon', *val* 'wave'), have emerged. In addition, many terms used primarily by medical professionals have entered common parlance (*imunokompromitiran* 'immunocompromised').

The importance and influence of Coronavirus-related terminology on languages is reflected in the fact that many languages have e-glossaries and new entries have been added to existing e-dictionaries. The choice of the word of the year also shows the frequency and scope of Coronavirus-related vocabulary.

Many works and conferences were dedicated to Coronavirus-related terminology (e.g. *Globalex Workshop on Lexicography and Neology*, Focus on Coronavirus-related Neologisms, online, August 31, 2021). The symposium *From Dante to the Present Day: Disease Outbreaks, Epidemics and Pandemics in Language, Literature and Culture*, Split, September 23 and 24, 2021, presented the results of interdisciplinary research that combines synchronic and diachronic approaches. In the paper *Imperativeness in Recommendations for Protection against the Coronavirus*, Diana Stolac and Anastazija Vlastelić (2022) begin their analysis with public health instructions during the 19th-century cholera epidemic. They focus on a set of instructions in three texts written in standard Kajkavian Croatian language and published in 1830 and 1831 and relate them to the instructions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. Methodology

This paper combines the diachronic and the synchronic approach. The corpus for the diachronic analysis consists of the reprinted edition of *Uspomena povistna KUGI MAKARSKOJ* (A Historical Memory of the Plague in Makarska in 1815) by Luigi Cesar Pavišić, the unpublished manuscript *Kronika Karamanovih* by Anka Mardešić, née Karaman, Anka Mardešić's correspondence with Sergej Katalinić, and newspaper articles about Romeo and Juliet from Split (Palma Karaman and Andrija Katalinić).

The synchronic analysis is based on the *Glossary of Coronavirus* compiled by Mihaljević, Hudeček and Lewis (2024), members of the Institute for the Croatian Language (jezik.hr/koronavirus), data collected by the authors from the media and social media after the publication of this glossary, e-dictionaries (e.g. *Mrežnik*) with Coronavirus-related entries (2024). As the COVID-19 pandemic has led to many new words, new dictionaries, and new dictionary entries in electronic dictionaries, this paper also focuses on Coronavirus-related terminology that is not listed in the *Glossary of Coronavirus*.

All Croatian examples cited in this paper have been translated into English by the authors. Since the focus of the paper is on Croatian and not on English, the principle of translation is formal correspondence and not translation equivalence.

The paper sheds light on two cases of epidemics and disease outbreaks in Dalmatia, especially through new data on the history of Romeo and Juliette from Split from Anka Mardešić's family archive. Anka was Palma Karaman's niece and grandmother of one of the authors of this paper. Idioms related to diseases and epidemics listed in this paper were created in the past and are still used in the present and connect the diachronic and the synchronic approach.

3. Disease outbreaks and epidemics in Dalmatia

3.1. *Uspomena povistna KUGI MAKARSKOJ*⁶

The book *Uspomena povistna KUGI MAKARSKOJ* (A Historical Memory of the Plague in Makarska in 1815) by Luigi Cesar Pavišić describes the plague in Makarska. It was republished in 2015⁷. In the town of Makarska,

⁶ The conference *Kuga u Makarskoj i primorju 1915* was held in Makarska in December 2015 to mark the 200th anniversary of the plague epidemic. The proceedings of the symposium were published in 2017.

⁷ «The plague of 1815 affected the town of Makarska and the surrounding coastal settlements, as well as several settlements in the Donja Neretva area.» MARINKO TOMASOVIĆ (ed.), *Kuga u Makarskoj i primorju 1815.*, Zbornik radova sa znanstvenog skupa održanog od 2. do 4. prosinca 2015. u Makarskoj, Gradski muzej Makarska, Makarska, 2017, p. 9.

555 to 600 deaths were counted due to the plague epidemic. The book was dedicated to four men who died of the plague: Stipan and Fabian Blašković, Ivan Jozip Paulović-Lučić, and Pavao Klement Miošić.

The author Luigi Cesar Pavišić was born in 1823, eight years after the plague, and died in 1905. He wrote his book in 1851 when he was only 28 years old. The themes in *Uspomena povistna* are perceived through the territorial origin of the plague, its medical and anthropological observation, and local memories of it. He begins his book by asking why the plague is so common in Dalmatia: «Parvo nego ovo učinim, budi mi dopušteno pokazati, zašto Dalmaciju često pohadjahu kuge»⁸ (Before I do that, let me show you why the plague comes to Dalmatia so often). He finds the answer in trade and traveling (especially through Bosnia, which is close to the Ottoman Empire) and in the nature of the disease, which shows no signs until it is too late: «Naćeš drugi uzrok koi nosi s'sobom boleština koja se zna tako utajati sakrivena, da dok sama posumnjivanja daju povod izvidjanju i istraživanju od kojih poradjaju se različita mnjenja i prijenja, pa ovo sve čini gubiti vrime, što je najdragocinie od svake stvari, a medjuto ona plaza se i gorstašno diže se».⁹

The style of the book can be characterized as popular and scientific at the same time, even with some literary elements. It is a mixture of memoirs and chronicles. It contains elements of literary and emotional expression; facts are mixed with fiction (folk tales), so it could be categorized as historical scientific-popular prose¹⁰. It is written in the Croatian Štokavian Ikavian dialect. Pavišić referred to the language as Dalmatian and Bosnian and used the spelling of the members of the Illyrian movement but

⁸ «Before I do this, let me show you why the plague comes to Dalmatia so often» in VJEKOSLAV CEZAR PAVIŠIĆ, *Uspomena povistna o kugu Makarskoj god. 1815. Pretisak iz 1815. godine*, Gradski muzej Makarska, Makarska, 2015. p. 6. (all translations from Croatian to English, are made by the authors).

⁹ «Another reason that this disease brings with it is that it remains hidden until the suspicion gives rise to inquiries and investigations, from which various opinions emerge, and all this leads to the loss of time, which is the most important thing in general, and in the meantime, the disease progresses». Ibid., pp.7-8.

¹⁰ MILICA MIHALJEVIĆ, *O jeziku i slovopisu djela Uspomena povistna o kugi makarskoj godine 1815* Luigja Cesara Pavišića, in: *Kuga u Makarskoj i Primorju 1815.*, Marinko Tomasović (ur.), Gradski muzej Makarska, Makarska, 2017, p. 399.

with elements of the Zadar philological school. He wanted his readers to understand him and therefore his language is simple; he used many synonyms and neologisms and refrained from using loan words. These compounds are recorded in this work: *gradoobranaštvo* (defense of the city), *vojostanica* (military station), *veliko-sušje* (severe drought), *grabomartac* (gravedigger), etc. Many of them are not listed in the Dictionary of the Academy of Sciences and Arts. The work contains these terms: *raznositelj* (scatterer), *mudrozborje istočno* (oriental institute), *martva knjiga* (death register), *martva platja* (family pension), etc.¹¹. In Table 1, a characteristic paragraph from this book is translated into English.

Croatian	English
Prešavši u drugu ulicu, vidio bi na jednom kraju prenositi iz kuće oli bacati s'prozora martca, iz drugoga voditi napo martva bolesnika u bolnicu. Enoti tilesine jednog bidnog starca koi vidivši jednog za drugim sve sinove poizdisati brez da im je mogao pomoći dati, napokon svladan od bolesti, od glada, od zlopatjenja umra bi brez popa, niti rodjaka niti priatelja biaše; etoti jedne majke umiruće, oko sebe troje četvero dičice, koja obiknuta neastavljati se od nje i nevidić pogibil hodiahu, za njom lipo u nutra mista od smarti; (Pavišić, 2015: 15)	When he went into the other street, he saw on one side dead bodies being carried out of the house or thrown out of the window: on the other, half-dead sick people being taken to the hospital. There lies the body of a poor old man who saw his sons die one after the other without being able to help them, who was finally overcome by illness and hunger and died in pain without a priest, relatives, or friends being present. There is a dying mother, and three or four children around her, who were never separated from her and did not realize the danger but walked after her in the dying city.

Table 1
Paragraph from *Uspomena povistna KUGI MAKARSKOJ*

The introduction to the reprint of Pavešić's book states that the two-year-old child (one of the children mentioned in this paragraph) was raised by a girl with the last name Nikolić after their mother's death¹².

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Cit. MARINKO TOMASOVIĆ, *Kuga u Makarskoj i primorju 1815*, p. 19.

The paragraph shows the atmosphere in Makarska during the plague epidemic, with many people dying, fear, sadness, helplessness, cruelty, and injustice.

3.2. Romeo and Juliet from Split

Another example of disease outbreaks in Dalmatia the memory of which has been preserved in folk songs and newspaper articles relates to the so-called Romeo and Juliet from Split – Palma Karaman (Josip Bepo Karaman's half-sister, the first Dalmatian cinematographer and cinema owner) and Andrija Katalinić. They both died of smallpox (*variola major*, known as *patule* in Split) in 1864. Palma Karaman was not even twenty years old (in her fourth quinquennium) and was about to marry Andrija Katalinić when she contracted *variola major* and died within a few days. Her fiancé Andrija was distraught and could not accept the death of his beloved. He lay down next to her dead body and wrapped himself in her sheets to get the *variola*. They were buried in the same grave in the Sustipan cemetery in Split. Their gravestone has not been preserved. The Italian text from the gravestone shown in Table 2 was copied from the manuscript *Kronika Karamanovih* written by Palma's niece Anka Mardešić, née Karaman, which is kept in the family archive, shown in Figure 1.

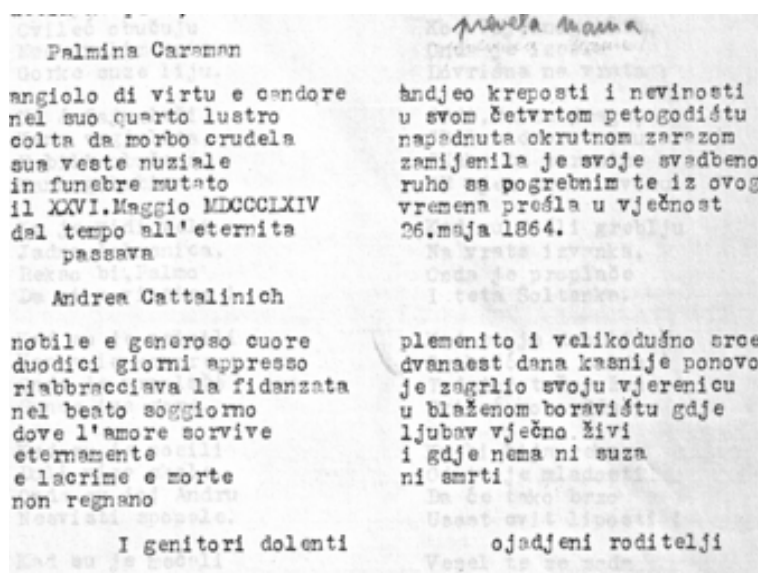


Figure 1
Manuscript by Anka Mardešić

Italian	Croatian	English
Palmina Caraman angiollo di virtù e candore nel suo quarto lustro colta da morbo crudela sua veste nuziale in funebre mutato il XXVI. Maggio MDCCCLXIV dal tempo all'eternità passava	andjeo kreposti i nevinosti u svom četvrtom petogodištu napadnuta okrutnom zarazom zamijenila je svoje svadbeno ruho sa pogrebnim te iz ovog vremena prešla u vječnost 26. maja 1864.	an angel of virtue and innocence in her fourth quinquennium, struck by a cruel plague, exchanged her wedding dress for a burial gown and entered eternity on May 26, 1864
Andrea Cattalinich nobile e generoso cuore duodici giorni appresso riabbracciava la fidanzata nel beato soggiorno dove l'amore sopravvive eternamente e lacrime e morte non regnano I genitori dolenti	plemenito i velikodušno srce dvanaest dana kasnije ponovo je zagrlio svoju vjerenicu u blaženom boravištu gdje ljubav vječno živi i gdje nema ni suza ni smrti ojađeni roditelji	a noble and generous heart twelve days later again he embraced his betrothed in a blessed place where love lives forever and where there are neither tears nor death grieving parents

Table 2

The text of the gravestone in Italian, Croatian, and English

The story of these unhappy lovers is often mentioned in the Split newspapers *Slobodna Dalmacija*, mostly on St. Valentine's Day¹³.

Andrija Katalinić was the brother of the grandfather of Ljubo and Sergije Katalinić, the heirs of the great Katalinić Palace, which was bombed during the Second World War. From 1973, Bepo Karaman's descendants (1864 – 1921) kept the correspondence between Anka Karaman and Sergije Katalinić. The reason for the correspondence was the article *Dobrovoljna smrt i nasilno progonstvo* (Voluntary Death and Forced Exile) by Šimun Jurišić (1942 – 2010), which was published in the newspapers *Nedjeljna*

¹³ See: <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/split/znate-li-pricu-o-splitskom-romeu-i-juliji-voljeli-su-se-toliko-da-je-on-za-njom-posao-u-strasnu-smrt-493049>; <https://hr-hr.facebook.com/collegium.split/posts/742030899782061>; <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/split/ne-trebaju-nama-strane-legende-tragicnih-zabranjenih-ljubavi-je-bilo-i-u-nas-sest-istinitih-prica-iz-staroga-splita-ganut-ce-vas-do-suza-a-neke-bi-vas-mogle-i-sokirati-502744>.

Dalmacija in 1973. In the said article, the author asks members of the Karaman and Katalinić families to provide additional data about the lives and deaths of these tragic lovers. From the correspondence, we learn that Palma had already bought her wedding dress and that both families were sympathetic to the impending marriage. When Palma fell ill, her fiancé continued his visits, even though he fell ill. Palma died in Andrija's arms on May 26, 1864. To aggravate his condition, Andrija went home, saddled his horse, unbuttoned his shirt, and galloped to Kaštel Stari and back in a windy (*jugo*) storm. He not only fell ill with variola, but also with severe pneumonia and died 12 days after Palma.

From Sergije Katalinić's letter, we learn that Darinka Karaman, a member of the Karaman family, wanted to transfer the lover's remains and gravestone from Sustipan to Lovrinac, the new Split cemetery. She was not allowed to do so, as the authorities said that the remains and the gravestone would remain in Sustipan. However, this did not happen, and it is unknown where their remains are. The gravestone was destroyed in 1961.

Two versions of the folk song about Palma's death have been recorded in the manuscript *Kronika Karamanovih*. They can also be found in *Marjanska Vila* ili *Sbirka narodnih pjesama sakupljenih u Spljetu / po Dujmu Srećku Karamanu* by Srećko Karaman (1856 – 1927).

	Croatian	English
1 st Poem	Palmi Karamanki Preminuloj godine 1864. od patula Kad na Božji danak Presesun dospíše Niki Karamanu Ćer Palma umriše. Kad su došle žene Da će je obući Bortula Joskina Reče tad plačući: 'Ne dan te obući Sokolice siva Jerbo mi se čini Da si jošće živa! Al se Joskinica Juto privarila Jer je crna bolest Palmu pokosila. Prigori bi otac Pola svoga blaga, Da mu je ostala Ćer Palme pridraga. Tad ju tužne žene Cvileć obučiju Nad uvelin cviton Gorke suze liju. Na šofaju leži Kano angjelica U bil obučena Kano golubica.	To Palma Karaman Died in 1964 from smallpox When on God's Day the procession came Niko Karaman's daughter Palma died. When the women came to dress her Bortula Joskina said crying: I won't let you get dressed my gray falcon because it seems to me that you are still alive! But Joskinica was wrong because the black sickness knocked Palma down. Her father would give half his wealth for his beloved daughter to remain alive. Now sad women dress her up crying above this withered flower bitter tears. She is lying on her bed as an angel dressed in white as a dove.

	Ko je vidi veli: Jadna žalosnica Rek bi Palme Da si nevistica!	Whoever sees her would say poor sad woman, one would say, Palma, that you are a bride.
2 nd poem	Proplačite vi nebesa Irešena sa zvizdama, pod nebesin sva čudesa Proplačite sada s nama! Proplačite vi pastiri, sve ovčice i sva stada, Neka kunu iste zviri Smrt nemilu teška jada! Palmu sori u mladosti Gorka tuga, bol nemila, Pokosi je bez milosti, Kosa oštra, smrtna sila. U najlipji cvit mladosti Palma svrši svoja lita, Uvela je sva do kosti, Usala je ruže kita!	Cry, you heaven decorated by stars, all wonders under heaven, cry with us. Cry you shepherds all sheep and all heards, Let them curse the same monsters, cruel death, hard misery. Palma was destroyed in her youth, bitter sadness, odious pain, mowed without mercy by a sharp scythe, deadly force. In the most beautiful flower of youth Palma ended her years. Withered to the bones The bunch of roses withered.

Table 3
Excerpts from two poems about Palma Karaman's death

Both poems revolve around the tragic death of Palma Karaman. She was young («Palmu sori u mladosti»), beautiful («Plemeniti struk liposti, Ki nemilo uveo je»), honest («dostojna je slavna venca, od poštenja sad na glavi») and was a beloved daughter from a rich family from Split («prigori bi otac pola svoga blaga da mu je ostala ćer Palme pridraga»). Her father Nikola Karaman (Niko) was a butcher. She was about to marry her beloved fiancé Andrija Katalinić («moja ljubav – želja tvoja; zato Andre pun ljubavi za njom vene u životu, jer se s dragom on rastavi ne jubeći nje lipotu»). Smallpox is called the black disease («crna bolest»). Black coffin («mećali u crne kapsile») and black earth («crna zemljica») contrast with her white robe («u bil obučena kano golubica»). Her death is described

as quick and sudden («ko bi bija reka, od tvoje mladosti, da će tako brzo, usast cvit liposti! ») and the reaction of the people is grief («tužne žene, proplačite vi nebesa, cvileć obučiju») and disbelief («jerbo mi se čini da si jošće živa! »). The funeral procession passes through different parts of Split («Šperun, sv. Frane, Tomića stine, sv. Petar, Vučji dvor, Vučji rat») and at each place different people begin to cry («žene iz Šperuna, dvi tete Petrinke, teta Šoltanka»). Palma is compared to a withered flower, an angel, a dove, a bride («uvelin cviton, kano andjelica, kano golubica, rek bi Palme da si nevistica»).

4. Idioms: a link between past epidemics and our language today

During the lockdown in 2020, the Institute for the Croatian Language published a special issue of the journal *Hrvatski jezik*, which dealt with various aspects of epidemics and pandemics in the present and in the past. One of the papers was dedicated to idioms related to disease outbreaks and epidemics. It showed how idioms preserve the memory of past disease outbreaks and epidemics. Barbara Kovačević (2020, 2024) gives an overview of idioms related to disease outbreaks and epidemics, ranging from *smrdi kao kuga* ('it stinks like plague') to *između čekića i plesa* ('between a hammer and a dance'), showing that disease outbreaks and epidemics from the past have found their way into the language of the present. Table 4 shows some of these idioms used in today's Croatian.

Croatian	English
bježati od koga kao da je gubav	run from somebody as if he had leprosy
bježati od koga/čega kao od kuge	run from somebody/something as from the plague
bojati se koga/čega kao kuge	be afraid of somebody/something as of a plague
gori od kuge/kolere	worse than plague/cholera
kuga i kolera	plague and cholera

pljuje kao tuberan	spits like one with the tuberculosis
širi se kao virus	spreads as a virus
smrdjeti kao kuga	stink like plague

Table 4
Epidemic-related idioms

The COVID-19 pandemic has spawned many pandemic jokes (Miloš 2020) and puns. It remains to be seen whether any COVID-19-related idioms (e.g. «između čekića i plesa») will be preserved for future generations.

5. The COVID-19 pandemic – language change in real time

Languages change over time, but in 2020, with the emergence of the Coronavirus, linguists had the chance to observe language change in real time. These changes are recorded by the media and social media. As it can be seen in Figure 2, New Corona-related terms are recorded in specialized and general corpora, e.g. *enTenTen20 Corpus*.

CONCORDANCE English Web 2020 (enTenTen20)

simple covid-19 • 1,433,204
31.87 per million tokens • 0.0032%

Account expires in April 2022 »
Get more space

Left context KWIC Right context

1	cornell.edu	types can bring you more success in your ... </s><s> What's New? </s><s> COVID-19 Resources </s><s> We have collected some of our favorite resources for inf
2	cornell.edu	live, regulatory, judicial, and executive responses in the United States to the COVID-19 pandemic and collected them here for your use. </s><s> See them here </s>
3	dnaindia.com	oronavirus in March when she was pregnant, has given birth to a baby with Covid-19 antibodies. </s><s> Sero survey means collection and testing of serum spec
4	gov.uk	</s><s> If you cannot go to an appointment because you have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or because you are self-isolating, it will not affect your immigrati
5	dvidshub.net	Portraits of individuals at Dyess Air Force Base promoting mask wear during COVID-19 pandemic. </s><s> Chief Master Sgt. Eric Dugger, 7th Bomb Wing... </s><s>
6	fiso.co.uk	h Salah likely part of the starting lineup once again after testing negative for COVID-19 earlier this week. </s><s> It is only natural to want to relax after a hard day. ·
7	fiso.co.uk	<s><s> Add to that the absence of Fabinho and Henderson, and the obligatory COVID-19 isolation of Mo Salah, and betting against a good result for Liverpool starts n
8	palatineconcert...	last saw each other – on March 1 to be exact! </s><s> Learning to live with COVID-19 and the restrictions that it places on our daily lives has been a challenge for
9	tourdavita.org	ple programs that prevent and treat chronic disease and currently to combat COVID-19 with its partners in vulnerable communities around the world. </s><s> Most I
10	reliefweb.int	lrought have wiped out harvests and hampered people's access to food and COVID-19 is compounding their suffering, WFP warns. </s><s> An estimated 1.5 millio
11	reliefweb.int	re not normal times. </s><s> Thanks to the flood of information surrounding COVID-19 and the number of sources producing reports, analyses, infographics, manu
12	lafayette.edu	larship component and grant opportunities for faculty and students. </s><s> COVID-19 Update </s><s> Campus updates regarding COVID-19 are available on the
13	lafayette.edu	id students. </s><s> COVID-19 Update </s><s> Campus updates regarding COVID-19 are available on the College's COVID-19 Updates and Information page </s>
14	lafayette.edu	's><s> Campus updates regarding COVID-19 are available on the College's COVID-19 Updates and Information page </s><s> Visit the Support Easton to learn how

Figure 2:
COVID-19 in enTenTen20 Corpus

Including the most recent data in the corpora facilitates selecting the *Word of the Year*.¹⁴

Based upon a statistical analysis of words that are looked up in extremely high numbers in our online dictionary while also showing a significant year-over-year increase in traffic, Merriam-Webster's Word of the Year for 2020 is pandemic.¹⁵

Corpus analysis enabled Oxford University to select the word of the year suggesting that «The Oxford Children's Dictionaries & Language Data team at Oxford University Press having analyzed stories submitted by more than 134,000 children for a writing competition has already identified the Children's Word of 2020: *coronavirus*». ¹⁶

In 2021 the words *vax* and *vaccine* were among the most popular words of the year:

2021 is at its end. This year we saw several words getting added to our vocabulary. However, as per the five leading dictionaries, the five words that stood out the most were; *vax*, *vaccine*, *perseverance*, *NFT*, and *allyship*.¹⁷

Because 2020 has seen so many "seismic events" Oxford Dictionaries has expanded the word of the year to encompass several "Words of an Unprecedented Year":

They include bushfires, Covid-19, WFH, lockdown, circuit-breaker, support bubbles, keyworkers, furlough, Black Lives Matter and moonshot.

¹⁴ «Since 2003, Merriam-Webster has proclaimed a *Word of the Year*, based partly on the number of times a word or expression has been looked up online and how that frequency compares to the previous year. Past words of the year include *blog* (2004), *bailout* (2008) and *austerity* (2010).» See: <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-04-11/coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-changes-how-we-talk>.

¹⁵ See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/word-of-the-year-2020-pandemic/pandemic>

¹⁶ See: <https://global.oup.com/education/500-words/childrens-language/?region=international>.

¹⁷ See: <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/grammar-vocabulary/story/word-of-the-year-2021-two-iterations-of-vaccine-nft-amongst-word-of-the-year-chosen-by-top-dictionaries-1888889-2021-12-17>.

The use of the word pandemic has increased by more than 57,000% this year.¹⁸

In the time of Corona, many medical terms that were previously unknown to the public entered the general language.

Rarely has a word moved from the jargon of medical professionals to the general public's everyday vocabulary as quickly as Coronavirus. Though not a new word, Coronavirus rocketed from obscurity to ubiquity in a span of a few weeks¹⁹

As soon as new Coronavirus-related words and phrases appeared in the media and social media, many online glossaries were compiled, e.g., *Coronavirus: Glossary of Common Terms* (<https://www.webmd.com/lung/coronavirus-glossary#1>); *Coronaspeak – A Guide to the Language We Are All Using These Days* (<https://grownandflown.com/corona-slang-language-guide/>).

In *the Merriam-Webster dictionary*, a special release of new Coronavirus-related vocabulary is published online:

The current pandemic is caused by a new, or novel, type of Coronavirus dubbed COVID-19 in February. The name stands for “coronavirus disease 2019,” and was added to our dictionary in a special release of new words in March, giving COVID-19 the distinction of being the fastest term to go from coinage to inclusion in a Merriam-Webster dictionary – the process took only 34 days.²⁰

Merriam-Webster records two meanings of *COVID-19*:

1. a mild to severe respiratory illness that is caused by a coronavirus (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 of the genus Betacoronavirus), is transmitted chiefly by contact with infectious material (such as respiratory droplets) or with objects or surfaces contaminated by the causative virus, and is characterized especially by fever, cough, and shortness of breath and may progress to

¹⁸ See: <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-55016543>.

¹⁹ See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/word-of-the-year/coronavirus>.

²⁰ See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/word-of-the-year/coronavirus>

pneumonia and respiratory failure 2. the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.²¹

Merriam-Webster also records the first known use of the term *COVID-19* and its history and etymology. Many other languages have online glossaries and dictionaries of Coronavirus-related terminology, e.g., German *Neuer Wortschatz rund um die Coronapandemie* at <https://www.owid.de/docs/neo/listen/corona.jsp#>; Dutch *Coronawoordenboek* at <https://www.taalkbank.nl/2020/03/14/coronawoordenboek/>.

Comparing new words in glossaries of non-related languages reveals the global character of the pandemic. Figure 3 shows the words *kovidiot*, *Covidiot*, and *covidioot* in Croatian, Dutch, and German.

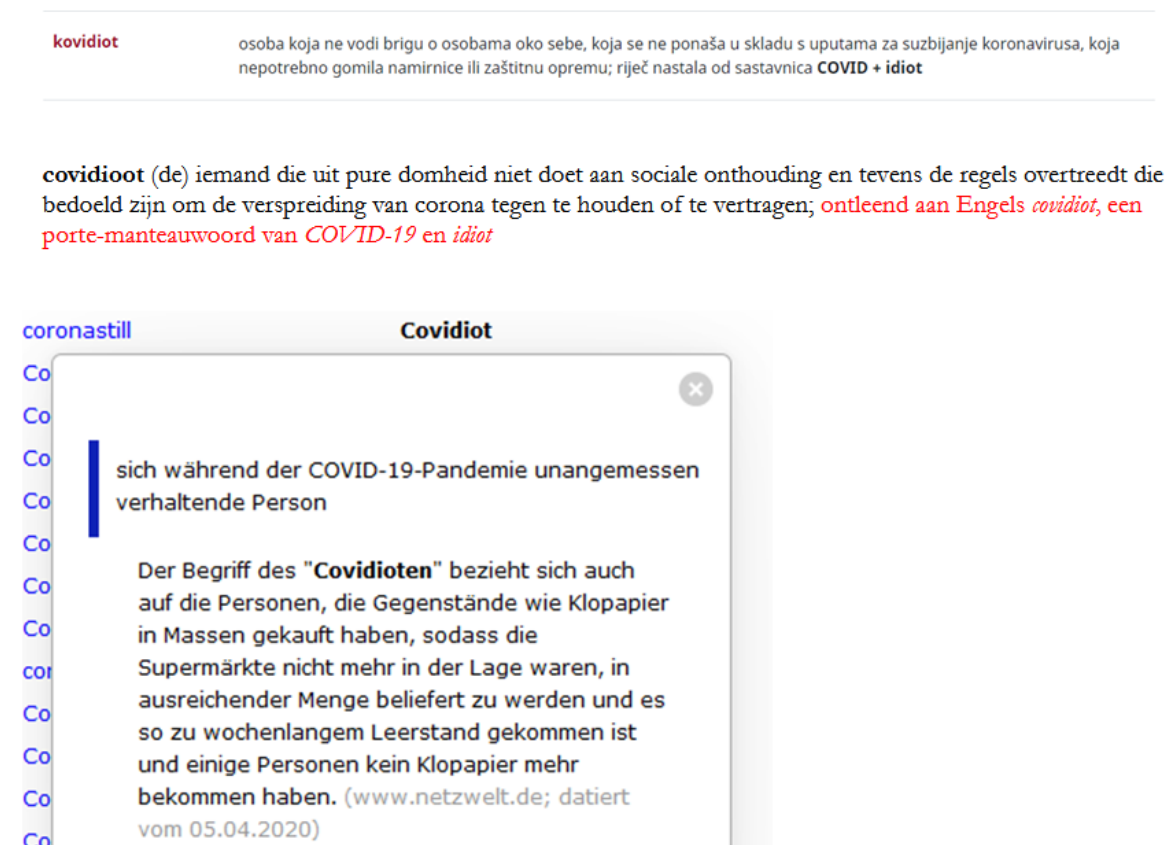


Figure 3
Words *kovidiot*, *Covidiot* and *covidioot* in Croatian, Dutch, and German

²¹ See: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/COVID-19>.

Figure 3 also proves that Croatian *kovidiot* is not a blend in Croatian as stated by Mikić and Čolić, but a loanword from English as it can be seen in the Dutch dictionary entry.

If we compare the terms *samoizolacija*, *zelfisolatie*, *Selbstisolation* in the same three languages as shown in Figure 4, we see that although they are modeled according to the same word-formation model the first element differs (*samo-*, *selfst-*, *zelf-*), so these terms are formed by compounding a national element with an international stem of Latin origin (*izolacija*, *isolatie*, *Isolation*).

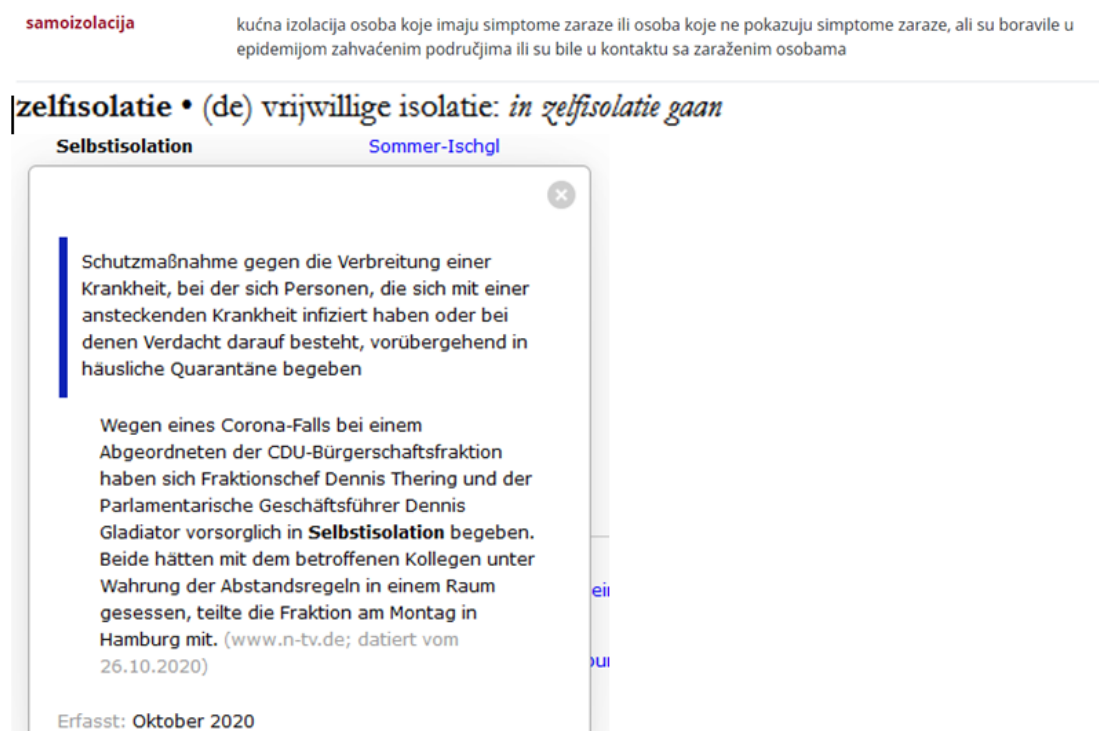


Figure 4

Words *samoizolacija*, *zelfisolatie*, *Selbstisolation* in Croatian, Dutch, and German

5.1. Croatian Coronavirus-related terminology

The emergence of words related to the Coronavirus has provoked a quick reaction from Croatian linguists. An online *Coronavirus Glossary* has been published on the website of the Institute for the Croatian language, numerous language consultations were held, and language advice was

asked, a special issue of *Hrvatski jezik* on Coronavirus and e-learning has been published. Ana Ostroški Anić and Kristina Štrkalj Despot (2021) have compiled a small Croatian Coronavirus-corpus in Sketch Engine. Ana Mikić Čolić (2021) analyzed the word formation of Coronavirus-related neologisms in the supplement to her book *Neologizmi u hrvatskome jeziku* (Neologisms in Croatian). Some Coronavirus-related terms were added to the *Croatian Web Dictionary – Mrežnik*, a general normative online dictionary of the Croatian language. Part of the COVID-19 entry from *Mrežnik* is shown in Figure 5.

COVID-19

med. **COVID-19 bolest je koju prouzročuje novi soj koronavirusa SARS-CoV-2 (teški akutni respiratorni sindrom, koronavirus 2).**

- Bolest COVID-19 prenosi se kapljičnim putem i izravnim kontaktom, preko kapljica sline ili sluzi govorom, disanjem ili kašljanjem zaražene osobe u blizini druge zdrave osobe.
- Osobe sa simptomima bolesti mogu doći u bolnicu samo uz prethodan dogovor liječnika s nadležnom bolnicom nakon što je liječnik postavio sumnju na COVID-19.
- 13. ožujka 2020. donesena je Odluka o proglašenju epidemije bolesti COVID-19 na području čitave Republike Hrvatske.

Kakav je COVID-19? dugotrajan, težak

Što COVID-19 može? prijetiti, širiti se, ubiti, uništiti (gospodarstvo, turizam), vladati

Što se s COVID-om 19 može? biti pozitivan na njega, oboljeti od njega; preboljeti ga

U vezi s COVID-om 19 spominje se: bolest, borba, kriza, simptom, slučaj

SINONIM: bolest koronavirusna bolest

COVID ambulanta

COVID ambulanta ambulanta je namijenjena osobama kod kojih postoji sumnja na COVID-19.

– Pacijente s dišnim tegobama (npr. kašalj, nedostatak daha, gubitak njuha, curenje nosa) i/ili vrućicom, kao i one koji

Figure 5
Part of the entry *COVID-19* in *Mrežnik*

However, after the publication of the *Coronavirus glossary*, the authors of this paper continued to collect Coronavirus-related terminology. Table 5 lists some of these terms with their synonyms, definitions, and derivatives collected by the authors from the media, social media, the Internet, personal conversations, language advice, and the *Corona corpus*.

English	Croatian	Definition
anti-masker	antimasker (male) antimaskerica (female) antimaskerski	a person who opposes wearing a face mask during the COVID-19 pandemic

booster dose	booster doza dodatna doza docjepna doza treća doza docjepna doza	a vaccine that helps improve the protection from first 2 doses of the vaccine a supplementary injection of a vaccine given to maintain the immunization provided by an earlier dose
to boost boosting	boosterirati/busterati se bustati/bustati se boosteriranje/ busteriranje	to vaccinate with a booster dose
Wave omicron-wave delta-wave	val omicron-val delta-val	any surging or progressing movement of the virus resembling a wave of the sea
antivaxxer antivaxxerism	antivakser (male) antivakserica (female) antivakterski pokret protucjepiša necjepiša protucjepiša antivakserizam, antivakserstvo	a person who distrusts or is against vaccination, often someone who is vocally opposed to vaccines attitude or movement against vaccination
flurona	flurona	flu virus and the COVID-19 virus occur at the same time
deltacron	Deltakron	super variant combining Delta and Omicron
endemisation of COVID-19	endemizacija koronavirusa prelazak pandemije u endemiju	constant presence and/or usual prevalence of a disease or infection within a geographic area

postpandemic prepandemic pandemic fatigue	postpandemijski pretpandemijski pandemijski zamor	after pandemic, that which occurs after the pandemic before pandemic, that which occured before the pandemic fatigue caused by the pandemia
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Table 5

A selection of terms related to the Coronavirus in Croatian

In Croatian Coronavirus-related terminology numerous neologisms with the element *COVID* and *korona-* occurred (Table 6).

	Croatian	English
COVID/covid/ kovid	COVID bolnica, COVID centar, COVID dodatak, COVID incidencija, COVID kredit, COVID krevet, COVID negativan, COVID pacijent, COVID party, COVID pandemija, COVID planinar, COVID pozitivan, COVID potvrda, COVID redar, COVID restrikcija, COVID situacija	COVID hospital, COVID center, COVID bonus, COVID incident, COVID credit, COVID bed, COVID negative, COVID patient, COVID pandemic, COVID party, COVID mountaineer, COVID positive, COVID certificate, COVID guard, COVID restriction, COVID situation
korona	koronabomba, koronajesen, koronakarta, koronamafija, koronamutacija, koronapravila, koronapotvrda, koronarecesija, koronaredar, koronaroman, koronasemafor, koronatuga, koronaudar, koronazima	Corona bomb, Corona fall, Corona ticket, Corona mafia, Corona mutation, Corona rules, Corona certificate, Corona recession, Corona monitor, Corona novel, Corona traffic light, Corona sadness, Corona strike, Corona winter

Table 6

Terms with the element *COVID* and *korona-*

Wordplay and puns are common in Coronavirus-related neologisms, e.g. *kuga-potvrda* (plague certificate) instead of *vaccination certificate*, *stožerokracija* (modeled on the words *saristokracija*, *birokracija*, *demokracija*; ‘aristocracy, bureaucracy, democracy’ from the word *stožer* ‘headquarters

(of civil defense)'), names Toni Cjepinski, Toni Cjepaničev, for the singer Toni Cetinski, known for his anti-vaccination activism, and Alemka Narkotić for Alemka Markotić, a member of the Civil Defense Headquarters (Narkotić rhymes with the surname Markotić and is associated with *narkoman* 'junkie'). *Petokoronaš* is the title of the first Croatian novel about Corona by Emanuel Željko Špoljar²². Since wordplay with literary works (*In the Time of Cholera* > *In the Time of Corona*) and terms (*Newspeak* > *Coronaspeak*) is characteristic of the time of Corona, it is interesting that the title of this novel is a wordplay with the word *petokolonaš*. The word *petokolonaš* is derived from the term *peta kolona*, which means 'a group of people who undermine a larger group from within, usually in favor of a hostile group or nation, an internal enemy' and is a political and military term. *Petokolonaš* is a member of this group of people but can also have a broader meaning 'traitor in general' (VRH, 2015). The word *petokoronaš* consists of the elements *pet* (five) and *koronaš* (a person infected with the Coronavirus).

6. Conclusion

The impact of COVID-19 on daily life has far-reaching consequences, and some aspects of daily life are unlikely to return to the old normal even after the pandemic is over (e.g. homework, e-learning). Linguists have shown how the COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected our behavior but also the way we speak and think. The appearance of Coronavirus-related terminology was a rare experience for lexicographers as they could observe an exponential rise in the usage of a single word in a very short period. "*Covid-19*, a shortening of *coronavirus disease 2019*, and its various manifestations has done just that"²³.

The COVID-19 outbreak reminded us of similar (yet different) disease outbreaks in the past. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were epidemics and deadly disease outbreaks (such as the plague, cholera, smallpox, Spanish flu) both in the world and in Croatia. They were accompanied by the same feelings of panic, sadness, loneliness, helplessness, disbelief,

²² See: <https://arteist.hr/petokoronas-prvi-roman-o-zivotu-u-doba-korone/> .

²³ See: <https://public.oed.com/blog/the-language-of-covid-19/> .

injustice, etc. The paper focuses on two cases from Dalmatia and provides new and unknown data from family archives about the deaths of Palma Karaman and Andrija Katalinić, often referred to as Romeo and Juliet from Split.

The COVID-19 pandemic motivated researchers from various fields to investigate the impact of past epidemics and disease outbreaks on daily life, literature, humor, collective memory, and language. Many literary works were dedicated to the epidemics and disease outbreaks of the past and many idioms relate to epidemics and disease. It is still too early to analyze novels about Coronavirus, but even in Croatia, some novels about Coronavirus have already been published (*Petokoronaš*).

However, there has never been a global crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic and there has never been such a global linguistic phenomenon in the past. It has confirmed the importance and influence of technology, media, and social media today. In addition to giving rise to new words and phrases (some of them pronounced the word of the year) COVID-19 pandemic caused the increased use of medical terms in everyday language and the addition of new meanings to existing words. These new terms can be found in general and specialized corpora, e-dictionaries, and glossaries. They reflect “the ethos, mood or concerns” of the time and have “enduring potential as terms of cultural significance”. The comparison of entries in dictionaries of different languages demonstrates the global influence of Coronavirus-related terminology and the fact that English terminology has influenced the terminology of many other languages, including Croatian.

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