

NAMES OF COVID-19 PRO- AND ANTIVAXXERS IN THE LATVIAN LANGUAGE: THE SEMANTIC AND ETYMOLOGICAL ASPECT

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic split people into two irreconcilable camps in terms of their attitude towards the disease as well as the methods employed to control it, including vaccination. These opposing camps would engage in bouts of verbal aggression, their members calling the opposition names based on all kinds of dysphemisms. This article follows the demarcation line between COVID-19 pro- and antivaxxers while distancing itself from the stylistic and emotional charges expressed with the names that were given to them. The article covers only the names pertaining to the process of vaccination in its own right: those made with the lexemes *vakcīna* (vaccine), *vakcinēt* (vaccinate), *vakcinācija* (vaccination), *pote* (inoculation), *potēt* (inoculate), *durt* (jab), *šprīce* (syringe), *adata* (needle), and so on. The names in questions were classified on the grounds of the origin of their motivational words. The following groups were identified: lexis that has been borrowed (from the English language); internationalisms; loanwords that took root in the language; and Latvian words. The article also brings to light names that had been in use before and made relevant in the COVID-19 narrative. Semantically, it was observed that the names used to designate opponents of vaccination involved lexemes with components denoting some kind of opposition or the absence of something. Also, this group of people was given names representing hate, fear, indifference, or on the contrary, the propagation of something. Some names would highlight their mental abilities (idiots, muttons). The names of provaxxers would sometimes be created with the use of positively charged lexemes: fans, lovers, admirers, adulators, and so on. Nonetheless, some of their names were made with words such as ‘poor things’, ‘zombies’, ‘rats’ to stress the negative effects of the vaccine on the person who has been vaccinated.

Keywords: *Coronalexis, COVID-19, provaxxers vs. antivaxxers, lexical-semantic aspect, origin of words (etymology)*

Résumé

La pandémie de COVID-19 a divisé les personnes en deux camps irréconciliables, tant par leur attitude face à la maladie que par les méthodes utilisées pour la contrôler, y compris la vaccination. Ces camps opposés s'engageaient dans des échanges d'agressions verbales, leurs membres attribuant à l'autre des appellations péjoratives basées sur divers types de dysphémismes. Cet article trace la ligne de démarcation entre les partisans et les opposants à la vaccination contre la COVID-19, tout en s'éloignant des charges stylistiques et émotionnelles exprimées par les noms qui leur étaient attribués. L'étude se concentre uniquement sur les appellations liées au processus même de la vaccination, construites à partir des lexèmes tels que *vakcīna* (vaccin), *vakcinēt* (vacciner), *vakcinācija* (vaccination), *pote* (inoculation), *potēt* (inoculer), *durt* (piquer), *šprīce* (seringue), *adata* (aiguille), etc. Les noms analysés ont été classifiés en fonction de l'origine des mots motivants. Les groupes suivants ont été identifiés : lexique emprunté (notamment à l'anglais), internationalismes, emprunts intégrés dans la langue, et mots d'origine lettone. L'article met également en lumière des termes déjà en usage auparavant mais qui ont pris une nouvelle signification dans le contexte de la narration liée à la COVID-19. Sur le plan sémantique, il a été observé que les noms désignant les opposants à la vaccination intégraient des lexèmes suggérant une opposition ou une absence de quelque chose. Ce groupe a aussi été associé à des appellations exprimant la haine, la peur, l'indifférence ou, au contraire, la propagation de certaines idées. Certaines appellations mettaient en avant leurs capacités mentales (idiots, moutons). Les appellations désignant les partisans de la vaccination comportaient parfois des lexèmes à connotation positive: fans, amoureux, admirateurs, adorateurs, etc. Cependant, certains noms soulignaient des effets négatifs perçus du vaccin sur les personnes vaccinées, en utilisant des termes comme «pauvres», «zombies», «rats ».

Mots-clés : *Coronalexique, COVID-19, provax contre antivax, aspect lexicosémantique, origine des mots (étymologie)*

Introduction

The pandemic of the so-called novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and the COVID-19 disease caused by it¹ has enchained the world for about 3 years: between the spring of 2020 and the spring of 2023.² The pandemic affected nearly all spheres

¹ This article draws on the distinction between the coronavirus and its disease, as it is irrelevant to the subject of the study. For the sake of brevity and simplicity, the term COVID-19 is used instead.

² “WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19 11 March 2020” (<https://www.who.int/director-general/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>) and “WHO chief

of human life, and language was no exception. Many new names (words and phrases) would be coined to designate the new realities and describe the situations at hand; many of them were occasional and did not catch on in the language at all. Now that the shift in the global geopolitical situation has seemingly pushed the COVID-19 pandemic into oblivion, no one even recalls the names of the specific realities related to it. However, the words and phrases from that period still provide a source of interesting material to researchers of the special lexis, the creative work that people engaged in on the linguistic front³, and the expression of social relations during the pandemic period. Language saw an influx of new words, emotional expressiveness and verbal aggression were on a rise, and different dysphemisms were being used to describe the opposing factions.⁴

This pandemic divided the global community into two irreconcilable camps: first, those who followed the official epidemiological safety guidelines and were convinced of the threat posed by COVID-19 and those who denied the existence or the threat of the coronavirus and went against the official requirements. Once the vaccine was available and vaccinations kicked off, with the requirement being for people who were in contact with others to either have had and recovered from COVID-19 or to be vaccinated, the polarization of the society around the globe became more pronounced still, with the two camps consisting of those who either supported the necessity to get a COVID-19 jab or at least would not oppose the official guidelines on one side, and those who would not get a vaccine and (or) would speak against vaccination.

In the midst of the vast abundance of corona-lexis material representing the period of the pandemic, the names that differentiate people based on their stance on vaccination can be identified as a separate lexical group in the semantic field⁵ of vaccination (co-existing with other lexical groups designating the vaccine as such, describing different realities pertaining to vaccination (such as vaccination bureau, newspaper, lottery), defining persons administering the vaccine and vaccination sites, and so on).

declares end to COVID-19 as a global health emergency”, 05/05/2023 (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136367>).

³ This is the 15th article by this author dedicated to the so-called coronalexis (mainly in the Latvian language, although a comparison with other languages is made as well).

⁴ The author of this article uses the following definition of dysphemism: ‘Dysphemism: a derogatory or unpleasant term used instead of a pleasant or neutral one.’ (COD 1999: 447).

⁵ Here, the semantic field is perceived as a ‘whole of words and phrases constituting a separate thematic group’ as defined in Lithuanian linguistics (Gaivenis & Keinys 1990: 113).

The official communication, including online articles, describes these two opposing groups of people with neutral, non-offensive words. This can sometimes be the case with unofficial communication as well, with the two camps being designated with stylistically neutral, politically correct, or just equivalent (e.g., slang or equally ironic) words in the same sentence, such as *Inficējušies 9000. No tiem 4500 **antivakši** un 5500 **pošu jūsmiņi***. [9,000 confirmed cases. Including 4,500 **antivaxxers** and 5,500 **admirers of the inoculation**.] (F); *Pote **antivakseri** par **vakcinēšanās fanu** nepārtaisīs, lai arī kādu iemeslu dēļ viņš ir potējies*. [Inoculation will not turn **an antivaxxer** into **a fan of vaccination**, whatever their reason of taking the jab might have been.] (F).

Nonetheless, the choice of words designating each of the groups in unofficial communication sometimes clearly shows the affiliation of the author, with the opposite camp described with all sorts of dysphemisms.

For instance: *Tieši **vakcinētie** ievēro un ievēroja visus ierobežojumus, atšķirībā no **kovidiotiem antivakceriem**, kas visu laiku bļautījās, gan pret sejas maskām, gan citiem ierobežojumiem* [It is **the people who have taken the vaccine** who are and have been observing all of the restrictions, in contrast to **antivaxxer covidiot**s who have been ranting against the facemasks and the rest of the restrictions] (c.⁶) – here, the author is a provaxxer, vs.

*lai veicas **pretpotniekiem** cīņā ar **režīma zābaku laizītājiem*** [good luck to **the anti-inoculationists** in their fight against **the bootlickers to the regime**] (c.) – here, the author clearly speaks against the advocates of the vaccine.

These and many other examples support the fact that ‘some nominative words in their denomination of something or another also convey an emotional assessment of the thing so denominated or communicate its image: hence, in addition to the nomination function, they also perform an emotional or expressive function’ (Jakaitienė 2009: 24). However, this article will draw the line at any stylistic and (or) emotional connotations and will only address specific words and phrases as lexical-semantic units.

1. The Empiric Material, Goal, and Methodology of the Study

The **empiric material** for this study was sourced from the author’s database of corona-lexis of the Latvian language, which consists of examples taken from various texts published online: articles and comments published on news and opinion portals, social media, forums, blogs, the websites of the governmental bodies and individual municipalities.

⁶ This is the tag for the comment by an unidentified person to an article on a news portal.

The scope of the database of Latvian examples used can be just described as containing several dozens of thousands of different lexical units chosen at random, because the sampling process was limited to the physical capabilities to register all of the material found on the world wide web, rather than to some particular source or period (the earliest excerpts date back to January 2020, the latest, to May 2024, meaning that they were captured in parallel with the writing of this article; besides, as this article was being written, cases of corona-lexicon that predated the earliest examples were found online). As a result, the collection of this Latvian material cannot be perceived as an all-inclusive and complete, but as a dynamic and continuously updated database.

Any examples from other languages (such as Lithuanian and English) are presented as confirmation that the relevant words and (or) phrases or the meanings thereof did not exist during the period in question in the Latvian language alone.

For the purposes of this study, only examples from texts of COVID-19 discourse were selected. It is nonetheless important to note that some of the names falling into this semantic group in different languages predate the pandemic and had been used with reference to vaccination for other diseases. Some of the words scrutinized here had been found in 21st-century online sources way before the COVID-19 pandemic (for more on this, see descriptions of specific names). Annette Klosa-Kückelhaus, the German researcher of corona-lexis, refers to a much older example involving the word *Impfgegner* ('an opponent of vaccines'), which was printed in the German magazine "Der Spiegel" in 1959 (Klosa-Kückelhaus, 2021: 85).⁷

The goal of this article: screen and classify the names of COVID-19 vaccine supporters and antagonists available in online sources to identify the underlying lexemes pertaining to the process of vaccination and use them as a point of reference in designing a classification system for the material so screened, considering the origin and usage of the lexemes in different languages.

This synchronous study is grounded on a descriptive, componential, and (to an extent) contrastive method of analysis. The article only features a qualitative analysis and disregards the quantity of examples of the specific lexical semantic groups, their proportion, and frequency of usage.

2. Names that designate people in terms of their view of vaccination

Only words and phrases that bear a semantic link with the vaccination process as such were selected for this study, omitting semantically different names that, during

⁷ For more on vaccination opponents, their movement sometimes even referred to as a new religion, also see Liparte 2023b: 49.

the COVID-19 pandemic, were used in reference to both pandemic deniers and vaccination opponents, and supporters of various conspiracy theories (flat earthers, tin foil hatters, Kremlin trolls, etc.), as well as dysphemisms that are almost universally used to designate people who think and act differently at different times and in different situations (mutton-heads, losers, vatniks, and so on; in the narrative of the COVID-19 pandemic, *covidiot* is to be considered a universal dysphemism as well).⁸

The names of vaccination supporters and opponents covered in this study are categorized on the basis of the underlying lexemes. The following groups were identified: lexis that has been borrowed (from the English language); internationalisms; loanwords that took root in the language; and Latvian. The examples in each of these groups were reviewed on the basis of the specific roots/stems of the words.

2.1. Names adopted from the English language and their derivatives

2.1.1. Containing the root *vaks-* (sporadically, *vax-* // *vaxx-*)

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the mass (or forced, as some would argue) vaccination for this disease, the name *antivakseri* (antivaxxers) was broadly used to designate opponents of the vaccination in many languages. It is one of the words addressed in this study that did not come into existence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and had been used with reference to people who are against a specific vaccine or vaccination in general much earlier. The neologisms database (ND) of the Lithuanian language offers the following information: ‘ANTIVAKSERIS // “ANTIVAKSERIS” // ANTIVAKCERIS – a word made with a newly borrowed root; origin: English *antivaxxer*, *anti-vaxxer*, *antivaxer*, *anti-vaxer*; meaning: someone who is against vaccines and vaccination, an opponent of vaccines; someone who is against the vaccination pressure from the authorities during the pandemic.’ The ND features examples containing this lexeme that date back to 2016. In the Latvian language, the word *antivakseris* has been included in the dictionary of the modern language MLVV (with reference to it as a colloquialism) and the thesaurus (with no stylistic reference); however, it only comes with a single example with no reference to the source, and lacks information as to the timing of its usage as a result. In the English language as such, the lexeme *anti-vaxxer* has been used since the very beginning of the 21st century at the very least: The first known use of *anti-vaxxer* was in 2001 (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anti-vaxxer>), yet the

⁸ On differently motivated dysphemisms that were used to designate part of the divided society during the COVID-19 pandemic, see Liepa & Rožukalne 2022, Liepa & Liparte 2023: 211–214, 224–225, Liparte 2023a: 279.

Urban Dictionary (UD), the online dictionary of English slang, contains quite a few examples containing the lexemes *anti-vax* (dating back to 2014), *anti-vaxxer* (dating back to 2015). Which means that this word was merely made relevant in the COVID-19 pandemic narrative. This is something that has been highlighted by the Latvian linguist Andrejs Veisbergs as well: we could speak about ‘vaccine deniers’ and ‘vaccine supporters’, yet these ‘antivaxxers’ and ‘vaxxers’ usually apply to COVID-19, while ‘deniers’ and ‘supporters’ would be too broad a term. (lsm.lv).

Generally, the Latvian language uses forms that have been adapted in terms of their spelling, such as *antivakseri*, sporadically also *antivakši*, *antivaksotāji* (with *ks* instead of *x*, which is not a letter that exists in the Latvian language), such as *Neviens no šiem cilvēkiem nav “antivakseris”. [...] Šie cilvēki nevēlas apturēt vakcinācijas procesu. [...] Viņi grib brīdināt sabiedrību, ka pastāv risks.* [None of these people is **an antivaxxer**. [...] These people do not want to inhibit the vaccination process. [...] They want to forewarn the society about the risks.] (nra.lv.)⁹; *mīlēties drīkst tikai vienā variantā - Jānis ir fakcinēts un ar QR kodu, bet Līga drīkst būt no antivaksotājiem. Tad viņa saņēms no Jāņa vakcīnu pilnīgi negaidītā veidā.* [There is only one way to have sex: if he is fuck-vaccinated and has a QR code, and she may be **an antivaxxer**. Then she will get the vaccine from him in a surprising sort of way.] (c.).

The stem *antivaks-* was also used to coin adjectives that contain the different typical adjectival suffixes: *-isks*, *-īgs*, such as *Izskatās, ka tu jau esi pārkāpis to kapa malu un raksti no TURIENES. Vai arī visticamāk esi antivakserisks auns.* [It would seem that you have already overstepped the edge of the grave and are writing this from Beyond. That, or most probably you are an **antivaxxerly** mutton.] (c.).

Occasional wordplay that can only exist in a particular language should be mentioned as well. Here is one example from the Latvian language: *Antīnvakseri līdz pavasarim nenodzīvos un mums būs miers* [**Antini-vaxxers** will not survive until spring and we will have some peace] (c.). This example cannot be translated with some explanation: *antiņš* – a naïve, gullible oaf (tezaurs.lv), yet this common word derives from *Antiņš* – the name of a character in “Zelta zirgs” (The Golden Stallion), a play by the famous Latvian poet Janis Rainis that is often used in a derogatory fashion (tezaurs.lv). In turn, there was a case of play on words in the English language: *My mom's crazy sister is coming - she doesn't 'believe in' the pandemic.*

⁹ Sometimes the word *antivakseris* (antivaxxer) is put into quotes both in the Latvian and in the Lithuanian languages. That way, the author of the text visually highlights their uncertainty about the propriety/meaning of the word, or the fact that the word is foreign in that language. For more on the usage of quotes to indicate the author's view of certain words, see Blinkena 2009: 401–403.

She's a total **Auntie-Vaxer**, where the word *Auntie-Vaxer* is explained as Catchall term referring to any non-science believing relative. (UD).

The Latvian language sporadically features instances of spelling with the letter x, as per English original. One commentator even gave this explanation: *ja kā izrunā, antivakseri, ja kā raksta angļiski, antivaxeri* [In terms of pronunciation, it is *antivakseri*, in terms of the English spelling, it is **antivaxxers**] (c.).

Other isolated examples illustrate cases of spelling that include the inherently English double-x, which were adopted from the English language: *Ja antivaxxeriem ir kādas šaubas par vakcīnu veselīgumu, mediķi var censties saprast, kas tieši ir šaubu pamatā ..* [If **antivaxxers** have doubts if the vaccines are healthy, medics can try to understand the reason behind those doubts.] (Sviesta Ciba).

The non-Latvian letter x is present in one isolated name *nevaxi*, where the international prefix *anti-* is substituted with the semantically comparable Latvian prefix *ne-*: **Nevaxi** – *nezaudējiet savu cilvēcību* [**Non-vaxxers**, do not lose your humanity] (c., allocution). However, constructions with this prefix are also used in the version of the adapted Latvian language script: *Valdība novērtēja nevakseru procentu* [The government estimated the percentage of **non-vaxxers**] (F.).

The words *vakseri*, *vaxeri*, as well as the participial form *vaksētie* (the vaxxed – i.e., the vaccinated) derived from an occasional slang verb, are systematically used in opposition to the words *antivakseri*, *antivakši*, *antivaxeri*, to designate supporters of vaccination or people who have taken a jab.

For instance: *Gandrīz vai jāapsveic vaxeri ar atgriešanos pie normālas dzīves.*) [We have to almost congratulate **the vaxxers** on having returned to the normal way of life.] (c.); *Nezin kāpēc neizbrīna dažu vaksēto komentāri!? Algotie idioti!* [How come I am not surprised at the comments by some of **the vaxxed**!? **Hired idiots**!] (c.).

Truth be told, some people would remind others that the word *vakseris* is related to another noun, *vaksācija* (Eng. *waxing*) and the verb *vaksēt* (Eng. *(to) wax* ‘remove hair from (a part of the body) by applying wax and then peeling it off with the hairs’ (COD 1999: 1620)). The Latvian linguist Dite Liepa mentioned this in a radio broadcast (lsm.lv), and one witty internet user who uses only the word *antivakcers* (see below), put it this way: *Viens, sakot, ka es antivaksers esmu, gan trāpīja naglai uz galvas- esmu kategorisks vaksācijas pretinieks- savu apmatojumu nekad neesmu skuvījis un netaisošs to darīt. Lai aug!* [One of them said I was **an antivaxxer** and really hit the spot: I am **a strong opponent of waxing** – I have never removed any hair from my body and have no intention of doing so. Let it grow!] (c.).

There was another word that had been adopted from the English language and spelling-wise adapted for use in the Latvian language: *Brazīlijā TV diktors provakseris nokrīt ar sirdstrieku*. [In Brazil, a **provaxxer** TV anchor was struck by a myocardial infarction.] (Twitter). The same form of the word was used in the Lithuanian language as well: *Bet forumo provakseriu svajonė išsipildys ir didžioji dalis anksčiau ar vėliau bus paskiepyti* [But the dream of **the provaxxers** in this forum will come true and most of them will be sooner or later inoculated] (F). By the way, this word is featured in the ND as a slang term with indication that it means ‘someone who supports vaccination’, and derives from the English word *provaxer*; however, the ND examples containing this word are dated 2019. In the Latvian language, a parallel form with the letter combination *-kš-*, characteristic of the Latvian language, **provakši** (F), has also been found in the discourse of the Covid-19 pandemic.

An overview of the Latvian examples containing words with the root *vaks-* (as well as the inherently English *vax-* // *vaxx-*) as collected by the author of this article is presented in Table 1. For the sake of having a system, all examples in this and in other tables are given in the form of masculine plural nominative, regardless of the number, gender, or case that was used in the specific examples found online.

Table 1. Names of supporters of and opponents of vaccination for COVID-19 containing the root *vaks-* (*vax-* // *vaxx-*)

Root	Supporters of Covid-19 vaccination	Opponents of Covid-19 vaccination
<i>vaks-</i> // <i>vakš</i> ¹⁰	<i>vakseri</i>	<i>antivakseri</i>
		<i>nevakseri</i>
		<i>antivakseriski auni</i> [antivaxxerly muttuns]
		<i>antivakserīgie zaldāti</i> [antivaxxerous warriors]
		<i>antivaksotāji</i> [the antivaxxing]
	<i>vakši</i>	<i>antivakši</i>
	<i>vaksētie</i> [the vaxxed]	
	<i>provakseri</i>	
	<i>provakši</i>	
<i>vax-</i>	<i>vaxeri</i>	<i>antivaxeri</i>
		<i>nevaxi</i>
<i>vaxx-</i>		<i>antivaxxeri</i>

¹⁰ These are morphological variations. Since thematic consonants tend to mutate in certain positions in the Latvian language, some forms of noun cases have *s* > *š*, *t* > *š*, *c* > *č*. The same goes for the forms of word roots/stems presented in the chapters that follow.

2.1.2. Containing the root *būster-*

Another English lexeme that spread widely across other languages during the COVID-19 pandemic was *būsteris* (as it is spelled in the Latvian and the Lithuanian languages (for the Lithuanian word, see ND meaning No 4)). It is the adaptation of the English word *booster* ‘a dose of a vaccine increasing or renewing the effect of an earlier one’ (COD 1999: 160), which in the host languages is spelled the way it is pronounced, with the appropriate ending added as a form of grammatical adaptation.

Some descriptions of vaccinated people in the online Latvian narrative of COVID-19 contain passive participial forms *būsterots* // *būsterēts*, such as *Viena prominenta, būsterota personība* [One famous **boostered** persona] (F); *Lai strādātu vergam ir jābūt vakcinētam, lai saņemtu pakalpojumu ir jābūt būsterētam ar derīgu sertifikātu*. [To be able to work, a slave needs to be vaccinated, and **boostered** and in the possession of a valid certificate to be able to receive services.] (c.).

2.2. Names based on internationalisms

2.2.1. Containing the roots/stems *vakcin-* // *vakcīn-*¹¹, *vakcinācij-*, *vakc-*

The official Latvian communication during the drive for vaccination for COVID-19 made broad use of the common words *vakcinēt* ‘vaccinate’, *vakcīna* ‘vaccine’, *vakcinācija* ‘vaccination’. All of them are internationalisms originating from the Latin word *vaccine*, itself a derivative of the word *vacca* ‘cow’ (COD 1999: 1582), and are present in many languages. The various words designating opponents of vaccination made with these roots/stems are not the product of, but words that were made relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier examples that were found online contained the Latvian words *antivakcīnisti* (2013 and 2017), *antivakcinētāji* (2017). The situation with the Lithuanian language was quite a bit similar: the word *antivakceris* was listed in ND together with examples dated 2018, but *antivakcionistas* – with examples dated 2019. All these words have the same meaning ‘antivaxxer’. Here is an overview of examples found in the COVID-19 narrative.

2.2.1.1. Made from a verb *vakcinēt*

Both persons who were vaccinated and those who were not would be designated with passive participial forms of the verb *vakcinēt*: *(ne)vakcinēts*,

¹¹ In this case, the phonetically different variants that are presented in parallel represent different parts of speech that are used to make the appropriate forms or new words: words containing the component *vakcin-* < the verb *vakcinēt* ‘vaccinate’; containing *vakcīn-* < the noun *vakcīna* ‘vaccine’; containing *vakcinācij-* < the noun *vakcinācija* ‘vaccination’. The component *vakc-* can also be considered a variant of the component *vaks-* (see above).

vakcinējams, such as *Ir pienācis laiks, kad tieši nevakcinētajiem ir jāsāk baidīties no vakcinētajiem*. [A time has come when **the non-vaccinated** should start to fear **the vaccinated**.] (c.). The aspect of completion would also be highlighted with various forms of prefixal derivatives of the verb, such as *Tu tiešām esi stulbs un tas labi, ka esi novakcinēts*. [You really are a fool and it is a good thing that you are **vaccinated down**] (c.), while different phases of vaccination, with occasional compound participial forms, such as *balstvakcinēts* [vaccinated with a booster shot]; *Trīsreizvakcinētais* [Triple-vaccinated; a nickname] (c.).

Distorted participial forms with the vowel *o* inserted would be sporadically used as well, such as *Vakcionēto valsts iedzīvotāju zonas ceļmalās* [Areas of **vacci(o)nated** residents by the road] (c.).

2.2.1.2. Containing the noun *vakcīna*

The pandemic narrative also saw a number of various phrases containing the word *vakcīna*, such as *potēt vakcīnu slavinātājus* [inoculate **the vaccine adulators**] (c.). The aforementioned lexemes *antivakcīnisti*, *antivakcinētāji* were made relevant as well, such as *Kā informācija par vakcināciju, tā antivakcīnisti, pārsvarā necenzēti, plosās*. [Whenever there is some information about vaccination, **the anti-vaccinationists** are at it, using profanities as often as not] (Facebook).

Furthermore, the word *vakcīna* was used to make occasional compounds, which were then used with reference to either of the camps, such as:

Vakcīnfans ir cilvēks ar zemu izglītības līmeni, kurš akli tic valdībai, kura to arī izmanto. [**A fan of the vaccines** is a poorly educated person, one who blindly believes in the government, which is taking advantage of it.] (c.)

vs.

Iespējams, ka ar šo [paziņojumu] “es pati izvēlējos vakcinēties” Aminata izsauks uguni uz sevi, jo mūziķu vidū ir gana daudz vakcīnskeptiķu, turklāt daži pat no kareivīgo gala. [Could be that with her statement ‘getting vaccinated was something that I chose myself’ the singer Aminata will spark outrage for there are quite a few **vaccine-sceptics** among musicians, besides, some of them are quite belligerent] (nra.lv).

Gatis Šļūka, the famous Latvian cartoonist used data on the pace of the vaccination efforts in different regions of Latvia in the fall of 2021 to draw his own map of the situation (Fig. 1), in which he used different occasional compounds containing the word *vakcīna*: *vakcīnbrāļi*, *vakcīnķertie*, *vakcīnmīļi* vs. *vakcīnsvabadie* (for the meanings of the words, see Table 2).



Fig. 1. The cartoon. © Gatis Šļūka. (10/09/2021. Available at: <https://www.la.lv/karikaturas/gatis-sluka-vakcinbralu-un-posnideju-zeme>)

2.2.1.3. Containing the noun *vakcinācija*

In addition to the noun *vakcinācija*, persons who opposed it would be named using a compound of the noun with the component *pret-* ‘anti, against, contra’, such as *Teologs Juris Cālītis secina, ka pretvakcinācijas kustība ir kā jauna reliģija*. [The theologian **Juris Cālītis** draws a conclusion **that the counter-vaccination movement is like a new religion.**] (satori.lv).

2.2.1.4. The root *vakc-* instead of the English *vaxx-*

As already mentioned, some people would remind the general audience that the Latvian lexeme *vakseris* is related to waxing. In their posts regarding vaccination, some internet users use words containing the root *vakc-*, such as *Un, nobeigumā, antivakceram/ covidiotam teikšu vienu- nav tādu vakceru. Nav! Ir saprātīgi cilvēki, pilnīgs pretstats tev- laba izglītība, augsts saprāts, labs darbs, attiecīgi arī ieņēmumi*

labi, ģimenes, bērniņi. Viņi dzīvo tālāk. Sprotot Covid iespējamus draudus, vakcinējas un dzīvo tālāk! [And finally, I will tell **the antivaxxer/covidiot** one thing: no such **vaxxers** exist. There are intelligent people, a complete contrast to yourself: they are well educated, have a well-trained mind, a good job, and consequently, a good source of income, a family, kids. They live on. Realizing the potential threat of COVID, they get vaccinated and go on with their lives!] (F).

In his reply to the words used in this post, one commentator explained: *Es neesmu antivakceris, es esmu pofigvakceris. Nevajag man vakcīnu pret iesnām.* [I am not an antivaxxer, I am **a couldn't-care-less-vaxxer**. I don't need a vaccine for the snivels.] (c.). The first component of the compound word *pofigvakceris* is the Russian word *нофuz* 'couldn't care less', which is a barbarism used in that Latvian language (tezaurs.lv).

2.2.1.5. Dysphemically deformed words

The lexemes *vakcīna*, *vakcinēt(ies)* that can be typically found in the COVID-19 pandemic discourse would sometimes be used in their phonetically deformed forms: *fakcīna*, *fakcinēt(ies)*, where the *f* derives from the English word *fuck*, and *švakcīna*, *švakcinēt(ies)*, where *š* possibly originates from the English *shit*.

Such examples exist in the material screened for this study as well, for instance: *slimnīcās no 1300 kovidslimo 400 bij fakcinēti* [out of the 1,300 hospitalized COVID-19 patients, 400 were **fuck-cinated**] (c.); ..., *kad visi kas gribēja vakcinēties bija jau nošvakcinējušies*. [..., when everyone who wanted a jab had already been **shit-cinated down**.] (F).

Table 2. Names of supporters of and opponents of vaccination for COVID-19 containing the root/stem *vakcin-* // *vakcīn-*, *vakcinācij-*, *vakc-*

Root/ stem	Supporters of Covid-19 vaccination	Opponents of Covid-19 vaccination
vakcin-	<i>vakcinētie</i> [the vaccinated]	<i>nevakcinētie</i> [the unvaccinated]
	<i>novakcinētie</i> [the vaccinated down]	
	<i>balstvakcinēti</i> [vaccinated with a booster shot]	
	<i>Trīsreizvakcinētais</i> [Triple-vaccinated]	
	<i>ievakcinējušies</i> [the vaccinated-in]	
vakcīn-		<i>antivakcīnisti</i> [antivaccinists]
		<i>antivakcīnu propagandētāji</i> [anti-vaccine advocates]
		<i>antivakcīnu sivēni</i> [anti-vaccine pigs]
		<i>vakcīnskeptiķi</i> [vaccine-sceptics]
		<i>vakcīnidioti</i> [vaccine-idiots]
		<i>vakcīnu pretinieki</i> // <i>vakcīnpretinieki</i> [vaccine opponents]
	<i>vakcīnu slavinātāji</i> [vaccine adulators]	

	<i>vakcīngribuļi</i> [vaccine-seekers]	
	<i>vakcīnmīļi</i> [vaccine-lovers]	
	<i>vakcīnfani</i> // <i>vakcīnu fani</i> [vaccine fans]; <i>vakcīnēšanās fani</i> [vaccination fans]	
	<i>vakcīnsludinātāji</i> [vaccine-advocates]	
	<i>vakcīnķertie</i> [vaccine-chosen]; <i>vakcīnbrāļi</i> [brothers-in-vaccine]; <i>vakcīnmīļi</i> [vaccine-lovers] (all: Fig. 1)	<i>vakcīnsvabadie</i> [the vaccine-free] (Fig. 1)
		<i>pretvakcīnisti</i> [counter-vaccinists]
<i>vakcīnācij-</i>		<i>pretvakcīnācijas kustība</i> [counter-vaccination movement]
<i>vakc-</i>	<i>vakcionīdi</i>	
	<i>nav tādu vakceru</i> [no such vaxxers exist]	<i>antivakceri</i>
		<i>pofīgvakceri</i> [couldn't-care-less-vaxxer]
<i>fakc-</i>	<i>fakcīnēti</i> [fuck-cinated]	
	<i>fakcīnu propagandisti</i> [fuck-cine advocates]	
<i>švakc-</i>	<i>nošvakcīnējušies</i> [the shit-cinated down]	
	<i>švakcīnētie cilvēki</i> [shit-cinated people]	

2.3. Names grounded on loanwords from other languages that had caught on in the Latvian language

2.3.1. Containing the root *špric-*

These names are made with the Latvian colloquialism *šprice* (pl. gen. *špriču*), which, among other things, has the meaning of 'syringe, injection', and (or) the appropriate verb *špricēt*, its first meaning being '(to) inject with a syringe'. The dictionary of the modern Latvian language indicates that the noun originates from the German *die Spritze*, Russian *унпуу*, which all have the same meaning, while the verb derives from its German equivalent *spritzen* (MLVV). The matching loanwords *špricas* 'syringe', *špricuoti* '(to) inject', can also be found in the Lithuanian language, where they are considered inadmissible barbarisms as well (ekalba.lt).

Latvian names used to designate vaccinated persons in the narrative of the COVID-19 pandemic included participial forms of the verb *špricēt* and its derivatives containing different prefixes to indicate completion, such as *No vienas puses tīri cilvēcīgi nošpricētos žēl, ja viņiem kaut kas notiek*. [On the one hand, purely as a human being, I feel sorry for those who have been **inoculated down** when something happens to them.] (c.).

Then there were several instances (albeit all in the posts by the same online commentator) of usage of the occasional participles *špricinātie*, *nešpricinātie* (the inoculated, the non-inoculated), which were made with the root *špric-* with a

causative suffix *-inā-* added, such as *Nu, un ja pēc visa jau pateiktā nav saprotams, ka SLIMO acīmredzot vienādi, špricinātie un nešpricinātie, tad vajag apsēsties un domāt, kamēr pielec...* [Well, after all that has already been said, someone still cannot understand that both **the vaccinated** and **the unvaccinated** all GET SICK in equal numbers, then you should just sit down and think until you get it...] (c.).

The material gathered also included a compound, used with reference to the supporters of vaccination, which contains the noun *šprice*: *Špriču fani* *jau neko vairāk arī neprot, kā iebilst* [All fans of inoculation know to do is to object] (F).

An overview of the Latvian examples containing words with the root *špric-* as collected by the author of this article is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Names of supporters of and opponents of vaccination for COVID-19 containing the root *špric-*

Root	Supporters of Covid-19 vaccination	Opponents of Covid-19 vaccination
<i>špric-</i>	<i>špricētie</i> // <i>špricinātie</i> [the inoculated]	<i>nešpricētie</i> // <i>nešpricinātie</i> [the non-inoculated]
	<i>sašpricētie</i> [the inoculated up]	
	<i>nošpricētie</i> [the inoculated down]	
	<i>nošpricētie nabadziņi</i> [poor inoculated-down things]	
<i>šprič-</i>	<i>špriču fani</i> [fans of inoculation]	

2.4. Names with words from the standard Latvian language

2.4.1. Containing the root *pot-*

These names are derived from the name of the medical preparation or the verb that denotes the injection of it.

2.4.1.1. Verb *potēt* ‘inoculate’

Vaccinated vs. unvaccinated persons would be named with the participial form of the word, such as *to redzēsim tikai pēc kāda gada, kad potētie mirs no covid kā mušas* [we will see in a year or so that **the inoculated** are dropping from COVID like flies] (c.).

Participles of derivatives of the verb *potēt* with a variety of prefixes denoting completion and other semantic nuances are used as well: *sapotētie*, *nopotētie*, *uzpotētie* (for the meanings of the words, see Table 4).

2.4.1.2. Noun *pote* (pl. gen. *pošu*) ‘inoculation’

This word was used to make:

(a) phrases, such as *Bet vispārējā tendence tāda ir – pošu jūsmiņi savā masu psihozē ir gatavi aizmirst daudzas neērtas lietas*. [But the general trend is that **the admirers of inoculation** are ready to forget many uncomfortable things over their mass psychosis.] (F).

(b) various witty, occasional compounds – for instance, the ‘Word of the Year’ Twitter account offered a whole slew of such neologisms: “**Pošmīzis**” (*jeb “pošbailis”*) *izklausās pēc tāda, kurš no potēm baidās. Vakcinācijas pretinieks varētu būt “pošnīdis*”. [An ‘**inoculation-sissy**’ (or ‘**inoculation-recreant**’) looks like someone who is afraid of inoculation. An opponent of vaccination could be referred to as an ‘**inoculation-hater**’.] (Twitter. @gadavards). The cartoonist G. Šļūka uses a different kind of compound for ‘inoculation-haters’: **pošnīdēji** (Fig. 1). Only one of such words, *pošmīzis*, has made it to the thesaurus of the Latvian language, with reference to it as a slang term (<https://tezaurs.lv/pošmīzis:1>).

(c) derivatives: **pošnieki** ‘inoculationists’ (F) vs. **pretpošnieki** // **pretpotnieki** // **pretpotisti** ‘anti-inoculationists’, such as *Man zināmie pretpošnieki, kuri strādā valsts iestādēs, uzskatīja, ka nepotēsies, jo ir veseli* [Some **anti-inoculationists** that I know who work at governmental institutions thought they would not get the vaccine because they were well] (F). *Skiepininkas* ‘inoculationist’ vs. *priešskiepininkas* ‘counter-inoculationist’, words that follow similar principles of formation, can be found exclusively in the narrative of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Lithuanian language as well (according to the ND).

The Lithuanian ND gives the following information about the word *antivakseris*: ‘the recorded circulation features a version of this loanword that has modified to sound and appear Lithuanian: *antiskiepininkas*, -ė (‘anti-inoculationist’); during the coronavirus pandemic, *antivakseris* was the term used to designate someone who was against the governmental policy on the containment of the pandemic rather than a complete opponent of any sort of inoculation’. ND entries containing the word *antiskiepininkas* date back to 2019.

Following the ND terminology, the modified Latvian equivalent of the loanword *antivakseris* would be **antipošnieks* // *antipotnieks*. The author of this article managed to find it in one example: *Vienu varu pateikt: mans vairogš vienmēr būs blakus ikviena antipotnieka vairogam, pat ja zīmotnes mums būs dažādas*. [I can only tell you one thing: my shield will always stand next to the shield of any **anti-inoculationist**, even if the chevrons on our uniforms are different.] (t.me).

An overview of Latvian examples with the root *pot-* is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Names of supporters of and opponents of vaccination for COVID-19 containing the root *pot-*

Root	Supporters of Covid-19 vaccination	Opponents of Covid-19 vaccination
<i>pot-</i>	<i>potētie</i> [the inoculated]	<i>nepotētie</i> [the non-inoculated]
	<i>nopotētie</i> [the inoculated-down]	
	<i>sapotētie</i> [the inoculated-up]	
	<i>uzpotētie</i> [the inoculated-in]	
	<i>potētās žurkas</i> [inoculated rats]	
	<i>nopotētie zombiji</i> [inoculated-down zombies]	
<i>pot- //</i> <i>poš-</i>	<i>potnieki //</i> <i>pošnieki</i> [inoculationists]	<i>antipotnieki</i> [anti-inoculationists]
		<i>pretpotnieki //</i> <i>pretpošnieki</i> [counter-inoculationists]
<i>pot-</i>		<i>pretpotekļi</i> [counter-inoculationists]
<i>poš-</i>		<i>pošpretinieki</i> [inoculation-opponents]
		<i>pošbaili</i> [inoculation-recreants]
		<i>pošmīži</i> [inoculation-sissies]
		<i>pošnīdēji</i> (Fig. 1) // <i>pošnīži</i> [inoculation-haters]
	<i>pošmīļi</i> [inoculation-lovers]	
	<i>pošfani</i> [inoculation-fans]	
	<i>pošu jūsmiņi</i> [admirers of inoculation]	

2.4.2. Containing the root *dur-* // *dūr-*

Sometimes vaccinated people would be named after the act of ‘jabbing’ that has been performed on them. There were instances where this verb *durt* ‘to jab’ would be used in its participial form or as a derivative *iedurt* ‘to jab in’, such as *Tā gļēvā pakļāvība un nolemtība sabiedrībā drausmīgi biedē, šodien noskatījos, kā tie durtie galvas nolaiduši ar pasēm un telefoniem stāv rindā ārpus Maximas xxx* [This indecisive obedience and damnation of the society is a matter of great fear; today I watched how **the jabbed ones** were standing in a line to a Maxima xxx mall, with their heads hanging down and their passports and their phones] (c.).

And the cartoon (Fig. 1) identifies one of the Latvian regions with the highest vaccination rates as *dūrēju apgabals* ‘jabber region’.

2.4.3. Containing the root *adat-*

Based on one of its structural components, the syringe is often called *adata* ‘a needle’. This word is present in the pandemic discourse as well. One comment found online ironically refers to pro-vaccinists as the faithful followers of the Holy Needle: *Jūs, Svētās Adatas reliģiozie pielūdzēji, esat apķēzējuši visu, ko vien var. Būs jāatbild.* [You, **the faithful followers of the Holy Needle**, have defiled everything you can. You will have to answer for that.] (c.).

In another comment, re-vaccination for COVID-19 was described with the drug-related colloquial phrase *uzsēdināt uz adatas*, e.g.: *Visi būsīm “uzsēdināti uz adatas”* [We will all ‘hit the needle’] (c.). Cf. *Uzsēdināt uz adatas* ‘to get (someone) addicted to intravenous drugs’ (MLVV).

2.4.4. Containing the root *šļur-*

One forum participant who was fond of all sorts of twists on words repeatedly used an occasional participle that apparently had nothing to do with vaccination, such as *Neesi pamanījis, ka to pašu omakaronu pa pasauli izvazāja pamatā šļurinēti, gados jauni cilvēki?* [Didn’t you notice that that very same omacaroni [=omicron] has been spread all over the world mainly by **slopped-up** young people?] (F). This name can only be understood when it is known that some people dysphemically called the vaccine against COVID-19 by the dialect word *šļura*, whose first meaning is ‘a drink of poor quality (slop)’ (tezaurs.lv). For more on this, see Liparte 2023b: 55.

Conclusions

The material sourced online and covered in this article shows that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Latvian language saw an influx of names for the advocates of vs. the opponents of the vaccinations for this disease, said names grounded on various vaccination-related lexemes. These names would be coined with words from the standard, colloquial Latvian language or slang, as well as loanwords that have been adopted from the English language and properly modified to fit the grammar system of the host language and (or) had their spelling adapted.

Some of the names for the supporters vs. opponents of vaccinations that were used in the narrative of COVID-19 were not neologisms that came into existence during the period covered by this study but rather were words made relevant during this pandemic. This is particularly true when it comes to the lexemes that designate opponents of the vaccine.

The empiric material of this study features a number of occasional and sporadic neologisms that, in all probability, were specifically devised during the pandemic. We can now say with a sufficient degree of surety that they did not catch on in the language and have been completely forgotten, especially considering that the realities discussed in this paper are no longer relevant.

Opponents of vaccinations would be named with lexemes containing components that designate opposition (*anti-*, *pret-*) or the absence of something (*ne*). Moreover, this group of people would be described with words that signify hate, fear,

indifference, or, on the contrary, the propagation of something, sometimes accentuating their mental abilities (idiots, muttons).

The names of provaxxers would sometimes be created with the use of positively charged lexemes: fans, lovers, admirers, adulators, and so on. Nonetheless, some of their names were made with words such as ‘poor things’, ‘zombies’, ‘rats’ to stress the negative effects of the vaccine on the person who has been vaccinated.

Analysis of the emotional and stylistic connotations of these and many other names for vaccination advocates vs. opponents could be the subject of a separate study.

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[Translated from Lithuanian by Jūras Barauskas]