

Romanians' lexical creation under COVID-19 times

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This paper investigates Romanian lexical innovations that emerged during the Covid pandemic. Although the sociolinguistic approach is tangentially present, the main objective is to describe the lexico-semantic mechanisms of the analysed language facts. The methodology used required the tools of semantic, lexical-paradigmatic and stylistic analysis. The sources of corpus are: online press, news on local TV channels, networks socialization, and some oral attestations. The results of the research are the contribution to the inventory of the pandemic lexicon in the current Romanian and to the analysis and framing these facts of language in the broader typology of lexical creations, regardless of whether they are ephemeral or whether some of them will find their permanent place in the language.

Keywords: *pandemic lexicon, lexical imitation, lexical creation, expressiveness, utterance situation*

1. Introduction

Lexical imitation and lexical creation, together with the lexical loan and the various internal lexical-grammatical means of enriching the vocabulary, represent important processes for the development of individual and collective lexicon in contemporary Romanian language. The magnitude, complexity, and diversity of the occurrences of these two phenomena in the specialized languages, in the spoken language, and also in the colloquial and slang language, impose in the specialized literature various attempts to describe the mechanisms of these phenomena and to categorize them. Lexical imitation and lexical creation have been analysed from different perspectives in Romanian linguistic studies by prominent authors. These studies include descriptive approaches to the mentioned phenomena from the perspective of the dynamics of the Romanian vocabulary (Dimitrescu 1994; 1997; Hristea 1984; Bidu-Vrânceanu 1997; Stoichiţoiu-Ichim 2007), but also from the normative one, namely the correct or compliant expression with a certain stylistic-

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functional register that characterizes a certain enunciation situation (Avram 1987; 1997; Guțu-Romalo 2000; 2005; Zafiu 2001; 2010; Gruică 2006).

These contributions are complemented by a previous personal research (Ene 2019), which proposes a typological framework for these phenomena, with application to the contemporary Romanian language, and which facilitates in this work a radiography of the Romanian pandemic lexicon.

Lexical imitation, as an expression of the recognition of the linguistic prestige of a language or of a certain type of communicator, first places the speaker in the position of passive actant to enriching the personal lexicon and also the collective one, since the speaker propagates the imitated forms, by their frequent use, in everyday language use. Lexical imitation involves, at least in the first stage, an emotional stimulus – namely the impression given to the speaker by the word or expression heard in a certain context. The speaker feels the need to include that form first in his personal active vocabulary and only after that does he understand the objective need to include it in the everyday language use by making major or minor changes with varied results in the general diasystem of the language.

Lexical creation (or lexical innovation), on the other hand, deviates from a model. Again, the psychological factor is involved here as well, but this time the emotional impulse is the expression of the speaker's desire to give a new form, filtered through his own imagination, to an object or a notion that does not yet have a name or does, but this does not satisfy the exigencies of the creative perception of the respective speaker. Lexical creation is accomplished by transfer with or without material expression (Ene 2019, 2), and the results of these transfers are more or less surprising and also more or less occasional.

Of the two phenomena, the latter clearly stands out in terms of the frequency of involvement in the formation of the Romanian pandemic lexicon.

2. The denialists, the fans of conspiracy theories and the worldwide 'occulta'

Nothing seems to characterize Romanians better in under Coronavirus times than two expressions under the sign of which they went through all sorts of other difficult periods in their history: *To make fun of trouble* and *We'll live, and we'll see*. In other words, you can go through out the trouble by making fun of it, and then you will see what needs to be done, to be repaired, after it passes. This way of relating to such a reality that creates frustrations, various sufferings and even tragedies is valid both for those who believe in the existence of the virus and respond correctly to official recommendations to reduce the ravages of the current pandemic, and for those who develop or believe in conspiracies developed by

others on this topic. This suspension of trouble through humour, meant to convert trouble into something more bearable and which is a humorous propensity recognized as a Romanian brand, is manifested in language through lexical creations with different degrees of humour and expressiveness.

Such lexical creations appear in various registers and communication situations, but most of them are found in colloquial language and, especially, on social networks, because there, under the umbrella of anonymity, communication is free. Of course, inventiveness and, implicitly, the genuine interest of the general public (which is often manifested through lexical imitation) decrease in proportion to the 'talibanism' of the enunciators, regardless of which category of those mentioned above they belong to. It is natural for this to be so because it is known that dogmatism, frustration, principles taken to the extreme exclude any relaxation, or objective evaluation and never give birth to more or less memorable expressions.

The Covid-19 pandemic triggered contradictory reactions and unleashed all sorts of frustrations, and social networks quickly populated with comments positioned for or against various scenarios and conspiracy theories. It is obvious that poor monitoring of the language and ideas of those who post or comment on these social networks has led to an unwanted democratization of communication. Beyond the extremely frequent slippage from a linguistically correct expression, there is also an exponential increase in breaking the rules of minimum common sense. More and more often, the appetite for expressing one's opinion at any cost and in any form collides with the idea of respecting the other's opinion. Following these comments and posts often gives the impression one is witnessing a dialogue between the deaf.

A special note in the stream of comments, often uncontrolled and unsupported by genuine arguments, is made by comments or posts with explicit or implicit humorous intent. Quality humour appears especially in the positions against the current of denial of the existence of the virus and against various conspiracy theories, some of them being older and solely activated now, others having a novelty character. The humour of these positions has a very wide spectrum, ranging from a moderate tone to a sarcastic one to various degrees. Here is a first sample:

50k de oameni, un an și două luni de teste, oameni de știință, laboratoare, studii, dar dacii liberi tot sunt singurii din lume care cred că Bill Gates le pune cipuri în vaccin ca să îi urmărească când merg la piață să-și ia roșii. Gospodinele urlă, bombardierii își dau rezidențiatul în medicină pe Facebook, iar dacii umflă spitalele. (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

[En.: *50k people, a year and two months of tests, scientists, laboratories, studies, but the free Dacians are still the only ones in the world who think that Bill Gates puts chips in their vaccine to follow them when they go to the market to buy tomatoes. Housewives scream, trifling individuals do their medical residency on Facebook, and Dacians fill hospitals.* (Facebook, December 2021)]

Represented by the well-known spiked sphere, positioned on the right on a black background, the virus 'itself' is addressing in this way those who do not believe in its existence and signs „Covid-19, speaker motivațional” (En.: Covid-19, motivational speaker]:

Îmi place că sunteți din ce în ce mai pozitivi. (Facebook, decembrie 2021)
 [En.: *I like that you are more and more positive.* (Facebook, December 2021)]

The first example shows a moderate humour, marked by a slightly bitter tone given by finding the level of discussion belonging to those who deny the pandemic and/or oppose vaccination. The second example belongs to the playful sarcastic humour, the playful register being ensured by the idea of personifying the virus in a motivational speaker and by the pun created through the expression *to be positive* (“to be optimistic” vs. “to be infected with a virus”).

3. Romanian pandemic lexicon

Certainly, depending on the study perspective, the criteria for classifying the Romanian pandemic lexicon are diverse. In order to achieve the objectives of the present research, two criteria seem to be relevant for the classification of the mentioned language facts: (i) the type and register of communication and (ii) the word formation procedure or entering into the language.

3.1. Pandemic lexicon by type and register of communication

Depending on the type and register of communication, a distinction can be made between a) official lexical creations and b) colloquial lexical creations.

The official lexical creations are manifested in a neutral register in terms of expressive, ironic, or humorous intention: *autoizolare* [self-isolation], *distanțare socială* [social distancing], *aplatizarea curbei* [flattening of the curve], *lucrători esențiali* [essential workers], etc.

Colloquial lexical creations are expressive to varying degrees and are marked

by ironic and/or playful humorous intent: *covidiot*, *covideo party*, *Kung Flu*, etc.

The differences between the two types are not limited to the communication register. Both types involve almost the same transmission channels, but the way and the context in which they are used are different. The channels of transmission are diverse: print media, TV stations, columns of cultural publications, language publications, social platforms (Facebook, Twitter, etc. or forums associated with various online publications, blogs, etc.), daily conversations, official communication platforms (for example, the governmental ones), specialized publications (such as medical, economic, etc.). The last two channels obviously allow only the use of type a) and exclude the use of type b).

The official lexical creations are used with direct reference in various communication contexts, more precisely in all those that are transmitted through the above channels, except in those that signal and/or comment on them. In the latter case, they are used with indirect reference, the interest being linguistic, anthropological, etc. The same is true for colloquial lexical creations.

Another difference between the two types lies in the profile of the communicators. The official lexical creations type involves both official and unofficial communicators. Official communicators are: people in government positions who speak in public, people who have the task of posting various announcements on official platforms belonging to various institutions and organizations (government, prefectures, town halls, public health departments, emergency inspectorates, etc.), journalists, authors of press articles, medical staff involved in the fight against the virus, specialists (virologists, epidemiologists, statisticians, economic or health policy analysts, etc.). Unofficial communicators are: linguists (concerned with the lexical phenomenon in question), talk show moderators, regular users, who take lexical creations from the official environment and use them in the everyday language.

Colloquial lexical creations imply only the status of the unofficial communicator. Therefore, this category excludes government communicators or those belonging to other official national and local institutions, as well as various specialists in the medical, economic field and so on. Instead, media communicators use them in talk shows, possibly, but not in news headlines or in the content of news. Depending on the purpose of the communication, colloquial lexical creations can appear in the language of any account holder on various social networks. These people can be specialists who are either interested in analysing the respective linguistic forms, or selectively integrating them into their own active vocabulary. However, using lexical creations with direct colloquial reference frequently appears especially in the language of people who have no knowledge in the field of linguistics, but who have other specializations or various occupations and social status.

Therefore, the two types of lexical creation have one thing in common: both can be used with indirect reference, in various contexts, for the purpose of recording these linguistic forms or analysing them.

3.2. Pandemic lexicon by mode of formation or entry into the language

According to this criterion, two types are again distinguished: a) lexical creations with international circulation and b) lexical creations with national circulation. Each of these has subtypes. In this section, they are only presented, not yet analysed as well.

A first subtype of lexical creations with international circulation is that of the actual borrowings, not adapted to Romanian. In other words, they are used exactly in the original form, e.g., *lockdown*, *covid-party*, *covidiot*, *covideo party*, *covexit*, *Chinese Flu*, *Kung Flu*, etc.

Another subtype is that of the actual borrowings, but partially or completely adapted to Romanian, for instance, *(a)symptomatic* [(a)symptomatic], *carantină* [quarantine], *conspiraționism* [conspiracism], *conspiraționist* [conspiracist], etc.

The last subtype consists of loans by linguistic calque (partial or complete): *pacientul zero* [zero patient], *autocarantină* or *autocarantinare* [self-quarantine], *bioizolare* [bio-isolation], *răspândire intracomunitară* [intra-community spread], *telemuncă* [telework], *măsuri de relaxare* [relaxation measures], *criza de coronavirus* [coronavirus crisis], *contractarea virusului* [virus contracting], *imunitate de turmă* [herd immunity], *distanțare fizică/socială* [physical/social distancing], *aplatizarea curbei* [flattening of the curve], *lucrători esențiali* [essential workers], *coronapocalipsă* [coronapocalypse].

The lexical creations with national circulation represent the result of several internal processes – of lexical, semantic, grammatical, and stylistic nature. Among the lexical procedures, the derivation is the most common²: cf. *izoletă*, *carantinare*, *carantinat*, *carantinabil*, *termometrizare*³ (with the variant *termoscanare*), *covidat*, *coviduț(tz)*, *covidel*, *covrigel*, *virusache*, *negaționist*, *glovoist*, *cipat*, *haurist*, *șoșocar*, etc. Compared to the derivation process, composition is less involved in these lexical creations: *coronasceptic*, *autoizolare*, *vax-coviduțu'*, *spirală Covid*.

Resemantisations (change of meaning) are not so many, but they are often spectacular: cf. (sg.) *covid*/(pl.) *covizi*, (sg.) *contact*/(pl.) *contacti*, *guvid*, *covrig*.

The process of changing the grammatical value (conversion) is the least represented. Several forms can be mentioned, such as *mască* (adv.) *fizic*, or *oculta* (*mondială*), all of which will be analysed in the following.

² All examples in this section are analysed in the following sections.

³ Term analysed in Zafiu 2020b.

Among the stylistic procedures, the truncations (*corona*, *rona*) stand out, and so do especially the puns and the metaglyphs: *hAUR*, *hAUrolac*, *Cimitirol*, *Gropatin*, *champignon*, *unicorn*, *majordom*, *Covid24*, *covprostie*, *plandemie* (also *plan-demie*), *crocobaurul de (virus/covid)*, *nazipass*, *ciorba de covitroace*, *vax(x)/wax*, *(anti)vaxxeri/(anti)waxeri* etc.

4. The mechanisms of lexical creations with pandemic reference

We have seen the types and subtypes of lexical creations that have appeared in the pandemic context. It should be noted that most of these lexical creations have direct reference to the Coronavirus, Covid-19 disease, and related reference fields (actions involved in treating and preventing disease, economic and social actions arising from the context created, etc.).

A small number of such lexical creations have an indirect reference to Covid-19 disease. In other words, they represent a linguistic backlash generated by the pandemic context. This is the case, for example, for the forms *hAUR*, *hAUrolac* or *Covid24* which are motivated from a psycholinguistic perspective, as will be seen from the following analyses.

4.1. Mechanisms of lexical creations with international circulation

All subtypes of this category are lexical creations in the 'donor' language⁴, that produced them. In the 'beneficiary' language (Romanian in this case) all borrowings, adapted or not, and linguistic calques are lexical imitations (Guțu-Romalo 2005, 249; Stanciu-Istrate 2006, 309).

Below are some of the most used lexical creations belonging to the first subtype of foreign lexical creations taken over in Romanian as such, without any modification:

- (1) *covidiot*, designating "a person who bothers others by refusing to follow the rules designed to prevent the spread of Covid-19 disease", is a portmanteau word⁵ obtained from *Covid* and *idiot*;
- (2) *covid-party*, with the meaning "a party for the purpose of intentional infection for group immunization";

⁴ See, for example, <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-has-led-to-an-explosion-of-new-words-and-phrases-and-that-helps-us-cope-136909>, retrieved on 5.11.2021.

⁵ Cf. *mot-valise* from French.

- (3) *covideo party*, meaning “online party via Zoom or Skype”, is also a portmanteau word, obtained from the forms *Covid* and *video*;
- (4) *covexit*, meaning “exit from the pandemic”, is another word-suitcase, consisting of *Covid* and *exit*, after the model of term *Brexit*;
- (5) *Kung Flu*, with direct reference to Covid-19 disease, is a playful collage of lexemes, a variety of portmanteau word, based on the approximate homophony between *fu* (from the martial arts name *kung fu*) and *flu*.

The next subtype, the basis loans, but adapted to Romanian (partially or in full), is better represented than the first. I chose only two terms to illustrate this, because they are relevant to what I called *reactivation*:

- (6) *conspiraționism* [conspiracism] and *conspiraționist* [conspiracist] are basis loans, but older and reactivated in a pandemic context (as well as *simptomatic*, *asimptomatic*).

The terms cannot be interpreted as derivatives with *-ism/-ist* in Romanian, but adapted, because there are, according to Zafiu (2019):

[...] correspondences and models in languages of international circulation (*conspiracism* and *conspiracist* in English, *conspirationnisme* and *conspirationniste* in French, etc.), the two terms are useful, because they do not refer directly to the *conspiracy* (as they do *conspirator*⁶ and *conspirativ*⁷), but to the conspiracy theories, to the obsessive assumption of a conspiracy behind any event.⁸

Loan words by linguistic calque are the most common subtype of lexical creations with international circulation:

- (7) *autocarantină* and *bioizolare*, partial calques It. *autoquarantena* and *biocontenimento*;
- (8) *aplatizarea curbei*, *distanțare fizică* (with the variant *distanțare socială*), *lucrători esențiali*, *coronapocalipsă* – all are calques of the English terms (cf. *flattening the curve*, *physical/social distancing*, *key workers*, *coronapocalypse*); the last form is the portmanteau word in English;
- (9) *criza de coronavirus*, complete calque of the En. *coronavirus crisis*;
- (10) *imunitate de turmă*, complete calque of the En. *herd immunity*.

⁶ En. *conspirator*.

⁷ En. *conspiratorial*.

⁸ My translation.

The last two examples represent special situations: for (8) it must be specified that the Romanian translation has a hilarious effect, and for (9), that the translation of *herd* through *turmă* creates an alteration in Romanian in the direction of a semantic depreciation. The uninspired translation of the expression *coronavirus crisis* by *criza de coronavirus* (instead of *criza coronavirusului* or *criza generată de coronavirus*) has a hilarious effect, because “Normally, in Romanian, the construction of the word *criză* with the preposition *de* expresses a lack, a deficiency (*criză de pâine, de medicamente, de hârtie* [crisis of bread, medicine, paper], etc.)”⁹ (Zafiu 2020a). So, to say *criza de coronavirus* in Romanian is like complaining that there is not enough coronavirus for everyone [sic!].

As for the translation *turmă* for *herd* from the English expression *herd immunity*, again we have an unfortunate result. The rendering of the word *herd* by the word *turmă* in this expression attracts the pejorisation of the latter. The pejorisation refers “to change in word’s evaluative force. In pejorisation, a word takes on a derogatory meaning. This is frequently seen with words for animals, which can be used to refer to people negatively or insultingly” (Riemer 2010, 374-375). The pejorative meaning of the term *turmă* is strengthened by many occurrences in Romanian (Zafiu 2021a):

In the current language, *turmă* [herd]¹⁰ is [...] a prototypical representation of depersonalization, of social conformity. The derogatory meaning is partly recorded in dictionaries [...] “crowd, (large) group of people (in disorder)” [...] or [...] “(large) group of submissive, docile people”. [...] The pejorative meaning was fixed especially in the expression *a merge cu turma* [to go with the flock]¹¹ [...]. The same semantic note is found in formulas such as *spirit de turmă* [herd spirit]¹² or *mentalitate de turmă* [herd mentality]¹³ [...]¹⁴

Therefore, a more appropriate variant of translation into Romanian would be *imunitate colectivă/de grup* [collective/group immunity]. This avoids the pejorative effect reported above, an effect recorded, moreover, in other languages as well where various specialists propose translation variants for the phrase *herd immunity* from English (Zafiu 2021a): cf. It. *immunità di gregge*, where the word *gregge* means “flock of sheep or goats” (for which the proposed replacement is *immunità di gruppo*), Fr. *immunité grégaire* (the alternative being *immunité collective*, de

⁹ Idem.

¹⁰ My note.

¹¹ My note.

¹² Idem.

¹³ Idem.

¹⁴ My translation.

groupe, de communauté) or Germ. *Herdenimmunität* (for which the alternative is *kollektiven Impfschutzes*).

4.2. Mechanisms of lexical creations with national circulation

This category of lexical creations is the most spectacular and richest, and it is normal for it to be so, since in this case all the resources and registers of the language are exploited. For this reason, the analysed corpus will be structured in sections dedicated to each subtype.

4.2.1. Lexical creations obtained by derivation

Among the first such lexical creations appeared by derivation was the noun *izoletă*, belonging to the jargon of emergency medicine, but quickly taken over in the everyday language, probably due to its exoticism:

- (11) *izoletă* means a “portable isolation system” used to transport a patient having a high risk of transmitting pathogens; the patient is placed on a (relatively) sealed covered stretcher to prevent contamination of the person handling the stretcher and those with whom the patient comes into contact until it is installed in a space where medical care can be provided safely; “the phrase *barella di biocontenimento* from Italian corresponds to our *izoleta*” (Zafiu 2020a); the new word is obtained by adding the suffix *-etă* to the verb (*a*) *izola* [to isolate]:

„*izoleta* nu a atins pământul, ci a rămas sprijinită pe genunchiul paramedicului. De asemenea, în urma incidentului nu a fost deteriorată *izoleta de protecție*” (g4media.ro)¹⁵

- [En.: “*izoleta* did not touch the ground but remained leaning on the paramedic’s knee. Also, *the protective izoleta* was not damaged because of the incident” (g4media.ro)]¹⁶

The suffix *-etă* in Romanian comes mainly from French, but also from Italian (and sporadically from Spanish and Russian), through loans with this ending (for example, Rom. *trotinetă* < Fr. *trottinette* [scooter], Rom. *șaretă* < Fr. *charrette* [chariot], Rom. *bicicletă* < Fr. *bicyclette* [bicycle] or Rom. *simfonietă* < It. *sinfonietta* [sinfonietta] and many more). This suffix is specialized for forming nouns. Given the

¹⁵ In Zafiu 2020a.

¹⁶ My translation.

multitude of words with this ending, direct borrowings especially from French, *-etă* is very unproductive as a suffix in Romanian.

Words formed with this suffix are generally of two types: neutral in terms of connotation and designating smaller objects – see examples a), b) and c) – and playfully and/or pejoratively marked – see examples d) and e):

- a) *camionetă*, “a smaller truck, pickup truck, van”, noun obtained from *camion* [truck] + *-etă*;
- b) *tricicletă*, “a small vehicle (for children) with three wheels arranged on two parallel axles, set in motion by turning the pedals similar to a bicycle”, noun obtained from *triciclu* (< Fr. *tricycle*) [*tricycle*] + *-etă* by analogy with *bicicletă* [bicycle];
- c) *verighetă*, “precious metal ring (but without precious stones) worn as a symbol of the bond between the fiancés or spouses; wedding ring”, noun obtained from *verigă* [ring] + *-etă*;
- d) *babetă*, term used in colloquial language (in a joking register) with the meaning “old woman”, synonymous with *babă* [old woman, crone]; noun obtained with *babă* + *-etă*;
- e) *borfetă*, noun obtained with *boarfă* [rag] + *-etă*; *boarfă* has the meaning “worn out thing” in colloquial register, but is used in slang with the meaning “prostitute”; *borfetă* has only this exclusively slang meaning).

Some lexical creations obtained by derivation even go so far as to develop lexical families:

- (12) *a (se) carantina* (verb, “preventive isolation of persons or even groups of persons who have been in contact with a contagious patient or who come from an area where there is an epidemic”), *carantinare* (noun), *carantinat* (participle form that can be used with adjective value) and *carantinabil* (adjective, “who is likely to be quarantined”) – lexical family from a verb not recorded in dictionaries (in dictionaries there is only the noun *carantină* [quarantine], which, in a pandemic context, is also synonymous with *lockdown*, when total isolation is used)¹⁷:

Infecția cu coronavirus (COVID-19): Cum să vă *carantinați* (autoizolați) la domiciliu atunci când este posibil să vă fi expus și nu prezentați simptome (canada.ca)

- [En.: Coronavirus Infection (COVID-19): How to *quarantine* (self-isolate) at home when you may have been exposed and show no symptoms (canada.ca)]

¹⁷ In all the following quotes, taken from online sources, I have used italics for the exemplified term.

Regulile pentru *carantinarea* persoanelor bolnave de Covid au fost abrogate (digi24.ro)

[En.: The rules for *quarantining* people with Covid disease have been repealed (digi24.ro)]

Timis este singurul ramas peste limita de avarie, care il plaseaza in zona *carantinabila*. (ziare.com)

[En.: Timiş is the only one left over the emergency limit, which places it in the *quarantine* area. (ziare.com)]

- (13) *covid* (noun used with triple reference: to the disease caused by the virus, to the virus, but also to the person who was infected with this virus), *covidat* (participle with adjective value or even with noun value, with reference to the infected person), *coviduț(ul)* (noun referring to the virus), spelled and *covidutz*, and *covidel(u)* (idem) – lexical family based on the name Covid-19 disease; the last two nouns are false hypocoristic names, formed from the base *covid* + the diminutive suffixes *-uț* and *-el*, by analogy with, for example, *căluț/călușel* (diminutives for *horse*):

Fix de *coviduț* a murit... (Facebook, decembrie 2020)

[En.: Right because of *coviduț* [he] died... (Facebook, December 2020)]

Au „murit” toate celelalte boli. A ramas doar *Covidutul*. Dragalasul... (Facebook, decembrie 2020)

[En.: All other diseases have ‘died’. Only *Coviduț* remained. Sweet darling ... (Facebook, December 2020)]

lasa, stai tu linistit si asteapta-l pe *covidutz*! (Facebook, octombrie 2020)

[En.: alright, stay calm and wait for the *covidutz*! (Facebook, October 2020)]

în AFRICA. SE MOARE DE. FOAMETE DE ALTE BOLI. LĂSAȚI COVIDELU (Facebook, decembrie 2020)

[En.: in AFRICA. PEOPLE ARE DYING OF. STARVATION AND OTHER DISEASES. LEAVE THE *COVIDEL* (Facebook, December 2020)]

- (14) *vax* (with the variants *vaxxin* and *wax*, all meaning “vaccine”), *vaxinat* (participle with adjective value, “vaccinated person”), *vaxer* (noun, “person who believes in the vaccine”), *antivaxer* (noun, “person who does not believe in the vaccine”) – lexical family based on an existing word in Romanian (*vax*, noun and interjection with the meaning “trifle, fad, stupid thing”), but whose meaning is transformed and used pejoratively instead of *vaccine* and, implicitly, to denigrate the people who are vaccinated (or, depending on the perspective, who do not want to be vaccinated):

Alt *vax*? Pana se termina covidutu, fiecare tara o sa aibă *vax* propriu și fiecare om o sa fie înțepat cu 10 doze. (Facebook, ianuarie 2021)

- [En.: Another *vax*? By the end of the covidutu, each country will have its own *vax* and each person will be stung with 10 doses. (Facebook, January 2021)]

Alții care confirmă că *vaxxinul* afectează grav creierul [...] cine este *vaxxinat* (Facebook, septembrie 2021)

- [En.: [Here are]¹⁸ Others who confirm that the *vaxxin* severely affects the brain [...] who is *vaxxinat* (Facebook, September 2021)]

pentru *antivaxxeri*, fă-ți test si intri la mall (Facebook, noiembrie 2021)

- [En.: for *anti-vaxxers*, take a test and you get into the mall (Facebook, November 2021)]

Another false hypocoristic form, such as *coviduț/covidel*, is also the one below, for which a suffix that is not very productive in Romanian is reactivated:

- (15) *virusache* (noun with reference to Coronavirus), obtained from *virus* + the suffix *-ache* (used, in generally, for Romanian surnames, e.g., Vasilache):

mai cobai [decât unii]¹⁹ sunt cei care vor sa testeze *virusache* pe pielea lor și sistemul medical românesc. (Facebook, martie 2021)

- [En.: more lab rats [than some]²⁰ are those who want to test *virusache* themselves and the Romanian medical system. (Facebook, March 2021)]

¹⁸ My completion.

¹⁹ My completion.

²⁰ My completion.

După ce trece *Virusache*, facem o petrecere mare cu macaroane, făină, ulei, bulion și hârtie igienică. (ro.pinterest.com)

[En.: After *Virusache* goes away, we'll have a big party with macaroni, flour, oil, tomato paste, and toilet paper. (ro.pinterest.com)]

The suffix *-ache* also forms nouns (with basis word referring to persons or living things) and gives hypocoristic and/or ironic value to newly formed words.: cf. *cuțulache* (from basis *cuțu*, part of a compound interjection, *cuțu-cuțu*, with which the little dogs are called), *fudulache* (from the adjective *fudul*, referring to a conceited, haughty, arrogant person), *băftache* (from the noun *baftă* [luck], also used as an interjection, *Baftă!* [Good luck!]), the new word designating a person who is lucky in general or in certain circumstances), *bulache* (from the proper name *Bulă*, a famous character in Romanian jokes, a prototype of stupidity, the newly formed word having the meaning of “naive, silly person”), etc.

Another lexical creation obtained by derivation is:

- (16) *glovoist*, which designates “the person who delivers” (goinfashion.ro); from GLOVO (the name of a home delivery company) + the suffix *-ist*; expressively neutral construction, but also appeared in the pandemic context, when such companies were very much on demand.

Finally, the adjectives below, strongly marked pejoratively, were also formed by derivation:

- (17) *haurist*, noun/adjective designating a person who does not believe in the existence of the virus and the benefits of the vaccine and/or who uses suburban and violent language in expressing an opinion on these topics; obtained from *haur* + the suffix *-ist*; *haur* is a form that mimics the pronunciation of the word *aur* [gold] by Romany people, and the basis *aur* is a transparent allusion to the extremist nationalist party named AUR²¹:

[...] restrictii există si in alte tari, oamenii le respecta. nu poti intra cu forta la un restaurant sau magazin doar pt. ca esti *haurist* [...] (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

²¹ AUR is the abbreviation for the Alliance for the Union of Romanians, a party that has had various aggressive public positions or organized demonstrations against restrictions imposed by the government in order to prevent the population from getting sick in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

[En.: [...] restrictions exist in other countries too, people respect them. you cannot enter a restaurant or store by force just because you are *haurist* (Facebook, December 2021)]

- (18) *șoșocar* or *șoșocist*, nouns/adjectives formed from the proper name *Șoșoacă*²² + the suffix *-ar/-ist*, with the same meaning as *haurist*, but enhanced from the perspective of language violence:

toate tarile Europei cer certificatul verde! Doar la noi *sosocarii* astia urla impotriva [...] (Facebook, noiembrie 2021)

[En.: all Europe's countries require the green certificate! Only here do these *șoșocarii* howl against [it]²³ (Facebook, November 2021)]

4.2.2. Lexical creations obtained by composition

Composition is a less represented process in creating the lexical formations that are the subject of this research:

- (19) *vax-coviduțu'*, false hypocoristic construction, having as reference both the virus and the disease caused by it; the term is obtained by hyphenating the words *vax* (see example (13)) and *coviduț* (see example (12)); the composition is of the parataxis type (initially, a coordination by juxtaposition):

Normal că scade [incidența, numărul de îmbolnăviri la mia de locuitori]²⁴, e perioada vacanțelor, așa s-a întâmplat și astă-vară, a luat *vax-coviduțu'* o pauză... (Facebook, decembrie 2020)

[En.: Of course, it decreases [the incidence, the number of illnesses per thousand inhabitants]²⁵, it is the holidays period, the same happened this summer, *vax-coviduțu'* has taken a break... (Facebook, December 2020)]

²² Diana Iovanovici Șoșoacă is a former member of the AUR party, currently an independent Romanian parliamentarian as a result of her exclusion from the AUR for image disservices. She was considered a harmful politician by her actions and by the violence of her language even by this extremist party.

²³ My completion.

²⁴ My completion.

²⁵ My completion.

- (20) *coronapass*, “Covid digital certificate”; noun composed by truncating the forms *coronavirus* and *passport* from English:

Guvernul pregătește un „*coronapass*” mascat. (antena3.ro)

[En.: The government is preparing a masked ‘*coronapass*’. (antena3.ro)]

- (21) *spirală Covid*, composition obtained by the simple joining (without hyphen) of the words *spirală* [spiral] and *Covid*:

E mâna lui Gregorian Bivolaru. Organizează *spirale Covid*. (Facebook, noiembrie 2021)

[En.: Gregorian Bivolaru²⁶ has a hand in this. He organizes Covid spirals. (Facebook, November 2021)]

The ironic register given by the allusive value of the form resulting from this composition is revealed only by knowing some data about the mentioned character and by reconstructing the primary context in which the noun *spirală* [spiral] appears as a term of another phrase. Gregorian Bivolaru is a controversial figure²⁷, a yoga teacher who considers himself and is considered by his followers a guru. When he was still active in Romania, Bivolaru regularly organized (in the summer, usually at the seaside) the so-called ‘healing spirals’ (followers sat in a spiral and practiced *yang* meditation). Like most little-known things, on which an aura of mystery mixed with elements of scandal hovers, this one too has generated numerous jokes and ironic allusions. Therefore, the above post seems to explain in an ironic tone the rather rapid decrease in the number of Covid-19 illnesses in a certain period as a result of an allegedly spiritual intervention of the mentioned character.

4.2.3. Lexical creations obtained by conversion

Conversion (or change of grammatical value/category) is also involved in lexical innovation. Three lexical creations in the sphere of the pandemic lexicon obtained by conversion are analysed here:

²⁶ My note.

²⁷ Gregorian Bivolaru, also known as Magnus Auroisson, the founder of the Absolute Integration Movement (MISA), has been convicted several times and still has legal issues. He is currently wanted by Interpol for “sexual abuse and trafficking in human beings in aggravating form in Finland and France in 2008-2013”, according to the *agerpres.ro* news agency (<http://www.agerpres.ro/justitie/2017/09/24/misa-mandatul-emis-de-finlanda-pentru-bivolaru-nou-abuz-flagrant-avea-dreptul-sa-paraseasca-tara-14-00-06>, retrieved on 29.03.2022).

- (22) *mascat*, meaning “person wearing a mask, complying with restrictions imposed in a pandemic context”, is a noun obtained by conversion from an adjective:

[...] oricum, nu se primesc decât *mascații* cu certificat la mall... Poate să le țină închise! (Facebook, septembrie 2021)

- [En.: anyway, only *mascații* [people wearing masks]²⁸ having the certificate are accepted at the mall... they can keep them closed! (Facebook, September 2021)]

In Romanian, the basic grammatical class for *mascat* is that of the adjective, which has the meanings: “wearing a mask” (cf. *om mascat* [masked man]), “which involves wearing a mask” (cf. *bal mascat* [masquerade, costume ball]) or “which is not visible, hidden, camouflaged; disguised” (cf. *ușă mascată de o draperie* [a door masked by a curtain], respectively *neplăcere mascată de un zâmbet forțat* [a nuisance masked by a forced smile]).

The form *mascat* from Romanian appears as a noun even before the Covid-19 pandemic: cf. “Bărbatul s-a trezit cu *mascații*²⁹ la ușă” (impact.ro³⁰) [The man suddenly found himself with *mascații* at the door]. The novelty of the noun *mascat* meaning “person wearing mask” consists in the fact that it is used exclusively with a pejorative connotation by people who do not believe in the pandemic and are against the restrictions imposed in this context.

The same process of conversion is also the basis of the form below, which is extremely frequently used, and which has great chances of becoming stabilised, especially in the lexical sphere related to the institutionalized learning process:

- (23) *fizic* [physically], having the meaning “with physical presence, on the spot”, is an adverb obtained from the homonymous adjective (Romanian dictionaries record the form *fizic* only with the morphological values of adjective or noun):

„Copiii abia așteaptă să meargă *fizic* la școală” (g4media.ro³¹)

- [En.: Children can't wait to go to school physically (g4media.ro)]

²⁸ My completion.

²⁹ Hooded policeman; member of a counterterrorism brigade.

³⁰ <https://www.impact.ro/tanar-din-arad-saltat-de-mascati-din-casa-pentru-ca-a-injurat-pe-facebook-video-271752.html>, retrieved on 29.03.2022

³¹ In Zafiu 2021c.

As can be seen from the example above, this new morphological value arose from the need for precision of speakers who oppose the adverb *fizic* to the adverbial use of the form *online* given that, in the pandemic context, teaching activities and other activities (for which the term *telemuncă* [telework] is also used and is reactivated in recent vocabulary), have moved into virtual space.

Analysing this recent adverbial use of the form *fizic*, Rodica Zafiu (2021c) specifies that in opposition to the form *online* “there are actually several formulations, competing, of which the most common is the collocation *față în față* [face to face]³²”. However, she explains the frequent occurrence of the adverb *fizic* as an ephemeral one because it would be redundant in the context of the opposition with *online/virtual*:

However, the term *fizic* is more successful at the moment, on the one hand because it has a much wider scope to spread (from books to cards, shops, lessons, and meetings), on the other hand because it eliminates ambiguities. After all, in a video conference we and other people’s images are – how else? – *face-to-face*.³³

Nevertheless, a nuanced answer is required to the rhetorical question at the end of the quoted passage, meant to explain the need to use the adverbial form *fizic* in certain circumstances. Here, we do not talk about just that participants in a video conference or an online teaching course can keep their video camera turned off. In addition, the face-to-face phrase used in the context of an online meeting contradicts its meaning in English, where it comes from (cf. En. *face-to-face meeting*, “involving two people who are together in the same place”). The use of the form *fizic* as adverb in Romanian is necessary, for example, in the opposite situation to the carried out of teaching activities in an asynchronous online mode (complementary to those carried out online synchronously in distance learning), when the collocation *față în față* [face-to-face] loses its relevance.

Here is the third form of conversion that caught my eye:

- (24) *oculta* (in the context *oculta mondială* [worldwide ‘occulta’³⁴]) is a noun obtained from the adjective *ocult* (“hidden, secret, mysterious”); as noun, the form *oculta* is used either in a ‘serious’ register (by adherents of various conspiracy theories), or in an ironic register (by those who do not believe in these theories):

³² My completion.

³³ My translation.

³⁴ The so-called New World Order.

Este esențial pentru *Oculă* Mondială să țină omul ocupat, să-l amăgească și să-l stoarcă de energie. (Facebook, pagina Sănătate Spirituală, ianuarie 2022)

[En.: It is essential for the Worldwide *Occulta* to keep people busy, to deceive them, and to drain their energy. (Facebook, page Spiritual Health, January 2022)]

[...] prefer să iau în serios ce spun specialiștii decât să construiesc, încântat de deșteptăciunea mea geto-dacică, ipoteze și scenarii secrete, gândite asasin de o „*ocultă*” mondială [...], în speranța să ne încalece. (Pleșu 2021a)

[En.: [...] I prefer to take seriously what specialists say than to build, delighted by my Geto-Dacian cleverness, all kind of secret hypotheses and scenarios, conceived with murderous intentions by a worldwide '*occulta*' [...], hoping to subdue us. (Pleșu 2021a)]

It should also be specified that when the enunciator belongs to the first category (he is a convinced follower of conspiracy theories), the noun is used exclusively with a definite article *-a (oculta)* and is often capitalized (*Oculă*).

4.2.4. Lexical creations obtained by resemantisation

Lexical creations obtained by resemantisation are among the most surprising. Some of these are true linguistic oddities:

- (25) *covid*, meaning “person with Covid disease; Covid patient treated in hospital”, is a resemantization of the noun naming the disease; it is used as a masculine noun, for which even the morphological regularization for the plural (*covizi*) has taken place and, moreover, for which the antonym *non-covizi* has been created too:

„Cine e de vină pentru «*covizii*» liberi?” (sportmedia.ro³⁵)

[En.: “Who is to blame for free '*covizii*'?” (sportmedia.ro)]

„*non-covizii*, reprimiți în spitale” (inpolitics.ro³⁶)

[En.: “*non-covizii*, received back in hospitals” (inpolitics.ro)]

³⁵ In Zafiu 2020d.

³⁶ Idem.

- (26) *contact*, masculine noun meaning “person who came in contact with another infected with the Covid virus”, resemantization of the noun meaning “direct touch”; in this case also a morphological regularization for the plural (*contacti*) took place; this noun is used even on official platforms:

Ce avem de facut daca avem simptome, suntem *contacti* sau suntem depistati COVID pozitiv? (dspsv.ro³⁷)

- [En.: What should we do if we have symptoms, we are *contacti*, or are found to be positive for COVID? (dspsv.ro)]

- (27) *guvid*, *covrig* [“gobi³⁸, pretzel” in their basic, denotative meanings] – false hypocoristic nouns that have become parallel names for Covid disease, obtained by transfer without a material basis (based on a vague homophony):

- (28) Ia zi boss, tu te-ai întâlnit cu *Guvidu’*? (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

- [En.: Let’s hear you, boss, have you met *Guvidu’*? (Facebook, December 2021)]

[...] s-au lasat sa fie cobai in experimentul *covrig* si si-au injectat serul experimental, după care au facut gripa *covrig*!!! (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

- [En.: [...] they let themselves be lab rats in the *covrig* experiment and injected with their experimental serum, after which they got the *covrig* flu!!! (Facebook, December 2021)]

4.2.5. Lexical creations obtained by truncation

Truncation is a procedure frequently used to streamline communication (cf. *juma* instead of *jumătate* [half]), to obtain familiar names (cf. *Alex* instead of *Alexandru*), to obtain names of institutions, organizations, agencies, etc. (cf. *ROMPRES*, for the *Presa Română* [Romanian Press]), and also to obtain a hypocoristic effect (cf. *grădi* instead of *grădiniță* [kindergarten]), especially in communication with children.

³⁷ Direcția de Sănătate Publică Județeană Suceava (En. Suceava County Public Health Directorate)

³⁸ *Gobius* is the scientific name for a small, usually marine fish that typically has a sucker on the underside.

More recently, hypocoristic truncation occurs quite often not only in utterances in which children are involved, but also in situations of communication between adults who have a certain sociopsychological profile. Therefore, this phenomenon extends from the so-called *baby-talk* register – “the register in which parents often address their children, with affectionate distortions that mimic the simplified language of the little ones” (Zafiu 2021b) – to a childish, infantile register of speech (cf. “m-am *plicti* de sală”³⁹ [I got *bored* with the gym], where *plicti* replaces *plictisit*).

If in utterances like the one in the last example, the speakers are not aware of the questionable quality of their ‘affectionate’ language, there are speakers who ironize this register: cf. “își caută alt *iubi* cu mașină”⁴⁰ [(She is) looking for another *lover* with a car], where *iubi* replaces the noun *iubit* [lover]. In this utterance, the irony also refers to the use as affectionate appellation of the hypocoristic name *iubi* used by some people: cf. “*iubi*, vezi că stau până târziu la birou”⁴¹ [*Honey*, see that I'm staying late at the office].

This last register, marked by irony, frustration (justified or not) or by a playful intention, is the one involved in the false hypocoristic truncations below:

- (29) *corona*, with the variant *rona*, both are truncations of the word *coronavirus*:

Să vă ducă dracu cu *Corona* voastră (Facebook, august 2020)

[En.: Go to hell with your *Corona* (Facebook, August 2020)]

Marca de bere „*Corona*”⁴² își schimbă numele în „Speranța”...
(forum.softpedia.com)

[En.: The “*Corona*” beer brand changes its name to “Hope” ...
(forum.softpedia.ro)]

Parcă *rona* nu mai sună atât de înspăimântător. (goinfashion.ro)

[En.: Looks like *rona* doesn't sound so scary anymore. (goinfashion.ro)]

Other forms clearly express a frustration:

³⁹ eva.ro, in Zafiu 2021b

⁴⁰ bzi.ro, in Zafiu 2021b

⁴¹ oral attestation

⁴² The basis meaning is *crown* (from the Latin noun *corona*).

- (30) (*certificatul*) *nazi* (also used in quotation marks, as a sign of change of referent), referring to the Covid digital certificate, is an adjective that has become invariable by truncating the adjective *nazist*:

ieri, numărul total al vânzătoarelor de la toate magazinele (exceptând Auchan, care și-a făcut intrare proprie și se intră fără permisul „*nazi*”) era în mod vizibil mai mare decât numărul total al cumpărătorilor. (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

- [En.: Yesterday, the total number of saleswomen at all stores (except Auchan, which made their own entrance and it's possible to enter [there]⁴³ without a '*nazi*' permit) was visibly higher than the total number of shoppers. (Facebook, December 2021)]

4.2.6. Lexical creations based on puns and graphic aspect

This category is the most spectacular of all and almost as productive as that of the lexical creations obtained by derivation:

- (31) *cipat*, participle (also used with adjective value), meaning “(person) who has one or more chips inserted into the body via the Covid vaccine”, based on a verb created especially for this purpose in Romanian, (*a*) *cipa*; this verb is formed in turn from the noun *cip* [chip] (“small piece of semiconductor material that supports one or more integrated circuits”); among the mentioned forms, *cip* is the only one registered in Romanian dictionaries:

M-am „*cipat*”! Aștept provincia... (viata-medicala.ro, 22 ian. 2021)

- [En.: I got '*cipat*' [vaccinated]⁴⁴! I'm waiting for the province ... (viata-medicala.ro, 22 Jan. 2021)]

This is the title of an article in which the author, a doctor, announces that he has been vaccinated ('*cipat*') and expects that *provincia* [the province] to do the same. Obviously, the term *provincia*, used here with derogatory value, refers to those who believe in all sorts of conspiracy theories, inclusively in the one that accredits the stupefying idea according to which the Covid vaccine contains a chip or more.

⁴³ My completion.

⁴⁴ My completion.

- (32) *anti-cipat*, adverb meaning “against Covid vaccination [because the vaccine would contain one or even more chips]”; lexical creation obtained from the element of composition *anti-* and the participle *cipat* (see above); as a humorous reaction to this conspiracy theory and its followers, all sorts of jokes have appeared:

Cică dacă zici mulțumesc *anti-cipat* [asistentei care te vaccinează⁴⁵] nu te cipează. (Facebook, mai 2021)

- [En.: They say that if you say thank you *anti-cipat* [to the nurse who vaccinates you she]⁴⁶ will not chip you. (Facebook, May 2021)]

The form *anti-cipat* in this example is a play on words based on the homophony with the adverb *anticipat* [“in advance”].

- (33) *nazipass*, name given to the Covid digital certificate by those who do not believe in the existence of the virus and, implicitly, are against vaccination (see also example above (29)); portmanteau word obtained from the *nazi* (truncation of the adjective *nazist*) + *pass* (truncation of the English noun *passport*):

La nazipass nu vor renunța chiar dacă intram în verde. (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

- [En.: They will not give up the *nazipass* even if we go green. (Facebook, December 2021)]

- (34) *Cimitirol*, *Gropatin* – these are imaginary names for the Covid vaccine, more precisely portmanteau words obtained from *cimitir* [cemetery] + the ending *-rol* and *grop-* (from *groapă* [grave]) + the ending *-tin*; those endings are selected for their specialized resonance for the creation of drug names (cf. *Paracetamol*, *Tramadol*, *Mialgin*, *Ventolin*, etc.); thus, *Cimitirol* and *Gropatin* have become the ‘medicines’ that put you directly in the cemetery (*cimitir*)/grave (*groapă*):

Cimitirol sau *Gropatin* se numește vaxinul (Facebook, noiembrie 2021)

- [En.: *Cimitirol* or *Gropatin* is the name of *vaxinul* [the vaccine]⁴⁷ (Facebook, November 2021)]

⁴⁵ Idem.

⁴⁶ My completion.

⁴⁷ My completion.

- (35) *plandemie*, written and *plan-demie*, portmanteau word obtained from nouns *plan* [plan] + *pandemie* [pandemic]:

Nu este nici o *pandemie*, ci o *plandemie*. (Facebook, noiembrie 2021)

[En.: It is not a *pandemie* [pandemic], but a *plandemie* [plandemic]. (Facebook, November 2021)]

Cat timp veti urmarii massmedia platita de big pharma *plandemia* nu se va termina. (Facebook, noiembrie 2021)

[En.: As long as you watch the media paid for by the big pharma, *plandemia* [the pandemic] will not end. (Facebook, November 2021)]

E clar de ce susții *plan-demia*, lucrezi în farmacie (Facebook, noiembrie 2021)

[En.: It's clear why you support the *plan-demia*, you work in a pharmacy (Facebook, November 2021)]

- (36) *champignon*, *unicorn*, *majordom* – these are homophonic puns with the term *omicron* that are intended to ridicule the names given to virus strains:

Champignon când apare? (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

[En.: When does *Champignon* appear? (Facebook, December 2021)]

Acum omicron după *unicorn* apoi *majordom* și tot așa. (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

[En.: Now omicron, after *unicorn*, then *majordom* [butler]⁴⁸ and so on. (Facebook, December 2021)]

- (37) *covprostie*, portmanteau word referring to Covid disease, obtained from *covid* + *prostie* [stupidity]:

[...] mai dativa dracu cu *covprostia* voastra. (Facebook, decembrie 2021)

[En.: [...] go to hell with your *covprostia*. (Facebook, December 2021)]

⁴⁸ My completion.

- (38) *ciorba de covitroace*, an expression with one single occurrence, used by a Facebook commenter in response to a news story about the death of a person who attended a party with the intention of becoming infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus and being naturally immunized; *covitroace* is a portmanteau word obtained from *Covid* + *potroace* [giblets], in the expression *ciorbă de potroace* which refers to a very sour soup, consumed especially after parties as a natural treatment for hangovers:

A uitat să mănânce ciorba de covitroace de dimineață (Facebook, septembrie 2021)

[En.: He forgot to eat the covitroace soup in the morning (Facebook, September 2020)]

- (39) *crocobaurul (de virus/de covid)*, portmanteau word from *crocodil* [crocodile] + *balaaur* ("fantastic monster, often winged, embodying evil, depicting a huge, long-tailed snake with seven, nine, or twelve sharp-tongued heads through which it pours flames"):

„Crocobaurul ăsta de virus Covid-19 ne-a pus în fața unei noi ere” (orastie.ddns.net)⁴⁹

[En.: This Covid-19 virus *crocobaur* put us in front of a new era (orastie.ddns.net)]

The form *crocobaur* has a “diversity of values” in Romanian, which ensures its preservation in vocabulary “and even a greater future spread in colloquial language” (Zafiu 2021d). For a detailed analysis of the linguistic mechanism of *crocobaur*, let us give the floor to Rodica Zafiu who dedicated an entire article to this form (2021d):

Crocobaur is a nice word, not found in dictionaries, but which many of us have come across and maybe even used lately. The word is a playful lexical creation, produced by contamination or lexical derailment, the first segment of which certainly comes from the term *crocodil* [crocodile]⁵⁰. The final segment cannot be identified as easily, but we assume that it first evokes the

⁴⁹ In Zafiu 2021d.

⁵⁰ My completion.

form *balaur* [a kind of dragon, see explanation above]⁵¹, but it can also be associated with scientific names such as *dinozaur* [dinosaur]⁵² or *brontozaur* [brontosaurus]⁵³. In fact, the closeness to the *balaur* is what separates the indigenous *crocobaur* from an international *Crocosaur* or *Crocosaurus* – also a creation of imagination and linguistic fantasy, present in movies, video games and current fairy tales.⁵⁴

Some puns also involve graphic elements. Here are two such puns:

- (40) *hAUR* – the lexical form is the result of the lowercase letter *h*' prosthesis to the abbreviation with uppercase *AUR* (corresponding to the name of a political party that has consistently opposed the measures taken by the government in the pandemic context):

Tot timpul când văd un articol cu și despre *hAUR*, îmi vine să vomit.
(Facebook, octombrie 2021)

[En.: Every time I see an article with and about *hAUR*, I feel like throwing up.
(Facebook, October 2021)]

It certainly took the party's founders a long time to find a suitable name for it, because the abbreviation *AUR* (Alliance for the Union of Romanians) is homophonous with the common noun *aur* [gold]. From here there is only a step to the suggestion “a golden party”, which solves all the problems of the Romanians, of course, provided they are closely united around the party. It is this populist resonance of the party's name that is intended to be ridiculed by the spelling *hAUR*. This spelling reproduces the pronunciation by ethnic Roma of words beginning with a vowel (see also example (17) above).

- (41) *hAURolac* sau *haurolac* – pejorative term referring to the propensity to circus, violence in the expression of many people adherents of conspiracy theories, most of them being fans of the *AUR* party, led by George Simion (the motivation is a sociolinguistic one by associating a type of mentality with the ideology of a political party – see also above, examples (17) and (39)); these lexical creations are portmanteau words obtained from *aur* (written *hAUR/haur*) + *aurolac*; the last form is in

⁵¹ Idem.

⁵² Idem.

⁵³ Idem.

⁵⁴ My translation.

turn a lexical creation with the meaning “person who inspires *aurolac*, drug addict”, the result of a resemantisation of the term *aurolac*, having the basic meaning “varnish for painting metallic elements containing solvents with hallucinogenic effects”:

E greu să-ți imaginezi un *haurolac* în parlament [al României]⁵⁵. Nu poți scoate huliganul dintr-un analfabet funcțional. (Facebook, decembrie 2020)

[En.: It's hard to imagine a *haurolac* in [Romania's] parliament. You can't get the hooligan out of a functional illiterate. (Facebook, December 2020)]

Ce să caute *hAUrolacii* în Mall? La furat de portofele? George Simion sper să ai pe conștiința tu și Șoșoaca toate victimele colaterale care cred și au crezut în gargara voastră (Facebook, octombrie 2021)

[En.: Why would the *hAUrolacii* go to the Mall? To steal wallets? George Simion, I hope you and Șoșoacă have a guilty conscience because of all the collateral victims who believe and have believed in your 'gargle' (Facebook, October 2021)]

- (42) *Covid24* is a derogatory name for the Digi 24 news TV station, used by the same people who do not believe in the existence of the virus and are convinced that some television stations manipulate public opinion through false news and exaggerated figures regarding those who died because of this virus; the substitution of the form *Digi* for *Covid* suggests that the television station in question is subordinate to the government:

Umflati cazurile Covid24. Altceva n-aveti de facut inainte de revelion? (Facebook, decembrie 2021).

[En.: You inflate the cases, *Covid 24*. Do you have nothing else to do before New Year's Eve? (Facebook, December 2021)]

⁵⁵ My completion.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of the lexical formations presented here shows that a context such as that of the Covid-19 pandemic, generator of frustrations and sufferings of all kinds, favours an unleashing of lexical creativity. These linguistic manifestations function as a compensatory movement of the psyche under the enormous pressure of overwhelming emotions.

The most common mechanisms involved in generating these lexical creations are: derivation, calque, resemantization, conversion, and puns.

The expressive values of these language facts that coined in exceptional conditions are the playful and/or false hypocoristic register, the pejorative load manifested in various degrees. Expressive values appear almost exclusively in colloquial language, which is the language freed from the constraints imposed by various social practices and habits. Lexical formations such as *criza de coronavirus* [calque of En. *coronavirus crisis*] or *imunitate de turmă* [calque of En. *heard immunity*], marked by involuntary humour or a certain degree of linguistic inadequacy, are accidental and, in general, due to a hasty translation of expressions with international circulation.

Regardless of whether some of these lexical creations will prove to be ephemeral or whether some of them will become stable in the language, their recording and analysis are necessary to describe the dynamics of the current Romanian lexicon.

Yes, Romanians are right: *To make fun of trouble* and *We'll live, and we'll see* seem to be the best ingredients for the recipe for maintaining mental health in times of hardship, and Andrei Pleșu's words from another context seem appropriate even now: "[...] in the long run, we could add to this traditional recipe a minimum percentage of despair. Otherwise, we will die ... laughing!" (Pleșu 2021b).

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