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Virolinguistics: Introduction to the Study of the Coronavirus Language[1]

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Abstract. This paper undertakes the introduction to virolinguistics, a new linguistic discipline that investigates the virus language (virolect) based on the Hungarian linguistic material drawn from the scientific literature and our own collection. The goal of this work is to evaluate the effect of the pandemic on certain aspects of the Hungarian language: genres, vocabulary, communication, the linguistic landscape, and social media. The linguistic materials of these various areas play an important role in our society: they have a warning, entertaining, or stress-relieving function. Due to the restrictions, most studies have moved to the Internet. The methodological paradox of virolinguistics can be identified in the fact that it disregards certain scientific standards in order to assist linguists in collecting their valuable linguistic and visual materials.

Keywords: coronavirus, pandemic, vocabulary, linguistic landscape, Internet memes

Introduction

The goal of this paper is the theoretical and methodological introduction to virolinguistics, a new linguistic discipline based on the effects of the pandemic on the Hungarian language[2] (and its use in communication). The demand for outlining

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2 In addition, not just the Hungarian language but many other languages have experienced similar changes as well.

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virolinguistics as an area of research has arisen already during the first wave of the pandemic (Istók–Lőrincz 2020),[3] but methodological and terminological recommendations and a detailed elaboration of the concept had yet to present themselves. Linguistics, literary theory, and ethnography have all reacted to the effects of the pandemic on communication and linguistics almost immediately. New communicational and cultural genres (H. Nagy 2020), words and phrases (Alyeksyeyeva–Chaiuk–Galitska 2020, Dobrík 2020, Ďuricová 2020, Roig-Marín 2020, Veszelszki 2020a, Uricska 2021), forms of verbal communication (Domonkosi 2020, Domonkosi–Ludányi 2020a, 2020b), and captions warning about the dangers of the virus (Štefaňáková 2020) have appeared all around the world. The effect of the pandemic on communication and languages is so significant that currently a distinct linguistic variation created by COVID-19 can be identified: "Socio-historical and socio-psychological events always have a linguistic point. Linguists believe that confinement into one's home results in an internal language version in a relatively short time, which appears primarily in pronunciation, in word usage and in word creation (neologisms), but it can also result in grammatical change" (Balázs 2020a: 229). Terms reflecting this phenomenon are a proof of this: *Coronaspeak* (Alyeksyeyeva–Chaiuk–Galitska 2020), *"Newspeak" of the quarantine era* (Temirgazina–Luczyk 2020), *karanténnyelv* 'quarantine language' (Balázs 2020a, 2020b), *járványnyelv* 'pandemic language' (Haitzmann 2020), *vírusnyelv* 'virus language' (Istók–Lőrincz 2020). Virolinguistics as a concept is an invention of the authors of the present paper, an umbrella term denoting the linguistic discipline analysing the virolect. Virolinguistics can be seen as a heterogeneous, general linguistic discipline that enables the discourse between linguistic branches that might seem distant at first glance but are identical in their themes (focused on the virus). The function of virolinguistics can be identified in the documentation and analysis of verbal and visual materials pointing to the dangers of the virus (warning function, e.g. captions warning about the dangers of the virus) and in the analysis (e.g. Internet memes) of verbal and visual pieces lampooning the situation (entertaining and stress-relieving function; Istók–Lőrincz 2020).

1. Methodological aspects (the paradox of virolinguistics)

The virus language is changing so quickly that researchers need to react to new linguistic phenomena immediately (they need to document them) lest they miss out on them, with no second chances after the end of the pandemic (hapax legomena and occasionalisms that appear on social media platforms disappear,

3 The present English study is an extended continuation of the authors' paper written in Hungarian, published in 2020, with new example material.

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captions posted in public spaces are replaced by new ones, etc.). Due to the speed of the whole process, its distinct phases are difficult to reconstruct ex post; they become blurred, while the direction of the following linguistic innovations cannot be foreseen either. To get a full picture of the virolect, it is imperative to perform as much synchronic research as possible.

The necessity of synchronic research leads to a looser adherence to methodological aspects. It is a paradox of virolinguistics that if we insist on scientific aspects in a strict manner, we have to wait until the easing of the restrictions, that is, the end of the pandemic. However, the majority of the corpus intended for analysis will become obsolete or, in a worse scenario, unavailable. Below we will enlist the most frequent examples:

1. Due to the lack of physical presence, most studies move to online platforms: paper-based surveys are replaced by online surveys, also interviews can only be conducted online (and not in a natural manner, which can affect the answers given by the subject).

2. Since the exploration of the virus vocabulary happens in real time, virus dictionaries have to let go of objective frequency indicators (cf. Veszelszki 2020a, Uricska 2021).

3. Although the visual use of verbal communication (virolinguistic landscape) can be documented, one can only hypothesise on the motivations behind these instances of communication. Since a number of institutions and shops are closed (Slovakia), there is no way to conduct (recorded) interviews. The researcher remains in solitude.

2. Virus genres

Quarantine culture is forming new communicational and cultural genres and is redefining existing ones. Some of the most popular genres are posts about the virus (virus post or virus comment), the virus diary, the virus poem, and the virus painting. Since we move a significant share of our actual physical activities, such as communication, work, recreation, and playing games, into the virtual realm, one may claim that new and redefined genres are also emerging in a kind of "digital quarantine". From a linguistic standpoint, it can be ascertained that popular texts can be characterized by their conciseness, ease of comprehension ("microgenres"), and powerful visual representation (e.g. the use of images, photos, metaphors).

Péter H. Nagy (2020: 24–25) highlights the hybrid nature of the new genres: among the characteristic traits of these genres, he mentions up-to-datedness, reflection on scientific findings, directness that alleviates the seriousness of the subject, the aim for self-deprecation, and conciseness. He also points to the social

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utility of the new genres: "This had a radical contribution to the mitigation of the panic caused by the coronavirus and the social channelling of accumulated energy" (H. Nagy 2020: 25).[4] The genres connected to the coronavirus can be put into two larger categories: (1) informative and misleading genres (e.g. news about the virus, fake news, personal accounts); (2) entertaining (stress-relieving) genres (e.g. coronavirus memes, quarantine songs, quarantine videos). The tone suggests seriousness in the former, playfulness in the latter case.

In his speech given at the *Munich Security Conference* (15 February 2020), the Director-General of The World Health Organization (WHO) called attention to the fight against fake news: "we're not just fighting an epidemic; we're fighting an infodemic. Fake news spreads faster and more easily than this virus, and is just as dangerous" (W1). The lexeme *infodemic* was formed by the merger of the words *information* and *epidemic* or *pandemic*, denoting the spread of disinformation, which is difficult or impossible to regulate (Uricska 2021: 51). The fake news about the coronavirus (on its emergence, existence, handling, cf. Falyuna 2020, Islam et al. 2020) differ from other fake news because the novelty of the topic and the lack of experience with it make it difficult to ascertain the veracity of their content (especially due to the fragments of truth they contain). Their exposure can be made easier by identifying certain linguistic signs (e.g. the name of the website, clickbait title, substandard grammar and vocabulary).

3. Virologisms (new words, phrases)

In just a year, thousands of new words and phrases related to the pandemic have appeared in both the Hungarian and the English language. There has hardly been any example for such an expansion of the Hungarian vocabulary (cf. Veszelszki 2020a) since the Hungarian Language Reform (18th and 19th centuries). The reason for this is that the magnitude of social change influences the magnitude of linguistic change as well: new phenomena necessitate new lexemes. A virus dictionary published this year explains this phenomenon the following way: "People invent new concepts for phenomena and events for which they had no concepts before. This has happened in relation to the pandemic, too. We have complied new as well as well-known words used in this new context" (Uricska 2021: 10).

A standard scientific documentation of Hungarian lexemes was performed by Ágnes Veszelszki (2020a) and by Erna Uricska (2021) for the English ones. Veszelszki collected 400 Hungarian while Uricska 403 English words and phrases from the virus language during the first wave of the pandemic. The titles of the two dictionaries carry metalinguistic information regarding the two

4 Translated by the authors of this paper. In the following sections, unless indicated otherwise, all translations from Hungarian belong to the authors.

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most popular types of word formation observed in the virus language: they point to compounding (*Karanténszótár* 'Quarantine dictionary') and portmanteaus (*COVIDictionary*).

Neither of the authors consider their dictionary a terminological one. Veszelszki considers hers an "epidemiological and historical account" (2020a: 7), while Uricska refers to hers as *covidocs* (2021: 10). *Covidocs* can be considered a new genre of dictionaries: it dismisses objective frequency indicators (see the chapter on the paradox of virolinguistics above). Instead of presenting statistics and linguistic information, it becomes easily comprehensible to the general public thanks to its readable style, suitable even for continuous reading (which cannot be said of terminological dictionaries). Data collection can happen with the help of questionnaires or through the systematic reading of articles from the media (Uricska only applies the former, while Veszelszki uses both approaches).

The new words and phrases associated with the coronavirus are denoted by the term *coroneologism* both by Veszelszki (2020a: 9, 48) and Roig-Marín (2020) (probably independently from each other): the term points not only to the content of the lexemes but also to a popular type of word formation applied in their case, the portmanteau (*corona* + *neologism*). An alternative to the term *virus language neologism* can be the term *virologism* (Greek *virus* + *logos* 'word', invented by the authors of this paper: I. B. and L. G.), which is shorter than the above mentioned *coroneologism*: its advantage is that it can possibly stay in use to denote lexemes of the virus language that have lost their neological character (which is being perceived to be novel).

Although many virologisms are hapax legomena (one-time word formations) or occasionalisms (occasional word formation), their formation and spread can be supported by the fact that they are likely to appear in formal and informal texts equally: print and electronic media, but one can stumble upon them in comment sections of social media platforms as well. Veszelszki's dictionary (2020a) includes examples of lexemes from a wide range of styles and varieties: "from the vernacular and playful words that are borderline slang, through journalistic inventions, to medical terms that permeated colloquial language due to the pandemic, and vocabulary elements of the administrative language" (Veszelszki 2020: 7).

Veszelszki's (2020a) examples confirm that the most productive method of word formation is compounding (e.g. *fotelkonferencia* 'couch conference' 'a conference moved to an online platform'; *pánikvásárlás* 'panic shopping' 'panic shopping induced by the quarantine'; *vírusgeneráció* 'virus generation' 'the new generation affected by the experience of the pandemic'), while derivation is becoming less and less common (e.g. *cecíliás* 'Cecilia-like' 'someone talking like Cecília Müller, the Chief Medical Officer of Hungary, well known from the media'; *élesztőtlen* 'lacking yeast' 'someone who is out of yeast'; *karanténosítás* 'quarantining' 'putting traditional art pieces into a quarantine theme').

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The first component of Hungarian composites is usually one of the following words: *karantén* 'quarantine', *korona* 'corona', *covid*, *oltás*, or *vakcina* 'covid or vaccine', or *virus* 'virus'. Some novel verbal examples from the webpage of *Új Szó*, a Hungarian daily newspaper in Slovakia (from articles published between November 2020 and January 2021):

(1) *karanténkötelezettség* 'quarantine obligation': *A brit kormány tavaly júliusban állította össze azoknak az országoknak a listáját, amelyekből karanténkötelezettség nélkül be lehet utazni az Egyesült Királyságba.* 'Last July, the government of the United Kingdom composed a list of countries which do not indicate mandatory quarantine on return to the United Kingdom.' (W2)

(2) *koronavírus-mutáció* 'coronavirus mutation': *Már Szlovákiában is megjelent a Nagy-Britanniából származó új koronavírus-mutáció* 'The new coronavirus variant from the United Kingdom has already appeared in Slovakia' (W3)

(3) *Covid-igazolvány* 'COVID passport': *Idén a Covid-igazolvány mentheti meg a turizmust* 'Tourism could be saved by COVID passports this year' (W4)

(4) *Covid-Pass* 'COVID-pass': *Covid-pass: A jövő útlevele?* 'COVID-pass, the passport of the future?' (W5)

(5) *oltóközpont* 'vaccination centre': *Hatalmas oltóközpont lesz a kaliforniai Disneylandben* 'A huge vaccination centre opens in the Californian Disneyland' (W6)

(6) *vakcinaprogram* 'vaccination programme': *Valóban lassú a szlovák vakcinaprogram?* 'Is it correct to claim that the vaccination programme in Slovakia is slow?' (W7)

(7) *vakcinaútlevél* 'vaccine passport': *Egyre több hír jelenik meg arról, hogy az újranyitást követően mind több ország, cég, légitársaság tervezi azt, hogy a turistákat csak akkor engedik az országba, szállodába, fedélzetre, ha azok rendelkeznek vakcinaútlevéllel (Covid-Pass), amely igazolja azt, hogy az érintett megkapta a koronavírus elleni oltást.* 'More and more news come to the surface claiming that after opening, more and more countries, companies, airlines plan to admit tourists into their territories, establishments, on their boards only if they possess a vaccine passport (COVID-pass), which proves that they have received the vaccine against the coronavirus.' (W8)

However, it must be mentioned that the utilization of word formation methods can differ across languages: e.g. the Slovak language prefers derivation over portmanteaus, which, conversely, are more common in the Hungarian language (for more information on this topic, cf. Misadová 2011: 64–69, Tóth 2017: 63–65), while even greater contrasts can be observed between other methods of word formation: e.g. portmanteaus are particularly popular in the English language, while the Hungarian language, which shunned it at first, is slowly getting used to it (the examples from the virus language seem to confirm this), and the Slovak language barely uses it. Thus, it is not surprising that Uricska's dictionary

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(2020) includes a number of English portmanteaus (e.g. *homeference* 'a virtual conference from home' <*home* + *conference*; *coronacation* 'working or schooling from home' <*corona* + *vacation*; *covidiot* 'a person who ignores the rules of physical distancing' <*covid* + *idiot*). Based on Veszelszki's corpus (2020a), it can be confirmed that certain types of "rare methods of word formation" (Lengyel 2000) are becoming more frequent in Hungarian as well (Istók 2017, 2018: 53–60): portmanteau is also the most popular method (e.g. *karantéboly* 'frustration with the pandemic' <*karantén* 'quarantine' + *téboly* 'madness'; *koronapló* 'a diary written during the pandemic, usually about the pandemic' <*korona* 'corona' + *napló* 'diary', *covidinka* 'a person who is acting irresponsibly during the pandemic' <*covid* 'COVID' + *dinka* 'fool') among *affecters* (Istók 2017: 171) with a determined function of style.

Zsófia Ludányi (2020a, 2020b) points out a number of uncertainties in grammar and spelling when it comes to the expansion of the Hungarian vocabulary. In her opinion, the central problem is caused by the various acronyms regularly used as names for the coronavirus disease (e.g. *COVID-19*, *COVID–19*, *Covid-19*, *Covid19*) (Ludányi 2020b: 33). Based on the agreement between several institutions in Hungary, the accepted resolution is the following: the recommended spelling in texts intended for medical professionals and scientific use is COVID19, but the colloquial use is Covid19 (Ludányi 2020b: 34). Ludányi also mentions that the disease has not had a codified spelling in dictionaries. If the abovementioned recommendation is not followed, some grammatical error is made (Ludányi 2020b: 34).

Virologisms are worth analysing from the aspect of linguistic variability (cf. Lőrincz–Lőrincz 2020: 235–236) as well. For example, several names have come up in the Hungarian press in Slovakia for the document certifying a negative test result: *Covid-igazolvány* 'COVID-ID', *Covid-tanúsítvány* 'COVID certificate' (W4), *kék tanúsítvány* 'blue certificate', *őszi igazolás* 'autumn certificate' (W9), *oltási igazolvány* 'vaccination ID' (W10). The document certifying vaccination against the virus also has several names: *vakcinaútlevél* 'vaccine passport', *zöld útlevél* 'green passport', *Covid-Pass* 'COVID-pass' (W8). The majority of these can be categorized as a compounding or qualifier composition.

From time to time, linguistic variability poses questions regarding language cultivation and terminology as well. For one of the restrictions imposed to stop the pandemic, that is for keeping a 1.5–2 metre distance, the term *szociális távolságtartás* 'social distancing' (*sociálny odstup* in Slovak, *distanțare socială* in Romanian) has become widely used in English, Slovak, Romanian, Hungarian, etc. The World Health Organization (WHO) uses the term *physical distancing* instead: "We can stay socially connected while physically distant" (W14). In addition to physical distancing, Géza Balázs (2020c) recommends *emberek közötti távolságtartás* 'distancing between people', while *Magyar Nyelvi Szolgáltató*

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Iroda (Manyszi, i.e. the Hungarian Language Service) proposes *udvariassági távolságtartás* 'polite distancing' (W11). In our day-to-day lives, we can encounter several variants of this term: *társas* 'social', *társadalmi* 'social', *társasági* 'social', *közösségi* 'public', etc. *távolságtartás* 'distancing'.

In formal and informal texts alike, the term *korona* 'corona', classified as an apocope, is becoming more common compared to the lexemes *koronavírus* 'coronavirus' and *koronavírus-járvány* 'coronavirus pandemic'; as a variant of the latter, the reduced term *koronajárvány* 'corona pandemic' can also occur. Obscurity can be observed in the definite meaning of the term *járvány(helyzet)* 'pandemic (situation)' in its alternative forms. The reason for this is that the terms *koronavírus* 'coronavirus', *korona* 'corona', *koronajárvány* 'corona pandemic', *vírus* 'virus', *koronavírus-járvány* 'coronavirus pandemic', *karantén* 'quarantine', and *covid* are used interchangeably in different contexts of the structure *[…] idején* 'during […]'.

4. New forms of interaction

Ágnes Domonkosi and Zsófia Ludányi were the first in the Hungarian scientific literature to notice the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on verbal interactions (Domonkosi–Ludányi 2020a, 2020b): good wishes have become more prominent and new greetings have emerged in e-mails (e.g. *Vigyázzunk egymásra!* 'Let's look out for each other!'; *Maradj otthon!* 'Stay at home!'; *Viselj maszkot!* 'Wear a mask!'). The authors have analysed 250 e-mails (formal or informal electronic mails received directly or forwarded from other people): "The results point to the existence of a social-distance-reducing strategy underlying varied patterns of construal. Social distance is offset, as it were, by linguistic means, distance being restricted to the spatial domain and solidarity taking central stage in language activity" (Domonkosi–Ludányi 2020a: 241). They also point out that while references to the coronavirus get an equally important role in the opening and closing segments in English e-mailing (cf. Kircher 2020), Hungarian e-mails mostly contain such references in their closing segments only (Domonkosi–Ludányi 2020a: 246–247).

The significance of verbal interaction in online education becomes heightened as well. A paper by Ágnes Domonkosi investigates the roles of social deixis in distance education (2020): "Social deixis, i.e. the use of T/V, address forms, greetings and operations for presenting persons in discourse play a key part in the organization of social relations. In digital interactions lacking personal presence, impression-making and face-creation have a stronger linguistic basis, with the result that acts of social deixis play an even more prominent role than in direct, personal communication" (Domonkosi 2020: 45). Digital education changes the utility of traditional linguistic functions, the phatic (communicative), metalingual (linguistic) and conative (vocative) ones called by Roman Jakobson (1960) are

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gaining a greater role (e.g. *Jól látnak? Jól hallanak?* 'Can you see me well? Can you hear me well?'; *Jól hallottam? Azt mondta, hogy…?* 'Did I hear you correctly? Did you say…?'; *Kapcsolják be a mikrofont, hogy halljam, amit mondanak!* 'Turn on your microphone so that I can hear what you are saying!').

5. Providing information about the pandemic situation to national minorities

5.1. The virolinguistic landscape

The virus reshapes the linguistic landscape of public spaces as well. On the doors and windows of bureaus, schools, shops, cinemas, public transportation vehicles, etc., there are signs warning about potential infection and requesting that people wear masks, sanitize their hands, and keep a physical distance. Since the study of the linguistic landscape has many aspects, we differentiate between its various segments. For example, Tódor (2019: 16) mentions several fields of study, e.g. *cityscape* (cf. Malinowski 2010), which deals with the linguistic landscape of cities; *ruralscape* (e.g. Muth 2015), regarding the visual use of language in villages; or *cyberspace* (e.g. Ivkovic–Lotherington 2009), emphasizing the elements of the linguistic landscape pertaining to the virtual domain. Thus, by analogy with these examples, the field studied in this paper can be called *epidemiological linguistic landscape*, or *virolinguistic landscape* (cf. Lőrincz 2021).

The analysis of the captions of the virusscape from the standpoint of linguistics and language policy is important especially in the municipalities populated by Hungarians in neighbouring countries (e.g. Slovakia, Romania, Serbia). As stated in Article 4 (6) of Act No. 184/1999 of the Slovak Republic (W12), warning signs must include a Hungarian translation as well where at least 20% of the local population is Hungarian: "In municipalities with a high percentage of Hungarian population, information pertaining to the security of the lives, health, wealth, and the personal security of citizens must be displayed in publicly accessible spaces in Hungarian language as well" (Cúth–Horony–Lancz 2012: 25). The list of municipalities with a high percentage of Hungarian population is included in Government Regulation 221/1999 (W13). According to this regulation, "municipalities with a high percentage of Hungarian population" are municipalities in which citizens belonging to a national minority make up at least 20% of the population. In spite of the above regulation, in addition to bilingual signs, there are less Hungarian monolingual signs (*Figure* 1), while a number of Slovak monolingual signs can be found (*Figure* 2).[5] Mostly, there is an attempt to compensate for the lack of the mandated translation with a visual representation of the request.

5 Photos no. 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8 were taken by the authors of the study.

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Figure 1. *Monolingual Hungarian caption in the window of a bar in Komárno (Slovakia) ('Max 2 persons per 1 table') Monolingual*



Figure 2. *Monolingual Slovak sign in the window of a shop in Komárno (Slovakia) ('No entry without face mask / Safety measures COVID-19', Wash your hands / Safety measures COVID-19')*

On bilingual signs, the Slovak caption usually precedes the Hungarian one; however, the font and size of the texts is the same. The translated text mostly reflects the meaning of the original text accurately; examples of loose translations are rare: *Vstup len s rúškom!* 'Entrance allowed only with a mask!' – *Védőmaszk használata kötelező!* 'Wearing a mask is mandatory!' (*Figure* 3).



Figure 3. *Bilingual warning in Slovak and Hungarian on the door and window of a notary's office in Komárno (Slovakia) ('Entrance allowed only with a mask!', 'Wearing a mask is mandatory!')*

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5.2. Providing information to the public in a spoken form

Another important question is posed by the language policy aspect of providing information through mass communication. In this regard, Gábor Czímer (journalist working for *Új Szó*, a Hungarian daily newspaper in Slovakia) criticizes the monolingual character of the public address system on trains in southern Slovakia: "There are no warnings in Hungarian against the spread of the coronavirus pandemic on the trains of the state-owned railway company. […] In municipalities populated by minorities, warnings delivered in the public address system regarding the dangers of the coronavirus pandemic must be repeated in the minority's language" (Czímer 2020). Since the publishing of the quoted article, this issue has been resolved to some degree: "For example, bilingual warnings in Slovak and Hungarian have been introduced on connections between Bratislava and Komárno" (Szalai 2020).

6. Virtual linguistic landscape: The effect of the virus on social networking sites

The pandemic situation reshapes the content and appearance of social networking sites as well. The majority of the abovementioned linguistic examples (virologisms, new forms of interaction, etc.) is also from the Internet, so the remainder of this paper will only be concerned with coronavirus memes and coronavirus emojis.

6.1. Coronavirus memes

Coronavirus memes present the effect of the pandemic on day-to-day life, usually in a humorous, ironic, mocking, or critical style (cf. Veszelszki 2020b, Pauliks 2020): the increasing value of several products in shortage, some of which are taking up the role of currency (toilet paper, flour, yeast, but even pets that enable owners to go outside); students being crushed under the weight of a tremendous amount of school assignments; confinement and a lack of physical activities causing unprecedented obesity, etc. Ágnes Veszelszki (2020b) explains the popularity of coronavirus memes by the theory of relieving tension: according to this concept, "the main function of humour is to release inner and social tension, thanks to which the user(s) of humour become relieved and are freed from tension". However, it is necessary to add that coronavirus memes (*Figure* 4), beyond entertainment and the release of tension, also remind the receiver of the dangers of the pandemic, and thus they are significant on a social scale. Another one of their important qualities is the fact that, due to their widespread nature, they popularize memes even amongst those who are indifferent towards the genre.

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Figure 4. *Coronavirus meme: Humour based on pragmatics (W14) ('The Battle of Auchan (c. AD 2020)')*



Figure 5. *Coronavirus meme: Humour based on semantics (W14) ('I worked wearing a mask and gloves already in 1993 / and then I didn't leave the house for 12 years')*



Figure 6. *Coronavirus meme: Humour based on grammar (W14) ('This is not a t-shirt / this is a stay at home overall')*

The source of the humour behind coronavirus memes can have a pragmatic, semantic, or even grammatical basis (cf. Istók 2018: 125–145). The basis is pragmatic if it violates Paul Grice's maxim of quality: "Do not say what you believe to be false" (1975: 46). The hyperbole (exaggeration), irony (carrying a different meaning), and immunization (replacement by an alien element) are considered to be the most common violations of this norm. The source of humour in *Figure 4* is exaggeration (the depiction of panic shopping as a historical battle).

Humour has a semantic basis when a change in script (the two best-known script theories are: Raskin 1985 and Attardo 1994) occurs with regard to lexicological sense relations – typically homonyms (homographs) or polysemes (multiple meanings). *Figure* 5 is referencing the robberies by Attila Ambrus in the 90s. The verbal cues (*maszk* 'mask', *kesztyű* 'glove', *dolgoztam* 'I worked', *ki sem tettem a lábam az utcára* 'I didn't even leave the house') activate the primary script (CORONAVIRUS) in the receiver: one works in a mask and gloves and stays at home to limit the spread of the pandemic. However, the reference to a confinement lasting longer than a decade (linguistic cue: *12 évig* 'for 12 years') and the visual cue (Attila Ambrus) make the reader sceptical and force them to reinterpret what they have just read. Then the attention is directed towards the twist (*maszk* 'mask': 1. medical mask; 2. robber mask) based on polysemy and the secondary script it creates (BANK ROBBERY): the mask and gloves are instruments of disguise, and the confinement (prison) is a consequence of the bank robbery.

Humour has a grammatical basis when someone uses an unexpected hapax legomenon, or occasionalism. *Figure* 6 shows Pál Győrfi, spokesperson of the

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Hungarian National Rescue Service, well-known from the media, the "face" of the *Maradjanak otthon!* 'Stay at home!' slogan. The humorous effect is caused by the unusual merger of the phrase *Maradj otthon!* 'Stay at home!' and the word *otthonka* 'casual clothes worn at home, overall'.

6.2. Coronavirus emojis

Emojis (pictograms) depicting infection or the various methods of preventing infection have appeared or reappeared almost immediately after the break-out of the coronavirus pandemic. In this paper, these emojis are denoted by the term *coronamojis*. According to a research conducted on tweets by Emojipedia, the *Face with Medical Mask* and the *Microbe* pictograms were the most popular coronamojis during the first months of 2020 (Broni 2020).

A couple of widely known "pictograms" can even be seen on the billboards thus emphasizing the importance of prevention. *Figures 7* and *8* show billboards in Komárno (Slovakia) rented by Fort Monostor located in Komárom (Hungary). These warnings have been posted on the social network site Facebook (Istók–Lőrincz 2020: 90), so they are parts of the linguistic landscape of both the physical world and the virtual realm. Replacing a textual element of a popular slogan promoting prevention and solidarity (*Mossanak kezet!* 'Wash your hands!'; *Viseljenek maszkot!* 'Wear a mask!') with a pictogram can attract people's attention.



Figure 7. *Poster in Komárno by Ford Monostor (Slovakia) ('Wear a mask!')*



Figure 8. *Poster in Komárno by Ford Monostor (Slovakia) ('Wash your hands!')*

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Conclusions

In this paper, the authors attempted to present the terminological and methodological layout of virolinguistics, which investigates the virus language (virolect). Using Hungarian examples, the effect of the pandemic situation on communicational and cultural genres, the vocabulary, verbal communication, the virolinguistic landscape, and social networking sites were presented. The "directing principle" of virolinguistics, outlined as a heterogeneous linguistic discipline, can be identified in the continual warning about the danger of getting infected (warning function) and the creative visual and verbal illustration of the pandemic situation (entertaining and stress-relieving function). Based on the presented objectives and examples, virolinguistics prefers the following methods of data collection: (1) passive (non-interventionist) data collection on the Internet (e.g. new words, phrases; collection of forms of interaction, observing their context as well); (2) passive (non-interventionist) data collection in public spaces (e.g. taking pictures of captions that warn about the dangers of the virus); (3) online surveys or interviews (e.g. views on the information provided to minorities verbally).

Henceforward, qualitative researches will be replaced by quantitative ones, like in the authors' other work on a linguistic landscape research theme supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency (contract no. APVV-18-0115), in which a statistic analysis of the virolinguistic inscriptions of Komárom and Komárno are done.

It is worth considering to use the knowledge of virolinguistics in education: humorous coronavirus memes to introduce some language phenomena (e.g. polysemy, homonymy), or virologisms are suitable to illustrate the language change (e.g. derivation).

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