



**Andreea Calude**

Senior lecturer in linguistics at the University of Waikato



**Covid metaphors**

**Language Matters**

(touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing) to make sense of more complex and abstract notions, such as love, arguments and even mathematics.

For example, romantic love is sometimes described as a journey: our relationship is at a crossroads, it's been a bumpy road, we can't turn back now, we decided to go our separate ways, this relationship isn't going anywhere. Arguments are described in relation to war: she demolished his argument, he defended his points, she fiercely attacked his theory. Ideas are food: his idea was half-baked but she sure swallowed it up.

So what metaphors are we using to talk

about Covid-19? Like other nations, New Zealanders make use of at least two well-established metaphor patterns. First, there is the Covid-19-as-war metaphor: we need to fight the virus, our best weapon against Covid-19 is lockdown, we want to beat the virus.

Covid-19, and more recently the change to Delta – presumably in order to signal key differences associated with this new strain – is being conceptualised as a common enemy whom we must conquer and stamp out. Delta takes on human characteristics in these metaphors, or at least animate ones (only animate beings can fight back).

Then there is also the Covid-19-as-journey metaphor: the course of the pandemic, the beginning of lockdown, the

end of transmission, infection numbers are expected to peak at a certain point. These metaphors signal a temporal dimension to the pandemic.

We are like travellers on a path, which will see us hit various bumps (more, and then fewer, infections) and potentially, some turns and twists (a move through the various levels of lockdown), but ultimately, we hope to reach our destination (eliminating the virus).

The metaphor sets up an expectation that this journey will take its course, unfolding over a given period, so we need to be patient and allow it to pass.

One interesting metaphor we see in New Zealand media, which I have not seen elsewhere, is the Covid-as-sport one. The Team of Five Million is reminiscent of an organised sports team, such as the All Blacks or the Black Caps, in which the country is compared to a competing team. Similarly, the call to up its game conjures images of a sporting context.

Given the importance Kiwis attach to sport and our image as a sporting nation, which has been evident through the recent Olympic and Paralympic Games, it seems fitting to imbue the Covid-19 discourse with a connection to something which New Zealanders may embrace and feel positive about.

If we, as a small Team of Five Million can punch above our weight by winning World Cups and Olympic medals, perhaps we can also beat Covid-19!

*Andreea Calude is the author of Questions About Language (Routledge, 2020).*

**Contact us**

Got a language query? Email [opinion@stuff.co.nz](mailto:opinion@stuff.co.nz). Not all queries will be answered.



**Abortion law is un-American**

Views from around the world. These opinions are not necessarily shared by *Stuff* newspapers.

**W**omen in Texas are facing a sickening new reality. A bill that took effect last week offers a \$10,000 or more bounty for suing a doctor or anyone who helps to perform or procure an abortion at six weeks' gestation or later.

The Lone Star State has created an Orwellian system where neighbours would be paid to snitch on neighbours as lawyers profit from a process that could have been designed by the East German Stasi. In the legal discovery process, clinics could be forced to turn over women's medical records to prove or disprove whether they had an abortion and how old the embryo was.

You don't have to believe in abortion on demand or

**Viewpoint**

revere Roe v Wade to understand that the Texas law is simply un-American.

This totalitarian system was put in place because abortion opponents thought they had come up with a clever way to prevent courts from stopping the law before it went into effect. By making everyone the prosecutor for the law, the Texas Legislature made it hard to figure out who abortion rights advocates could take to court to stop enforcement.

This year, the Supreme Court has already agreed to hear a Mississippi case that abortion opponents believe is an opportunity for the court to overturn Roe v Wade. We hope the court will sustain the decades-old precedent, but this Texas case isn't about abortion, it is about the kind of country Americans want to live in.