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The rise of COVID-19 terms in English and Romanian. Translation challenges

COVID-19 terminų vertimo iššūkiai anglų ir rumunų kalbose

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Abstract

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, linguists and terminologists in particular are confronted with a lot of challenges in translating new terminology. This has to do with a mass communication that is largely centred around English. The sometimes-sudden creation of new terms as a response to the new realities is one of the reasons behind these challenges. So, it is only fitting to research these attempts to offer equivalents for these newly-coined English terms posing problems to Romanian translators. This article aims to investigate in more detail the terminology related to the coronavirus pandemic, as a means to contributing to the rise of valid Romanian versions of English terminology specific for the coronavirus pandemic, keeping in mind that terms are “dynamically equivalent”. Our reasoning behind the investigation of the coronavirus-related vocabulary and its translation from English into Romanian (mainly via Google Translate) is to look into the issue of poverty of linguistic resources employed to adequately translate these terms. An analysis of the coronavirus pandemic-related terminology shows that Romanian equivalents for the newly-coined English terms is either missing or awkward sounding. We are going to investigate the several reasons for this. Our belief is that the main reason has to do with the fact that most of the available information about COVID-19, irrespective of its medium (blogs, social media content, articles), is in English. If we are to compare this to what happens in case of machine translation use, then the outcome is in certain cases quite infelicitous.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19 Romanian words, COVID-19 English terms, Google Translate, machine translation, translation errors.

Introduction

With the increasingly rapid progress of technology, globalization has constantly accelerated the integration of neologisms in language in recent years. Communication among people and creation of new content have attained new heights. Newly coined words, terms and phrases are currently reaching an ever-larger global public with the help of the Internet and the new social media. The coronavirus outbreak was no exception with respect to the newly-formed terms and phrases which gained sometimes unwanted popularity, as well as lesser-known words or terms already in use. This “new language” gained worldwide dissemination almost to the extent that it managed to keep pace with the fast-spreading virus.

The status of the English language as an international language, a lingua franca of sorts, is obvious. Crystal (2003) argues in favour of this idea claiming that “the emergence of English with a genuine global presence therefore has a significance which goes well beyond this particular language” (p. 190). In his work, Crystal (2003) investigates the range of historical reasons that have led to the current situation, analysing all types of factors, such as politics, commerce, the Internet, and various aspects of life. All these factors will be considered in the current analysis of the terms that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. As we will see, more often than not, new terms are in fact a resurgence of older, obsolete, outdated and sometimes even extinct words. The outstanding circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic have given rise to various terms describing the new realities, terms that cover a wide range of domains, including the medical and legal ones, as well as terms borne in the social media.

As technology has spread in the field of translation as well, machine translation (MT) is one important and easy to reach tool that facilitates rapid access to extensive information about coronavirus. Google’s online translation service, Google Translate, is one of the most often used multilingual machine translation systems that has been trying to offer its users more and more accurate and fluent automatic translation solutions. The tool is widely used (Wise, 2022), and it offers free translation services for an impressive number of languages, though it is worth mentioning that it still fares better for certain language pairs (such as English-German, English-French), while for others it is quite disastrous (such as German-Romanian). The main explanation for its frequent use could be the fact that it now works as a neural translation system, which means it imitates the human brain in translation. To our mind, however, freely available access to the non-professional variant of this translation tool may qualify as the utmost reason for people using it.

Theoretical Framework

Wüster (1974) claims in his already classic theory of terminology that there is an emphatic need for concepts that are objective and clear inside fixed conceptual structures. These objective concepts rely on observing how such “frozen” words behave in dictionaries. However, Sager (1990), Temmerman (2000, Cabré-Castellvi (2003); Faber et al. (2005), among others, argue in favour of the study of specialized languages in authentic communicative settings. It means that in doing so researchers explore an array of contexts in which such texts containing specialized language are produced. In turn, this has led to a more accurate and elaborate explanation of how we understand and structure specialized knowledge.

Our current work draws its theoretical framework from works by Sager (1997), Cabré-Castellvi (2000, 2003), Fernández-Silva et al. (2011), Sageder (2010), and Protopopescu (2013). These works on terminology and terminology theories helped in better understanding how one can go about in the analysis of terms in various specialised domains. They are the scaffolding on which our analysis is built.

In her works on terminology, Cabré-Castellvi (2000) argues for a revision of terminology theories. This has to do with the need, in the early 2000s, of giving terminology the status of a subject of study separate from corpus linguistics or lexicology, or any other applied branches of linguistics. In order to achieve this, Cabré-Castellvi (2003) makes certain assumptions: first, she defines terminology as “a set of needs, a set of practices to resolve these needs and a unified field of knowledge” (p. 182). Secondly, she stipulates that terminology operates with terminological units. These are multi-dimensional to the extent that they are at once units of knowledge, language and communication. This description differentiates them from words, which have similar structural characteristics but also function as units of language. Thus, terms can be defined as linguistic representations of concepts, since they are the outcome of the evolution of cognitive and communication processes among the experts who make up a specialized community (Sager, 1997, p. 25). Terms are a tool of communication about concepts and they also represent a reflection of the manner in which the mind of the expert is structured.

Terms, or the linguistic representations of concepts, are devised by and within a certain linguistic community. The reason behind this has to do with the need felt by said community of communicating the knowledge it produces. In spite of that, the terms created also coincide with the final phase of the process of concept formation contributing to the evolution of cognitive processes. Crucial work in the field of term formation points to the fact that, more often than not, terms reflect the most relevant features of their corresponding concepts (Sager, 1990).

When we investigate the behaviour of terms in contexts of so-called real communication, we observe that the same concept is expressed by means of various terms in texts produced by experts. In some cases, these terminological variants are not different only from a formal point of view, but also from a semantic point of view, because every term offers a certain particular perception on the respective concept (Freixa, 2006). Such a vision may point to the idea of linguistic planning, a term first introduced by Haugen (1959), who defined it as “the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community” (in Cooper, 1989).

Interestingly, no single language was affluent from the onset. Leibniz (in Coulmas, 1989) was well aware of the lexical gaps of the German language of his times, so much so that he envisaged specific remedies that could be universally applied across languages. In his view, the first step towards such a correction would be augmenting the lexis of a language, that is turning it into one that is as rich and varied as possible. With this in mind, Leibniz (in Coulmas, 1989) suggested the following four stages:

- 1 looking for suitable words that are already part of the language corpus but which are not easily recoverable because of their rarer use,
- 2 recovering of outdated words or terms that were forgotten but have a certain quality attached to them,
- 3 domesticating or adapting foreign names that have a specific meaning,
- 4 inventing new words (coining) where the procedure fails.

Our work sets forth to investigate some phenomena that are currently happening in language, in both English and Romanian. We want to look into the manner in which certain terms employed during the pandemic have developed morphologically and, in certain cases, even diachronically. Since this is a contrastive study of English and Romanian terms, it is also interesting to see if some of these terms are short-lived or if they are to survive the pandemic in the long run. Investigating such developments may also lead to a rethinking of the most effective methods of disseminating and using borrowings within various systems, having in mind linguistic planning as well.

As far as translation strategies are concerned, we cannot help but notice a strong tendency towards foreignization. This is manifest either in the calquing of certain structures from the source language, in this case, English, or in the shape of lexical borrowings. Thus, we entertain the possibility that certain terms have reached the stage of glocalization as referred to by Pym (2004). Thus, he argues that the term “glocalization” is a paradox that encompasses the local embedded in the global, since “internationalization makes no sense without the corresponding processes of localization” Pym (2004, p. 37).

As far as Romanian is concerned, in spite of having a large number of parameters and a complex database which presumably optimizes the accuracy and the fluency of the Google Translate tool, it is one of the less common languages in the world, and the online data in Romanian are limited. Moreover, Romanian does not have an online dictionary that is updated online in real time, as is the case with say, the English Oxford Dictionary, and its one electronic corpus, CoRoLa, is still in its infancy stages. Therefore, the lack of input data for Romanian so far is clearly an overwhelming reason for the lack of consistency of the Google Translate tool.

In as far as previous studies of Covid terminology in Romanian are concerned, they are few and far between. Dumitran (2021) is one of the more solid studies which mainly deals with the Google translated terms of Covid-related official documents. Dumitran’s research aims at identifying errors of specific texts translated into Romanian by means of the Google Translate tool. Thus, the study focuses on lexical errors that are caused by literal translations, wrong alternate meaning of a word, mistranslating idioms by the word-by-word translation pattern or inappropriate lexical selections of MT.

Methods

The data used for investigation comprise a corpus of texts (excerpts) translated from English into Romanian. All excerpts are related to the COVID-19 pandemic, as it was and still is a challenge for researchers of MT and translators alike to provide the correct equivalents in certain cases connected to this particular context. Both categories have been pressured to develop tools and resources in order to improve access to information about the coronavirus all over the world and improve the development of languages, translation tools and resources. As Piller, Zhang and Li (2020) emphasize, “[a]lmost everyone in

the world has had to learn about public health concepts such as ‘social distancing’, ‘droplet transmission’ or ‘flattening the curve’ to avoid getting sick. Almost everyone has had to understand the specifics of containment measures such as lockdowns, contact tracing, or mask wearing in their jurisdiction” (p. 504). Nevertheless, Pillar, Zhang and Li (2020) also claim that “... global knowledge dissemination was woefully limited to a small number of languages as the world entered the pandemic”, so this is the reason why there were “problems related to translation and multilingual terminology standards in public health information and medical research” (p. 506).

The new COVID-19 related terminology had a significant impact on English, and the linguistic consequences demonstrated that, during the pandemic, English has been playing an even more important role in spreading and sharing information about the coronavirus. In this context, translation needs have been growing within a year in the entire world, especially in the countries where people do not speak the languages recognized as major, international ones.

For the purposes of this article, we used data from official documents regarding public health care, available from the World Health Organization (WHO), such as official statements of the authorities, vaccine prospects, medication descriptions, presented between March 2020 and October 2022, but also online material such as blogs, online chat, social media texts.

Data Analysis

In what follows, we are going to discuss the occurrence of various terms associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. As announced from the very beginning, the terminology that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic comes from various sources and covers different domains, ranging from the medical field to legal and social media. The COVID-19 pandemic was indeed a rich source of language innovation for both English and Romanian. The language of quarantining has given rise to new terminology which refers to social isolation, a concept that obviously pre-existed the coronavirus pandemic, but gained more notoriety in 2020. Terms such as *self-isolate*, *self-isolated* and *shelter in place* were all assigned new dictionary citations that illustrated the new usage. Some of them witnessed a change in meaning. *To shelter in place* initially meant to look for safety during a particular event, such as extreme weather phenomenon or an active shooter attack. A quick Google count of the frequency of occurrence for the phrase (approximately 7,900,000 results) points to it being now employed with the meaning of an extended period of self-isolation. Correspondingly, the term *elbow bump*, which was initially attested in 1981 as a gesture of *high-five* (in the Meriam-Webster online entry, see below), has come to be used as a way in which people greet each other safely by touching their elbows instead of shaking their hands, thus denoting a shift in semantic meaning.

Elbow bump = a gesture in which two people bump their elbows together especially as an alternative to a handshake; the first known use of elbow bump was in 1981 (Merriam-Webster-Dictionary, n.d.)

Regional variations are cropping up in the new coronavirus language. A good illustration of that is the fact that British English prefers the term *self-isolate* to the American English *self-quarantine*. *Rona* or *the rona* are newly coined slang terms to label the coronavirus in both the US and Australia, initially occurring in Twitter posts, later to be included in the *urbandictionary.com*. Below we offer an overview of medical terms that were commonly used during the pandemic, with their Romanian Google Translate and accepted translations (Dumitran, 2021).

Table 1 is an updated, appended and corrected version of Dumitran’s 2021 version and it covers a few interesting cases in which the MT tool offers a version that is different from the officially accepted Romanian term.

A puzzling result is the pair *symptomatic/asymptomatic*. In this case, the MT tool offers the feminine inflected version of the Romanian adjective, *asimptomatică*. This is intriguing because the default equivalent of an English adjective in Romanian is in the masculine, and we cannot find a reasonable explanation as to why google translate has suggested the feminine.

Another interesting case is the pair lockdown/quarantine. Google translate offers the equivalent carantină for both words of this pair. However, the Romanian equivalent does not cover both meanings of words in the English pair, so one cannot argue that the Romanian word is suggested as a polysemous equivalent. Lockdown refers in this case to a temporary condition imposed by governmental authorities (as during the outbreak of an epidemic

disease) in which most people are required to refrain from or limit activities (such as dining out or attending large gatherings) outside their home so as to avoid public contact as much as possible, while *quarantine* refers to a restraint upon the activities or communication of persons or the transportation of goods designed to prevent the spread of disease or pests (both definitions are from the Meriam-Webster online dictionary). Instead, if we look at the official Romanian terms, we have the pair *stare de alertă / carantină*. This is closer to reality, although, to our mind, *stare de alertă* is still not the best equivalent for *lockdown*. *Stare de alertă* is in fact the equivalent of *a state of alert*, which was the legal term used during lockdown, which actually points to a legal reality that encompasses more than just *lockdown*. So, here, we are actually dealing with a general term used as an equivalent for a term that has a much narrower meaning.

Table 1. Medical terms used during the COVID-19 pandemic

| English terms | Google Translation equivalent | Romanian accepted term |
|---|--|--|
| Asymptomatic | Asimptomatică | Asimptomatic |
| Clinical trial | Studiu clinic | Studiu clinic |
| Corona/Coronavirus/Novel Coronavirus/COVID-19 | Corona/Coronavirus/Noul Coronavirus/COVID-19 | Corona/Coronavirus/Noul Coronavirus/COVID-19 |
| Community immunity | Comunitatea de imunitate | Imunitate comunitară |
| Community spread | Răspândire în comunitate | Răspândire în comunitate |
| Contagious | Contagios | Contagios |
| Epidemic | Epidemie | Epidemie |
| Flatten the Curve | Aplatiza curba | Aplatizarea curbei |
| Incubation period | Perioadă de incubație | Perioadă de incubație |
| Immunity | Imunitate | Imunitate |
| Isolation | Izolație | Izolare |
| Isolation pod | Pod de izolare | Izoletă |
| Lockdown | Carantină | Stare de alertă |
| Mask | Masca | Mască |
| Pandemic | Pandemic | Pandemie |
| Outbreak | Epidemie | Primele cazuri |
| Quarantine | Carantină | Carantină |
| Sanitizer | Dezinfectant | Dezinfectant |
| Spread | Răspândire | Răspândire |
| Self-quarantine | Carantină autoimpusă | Carantină autoimpusă |
| Social Distancing | Distanțare socială | Distanțare socială |
| Stay-at-Home, Shelter in place | A sta acasă | A sta acasă |
| Super-spreader | Super împrăștiere | Persoană extrem de contagioasă |
| Super-spreader event | Eveniment de super împrăștiere | Eveniment cu risc ridicat de contagiune |
| Symptomatic | Simptomatic | Simptomatic |
| Rapid test | Test rapid | Test rapid |
| Transmission | Transmitere | Transmitere |
| Vaccine | Vaccin | Vaccin |

(Appended, corrected and adapted from Dumitran, 2021, p. 39)

Isolation pod is another intriguing case to look at. The Google Translate version is *pod de izolare*, which is complete nonsense, since *pod*, the homophone of the English word in the phrase under discussion, has a different meaning in Romanian – that of *bridge* – one which obviously does not cover the concept of *pod* in English, which refers to a usually protective container or housing, as per Meriam-Webster Dictionary online. Interestingly, Romanian has come up with its own translation strategy in this case, coining a completely new term, *izoleță*, on the pattern of other words formed by derivation from a verbal root with the suffix *-eță* in Romanian (e.g., *bicicletă*, bicycle). Not surprisingly, Romanian linguist Rodica Zafiu (2020) lauded this lexical innovation in a newspaper article, by commenting on the richness of Romanian when it comes to language creations. The term *izoleță* was actually as short-lived as the object it described, since, a few months after the outbreak of the pandemic, these isolation pods were no longer in the news or used by the medical emergency services. The English term, on the other hand, pre-existed the COVID-19 pandemic, as it was first recorded at least as early as 2015 (Protopopescu, 2022).

The pair *super-spreader* and *super-spreader event* is also interesting to discuss from a translation point of view. In the Google translate version, we get *super împrăștiere* (*super spreading*) and *eveniment de super împrăștiere* (*event of super spreading*), respectively. However, the accepted equivalents are *persoană extrem de contagioasă* (*extremely contagious person*) and, respectively, *eveniment cu risc ridicat de contagiune* (*event with a high risk of contagion*). Therefore, we can see that, in this particular case, where we are dealing with two terms which are structurally more complex, the MT tool fails to provide a correct equivalent. More exactly, *împrăștiere*, i.e., the Romanian equivalent of the English *spreading* only in everyday, non-specialized contexts. In medical contexts, however, to render the idea of contagion, the term *contagiune* (*contagion*) is the accepted one. This is a typical instance of technical–non-technical inadequacy that occurs with Google Translate at least as far as the pair English–Romanian is concerned. The reason behind it may lie with the accepted terms for the pair. The Romanian equivalents are instances of paraphrase, which seems to be the favoured translation strategy (Vișan 2015), since Romanian does have a tendency to sometimes overexplain concepts that it translates from another language, especially a language with the word structure possibilities of English.

The domain of legal terminology can be said to have been enriched during the pandemic. Although some of the terms pre-existed the COVID-19 era, they became more prominent during the recent pandemic times.

As shown in previous work (Protopopescu, 2022), English has created a lexical family comprising the hybrid compound *teleworking*, and similar terms such as *tele-employer* and *tele-employee*, *telecommute* and *telecommuter*. These hybrid compounds are made up of a Greek stem (*tele-*) combined with an English word. Interestingly, Romanian has not behaved in a similar fashion. It has, however, created the term *telemuncă* (*teleworking*) by means of calquing, a lexical process that is not productive in Romanian (Vișan, 2015). The fact that the Romanian term is one obtained through copying the form and the meaning of an English word is proven by its inability to develop a lexical family. The same is true of *telenavetă* (*telecommuting*) which is a noun in Romanian, unlike its English counterpart which is both a noun and a verb. The Romanian term has only yielded *telenavetist* (*telecommuter*). The English verb *telecommute* appeared in the language as early as 1974 and it is also a hybrid compound from *tele-* + *commute*. *Telecommuting* is the noun denoting the process and its origins go back to the same period as the verb, as a hypothetical workplace set-up; it functions as a verbal noun derived from the verb *to telecommute*. We were able to trace the following terms for Romanian: *telemuncă* (*telework*), *telesalariat* (*teleemployee*), *teleangajat* (*teleemployee*), *telelucrător* (*teleworker*). Yet, as expected, and for the reasons given above, no corresponding verbs were encountered (**a teleangaja*, **a telemunci*, **a telelucra*). Such terms are, we believe, part of the legal domain because they are used in legal documents, as illustrated by the examples below:

Example 1

“Art. 2. - În sensul prezentei legi, termenii și expresiile de mai jos au următoarele semnificații:

- a *telemuncă* – forma de organizare a muncii prin care salariatul, în mod regulat și voluntar, își îndeplinește atribuțiile specifice funcției, ocupației sau meseriei pe care o deține, în alt loc decât locul de muncă organizat de angajator, cel puțin o zi pe lună, folosind tehnologia informației și comunicațiilor;
- b *telesalariat* – orice salariat care desfășoară activitatea în condițiile prevăzute la lit. a).”

(Indaco Systems, n.d.)

(Art. 2. – In the sense of the current law, the terms and phrases below have the following meanings:

- a *telework* – form of labour organization in which the employees regularly and voluntarily fulfill the attributes specific to their position, job or trade, in a different place from that organized by the employer, at least one day per month, by using ITC;
- b *tele-employee* – any employee who carries out their activity in accordance with the conditions under letter a’). (e.g., from Protopopescu, 2022, p. 331)

Acronyms and abbreviations are of similar interest in this case since they are related to the medical and legal fields. Romanian is not consistent in its treatment of acronyms and abbreviations, to the extent that, in certain cases, it translates them into Romanian, while in other cases, it simply adopts them from English (Vişan, 2013; Imre, 2022). A case in point is the difference between *ONU* (*the UN*) and *NATO* (*NATO*). The latter should have been *OTAN* in Romanian, since these are the initials of the Romanian name of the organization (*Organizația Tratatului Atlanticului de Nord*), much in the same vein as other Romance languages (see its French counterpart, *OTAN*). Because of this inconsistency, we expect to have similar findings in our case. To this end, let us examine the examples in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Abbreviations and Acronyms used during COVID-19

| Abbreviations and Acronyms used in English | Abbreviations and Acronyms given by Google Translate into Romanian | Abbreviations and Acronyms used in Romanian |
|---|--|--|
| ARDS Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome | SDRA | ARDS Sindromul de detresă respiratorie acută |
| ARI (Acute Respiratory Infection) | ARI | SARI (Infecție respiratorie acută severă) |
| CDC (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention) | CDC | DSP (Direcția de sănătate publică) |
| CFR (Case Fatality Rate) | CFR | RM (Rata mortalității) |
| Covid-19 COVID-19 is the name of the disease that the novel coronavirus causes. It stands for coronavirus disease 2019 | Covid-19 | Covid-19 |
| PCR (Polymerase chain reaction) | PCR | PCR (Polymerase chain reaction) Test PCR / test antigen |
| PPE (Personal protective equipment) | EIP | EIP (Echipament individual de protecție) |
| PUI Patient Under Investigation | PUI | - Pacient monitorizat |
| SARS-CoV-2 Novel coronavirus 2019 is the name of the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2 | SARS-CoV-2 | SARS-CoV-2 |
| WFH (Working from home) | WFH | Lucru de acasă / Muncă la domiciliu |
| WHO (World Health Organization) | CARE | OMS (Organizația mondială a sănătății) |

(Appended, corrected and adapted from Dumitran, 2021, p. 41)

The inconsistency of translated acronyms and abbreviations in Romanian is borne out by the data if we look at the *ARDS/ARDS/SDRA* example. In this case, the Google Translate tool correctly predicts the *SDRA* abbreviation for the Romanian term for the syndrome (*Sindromul de detresă respiratorie acută*). However, the accepted Romanian counterpart is the same as the English abbreviation, namely *ARDS*.

In the case of *CFR (Case Fatality Rate) / RM (Rata mortalității) / CFR*, we have the opposite case. The Google Translate tool wrongly predicts the adoption of the English abbreviation, while the accepted Romanian counterpart is the abbreviation of the Romanian translation of the term, *rata mortalității (rate of mortality) (RM)*. It would be worth mentioning in this case that *CFR* has its own meaning in Romanian, well-known to most as an abbreviation of *Căile Ferate Române (Romanian Railways)*. Something similar happens in the case of *WHO/OMS/CARE*. The Google Translate tool wrongly identifies the abbreviation as the relative pronoun *who*, so it translates it as a relative pronoun in Romanian as well, *CARE* (which literally means *who/which*). The accepted Romanian abbreviation is, however, the abbreviation of the Romanian translation of the full name of the organization, namely, *Organizația Mondială a Sănătății – OMS*.

PUI is a case where the Google translate tool makes the wrong prediction again, by adopting the English abbreviation, while in Romanian, there is no equivalent acronym, just the plain full phrase designating the concept, *pacient monitorizat (patient under investigation)*.

The most interesting area to investigate in the case of pandemic terms is the one of terms emerging from the media, blogs, social media. These are perhaps the most interesting and colourful terms related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These are the result of various word-formation processes, some of them less productive: blends, clippings, reduplicatives, etc. Terms such as *coronadodge*, *locktail*, *covidiot*, *armchair virologist*, *coronasplaining* were used in English to describe, quite creatively, some of the new realities the whole world was facing. Romanian did not keep up with the newly emerged English terms, hence a poverty of Romanian translated correspondents, although terms such as *covidiot*, *covrig (pretzel)* for COVID, as well as *guvid (frog fish)* which seem to play upon the sounds in COVID or *expert de canapea (couch expert)*, *covidivorț (covidivorce)* emerged in Romanian as well, at first in social media and then in the media in general, as illustrated by the examples below:

Example 2

alt expert de canapea (di livio, 2020)

‘another couch expert / armchair virologist’

This is an interesting example for Romanian, because the term/collocation *expert de canapea* pre-exists the COVID-19 pandemic. It is used in the very general meaning of someone claiming to be an expert from the sidelines in whatever field or domain. The English term, *armchair virologist*, is much narrower in scope, since it clearly refers to the medical field and more precisely to being an expert in viruses. Even in this interpretation, however, we can clearly see that the structure of the suggested Romanian corresponding term is borrowed from English and we could say that the term is an instance of glocalization in the sense of Pym (2004).

Another intriguing case is represented by a reduplicative compound word: *Fauci-Ouchie*, a term widely used as a humorous name for the COVID-19 vaccine. The term emerged as a direct reference to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the chief medical advisor to President Joe Biden, a strong proponent of the vaccine. Reduplicatives are compounds that emerge as a repetition of a word or a part of a word. This specific compound is an example of a rhyming reduplicative consisting of a proper name and an interjection. Vișan (2015, p. 95) traces an important distinction between primary interjections (*gee!*, *Yuk!*, *tut-tut!*, *ugh!*, *hush!*, *ow!*, etc.) which are often phonologically aberrant (monosyllabic or non-syllabic, contain combinations of sounds that are not necessarily part of the main sound system of a language, are reduplicative, have no fixed spelling, and, most importantly, are lexically opaque) and secondary interjections (which are homonymous with other parts of speech, such as *shoot!* or *Jesus!*). Since Romanian has its own pattern of reduplicative formation (e.g. *că hâr*, *că mâr* (about somebody becoming entangled in deceitful explanations); *tranca-fleanca (tittle-tattler)*; *scârța-scârța pe hârtie (bureaucrat, clerk)*, *hâra-hâra (dis-sention)*, etc.), one might expect a similar-pattern equivalent in Romanian, but this is hardly the case. Moreover, Google Translate fails to offer a Romanian equivalent for this term and seems to be unable to correctly interpret it as a compound in English.

Example 3

I hated vaccines as a kid but I'm sure glad I got my *Fauci Ouchie* last night. (Crrringe, 2021)

Google Translation: Am urât vaccinuri ca un copil, dar eu sunt sigur că mă bucur că am luat **Ouchie** meu **Fauci** noaptea trecută. (*I hated vaccines like a child, but I am sure that I rejoice that I took Ouchie my Fauci last night.*)

Conversely, Romanian opponents of the vaccine scheme have come up with the terms *va@@in*, *vakseen*, *vaxxin*, *vaggin* or *vacsin* for *vaccine*. All these coinages are play-upon-words and variations of the *cc* cluster in *vaccin* in Romanian. There do not seem to be any equivalents or correspondents for these terms in English. These were mostly used in social media at the peak of the vaccination scheme during the COVID-19 pandemic, mostly in order to disseminate fake news, as seen in the example below:

Example 4

Astfel, cele mai des întâlnite forme greșite folosite în informațiile false publicate și distribuite pe Facebook sunt: *va@@in*, *vakseen*, *vaxxin*, *vaggin* și *vacsin*. (A.U., 2021)

'Thus, the most commonly met erroneous forms used in fake news published and distributed via Facebook are: *va@@in*, *vakseen*, *vaxxin*, *vaggin* and *vacsin*.'

Blends are also worth investigating because they appear to function on already existing patterns as well. This can be seen in the examples below:

Example 5

It should have happened but was delayed by *scandemy*. (Guenne Boge, n. d.)

Example 6

La începutul *scandemiei* urla Macron că masca nu e bună de nimic.

'At the beginning of the *scandemy* Macron was crying out loud that the mask is good for nothing.'

Scandemy is an instance of a blend developed on the pattern of *epidemy* – it contains the initial part of the word *scandal*, followed by the end part of *epidemy*. The Romanian translation *scandemie* (*scandemy*) looks like a calque of the English term, taken over by the media. A similar blend extensively used during the pandemic and patterned on the word *pandemic* itself was *infodemic* (Google Translate *>pandemic* and *infodemie*, respectively): a blend of *information* + *epidemic*. It refers to the spreading of information, where some of it is not substantiated, thus leading to anxiety or speculation linked to a crisis or a controversy. If we are to look into its origins, the term was coined in 2000 and it was used to describe the potential misinformation associated with the SARS epidemic (an earlier coronavirus). These examples are illustrative of the way in which commonly used terms can generate new coinages which replicate their structure in order to render new realities.

Conclusions

Language is a living organism (Singh, 2005) and, as such, it develops closely depending on the circumstances in which it is used, so that it comes as no surprise that COVID-19 has triggered the emergence of such dynamic flow in vocabulary, as we have seen here for the particular cases of English and Romanian. There is a high probability that new words related to COVID-19 will continue to emerge even after the end of the pandemic. Some terms, as was the case of the Romanian *izoleț* (*isolating pod*) had a short-lived life, others are perhaps more likely to live on. Mass media as well as social media with their fast ways of disseminating information have played an essential role in the development of new lexis as well as in bringing old terms back in use.

As far as the performance of the Google Translate tool is concerned, we may conclude that, more often than not, it fails to suggest appropriate equivalents for the English Covid-19 related words and phrases that we have considered in this article. It has very limited capability to identify domain-specific terminology, as we have seen in the case of..... Additionally, the translation of concepts such as *pandemic* > **pandemic*, or *community immuni-*

ty>**comunitatea de imunitate* is the result of wrong lexical selections (adjective instead of noun for *pandemic*, and wrong noun phrase structure in the case of *community immunity*, the head of the structure is wrongly identified as *community*), indicating that the tool could not provide an accurate equivalent in a “minor” language like Romanian. Acronyms pose a higher level of unintelligibility and, consequently, of difficulty in translation to the tool. One example in this respect is *PUI*, which is not translated at all, unless by its full descriptive paraphrase. Acronyms are sometimes mistakenly interpreted by Google Translate. This is the case of *WHO*, which was taken to be a relative pronoun in English and therefore translated into Romanian by *CARE*.

The unsatisfactory performance of Google Translate in giving accurate equivalents in a “minor” language like Romanian, in the lexical contexts that we have analysed, might raise awareness regarding the importance of improving its multilingual database that feeds its algorithms with vocabulary items. The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be both a test and a challenge for machine translation that showed its effectiveness, accessibility, but also its deficiencies. So, unfortunately, at this stage we cannot really rely on the Google Translate tool for Romanian, even though it is the most preferred go-to for most internet users.

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Sources

Santrauka

Daria Protopopescu

COVID-19 terminų vertimo iššūkiai anglų ir rumunų kalbose

Dėl COVID-19 pandemijos kalbininkai, o ypač terminologai, susiduria su didžiuliais iššūkiais. Taip yra dėl anglų kalbos dominavimo masinėje komunikacijoje. Todėl kartais, siekiant aprėpti šią naują tikrovę, terminai sukuriami akimirksniu. Šiuo tyrimu siekiama aptarti atitikmenis naujiems anglų kalbos terminams, kurie kartais sukelia problemų rumunų kalbos vertėjams. Straipsnio tikslas – ištirti ir detalai išnagrinėti su COVID-19 pandemija susijusių terminologiją, prisidėti prie naujų specifinių koronaviruso terminų rumunų kalba kūrimo. Poreikis ištirti su koronavirusu susijusių leksiką, kuri mašininio vertimo būdu verčiama iš anglų kalbos į rumunų kalbą, grindžiamas tuo, kad trūksta kalbinių išteklių, naudojamų šiems terminams tinkamai išversti. Su COVID-19 pandemija susijusių terminų analizė rodo, kad trūksta anglišų terminų atitikmenų rumunų kalba arba jie yra netinkami. Manome, kad taip yra dėl to, jog didžioji dalis prieinamos informacijos apie COVID-19, tiek straipsnių, tiek tinklaraščių ar net socialinių tinklų komentarų forma, yra anglų kalba.

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