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Barbara Cappuzzo

University of Palermo, Italy

Anglicisms and Italian Equivalents in the Era of Covid-19: A Corpus-Based Study of Lockdown

Abstract

The whole globe has been going through an unprecedented historical moment since World War II. COVID-19, the disease against which we have all been trying to defend ourselves for several months now, has spread worldwide with a significant impact in all spheres of life. With the pandemic outburst and English the language of globalization, several Anglicisms have entered the lexicon of other languages, especially Italian, traditionally open to foreign words. COVID-19-related Anglicisms are used in Italian to such an extent that we can reasonably refer to them as the 'language of pandemic'. The English words and expressions employed in Italian to refer to the current disease are numerous. Some of them already existed, while others have been introduced during the current pandemic. An example of the latter is *lockdown*, which was the object of attention in this study. A 69,726-word corpus of 63 articles taken from *la Repubblica.it* throughout March 2020 was analyzed in order to scrutinize how the term was employed in one of the most authoritative and influential Italian dailies. The investigation of *lockdown* was carried out parallel to that of its Italian corresponding words. The results suggested that the term was often used together with its Italian equivalents mainly to fulfil the pragmatic/stylistic need to avoid lexical repetition. Moreover, *lockdown* appeared as an all-inclusive term encompassing various connotations of meaning which did not always seem to be fully and correctly conveyed by its Italian counterparts.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 disease pandemic has been dominating newspapers and TV programs for at least six months now. The "Tsunami-like impact" of COVID-19, as Svoboda (2020) has defined it, has caused important changes in all aspects of our life, at the social, behavioral, economic, and occupational levels.

The pandemic outbreak has introduced a great number of Anglicisms into the Italian language, especially after the virus (SARS-CoV-2) spread into the UK and the United States. *Smart working*, *cluster*, *droplet*, *fake news*, *flashmob*, *task force*, *hub*, *conference call*, *COVID hospital*, *coronabond*, etc. are only some of the numerous English words and expressions that we have got used to reading and listening to in these months in different fields of knowledge. Some of them were already used before the pandemic, e.g., *smart working* and *cluster*. The former has reached a very high frequency of use due to the fact that many activities have had to be carried out remotely after the pandemic. The latter has been circulating for a long time with different meanings depending on the several fields where it is used. In linguistics, for instance, *cluster* generally refers to a group of consonants with no intervening sounds. With the diffusion of COVID-19, the word has begun to be used in the sense of "medical site (of a disease)" in the place of the corresponding Italian *focolaio*.

Amongst the COVID-19-related Anglicisms used in Italian, there is one, *lockdown*, which was almost completely unknown before the pandemic and that has currently become one of the most frequently used terms. Since the spread of the virus in the UK and the United States *lockdown* has been used extensively in Italian both in the media language and in everyday exchange as well.

In this 69,726-word corpus-based analysis, the use of *lockdown* was investigated as well as that of its equivalents, namely: *blocco*, *chiusura*, *confinamento*, *contenimento*, *coprifuoco*, *distanziamento sociale*, *isolamento* and *quarantena* (which were analysed together), *misure restrittive*/*misure di restrizione*/*restrizione*/*i*. The aim of this study is to understand whether precise reasons exist which lead to the choice of *lockdown* rather than to the use of its Italian equivalents or to their co-occurrence in news discourse. At the same time, the investigation intends to understand whether the Italian terms which have been codified as equivalents of *lockdown* can be considered as effective corresponding words or rather whether *lockdown* is basically an 'untranslatable' (or at least a not entirely translatable) term, because of being semantically all-encompassing and highly concise.

1.1. Previous Research on Anglicisms in the Italian Language

First and foremost, it is important to clarify what is meant by the word "Anglicism." Görlach (2003, p.1) defines Anglicism as "a word or idiom that is recognizably English in its form (spelling, pronunciation, morphology, or at least one of the three), but is accepted as an item in the vocabulary of the receptor language." However, recent studies (Furiassi, Pulcini & Rodriguez Gonzales, 2012) have highlighted the limits of the above-mentioned definition, as it does not encompass all those forms of lexical influence, e.g. adapted loans, calques, hybrids, false Anglicisms, etc. which represent crucial and increasing phenomena about the influence of English as a donor language. This is in line with the statement made by Furiassi, Pulcini and Rodriguez Gonzales (2012, p.5):

Furthermore, moving beyond the analysis of individual lexical items, English-induced forms of borrowing seem to encompass a much wider range of phenomena than in the past, including larger phraseological units, idioms, and proverbs. For this reason, some scholars suggest adopting a broader view of Anglicism as an umbrella label for any sign of interference - phonological, morphological, syntactic and phraseological (but also semantic, pragmatic, stylistic and cultural) – which may be ascribed to the influence of the English language. A more flexible, all-inclusive definition proposed by Gattlieb identifies an Anglicism as any individual or systemic language feature adapted or adopted from English, or inspired or boosted by English models used in intralingual communication in a language other than English (Gottlieb 2005, p.163).

Several studies from different perspectives have been carried out on Anglicisms in Italian.
Pulcini (1999, 2006, 2010, 2017) also analyzes Anglicisms from a diachronic point of view, from the early contacts up to the post-World War II period and the new millennium years. Minutella (2011, 2015, 2017) carries out studies on Anglicisms in dubbed Italian, with particular attention to animated films – a still neglected genre in linguistic contact research.

One of the issues emerging from the study of the influence of English on the Italian language is in regard to false Anglicisms, i.e., lexical items that acquire a different meaning in the receiver language from the meaning they have in the donor one. In this respect, Furiassi (2005, p.279) highlights that these words are "often believed to be real English words" but are actually "autonomous creations of the Italian language." The scholar also deals with borrowings which are halfway between false and true Anglicisms, i.e., words that are identical in formal aspect but different in the function they serve. The question of false Anglicisms had already been treated more than half a century ago by Rothenberg (1969), who made an account of the English loanwords in Italian and emphasized how troublesome it was for foreign

people to understand a language where an elevated quantity of English terms was used with a different meaning from that in the original language.

He wrote: "It does not suffice to know English and standard Italian to sense the connotations and overtones, or even the denotations" (Rothenberg, 1969, p.149). "Flirt" for "flirtation", "city" for "downtown", "dancing" for "dance hall" are only some of the examples, mentioned by Rothenberg (1969: *ibid.*), of 'Italian use' of English borrowings.

1.2. *Lockdown*

The 2006 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) only yields the following definition for *lockdown*:

n. N. Amer. The confining of prisoners to their cells, typically in order to regain control during a riot.
(Oxford English Dictionary 2006, s.v. *lockdown*, p. 836)

As can be seen in the definition above, the use of the term was initially restricted to the prison environment.

Afterwards, the meaning of the term was extended to refer also to security measures as a consequence of critical and life-threatening situations. The *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary* (2020) registers:
an official order to control the movement of people or vehicles because of a dangerous situation.
Merriam Webster (merriam-webster.com) displays the following uses of *lockdown*:
1. the confinement of prisoners to their cells for all or most of the day as a temporary security measure.
2a: an emergency measure or condition in which people are temporarily prevented from entering or leaving a restricted area or building (such as a school) during a threat of danger.
2b: a temporary condition imposed by governmental authorities (as during the outbreak of an epidemic disease) in which people are required to stay in their homes and refrain from or limit activities outside the home involving public contact (such as dining out or attending large gatherings).

It can be noticed that *Merriam Webster* (merriam-webster.com) also includes social distancing measures due to health emergencies ("during the outbreak of an epidemic disease") among the uses of *lockdown* (2b).

The first record of *lockdown* in the Italian press goes back to a 2013 article by Federico Rampini in *la Repubblica* where an attempted terrorist attack on the White House was dealt with (Accademia della Crusca, www.accademiadellacrusca.it). We can read: "Quando la Capital Police leva il "lockdown" e i parlamentari barricati nei loro uffici possono finalmente uscire, fioccano le prime polemiche [When Capital Police puts an end to the

lockdown and the Parliament Members, closed in their offices, can finally go out, it is much debated].[1]"

The *Accademia della Crusca* (www.accademiadellacrusca.it) registers 2020 as the year of diffusion of *lockdown* in Italian, and the *Treccani* dictionary of the Italian language (www.treccani.it) reports the term among the 2020 neologisms.

2. Description of the Corpus, Method, and Analysis

For the analysis of *lockdown* and its Italian equivalents, a 69,726-word corpus of 63 articles taken from *la Repubblica.it* throughout the month of March 2020 was used. *la Repubblica* was founded in Milan and is the second Italian daily for total circulation (paper and online format) and for readership after the *Corriere della Sera*.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis was carried out in the study. The quantitative analysis considered the frequency of *lockdown* and of its Italian equivalents in the corpus and the ratio between the former and the latter. The qualitative analysis is mainly focused on the use with which the English term and its equivalents were employed in the corpus. Also, pragmatic reasons for their co-occurrence in the texts were investigated. The equivalents were analyzed following their alphabetical order for convenience, except *isolamento* and *quarantena*, which were analyzed together. Manual reading of the texts was carried out and the analysis also made use of Wordsmith (6.0) concordancing software.

3. Results

3.1. *Lockdown*

The search for *lockdown* in *la Repubblica.it* yielded 63 results which accounted for the overall number of articles where *lockdown* was used throughout March 2020. *Lockdown* occurred 85 times, thus being used 1.3 times on average per text.

In two cases, *lockdown* was accompanied by the Italian *chiusura*, which was used, respectively, as an alternative to the Anglicism or as an explanatory word:

1. Tutto è cominciato improvvisamente mercoledì, quando il premier **Narendra Modi** […] ha annunciato la totale <u>chiusura</u> o <u>lockdown</u> del grande continente per 21 giorni […].
(*Coronavirus, l'esodo biblico dei lavoratori indiani: a piedi per migliaia di chilometri*, 30 marzo 2020)[2]
[All started suddenly last Wednesday, when Premier Narendra Modi […] announced the total "chiusura" or lockdown of the big continent for 21 days]

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[1]All the translations in this study are mine.
[2] The underlinings are mine.

2. Il premier in pubblico aveva detto più volte di stringere le mani tranquillamente a chiunque o che il Regno Unito non avrebbe avuto bisogno di un <u>lockdown</u> (una chiusura) totale come accaduto in Italia […].

(*Coronavirus, dalla "siesta" del comico al governo Johnson quando diceva: "Misure italiane inutili"*, 24 marzo 2020)

[The Premier had publicly said several times he shook anyone's hands without any problem or that the UK would not need a total lockdown ("chiusura") as in Italy]

In the first sentence, "lockdown" is mentioned immediately after "chiusura" as if the need was felt to also mention its English equivalent. By contrast, in the second sentence, "lockdown" is *followed* by its Italian translation/equivalent "(una) chiusura" (in brackets), probably serving to make the Anglicism more understandable.

In three other cases, instead, the Italian term chosen to refer to COVID-19 security measures was *blocco*, which was used next to *lockdown*. In one case, the latter appeared in brackets after the Italian term, in the two others immediately before it, and "blocco" (followed by the adjective "totale"), was used with an explicatory function:

3. Grazie a questi distanziamenti, la banca centrale del Paese (Fed) potrà mobilitare fino a 4.000 miliardi di dollari grazie a un effetto leva (leveraged). Il segretario al Tesoro, Steven Mnuchin, potrà assegnare parte dei fondi alle società danneggiate dal <u>blocco</u> (lockdown).

(*Coronavirus, accordo negli USA. Aiuti da 2.000 miliardi, 1200 dollari a ogni americano*, 25 marzo 2020)

[Thanks to distancing, the central bank of the country (Fed) will be able to use up to 4,000 billion dollars as a consequence of the "leva" effect (leverage). The Treasury Secretary, Steven Mnuchin, will be able to give parts of the funds to the companies that have been damaged by the "blocco" (lockdown)]

4. Boris Johnson ha deciso: Londra e il Regno Unito da stasera sono in "<u>lockdown</u>", in <u>blocco totale</u>. […] Londra e tutto il Regno Unito sono andati ufficialmente in "<u>lockdown</u>", in "<u>blocco totale</u>".

(*Coronavirus, Regno Unito come l'Italia: negozi chiusi e tutti a casa*, 23 marzo 2020)

[Boris Johnson has decided: starting from tonight London and the UK will be on "lockdown", on "blocco totale." […] London and all the UK have officially gone into "lockdown", into "blocco totale"]

Independently of its position in relation to the Italian equivalents, the occurrence of *lockdown* seemed to stem from the need to use a *technical* term, precise and unambiguous, to refer to 'all that set of control measures and activity restrictions aimed at limiting the Coronavirus diffusion'. The

possible and available Italian equivalent expressions are perhaps perceived as not sufficient to convey the concept satisfactorily.

Lockdown was also found in mixed linguistic solutions (precisely 9 occurrences), made up of the English term plus an adjective, e.g., *totale* (total), 4 occurrences; *mondiale* (global), 2 occurrences; *nazionale* (national), 3 occurrences. The following extracts may serve as illustrating examples:

5. Nel quinto giorno del <u>lockdown totale</u> dichiarato dal premier Norendra Modi, rimbalzano in tutto il mondo le immagini di centinaia di persone lungo le strade o alle frontiere […]

(*Coronavirus nel mondo: contagi, aggiornamenti e tutte le news sulla situazione*, 30 marzo 2020)

[On the fifth day of total lockdown as declared by Premier Norendra Modi, images of hundred people along the streets or at frontiers spread all over the world]

6. Il <u>lockdown mondiale</u> fa calare le concentrazioni di inquinanti nell'atmosfera. Ma torna il record di polveri sottili nella Pianura Padana. […]

(*Inquinamento: cala il biossido di azoto, ma i venti portano le polveri sottili*, 30 marzo 2020)

[The global lockdown is reducing pollution in the atmosphere. Yet, the record of fine dust particles is coming back to the Pianura Padana]

7. Agli indiani è stato chiesto di rispettare il coprifuoco dalle 7 alle 21 di oggi. […] Secondo molti, si è trattato di una prova generale per testare la capacità del Paese di affrontare un <u>lockdown nazionale</u> più esteso.

(*Coronavirus, l'India e il lockdown più grande del mondo. E Modi chiede ai cittadini di cantare dai balconi*, 22 marzo 2020)

[Indian people were asked to respect the curfew from 7 am to 9 pm of today. […] Many people think it was a way to verify the ability of the country to deal with a broader national lockdown]

3.2. Italian Equivalents of *Lockdown*

As already specified earlier, the number of occurrences of *lockdown* was 85. The total number of occurrences of all the Italian equivalents here investigated was 210. Therefore, the ratio between the former and the latter was 1: 2,5.

Each Italian equivalent of *lockdown* will be analyzed and discussed in the following subsections.

3.2.1. *Blocco*

As far as the Italian equivalents of *lockdown* are concerned, the first word analyzed was *blocco*, which showed 17 occurrences, two of which were not included in the analysis as they were not COVID-19-related but used in the sense of "police roadblock". Out of the 15 actual occurrences, there were 3 cases of use of "<u>blocco</u> delle attività economiche", 1 case of "blocco"

followed by "lockdown" (already discussed in extract 3 above), and 5 cases where "blocco" was used without any particular collocation as in the following extracts:

8. Tre dei quattro decessi sono avvenuti nel Hubei e due nel capoluogo Wuhan, dove il <u>blocco</u> finirà l'8 aprile […]

(*Coronavirus. In Spagna sono più di tremila i morti,* 25 marzo 2020)

[Three of the four deaths took place in Hubei and two in the capital Wuhan, where the lockdown will be over on April 8]

9. Gli atleti avrebbero bisogno di tempo per riqualificarsi tra la fine del <u>blocco</u> e la ripresa delle competizioni. Altrimenti ci saranno sicuramente infortuni.

(*Ciclismo, governo francese: tour a rischio*, 25 marzo 2020)

[Athletes would need time to requalify between the end of the lockdown and the restart of the competitions. Otherwise there will certainly be injuries]

Finally, in the 6 remaining cases of *blocco*, the term was always followed by the adjective "totale". In one case, the word was used in the explicatory function already discussed above for extract 4. Also, in 5 cases, it was used as illustrated in the following two extracts:

10. Il maggior calo della mobilità è nella terza settimana dell'emergenza nei collegamenti dal Nord e dal Centro Italia, con una diminuzione fino al 50-70%. Dati alti, ma non un <u>blocco totale</u>.

(*Coronavirus, l'Italia si è fermata o quasi: l'analisi degli spostamenti via gps*, 15 marzo 2020).

[Most mobility decrease is on the third week of emergency in the connections from Northern and Central Italy, with a fall up to 50-70%. This is seen as high percentages, but not a total lockdown]

11. Nel Paese la situazione è difficilissima, dato che dalla notte scorsa è in vigore il lockdown volto a limitare la diffusione del coronavirus e c'è il <u>blocco totale</u> di treni e trasporti pubblici.

(*Terremoto, due scosse di magnitudo 5,4 e 4,6 a Zagabria: gravissimo un 15enne. Nel Paese da ieri in vigore il lockdown per il coronavirus*, 22 marzo 2020)

[In the country, the situation is very difficult. This is because the lockdown limiting the coronavirus spread has become law since last night, and there is a total lockdown of trains and public means of transport]

3.2.2. *Chiusura*

The occurrences of *chiusura* found in the texts were 41. First and foremost, the concordance of *chiusura* immediately revealed that in majority of the cases, precisely 24 out of 43, the term was followed by the indirect complement that specifies "of what/whom" in such expressions as "*chiusura* degli aeroporti" (closure of airports), "dei negozi non essenziali" (of

unnecessary shops), "del Paese" (of the country), "delle frontiere" (of frontiers), "delle scuole" (of schools), "delle contrattazioni" (of negotiations), "di Wuhan" (of Wuhan), "di bar e ristoranti" (of coffee shops and restaurants), "dei confini interstatali" (of intergovernmental frontiers), etc.

The concordance of *chiusura* revealed the use of the term accompanied by the specification of the object it referred to. This is because before the COVID-19 infection, *chiusura* had always been employed to refer to anything that had to/could be closed (from a door to an activity, from a window to a service, a box, a shop, etc.). In everyday speech, since the spread of COVID-19, *chiusura* has been used without necessarily attaching a complement. As a matter of fact, in the corpus analyzed for this study, occurrences were found where the word was not followed by any complement and was used with the meaning of "emergency measures aimed at limiting the COVID-19 infection." The following extracts may serve as illustrating examples:

12. Vi ricordate le penne lisce, quelle lasciate invendute sui banconi dei nostri supermercati nei primi giorni della <u>chiusura</u>? In Inghilterra alcuni su Twitter sostengono che sia accaduto lo stesso, ma non con le penne lisce, bensì con la pizza con l'ananas.

(*Pene corporali in strada per chi viola il diritto di uscire*, 29 marzo 2020)

[Do you remember penne pasta, those left unsold on the counters of our supermarkets on the first days of lockdown? Some people maintain that in England the same happened, but not with penne pasta but with pizza and pineapple]

13. A New York la marijuana gestita dagli spacciatori ha avuto un aumento esponenziale nella distribuzione nelle ore in cui le misure di <u>chiusura</u> sono state annunciate.

(*La mafia del coronavirus. Dalla droga alla sanità, la pandemia aiuta l'economia criminale*, 23 marzo 2020)

[In New York, the marijuana managed by pushers has increased exponentially in distribution during the hours when control measures have been announced].

3.2.3. *Confinamento*

The word *confinamento* showed only 5 occurrences. Originally, it was used, as mentioned, to refer to the isolation of prisoners in their cells for a long period of time as a security measure to control disturbances. Today, *confinamento* is considered a synonym of *lockdown* to refer to the security measures aimed at limiting freedom of movement and at restricting normal activities in emergency situations (Wikipedia, www.wikipedia.it). Four cases

were found of this use of *confinamento* in the corpus investigated, one of which is shown below:

14. Il premier Pedro Sanchez ha inasprito ulteriormente il <u>confinamento</u>: oggi un nuovo decreto vieta tutte le attività non essenziali almeno fino al 9 aprile con un congedo retribuito per tutti i lavoratori.

(*Coronavirus nel mondo: contagi, aggiornamenti e news sulla situazione*, 29 marzo 2020)

[Premier Pedro Sanchez has reinforced the lockdown further. Today, a new law forbids all unnecessary activities at least till 9 April with paid leave for all workers]

However, in one case, *confinamento* was used in a sense which was more similar to that of quarantine:

15. Emmanuel Macron ha annunciato una serie di restrizioni secondo il "modello italiano", chiedendo ai francesi di rispettare un <u>confinamento</u> per 15 giorni. […]

(*Coronavirus: Francia, Germania e Regno Unito cambiano rotta. Johnson sconsiglia contatti*, 16 marzo 2020)

[Emmanuel Macron has announced several restrictions following the "Italian example" by asking the French people to respect quarantine for 15 days]

Confinamento was given great importance by the *Accademia della Crusca*, whose current President, Claudio Marazzini, maintains that it represents the only valid equivalent for the Anglo-American *lockdown*. With regard to the latter, Marazzini states:

In Italia nessuno è stato pronto a fornire alternative valide a questo termine angloamericano, neanche l'Accademia della Crusca. Con il senno di poi, se potessi riscrivere la storia, direi che sarebbe il caso di seguire gli spagnoli e i francesi che hanno fatto ricorso correttamente a una parola che ha le proprie radici nelle lingue romanze: 'confinamento'.

(*Crusca: "Si dice la Covid. Lockdown? No, meglio un termine italiano"*, di Catiuscia Ceccarelli, 2 luglio 2020)

[In Italy, nobody has been able to provide valid alternatives to this Anglo-American term, not even the Accademia della Crusca. If I could rewrite history, I would say that we should follow the French and the Spanish, who have used a word rooted in Romance languages: 'confinamento'.]

3.2.4 *Contenimento* (*misure di*)

Contenimento (also *misure di contenimento*) is another term/locution that wikipedia (www.wikipedia.it) considers as an equivalent of *lockdown*. The investigation of the corpus yielded 10 occurrences, 1 of which was not considered for the purpose of this work as the term was not used with

reference to the pandemic.[3] The most numerous occurrences were in the form of "misure di contenimento" (5 occurrences), as shown in the following excerpt:

16. In India ci sono 433 casi di COVID-19 […] Ci sono almeno 700 milioni di persone sottoposte a <u>misure di contenimento</u> nel secondo paese più popoloso del mondo dopo la Cina. […]

(*Coronavirus, Oms: pandemia sta accelerando. Morto impiegato italiano del Parlamento Ue. Johnson ordina lockdown nel Regno Unito*, 23 marzo 2020)

[In India, there are 433 cases of COVID-19 […] There are at least 700 million people who are undergoing a lockdown in the second most populated country in the world after China]

The following locutions were also found: "direttive per il contenimento" (1 occurrence):

17. Le <u>direttive per il contenimento</u> del COVID-19 sono diventate una via libera alla violenza senza freni. […]

(*Botte a donne e bambini: così in Kenya si fa rispettare il coprifuoco per il coronavirus*, 29 marzo 2020)

[Guidelines for limiting COVID-19 diffusion have resulted in non-stop violence episodes];

"norme di contenimento" (1 occurrence):

18. Proseguono in tutta Italia le verifiche delle forze di polizia sul rispetto delle <u>norme di contenimento</u> del contagio da coronavirus. […]

(*Coronavirus in Italia: contagi, morti e tutte le news sulla situazione*, 29 marzo 2020)

[Police checks on compliance with the coronavirus infection control measures are going on throughout Italy]

Finally, only *contenimento* was used in 2 occurrences:

19. Il corpo militare sarà utilizzato per distribuire cibo e pulire le aree pubbliche nell'area di <u>contenimento</u> dove per due settimane verranno chiuse le scuole. […]

(*Coronavirus, sindaco di New York mobilita Guardia nazionale nel focolaio. Cuomo: "Questione di vita o di morte"*, 10 marzo 2020);

[The armed forces will be engaged to distribute food and clean public areas in the lockdown area where schools will be closed for two weeks]

20. Gli epidemiologi affermano che si vedono i primi effetti del <u>contenimento</u>. Non siamo però ancora al cambio di fase. […]

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[3] Si tratta di una limitazione […] che potrebbe aprire la strada ad altre scelte simili, in qualche maniera di contenimento della mole di informazioni scambiate da miliardi di utenti […] (*Coronavirus, prove di "lockdown" per WhatsApp: in India solo 15 secondi per i video negli "stati"*, 31 marzo 2020) [It is a limitation that […] could pave the way to other similar choices, in some way of control of the amount of information which is exchanged by billion users]

(*Coronavirus in Italia: contagi, morti e tutte le news sulla situazione*, 29 marzo 2020)
[Epidemiologists maintain that the first effects of the lockdown are being perceived. However, we are not at a turning point yet].

3.2.5. *Coprifuoco*

Another word that seemed to be used as an equivalent of *lockdown* was *coprifuoco* (curfew), which displayed 13 occurrences. In 8 cases, the meaning of the term was very similar to that suggested by the Anglicism, as no circumscribed period of time was specified. Thus, the term was used with the meaning of 'control measures and movement freedom restrictions', as in the following extract:

21. Il Presidente Recep Tayyip Erdogan in un discorso alla nazione di questa sera ha ribadito il suo no all'ipotesi di un coprifuoco, garantendo che la Turchia ha le risorse per venire fuori dall'epidemia.

(*Coronavirus nel mondo: contagi, aggiornamenti e tutte le news sulla situazione*, 30 marzo 2020)
[During a speech to the nation, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has reiterated his 'no' to the idea of a lockdown, and has guaranteed that Turkey has the necessary resources to overcome the epidemic]

By contrast, in the 5 other occurrences *coprifuoco* was used with a more restricted meaning in comparison with that conveyed by *lockdown*, as the former was employed with reference to a *defined* period of time as for compliance with restrictions on leaving. The excerpt below serves as an illustration:

22. Agli indiani è stato chiesto di rispettare il coprifuoco dalle 7 alle 21 di oggi, con la maggior parte dei collegamenti ferroviari sospesi fino al 31 marzo.

(*Coronavirus, l'India e il collegamento più grande del mondo. E Modi chiede ai cittadini di cantare dai balconi*, 22 marzo 2020)
[Indian people were asked to respect the curfew from 7 am to 9 pm today, with most railway connections being interrupted till 31 March].

3.2.6. *Distanziamento sociale*

Another term, more precisely seen as an expression, which is considered an Italian equivalent of *lockdown* is *distanziamento sociale* (www.wikipedia.it). It is sometimes also called *distanziamento fisico*. The latter is included in the Treccani encyclopedia (www.treccani.it) as a 2020 neologism and is described as a locution by the English *social distancing*. Treccani (www.treccani.it) also provides the following definition: "L'insieme delle misure ritenute necessarie a contenere la diffusione di un'epidemia o pandemia, come, per esempio, quarantena dei soggetti a

rischio o positivi, isolamento domestico, divieto o limitazione degli assembramenti, chiusura delle scuole, ecc."/ A series of actions considered necessary to limit the spreading of an epidemic or a pandemic, such as, for example, quarantine of at-risk or positive subjects, home isolation, limits on public gatherings, school closures, etc.

Distanziamento sociale displayed 6 occurrences in the corpus analyzed. Two extracts including the locution are reported below:

23. Alcuni stati hanno deciso un blocco completo delle attività solo in alcuni distretti; altri hanno imposto restrizioni parziali per promuovere il distanziamento sociale; altri stati ancora hanno invece imposto un blocco completo: oltre ai servizi essenziali, vigili del fuoco, generi alimentari e servizi comunali, saranno chiusi tutti i negozi, le fabbriche, gli artigiani, gli uffici, i mercati, i luoghi di culto, sospesi autobus e metropolitane. […]

(*Coronavirus: pandemia sta accelerando. Morto impiegato italiano del parlamento Ue. Johnson ordina lockdown nel Regno Unito*, 23 marzo 2020)

[Some countries have decided a total suspension of the activities only in some districts. Others have imposed partial restrictions to promote social distancing. However, others have imposed a total stop besides necessary services, firefighters, food and municipal services. Also, all shops will be closed including factories, artisans, offices, markets, places of worship, and buses and undergrounds will be interrupted]

24. Il paradosso per gli homeless dello slogan "io sto a casa". A conversare in questi giorni con colleghi africani si evince subito che il distanziamento sociale è una ricetta di sanità pubblica che può funzionare in Europa, dove le aggregazioni urbane sono più organizzate, ma risulta inapplicabile per gran parte delle popolazioni nei cosiddetti Paesi in via di sviluppo. […]

(*COVID-19, il virus delle disuguaglianze in azione e il "gioco" di scommettere sulla morte dell'altro*, 26 marzo 2020)

[The paradox of the slogan "I stay at home" for the homeless. Having a conversation these days with African colleagues makes one immediately understand that social distancing is a recipe of public health that can work in Europe, where urban aggregations are better organized, but it turns out to be inapplicable for the majority of people in the so-called developing countries]

In the extracts above, the use of *distanziamento sociale* can be assimilated to that of *confinamento* discussed in subsection 3.2.3. Both terms refer to 'actions (or measures) aimed at limiting physical contacts as much as possible to reduce the risk of getting infected.'

3.2.7. *Isolamento* and *quarantena*

There seems to be little clarity about two other terms that are considered equivalents of *lockdown*, i.e., *isolamento* and *quarantena* (Wikipedia, www.wikipedia.it). The Italian Ministry of Health (www.salute.gov.it)

provides an accurate description of both terms and clarifies the difference in meaning:

L'isolamento consiste nel separare quanto più possibile le persone affette da COVID-19 da quelle sane al fine di prevenire la diffusione dell'infezione, durante il periodo di trasmissibilità. / Isolation consists in separating COVID-19 infected people from healthy ones in order to prevent the infection spreading during the period of transmissibility.

La quarantena si attua ad una persona sana che è stata esposta ad un caso di COVID-19, con l'obiettivo di monitorare i sintomi e assicurare l'identificazione precoce dei casi. Per COVID-19 il periodo di quarantena è di 14 giorni successivi alla data dell'ultima esposizione. / Quarantine is required for a healthy person who has come into contact with a case of COVID-19, in order to control symptoms and ensure the early identification of cases. The quarantine span for COVID-19 is 14 days following the date of the last contact.

In the corpus analyzed for this study, *isolamento* and *quarantena* displayed, respectively, 29 and 54 occurrences.

Isolamento seemed to be used only once in the medical sense for physical separation of COVID-19 affected people from healthy subjects:

25. Anche l'Arcivescovo di New Orleans, Gregory Aymond, è risultato positivo al test del coronavirus, ha reso noto il suo sito Web e l'arcidiocesi della città della Louisiana, precisando che l'Arcivescovo, che ha lievi sintomi, è in isolamento.
(*Coronavirus, Oms: pandemia sta accelerando. Morto impiegato italiano del Parlamento Ue. Johnson ordina lockdown nel regno Unito*, 23 marzo 2020)
[Also the Archbishop of New Orleans, Gregory Aymond, tested positive to coronavirus. This was announced on his Website and by the archdiocese of Louisiana, specifying that the Archbishop, who has mild symptoms, is in isolation]

In most cases, *isolamento* was used in the sense of 'security measures and movement limitations.' Therefore, it has a meaning which was very similar to that of l*ockdown*. The following two extracts are reported:

26. Il premier indiano Norendra Modi ha ordinato l'isolamento totale dell'India, paese con 1,3 miliardi di abitanti, per tre settimane.
(*Coronavirus, in Spagna contagi record e 2700 morti. Francia quinto Paese a superare i mille decessi. Oms: USA possono superare Europa*, 24 marzo 2020)
[Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has ordered the total lockdown of India, a country with 1.3 billion inhabitants, for three weeks]

27. Mosca ha imposto un isolamento più forte in tutta la città a partire dal 30 marzo fino a nuovo avviso per tutti i residenti, indipendentemente dalla loro età; lo ha annunciato il sindaco Sergej Sobjanin. […]

(*Coronavirus nel mondo: contagi, aggiornamenti e tutte le news sulla situazione*, 29 marzo 2020)

[Moscow has imposed a stronger lockdown in the whole town starting from 30 March till there is a new communication for all residents, independently of their age. This was announced by Mayor Sergej Sobjanin]

However, the investigation of the occurrences of *isolamento* and *quarantena* also showed some cases where the two terms were used interchangeably. In the following two extracts, *isolamento* was used in the place of *quarantena*, while *quarantena* was used in the place of *isolamento*:

28. Il congresso spagnolo ha sospeso le sedute parlamentari per una settimana dopo che l'intero gruppo di Vox si è messo in isolamento quando il segretario generale del partito, Javier Ortega Smith, è risultato positivo al Coronavirus. […]

(*Coronavirus, sindaco di New York mobilita Guardia nazionale nel focolaio. Cuomo: Questione di vita o di morte*, 10 marzo 2020)

[The Spanish Congress has suspended parliamentary sessions for a week after the entire Vox group has put itself in isolation when the secretary-general of the party, Javier Ortega Smith, tested positive to Coronavirus]

29. *Dealing with Charles, Prince of Wales*

Testato positivo una settimana fa, ha completato i sette giorni di quarantena previsti dalla legge britannica. […]

(*Coronavirus, Gran Bretagna: il principe Carlo è guarito. L'erede al trono esce dalla quarantena*, 30 marzo 2020)

[Tested positive one week ago, he completed the seven days of quarantine provided for by British law]

In extract 28, what can be acknowledged is that the "Vox group" was in contact with a COVID-19 infected person (the party secretary-general Ortega Smith) from whom the group has physically distanced itself for precautionary purposes. According to what is reported above as for the meaning of *isolamento* and *quarantena* provided by the Ministry of Health, the term that should have been used in the extract is *quarantena* (quarantine) and not "isolamento" (isolation). This is because the group dealt with had not tested positive (it had only to respect distancing for monitoring of possible symptoms).

Conversely, in extract 29, in the place of "quarantena", the term *isolamento* would have proved more accurate considering that the person dealt with (Prince Charles) tested positive. In the article already quoted in extract 29, *isolamento* was used once correctly. Later on, it was used improperly as shown in the following two extracts:

30. Dopo il tampone positivo a Edimburgo, il principe è tornato a Birkhall e ha passato una settimana in isolamento totale.

[After the positive swab in Edinburgh, the prince went back to Birkhall and spent one week in total isolation.]

31. Anche Camilla, la seconda moglie del Principe, si è sottoposta al test, risultando negativa, dunque non ha il virus: ma la duchessa si è messa lo stesso in <u>isolamento</u> a scopo precauzionale. […]

[Camilla, the Prince's second wife, also underwent the test, proving negative, and therefore she did not get the virus. However, the duchess was self-isolated for precautionary purposes anyway]

No particular concern was noticed in the corpus as to the correct use of *isolamento* and *quarantena* in their precise specialized medical meaning. The indiscriminate use of the two terms was most likely due to the fact that they were both attributed to the general – thus not strictly 'technical' – sense of "physical distancing." Moreover, in extracts 30 and 31, *isolamento* was used with a more restricted meaning as compared to its use in extracts 26 and 27. Here, the term suggests a set of security procedures involving a whole country and not physical distancing of a single individual.

3.2.8. Misure restrittive / misure di restrizione / restrizione(i)

Other terms/locutions that seemed to be used as equivalents of *lockdown* were *misure restrittive* (11 occurrences), *restrizione*(*i*) (25 overall occurrences, 23 of which in the plural form), *misure di restrizione* (2 occurrences). The following are some examples:

32. Con le <u>misure restrittive</u> per contenere il contagio e la perdita di opportunità di lavoro, anche occasionale, si aggrava la situazione e aumenta il numero dei quasi 2,7 milioni di persone che in Italia sono costretti a chiedere aiuto per il cibo con la distribuzione di pacchi alimentari o nelle mense. […]

(*Coronavirus in Italia: contagi, morti e tutte le news sulla situazione*, 29 marzo 2020)

[With the restrictions adopted to limit the infection and the loss of work opportunities, including occasional work, the situation is getting worse and the number of almost 2.7 million people in Italy is obliged to ask help for food through the distribution of food packages or the increase in canteens]

33. "Stiamo già cominciando a vedere la luce in fondo al tunnel", ha dichiarato il presidente (*Trump*). Tra i contagiati ci sono anche due trader di Wall Street, venuti a contatto con il COVID-19 nonostante le <u>misure di restrizione</u> prese per evitare il diffondersi del virus. […]

(*Coronavirus, in Spagna sono più di tremila i morti. Oltre sessantamila casi negli Usa*, 25 marzo)

["We are already starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel", the president has declared (*Trump*). There are also two Wall Street traders among the infected, and they came into contact with COVID-19 despite the security measures taken to avoid the virus spreading]

34. Da quando sono state imposte le <u>restrizioni</u>, i movimenti in città sono diminuiti di due terzi, il che è molto positivo. I residenti potranno lasciare le loro case solo per ricevere assistenza medica urgente, andare in un alimentare o in farmacia […]. L'eccezione sarà fatta per i lavoratori essenziali. […]

(*Coronavirus nel mondo: contagi, aggiornamenti, e tutte le news sulla situazione*, 29 marzo)

[Since restrictions were imposed, movements in the towns have decreased by two thirds, and this is a positive signal. Residents will be able to leave their homes only for urgent medical assistance, to buy food or medicines. An exception will be made for essential workers]

3.2.9. Lexical Variety: *Lockdown* and its Equivalents

From the observation of the corpus used for this study the will emerged to fulfil pragmatic stylistic needs such as avoiding lexical redundancy. The co-occurrence and the alternated use of *lockdown* with its Italian equivalents can be considered in this perspective, i.e., within the search for lexical variety. The following extracts may illustrate what has just been said:

35. Allo stesso tempo, rileva l'organizzazione parigina, le necessarie <u>misure di contenimento</u> stanno assestando dei colpi durissimi all'economia. In particolare, stima l'Ocse, ogni mese di <u>lockdown</u>, cioè di <u>limitazione delle attività</u> e di <u>isolamento</u> per la maggior parte della popolazione, costa due punti di pil annuale […]

(L'allarme dell'Ocse: "Spendere ora o si rischiano milioni di morti", 27 marzo 2020)

[At the same time, as the Parisian organization reveals, the necessary restrictions are a terrible blow for the economy. In particular, according to Ocse, every month of lockdown, which results to limitation of activities and of isolation for the majority of the population, costs two GNP points every year]

As can be seen, the extract above includes "misure di contenimento", "lockdown", "limitazione delle attività" and "isolamento." The latter two are used as equivalents/synonyms/definitions of "lockdown" towards which they serve a clarifying function. Moreover, the co-occurrence of four distinct terms (at least in their superficial form) to refer to anti-COVID-19 measures gives discourse linguistic variety, thus avoiding lexical repetition. Another example is reported below:

36. Quarantena forzata. Al momento, quello che sappiamo è che all'inizio della crisi, coinciso con il primo <u>lockdown</u> delle attività commerciali, inasprito successivamente con <u>misure</u> sempre più <u>restrittive</u> da parte del governo, c'è stata un'improvvisa impennata dei consumi.

(Pane, latte, zucchero e farina: così cambia il carrello degli italiani, 31 marzo 2020)
[Necessary Quarantine: What we know now is that at the beginning of the emergency situation, this coincided with the first lockdown of commercial activities and later with more and more restrictive measures from the government. As a result, there was a sudden increase of consumptions]

4. Conclusion

The investigation of the corpus used for this study has highlighted important aspects. From a quantitative point of view, *lockdown* was the most frequently used term as compared to each of its Italian equivalents, thus showing wide employment in the articles investigated for this study. However, the sum of all occurrences of the Italian equivalents exceeded the number of occurrences of *lockdown*. This basically means that the corresponding Italian terms were also largely used in the corpus and that there was an overall balanced frequency between the Anglicism and its Italian equivalents. The latter were used as explanatory terms (e.g., *blocco* and *chiusura*), probably because in the investigated period, *lockdown* had not yet been fully assimilated and clarifications were needed. The Italian equivalents were also used as co-occurring terms together with *lockdown* to avoid phenomena of lexical repetition and provide the discourse with variety of expression. Moreover, as it occurs for many foreignisms and their translatability, the question remains whether an exact and adequate Italian equivalent of *lockdown* has actually been found to date. As a matter of fact, besides being concise in itself, in the Italian language *lockdown* turns out to be a precise, technical, semantically all-inclusive term. In readers' perception – especially in *Italian* readers'– *lockdown* encompasses all connotations of meaning included in the equivalents treated in this study, from 'movement limitations' to 'working activity reductions', from 'security measures' to 'physical distancing', etc. *Lockdown* also ultimately refers to the most immediate consequences of all those conditions, namely 'economic collapse' and 'profound interpersonal life changes.' Moreover, *lockdown* is unequivocal. This is because in the Italian language it is used exclusively with reference to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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