

Bridging Linguistic Gaps through Translation of COVID-19 Terms from English into Albanian

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Abstract

During the critical period of the global COVID-19 outbreak, Albania, like many other nations, faced the urgent need to communicate vital public health information effectively. The selection of appropriate terminology was paramount to ensuring that the public understood the nature of the virus, the measures necessary to prevent its spread, and the overall health strategies implemented by the government. Henceforth, this study aims to identify the COVID-19 terminology used by the Albanian Health Authorities to describe the virus and to analyse the strategies employed in translating these terms from English into Albanian. The research focuses on the period from March 1, 2020, to July 27, 2020, which coincided with the global COVID-19 outbreak. 30 COVID-19-related terms in English and their Albanian equivalents were examined for this purpose. Data for this research was collected from two primary sources: the COVID-19 Terminology Collection from the European Union Terminology Database (IATE) and the Albanian equivalents obtained from news reports published by the healthcare authorities on the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania’s website. The study employed several theoretical frameworks to analyze the translation strategies. Vin and Darbelnet’s translation model, the sociolinguistic model, and the metaphor translation method were utilized to achieve the research objectives. Vin and Darbelnet’s model provided a structured approach to analyzing translation techniques, such as borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. The sociolinguistic model helped to understand how social and cultural factors influenced the choice of

terminology and its reception by the public. The metaphor translation method was particularly relevant given the widespread use of metaphorical language in describing the pandemic and its effects. The findings offer insights into the most effective translation methods for accurately conveying selected COVID-19 terms in Albanian while preserving the intended stylistic essence of the original terms. The research emphasizes the importance of making controlled linguistic choices during translation rather than freely creating and adopting COVID-19 terminology for public use. Standardizing terminology is essential for clear and consistent communication, particularly during a public health crisis. The study highlights the potential risks of using inconsistent or poorly translated terms, which can lead to confusion, misinformation, and reduced public compliance with health guidelines. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the importance of making controlled linguistic choices during translation rather than freely creating and adopting COVID-19 terminology for public use.

Keywords: Linguistic communication, translation, health terminology, audience

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges and uncertainties, necessitating effective communication strategies to navigate the crisis (Tirosh, 2020). This situation has also led to a significant increase in the use of medical terminology worldwide, including in the Albanian public sphere. During those difficult times and beyond, it is essential to examine how experts and non-experts use and understand this terminology in various communicative contexts (Alanda, 2020). One critical aspect of communication during the pandemic was the accurate translation and use of terminology related to the virus. Many new specialised terms emerged from around the world, flooding communication channels. This proliferation of specialised terminology was essential because many individuals lacked medical or biological expertise (Federici, O'Brien, 2020). Information about the coronavirus pandemic was directed at two primary audiences: professionals and the general public. In this context, the universal principle of communication is crucial; therefore, language, communication, and culture must be used appropriately to ensure fast and accurate transmission of information between countries (Baya, 2007).

The paper aims to identify the COVID-19 terms used by the Albanian Health Authorities to describe the virus and analyse strategies adopted in translating the terms from English into Albanian from March 1, 2020, to July 27, 2020. The English data is taken from the European Union Terminology database (IATE) and includes terms from the COVID-19 Terminology

Collection. The Albanian counterparts were sourced from news reports published by healthcare authorities on the Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Protection website. This period, March 1, 2020, to July 27, 2020, was critical as Albania, like many other countries, struggled with the initial outbreak of the pandemic and the implementation of restrictive measures (Musabelliu, 2020). By examining the translation strategies employed during this time, the study seeks to understand how Albanian health authorities handled the challenges of communicating complex medical information to the public (UNICEF, 2020). This approach allows the study to compare standardised English terms with their official Albanian counterparts, whether they were translated terms, borrowed, adapted, or newly created for the sake of the pandemic crisis at its beginning time, henceforth providing insights into the translation techniques used and the potential impact on public understanding. For this purpose, the effectiveness of communication of risks and consistent communication played a key aspect in managing the pandemic (Madhi, 2020).

Literature Review

The exploration of COVID-19 terminology is a relatively recent field of study that arose alongside the coronavirus pandemic's onset in early 2020 and has continued to develop throughout these challenging years. Henceforth, many international scholarly articles have made important efforts to understand coronavirus terminology, its translation, and its varied implications across different cultural contexts. These studies have explored the linguistic challenges posed by the pandemic, the strategies employed to overcome them, and the impact of terminology choices on public understanding and health outcomes. However, when we look at Albanian literature, there is a notable opportunity for growth and development. Currently, there is a lack of research focused on strategies for addressing stress and anxiety related to COVID-19 symptoms. This gap is particularly significant given the psychological toll of the pandemic on individuals and communities. Furthermore, the translation of COVID-19 terms from English to Albanian remains an unexplored territory, with no studies examining the linguistic challenges in this process. This study aims to address these gaps, thereby providing valuable insights within the Albanian context and contributing to the broader field of COVID-19 terminology research.

Theoretical research clearly illustrates that translation and interpretation are essential for effective cross-cultural communication, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Kanglong Liu & Andrew K. F. Cheung, 2023). As we navigate this era of uncertainty and disruption, the demand for these skills has reached unprecedented levels. Translators and interpreters have played a critical role in ensuring that accurate and timely

information reaches diverse communities, helping to mitigate the spread of the virus and promote public health. The rapid rise of terms linked to current events-such as 'COVID-19,' 'lockdown,' and 'distance learning'-demonstrates how swiftly language evolves to meet emerging realities. This transformation can generate terms that may obscure important semantic distinctions (Muller, Beka, 2017). The need for clarity and precision in terminology is particularly acute in the context of a public health crisis, where misunderstandings can have serious consequences (Baya, 2007). Furthermore, examining linguistic features reveals significant language-specific adaptations in vocabulary pertinent to the pandemic, showcasing the emergence of neologisms and loanwords. These linguistic developments highlight the adaptability of language in response to challenges and reflect the profound semantic changes that shape our communication landscape. The integration of neologisms and loanwords into a language can both enrich and complicate communication, necessitating careful consideration of their usage and understanding (Karren, Fisker, & Demoulin, 2022).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of addressing linguistic diversity in our communities. It has revealed language disparities that may limit access to vital public health information for some individuals (Piller, 2020). This situation highlighted the critical role of minority language media, particularly with decreasing advertising revenue and the dynamics between minority and majority language groups. Ensuring that public health information is available in multiple languages is essential for reaching all members of society, regardless of their linguistic background. Moreover, the pandemic has underscored the need for the COVID-19 translation of terminology and techniques from English into other languages (Willis & Bober, 2021).

Moreover, the pandemic has underscored the need for translating COVID-19 terminology and techniques from English into other languages. This intentional and thoughtful approach is essential to ensuring accurate and accessible communication for all communities. The nuances of language and culture must be carefully considered to avoid misunderstandings and promote effective communication (Kitanovska-Kimovska & Neškovska, 2022).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, conceptual metaphors became necessary, serving as powerful mechanisms for effectively communicating crucial information to diverse audiences (Sarif, Garniwa, & Sunarn, 2020). These metaphors simplified complex health concepts and ensured messages resonated clearly and effectively with the public. Furthermore, cognitive theory plays an indispensable role in this process, shaping our mental representations and allowing individuals to fully engage with and understand their experiences through these metaphors (Wenjie & Rossi, 2021). Understanding how cognitive processes influence the reception and

interpretation of information is essential for crafting effective communication strategies. This strategic use of language was vital in fostering clarity and comprehension during uncertainty. Striking a balance between technical precision and accessibility is essential for engaging a diverse audience, especially during challenging times like the coronavirus pandemic. Communication style and transparency from public health institutions are important factors in predicting anxiety (Gapparova, 2020).

Our focus on identifying effective translation strategies-such as translation, adaptation, and creation-plays a vital role in understanding how information is conveyed across various linguistic and cultural landscapes. This understanding is particularly crucial when writing original research or translating terminology related to COVID-19 because the choices made during the translation process can have a significant impact on the accuracy, clarity, and cultural appropriateness of the information being conveyed. Therefore, it is important to adopt translation approaches that carefully analyze and deliver the meaning of the terms and take into account the social-cultural factors (Jiménez-Crespo & Sánchez, 2017).

Methodology

The **research questions** for this study are as follows:

- a. What COVID-19 terminology was used by the Albanian Health Authorities to describe the virus?
- b. What translation procedures were utilised to convey COVID-19 terminology from English to Albanian between March 1, 2020, and July 27, 2020? How successful were these procedures in clearly communicating the meaning of English COVID-19 terminology to Albanian audiences?

These questions aim to explore both 1. specific terms adopted by health authorities and 2. effectiveness of the translation strategies employed during a critical period of the pandemic. Understanding these elements is essential for assessing how well public health messages were conveyed and received in Albania.

Data Collection

To conduct this research, 30 COVID-19-related terms most used in English were taken from the COVID-19 Terminology Collection in the European Union Terminology database (IATE). This database serves as an authoritative source for terminology used across various sectors, ensuring that the selected terms reflect standardized usage within the context of public health communication.

The corresponding Albanian terms were sourced from news reports published by healthcare authorities on the website of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania. Data was collected from March 1, 2020, to July 27, 2020, a timeframe that coincided with significant developments in the COVID-19 crisis both globally and within Albania.

The following data from English and Albanian are collected to be analysed in the study:

- English 'coronavirus, quarantine, vaccine, symptoms, pandemic, vaccination, isolation, face mask, hand sanitiser, test, positive test, outbreak, contact tracing, health guidance, super spread, social distancing, lockdown, the fight against the invisible enemy, apocalypse, zombie, invisible, enemy, nature's warning, tracing';
- Albanian terms 'korona virusi, kuarantinë, vaksinë, simptomat, pandemi, vaksinimi, izolim, maskë fytyre, desinfektues duarsh, test, test pozitiv, shpërthim, ndjekja e kontakteve, udhëzimet shëndetësore, super ngjitës, distancim social, lokdaun, lufta kundër armikut të padukshëm, apokalips, zombi, i padukshëm, armiku, forcë e natyrës, gjurmim'.

This list includes a range of terms that reflect various aspects of the pandemic, from health measures and symptoms to broader metaphors that emerged during this global crisis. Through their analysis, it is possible to gain insights into how COVID-related concepts were communicated and understood within Albanian society.

Data Analysis Methods

The analysis process of the COVID-19 terms went through the following stages:

a) the data collection stage;

b) the analysis stage: a thorough analysis was conducted to evaluate both the English terms and their Albanian counterparts. For this reason, the study focused on identifying patterns in translation strategies and assessing whether direct translations were employed or if adaptations were made to fit cultural and linguistic contexts better. The study made use of several theoretical frameworks to conduct this analysis, including Vin and Darbelnet's translation model, and different translation techniques such as borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. By applying these frameworks, it was aimed to determine which methods were most effective in conveying the meaning while maintaining clarity and accessibility for Albanian audiences.

Sociolinguistic and Cognitive Approaches added value to the analysis of the data and to the study itself. It was used to examine and understand:

- How cultural factors influenced the choice of terminology and whether certain metaphors resonated more strongly with the public;
 - How language shapes perceptions of health issues and influences public behaviour during crises.
- c) the discussion stage, which, in this paper, due to the type of the discussion analysis process and to avoid ambiguities and repetition, is incorporated with the result section.

Data Analysis Description

The effectiveness of translation methods hinges on the strategic application of various models and approaches, each designed to support and enhance the others when challenges arise. To achieve this, the following methods were used:

- a. The study utilized several theoretical frameworks to guide this analysis, including:
 - Vin and Darbelnet's Translation Model: This foundational framework is built upon the essential translation strategies articulated by Vinay and Darbelnet in their influential work from 1958, later revisited in 1995, and highlighted in Venuti's 2000 analysis.

In our efforts to effectively translate specific terms into Albanian, we used a variety of techniques that reflect the depth and versatility of this model:

- Borrowing: This approach involves retaining the original term from the source language within the target language. By comparing terms and contexts they were used in, the study analysed if the borrowings in Albanian maintained the authenticity and distinctiveness of the original concept, allowing the Albanian audience to recognise and connect with the term in its native form.
- Calque: Here, we delved into translating the individual components of terms to preserve their underlying meaning. This technique allowed the researcher to identify through comparison if the essence of the original phrase while adapting it to the Albanian grammatical and syntactic structures was the same as the original.
- Literal Translation: Through direct, word-for-word translation, the researcher compared the clarity and straightforwardness of the terms used in both languages and in determining the loss or not of the meaning or their intended impact while conveying essential ideas from the source to the target language.
- Neologism: when existing vocabulary fails to capture the nuances of newly introduced concepts, we innovate by creating new words. To analyse that, this creativity ensured the newly created term resonated with contemporary language usage while faithfully reflecting original

- meanings, and the researcher analysed the meanings and scales of similarities of the existing and new terms.
- Direct Translation: The researcher identified health terms in Albanian that aligned closely with their English counterparts to foster a clear understanding of the target audience by providing a precise conveyed meaning.
 - Adaptation and Transcreation: Recognising that language is deeply intertwined with culture, terms are modified to convey similar meanings that are respectful of the cultural context. Through this approach, it was possible to bridge the gap between the source and target languages by ensuring that the translation is both relevant and relatable to Albanian speakers. This combination of strategies was used to aim at delivering translations that are not only accurate but also culturally sensitive, enriching the engagement of Albanian readers with the original material.
- b. Sociolinguistic Mode. This analytical approach was one of the bases for the study to comprehend how the original intent and meaning were articulated in both the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). By closely examining the nuances of language and culture, it was possible to appreciate the intricate dynamics of communication. Particularly in the context of COVID-19 terminology, the study focused on awareness of cultural and linguistic sensitivities. Through the sociolinguistic mode, the study could identify that this sensitivity affects how messages are framed and influence their reception among diverse audiences. All that is possible with the use of precise language that resonates with the specific cultural contexts of the target population.
- c. Metaphor Translation Method (Cognitive Approach): it served as a crucial framework for translating metaphors by emphasizing their role as essential connections between cognitive processes and cultural contexts. This method in this study helped in reaching a deeper understanding of the underlying meanings of metaphors and highlighted their significance in conveying complex ideas and emotions across languages.

Also, this approach provided the author of the study with the means to meticulously ensure that the stylistic nuances and semantic integrity of the original text are preserved throughout the translation process (Wenjie Hong, 2021). The comprehensive analysis through this cognitive method revealed that a remarkable level of cognitive equivalence can be achieved when translating metaphors into Albanian. This means the translated metaphors resonated well with the target audience while maintaining their original intent

and impact. By focusing on the cognitive aspects of metaphorical language, it was identified that translators can minimise the potential loss of meaning that often occurs in literal translations. This careful consideration enriches the translated text, conveying a more profound interpretation that resonates with the target audience's cultural and emotional sensibilities. Therefore, it was found that the result is a translation that reflects the original message and enhances the reader's experience through a more authentic and relatable engagement with the content.

Results and Discussion

As the global pandemic spread, many international, governmental, and independent organisations dedicated significant resources to the creation of detailed glossaries that captured COVID-19 terminology in various languages. These glossaries served as vital tools for clear communication and understanding during an unprecedented crisis (UNDP Albania, 2020). Organizations like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the European Union (EU) developed comprehensive terminological resources to ensure consistency and accuracy in the dissemination of information related to the virus (INSTAT, 2021). Such glossaries became essential references for healthcare professionals, translators, media outlets, and the general public, facilitating effective communication across linguistic and cultural barriers.

However, in contrast to this global trend, Albania did not adopt a similar standardized approach. Instead, the terminology and language surrounding COVID-19 in the Albanian context seem to have been generated spontaneously and without careful planning. This absence of a cohesive language framework has posed considerable challenges for different and important audiences or target groups, including healthcare authorities and personnel, media representatives, translators, and the general public. The absence of a unified glossary or terminology could have led to inconsistencies in messaging, potential misunderstandings, and difficulties in accurately conveying complex medical information (Albania IC, 2022). For instance, without standardized translations, healthcare professionals might have faced challenges in communicating with patients or accessing the latest research findings.

This study is the first of its kind in the Albanian context, and it aims to provide a thorough view of the COVID-19 terms and techniques used to translate them from March 1, 2020, to July 27, 2020. Therefore, it aims to shed light on the translation strategies used to deliver important information about the virus and its impact on Albanian society through the analysis of the terminology mostly used during this critical period. The daily press news at the official website of the Albanian Ministry of Health was an important source of information for the public (OECD, 2020). Through the analysis of

their news outlets, the study tries to assess how successfully various English terms were translated and adapted for local use. It also intends to identify any potential cultural misunderstandings or meaning inconsistencies that might have arisen due to the lack of a unified glossary or terminology. Moreover, this study's findings contribute to the broader discussion on the importance of language planning and terminology management during public health emergencies, offering valuable insights for future crisis communication strategies in Albania and other similar contexts.

Overview of Methods in Translating and Adapting Medical Terminology

In response to this challenge, we have identified eight distinct methods for translating, adapting, or using medical terminology to suit different audiences. Each technique plays a crucial role in conveying the intended meanings, capturing metaphorical nuances, and considering the cultural backgrounds necessary for clear and effective communication.

These methods include:

- 1) Borrowing existing terms
- 2) Creating calques
- 3) Employing literal translations
- 4) Developing neologisms
- 5) Utilizing direct translations
- 6) Adapting phrases to fit local contexts
- 7) Ensuring cultural and linguistic sensitivity
- 8) Using metaphorical translations

The data gathered for this study reflects a comprehensive exploration of linguistic elements and the interdisciplinary efforts that underpin this paper. However, the effectiveness of this terminology relies on how well the target audience understands it. Nevertheless, our analysis indicates that the terminology related to COVID-19 has become widespread in the Albanian context since 2020. In quantitative research, in terms of percentages, the most common translation approach is equivalence (47%), terms such as 'pandemia' (pandemic), 'izolimi' (isolation), and 'vaksinimi' (vaccination); followed by borrowing (16%) (e.g., 'asimtomatik' (eng., asymptomatic), 'kontakt' (eng., contact), calque (12%), like 'lokdaun' (eng., lockdown), and adaptation and transcreation (11.9%), such as 'distancim social' (eng., social distancing).

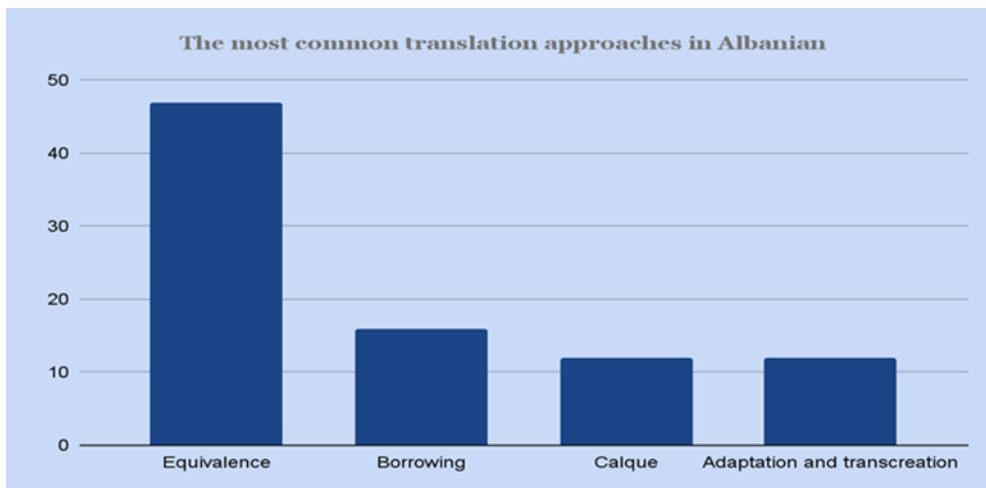


Table 1. Most used translation strategies

Below is an overview of key lexical characteristics and various translation techniques employed in adapting terminology related to the pandemic into Albanian.

Translation Strategies

This examination through the aforementioned translation strategies of COVID-19 health terminology used between March 1, 2020, to July 27, 2020, reveals the nuances of language and the cultural context in which these terms have been reinterpreted and integrated. The findings presented in this study offer an in-depth analysis of various linguistic components and the collaborative, interdisciplinary efforts that support this research.

- Some languages opt for direct translation of COVID-19 terminology from English to better convey these urgent concepts to their speakers. In Albanian, the term 'coronavirus' is rendered as <korona virusi>, closely following the English phonetics while making it accessible for Albanian speakers. Similarly, the English word 'quarantine' is translated to <kuarantinë>, and 'vaccine' becomes <vaksinë>. These direct translations showcase how essential terms have been phonetically adapted or borrowed directly from English to ensure clarity and understanding among the population.

Ultimately, whether through adaptation or direct translation, the goal remains the same: to communicate vital information effectively in a way that is culturally relevant and linguistically appropriate. This nuanced approach is crucial for fostering understanding and compliance, especially in public health communication.

Other common COVID-19 terms translated from English to Albanian that have been translated using the direct translation strategy are:

Table 1. Words and phrases translated by the Direct Translation method

Direct Translation	English	Albanian
	Coronavirus	korona virusi
	Quarantine	kuarantinë
	Vaccine	vaksinë
	Symptoms	simptomat
	Pandemic	pandemi
	Vaccination	vaksinimi
	Isolation	izolim
	Face mask	maskë fytyre
	Hand sanitiser	desinfektues duarsh
	Test	test
	Positive test	test pozitiv
	Outbreak	shkallëzim
	Contact tracing	ndjekja e kontakteve
	Health guidance	udhëzimet shëndetsore
	Hospitalisation	spitalizim
	Recovery	rekuperim
	Tracing	gjurmim

- Neologisms can play a crucial role in addressing novel concepts, as seen in the example of the English Neologisms play an essential role in our understanding of new concepts, particularly highlighted by terms like the English 'Super Spreader,' which translates to <super ngjitës> in Albanian. These terms were not merely created out of convenience; they emerged as critical responses to the global coronavirus pandemic, illustrating our urgent need to articulate unfamiliar phenomena arising within scientific and medical discussions.
- Adaptation and Transcreation: In the realm of language, particularly in the context of global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, the process of adaptation and transcreation has become increasingly significant. This involves not only translating terminology but also adjusting it to resonate with specific linguistic and cultural nuances. For example, 'social distancing' has been adapted to fit various cultural contexts. In Albanian, this concept translates to <distancim social>, which is not just a direct translation but also reflects local understandings of personal space and social interactions during the pandemic. This adaptation illustrates the importance of considering cultural norms and societal values when disseminating health-related information. Transcreation requires a creative approach to translation, ensuring that the original message's intent and emotional impact are preserved, even

when the wording changes. According to Jiménez-Crespo & Sánchez (2017), this dual focus on translation and creative adaptation is essential, especially when introducing new concepts that may not have direct equivalents in the target language.

- Calquing is a linguistic process that entails borrowing the underlying structure of a foreign expression while translating its components literally into the target language. This technique is useful in situations where there is no direct equivalent or established term available in the target language. An illustrative example of this can be found in the translation of the English term 'lockdown' into Albanian, which was rendered as <lokdaun>. This translation captures the sound and structure of the original term, effectively embodying its meaning through literal interpretation.

In this instance, the Albanian authorities confidently took significant steps to enhance public understanding of the lockdown measures. They delivered clear and comprehensive explanations in Albanian, thoroughly outlining the implications and rationale behind the lockdown. Acknowledging the urgency of effective communication during a crisis, these explanations were consistently paired with visual aids, such as infographics and videos, which made the information not only accessible but also engaging.

- Cultural and linguistic sensitivity has been highly considered by translators when translating COVID-19 terminology. For this purpose, the study aimed to identify how the chosen health terminology in both languages conveyed information that resonated with the target audience and was culturally appropriate. Henceforth, a focus was put on adjusting terminology, tone, or examples to align with local customs and beliefs (Gapparova, 2020). Through cultural and linguistic sensitivity, the study analysed if the information was clearly stated and accurately conveyed, fostering public responses. The perfect example is 'Lufta kundër armikut të padukshëm' (the fight against the invisible enemy), which is explained in detail in the section on metaphors. Here, the purpose of using this metaphor was to tailor messages to meet the cultural and linguistic frameworks of the audience and to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of health communication news.

To achieve its best outcome on how the frequent appearance of specialised terminology in various news outlets shaped public understanding and behaviour during health crises, it would have needed the involvement of readers, and that was impossible to put into practice, but it would have shifted from the objectives of the study. Maybe this will be the topic of another paper.

Another noteworthy finding was the substantial influence of English on the development of Albanian medical terminology regarding linguistic borrowing and cultural nuances, which underscores the profound impact that English has as a global lingua franca, particularly in the field of medicine. Several factors contribute to this trend, including the overwhelming presence of English-language medical publications and literature, which serve as key resources for medical professionals and students. Furthermore, the collaboration and exchange of knowledge through international partnerships in addressing health crises have significantly facilitated the integration of English terms into the Albanian lexicon, thereby enhancing the richness and precision of medical discourse in the language.

- The metaphor for Coronavirus, the cognitive approach. During the pandemic, metaphors about coronavirus were used to describe personal or social perceptions about the virus. The Albanian version is 'Lufta kundër armikut të padukshëm' (the fight against the invisible enemy). In this case, it is noticed the replacement of the word virus with the word enemy. The usages of the words fight and enemy in the example above are at the detriment of the word virus, considered the enemy in both source and target texts. The word fight on its own is a term used in the army to defeat the enemy. Metaphors help people with the intangible, with tangible expressions (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). There are numerous English metaphors about COVID-19; a few to mention are apocalypse, zombie, invisible enemy, nature's warning, and so on. In the Albanian context, one of them predominated in most official news delivered at the website of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania: 'Fight against invisible viruses...'. (Risagarniwa, & Sunarn 2020).

As a summary, the following table illustrates the words and phrases used in the study and analysed through the above translation strategies:

Table 2. Words and phrases analysis through different translation strategies

Translation Strategies	English	Albanian
Neologisms	Super Spreader	super ngjitës
Adaptation and Transcreation	social distancing	distancim social
Calquing	lockdown	lokdaun
Cultural and linguistic sensitivity / Metaphorical translations	the fight against the invisible enemy	lufta kundër armikut të padukshëm
	face the storm	përballojmë stuhinë
Metaphorical translations	apocalypse	apokalips
	zombie	zombi
	invisible	i padukshëm
	enemy	armies
	nature's warning	forcë e natyrës

Analysis of Albanian COVID-19 Terminology and its impact on Albanian culture

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly influenced language, particularly in English, where terms such as 'social distancing,' 'quarantine,' and 'lockdown' spread rapidly and became widely used worldwide. This was mostly made possible by social media and online platforms, and the rapid dissemination of information through virtual communication allowed for the immediate adoption of terminology by the masses, and it made it easier for people to discuss and understand the evolving situation. It also reflected the pandemic's global reach and underscored the English language's adaptability in incorporating new vocabulary (Muller, Beka, 2017).

In contrast, Albanian tends to rely more on translations and calques when incorporating foreign health terms. This practice has led to a blend of loanwords and local expressions within the Albanian lexicon. While some terms have been directly borrowed from English, others have been adapted to fit the phonetic and grammar structures of the Albanian language. For instance, terms like "lockdown" have been translated as "lokdaun," reflecting a trend toward using English terminology rather than developing an equivalent Albanian term. However, the dependence on borrowed terms can create challenges in ensuring that all classes of audiences, including educated or uneducated people, or the old generation, fully understand the meaning of these concepts, particularly among those who may not be familiar with English.

Additionally, there has been a notable impact of English borrowing in Albanian medical terminology, helping to modernize and expand the language in response to contemporary health discussions. The influx of new terms has prompted discussions among linguists and language conservatives about the balance between maintaining linguistic integrity and embracing necessary innovations that reflect current realities. This dynamic evolution of language is particularly evident in medical contexts, where precise communication is vital for public health (Musabelliu, 2020).

Furthermore, the research uncovered a range of language-specific and nuanced differences in the way health-related terminology is comprehended and used within Albanian society. For example, the term 'lockdown' was interpreted through multiple lenses, which reflected the unique cultural perspectives and attitudes towards cultural practices dominant in Albania. These interpretations varied significantly, highlighting the diverse social and historical contexts that shape how such terms are perceived. In some cases, the concept of lockdown may evoke feelings of safety and protection from the virus, while in others, it may raise feelings of isolation or frustration due to restrictions on movement.

The study also documented various cases of shifting meanings and the emergence of newly coined terms that sought to articulate concepts associated with the pandemic. This dynamic evolution of language demonstrates not only the adaptability of communication in response to unprecedented events but also the creativity involved in finding suitable descriptions for new realities. For example, terms or expressions like "super spreader", "invisible enemy" or "face the storm" were introduced into everyday discourse, provoking discussions about individual responsibility and community health.

One thing that was noted in the Albanian linguistic situation of the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, from March 1, 2020, to July 27, 2020, is that its "special" terminology extended beyond general vocabulary; it influenced cultural attitudes and public agreement towards health practices of the government rules. As people become more familiar with these terms, they may also develop a greater understanding of public health measures and their importance in combating the virus. With this regard, it can be stated that in hard times, the widespread use of specific terminology among different demographic communities can foster a sense of collective identity and shared challenges. For this reason, health news outlets issued by official authorities must adapt to effectively incorporate new health terms to overcome any potential understanding or cultural gaps among various audiences.

Observations on the Medical Translations

We've observed significant issues in the field of COVID-19 news translation, particularly concerning the style and accuracy of medical terminology. In some cases, translators adhere too rigidly to the style of the source language, often English, resulting in awkward and mechanical outcomes that undermine the quality and clarity of the target language, Albanian. This word-for-word approach, also referred to as literal translation, often may create misunderstanding and ambiguity regarding crucial information about the coronavirus. Moreover, while trying to make the source language adapt to the Albanian nuances and linguistic patterns, translators may accidentally or involuntarily incorporate foreign grammatical structures or idiomatic expressions that do not resonate with the target language's linguistic means or the Albanian different audiences. This lack of adaptation can impede Albanian people's comprehension and reduce the overall effectiveness of public health messaging. This is the case of the terms "lockdown", "the storm," "invisible enemy" and "social distancing"- given its literal meaning to cease constant contact with other people; but what was meant by "social distancing" was "physical distancing", and not leading a solitary life to do COVID-19 restrictions. Most people at that time in Albania faced strong psychological and mental health challenges and sought online professional help (Kamberi, Jaho, Mechili, Sinaj, & Skendo, 2020).

Sadly, some journalists and translators prioritize technical translations of full papers or terminology without considering the need for clear communication. The focus on technical accuracy, while important, should not overshadow the primary goal of conveying information in a manner that is accessible and understandable to the general public. Complex medical concepts must be simplified and contextualized to ensure that they are effectively absorbed by a broad audience, including those without specialized knowledge. This requires a shift in emphasis from merely translating words to interpreting meaning and adapting language accordingly.

Particularly in the Albanian context, we have found that many medical translations are performed by native speakers who lack the necessary medical expertise or the linguistic skills to accurately convey complex terms. While fluency in Albanian is essential, it is not sufficient to ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of medical translations. Translators must also possess a deep understanding of medical terminology and concepts, as well as the ability to navigate the nuances of both the source and target languages. Without this specialized knowledge, translations may be inaccurate, misleading, or even dangerous.

This can lead to misunderstandings among the general audience and undermine public trust in health information. To remedy this situation, it is imperative to engage medical translators who demonstrate specific competencies: native or near-native proficiency in the target language, full command of the source language, and a deep understanding of medical terminology. This approach is essential, as medical terminology evolves rapidly, with new terms emerging in response to discoveries and reclassifications (Bowker & Pearson 2002). By prioritising qualified translators, we can ensure clarity and accuracy in conveying vital health information. The need for qualified medical translators extends beyond the accuracy of individual terms; it encompasses the overall coherence and clarity of translated materials. Translators must be able to synthesize information from multiple sources, adapt language to suit the intended audience, and ensure that the translated text aligns with established medical conventions. This requires a high degree of skill and expertise, as well as ongoing professional development to stay abreast of the latest advancements in medical terminology and translation practices (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003).

The analysis of COVID-19 terminology within the Albanian public discourse emphasises the critical necessity for clear and precise communication during crises. Addressing the challenges associated with medical terminology and implementing effective translation strategies can ensure the accurate conveyance of essential information to the public. Such efforts are vital in fostering a better understanding of health directives and enhancing public trust in communication during emergencies. The impact of

inaccurate or unclear translations can affect adherence to health guidelines, influence public behaviour, overall health outcomes, and individual comprehension (Kerras & Baya, 2021).

This assertive, multifaceted approach ensured the public received essential information with clarity and precision. It highlighted the critical importance of strong messaging in challenging times, demonstrating how language can evolve to meet contemporary needs. The Albanian authorities showcased their firm commitment to public safety and understanding, building a robust foundation of trust with the community they serve. Clear and confident messaging is necessary, and their proactive measures exemplify the decisive action required in moments of crisis. A consistent and well-coordinated communication strategy helped to promote public compliance with health measures, reduce anxiety and misinformation, and ultimately contribute to better health outcomes. By prioritizing clear and accurate communication, public health authorities can build trust with the community and ensure that everyone has the information they need to protect themselves and others.

Conclusions

The study was conducted to delve deeply into two primary areas: 1- the COVID-19 terminology used by the Albanian Health Authorities to describe the virus; and 2- various translation strategies employed by journalists and translators while reporting COVID-19 news. Through rigorous analysis, 30 COVID-19 terms, in both English and Albanian, were identified, along with several key approaches that consistently emerged as significant during translation. These terms were more widely used on the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania's website and in press releases. For the latter, there is no gathered evidence. However, further investigation is needed to prove the latter claim with more complete evidence. The initial examination suggests that these official sources played a crucial role in shaping public understanding and awareness of the pandemic.

To address our objectives, an emphasis was placed on the identification of eight translation strategies and how they were used to translate and adapt specialized terminology associated with COVID-19 for varied target audiences, encompassing different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These strategies included borrowing, calque, literal translation, neologism, direct translation, adaptation and transcreation, cultural and linguistic sensitivity, and metaphor translation methods. Throughout the study analysis, the eight chosen techniques contributed to rendering the correct meaning, metaphorical nuances, and cultural background. Among these translation strategies was the direct translation of specific technical terms, which aimed to retain the original meaning while ensuring clarity for the target

audience. Additionally, it was a prominent and crucial aspect of adapting these terms to fit cultural contexts by taking into account regional nuances and public familiarity with health-related vocabulary. This adaptability ensured that the information was accurate, accessible, and relatable to audiences.

Moreover, cases were observed where the creation of entirely new terminology was necessary, particularly in situations where existing words failed to encapsulate newly emerging concepts linked to the pandemic. This proactive approach highlights the dynamic nature of language and the pressing need for innovative solutions during crises. Also, the usage of examples from both languages, English and Albanian, were documented and highlighted, recognising their vital role in facilitating effective communication about the pandemic to a wide array of audiences. The findings of the study resonate with the insights presented by Kerras & Baya (2021), underscoring the importance of adaptability and precision in translation efforts during these unprecedented and rapidly evolving times. Engaging with these varying strategies is aimed at contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in pandemic-related translation work.

However, translating COVID-19 terminology into Albanian posed challenges, as certain terms may not have equivalents in the language. In such cases, experts and non-experts acting as senders and receivers of information must strive to find the most accurate and culturally appropriate equivalents to ensure effective communication and prevent misunderstandings and misinformation. The need for clear and precise language becomes crucial to avoid misunderstandings and misinformation (Gapparova, 2020). Another challenge posed by medical terminology, and COVID-19 terminology in particular, that we faced during the analysis phase is ensuring accurate and effective communication across different contexts and settings. In cases of English COVID-19 terms borrowed into the Albanian context so that the information conveyed could be captured more easily by Albanian society, the respective authorities gave an extra explanation, taking into account the cultural, linguistic, and contextual nuances, to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers (Bowker, & Pearson 2002).

Another limitation of the study may be the time length chosen to gather our data, reflected in the limited number of models/approaches used for this study. Further research including a broader timeframe, more COVID-19 terminology, and incorporating additional analytical frameworks could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of COVID-19 terminology and translation strategies in Albania. For this purpose, this paper is the first sequel of studies on this topic.

In conclusion, the study sheds light on the specific vocabulary used in the Albanian context but also emphasises the role of translation strategies in shaping public perception and knowledge about COVID-19. This analysis is

crucial for ensuring that health communication is accurate and culturally relevant, aiding information during health crises. The findings from this research can inform future public health communication efforts in Albania and other contexts facing similar challenges.

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