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METAPHORIC COVID NEOLOGISMS AND THEIR TRANSLATION PECULIARITIES

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The present paper examines the translatability of English metaphoric neologisms into Armenian in COVID discourse and investigates certain translation strategies used to deal with the problem, which, if not solved, will result in unexpressive translations leading to inefficient communication. The research focuses on the translation peculiarities of the new concepts (often expressed metaphorically) which form a new layer of medical disease terminology of the global vocabulary. Words used in COVID discourse need to be treated with care and responsibility since the usage of COVID neologisms fuels tension and creates distortion in public mind and, thus, causes panic and improper conduct. The results achieved through the application of the methods of induction and deduction prove that the translation of such terms serves to better understand the sender's message (although there are cases of ambiguity due to some hidden extra-linguistic basis) and discloses the fact that in the postmodern COVID period metaphor and metaphoric neologisms in healthcare, business and global media communication are coined quickly as a result of radical social changes, an unprecedented amount of "polluted" information, negative attitudes towards vaccination campaigns and false conspiracy narratives. Both English and Armenian metaphoric neologisms highlight the various aspects of the mentioned social response.

Keywords: *COVID discourse, translation of metaphoric neologisms, global vocabulary, efficient communication and impact.*

Introduction

Medicine is one of the specialized domains in which neologisms are constantly generated due to the continuous scientific and technical advances in the field, as well as the appearance of new diseases and unknown phenomena. In this

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context, neologisms are usually inserted in a language to fill a terminological gap which is usually accompanied by a conceptual gap. Medical terminology is a system of concepts that refers to conditions and processes occurring in the human body. This refers to all diseases and their symptoms, medical equipment and medicines, as well as methods for the diagnosis, prevention and treatment of various diseases.

Medical translation is characterized as a separate type of technical and scientific translation, since medicine with its related fields deals with public health issues. The main feature of translating medical texts is terminology. Besides, it shows the difficulties the translators of the social media neologisms encounter in the process of translating them from English into Armenian.

The core problem of the research is to examine and establish the translatability of COVID neologisms with the account of the extra-linguistic reality within global and Armenian contexts. The theoretical study of the problem indicates that it is not easy to assume when a neologism ceases to be a neologism and begins to act as a metaphor. Anyhow, we have set it our task to study the role of COVID neologisms in the creation of metaphor in pandemic discourse. The present investigation is carried out in two directions simultaneously: the theory of translation of conceptual metaphors/neologisms and the translatability of COVID neologisms. The vitality of the problem is conditioned by the present day spread and developments of the virus and its direct impact on the quality of human life over the globe. To reach this goal we intend to present analysis of carefully sampled examples from various social spheres of postmodern COVID period.

It is common knowledge that there are established strategies towards the translation of medical metaphors and neologisms. We intend to show that 1. not all metaphoric neologisms in English COVID discourse are translatable; 2. sometimes they need to be interpreted; 3. the target language users do not commonly use the already created Armenian conceptual equivalents; 4. there are cases when the international terms are used without translation; 5. COVID translation is marked by its creativity principle, especially due to technological advances and their influence on human behaviour. A set of translation approaches together with the methods of induction and deduction have been applied to the linguistic material from healthcare, media and other spheres in the course of our research.

COVID-19 is no longer a medical concern: it has even designated its fashion (mask and sportswear variety) and dictates its lifestyle. In this emerging

scenario the quality of life has become even dependent on medical knowledge, terminological accuracy. Various restrictions with their continuous impact on interpersonal and attitudinal relations, human emotion and empathy, have even been reported to affect the health of patients. By 2020 COVID metaphors have already been part of the global glossary and can be found in stable lexical networks. The study shows that COVID metaphoric neologisms based on the conceptualization processes in healthcare, appear in media as part of popular discourse.

So, the present study investigates the translation strategies used to deal with the source language (English) new medical COVID metaphoric neologisms to transfer them into the target language (Armenian). The theoretical material on the problem is supported by examples from various social spheres, the popular discourse including.

Translation problems in *New Normal*

The period of 2019- 2020 was the beginning of formation of a new layer of medical terminology, which is connected with the reality people face today. Translating newly coined words – neologisms – from English into Armenian is a most hectic job since before neologisms are created, they go through a systematic linguistic process in which each word has its own way of formation and its linguistic specificity. In addition, the newly termed expressions are often used to grasp and hold attention, so they are shaped in an attractive way which is effort and time consuming. The word is usually an indicator of the innovation itself and the way it works. Accordingly, translators have to be aware of these facts and try to produce a translation that is as purposeful and attractive as the original English element. The problem of the research is the lack of translations that are provided for English COVID metaphors in Armenian dictionaries though many of the required concepts already have their expressions and are conducted by Armenian healthcare specialists who often prefer to use the English terms due to certain reasons like the dominance of Global English over other languages in general and Armenian language in particular.

The year 2020 was the beginning of the formation of a new layer of medical terminology with a social bias when computer technology plays a major role in this new area of medicine. This is another point to pay special attention to the extra-linguistics of the problem. Hence, the most popular medical term since 2020 has been *telemedicine*. It does not have its direct Armenian translation but instead the *explanation of the concept* (*unqułüg*

բժշկական խորհրդաստիճան) is used by almost all Armenian medical centers to fill the gap. During the pandemic to reduce contact with people the concept *telemedicine*, formed by combining the two words “telephone” and “medicine”, came into wide use. Although *super-spreaders* is another frequent COVID term today, it does not have its corresponding conceptual Armenian equivalent. This term refers to a person who is responsible for infecting a large number of people. Media informs that “...most new transmissions were from a few *super-spreaders*: about 10% of the people caused 60% of new infection... Actually this term is highly charged with emotive-evaluative overtones due to its first component *super*. The lack of its translation and its use have extra-linguistic implications – Armenia is a small country and a vast number of its population actually got infected very fast, and there was no social demand to create a specific neologism or concept. Another term is *infodemic*, which refers to an overload of true or false information during a pandemic. Coined from *information* and *epidemic*, it is used to offer a range of recommendations for governments and global media platforms on how to fight the COVID-19 false *infodemic*. In addition to serious terms, the daily vocabulary includes metaphoric neologisms such as *coronadivorce* (a large number of divorces during the pandemic), *coronababies* (a real boom in the birth rate due to forced quarantine) and *corona bud* (the only friend with whom you spend time during quarantine). These English terms were created by telescoping - two words are brought together to create a new word which combines their meanings. Couples whose marriages are fraying under the pressures of self-isolation could be heading for a *coronadivorce*. The phenomenon was not observed in Armenia. Moreover, self-isolation strengthened family ties which may be explained by Armenian family cultural specificity. So, the mentioned terms, perhaps, have not found their translation or equivalent concepts in Armenian since Armenian family members always show willingness and high morality to help their close people. They stick together to help each other to overcome the difficulties caused by the virus. The best recommendation for culture-based translation will be simple interpretation with the account of the context.

Now we intend to discuss the new names for lockdown dressing: *Hate-wear* and *sadwear* are lockdown fashion terms coined by NYT and Esquire for the ways people are expressing frustration through clothes. The media-coined terms confirm that “the pandemic has changed shopping for ever. Practical, comfortable items suitable for a lifestyle of working from home and occasional trips outside – such as Ugg (*You Go Girl*) boots, Crocs and trousers with

elasticated waistbands – have seen rising sales”. People wear these clothes to feel a bit relaxed when in front of their computers. NYT mentions that a sweater with holes in, jogging bottoms in the wrong size and a jumper worn so regularly “suddenly became a symbol of stress and sadness”. The list of “comfort-blanket” clothing included pajamas and hoodies, as well. Although the *sadwear* can be seen all over the world, Armenia including, Armenian media never mentioned this fact. Moreover Armenian youth seem to be quite happy about the new fashion giving no specific name to the fashion. We offer to list the mentioned items under the name *սխրության խորհրդանիշ նորաձևությունն* կամ պարզապես *թագածահրի/թագավարակի ոճ*.

Below are presented a couple of the most frequent clichés that one may come across in Armenian media to talk about COVID-19:

*Ծանր սուր շնչառական համախտանիշը - SARS-CoV,
Առաջարկում ենք պայքարել ու հաղթել կորոնավիր-
ուսին,
Պայքարել ՔՈՎԻԴ—19 ի դեմ, (UNICEF),
Ի՞նչ է կորոնավիրուսը, ինչպե՞ս պաշտպանվել դրա-
նից,
Այսօր ամբողջ աշխարհը մեծ ճակատամարտի մեջ է և
պայքարում է կորոնավիրուսի դեմ:*

Anyhow, there are internationally recognized *terms like patient, COVID, zoom+bie, covidiot, lockdown, covideo party, quarantine that are used in Armenian without translation. Terms like self-isolation, social-distancing have found their direct translations.*

The next part of the present paper deals with various approaches and strategies of translation and interpretation that are used as proper tools to successfully handle the problem of our interest.

A review of translation strategies and approaches

Global English is expanding within the New Normal context to enrich the global medical glossary with new concepts according to the unprecedented developments. In 2019 COVID penetrated into daily life. The phrases and expressions like *Bremain* (Britain to remain in the EU), *Bregret* (Britain+regret), *Brexit* (Britain+exit), *Euro-Fudge* (to cheat about something slightly, esp. by

not reporting facts accurately or not telling the exact truth), *Brexhausted* (Britain+exhausted) coined at the referendum not long ago, lost their vitality (BBC) and disappeared from media as soon as Corona terms appeared.

Actually the world is witnessing what Wittgenstein (Lyotard, 1979) called *language games*. What he meant by this term is that each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put. According to some postmodern linguists with the advent of postmodernism a privileged position for the science of linguistics was created due to

- a shift from truth to fiction and narrative, by a change from the world of experience to that of language,
- the demise of the three great metanarratives of science, religion and politics with their replacement by Wittgenstein's local language-games (Lyotard, 1979; Lecerle, 1990).

Perceiving the modern images and unbelievable demeanor of the postmodern society as normal, we proceed from the assumption that in the global context linguistic investigations can be carried out with the account of the extra-linguistic reality, the novel global spread of COVID being that extra-linguistic basis. Social changes initiate the appearance of new concepts and new words (neologisms) to answer communicative needs in a certain communicative community, to make communication easy and efficient, to influence the audience, to transmit certain social messages.

Neologisms are formed at a certain stage of language development, spread and become accepted as a language norm, and at this stage of the language development most language users perceive it as new (Herberg, 1988, p. 110).

Neologisms, perhaps the professional translator's biggest problem, are new words, word-combinations or fixed phrases that appear in the language due to the development of social life, culture, science and engineering. New meanings of existing words are also accepted as neologisms. A problem of translation of new words ranks high on the list of challenges translators face because such words are not readily found in ordinary dictionaries and even in the newest specialized dictionaries. Neologisms pass through three stages to cease to be neologisms to become metaphors: creation, trial and establishment. In other words, the neologism is created by a limited audience (still unstable and referred to as *protologism* (from Greek *protos* and *logos*) by analogy with prototype and neologism. Then, it is spread and tried by a large number of people (not widely accepted yet), and finally established (having gained wide-

spread approval it becomes stabilized and identified). The establishment, although a time consuming process, is reflected in glossaries and dictionaries (Parianou & Kelandrias, 2002, p. 756).

Translation theorists propose a range of strategies when discussing translatability issues. Dealing with the translatability problem, H. Nikska introduces the concept of “translational creativity” presenting interpreting strategies and the following translation strategies:

- Omission (the term is simply omitted, not translated, but may be translated at a later stage);
- Use of “approximate” or “provisional” equivalent;
- Explanation of concept (hypothesis: more usual in consecutive than simultaneous interpreting);
- Neologism:
 - a) loan translation (“literal” translation of a source language term);
 - b) direct loans /transfer (source language term is used as it is or with some modification to make it fit into the target language phonology/morphology);
 - c) coining of a new word (hypothesis: unusual in interpreting; more usual in written translation) (Nikska, 1998).

Newmark proposed 12 types of neologisms: new coinages, derived words, abbreviations, collocations, eponyms, phrasal words, transferred words, acronyms, pseudo-neologisms, and internationalism (Nikska, 1987; 1988, p. 143).

Generally, translators of medical texts either leave a given term in the original language (which is usually English) or resort to using foreign words solely because they are unable to find a better solution. In the worst case they assume and hope that the professional who reads the translation will be familiar with the English words. Certainly, language professionals do have the option of explaining the term through a definition or explanation, but this is often not appropriate because, in many cases, this would make the translation too wordy, particularly in documents where specific terms are repeated over and over.

The study shows that a considerable amount of COVID neologisms in English do not have recognized translated variants in Armenian because of the lack of demand. Moreover, misinterpretation is the major problem since it fails to provide successful communication. Generally, translators of metaphors/neologisms are known to keep to certain rules. It has been argued that metaphors can become a translation problem, since transferring them from one

language and culture to another may be hampered by linguistic and cultural differences. A number of translation procedures for dealing with this problem have been suggested, e.g., substitution (metaphor into different metaphor), paraphrase (metaphor into sense), or deletion. Such procedures have been commented on both in normative models of translation (how to translate metaphors) and in descriptive models (how metaphors have been dealt with in actual translations) (Schaeffner, 2004a).

So, for carrying out the job to its best, the translation is suggested being done with the account of the cultural background and the cognitive approach. As it is mentioned “[...] instead of identifying how source metaphors are rendered in target texts at the linguistic level, scholars are more concerned with metaphor-elicited conceptual shift, that is, how different conceptual worlds can be bridged via translation” (Schaeffner, 2004a). Investigating metaphors in politics, Schaeffner claims that “all translations are ideological since the choice of a source text and the use to which the subsequent target text is put are determined by the interests, aims and objectives of the social agents.” Schaeffner (2004b) emphasizes the significance of vocabulary in the process of practicing power (Schaeffner, 2004b). The points put forward by Schaeffner can be clearly detected in *COVID discourse* as a major extra-linguistic reality: the addressers practise power and serve the interests, aims and objectives of health organizations and their subdivisions as well as those of governments. As we have already mentioned in our previous publication (Oganyan & Gasparyan, 2022), the newly coined socially accepted concepts presenting WAR and NON-WAR domains like *covid-19*, *lockdowns*, *omicron*, *working from home (WFH)*, *social-distancing*, *zombie*, *zombombing*, *quarantines*, *covidiot*, *covideo party*, *ventilator*, *quarantine*, *self-isolation*, etc., abundantly appear in healthcare, business, media to effectively communicate and influence the audience. Referring to the field of communication in the context of the new coronavirus reality (job losses, zoom classes, testing inconveniences, vaccination fear and problem), they make the extra-linguistic basis for the linguistic expression of the *New Normal*.

So, if we apply Schaeffner’s (2004a) approach onto the translation of the glossary of metaphoric neologisms in use today, we shall see that the same conceptual shift for political translation does successfully work for COVID discourse metaphoric neologisms on the ideological persuasion-impact level. Hence, the translation strategies are supposed to proceed with the account of the mentioned extra-linguistics.

It is believed that the first thing to do is to establish and define the function of the neologism, its motivation for being in that particular place, the extra-linguistic reality. Ignoring this will cause confusion for the target readers. Ignoring each of them means misunderstanding the context in which the text is produced. Translators have to find out the meaning of new neologisms mainly based on the context. In this respect let us adduce examples from the two big domains of COVID-19 vocabulary to highlight the significance of function, context and the extra-linguistic basis.

a) *Non-war*: The domain which may include sports, storms, monsters, natural disasters, crime etc., as in the examples below:

- *to slow the rate* at which people get infected – *դանդադեցնել վարակի տարածման ընթացքը*;
- *turn to/move to mitigation* (to mitigate the risk to those who are most at risk: the elderly and those with chronic underlying conditions) - *մեղմացնել չափավորել, կառավարելի դարձնել վարակի ռիսկերը*;
- *The Coronavirus Blizzard* (a severe snowstorm with high winds) - *թագավարակի անսպասելի և անկառավարելի հարձակում*;
- *track down* (to find someone or something after a long, thorough or difficult search);
- *Virus as Beast or Crime*; - *թագածաիրը վրա է տալիս գազանի ու հանցագործության նման*;
- *Epicenter* *վարակի էպիկենտրոն*;
- *coronaspeak* - *կորոնասպեակ* indicates the set of corona slang neologisms like *sanny* - *ձեռքի գործիքներով վարակի ախտահանում* for hand sanitizer;
- *Covidiot* (*կորոնաստիստար* - we suggest using it without translation and interpretation) can mean both people who fail to follow the covid rules of behavior, fail in *social-distancing* - *տապալել սոցիալական հեռավորության պահպանման պահանջը* and *self-isolation* - *ինքնամեկուսացում*, and the opposite group - those who neglect covid rules and are obedient followers of those rules, are meant as well;

- *Crime* is a wild *beast* preying on (virus infecting) the city of Addison - Հանցագործ վարակը կատաղի գազանի նման զոհեր է փնտրում.
- The *crime* rate - Հանցագործ վարակը գործում է սահազնացող արագությունը in the once peaceful city has steadily increased over the past 3 years. In fact, these days it seems that *crime is lurking in* - վարակը ժանտախտի արագությամբ մուտք է գործում ամեն բակ ու տուն (plaguing) every neighborhood.
- Vaccine names (may include either proper nouns in the name, or their first syllable may include the stem *vac+cine*, and often may include numerals) are patterned in the non-war domain. As a matter of fact, Vaccine names show zero translatability although the hidden extra-linguistics sometimes contains a message, as for instance, *Sputnik Light*, giving a hint about the country of production – *Russia*, the mild or *light* impact; with *-vac – vaxin* indicating the presence of the vaccinating agent; *-shield* emphasizing that in case to take this one it will defend you: *AstraZeneca*, *Jenssen*, *Sputnik Light (rAd26)*, *CoronaVac*, *Sinovac*, *Sinopharm*, *Moderna*, *Pfizer*, *Novavax*, *Covovax*, *Spikevax*, *Covaxin*, *Covishield*, *Ad26.COV2.S*; *Sputnik –V (Gum Covid Vac*, etc.

b) *War* terms which often indicate the severe struggle/defence against the virus, may seem to exhibit obvious “aggression”. We all know that in this present *New Normal* the struggle or even the fight is the only option for survival as in *nation's battle against the coronavirus*; *‘defend the city’ against coronavirus*; *coronavirus has invaded the world*; *When crime is described as a beast, we are more likely to want increased police forces*. A vivid example of this is the sentence uttered by Boris Johnson not long ago (2022). He stated in a briefing that “This enemy can be deadly, but it is also beatable”. Talking about war, *cold war* should not be neglected. For example, the noun *containment* which is generally used in combination with *disease* as in *disease containment*, or in *containment to mitigation*, although initially it was meant to define a policy of controlling an unfriendly country’s power or influence (some sources even mention the communists).

The above-mentioned linguistic units, *neologisms*, cannot and should not be translated unless their function and communication aims are established, their contextual meanings are identified. Our study reveals that these neologisms appear in social spheres and media not just to inform. They have clear-cut intentions to inform causing a huge impact on the community's consciousness to inseminate fear (without vaccination they are going to suffer and die), commercial dependence (to buy corona items and stay-at-home clothes), obedience (to make people admit the unlimited power of the authorities who are very much concerned with the state of health of the inhabitants). Thus, a careful observation of the COVID discourse with metaphoric neologisms reveals that

1. COVID discourse has become an inseparable part of the popular discourse,
2. COVID discourse tends to display new functional-generic features tending towards
 - a) the genre of official language (instructions, orders) and
 - b) the language of advertising except one point - community members hurry to buy the "advertised" items and services not to enjoy but out of panic and deep fear of the perspective of facing considerable fines or/and unhappy ending.

The audience, in perennial fear of the upcoming deadly new set of viruses, follows the *Covid rules* of behavior not risking to mix with other people because they may catch the disease or transmit the infection to their relatives with poor health, etc.

So, the main function of *COVID discourse*, to inform, is not purely realized without an impact on the audience's, medical practitioners' and patients' minds and emotions. The influence is realized with the interplay of the language/speech functions EXPRESSIVENESS, PERSUASION, IMPACT and INTERPRETATION (buying masks, expensive medicine and medical care), for DIRECTIVE purposes (to hastily vaccinate and get vaccinated because nobody wants to die). The hidden extra-linguistic message with its deep psychological peculiarities is responsible for the coinage of the *COVID* neologisms which are the carriers of the message, thus shaping not only the structural peculiarities of the discourse, but also the translation and interpretation ones. Finally, the discourse obtains a new psychological-manipulative role for commercial purposes in which neologisms prove to be text-building and style-forming elements.

Conclusion

1. The postmodern linguistics can be identified as an expression of Wittgenstein's local language-games;

2. Strategies and approaches have been established to help to describe, translate, interpret, conceptualize COVID-19 issues.

3. Not all metaphoric neologisms in English COVID discourse can show the same level of translatability.

4. Sometimes COVID neologisms need to be interpreted and not translated.

5. The target language users do not commonly use the already created Armenian conceptual equivalents.

6. There are cases when the international terms are used and not the Armenian equivalent.

7. COVID translation is marked by its creativity principle, especially due to technological advances and their influence on human behaviour.

8. The COVID discourse influence is realized with the interplay of the language/speech functions EXPRESSIVENESS, PERSUASION, IMPACT and INTERPRETATION (buying masks, expensive medicine and medical care), for DIRECTIVE purposes (to hastily vaccinate and get vaccinated because nobody wants to die).

9. The hidden extra-linguistic message with its deep psychological peculiarities is responsible for the coinage of the COVID neologisms which are the carriers of the message, thus shaping not only the structural peculiarities of the discourse, but also the translation and interpretation ones.

10. The COVID discourse obtains a new psychological-manipulative role for commercial purposes in which neologisms prove to be text-building and style-forming elements.

11. Neologisms appear in social spheres and media not just to inform. They have clear-cut intentions to inform causing a huge impact on the community's consciousness to inseminate fear (without vaccination they are going to suffer and die), commercial dependence (to buy corona items and stay-at-home clothes, obedience (to make people admit the unlimited power of the authorities who are very much concerned with the state of health of the inhabitants).

12. A careful observation of the COVID discourse with metaphoric neologisms reveals that

- COVID discourse has become an inseparable part of the popular discourse;
- it tends to display new functional-generic features tending towards
 - a) the genre of official language (instructions, orders, military) and
 - b) mostly to the language of advertising except for one point - community members hurry to buy the “advertised” items and services not to enjoy but out of panic and deep fear of facing considerable fines or unhappy ending.

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**ՓՈԽԱԲԵՐԱԿԱՆ ՀԻՄՔՈՎ COVID ՆՈՐԱԲԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ
ԵՎ ԴՐԱՆՑ ԹԱՐԳՄԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ
ԱՌԱՆՁՆԱՀԱՏԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐԸ**

**Նաիրա Գասպարյան
Մարիաննա Օհանյան**

Բժշկությունն այն մասնագիտացված ոլորտներից է, որտեղ մշտապես առաջանում են նորաբանություններ՝ կապված ոլորտում գիտական և տեխնիկական առաջընթացի, ինչպես նաև նոր հիվանդությունների և անձանոթ երևույթների ի հայտ գալու հետ: Հայտնի է, որ բժշկագիտական թարգմանությունը բնութագրվում է որպես տեխնիկական և գիտական թարգմանության առանձին տեսակ, քանի որ բժշկությունն իր հարակից ոլորտներով զբաղվում է հանրային առողջության խնդիրներով: Սույն աշխատանքն ուսումնասիրում է գլոբալ անզլերենի փոխաբերական հիմքով ստեղծված նորաբանությունների հայերեն վերարտադրության և թարգմանելիության խնդիրները COVID խոսույթում: Հետազոտությունը կենտրոնանում է *Նոր Նորմալ* իրականության շրջանում ստեղծված փոխաբերական նորաբանությունների և նրանց թարգմանական առանձնահատկությունների վրա, քանի որ փոխաբերական նորաբանությունները բժշկագիտական եզրույթների նոր շերտ են և կարող են հայտնվել գրավոր ու բանավոր խոսքում՝ լրատվության մեջ, պետական և հասարակական անձանց ելույթներում:

Բանալի բառեր՝ COVID խոսույթ, փոխաբերական հիմքով նորաբանությունների թարգմանություն, գլոբալ բառապաշար, արդյունավետ հաղորդակցում և ներգործում: