

## ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN PANDEMIC-RELATED TERMS

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***Abstract:** With the advent of the current pandemic, it is not only our lives that have changed but also the language we use. New terms have sprouted overnight to cover the new reality. This is the reason behind the current article in an attempt to provide equivalents for the newly formed English terms which sometimes pose challenges to their Romanian translators.*

***Keywords:** blending, corona terminology, derivation, pandemic terms, specialized terminology*

### 1. Introduction

In tackling the issues related to the language that has arisen during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, we need to start by trying to answer some underlying questions. A very general one has to do with the reason behind language change. Why is it that languages change? The answer seems to be just as straightforward as the question.

Languages behave in a very similar way to living entities. They evolve over time, adapting to new realities and circumstances. We are constantly adding new words and expressions to spoken language, i.e., neologisms. According to Singh (2005: 25) any change in a language goes through two phases: the innovation itself, and then dissemination. Usage and change are two sides of the same coin: speakers change the language as they use it, even though this is not always intentional.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term idiolect as “the speech habits peculiar to a particular person.” A single user may employ a word or phrase in a new way (idiolect) and then disseminate it.

There are multiple ways by which these new terms or uses can be shared, such as in a news story, a blog post, a video or a social media post. This leads to other speakers using this same word (or neologism).

An essential question that needs an answer is: how does language change impact communication during extraordinary times such as a global pandemic? The answer might lie in the fact that words, or rather, vocabulary changes very quickly and it is often difficult to keep track of that. We often see new words in the media, and so, we become aware of a lexical change. English has constantly undergone (lexical) changes throughout its history, and it has both gained and lost nouns, verbs, adjectives over time. The inclusion of new words in dictionaries gets media attention.

## 2. Theoretical background and the data

Any discussion related to new terminology involves the emergence of newly coined words. During the period of the current pandemic, we have witnessed the coinage of numerous new terms related to COVID. In the table below, there are just a few such examples with their possible Romanian correspondents.

English	Romanian
COVID-19	COVID-19, but also, covrig, covit
Covidiot	Covidiot
Coronacoma	-
Coronials / Coronababies	-
Covidivorce	Covidivorț
Coronaspeck	Coronaseu

One of the many definitions of terms is that they are the linguistic representation of concepts, the result of the development of cognitive processes and communication among experts within a community of specialized languages (Sager 1997: 25). Terms are also a tool by means of which one communicates about concepts, they are also the reflection of the way in which knowledge is structured in the expert's mind.

In its classic formulation, as stated by Wüster (1979), the theory of terminology is in favour of certain objective concepts which are clear within the static conceptual structures and it is based on noticing the so-called "frozen" elements in dictionaries. In spite of that, the study of specialized language in the context of real communication (i.e. texts produced by experts in a various range of contexts) resulted in an even deeper and more adequate explanation regarding the way in which specialized knowledge is understood and structured (Cabré 2003; Faber et al. 2005; Protopopescu 2013a, 2013b; Sager 1990; Temmerman 2000).

Terms, which are basically the linguistic representations of concepts, are created by a certain linguistic community which feels the need to communicate the knowledge it produces. However, the terms also represent the final stage in the formation process of concepts and contribute to the development of cognitive processes. Fundamental work in the field of term formation point to the fact that more often than not terms reflect the most relevant features of the concept (Sager 1990).

Whenever we examine the way in which terms behave in contexts of real communication, we can notice that the same concept is expressed by means of several terms in the texts produced by experts. In certain cases, these terminological variations differ not only formally but also semantically since every term offers a certain vision on the concept (Freixa 2006: 64). This observation may lead to the idea of linguistic planning. This concept was first introduced by Haugen (1959) who defined it as "*the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community*" (qtd. in Cooper 1989: 103).

The absence of certain Romanian equivalents for the newly formed English terms is obvious to the naked eye. There are several reasons for this, the main one being that most of the information, be it in the form of articles, blogs or even social media comments is written in English.

We need to stipulate from the onset that no language was rich from the very beginning. Leibniz (qtd. in Coulmas 1989: 117) was well aware of the inexistence of certain words in the German lexicon of his time, so he suggested certain steps that could be applied cross-linguistically. According to him, the first step is enriching the lexicon of a language, that is to say transforming it, making it as rich and as diverse as possible. To this end, Leibniz suggested the following four steps:

- a) seeking adequate words that are already available in the language corpus, but which are not, however, easily retrievable due to their less frequent use;
- b) retrieving old obsolete words with a certain quality;
- c) domesticating or naturalizing foreign names that have a certain meaning;
- d) coming up with new words where the above procedure fails.

In fact, these remarks are commonsensical because if we are to look at what happens during the history of any language or rather if we are to follow the evolution of any lexicon, we are going to notice that language does not rush to come up with new words or coin new terms. It rather digs deep into its lexicon for words or terms that for one reason or another have gone into obsolescence or are used with a different meaning or in a different register. Alternatively, if the language cannot resort to outdated words, it resorts to modern terminologies obtained either by coining (neologisms), or borrowing words. Neologism refers to the coinage and introduction of new words, to which Katamba and Stonham (2006:83-84) refer as “productive word-creation using the internal resources of language”.

The current article sets upon investigating the phenomena going on in the language at present, the way in which the terminology used during the pandemic has evolved from a morphological as well as from a diachronic perspective. Discussing such developments may lead to rethinking linguistic planning in the sense of finding more efficient methods of dissemination and usage of loans both within educational systems as well as elsewhere. At present one can notice a tendency towards foreignization which comes from the loan translation of structures from the source language or as a consequence of lexical borrowing. Thus, certain terms may have come to the stage that Pym (2004:37) calls glocalized.

From a linguistic perspective, such a period of time is extremely fruitful because we can actually analyze the terms as they come, sometimes we can even pinpoint the exact origin of a certain term. The processes involved in lexical change applied to the language generated during the pandemic range from more to lesser productive ones: compounding, clipping, contronyms, conversion, derivation, blending, acronyms and abbreviations, borrowing, semantic shifts, and others.

### **3. Analysis of the data**

To better understand the language phenomena that led to the emergence of new terminology during the pandemic, we shall explore the various lexical processes involved in the creation of pandemic-related terms.

### 3.1. Compounding

As English borrowed from other languages, compounding involved the use of ‘foreign’ elements, creating formations that were completely ‘non-native’ and sometimes hybrid words (in that they combined words from different languages). Examples of both types have been particularly prevalent in the domains of science and technology (Singh 2005: 15).

- (1) *dinosaur* = Greek *dino* ‘terrible’ + Greek *saur* ‘lizard’
- (2) *submarine* = Latin *sub* ‘under’ + Latin *marin-* ‘sea’
- (3) *telephone* = Greek *tele* ‘far’ + Greek *phone* ‘voice’
- (4) *telescope* = Greek *tele* ‘far’ + Greek *scope* ‘watcher’
- (5) *stethoscope* = Greek *stetho* ‘breast/chest’ + Greek *scope* ‘watcher’
- (6) *bronchoscope* = Greek *broncho* ‘windpipe’ + Greek *scope* ‘watcher’

Both *tele* and *scope* have become part of hybrid compounds such as *television* and *flouroscope*, which include words borrowed from Old French (*vision* ultimately from Latin) and Latin (*flouro* from Latin *fluere* ‘to flow’).

Starting from the pattern observed above, we notice how certain terms have emerged during the current pandemic following a similar path. Most of them are compounds containing the noun *corona*. *Corona* itself is a common noun used informally in relation to the Coronavirus, so it can be classified as an instance of final clipping. In compounds, it appears in various combinations. Thus, *coronacoaster* developed on the pattern of *rollercoaster* and it refers to experiencing conflicting emotions during lockdown. More specifically, it refers to the repeated highs created by spare time and the lows created by the restrictive existence. Other such terms are *coronapocalypse* (*corona* + *apocalypse*) or *coronageddon* (*corona* + *armageddon*), the latter being more of a blend. Another example of a compound that contains the noun *corona* is *Corona-Cut* which is a DIY haircut needed as a consequence of the closure of hairdressers and barbers during the lockdown. Often self-inflicted or carried out by a non-professional hairdresser, a *corona-cut* typically leads to a series of BHDs (Bad Hair Days), until it can be professionally rectified. *Coronadodge* is an unnatural and overacted swerve, carried out in the belief that it will prevent contracting the coronavirus from the avoided individual. Romanian translators would be faced with challenges in translating *coronadodge*, but would encounter no difficulties in referring to *coronapocalypse* as *corona-apocalipsă*, *coronacoaster* would most likely translate as *coronarusse*, on the pattern of *montagne-russe*:

- a) I know most people understand, but the *coronadodge* where I walk out into the middle of the road when someone is coming the other way still feels a bit rude. I would smile at them but worry that might come off as sarcasm. (Twitter user, <https://twitter.com/arobertwebb/status/1242835404522471426?lang=f>; accessed 2020, May 25)
- b) The term ‘*coronacoaster*’ began life as a funny meme about fluctuating between the highs of mastering the “baking of banana bread” and the lows of “drinking gin for breakfast”. (<https://www.mddus.com/resources/publications-library/insight-primary/q4-2020/surviving-the-coronacoaster>; accessed 2020 December 17)
- c) *Coronapocalypse*: Americans start panic-buying and the scenes are wild (<https://www.deseret.com/entertainment/2020/3/13/21179018/coronapocalypse-coronavirus-covid19-panic-buying-photos-memes-videos>; accessed 2020, March 13)

- d) Scrisoare către copilul meu în timp de *coronapocalipsă*: fiecare zi e o Duminică! ([https://www.qbebe.ro/mama/mamici\\_care\\_ne\\_plac/scrisoare-catre-copilul-meu-in-timp-de-coronapocalipsa-fiecare-zi-e-o-duminica](https://www.qbebe.ro/mama/mamici_care_ne_plac/scrisoare-catre-copilul-meu-in-timp-de-coronapocalipsa-fiecare-zi-e-o-duminica); accessed 2020, March 30)  
 (“Letter to my child during the coronapocalypse: each day is a Sunday!”)

An interesting case of compounding is that of compounding-reduplicatives. In this category we have terms such as: *Fauci-Ouchie*, a term widely used as a humorous name for the COVID-19 vaccine:

- a) A 6-year old ballet student asked me today if I’m excited about getting my “*Fauci Ouchie*” soon, and I will now be referring to the covid-19 vaccine as only that, because it’s the cutest thing ever. (Twitter user, [https://twitter.com/EmmaScott/status/1352425395375759363?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1352425395375759363%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fnancyfriedman.typepad.com%2Faway\\_with\\_words%2F2021%2F03%2Fwords-of-the-week-coronacoinages-2021.html](https://twitter.com/EmmaScott/status/1352425395375759363?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1352425395375759363%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fnancyfriedman.typepad.com%2Faway_with_words%2F2021%2F03%2Fwords-of-the-week-coronacoinages-2021.html); accessed 2021, January 22)
- b) Gov. Ron DeSantis returned to Fox News prime time for the second time this week, serving up a “*Fauci ouchie*” on The Ingraham Angle. (<https://floridapolitics.com/archives/433736-fauci-ouchie/>; accessed 2021, June 4)

The term is obviously a direct reference to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the chief medical advisor to President Joe Biden, who is a strong proponent of the vaccine. From a linguistic point of view, reduplicatives are compounds created by means of the repetition of a word or a part of that word. This particular compound is an instance of a rhyming reduplicative, made up of a proper name and an interjection.

As mentioned above, an ingenious type of compounding is hybrid compounding. Following this pattern, pandemic terminology has given prominence to a lesser used verb in English, *to telework*, which means to work remotely, as well as to the noun/adjective *teleworking*. Romanian also has such hybrid compounds as *telemuncă* or *telesalariat*. For example,

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

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

[from Legea nr. 81/2018 privind reglementarea activității de telemuncă, Text publicat în MO, Partea I nr. 296 din 2 aprilie 2018. În vigoare de la 5 aprilie 2018, <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gi3tknrrgm2a/legea-nr-81-2018-privind-reglementarea-activitatii-de-telemunca>; accessed 2020, August 15]

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

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

Romanian exhibits in this case an instance of borrowing or calque rather than hybrid compounding, by copying the English pattern, with terms such as: *telemuncă*, *telesalariat*. However, I have not come across the verb \*a telemunci, which indicates resistance to conversion, perhaps because of the verb phrase *A munci de acasă / de la distanță*. Alternatively, English also has the phrases *to work from a distance* or *distance work / remote work*. Another, more pertinent, reason is related to its etymology. If we are to acknowledge its status in Romanian as a borrowing or as a calque, it follows that it was not formed in Romanian by means of compounding, and therefore it would be resistant to forming a lexical family.

### 3.2. Clipping

Clipping is another rather productive lexical means for developing new terms during the current pandemic. Thus, we get such terms as: *Miss Rona* which is a new way to refer to *covid-19* online. It may be spelt as a proper name or as a common noun *rona*. It is both an instance of clipping (*Corona*) and an eponym (*the rona*). Interestingly, its origin is a reference to Covid-19 online that started among queer and black users on Twitter. “*Rona*”, “*the rona*” or “*Miss Rona*” as slang for coronavirus have been observed in both the U.S. and Australia. Dictionary editors have not yet documented wide enough usage to warrant their inclusion.

- a) Did you hear that Italy is shutdown because of *rona*?  
(cf. [UrbanDictionary.com](#) - by John Rona, 2020, March 11)
- b) “*Miss Rona* is really clapping the white supremacists”: Black Twitter’s political humor in Covid-19 times  
(<https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/spir/article/view/12136>; accessed 2021, November 27)

According to Vișan (2019: 196) “The inclusion of the label “dictionary” as part of the title of Urban Dictionary is certainly problematic, because the label automatically raises the expectations of its target readers, who immediately set Urban Dictionary against a prototypical dictionary that they take as their point of reference.” It is not a description of a standard language since many of the terms included in it are slang. It does not have a scholarly or a pedagogical purpose.

### 3.3. Conversion

Conversion is one of the minor lexical processes, so there are low expectations for terms formed in this way. One notable presence is the verb “to hamster”, which means *to hoard*. Its origin is Dutch *hamsteren* (v) meaning either *to stuff one’s cheeks*, or *to hoard*, a borrowing from the German *hamster* in 1916 or 1917. It has gained prominence during the current pandemic when a sign-language Dutch interpreter used it to refer to the idea of panic-buying and hoarding.

In the Netherlands, as elsewhere, people have “*hamstered*” in supermarkets as they worried about disruptions to supply chains and being isolated indoors.  
(<https://www.economist.com/1843/2020/04/08/do-you-speak-corona-a-guide-to-covid-19-slang>; accessed 2020, April 30)

Related to this, *Hamster Kaufing* of obvious German origin refers to stockpiling shopping (usually food) in the style of a hamster. Such stockpiling was carried out in fear of running out of supplies at home and being unable to buy them at the supermarket. The term was first coined in Germany but later adopted by English-speaking nations.

### 3.4. Derivation

This process appears to be more productive in Romanian, the most notorious example being that of *izoletă*, a common noun referring to a special type of stretcher, an isolation pod, used in the transportation of high-risk patients, for fear they might transmit pathogens. Its etymology is assumed to be unknown by dexonline, but the word is probably derived from the verb *a izola* and the suffix *-etă*. [dexonline.ro entry, added by raduborza, accessed 2020, November 2] It appears to work on the pattern of *bicicletă*, *motocicletă*, *trotinetă*. However, in these cases there are no verbs as is the case of *a izola* – *izoletă*, but Pană-Dindelegan (2020) argues in favour such an interpretation. The etymology in the dexonline entry is marked as unknown, so the editor of the entry does not fully commit to it.

Its English correspondent would be *isolation pod* (NP) a capsule which is used to provide medical isolation for a patient. Isolation devices were developed in the 1970s for the aerial evacuation of patients with Lassa fever. In 2015, Human Stretcher Transit Isolator (HSTI) pods were used for the aerial evacuation of health workers during the Ebola virus epidemic in Guinea. So, the origin of the NP in English goes at least as far back as 2015/2016.

Interestingly, this strange looking device had a short-lived lifespan, since it was extensively popularized and used at the beginning of the pandemic, but quickly went into obsolescence as the pandemic progressed. The various other such derived terms, prompted Pană-Dindelegan (2020) and Zafiu (2020) to argue in favour of the richness of the Romanian language relying upon these very processes of lexical dynamics. Dindelegan even went as far as questioning the poor status of Romanian, given its so-called quick reaction to the newly formed terms. However, as we can see from the examples discussed so far, Romanian is not as quick to react and translate, adopt or adapt certain terms.

### 3.5. Blending

Of all the lexical processes, blending seems to be by far the most productive means of forming new terms during this period. It would be interesting to see from a statistics point of view, what is the percentage of newly formed blends compared to other newly formed terms.

A lot of slang terms containing some form of *corona* or *covid* have been generated during this time. Below we provide a list of such terms with relevant contexts:

**Covidiot** is a common countable noun, referring to someone who ignores public health advice. It is a blend of *COVID* + *idiot*. The term “covidiot” describes any and every person behaving stupidly or irresponsibly as the epidemic spreads. Its origin can be traced back to early March 2020; it spread almost as fast as the virus (mostly due to the social media), and so did instances of **covidiotic** behaviour.

**Covedient** is someone who rigidly follows (to the extent of over-interpreting) all government warnings and regulations related to the coronavirus, a blend of *COVID* + *obedient*.

**Covidivorce**, which needs no further explanation, is a blend of *COVID* + *divorce*.

**Coronababy**, **coronacation**, **coronalusional**, **coronasplaining** all are blends of *corona* + *another noun*. Where once there were “blackout babies”, we can now expect a wave of “coronababies” and a new generation of “quarantens” in 2033. Couples whose marriages are fraying under the pressures of self-isolation could be heading for a “covidivorce.”

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/world/coronavirus-lockdown-relationships>; accessed 2020, June 2]

**Twindemic** formed on the pattern of *pandemic* to refer to the co-occurrence of the flu and corona pandemic at the same time:

“This was one of the few blessings in an otherwise abysmal winter, in which COVID cases and deaths surged to their highest levels ever in the U.S. At least we didn’t face the dreaded ‘twindemic’.” (“We Accidentally Solved the Flu. Now What?” by Jacob Stern, *The Atlantic* October 13, 2021;

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/10/flu-season-winter-america-choice>; accessed 2020, October 15)

Romanian has its own correspondents to the blends above, but they are fewer in number: **covidivorț**, **covidramă**, as well as **covidolog** (as pointed out by Hortensia Pârlog in a personal communication), which appears to be a creation of Romanian.

- a) O soție afectată de “**covidivorț**” – fenomen generat de nepotrivirile de cuplu relevate de prea lungă coabitare în carantină, o “boală” ce tinde, se pare, să devină în țările europene o adevărată ”epidemie după pandemie”  
(<https://www.monitorulsv.ro/Prin-padurea-de-cuvinte/2020-07-21/De-la-ciurma-la-corona-26-Pupat#ixzz6dztWOLKS>; accessed 2020, November 11)  
(‘A wife affected by covidivorce – a phenomenon generated by couple incompatibility highlighted by long cohabitation during quarantine, a “disease” that apparently tends to become in European countries a true epidemic after the pandemic’).
- b) „Tot românul știe mai bine cum stau lucrurile (...). „**Covidologii**” adevărați se numesc Bittman, Garcea, Cataramă, Olivia Steer, Șoșoacă (...)” (*Dilema Veche* nr. 918, 11-17 nov. 2021, p. 3)  
(‘A Romanian always knows only too well how things are (...) The true covid experts (‘covidologues’) are Bittman, Garcea, Cataramă, Olivia Steer, Șoșoacă (...)’)

A term used in the media as a result of the pandemic, to mock the actions of people was *sheeple* which is a *pluralia tantum* noun, referring to a person or persons acting as a group or behaving only by taking into account what is trending, living with the herd mentality, following other people blindly, as opposed to thinking on one’s own and being an individual. It is obviously a blend of *sheep* and *people*. Interestingly, *sheep* is marked as [-human], while *people* is [+human] so it is hybrid in nature (cf. Zamfirescu, Dumineciou 2017: 270)

- a) Power to the **sheeple**: why common sense prevails despite COVID-19 uncertainty.  
(<https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/general/power-sheeple-why-common-sense-prevails-despite-covid-19-uncertainty>; accessed 2021, October 4)



- b) Wake up *sheeple*! Shepherd uses her flock to make a point about vaccines. (<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-wednesday-edition-1.6304974/wake-up-sheeple-shepherd-uses-her-flock-to-make-a-point-about-vaccines-1.6304976>; accessed 2022, January 18)

The first attested use of *sheeple* goes back to 1945, a blend made up of “sheep” and “people” [“Sheeple.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sheeple>. Accessed 2020, October 20.]

In his column *Round About Radio*, published in London 1945, W. R. Anderson wrote: “The simple truth is that you can get away with anything, in government. That covers almost all the evils of the time. Once in, nobody, apparently, can turn you out. The People, as ever (I spell it “*Sheeple*”), will stand anything.” (cf. <https://findwords.info/term/sheeple>; accessed 2020, October 20.)

Another interesting case of blends are those that also yield contronyms. A contronym, often referred to as a Janus word or auto-antonym, is a word that evokes contradictory or reverse meanings depending on the context. Specifically, a contronym is a word with a homonym (another word with the same spelling but different meaning) that is also an antonym (a word with the opposite meaning).

Generally, contronyms appeared in one of two ways: (1) different words with different etymologies converged into one word, or (2) one word acquired different and opposite meanings over time. Examples of contronym blends are: *morona* (a blend of *moron* + *corona*) and *vaxhole* (a blend of *vaccine* + *asshole*).

- a) While it doesn’t matter which shot you end up getting (as long as you make the choice that’s right for you), a *vaxhole* might brag about getting the Pfizer shot and put down a friend who got Johnson & Johnson. (<https://www.purewow.com/wellness/vaxhole>; accessed 2021, October 20)
- b) Rudd proudly brags that he would never get the Covid vaccine. Now he has Delta, along with many of his family and friends. What a *vaxhole*! (<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=vaxhole>; accessed 2021 October 20)
- c) A: “Look at those two friends over there, sitting closely together”  
B: “Yeah, that’s *Morona* 1 and 2”  
(<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Morona>; accessed 2022, February 15)

The Romanian counterparts are: *covidiot*, and *antivaxer*. However, while *covidiot* may have both meanings as the *morona* term in English, *antivaxer* is quite transparent for interpretation, formed by means of derivation and pointing to only one of the meanings of *vaxhole*. *Morona* refers to an individual showing moronic characteristics towards the coronavirus pandemic. There are two types of “*morona*”: (1) individuals who put themselves or others at risk through reckless acts, e.g., refusing to wear a mask, and (2) individuals who overreact to every twist and turn of the coronavirus story. *Vaxhole* denotes (1) a person who brags about being vaccinated (this is a common definition on Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) or (2) a person who refuses to be vaccinated (for which English also has *anti-vaxxer*).

(cf. [https://www.cyberdefinitions.com/corona\\_virus\\_terms.html](https://www.cyberdefinitions.com/corona_virus_terms.html); accessed 2020, August 22). As stated above, the Romanian equivalent is *antivaxer*, but this is a generic term for all those opposing vaccines.

- a) „*Covidiot*” este noul termen apărut în mediul online, folosit pentru a-i descrie pe oamenii care nu respectă măsurile impuse de autorități în vremea pandemiei, dar și pe cei care iau în răs coronavirusul. (<https://adevarul.ro/life-style/stil-de-viata/cine-covidiotii-noul-termen-apatut-online-panicati-vs-petrecareti-sfideaza-pandemia-daca-iau-corona-iau-gata-foto-video-15e9748475163ec4271c2e04f/index.html>; accessed 2020, October 20)  
(‘Covidiot is a new term that has appeared online, used to describe people that do not comply with the rules imposed by the authorities during the pandemic, as well as those who mock the coronavirus.’)
- b) Pe cine a chemat PSD să rescrie Legea carantinei: *antivaxxeri*, negaționiști ai Covid-ului și ONG-uri care susțin teoriile conspirației. (<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/pe-cine-a-chemat-psd-sa-rescrie-legea-carantinei-antivaxxeri-negationisti-ai-covid-ului-si-ong-uri-care-sustin-teoriile-conspiratiei-1335087>; accessed 2020, October 20)  
(‘Who did the PSD call in order to re-write the Law of Quarantine> antivaxxers, Covid negationists and NGOs supporting conspiracy theories.’)

### 3.6. Acronyms and abbreviations

One would not expect for acronyms and abbreviations to be so productive in the case of new terminologies, but in this particular case, both English and Romanian exhibit a few such terms.

The most prominent term is Covid itself.

(1) COVID or Covid? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it first appeared in a Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> World Health Organization situation report as shorthand for “coronavirus disease 2019.”

There is also a question related to the way in which it should be written: COVID-19 or Covid-19. The Oxford English Dictionary editors report regional differences for this term as well. Thus, “COVID” in capital letters is dominant in the U.S., Canada, and Australia, while “Covid” is more common in the U.K., Ireland, New Zealand, and South Africa. Since the Oxford English Dictionary is edited and published in England, British forms take precedence: in the online dictionary, the headword is *Covid-19*.

(2) BC (“Before Corona”, abbreviated as BC) refers to the time before the coronavirus struck. It is a play on the phrase “Before Christ” and implies a time long ago.

As far as Romanian is concerned, COVID was initially borrowed as an acronym, hence its capitalization in spelling (Pană-Dindelegan 2020, online). Romanian has adopted abbreviations such as: ATI (Anestezie și Terapie Intensivă), DSP / DSP-ist (Directia de Sănătate Publică), DSU (Departamentul de Situații de Urgență).

### 3.7. Borrowings

English is quite hospitable to borrowings so it does not come as a surprise that we do have new terms that are the result of borrowing.

*Coronaspeck* is a common noun used to refer to Coronavirus fat. Its origin is German, where it is an instance of blending corona + speck

Romanian faces some challenges in finding an equivalent for this. One possible equivalent would be *grăsimă intra-abdominală*, but this too formal and has medical connotations unlike the English term. Other possible equivalents in Romanian could be: *coronaseu*, *corocolăcei*, as discussed with colleagues who specialize in special terminologies and translation studies. For *Hamster Kaufing*, discussed in a previous section, a possible verbal equivalent in Romanian could be *a hârciogi*.

### 3.8. Semantic shift

Semantic shift (Viş an 2015) occurs due to the speaker's/writer's desire to avoid clichés. This happens due to a variety of reasons:

- a need for economy
- a change in the thing named
- sound changes and shift in meaning
- lexical obsolescence
- lexical gaps

Originally, *sheltering in place* referred to seeking safety during a circumscribed event, like a tornado or an active shooter attack. It is now being used to refer to a prolonged period of social isolation.

Similarly, *elbow bump* (or more recently *elbump*) has evolved from a gesture akin to a high-five, as documented in 1981, to its present form: a safe way of greeting another person without handshaking.

- a) Our current COVID-19 pandemic has many states issuing *shelter-in-place* orders to prevent the spread of this highly contagious variation of coronavirus. (<https://www.360training.com/blog/what-does-shelter-in-place-mean/>; accessed 2021, November 19)
- b) And then there's the "*elbump*", a greeting that involves touching elbows rather than shaking hands with the other person. (<https://eu.palmbeachpost.com/story/news/columns/2020/03/13/cerabino-learning-lexicon-of-coronavirus-spread-it-around/112272360/>; accessed 2021, November 19)

Some regional differences are also emerging in COVID-19 language. *Self-isolate* has been the preferred term in British English, whereas *self-quarantine* is more commonly employed in the U.S.

- a) *Self-isolate* straight away and get a PCR test (a test that is sent to the lab) on GOV.UK as soon as possible if you have any of these 3 symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild. (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>; accessed 2021, November 19)
- b) *Self-quarantine* is a practice used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. (<https://uh.edu/covid-19/guidelines-protocols/completion-of-self-quarantin-isolation/>; accessed 2021, November 19)

### 3.9. Confusing terms

During lockdown, the terms *social distancing* and *physical distancing* came to be extensively used in the media. One of the most widely employed these days is **social distancing** – Ro. *distanț are socială*. This is the technical term used to indicate that people need to remain two meters apart from each other. However, a lot of people argue in favour of a difference between *social distancing* (*distanț are socială*) and *physical distancing* (*distanț are fizică*). As a matter of fact, they have very different meanings. *Social distancing* implies that a person is isolated from the society they live in. *Physical distancing* indicates that a person is physically away from other people. It could be argued that in our highly digital age the focus should have been more on physical rather than social distancing. As Stephen Frost (2020), of the Counselling Directory, puts it, “at a time of crisis and fear, we need the opposite of social distancing. [...] We need to physically separate, not socially separate.”

### 4. Conclusion

The new English terminology generated as a consequence of the pandemic poses challenges for the translators and the linguists, who need to come up with Romanian equivalents for many of the newly formed / newly coined terms. We are in the process of witnessing the failure of standard dictionaries to keep up with the new terminology. There is some hesitance in including new terms, because they are deemed as ‘slang’. On the other hand, older terms are revived by the media and social media (see the case of *sheeple*).

Romanian seems to be less flexible or hospitable towards borrowing or adapting the new terms.

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