# SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS OF THE COVID-19 INFODEMIC: HOW IS LANGUAGE USED TO TRANSMIT HEALTH INFORMATION IN ARABIC AND ENGLISH?

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***ABSTRACT :***

***The Coronavirus pandemic has affected all areas of life in a globalised world. Infodemic has been present along with the Covid-19 pandemic since huge flows of information have been made available on the internet. In this paper, we aim to explore how linguistic devices are socially used to create infodemic, translate information, and how the expressive and conative functions have been fulfilled. To this end, some websites and social media posts are analysed to identify the infodemic patterns and the occurrence of coronavirus-related terms from a sociolinguistic perspective. Some translation strategies related to the coronavirus context are examined to gain a qualitative understanding of information transmission sociolinguistic patterns. It has been concluded that language creativity and diversity as well as the extensive denotative and connotative uses of linguistic devices are the main aspects of the Covid 19 infodemic, which reflects the major preoccupations of the time as well as the social, cultural and linguistic features of each society.***

***Keywords: Covid-19; Infodemic; Misinformation; Sociolinguistics; Translation.***

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The Covid-19 pandemic has been rapidly evolving. Modern communication technologies and internet have widely contributed to creating, delivering and sharing Covid-19 health information in a borderless and interconnected world. Great flows of information were transmitted worldwide in various languages. However, health misinformation and rumours have been largely circulating, especially on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, causing panic, fear, anxiety, and stress. This is mainly because anyone can publish anything about the pandemic on blogs, podcasts, websites, and media

channels, without prior quality control. Language has been the most used tool to create infodemic, transmit, and translate both accurate and inaccurate information. Language functions have been used to express feelings, explain attitudes, engage in social interaction, draw the attention of the recipients and influence their behaviour. Translation services have been much needed in the pandemic context, many governments designed websites to share Covid-19 resources that were translated into several languages.

## 1.1 Infodemic and the Covid-19 pandemic:

Information about the Covid-19 pandemic has been widely shared and transmitted on the internet, to such an extent that an infodemic has been created. Infodemic is defined as the rapid spread of all kinds of information, thus, making solutions more difficult to find. (Ashrafi & Kazempour, 2020)

The WHO stated that the Covid-19 pandemic has been accompanied by a massive infodemic which is "an overabundance of information – some accurate and some not – that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need them" (WHO, 2020). It is inferred from this definition that infodemic involves huge volumes of both information and misinformation.

Infodemic has been amplified especially through social media networks that has caused it to spread farther and faster like a virus. (Zarocostas, 2020, p. 676) Thus, infodemic is similar to a pandemic since information spreads rapidly, widely, and in a short period.

In fact, people have needed information about what is really happening in the world, the response of their governments to the pandemic, the clinical trials, the available treatments, the number of confirmed and recovered cases and so on; they were seeking information in every corner on the web without taking time to filter out false messages.

Moreover, infodemic has made it hard to access trustworthy information; decision-makers and health care workers have not had time to check every piece of information and address rumours because they had to undertake immediate actions to save lives.

Although it is difficult to analyse and check information on the web, it is advisable to access reliable and secure sources, such as WHO and countries' official health websites, which provide right information and tailored guidance.

In this vein, it is worth mentioning that WHO has warned against

infodemic and launched the WHO Information Network for Epidemics (EPI-WIN), available at www.who.int/epi-win, to provide proper timely informative materials, fight misinformation, deliver health protection recommendations and guidance for various populations, measure infodemic, and translate data.

## 1.2. Coronavirus health information:

The rapid spread of coronavirus has resulted in producing a huge amount of information. People across the globe have urgently needed accurate, trusted, and up-to-date information.

The designed and shared information covers many areas, such as statistical data, prevention and self-isolation measures, health care recommendations and guidelines, scientific reports as well as fact sheets.

It is worth mentioning that appropriate right information and educational materials may help control the pandemic, communicate risks, and increase people's awareness as to the adoption of protective behaviour.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) indicated, in its fact sheet no.5, that more than "361 million videos were uploaded on YouTube under the Covid-19, about 19,200 articles have been published in Google Scholar since the pandemic started. In the month of March, around 550 million tweets included the terms *coronavirus, corona virus, covid19, covid-19, covid_19,* or *pandemic*" (PAHO, 2020). Coronavirus hashtags are still common in various languages and are used in numerous social networks to highlight the existence of the pandemic and mirror the virus consequences for human life.

Many institutional websites have been designed to provide coronavirus resources in several languages, such as the Australian Department of Health, the social interpretation service of Wallonia (Belgium), the U.S. Government Websites for Covid-19 Information, FEMA (coronavirus rumour control) to get facts about coronavirus rumours and myths, the coronavirus.gov website to receive the latest official information from the White House Coronavirus Task Force, the UAE Thrive Wellbeing Center, which provides resources for parents, students, and educators.

Despite the existence of thousands of websites dealing with the pandemic latest news, people usually tend to take account of health information shared by their friends more than that found on search engines. (Zhao & Zhang, 2017). This fact may clearly explain the large dissemination of misinformation and rumours on social media.

## 1.3 Impact of Covid-19 misinformation:

We can **s**imply define misinformation as a piece of false, inaccurate and misleading information that is baseless, and deliberately intended to deceive people.

According to Vraga and Bode (2017), health misinformation is a claim related to health with no scientific basis and is not backed up with any expert opinion. This means that no medical institution accredits this piece of information that expands rapidly as much as health content is produced.

As for the ways of misinformation circulation, they are complex and difficult to determine, since anyone on the web can fabricate and share any news that are likely to reach billions of people with the click of one button, without prior quality checking or evidence analysis. Health misinformation is one of the most commonly shared types of information on social media (Li, Zhang & Wang 2017). Furthermore, social media platforms are responsible for the dissemination of health misinformation in the communication technologies era. (Fernández-Luque & Bau, 2015). Indeed, we have noticed, during lockdown period, that almost all social media users have been relatively exposed to misleading information without being able to recognize it or trace its origin.

As for the types of misinformation that have been shared; they have concerned all aspects of the coronavirus disease, such as its origin, causes and treatments. (PAHO, 2020) Rumours have been spread along with conspiracy theories. For example, Facebook threads featured 'Tanks expected in Algiers tomorrow', mentioning that military vehicles will be on the streets and the army will be deployed, preparing for lockdown, which was untrue.

Misinformation was divided into several categories; Waszak et al. (2018) identified three categories of fake medical news: (1) fabricated news, which is completely made-up information about medical facts that do not exist; (2) manipulated news, which includes a part of true basic information but has false conclusions; that is to say, the information is distorted; (3) advertisement news, which highlight stories to criticize conventional therapies and advertise products with little or no medical incidence.

Therefore, health misinformation is a major public concern and should not be taken lightly because it prevents public institutions from properly and effectively responding to epidemics and leads people to neglect safety measures to avoid the disease outbreak. (Brainard & Hunter,

2019) Hence, misinformation may cause people to change their behaviour and be less cautious. This will inevitably result in a much more severe, difficult to control pandemic, and eventually the breakdown of the health system.

Misinformation can negatively influence both individual and collective responses to counter the effects of the virus outbreaks. It may undermine trust in governmental authorities and local communities. For example, Algerian people suspected that the government was hiding the real statistics of coronavirus confirmed cases. Thus, people were sceptical, doubtful, and did not want to comply with the preventive measures that caused more mortality rates.

To summarize, it is important to avoid believing, sharing or responding to misinformation since it is deceiving and dangerous. Moreover, it is highly recommended having access to credible sources at the right time, reporting fake news, rumours and conspiracy theories. To this end, WHO has joined TikTok and launched information series to combat misinformation.

## 1.4 Linguistic devices in the context of Covid-19:

Language is a powerful means of communication. In the Covid-19 crisis, several coronavirus-related topics have been abundantly discussed on news platforms, and blogs. Social media have been among the first sources people rely on to have the information they needed about social distancing, quarantine, lockdown, and prevention measures, that is why they have maintained social connection.

Moreover, language and power are closely linked; language creates power and influence. This power lies in the use of single words with connotative dimensions. (Hung Ng, 2011, p. 371) Thus, language reflects power and control since it can shape thinking and influence behaviour.

Linguistic devices are defined as "items with proper functions, different from but continuous with the functionality of items ordinarily biological (etiological externalism)" (Muijnck, 2003, p. 223). Thus, a range of linguistic devices is used to fulfil some language functions depending on the various available contexts. For example, they can be used in press articles to make texts attractive, memorable, striking, and to catch the reader's attention.

In this regard, Semin and Fiedler (1988) identified four linguistic categories in their Linguistic Category Model (LCM) that focuses on the

abstract word choices serving to describe people, namely, descriptive action verbs, interpretive action verbs, state verbs, and adjectives.

Thus, words and phrases become powerful and influential, "according to the Linguistic Category Model, action verbs induce readers to assign greater responsibility or causality of the action to the sentence subject than to the sentence object" (Hung Ng, 2011, p. 372). Hence, texts and discourses should be deconstructed to identify the influence of language in certain contexts.

As for the types of linguistic devices, they are numerous and include "word choice, phrase types, and grammatical features (e.g., tense, aspect, voice)". (Biber, Connor, & Upton, 2007, p. 62) In addition to "particles, prepositional phrases, adverbial expressions, and peripheral constructions" (Harr, 2012, p. 153). These devices are units beyond the level of sentence, and are used to express feelings, state facts, develop topics, and assess situations.

For example, anaphoric pronouns, linking adverbials, and the use of lexical repetition and synonymy are lexical devices used to achieve topical cohesion in a text. (Biber, Connor, & Upton, 2007, p. 5) In the same vein, cohesion and coherence are very important properties of writing structure and influence the texts' readability; they are achieved by means of various linguistic devices, such as parallelism and transitional devices.

Reah (2002) gave some examples of linguistic devices used in news headlines that are homophones, homonyms, intertextual phrases and sayings, phonological similarity, alliteration, rhymes, and loaded words. (pp.17-19) These devices are also used in all types of texts to achieve various language functions.

Moreover, Millikan (1984) included "surface syntactic forms, tonal inflections, stress patterns, punctuations, and any other significant surface elements that a natural spoken or written language may contain" among linguistic devices. (p. 3) He added that linguistic devices "are often used in secondary or parasitic ways, as in metaphor, sarcasm, or lying". (pp. 3-4) Stylistic devices are part of linguistic devices that are "grouped into phonetic, lexico-semantic, and syntactic types", and result from the "revaluation of neutral words, word-combinations, and syntactic structures" (Efimov & Yasinetska, 2010, p. 12). This particular use of words results in connotative and aesthetic values.

In the Covid-19 health crisis, linguistic and stylistic devices have been extensively used to provide information about the virus outbreaks all around the world. The following words and phrases refer to the Covid-19

pandemic: '*the disaster'*, '*the storm of coronavirus'*, '*the serial killer'*, '*the killer with a benign face*', '*the monster'*, '*the Earth destroyer'*, and '*the invisible enemy'*. The medical staff (doctors and nurses) is referred to as the '*white army*' and '*the frontline soldiers*', the fight against the virus is referred to as '*the war/ the battle against coronavirus*'. The '*ghost town/village'* refers to towns and villages that have become deserted due because of the virus outbreak.

However, these linguistic devices can be used manipulatively to hide the truth, distort reality, and create ideological stances, thereby, influencing people to perceive reality as presented and not as it is. Critical linguistics, discourse analysis and rhetoric can be used to provide insights into the subtleties of language use. The linguistic devices have been also used to convey misinformation and rumours, and stigmatize countries and groups, for instance, the virus was referred to as the '*Chinese'* or '*Wuhan'* virus, which has led to racism, misplaced anger, and exacerbated tension between America and China.

## 1.5 Language functions and health information:

Language functions can be defined as the purposes for which language is used in different contexts. Language function depends on the context, fulfils basic communicative needs, and establish correspondence among members of any speech community, (Cobarrubias & Fishman, 1983, pp. 49-50) they are important to develop communication skills.

Jakobson (1960) identified six functions of language corresponding to the six elements of his communication model: (1) emotive (expressive), (2) conative (appellative), (3) metalingual (metalinguistic), (4) referential (cognitive, denotative, ideational), (5) phatic, (6) poetic (aesthetic) (pp.350-377). The emotive function is used to explain personal attitudes, the conative function is intended to draw the recipient's attention and influence their behaviour, the metalingual function is used to reflect upon language itself, the referential function is related to the conveyed messages, the phatic function is used to establish and sustain contact among participants, and the poetic function is oriented towards the form of the message and intends to make it fascinating.

Halliday (1975), in his turn, distinguished between seven functions of language: (1) instrumental; used to express needs and wishes, (2) regulatory; used to establish control over other's behaviour and actions, (3) interpersonal; maintains social interactions with others, (4) personal; expresses personal attitudes and feelings, (5) heuristic; used to explore the

surrounding environment, (6) imaginative; refers to the poetic use of language, (7) informative; used to convey information. (Halliday, 2004)

When we analyse the aforementioned functions, we notice that the types are relatively similar; they are just categorized under different labels. These functions are studied within many fields, according to Hudson (1995), the direct use of language falls within the field of lexical semantics, while the indirect communication is part of sociolinguistics. (Hudson, 1996, p. 230)

As for the social functions of language, they are related to the ways and manners language is used to express and maintain social relations. The view given on social relations with other can be expressed directly, by focusing on word- meanings or indirectly, by focusing on word-forms. (Hudson, 1996, p. 230)

Common language functions in the Covid-19 health crisis may include the expressive or personal function that is used to express people's feelings, opinions, and explain their attitudes towards the virus; it is characterized by the use of the subject pronouns, for instance "*I feel depressed about the whole situation*", "*We are deeply sorry to lose our beloved ones*", "I fear to get the virus". The interpersonal function is used in social interaction on social media to discuss the virus' evolvement and impacts.

The conative or regulatory function is used to influence and persuade the recipient by giving health guidelines, commands, and instructions to avoid the virus spread along with illustrating images. The informative function is used to describe health-promoting behaviour, communicate the virus risks and provide information about the sanitary situation and statistics. Even the poetic function is used in the context of the pandemic in several coronavirus awareness flyers, posters, social media graphics, and images.

## 1.6 Translation of the Covid-19 information:

Translation involves the transfer of lexical and semantic units from one language into another, taking into account the pragmatic, syntactic, stylistic and cultural dimensions. It is a complex process that requires many skills across multiple areas. Translators adopt several strategies and techniques to convey the message from one language to another, such as literal translation, borrowing, equivalence, adaptation, explanatory translation, explicitation, and addition.

As for medical translation, it "involves the communication of knowledge generated and needed in various specialties" (Montalt & González -Davies, 2007, p. 19) That is to say, medical translation may intersect with other disciplines, that is why the translator needs to have previous medical factual knowledge. (Montalt & González -Davies, 2007, p. 20) Indeed, the translator should be familiar with medical terminology, such as the names of diseases, drugs, body parts, as well as medical therapies and protocols.

Medical translation fulfils communicative functions, such as the dissemination of research findings among specialists, the communication of the most relevant research in the mass media, the education of both health professionals and patients, the approval of new drugs, the advertising of health products. (Montalt & González -Davies, 2007, p. 21) We have come across all these communicative functions in the context of Covid-19 that contributed to the expansion of medical translation on the global and local levels. Hence, the translation has covered academic research, press release, medical flyers, brochures, instructions, and audio-visual health materials.

It is worth mentioning that all translation services have been needed in the context of the novel pandemic, not just medical translation; translators have worked hand in hand with the medical staff to establish and sustain contact with foreign patients. Moreover, "Interpreters started to work distantly, providing phone interpreting services. Medical, marketing, financial, legal and social translation services were also provided by all governments in a globalized, interconnected and interdependent world" (Benlakdar, 2020, p. 137). In fact, Coronavirus rubrics have been designed on institutional websites to provide timely translated information and relevant resources, guidelines, and recommendations into several languages.

For instance, the Irish HSE health website has provided translated posters and booklets to help share the messaging about Covid-19 in various languages, such as Albanian, Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese, Farsi, French, Hindi, Kurdish, Polish, Russian, and Urdu, to name just a few. The Government of New South Wales (NSW) has also shared translated fact sheets and social graphics in more than 20 languages.

## 1.7 Sociolinguistic perspectives on Covid-19:

Sociolinguistics investigates the relationships between language and society. Coulmas (2013) pointed out that "the principal task of Sociolinguistics is to uncover, describe and interpret the socially motivated"

choices an individual makes". (As cited in Erdogan & Michael, 2019, p. 403) That is, sociolinguistics is concerned with the use of language at different levels in society.

The objectives of researchers in this field may considerably vary. Hernández-Campoy stated (2014) that "three different directions can be distinguished in studies of language and society: (i) sociological objectives, (ii) sociological and linguistic objectives, and (iii) linguistic objectives". (p. 10) That is, sociolinguists can conduct study for sociological, sociolinguistic, or linguistic purposes.

It is noteworthy that sociolinguistics covers a wide range of aspects, such as speech community which investigates how a given group of people uses language in social contexts; this includes dialects, sociolects, and functilects, sociolinguistic diversity, languages varieties, registers and jargons, socialization, social interaction, and relations of power.

Information transmission has been the major aspect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Analysing the multiple ways of conveying information and misinformation may highlight the social use of language. According to Agha (2007), registers are shared, recurrent social ways of using language by a given speech community in various communicative situations. They highlight variations and differences between individuals and societies. (as cited in Agha & Frog, 2015, p. 325) Thus, the use of dialects and registers during the Covid-19 crisis reflects the differences among genders and various social classes.

Moreover, Covid-19 pandemic has posed a global joint problem, various speech communities needed to have timely, reliable information. Several resources have been shared in minoritized languages. From a sociolinguistic perspective, the attitudes of the native speakers of minority languages are of paramount importance to understand the subjective perception about language dimensions. (Mirvahedi, 2019, p. 79) Health information has been made relevant to the world's populations through content localisation.

Thus, language diversity was accepted as an inevitable reality during the Covid-19 crisis since information has been disseminated in hundreds of languages. There was no exclusive reliance on one or two languages to convey information because this would have compromised the information accessibility timeliness. Much attention was paid to multilingual

communication through providing translation and interpretation services in multilingual countries to ensure equitable access to information.

In this vein, social media has promoted new genres and ways of expression that are different from standard written and oral forms. For instance, Arab people used their own dialects and language registers to express their feelings, and attitudes towards the Covid-19 pandemic instead of using the standard Arabic, creating, thus, new varieties of language that are unintelligible to others. We believe that social contexts are closely linked to the emergence and use of language varieties on social media.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic has been characterized by the creation of coinages, the use of medical jargon, and the simplification of medical terminology. The terms Covid-19, coronavirus, novel pandemic, social distancing, and lockdown have been frequently used with several collocations on social media. These terms were relatively uncommon before the outbreak of the pandemic. This frequent use highlights the fact that language reflects and constructs social and medical realities. As for jargon, it is usually defined as technical words particular to a given field and is fostered through professional communication and exchange. The coronavirus outbreak caused the extensive use of medical jargon and abbreviations, such as *patient zero, pre-symptomatic, N95 respirator, super-spreader, zoonotic disease, incubation period.*

## 2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

In this section, we analyse the content of some websites and social media posts to identify the linguistic devices that have been socially used to create infodemic and convey information taking into account language functions. Moreover, we will examine some translation strategies that were used to translate information.

Language diversity: many websites provided health information, fact sheets, posters, safety instructions and advice to people around the world in various languages. For instance, the Irish health website available at (https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/covid-19-translated-resources/) and the NSW Health website (https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/multilingual.aspx), and US Medline Plus (https://medlineplus.gov/languages/all_healthtopics.html) provided reliable information about Covid-19 in multiple languages and dialects, such as Swahili which is a Bantu language, Kurdish-Sorani and Kurdish Kurmanji

which are Kurdish dialects, Rohingya which is a minority language, Urdu which is a Persianised standard register of the Hindustani language, Dari Lu which is a dialect spoken in Afghanistan, Bangla which is a dialect of the Bangal language, Tamil which is a language spoken mostly in Karnataka, Punjabi which is a language spoken in the Punjab region of India and Pakistan, Wikang Tagalog which is a dialect in the Philippine regions, Gujarati which is an Indo-Aryan language native to the Indian state of Gujarat, and Hazaragi which is spoken by the Hazara people, who mainly live in Afghanistan in the Hazarajat region.

Thus, language diversity has been promoted and encouraged during the Covid-19 crisis. Minority communities have had access to timely, accurate information on several official European websites, and language barriers have been overcome through the use of minoritized languages, dialects, and registers to convey health information worldwide.

Covid-19 official information: The official information about Covid-19 that is provided on States' official websites is varied (posters, fact sheets, statistics, guidelines, medical reports, instructions), simple, well-structured and presented. The language is plain, direct, and not overspecialised or abstract. The words and phrases are used with subject-specific meanings, such as *protective factors, health-enhancing behaviours, contact, tracing, risk behaviours.*

Use of medical terminology: Immediate names of the disease, medical jargon, disease-related terms, adjectives, and words denoting human reactions and behaviours are extensively used, such as, *Covid-19, coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, the novel pandemic, medical/non-medical masks, ventilators, face coverings, BiPap machines, PPE, zoonotic, PCR testing, nasal swab, social distancing, self-isolation, quarantine, presumptive cases, containment, mitigation, flatten the curve, shelter in place, asymptomatic, patient zero, herd immunity, immunocompromised, intubation, hydroxychloroquine, PUI.*

Use of adjectives: Many adjectives are used to describe the pandemic and its impacts, such as *deadly, harmless, virulent, pitiless, merciless, difficult to defeat, unbeatable, powerful, and fatal*.

Covid-19 neologisms: New words have been created during the coronavirus outbreak that portray cultural, social and linguistic features of various societies and promote linguistic innovation and creativity. The phrase "*returner anxiety*" is a UK COVID-19 neologism describing the fear

of being exposed to the virus in the workplace or while travelling there. The term "*covidiot*" refers to any person who ignores the safety precautions against the coronavirus. The term "*quaranteens*" refers both to those born in the midst of the quarantine period and the current teenagers in the middle of this pandemic. The term "*coronacation*" which is a vacation that takes place due to cheap flights and hotels, it also means getting paid and having nothing to do or nowhere to go. The phrase "*Birthday zarty*" refers to a birthday party that is held on zoom due to social distancing. "*covideo party*" also refers to the parties held online. The term "coronababies" refers to the children born or conceived during the pandemic. The term "*covexit*" refers to the ways of exiting lockdown. The abbreviation "*WFH*" means working from home.

Use of metaphors and figurative language: Metaphors, hyperbole, and other stylistic and linguistic devices are largely used to negatively describe the Covid-19 pandemic and capture its aspects. The terms "*storm*", "*tsunami*", "*Covid-19 second wave*", "*enemy*", "*invisible monster*", "*serial killer*", "*China Coronavirus Pneumonia*", "*China flu*", "*The Covid-19 war/battle/tanker*", refer to the coronavirus and the fight against this deadly pandemic. Some healthcare workers are called the "*heroes*", "*defenders of the nation*", "*frontline soldiers*", "Corona warriors", and *"white armies"*. The phrase *"disciplined soldier"* refers to people who respect the lockdown measures.

Covid-19 information on social media: A large portion of information is shared on social media. The health information that is conveyed on social media tends to be oversimplified. Less attention is paid to grammar and spelling rules. Memes, emoticons, and pictures are used to illustrate health information.

Moreover, many people use their own dialects and registers in their posts and comments that allow them to express themselves in more personal ways to explain their attitudes and reflect their identity. The use of cultural and social specific words is one of the sociolinguistic aspects of the Covid-19 health crisis. In Algerian dialect the verb "*يتكورن*", the adjective "*مكورن*" have been created. The term "*حجبانين*" is also used which means "we are under lockdown". The term "*عجار*" is used ironically to refer to the "mask".

In addition, features of digital writing on social media have characterised the Covid-19 information transmission, such as the use of number and letter homophones as well as emoticons.

Covid-19 hashtags: Many hashtags are created, such as "#Stay at home", "#safe at home", "#we're in this together", "#the new normal". They were mostly used to reach a large audience, uplift peoples' spirits, give support, offer safety advice, and provide updates. The hashtag #ReframeCovid has been created on Twitter by two linguists at the University of Lancaster in England, Veronika Koller and Elena Semino, to seek alternative ways to talk about coronavirus. They have collected more than 200 metaphors from languages around the world and compiled them in a giant spreadsheet that are useful for further research.

Covid-19 misinformation: Misinformation has been largely shared on social media websites since anyone can publish anything with the push of a button. Urban legends which are fictional stories about local events, fake news, and rumours have been posted. For example, it has been claimed that the virus has been transmitted to humans as a result of someone eating bat soup in Wuhan. Online threads claimed that the ability to hold breath for 10 seconds can help diagnose coronavirus, which is completely untrue. Moreover, it has been claimed that cocaine can protect against coronavirus, this misinformation was disclaimed by the UK Ministry of Solidarity and Health.

A wide range of websites have been designed to fact-checking Covid-19 misinformation, such as the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and the Washington Post's Fact Checker whose task is to test claims, verify online status and posts.

Simplification, exaggeration, manipulation, and detailed description are the main strategies to convey misinformation through using several linguistic devices, such as generic phrases, evaluative adjectives and adverbs as well as modality.

Furthermore, language functions have been fulfilled by using the aforementioned linguistic devices. The informative function is used to provide all types of health information. The expressive and interpersonal functions are reflected in the social media posts expressing personal feelings and attitudes towards the crisis as well as the social interaction on social regarding the coronavirus pandemic. The conative is used to provide safety guidelines. The poetic function is reflected in the metaphorical use of language to describe the virus and human behaviours.

Covid-19 information translation: As we have seen earlier, Covid-19 health information has been translated in various languages. We noticed the

use of several translation strategies, such as literal translation, borrowing, equivalence, omission, addition, paraphrasing, explicitation, and self-explanatory translation.

Examples of English-Arabic health information translation:

1- If you're part of a large extended family, staying away can be the greatest act of love". The sentence was translated into Arabic as follows:

إذا كنت تنتمي إلى عائلة كبيرة تنتمي بدورها إلى عائلة أكبر، فأعظم ما يمكنك القيام بـه حفاظا على سلامتك وسلامتهم في ظل الظروف الراهنة هو تجنب الاختلاط بهم.

Paraphrasing, addition and self-explanatory translation are the strategies used to render the meaning of the original message. However, the Arabic sentence is longer than the English one.

2- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is important. Even with PPE, if the risk of the virus transmission is too high, you may not be able to enter your family or friend's room

، إذا كانت إمكانية انتقال الفيروس مرتفعة PPE وحتى مع (PPE) معدات الوقاية الشخصية مهمة جدا، فقد لا تتمكّن من دخول غرفة قريبك أو صديقك.

The abbreviation PPE is directly used in the Arabic version without translation. This may confuse the Arab reader who can forget its meaning, although it was mentioned earlier. It is preferable to use the Arabic abbreviation for more clarity.

3- COVID-19 in Egypt. Safely through corona crisis? Go on, take my used mask

لماذا يتدنى الشعور العام بالخطر إلى هذه الدرجة . - كورونا ومفهوم الشعور الخطر في مصر المخيفة في مصر؟

The strategy of paraphrasing is used to render the English original title to make it clearer to the reader.

4- COVID-19 pandemic. Science versus covidiots – India′s coronavirus challenge.

العلم في مواجهة حمقى كورونا .- جائحة كوفيد-19في الهند

The meaning of the English neologism is well rendered in Arabic. The difference in word formation is due to divergence in formal and syntactic features that exist between the two languages.

5- People should observe physical distancing.

- يجب أن يحترم النّاس التباعد الاجتماعي.

The Arabic translation is not accurate, the adjective "بدني" is the equivalent of "physical" and not "social", we believe that "physical distancing" is more accurate than "social distancing" which means staying at least 6 feet away from others. Whereas, social distancing means keeping away from social networks and not getting involved in social interactions.

6- The rise of 'coronadivorce' amid Japan's domestic violence.
ارتفاع "طلاق فيروس كورونا" وسط العنف المنزلي في اليابان.

The Arabic translation of the English coinage is longer, inaccurate, and ambiguous. It should be better to highlight the fact that the divorce is caused by the coronavirus lockdown as follows : الطلاق الناجم عن فيروس كورونا to avoid the semantic ambiguity in Arabic. However, it is difficult to find a one-word Arabic equivalent.

## 3. CONCLUSION:

Infodemic has made it hard to have accurate information. Thus, it is advisable to access reliable and secure sources, and avoid sharing or responding to misinformation. Information transmission has been the major aspect of the Covid-19 pandemic, highlighting the social use of language. Linguistic devices have been extensively used to influence people's behaviour and shape their attitudes, through using connotative words, adverbial expressions, descriptive adjectives, intertextual phrases, and metaphors. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has been characterised by the creation of coinages, the use of medical jargon, the simplification of medical terminology. Language diversity is accepted as an inevitable reality since information is disseminated in various languages, dialects, and registers to avoid compromising the information accessibility timeliness. Furthermore, social media have promoted new genres and ways of expression as well as new forms of digital writing, such as the use of number and letter homophones as well as emoticons and hashtags. Language functions, especially the expressive, interpersonal and conative ones are used to convey and express information. In addition, translation services are much-needed in the coronavirus crisis, paraphrasing, addition, explicitation, equivalence, and borrowing are the main translation strategies used to translate information and even misinformation. However, some translations are inaccurate and ambiguous, much attention should be paid to adopt the accurate equivalents before they are largely transmitted and used by both traditional and social media. The promotion of language creativity and diversity is the principal aspect of the Covid 19 pandemic that reflects

the major preoccupation of the time as well as the social, cultural and linguistic features of each society.

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