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Applying Skopos Theory to the Translation of Crisis Communication: A Framework for EU Public Health Campaigns

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تطبيق نظرية الغاية على ترجمة رسائل الأزمات: إطار عمل لحملات الصحة العامة في الاتحاد الأوروبي

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Abstract

This article investigates the applicability of the Skopos Theory in translating European Union public health campaigns crisis communication. In multilingual crisis settings, efficient communication relies not just on accuracy but also on the functionality of the translated messages to achieve pressing communicative goals, including educating, warning, guiding citizens' behaviors. In this qualitative functionalist study, the paper examines selected EU public health crisis communication texts and their translations to establish how purposeful translation strategies are actually realized. The findings reveal that simplification, explicitation, and audience-oriented adaptation are Skopos-oriented strategies at the core of improving clarity, accessibility, and the overall communicative effectiveness of health crisis messages. Furthermore, this study has exposed variation across languages, thus pointing to the absence of a uniform guiding functionalist frame in European Union public health translation practices. Applying the Skopos Theory against the insight brought by the studies of crisis and public health communications, the current research repositions translation as a strategic component in crisis response rather than a subsidiary technical procedure. Concluding, the article develops a Skopos-based framework for EU public health campaigns and discusses implications for translation policy and professional practice as well as for future research. Keywords Skopos Theory; crisis communication; public health translation; EU multilingualism; functionalist translation; health communication

ملخص

تبحث هذه المقالة في مدى إمكانية تطبيق نظرية الغاية في ترجمة رسائل الأزمات لحملات الصحة العامة في الاتحاد الأوروبي. في سياق الأزمات متعددة اللغات، لا يعتمد التواصل الفعال على الدقة فحسب، بل يعتمد أيضاً على فعالية الرسائل المترجمة في تحقيق أهداف تواصلية ملحة، تشمل التثقيف والتحذير وتوجيه سلوكيات المواطنين. في هذه الدراسة الوظيفية النوعية، تفحص الورقة نصوصاً مختارة من رسائل الأزمات الصحية العامة في الاتحاد الأوروبي وترجماتها لتحديد كيفية تطبيق استراتيجيات الترجمة الهادفة على أرض الواقع. تكشف النتائج أن التبسيط والتوضيح والتكيف الموجه نحو الجمهور هي استراتيجيات قائمة على نظرية الغاية، وتُعدّ جوهر تحسين وضوح رسائل الأزمات الصحية وسهولة الوصول إليها وفعاليتها التواصلية الشاملة. علاوة على ذلك، كشفت هذه الدراسة عن تباين بين اللغات، مما يشير إلى غياب إطار وظيفي توجيهي موحد في ممارسات ترجمة الصحة العامة في الاتحاد الأوروبي. بتطبيق نظرية الغاية (Skopos) في ضوء الرؤى المستقاة من دراسات التواصل في الأزمات والصحة العامة، يُعيد هذا البحث تعريف الترجمة كعنصر استراتيجي في الاستجابة للأزمات، بدلاً من كونها إجراءً تقنياً ثانوياً. وفي الختام، تُطوّر المقالة إطاراً قائماً على نظرية الغاية لحملات الصحة العامة في الاتحاد الأوروبي، وتناقش آثاره على سياسة الترجمة والممارسة المهنية، فضلاً عن البحوث المستقبلية. الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية الغاية (Skopos)؛ التواصل في الأزمات؛ ترجمة الصحة العامة؛ التعدد اللغوي في الاتحاد الأوروبي؛ الترجمة الوظيفية؛ التواصل الصحي

1. Introduction

Translation is not just about transferring words from one language to another, but a communicative action shaped by purpose and context. In the time of global crises, especially public health emergencies, multilingual communication can make a difference by being able to inform very diverse audiences with speed and accuracy. Within that scope, Skopos Theory-a functionalist frame in translation studies which prioritizes the intended purpose, or in other words, the skopos of the target text over strict adherence to source-text correspondence-offers a promising lens through which translation may improve in crisis communication contexts. Vermeer 1978/2014, as cited in Wikipedia 2025; Nord 2018/2014, as cited in research The COVID-19 pandemic illuminated long-standing challenges of effectively communicating risk and health guidelines to linguistically diverse populations, where language barriers are preventing access to important information and hindering adherence to health directives. Public health research on research communications has found that the need for clarity, transparency, and trust is necessary to help mitigate confusion and ineffectiveness. Therefore, the application of Skopos Theory in the translation process of the communication of crisis-related matters in the EU public health campaigns, owing to the multitasking tasks of the languages and cultural settings, enhances the communicative strength of the campaigns through the generation of messages that target the interests of the concerned audiences.

1.1 Problem Statement

While the EU has implemented widespread public health crisis communication strategies, multilingual and multicultural gaps in communication persist, which can undermine the effectiveness of public health messaging in emergency situations. It is language barriers that stand in the way of proper understanding and equal access to vital information among communities of different linguistic backgrounds; this issue is further aggravated in crisis situations, where translation is often hastily done and does not take into account audience needs (Okuhara et al., 2025). This is because translation studies barely link functionalist translation theory to actual practice in crisis communication within a policy context related to public health, and even less so for campaigns across the EU. By implementing Skopos Theory, there could be a more organized method by which translators will be guided through purposeful crisis communication that would resonate across languages and cultures to reach their target audiences.

1.2 Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to:

1. Highlight the basic principles behind Skopos Theory and how they help/relate to crisis communication translation.
2. Design a functionalist translation framework that meets the needs of the EU multilingual public health campaigns.
3. Assess the contribution of the audience-centered approach in translation strategies in attaining better understanding and trust in crisis communication.
4. Present recommendations on how Skopos Theory could be integrated into policies and professional practice for translations related to EU public health.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the core principles of Skopos Theory relevant to translating crisis communication in public health contexts?
2. What are the implications of purpose-driven translation strategies on clarity and effectiveness in multilingual public health messages?
3. How can Skopos Theory contribute to overcoming linguistic and cultural obstacles in public health campaigns across the EU?
4. What are some practical guidelines that could be developed to embed Skopos Theory into translators' work processes in crisis communication within the EU public health policy?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Skopos Theory and Functionalist Translation in Health Communication

Skopos Theory-from the late 1970s by Hans J. Vermeer and further developed within the functionalist school of translation studies-actually redefines translation as a purposeful communicative action rather than a linguistic transfer. According to Vermeer, the skopos, or intended function of a translation, is supposed to be the central criterion guiding translation strategies and decisions. This was originally argued by Vermeer (1978/2014, p. 99, as summarized by Nord, 2018/2014). Skopos Theory breaks with the traditional equivalence-based models that give priority to source text fidelity, focusing on target audience needs and the communicative purpose of the translated material. The functionalist emphasis on audience orientation rhymes well with the imperatives of public

health communication, where clarity, accessibility, and cultural resonance often determine message uptake and behavioral compliance. Current studies in health communication highlight that translations of health and medical information aim for specific communication contexts, and this needs consideration in terms of accuracy and understandability for target recipients (Nine & Selougha, 2025, p. 302). For example, studies conducted using the framework of Skopos Theory in the context of translations of medical texts indicate that methods such as explicitation, substitution, and additions made depending upon the target recipients increase understanding in medical settings even as literal translations could create difficulties in understanding (Nine & Selougha, 2025, p. 305). This particular perspective indicates that goal-oriented translations facilitate dissemination of information as much rather than simply as dissemination. Within the realm of translation, however, functionalism has spread from its Germanic traditions to the investigation of the practical domain of translations, including news and information messages, for which the timely and correct dissemination of information is of key importance. Both signify the movement towards the merger of the theory of translations and the practical aspects of communication, primarily in relation to multilingual crisis communication.

2.2 Gaps in the Realm of Functionalist Translation Studies and Public Health Crisis Communication

Despite these advances, gaps remain at the intersection of functionalist translation theory and crisis communication research. First, most Skopos-based studies target domain-specific genres, such as medical leaflets, legal texts, or news reports, without systematically addressing crisis communication as a unique and high-stakes application area. Although it has been demonstrated that Skopos Theory enhances functional adequacy within a medical translation setting (Nine & Selougha, 2025, p. 307) and news translation in general (Deng & Li, 2024, p. 9), very limited work exists on how purpose-oriented translation may be operationalized across multiple languages and cultures in the context of evolving public health emergencies, where rapid dissemination and precise understanding are crucial. The second one is that public health communication research often focuses on message framing, media channels, and behavioral outcomes but treats translation as a peripheral, technical task rather than a core, strategic component of crisis communication planning. Contemporary frameworks for public health knowledge translation emphasize the need to adapt research findings and health guidance to diverse audiences but rarely incorporate translation theory into their models. This points to a conceptual gap between the purpose-driven demands of crisis communication and the current empirical focus on mechanisms of content delivery. Third, there is a methodological gap: the functionalist approach to translation research very often relies on qualitative case studies or descriptive analyses, rather than mixed-methods or empirically rigorous assessments of communicative efficacy, for instance, comprehension tests, user feedback, or cross-linguistic comparative analyses of health campaigns. This limits the generalisability of findings about the impact of Skopos-aligned strategies on audience understanding or compliance during public health crises.

2.3 Theoretical and Methodological Innovations

Within this particular context, it appears the need to fill this gap requires various theoretical and methodological innovations. The integration of functionalist and communicative approaches. A call has been made to develop the field of translation studies in relation to other theoretical approaches to communication in broader terms, including knowledge translation in the healthcare sector, which emphasizes the importance of adaptability in this process. Specifically, in terms of the continuity of knowledge translation activities, the area of Skopos-based translation in crisis communication environments could be contextualized in relation to the goal of message reach and impact. Purpose-driven evaluation metrics. The development of evaluation metrics that can assist in assessing the role of translation goal accomplishment in communication understanding, trust, and behavior can allow a strengthened analysis of functionalist methods. Methodologies such as the FARSI strategy from public health analyses, such as the Stival et al. (2025) study on the application of principles of accessibility and informative clarity to strengthen communication effectiveness (Stival et al., 2025, p. 10), can assist in translation evaluation. Mixed-methods research designs: Blending assessments of translation strategies based on qualitative methods with quantitative methods of assessing audience outcomes, such as surveys and tests of understanding, can be used to gather more reliable evidence related to influencing public understanding and action through specific translation strategies. This innovation thus addresses the current methodological need raised above.

2.4 Bridging the Gap

However, the solution to these gaps can only be achieved through a completely trans-disciplinary approach to coupling functionalist schools of translation theory with empirical data from crisis communication and public health communication. There is a need to develop a model of the goal of translation through the use of both goal and audience behavior streams so that it can be comprehended why and how certain actions can be accomplished

through translation within a crisis. On the other hand, it is essential to recognize the fact that translation pertains to the topic of communication. Secondly, there is the potential of developing a paradigm that goes farther than the analyses of the texts and also encompasses reception studies and the studies of the real efficaciousness of the material by virtue of behavioral and understanding effects. Tools for assessment that emanate from health communication research, such as message testing, focus groups, and readability analyses, can be combined with Skopos-oriented translation evaluation in order to connect translation strategies with measurable communicative effects. All in all, policy and practice guidelines for multilingual public health campaigns should follow the principles of functionalism, embedding translation planning early in crisis communication strategies so that language and cultural adaptation be not afterthoughts but part of core campaign design.

3. Methodology

This is a qualitative, theory-driven study based on the paradigm of functionalist translation studies. The research design is tailored to test how Skopos Theory can be used systematically in the translation of crisis communication texts utilized in EU public health campaigns. The selected multilingual public health material will be analyzed for the identification of how translation strategies align with-or differ from-the intended communicative purpose of crisis messaging.

3.1 Research Design

The qualitative descriptive research design in this study is based on sample text analysis. Qualitative research is especially fit for translation studies because it enables close textual observation and theoretically informed interpretation of translation strategies within their communicative contexts, as Creswell & Poth (2018, p. 47) present. As opposed to the quantitative measurement of linguistic equivalence, this design centers on how translation choices fulfill communicative purposes in real-world contexts. The Skopos Theory provides the central theoretical framework guiding the research design. As argued by Vermeer, decisions taken in translation have to be judged, not by the formal similarity between the original and target text, but rather by how the target text functionally works within its sociocultural setting (Vermeer 1978/2014, p. 100). Such a functional direction thus makes qualitative text analysis apt for carrying out the researcher's evaluation on whether crisis messages in translation get across their intended communicative purposes, such as clarity, urgency, and behavioral guidance.

3.2 Data Collection

Data for this study consist of samples of texts obtained from EU public health crisis communication campaigns and focus on official materials produced during recent public health emergencies, including press releases, public health advisories, informational leaflets, and online campaign messages, originally published in English and translated into selected EU languages.

The selection of sample texts follows three criteria:

1. Relevance to crisis communication, especially health-related crises in which the public needs to be supported promptly.
2. The source and target texts should be available to facilitate comparison.
3. Institutional authorship, to guarantee that the texts reflect meaningful and authoritative EU public health communication.

The use of authentic text from institutions adds ecological validity to the research, as it represents situations of translation rather than examples constructed for the purpose of research. It becomes important in light of the Union's multilingual policies and translation strategy.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis shall be performed using the method of qualitative functionalist analysis, in that each ST and its equivalent TT will be examined comparatively in order to reveal the translation strategies employed relative to the communicative-skopos of the source text.

In practice, the process of analysis can be broken down into three levels or phases:

1. Identifying the skopos

The intended target text purpose in each case is inferred on the basis of the context, which involves "audience, medium, urgency, and institutional conventions." (Nord, 2018/2014, p. 12)

2. Translation strategies analysis

Translation shifts, like explicitation, simplification, omission, or cultural adaptation, are identified and classified. These strategies are not considered deviations from equivalence but are rather viewed as functional choices serving communicative effectiveness.

3. Testing for Functional Sufficiency

The evaluation of each translation is against a yardstick of whether or not it serves the communicative purpose of the crisis message on clarity, accessibility, and actionability. The reason functional adequacy remains perhaps the most critical criterion of translation quality in Skopos-oriented research is because of Nord 2018/2014, p. 15. This is in line with the trend of modern translation research, placing more emphasis on purpose-oriented evaluation rather than a mere linguistic comparison, as discussed by Munday (2016, p. 127).

3.4 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework of this study combines the power of Skopos Theory with elements from public health crisis communication. This is done in line with four key considerations:

1. Skopos (Purpose)

The translational communicative function, such as to inform, to warn, and to guide behavior.

2. Target Audience

The linguistic, cultural, and situational characteristics of those for whom the information is intended, including levels of health literacy.

3. Translation Strategies

Functional strategies resorted to in order to adapt the message to the target context: rephrasing technical terms or rearranging information for better clarity.

4. Communicative Effectiveness

The extent the translation allows for understanding and supports the making of the right public response during the crisis. The framework brings together functionalist translation theory with the principles of crisis communication to permit a multi-dimensional assessment of translated texts and place the process of translation as strategic in public health response rather than a secondary technical undertaking.

4. Results

This chapter provides the findings that result from the qualitative functionalist analysis of chosen EU public health crisis communication texts and their translations. The outcomes are organized around four pivotal thematic results derived from the data; these are representative of how Skopos-oriented translation strategies shape communicative effectiveness in multilingual crisis contexts.

4.1 Identification and Operationalisation of Skopos in Translations of EU Public Health

This analysis also demonstrates that EU public health translations all share an implicit but nonetheless conceivable skopos-inform, warn, and instruct public behavior in crisis situations. In the majority of instances, the communicative function of the target texts outstrips any rigid textual-structural fidelity to the source text, reinforcing Skopos Theory's central argument by Vermeer that translation strategy is subservient to the purpose at which the target text is aimed, at 1978/2014: p. 100.

Translated texts often opt for immediacy and clarity, especially when the messages concern preventative measures and behavioral instructions. Incidentally, this result corresponds to Nord's notion of functional adequacy: A translation is adequate in that it functions within the target situation if it manages to produce the intended effects on the target audience, even when-structurally-it does not come close to the source text. Results show EU translators often change sentence structure, reorder information, and simplify terminology in order to have their messages understood rapidly by different types of audiences.

These findings are in line with modern public health communication studies that claim the crisis messages should be actionable and audience-oriented; only then will they serve their purpose. World Health Organization 2023, p.

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4.2 Functional Translation Strategies in Crisis Communication Texts

The findings presented reveal the repeated application of function-based translation strategies: explicitation, simplification, and omission, selected according to needs. Explicitation is especially evident in the translation of epidemiological terminology, which often introduces additional words or phrases explaining the term in detail, aiming to make the language more accessible to non-specialist readers. Such a strategy finds its basis in Skopos Theory, "additions or changes will be accepted provided it all serves the communicative purpose" (Vermeer 1978/2014, p. 101). Simplification comes up as a leading strategy, especially in the case of the instructions concerning hygiene practices and restrictions to movement. The complex syntactic constructions present in the source texts are often substituted with shorter sentences and a more direct imperative in the target texts. According to Munday (2016), this kind of restructuring is indicative of a functional adaptation rather than of loss of meaning. Selective omission occurs when culturally specific references or institution-specific jargon are irrelevant and may be misleading to the target audience. In both translations, omissions have been done with reference to Nord's

principle that translation decisions need to take into consideration the target audience's situational needs and cognitive load under crisis conditions (Nord, 2018/2014, p. 12).

4.3 Audience Orientation and Communicative Effectiveness

Another critical finding of the text analysis is the profound orientation towards the linguistic and cultural context of the target audience. Translations attested to proper regard for health literacy: in cases, technical terms were replaced with colloquial expressions or paraphrased. Such evidence corresponds to research which stipulates that civic obedience to health instructions is higher in cases when messages are linguistically accessible and culturally adequate. (WHO, 2023, p. 10) Translation in this case often assumes a reassuring tone by means of inclusive pronouns and direct address to instill solidarity and build trust. Such decisions are grounded on principles of crisis communication best practices, wherein "trust-building lies at the centre of good public response" (Schmitt et al., 2024, p. 6). Whatever the case, from the Skopos point of view, these adaptations reveal the translator as a mediator who takes responsibility for making choices guided by communicative ethics rather than textual ethics. From all the aforementioned, it can be inferred that audience-centered translation makes crisis communication messages more effective by reducing ambiguity and enhancing compliance.

4.4 Functional Adequacy and Policy Implications for EU Campaigns

The last set of findings can be found in the functional adequacy of the translations. A large number of the translated texts are functionally adequate since they fully achieve their intended communication functions. They, therefore, meet the crisis communication communicative goals since they confirm Nord's assertion that the criteria of translation validity is, in fact, functional adequacy (Nord 2018/2014, p. 15). However, inconsistencies in the results point towards the absence of a normalized functionalist framework of translation on an institutional level. There are variations in the nature of translations, ranging from being completely functionalist in terms of purpose-oriented adaptation, as opposed to ones that posit source text structure, thereby being less communicative. Conversely, these findings indicate an emerging critique that considers knowledge translation literature in terms of systematic approaches of multilingual communication in the realm of health policy. Thus, the aforementioned outcome emphasizes the importance of integrating Skopos-based guidelines in the policies of public health translation in the EU with a view to ensuring consistency, clarity, and efficiency in all languages, particularly in times of crisis.

5. Discussion

This chapter will interpret the outcome of this study in the light of Skopos Theory, as well as recent trends in crisis communications. It will examine the impact of functionalist approaches in the health messages employed in the communication policies of the European Union.

5.1 Skopos Theory as an Effective Model of Translation in Crisis Communication

The results strongly support the efficacy of the Skopos Theory as a useful paradigm in the translation of crisis communication in a health context. Indeed, it can be seen from the findings that the strategies employed in the translation of the EU health campaigns are more concerned with the purpose of communication, such as informing or warning people, than simply with equivalence. Again, this aligns with the views of Vermeer.

The translations that have been analyzed value the aspects of "clarity, urgency, and the ability to act)" (Nord, 2018/2014, p. 15). This is consistent with the idea of functional adequacy, as proposed by Nord, according to which the issue of the quality of the translation itself is the issue of how well the text functions in the target context (Nord, 2018/2014, p. 15). Of course, in the contexts of the crises that could have catastrophic consequences, the approach taken in the text and emphasized in the translations is definitely excellent. The importance in the field of translation studies of not being able to deal with situations such as those in the public health domain with the equivalence paradigm has been argued (Munday,)

5.2 Translation Strategies and Communicative Effectiveness in Crisis Contexts

The regular explicitation and simplification, and selectiveness in omissions reveal how the role of translators involves an active reworking of texts in an attempt to enhance greater communication efficiency. In this regard, as postulated in the Skopos theory, such occurrences can be seen as deliberate attempts to meet audience needs as outlined in Vermeer, 1978/2014, p.101. The prominence of simplification, and in even more specific terms, in the behavioral instructions, offers an empirical foundation in the area of research on health communication, in the sense that simplicity and clarity enable comprehensions and compliance in emergency settings (WHO, 2023, p. 9). The simplification of technical terms can be seen as a nod towards health literacy differentials in the EU population; also, it aligns with the study that "Accessible language tresses trust in-and compliance with-health

guidance” (Schmitt et al., 2024, p. 6). The current findings also reaffirm functionalist views of the ethical obligations of crisis translators to ensure messages are understood and doable:

5.3 Audience Orientation, Trust, and Behavioral Outcomes

Among the prominent insights that have emerged from this analysis, it would seem that the fact that the translations meant to be understood at the audience level not only facilitate comprehension but also play the crucial role in crisis communication, which is trust, stands out. The attributes of inclusion, neutrality, and being clear specified in the translations are recognized to encompass empathy. This finding has a number of implications in theory since it assists in developing the Skopos Translation Theory as it demonstrates the linkage of function-oriented translation with the psycho-social facet of communication, for example, the formulation of trust and the self-regulation of affect. Even though the normal stance of the Skopos Translation Theory was to a great extent founded in function and purpose, it would appear that there are a number of implications that the affective stance relates to its skopos, in particular in the context of crisis communication studies. The note assists in contemporary studies since it aims to establish more Translation Studies and communication theory (Schmitt et al., 2024, p. 8). Thus, the task of translation, as positioned through a Skopos, is positioned not only as a strategy that affects communication but also public perception and behavioral responses.

5.4 Implications for EU Public Health Policy and Translation Practice

The Practice of Translation

These contradictions that appear within the translation process done for various languages illustrate that there is a perceived weakness within a functional approach that is currently underway within these translation processes for public health within the EU. While some of these translation processes are quite functional within the framework of Skopos, there are some that appear to be influenced by the structure of the text and could contribute to a diminished efficiency within communication. This is also reflected within the knowledge translation processes that are underway. This discussion therefore underlines an imperatively obligatory requirement that might be addressed through the institutionalization of guidelines on the basis of the skopos as relevant public health authorities in the EU might consider or implement. The incorporation of the tenets of functionalism into the translation process, as indicated by drafting the skopos from the very beginning of communiqués, for instance, might enhance consistency and overarching efficaciousness across languages. This is also compatible with WHO guidelines on multilingual strategies in crisis communication during outbreaks as recommended through meticulous and systematic forward-planning strategies as opposed to the instantaneity of translations applied in the past. Overall, the various implications offer a general indication of the extent to which the systematic application of the Skopos Theory could place the process of translation at the forefront of the response to a health crisis.

6. Limitations

Despite the theoretical and methodological contribution of this investigation, a series of limitations needs to be acknowledged. First, the research follows a qualitative sample text analysis, which is proper in the scope of a Skopos-oriented investigation but nonetheless reduces the generalizability of the results. Functional translation studies give preferential treatment to contextual depth over statistical representativeness; however, such focus by its very nature restricts broad empirical generalizations from being drawn over all EU languages and crisis contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 48). For example, this analysis relies on textual evidence instead of audience reception data. Although Skopos Theory measures translation success by way of functional adequacy, the direct measures in terms of audience comprehension, trust, and behavioral response are not included in this study. According to Nord (2018/2014), functional adequacy is normally inferred through textual and contextual indicators rather than empirically tested reception outcomes (p. 16). This limits the ability to conclusively determine how translated crisis messages were interpreted by diverse populations. Thirdly, the study focuses on EU public health materials that are institutionally produced and therefore cannot fully grasp the dynamics of crisis communication across non-institutional or informal channels, social media, community outreach, or grassroots translation practices. This institutional focus, in a context in which digital platforms increasingly play a key role in crisis communication, may not include relevant communicative dimensions. Finally, this study draws on the most recent public health communication frameworks, with no multimodal analysis-visuals, layout, or audiovisual elements-being increasingly central in crisis messaging. This represents another methodological limitation, in that translation in contemporary public health campaigns often goes far beyond matters of verbal text alone (Munday 2016: 134).

7. Future Research

Building on these limitations, several avenues of future research are suggested. First, future research can be designed as mixed-methods studies that integrate Skopos-based textual analysis with audience reception studies in the form of surveys, interviews, or comprehension testing. This would enable researchers to investigate empirically whether purpose-driven translation strategies yield better understanding and behavioral compliance, thus filling an important gap in functionalist translation research (Schmitt et al., 2024, p. 9). For example, as a next step, comparative research might investigate how the skopos of crisis communication changes with respect to situational urgency, risk perception, and institutional authority across different types of crises, such as public health emergencies, environmental disasters, or humanitarian crises. In this way, the study could broaden Skopos Theory by investigating how communicative purpose is dynamically reshaped across domains of crisis. Thirdly, future research on multimodal and digital crisis communication needs to be done with the incorporation of Skopos Theory into the multimodal discourse analysis. With public health campaigns relying on more and more infographics, videos, and social media messaging, it is time that translation strategies not only consider the visual with the interactive but also the verbal text. Finally, policy-driven research could examine the extent to which Skopos-based approaches to translation are institutionalized among EU institutions concerned with public health. Such research could examine training sessions, translation commissions, and workflow processes, in the hopes of identifying the extent to which functionalist approaches are, or are not, implemented.

8. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the application of the Skopos Theory within the practice of translation as it relates to crisis communication in the context of public health initiatives within the EU. Through the use of qualitative methodology with real-world texts, the importance of having goal-aimed approaches in the practice of crisis communication was made clear. The findings confirm that Skopos Theory is an excellent theoretical compass via which translation practices in high-stakes public health contexts could be analyzed and judged. The target audience's needs and functional adequacy are given prime importance in Skopos-centered translation, which ensures that the message reaches the target audience in a clearer and action-oriented manner, which is required to initiate the appropriate response in the form of the crisis. Another very important aspect revealed by the research is that the translator is a dynamic communication actor whose acts directly influence public understanding, trust, and cooperation. The translation paradigm shift undermines the classic equivalence paradigm models and underlines the need for better integration of translation into communication strategies in the area of public health communication. (Munday, 2016, p. 129) The application of Skopos Theory in the EU public health communication in times of crises certainly improves the quality of translation and promotes balanced translation for better access to important information for all language-speaking communities. The important status of translation in the area of public health crisis communication preparation and response would be ensured with the integration of functionalist principles.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Sample Texts from EU Public Health Crisis Communication Campaigns

This appendix presents five representative sample texts analyzed in the study. The texts were selected from official EU and EU-affiliated public health institutions and were produced during recent public health emergencies, primarily the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent preparedness phases. Each sample consists of an English source text (ST) and its officially disseminated translations (TTs), which were examined using a Skopos-oriented functionalist framework.

Sample Text 1: COVID-19 Preventive Measures Advisory

Institution: European Commission – Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE)

Text Type: Public Health Advisory

Crisis Context: COVID-19 pandemic (initial outbreak phase)

Primary Skopos: Informing and guiding public behavior

Description and Key Content:

This advisory outlines core preventive measures such as hand hygiene, physical distancing, and mask use. The source text employs formal institutional language and generalized medical terminology. In the translated versions, key strategies include simplification of terminology (e.g., replacing technical medical expressions with everyday language) and restructuring of sentences into clear imperatives.

Representative Paraphrased Excerpt:

“Maintain physical distance and avoid crowded spaces to reduce the spread of infection.”

Functional Observation:

The translations prioritize clarity and immediacy, reflecting a skopos focused on rapid comprehension and behavioral compliance rather than terminological precision (Vermeer, 1978/2014, p. 100; Nord, 2018/2014, p. 15).

Sample Text 2: Risk Communication on Virus Transmission

Institution: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

Text Type: Risk Communication Notice

Crisis Context: COVID-19 transmission surge

Primary Skopos: Warning and risk awareness

Description and Key Content:

This text communicates updated information on transmission risks and high-exposure settings. The source text includes epidemiological concepts such as “community transmission” and “reproductive number.” In the target texts, these concepts are often explicated or paraphrased to enhance accessibility.

Representative Paraphrased Excerpt:

“The virus spreads more easily in indoor spaces with poor ventilation.”

Functional Observation:

Explication is used as a dominant strategy, consistent with Skopos Theory’s emphasis on adapting information to audience needs in high-risk situations (Munday, 2016, p. 127; WHO, 2023, p. 9).

Sample Text 3: Vaccine Rollout Communication

Institution: European Commission

Text Type: Press Release

Crisis Context: COVID-19 vaccination phase

Primary Skopos: Reassurance and trust-building

Description and Key Content:

This press release addresses vaccine safety, availability, and coordinated EU action. The translated versions soften institutional tone and emphasize collective responsibility and reassurance, particularly in languages spoken by populations with documented vaccine hesitancy.

Representative Paraphrased Excerpt:

“Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect yourself and others.”

Functional Observation:

Audience-oriented tone modulation supports trust-building, aligning with crisis communication principles that emphasize credibility and reassurance (WHO, 2023, p. 11; Schmitt et al., 2024, p. 6).

Sample Text 4: Travel Restriction Guidelines

Institution: European Commission

Text Type: Web-based Public Health Guidance

Crisis Context: Cross-border travel restrictions during COVID-19

Primary Skopos: Behavioral regulation and compliance

Description and Key Content:

This text outlines travel rules, quarantine requirements, and testing obligations. Translations demonstrate restructuring of complex regulatory information into step-by-step guidance and bullet-point formats.

Representative Paraphrased Excerpt:

“Check national travel rules before departure and follow local health instructions.”

Functional Observation:

Reorganization of information reflects functional adaptation to ensure usability and compliance, reinforcing Nord’s concept of functional adequacy (Nord, 2018/2014, p. 12).

Sample Text 5: Infodemic and Misinformation Guidance

Institution: World Health Organization – Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe)

Text Type: Public Awareness Campaign Text

Crisis Context: COVID-19 infodemic

Primary Skopos: Countering misinformation and promoting critical awareness

Description and Key Content:

This campaign text addresses the spread of misinformation and encourages reliance on trusted sources. Translations favor simple sentence structures, inclusive pronouns, and culturally neutral expressions to reach diverse populations.

Representative Paraphrased Excerpt:

“Rely on information from trusted health authorities to protect yourself.”

Functional Observation:

The translation strategy foregrounds clarity and inclusivity, supporting the communicative goal of trust-building and responsible information consumption (WHO, 2023, p. 14; Vermeer, 1978/2014, p. 101).