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Compiling Specialised Bilingual Dictionaries: A Methodological Framework Based on an English-Romanian Sustainability Dictionary

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Abstract: This paper develops a methodological framework for specialised bilingual dictionary compilation from the experience of producing an English–Romanian dictionary of sustainability. The case study is used to reconstruct the decisions made during compilation and to organise them into seven connected stages that may inform the development of other specialised bilingual dictionaries. The analysis identified seven interconnected stages: domain delimitation, term identification, documentary validation, conceptual analysis, the selection of bilingual equivalents, editorial harmonisation, and expert validation. The findings indicate that specialised bilingual dictionary compilation is an iterative and concept-oriented activity that depends on the continual integration of documentary evidence, conceptual precision, and editorial consistency. The resulting framework provides methodological guidance for lexicographers, terminologists, and translators working in interdisciplinary fields where terminology evolves rapidly. It also contributes to research on specialised bilingual lexicography by outlining an approach that can be adapted and tested in other specialised domains.

Keywords: specialised bilingual lexicography, bilingual dictionaries, terminology, methodological framework, lexicographic workflow, conceptual equivalence, sustainability.

1. Introduction

The expansion of scientific, technical, and institutional communication across languages has increased the need for reliable bilingual terminological resources. At the

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same time, the emergence of new fields and the evolution of established ones have introduced new concepts and terms that require clear and consistent representation. In this context, specialised dictionaries do more than provide lexical equivalents. They support professional communication and translation, while promoting conceptual clarity and terminological consistency (Castellví 1999; Atkins et al. 2008; Trap-Jensen 2010; Cabré 1999). Their role is especially important in domains where knowledge is evolving rapidly and terminology is still taking shape.

Sustainability represents one of the most dynamic examples of such a domain. Originally associated primarily with environmental protection, sustainability has gradually come to encompass a much broader range of environmental, economic, social, and governance issues, including climate change, biodiversity, circular economy, sustainable finance, environmental governance, corporate reporting, public policy, technological innovation, and social responsibility (Purvis et al. 2019; Kuhlman and Farrington 2010). This broadening of the concept has given rise to an expanding terminological landscape, driven by scientific research, international organisations, legislative initiatives, reporting frameworks, and professional practice. As new concepts emerge and existing ones evolve, identifying reliable bilingual equivalents becomes a demanding task that requires both conceptual precision and linguistic consistency (Cabré 1999).

Contemporary sustainability concepts, such as *net zero, Scope 3 emissions*, *double materiality*, and *just transition* highlight the challenges of identifying accurate and consistent bilingual equivalents. Many of these terms first appear in international policy documents, scientific publications, or reporting frameworks before entering professional and institutional use. As they are adopted across different contexts, their meanings may shift, while equivalent terms in other languages are often still being established. Therefore, compiling a bilingual sustainability dictionary involves more than matching words across languages. It requires analysing concepts, assessing documentary evidence, and making editorial decisions that preserve conceptual equivalence between the source and target languages.

The issues encountered in sustainability terminology can also be noticed in other rapidly evolving domains, including artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and digital health, where researchers have also emphasised the need for greater conceptual clarity, more consistent terminology, and harmonised definitions (Estevez Almenzar et al. 2022; Graziani et al. 2023; Ramirez and Choucri 2020; Séroussi 2026). As a result, the value of a specialised dictionary depends not only on the quality of the finished product, but also on a clear account of the methodological decisions behind it.

Research in specialised lexicography has generated an extensive body of theoretical work. Most methodological studies have concentrated on particular stages of dictionary compilation, such as terminology extraction, corpus construction, concept-oriented terminology management, bilingual equivalence, and editorial principles (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995; Cabré 1999; Atkins et al. 2008). These studies provide valuable insights into different aspects of dictionary compilation. Nevertheless,

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what is still largely missing is a methodological account of how these stages can be connected within a single framework for compiling specialised bilingual dictionaries.

This gap is particularly noticeable in emerging specialised domains, where concepts and terminology continue to develop. In these contexts, compiling a bilingual dictionary involves more than identifying terms. Lexicographers must define concepts, assess documentary sources, establish reliable bilingual equivalents, and maintain editorial consistency while responding to changes in specialised knowledge. Yet, many of the decisions made during this process remain undocumented, making them difficult to apply or adapt in future dictionary projects.

This study responds to the limited availability of integrated methodological accounts of bilingual dictionary compilation. It draws on the experience of compiling an English–Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026), to reconstruct the main stages of the compilation process and organise them within a methodological framework. The dictionary provides the empirical case, whereas the principal contribution lies in making the underlying methodological decisions explicit and systematically organised. The resulting workflow may also offer a point of reference for dictionary projects in other specialised domains.

The paper addresses the following research questions:

RQ1. What methodological stages characterise the compilation of an English–Romanian sustainability dictionary in a rapidly evolving interdisciplinary domain?

RQ2. What methodological challenges emerge during the compilation process and how can they be addressed through a systematic lexicographic workflow?

The contribution of the study is threefold. First, it reconstructs the workflow that emerged during the compilation of an English–Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026). Second, it organises the main stages of that workflow within a single methodological framework that may be adapted for other specialised bilingual dictionary projects. Third, it reflects on the methodological lessons derived from this experience and considers their relevance for domains characterised by conceptual complexity and evolving terminology.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Specialised Bilingual Lexicography and Terminology

Specialised lexicography draws on research in lexicography, terminology studies, and specialised communication (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995; Cabré 1999; Trap-Jensen 2010; Sager and Nkwenti-Azeh 1990; Pearson 1998). Its primary concern is not the description of the general vocabulary of a language but the representation of concepts within a particular domain. For this reason, specialised dictionaries are designed to meet the needs of users such as experts, translators, researchers, educators, and other professionals who rely on accurate and consistent terminology. Rather than functioning simply as collections of technical terms, they organise and present domain-specific knowledge in a structured way.

The contrast between general and specialised lexicography reflects a wider development in terminology studies, where attention has gradually shifted from

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individual words to the concepts they represent. In the classical terminology tradition, associated with Wüster (Wüster 1979) and later developed by Sager (Sager and Nkwenti-Azeh 1990), terminology is understood as a system of interrelated concepts rather than a collection of isolated lexical units (International Organization for Standardization 2022, 2019). From this perspective, dictionary compilation starts with conceptual analysis and only then turns to the linguistic forms through which concepts are expressed. This process involves defining conceptual boundaries, identifying the characteristics that distinguish one concept from another, and organising concepts into coherent knowledge structures.

Later developments in terminology studies questioned the idea that concepts are fixed and universally shared. Cabré's Communicative Theory of Terminology (Cabré 1999) places terms within the communicative situations in which they are used, while Temmerman's sociocognitive approach shows that specialised concepts may change over time and be interpreted differently by different communities (Temmerman 2000). These developments have encouraged a more flexible view of specialised lexicography, one that combines conceptual precision with attention to the contexts in which terminology is used.

The implications of these developments are particularly clear in bilingual lexicography. Unlike monolingual specialised dictionaries, which describe concepts within a single language, bilingual dictionaries must relate conceptual systems across two languages. The task extends beyond the identification of lexical equivalents. As Adamska-Sałaciak shows, equivalence depends on conceptual, linguistic, and contextual factors rather than on formal similarity alone (Adamska-Sałaciak 2010). For this reason, identifying bilingual equivalents begins with the comparison of concepts rather than the comparison of words (Cabré 1999; Sager and Nkwenti-Azeh 1990; Wright and Budin 2001; Temmerman 2000).

Recent developments in corpus linguistics, digital lexicography, and terminology management have had a significant impact on specialised lexicography (Atkins et al. 2008; Fuertes-Olivera and Bergenholtz 2011). Dictionary compilation now builds on a wider range of methods, including corpus analysis, documentary research, conceptual modelling, terminology management, and editorial practice. Rather than treating these activities as separate stages, contemporary lexicography approaches them as closely connected parts of a single compilation process.

2.2. Sustainability as an Emerging Terminological Domain

Sustainability offers a useful context for exploring the methodological challenges of specialised bilingual lexicography. Few specialised domains have changed as rapidly over the past decades, both conceptually and terminologically. Since the publication of the *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development* (Brundtland 1987; Lozano 2008; Baker 2015), sustainability has evolved from a concept primarily associated with environmental protection into one that also encompasses economic development, social responsibility, corporate governance, technological innovation, public policy, and organisational communication. More recently, initiatives such as the

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United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2015), the European Green Deal (European Commission 2019), and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (EFRAG 2023) have introduced a wide range of new concepts and terms into professional and institutional communication.

Sustainability presents particular challenges for specialised bilingual lexicography because it brings together concepts from environmental science, economics, law, engineering, management, communication, sociology, political science, and information technology (Salas-Zapata and Ortiz-Muñoz 2019). Sustainability terminology is also closely shaped by institutional discourse. International organisations, regulatory bodies, and reporting frameworks regularly introduce new concepts or revise existing ones in response to scientific advances, legislative change, and professional practice (European Commission, 2019; European Union, 2022; ISO, 2022). The identification of bilingual equivalents therefore depends on the careful comparison of documentary sources and institutional uses before translation decisions can be made. (ISO, 2022).

2.3. Research Gap and the Need for a Methodological Framework

Taken together, the previous sections (2.1. and 2.2.) suggest that compiling specialised bilingual dictionaries involves much more than applying established lexicographic principles. While terminology studies and specialised lexicography provide a strong theoretical basis, interdisciplinary domains such as sustainability show how these principles interact in practice. Although conceptual analysis, documentary evidence, bilingual equivalence, and editorial judgement influence one another throughout compilation, they are frequently examined as separate methodological concerns. The present study brings these elements together within a framework derived from the compilation of an English–Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026) while also considering its possible applicability to other specialised bilingual dictionary projects.

The following section presents the research design adopted in the study and introduces the methodological framework that guided the compilation process.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research uses the compilation of an English-Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026) as a qualitative case study, an approach well suited to analysing complex professional processes in their real-world context (Yin 2018; Creswell and Poth 1998; Tisdell et al. 2025; Stake 1995). Rather than evaluating the completed dictionary, the study focuses on the methodological decisions made throughout its compilation. The analysis of these decisions forms the basis of the methodological framework presented in this paper.

The methodological approach combined documentary analysis with methodological reflection. Documentary analysis (Bowen 2009) was used to examine the sources consulted during dictionary compilation and their role in terminology selection,

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conceptual clarification, and the identification of bilingual equivalents. Methodological reflection focused on the rationale behind these decisions and on the recurring editorial principles that emerged across the project. The emphasis was not on individual decisions but on how they work together within the overall methodology of dictionary compilation.

Figure 1 presents the overall research design and analytical workflow adopted in the study. It illustrates the relationship between the research objective, the methodological approach, the analytical procedures employed, and the resulting methodological framework.

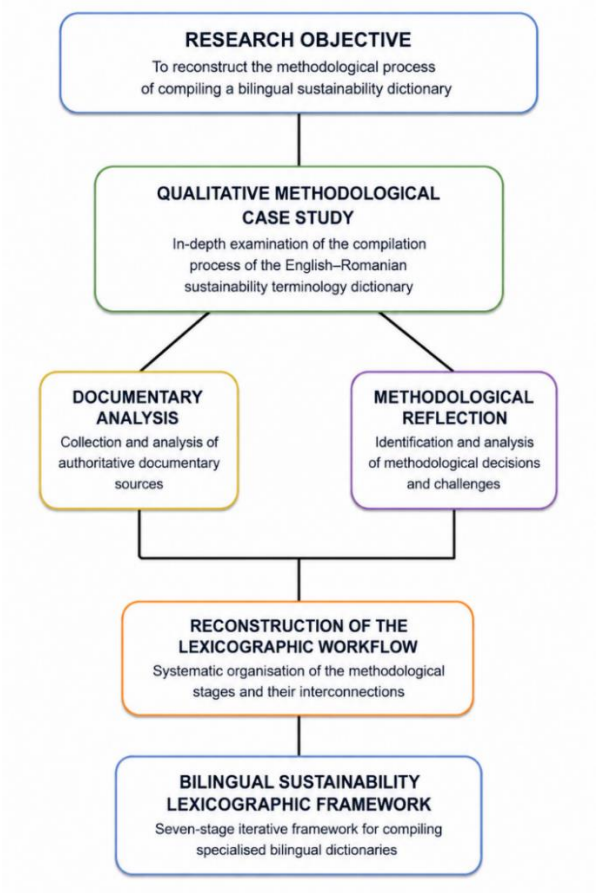

Figure 1. Research design and analytical workflow of the study

The figure outlines the analytical process through which the experience of compiling the English–Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026) was examined and subsequently organised into the proposed Bilingual Sustainability Lexicographic Framework.

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3.2. Documentary Corpus

The methodological framework presented in this study was developed from the documentary corpus compiled for the English-Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026). To ensure broad conceptual coverage, the compilation process combined several categories of authoritative sources, allowing terminology, concepts, and bilingual equivalents to be considered from different perspectives.

The documentary corpus included:

- international policy documents issued by the United Nations, particularly those related to sustainable development and climate policy;
- European Union legislation, regulations, directives, and strategic initiatives concerning sustainability, environmental governance, and corporate reporting;
- international standards published by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO);
- sustainability reporting frameworks developed by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG);
- peer-reviewed scientific publications indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection addressing sustainability, ESG reporting, circular economy, environmental governance, climate change, sustainable finance, biodiversity, environmental policy, and related interdisciplinary topics;
- specialised glossaries, terminology databases, and existing reference works dedicated to sustainability and related disciplines.

Each type of documentary source played a distinct role. Scientific literature contributed to conceptual clarification, institutional documents provided internationally accepted terminology, legislative texts presented legally recognised concepts, and specialised glossaries supported the comparison of existing terminological solutions.

Documentary sources were analysed comparatively rather than in isolation. This comparison helped identify shared conceptual elements, distinguish them from institution-specific interpretations, and establish a more coherent basis for compilation.

3.3. Guiding Lexicographic Principles

Five principles guided the compilation of the dictionary. The first (conceptual relevance) was a concept-oriented approach, in which conceptual analysis came before the selection of bilingual equivalents (Cabré 1999; Sager and Nkwenti-Azeh 1990; International Organization for Standardization 2022, 2019).

The second (documentary reliability) concerned the selection of sources. Terms were included only when supported by authoritative documentary evidence, such as scientific publications, legislation, professional standards, and documents produced by international organisations.

The third principle was conceptual clarity. English and Romanian terms were matched according to the concepts they expressed rather than their formal lexical similarity.

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Editorial consistency was the fourth principle. The same conventions were followed throughout the dictionary for terminology, grammatical information, bilingual correspondence, and cross-references.

The fifth principle concerned interdisciplinary applicability. The methodology was designed with transferability in mind so that procedures developed for the sustainability dictionary could also inform work on other specialised bilingual dictionary projects.

3.4. Analytical Strategy

Once the dictionary had been completed, attention turned to the practices that shaped its development. Related activities were identified, grouped, and organised into a framework describing the overall compilation process. The purpose was to show how these stages work together in the development of a specialised bilingual sustainability dictionary rather than to describe individual editorial decisions in isolation.

The framework is based on documented lexicographic practice and on the systematic comparison of documentary sources. Throughout the project, methodological decisions were recorded and reviewed to ensure consistency and transparency (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

The next section introduces the seven-stage Bilingual Sustainability Lexicographic Framework reconstructed from the workflow that guided the development of the English–Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026).

4. A Methodological Framework for Compiling Specialised Bilingual Sustainability Dictionaries

4.1. Developing a Methodological Framework

The compilation of specialised dictionaries has long been guided by principles of terminology management, concept-oriented analysis, bilingual equivalence, and editorial consistency (Bergenholtz and Tarp 1995; Atkins et al. 2008; Cabré 1999; International Organization for Standardization 2022, 2019). While these principles provide a solid theoretical foundation, they offer less guidance on organising the dictionary compilation process as a whole, particularly in interdisciplinary domains with rapidly evolving terminology.

The development of the English-Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026) showed that dictionary compilation is better understood as a series of interconnected methodological decisions than as a sequence of independent editorial tasks. Decisions concerning domain delimitation, term identification, documentary validation, conceptual analysis, bilingual equivalence, editorial harmonisation, and expert review influenced one another throughout the project, making the process both integrated and iterative.

The observations emerging from this process were subsequently organised into a framework intended to make the logic of compilation more transparent. Rather than introducing new theoretical principles, it organises established lexicographic practices into a coherent sequence of methodological stages derived from practical experience.

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Although developed through the compilation of an English-Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026), its applicability is not restricted to sustainability. The methodological stages described here are equally relevant to other specialised bilingual dictionaries in interdisciplinary domains characterised by conceptual complexity, multiple documentary sources, and evolving terminology.

4.2. Overview of the Methodological Framework

The analysis has identified seven interconnected stages that describe the compilation of a specialised bilingual sustainability dictionary. For reasons of clarity they are presented sequentially, although in practice the process required repeated movement between stages. Figure 2 summarises the proposed framework.

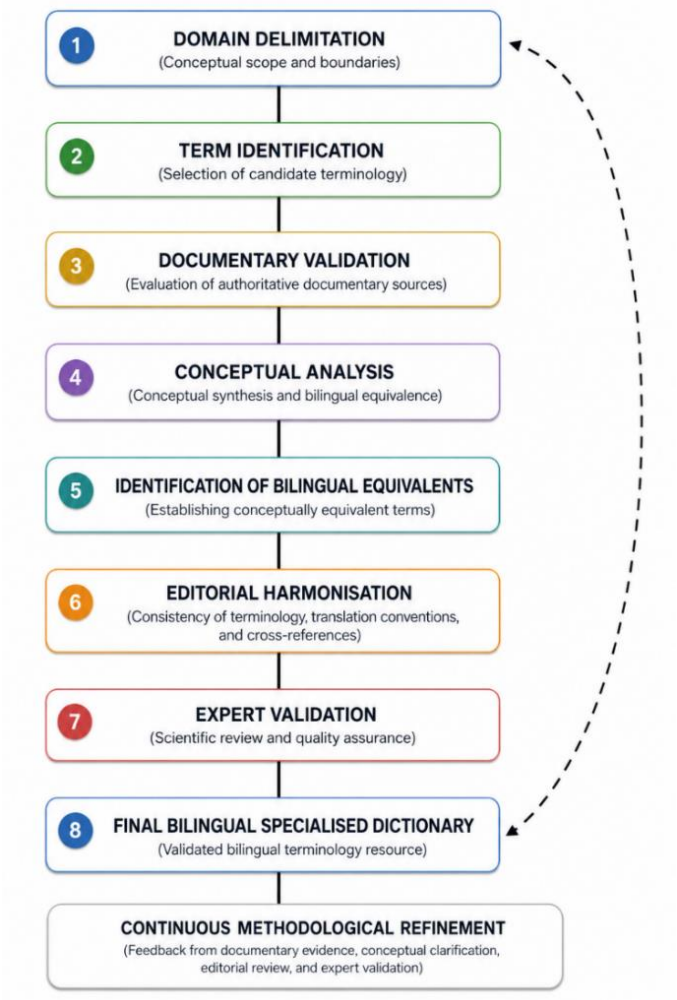

Figure 2. A seven-stage methodological framework for compiling specialised bilingual sustainability dictionaries

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To facilitate comparison, Table 1 summarises the objective, the main methodological question, and the primary outcome associated with each stage of the proposed framework. Together, Figure 2 and Table 1 provide an integrated overview of the methodological logic guiding the compilation process before each stage is examined in detail.

Stage	Objective	Main methodological question	Main output
1. Domain delimitation	Define the conceptual boundaries of the dictionary	What belongs to the sustainability domain?	Conceptual scope
2. Term identification	Identify candidate terminology	Which concepts should be included?	Preliminary terminology inventory
3. Documentary validation	Evaluate documentary evidence	Which documentary sources provide the most reliable conceptual support?	Validated documentary corpus
4. Conceptual analysis	Analyse conceptual meaning and relationships	What concept does the term represent?	Harmonised conceptual representation
5. Identification of bilingual equivalents	Establish conceptually equivalent Romanian terminology	Which Romanian equivalent best represents the validated concept?	Validated bilingual terminology entry
6. Editorial harmonisation	Ensure internal consistency	Are terminology, bilingual equivalents, and editorial conventions applied consistently?	Harmonised bilingual terminology corpus
7. Expert validation	Verify scientific and terminological accuracy	Does the entry accurately reflect current specialised knowledge?	Validated bilingual terminology entry

Table 1. Methodological stages of the Bilingual Sustainability Lexicographic Framework

Each of the following subsections examines one stage of the framework, explaining both the activities involved and the methodological rationale that connects them to the wider lexicographic workflow. Each stage is illustrated with a lexicographic example drawn from the English-Romanian Sustainability Dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026).

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4.3. Stage 1 - Domain Delimitation

The development of any specialised dictionary begins with defining the conceptual boundaries of the domain it intends to represent. This initial stage establishes the scope of the lexicographic project and provides the conceptual foundation for all subsequent methodological decisions. Without clearly defined domain boundaries, terminology selection, documentary validation, and conceptual analysis risk becoming inconsistent, ultimately compromising the coherence of the dictionary.

In established scientific disciplines, domain delimitation is often facilitated by relatively stable conceptual structures and clearly recognised disciplinary boundaries. Sustainability, however, presents a substantially different challenge. As an inherently interdisciplinary and rapidly evolving domain, it integrates concepts originating from environmental sciences, economics, engineering, law, management, communication, public policy, and social sciences. As a consequence, defining the conceptual scope of the dictionary required identifying not only the central themes of sustainability but also determining which adjacent concepts were sufficiently relevant to warrant inclusion.

The delimitation process was guided by internationally recognised sustainability frameworks and authoritative institutional sources, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015), the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019), and the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (EFRAG, 2023). Based on these sources, the dictionary was designed to encompass terminology related to environmental protection, climate change, biodiversity, circular economy, sustainable development, ESG reporting, sustainable finance, governance, organizational communication, resource management, and associated policy instruments.

Lexicographic example

The concept of *double materiality* (*dublă materialitate* in Romanian) was included because it is fundamental to the European Sustainability Reporting Standards. By contrast, general accounting terms that were not directly related to sustainability reporting were excluded, even if they appeared frequently in financial documents. Inclusion depended on the concept's relevance to the domain rather than on the discipline from which it originated.

4.4. Stage 2 - Term Identification

Following the delimitation of the conceptual domain, the next stage focused on identifying candidate terminology for inclusion in the dictionary. In emerging interdisciplinary fields such as sustainability, this process cannot rely exclusively on existing dictionaries because new concepts frequently appear first in scientific publications, legislative documents, technical standards, and institutional reports before becoming established in conventional lexicographic resources.

Candidate terminology was therefore identified through the systematic examination of complementary documentary sources, including international policy documents, European legislation, sustainability reporting frameworks, scientific publications indexed in the *Web of Science Core Collection*, international standards,

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specialised glossaries, and terminology databases. Consulting multiple documentary sources ensured that terminology reflected actual professional and scientific usage rather than the perspective of a single institution or publication.

Candidate terms were evaluated according to three main criteria. First, each term had to represent a distinct and identifiable concept within sustainability discourse. Second, it needed to demonstrate sustained relevance across authoritative documentary sources rather than isolated or temporary usage. Third, sufficient documentary evidence had to be available to support reliable conceptual analysis and subsequent lexicographic description.

Because the dictionary was conceived as a bilingual resource, term identification also involved examining Romanian equivalents used in scientific publications, institutional documents, and professional practice. Whenever multiple Romanian variants were encountered, they were retained for subsequent conceptual evaluation rather than selected solely on the basis of frequency of occurrence. This approach ensured that bilingual equivalence would ultimately be established through conceptual analysis rather than lexical preference.

The main outcome of this stage was a preliminary terminology inventory that provided the basis for systematic documentary validation.

Lexicographic example

Terms such as *renewable energy (energie regenerabilă), stewardship (administrare responsabilă)*, *double materiality (dublă materialitate)*, and *just transition* (*tranziție justă*) were consistently documented in scientific publications, European legislation, and institutional reports. Their presence across different types of documentary sources supported their inclusion in the dictionary, although some Romanian equivalents are still undergoing terminological standardisation.

4.5. Stage 3 - Documentary Validation

Once candidate terminology had been identified, the next stage focused on validating the documentary evidence supporting each term. In specialised lexicography, the scientific quality of dictionary entries depends not only on the terminology itself but also on the authority, credibility, and conceptual reliability of the documentary sources from which definitions are derived (Cabré 1999; Temmerman 2000).

Documentary validation is particularly important in sustainability because concepts are simultaneously defined by scientific communities, international organisations, regulatory bodies, and professional standards. Therefore, identical terms are frequently associated with multiple authoritative definitions reflecting different institutional priorities or disciplinary perspectives. Rather than considering these differences as contradictions, the validation process treated them as complementary sources of conceptual information requiring systematic comparison.

Documentary sources were evaluated according to three criteria: authority, conceptual relevance, and currency. Priority was given to documents issued by internationally recognised organisations, including the United Nations, the European Union, ISO, GRI, and EFRAG, complemented by peer-reviewed scientific publications and specialised

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reference works. When several authoritative definitions were available, they were compared to identify shared conceptual elements, differences in emphasis, and potential disciplinary variation.

Instead of adopting a single definition without further evaluation, documentary validation aimed to establish the conceptual core consistently represented across authoritative sources. This comparative approach reduced dependence on institution-specific terminology while providing a robust evidential basis for subsequent conceptual analysis and bilingual terminology decisions.

The outcome of this stage was a validated documentary corpus supporting each candidate term and providing the conceptual evidence required for the next stage of the lexicographic workflow.

Lexicographic example

Definitions of *greenwashing* were compared across European Commission documents, scientific publications, and environmental organisations. While the wording varied, they all identified the same main idea: presenting products, services, or organisations as more environmentally sustainable than they actually are. This shared conceptual core provided the documentary basis for the dictionary entry. In Romanian, the term was retained in its English form, *greenwashing*, reflecting its established use as a borrowing in contemporary sustainability discourse.

4.6. Stage 4 - Conceptual Analysis

Following documentary validation, the next stage focused on analysing the conceptual meaning of each validated term. In specialised lexicography, dictionary entries represent concepts rather than merely lexical units (Sager and Nkwenti-Azeh 1990; Cabré 1999). Consequently, conceptual analysis constitutes the methodological bridge between documentary evidence and lexicographic representation.

The primary objective of this stage was to establish the conceptual identity of each term by identifying its defining characteristics, conceptual boundaries, and relationships with other concepts within the sustainability domain. Rather than reproducing existing definitions, the analysis sought to synthesise the conceptual knowledge contained in multiple authoritative documentary sources into a coherent and internally consistent conceptual representation.

Particular attention was given to distinguishing essential conceptual attributes from contextual or institution-specific information. Documentary sources frequently emphasised different aspects of the same concept depending on their scientific, legislative, or organisational perspective. Instead of treating these differences as contradictory, conceptual analysis aimed to identify the conceptual core shared across authoritative sources while preserving relevant domain-specific nuances.

Because the dictionary was developed as a bilingual resource, conceptual analysis also played a central role in establishing English-Romanian equivalence. Romanian equivalents were selected according to their ability to represent the same concept rather than merely reproduce the lexical form of the English source term. Whenever several Romanian variants existed, the preferred equivalent was chosen on

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the basis of conceptual adequacy, documentary support, and consistency with contemporary professional usage.

The outcome of this stage was a harmonised conceptual representation of each validated term, providing the scientific foundation for establishing reliable bilingual equivalents.

Lexicographic example

The concept of *circular economy* (*economie circulară* in Romanian) was described by combining information from scientific publications, European policy documents, and sustainability reporting standards. The final entry integrates the defining characteristics shared by these sources rather than reproducing a single published definition.

4.7. Stage 5 - Identification of Bilingual Equivalents

Once the conceptual analysis had established the conceptual identity of each validated term, the next stage focused on identifying the Romanian equivalent that most accurately represented the same concept. This stage marked the transition from conceptual analysis to bilingual lexicographic representation, ensuring that each English term was paired with a Romanian equivalent reflecting the same conceptual content rather than merely its lexical form.

The identification of bilingual equivalents pursued two complementary objectives. First, the selected Romanian equivalent needed to preserve the conceptual meaning established through documentary validation and conceptual analysis. Second, it had to correspond to the terminology already recognised in scientific publications, institutional documents, legislative texts, or professional practice whenever such usage was sufficiently documented. Therefore, achieving an appropriate balance between conceptual accuracy and established professional usage constituted one of the main methodological challenges of the compilation process.

Candidate equivalents were assessed through comparison of documentary evidence and institutional usage rather than by relying on literal translation or frequency alone. When multiple Romanian variants were identified, they were assessed according to three main criteria: conceptual adequacy, documentary support, and consistency with contemporary specialised usage. Preference was given to equivalents that most accurately reflected the validated concept while maintaining coherence with the terminology employed throughout the dictionary.

In some cases, established Romanian usage retained the English term rather than replacing it with a Romanian lexical equivalent. Such borrowings were preserved when their use was sufficiently established in specialised and institutional discourse. This was the case, for example, with *greenwashing*, which appears in the dictionary in the same form in English and Romanian.

Because sustainability terminology evolves continuously, the identification of bilingual equivalents also required careful consideration of recently introduced concepts for which Romanian terminology remains unstable or inconsistently applied. In such cases, documentary evidence from authoritative international organisations, European legislation, scientific literature, and specialized reference works provided the

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principal basis for selecting the most appropriate equivalent. This evidence-based approach reduced dependence on isolated institutional preferences while promoting terminological consistency across languages.

This stage resulted in a validated set of English–Romanian terminology entries supported by documentary evidence, conceptual analysis, and shared editorial principles. These validated bilingual equivalents subsequently formed the basis for the editorial harmonisation of the dictionary as an integrated lexicographic resource.

Lexicographic example

Several Romanian equivalents were found for *just transition*. European Union legislation and Romanian institutional documents consistently used *tranziție justă*, which was therefore selected as the preferred equivalent.

4.8. Stage 6 - Editorial Harmonisation

Following the identification of validated bilingual terminology entries, the next stage focused on ensuring the overall coherence of the dictionary as an integrated lexicographic resource. Individual entries do not function independently; their value depends on the consistency with which terminology, bilingual equivalents, editorial conventions, and conceptual relationships are maintained throughout the dictionary.

Editorial harmonisation therefore involved a systematic review of all bilingual terminology entries to ensure consistency in terminology usage, grammatical structure, translation conventions, bilingual equivalence, and cross-referencing among related concepts. Particular interest was given to applying uniform editorial principles across the entire dictionary so that comparable concepts were represented according to the same lexicographic conventions.

This stage also provided an opportunity to identify conceptual overlaps, inconsistencies in terminology usage, or editorial variations that had emerged during earlier stages of dictionary development. Whenever such issues were identified, previously completed stages, including conceptual analysis or the identification of bilingual equivalents, were revisited. This stage clearly demonstrated the iterative nature of dictionary compilation, as addressing editorial inconsistencies often required revisiting decisions that had previously been considered complete.

Because sustainability terminology frequently incorporates concepts originating from multiple disciplinary traditions, editorial harmonisation also ensured that conceptually related entries remained compatible despite differences in disciplinary perspective or documentary origin. The consistent application of bilingual equivalents throughout the dictionary further strengthened its terminological coherence and practical usability.

The outcome of this stage was a harmonised bilingual terminology corpus characterised by conceptual consistency, editorial uniformity, and coherent internal organisation.

Lexicographic example

Entries for *greenhouse gas emissions, carbon neutrality, net zero*, and *Scope 3 emissions,* together with their Romanian equivalents*,* were reviewed together to ensure

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consistent terminology, uniform cross-referencing, and compatible conceptual descriptions throughout the dictionary.

4.9. Stage 7 - Expert Validation

The final stage consisted of evaluating the completed terminology entries through expert review. While documentary analysis establishes the evidential basis of specialised lexicography, expert validation provides an additional level of quality assurance by assessing whether dictionary entries accurately represent current specialised knowledge and professional terminology.

Expert validation focused on four complementary dimensions: conceptual accuracy, terminological appropriateness, documentary consistency, and practical usability. Reviewers evaluated whether the selected English-Romanian equivalents faithfully represented the conceptual content identified during the previous stages, whether they reflected genuine conceptual equivalence across languages, and whether the editorial conventions had been applied consistently throughout the dictionary. Particular attention was also paid to identifying conceptual ambiguities, inconsistencies in terminology usage, and opportunities to improve the clarity and consistency of individual entries.

Beyond quality assurance, expert validation served as an important mechanism for evaluating the methodological decisions adopted during dictionary compilation. Feedback received from domain specialists occasionally required revisiting earlier stages of the workflow, including conceptual analysis, the identification of bilingual equivalents, and editorial harmonisation. The review process showed that expert validation functions not simply as a final checkpoint but as a recurring source of feedback capable of reshaping earlier decisions.

The validation process also acknowledged the dynamic nature of sustainability terminology. As scientific knowledge, regulatory frameworks, and professional practices continue to evolve, specialised dictionaries must be viewed as living resources that require periodic revision rather than static reference works. Consequently, expert validation contributes not only to the scientific reliability of the current edition but also to the long-term sustainability of the lexicographic resource.

The completion of this stage resulted in the final validated version of the English-Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026) and concluded the methodological workflow proposed in this study.

Lexicographic example

Expert review confirmed most of the proposed bilingual equivalents but also identified a small number of entries where the preferred Romanian terminology differed from current institutional usage. These entries were revised before the dictionary was finalised, improving both terminological consistency and practical usability.

4.10. Synthesis of the Methodological Framework

The seven stages presented above should not be interpreted as independent editorial activities but as mutually reinforcing components of an integrated methodological

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framework for specialised bilingual dictionary development. Each stage contributes to the quality of the final lexicographic resource while simultaneously providing the methodological foundation for subsequent stages. Decisions concerning domain delimitation influence terminology identification; documentary validation creates conceptual analysis; conceptual analysis guides the identification of bilingual equivalents; and editorial harmonisation and expert validation ensure the scientific coherence and practical usability of the completed dictionary.

Although the framework is presented as a sequence of seven stages, its implementation is inherently iterative. Throughout the compilation process, new documentary evidence, conceptual refinements, editorial revisions, and expert feedback frequently required returning to previously completed stages. The stages therefore function less as separate phases than as recurring points within a process of evaluation and revision. This iterative character shows the dynamic nature of specialised lexicography, particularly in rapidly evolving interdisciplinary domains where terminology and conceptual structures are subjected to continuous development.

The main contribution of the proposed framework lies in presenting the methodological logic underlying specialised bilingual dictionary compilation. Instead of prescribing rigid editorial procedures, it provides a transparent workflow that integrates established principles of terminology, conceptual analysis, documentary validation, the identification of bilingual equivalents, editorial harmonisation, and lexicographic practice into a coherent methodological model. In doing so, the framework bridges the gap between theoretical discussions of specialised lexicography and the practical challenges encountered during dictionary development.

Although reconstructed from the compilation of an English-Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026), the framework is not intended to be domain-specific. Its methodological principles, including systematic domain delimitation, evidence-based terminology selection, concept-oriented analysis, the identification of bilingual equivalents, iterative editorial refinement, and expert validation, are applicable to a broad range of interdisciplinary fields characterised by conceptual complexity and rapidly evolving terminology. Thus, the framework may serve as a transferable methodological reference for future lexicographic projects involving specialised bilingual dictionaries in areas such as digital technologies, artificial intelligence, healthcare, environmental sciences, engineering, and other domains.

Taken as a whole, the framework demonstrates how established principles of specialised lexicography can be translated into an operational workflow for bilingual dictionary development.

5. Methodological Challenges and Lessons Learnt

5.1. From Methodological Workflow to Methodological Reflection

The framework presented in the previous section reconstructs the decisions that shaped the development of the English–Romanian sustainability dictionary ((Gherheș et al. 2026). Although the framework explains how the compilation process was organised,

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the practical work of developing the dictionary revealed methodological challenges that were not fully apparent at the outset of the project. These challenges emerged from the interdisciplinary character of sustainability, the diversity of documentary sources, the dynamic evolution of terminology, and the need to establish reliable bilingual conceptual equivalence.

Rather than representing isolated difficulties, these challenges became opportunities for methodological refinement. Addressing them required continuous interaction between documentary evidence, conceptual analysis, editorial judgement, and expert feedback, reinforcing the iterative nature of specialised bilingual lexicography proposed in the previous section.

The experience gained during the compilation of the dictionary extends beyond sustainability and may be useful for future lexicographic projects in other domains.

5.2. Conceptual Challenges

One of the main methodological challenges was defining the scope of sustainability. Unlike more established disciplines, sustainability continues to evolve in response to scientific advances, technological innovation, regulatory change, and changing societal priorities. Deciding which concepts to include in the dictionary became, thus, an important methodological decision. Concepts such as *circular economy*, *ESG*, *green finance*, *stakeholder engagement*, and *sustainable communication* are used in several disciplines while remaining closely linked to sustainability. For this reason, concepts were selected according to their relevance to sustainability rather than their disciplinary origin. The compilation process also showed that the scope of the dictionary could not be fixed at the outset but had to be reviewed as new concepts and terminology emerged.

A second challenge was comparing definitions drawn from different documentary sources. Scientific publications, legislation, standards, and institutional documents often emphasised different aspects of the same concept. Instead of selecting a single definition, the analysis focused on the characteristics they had in common. This approach helped maintain conceptual consistency while taking into account the different disciplinary and institutional perspectives.

5.3. Documentary and Terminological Challenges

The diversity of documentary sources represented another important methodological challenge. Sustainability terminology is simultaneously developed by international organisations, legislative institutions, standardisation bodies, scientific communities, and professional organisations, each stressing different dimensions of the same concepts according to their institutional objectives.

Instead of favouring a single documentary authority, the compilation process adopted documentary triangulation as a central methodological principle. Conceptual descriptions and documentary evidence were systematically compared across authoritative sources before identifying their common conceptual foundation. That is why documentary diversity became an asset rather than a limitation, enabling

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dictionary entries to reflect a broader and more balanced representation of specialised knowledge.

The dynamic evolution of sustainability terminology introduced an additional challenge concerning the terminology selection. New sustainability concepts often become widely used before their meaning is fully established, so frequency alone was not enough to justify their inclusion in the dictionary. Instead, terms were selected based their conceptual relevance, documentary support, institutional recognition, and consistent use in different sources. This approach helped ensure that the dictionary included well-established terms while remaining open to future developments in the field.

5.4. Editorial and Bilingual Challenges

Compiling a bilingual specialised dictionary brought additional challenges. Selecting Romanian equivalents involved more than literal translation; it required establishing conceptual correspondence between the English and Romanian terms. In some cases, similar terms were used differently in disciplinary or institutional contexts. For this reason, Romanian equivalents were selected by comparing concepts in documentary sources rather than by relying on lexical similarity alone.

Maintaining consistency throughout the dictionary was equally important. Because dictionary entries are closely connected, changes made to terminology, conceptual descriptions, or bilingual equivalents often affected other entries. As a result, editorial review continued throughout the project rather than being left until the final proofreading stage. Revisions introduced during conceptual analysis or expert review frequently required earlier entries to be updated to maintain consistency across the dictionary.

5.5. Lessons Learnt

The compilation of the English–Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026) generated several methodological observations that may be relevant to future lexicographic projects.

First, defining the scope of the dictionary was not a decision made only at the beginning of the project. As sustainability continued to develop, new concepts emerged and existing ones evolved, making it necessary to review both the scope of the dictionary and the terminology selected for inclusion.

Second, comparing different documentary sources proved essential. Scientific publications, legislation, standards, and institutional documents often described the same concept from different perspectives. Considering these sources together produced more balanced and reliable dictionary entries.

Third, compiling a bilingual dictionary required attention to concepts rather than words alone. Choosing Romanian equivalents depended on conceptual equivalence supported by documentary evidence, not simply on literal translation or lexical similarity.

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Finally, editorial review and expert validation formed part of the compilation process from beginning to end. Revising entries as the work progressed helped maintain consistency across the dictionary and improved the quality of the final resource.

Overall, this project showed that compiling a specialised bilingual dictionary involves more than selecting terms and their equivalents. It requires a series of connected methodological decisions that shape the quality and consistency of the dictionary as a whole.

Table 2 summarises the main methodological challenges encountered during the project and the lessons learnt from the compilation process.

Challenge	Methodological response	Main lesson
Dynamic conceptual boundaries	Continuous conceptual delimitation	Domain boundaries should be periodically reassessed.
Multiple authoritative documentary sources	Documentary triangulation	Comparative analysis improves conceptual robustness and reduces institutional bias.
Rapid terminological evolution	Selection based on conceptual relevance, documentary support, institutional recognition, and recurrence	Conceptual stability is a more reliable inclusion criterion than lexical popularity.
Bilingual conceptual equivalence	Concept-oriented documentary analysis	Conceptual equivalence should take precedence over literal translation.
Editorial consistency	Continuous harmonisation and iterative revision	Editorial coherence should accompany every stage of dictionary development.

Table 2. Main methodological challenges and lessons learnt

6. Methodological and Practical Implications for Future Specialised Bilingual Lexicography

6.1. From Methodological Reflection to Transferable Practice

The discussion in the previous section shows that compiling a specialised bilingual dictionary involves more than collecting and defining terms. It requires concepts, documentary sources, bilingual equivalents, editorial decisions, and expert review to be considered together throughout the compilation process. Although every dictionary shows the characteristics of its field, many of the methodological principles identified in this study can also be applied to other bilingual terminology projects in emerging interdisciplinary domains.

The following implications are based on the experience of compiling the English–Romanian Sustainability Dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026). Rather than prescribing a particular method, they highlight some methodological considerations that may be useful in future specialised bilingual dictionary projects.

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6.2. Methodological Implications for Future Lexicographic Projects

The experience gained during this study suggests several methodological implications that may contribute to improving the development of specialised bilingual dictionaries. Conceptual delimitation should precede terminology collection. Defining the conceptual architecture of the domain before selecting terminology provides clear inclusion criteria and establishes a coherent conceptual structure capable of supporting subsequent methodological decisions.

Documentary triangulation should become standard practice in specialised lexicography. Comparing scientific publications, legislation, international standards, institutional reports, and specialized reference works enables lexicographers to construct conceptually balanced bilingual terminology resources while reducing dependence on individual documentary perspectives.

Conceptual equivalence should guide bilingual terminology selection. Bilingual lexicography should prioritise conceptual correspondence rather than lexical similarity. Reliable bilingual equivalents emerge from comparative conceptual analysis supported by authoritative documentary evidence instead of direct linguistic translation.

Conceptual synthesis should precede bilingual terminology selection. Documentary evidence should be synthesised to identify the conceptual core shared across authoritative sources before selecting bilingual equivalents. Conceptual synthesis strengthens both scientific reliability and terminological consistency.

Editorial harmonisation should accompany the entire workflow. Maintaining consistency in terminology, editorial conventions, bilingual equivalents, and conceptual relationships is not a final editorial task but an ongoing methodological responsibility that supports the coherence of the entire lexicographic resource.

6.3. Practical Implications for Future Lexicographic Projects

Beyond their methodological importance, the findings of this study also have practical implications for future dictionary development.

First, lexicographic projects should adopt an iterative workflow that allows methodological decisions to be revisited whenever new concepts, documentary evidence, or expert feedback become available. Such flexibility is particularly important in interdisciplinary domains characterised by continuous conceptual evolution.

Second, collaboration with subject specialists should extend throughout the entire compilation process rather than being restricted to the final validation stage. Continuous expert involvement improves conceptual accuracy, facilitates the evaluation of bilingual equivalents, and strengthens the scientific credibility of the resulting dictionary.

Third, future bilingual dictionaries should explicitly document the methodological criteria used for terminology selection, documentary evaluation, conceptual analysis, and editorial harmonization. Such methodological transparency enhances the reproducibility of lexicographic projects while increasing users' confidence in the resulting terminology resource.

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Finally, specialised bilingual dictionaries should be regarded as evolving knowledge resources rather than static publications. Regular updates are essential for incorporating emerging concepts, revising previously validated bilingual terminology entries, and maintaining conceptual equivalence as scientific knowledge, legislation, and professional practice continue to evolve.
These implications are presented in Table 3.

Methodological principle	**Practical implication**	**Expected methodological benefit**
Define conceptual boundaries before terminology collection	Establish explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria	Greater conceptual coherence
Apply documentary triangulation	Compare multiple authoritative documentary sources	Reduced institutional bias and improved conceptual reliability
Prioritise conceptual equivalence	Evaluate bilingual terminology conceptually rather than lexically	More accurate bilingual representation
Synthesise conceptual evidence	Integrate conceptual evidence from multiple documentary sources	Scientifically robust bilingual terminology entries
Maintain continuous editorial harmonisation	Review terminology, bilingual equivalents, and editorial conventions throughout the project.	Improved consistency and usability
Integrate expert validation throughout the workflow	Obtain continuous scientific feedback	Increased conceptual accuracy and credibility
Treat dictionaries as evolving knowledge resources	Plan regular revisions and updates	Long-term relevance and sustainability

Table 3. Methodological and practical implications for future bilingual lexicography

6.4. Broader Implications for Specialised Lexicography

Although the methodological framework proposed in this study was reconstructed from the compilation of an English–Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026), its broader relevance extends beyond sustainability. Numerous contemporary domains, including artificial intelligence, digital communication, cybersecurity, digital health, circular economy, science communication, and environmental governance, share characteristics such as interdisciplinary knowledge structures, rapidly evolving concepts, and continuous terminological innovation. These domains face methodological challenges similar to those identified in this study, particularly regarding conceptual delimitation, documentary diversity, bilingual equivalence, and editorial consistency.

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The framework and methodological reflections developed in this study may therefore offer useful guidance for future bilingual lexicographic initiatives in interdisciplinary domains characterised by evolving terminology. The framework is not proposed as a universal model applicable to all lexicographic projects. Instead, it shows how a structured approach to dictionary compilation can improve the consistency and clarity of specialised bilingual dictionaries.

More generally, the findings show that the different stages of specialised bilingual dictionary compilation are closely connected. Conceptual analysis, documentary evidence, terminology management, bilingual equivalence, editorial harmonisation, and expert validation all influence one another throughout the compilation process. This interaction can be understood as an ecosystem perspective of specialised bilingual lexicography, in which each component contributes to the quality and consistency of the dictionary. From this perspective, specialised dictionaries are more than collections of terms; they are resources that organise and communicate specialised knowledge across languages, disciplines, and institutional contexts.

Figure 3 summarises the relationships between the main components of the proposed methodological framework. It shows how conceptual analysis, documentary evidence, terminology management, bilingual equivalence, editorial harmonisation, and expert validation work together throughout the compilation of a specialised bilingual dictionary.

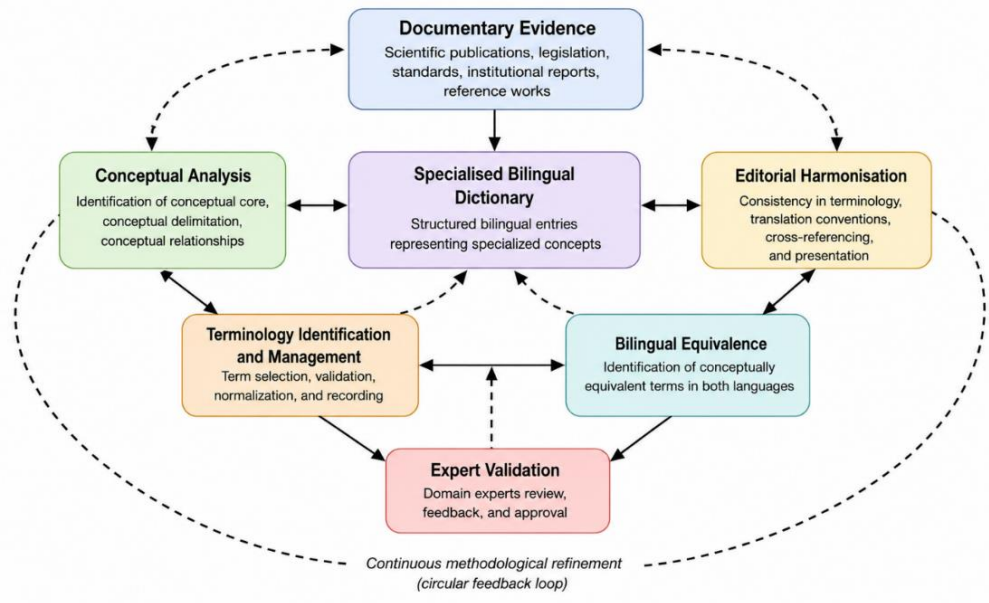

Figure 3. Ecosystem of Specialised Bilingual Lexicography

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7. Conclusions

The rapid expansion of sustainability as an interdisciplinary field has generated an equally rapid growth of specialised terminology, creating increasing demand for reliable bilingual lexicographic resources capable of supporting research, professional communication, education, translation, and policy implementation. Despite the growing importance of specialised terminology, methodological guidance describing how specialised bilingual dictionaries can be systematically developed remains relatively limited.

This study addressed that gap by reconstructing the methodological process underlying the compilation of an English-Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026). The emphasis was placed not on the dictionary as a finished product, but on identifying, analysing, and organising the methodological decisions that shaped its development. The resulting Bilingual Sustainability Lexicographic Framework thus organises the dictionary compilation into seven interconnected methodological stages encompassing domain delimitation, term identification, documentary validation, conceptual analysis, the identification of bilingual equivalents, editorial harmonisation, and expert validation.

Beyond describing the individual stages of dictionary development, the study argues that specialised bilingual lexicography should be understood as an iterative process of knowledge organisation in which conceptual analysis, documentary evidence, bilingual equivalence, editorial harmonisation, and expert review continuously interact. This perspective moves beyond traditional procedural descriptions of dictionary compilation by emphasising the methodological relationships that ensure the conceptual coherence, scientific reliability, and editorial consistency of specialised bilingual lexicographic resources.

The study makes several methodological contributions. One contribution is the formulation of a transparent workflow that translates established principles of specialised lexicography into an operational framework for bilingual dictionary development. A second contribution lies in highlighting the value of documentary triangulation and concept-oriented analysis as complementary tools for strengthening conceptual reliability and supporting the selection of conceptually equivalent bilingual terminology. The research also shows that reliable bilingual terminology is best established through conceptual equivalence rather than through literal lexical correspondence. Collectively, these contributions provide methodological guidance that may support future lexicographic initiatives in other rapidly evolving interdisciplinary domains.

Developed in the context of an English–Romanian sustainability dictionary (Gherheș et al. 2026), the framework may also be relevant to specialised bilingual lexicographic projects in fields marked by conceptual complexity, interdisciplinarity, and rapidly evolving terminology, such as artificial intelligence, digital communication, cybersecurity, digital health, environmental governance, and science communication.

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The study has its limitations. The proposed framework was derived from a single lexicographic project and reflects the characteristics of one language pair and one specialised domain. Future research could evaluate the applicability of the framework through comparative analyses involving additional languages, disciplinary contexts, and lexicographic traditions. Further studies may also explore the integration of corpus-based methods, computational terminology extraction, and artificial intelligence-assisted lexicography within the proposed methodological workflow.

Overall, the findings suggest that the development of specialised bilingual dictionaries should be regarded not merely as a lexicographic exercise but as a systematic process of conceptual knowledge organisation requiring methodological transparency, documentary rigour, interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuous refinement. By making this process explicit, the proposed framework contributes to ongoing discussions on methodological practices in specialised bilingual lexicography and provides a transferable methodological foundation for future research and practice across emerging interdisciplinary domains.

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