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THE VALUE INTERFACES OF MEDIA COVID-CULTURE IN ONLINE PRESS¹

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The outbreak of COVID-19 has caused a radical division of communities and reformatted a considerable area of interpersonal communication in the contemporary “glocalized” world. Historically and culturally developed standards, flexibly stable communication concepts, and universally applicable codes with a substantial degree of persuasive and expressive force have produced accelerated responses to the special requirements and challenges that contemporary social media discourse needs to, wants to, or can manage. In the pragma-communication ambit covering the COVID-19 issue, what was obviously activated and integrated were the methods and means of professional (medical, psychological, social, economic, political, military) and media discourse, including the extreme persuasiveness, inherent colloquialization, as well as individualization, of the web-based media products. In the context of the delicate thematic and pragmatic spectrum, a culturally specific way of

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intertextual media presentation of contents, intentions and effects was created at the intersection of the said communication markers. Using an adapted speech acts theory, the study focuses on a socio-pragmatic definition of interfaces in a so-called covid-culture value area, which occurs in contemporary online press featuring opinion journalism.

Key words: *interpersonal communication; speech act theory; media communication sphere; online press; covid-culture value area.*

A good scientist is one who knows what to look for, so you disregard the tons of stuff, and you see a little thing somewhere else. The same is true of a good newspaper reader. Whether it's in print or on the Internet, you have to know what to look for. That requires a knowledge of history, an understanding of the backgrounds, a conception of the way the media function as filters and interpreters of the world. Then you know what to look for. (Noam Chomsky)²

1. Introduction

The paper aims to draw socio-pragmatic attention to the delineation of the area and interfaces of the so-called *covid-culture* value complex in the contemporary online opinion press by focusing on “who and why formulates the media statement and to whom the media statement is addressed”. The value complex is considered and presented through the adapted Speech Act Theory (initial definition by Austin 1962) while reflecting its illocutionary component present in the application of communication functions. The source of the used persuasive methods and techniques is the publication by Iłowiecki – Zasepa 2003: 80–103.

The intention to focus on the value-forming aspect of social communication in the part of online journalism operating at the time of the truly unprecedented social crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is influenced by the motivating, interrelated socio-cultural and pragma-communicative circumstances.

1. In defining the conceptual background of the problem and tracing the approach to the topic of the paper, I start from the theorem of language

² Chomsky, Noam (2007). *What We Say Goes. Conversation on U. S. Power in a Changing World: Interviews with David Barsamian*, pp. 96–97.

consciousness as a specific component of human consciousness, in the sense of J. Horecký's views [Horecký 1991]. The author attributes consciousness an axiological, evaluative component, which assigns certain values to the used elements or results of communicative activity. In addition to the evaluation of the expressive components of language communication in terms of the norm and codification, the axiological component, which makes it possible to judge and evaluate expressions, but especially communications in terms of their appropriateness and adequacy to the speaker's intent, is of fundamental importance [Horecký 1991: 84]. In the relation *institutional communication – structured value world* (let me also include mediated interactions in electronic media) it is appropriate to point out the essence of cultivated linguistic consciousness, which is characteristic of the community segment in the media landscape with both individually (specifically) and socially (generally), i.e. group-accepted value standards.

The “responsible citizens”, the “good readers of newspapers” in the online media landscape, as evoked by the opening Chomsky quote, are/should be mentally active, motivated, with large cognitive capacity, (algorithmically, stereotypically) picky seekers, well-oriented in the genre and topic, critical, assertive, and self-respecting, technologically skilled communication partners, and media production consumers, who neither “adore” nor condemn it. At the same time, I note that in an optimally functioning community, such an “elitist” perception of the participants in the media interaction is neither the primary nor the only object of the media impact. Emphasizing a set of qualities, abilities, and prerequisites of the “good readers of newspaper” is meant to be prophylactic, with the ambition of extending its reach to a larger audience. The point is that the passivity, the unwillingness to seek high-quality journalistic expression, and the intellectual laziness of the recipients of media products is a misfortune (let me emphasize: Not only, but also) for the media [Follrichová 2011: 41]. The author's observation is particularly acute and symptomatic at the time of crisis with a broad, global impact on the life, behaviour, and actions of social structures and the respective communicating communities. In challenging situations and states of society, psychosocial pressure, among other things, is exerted *en masse*, quite aggressively, often abusively (through the media) on large target groups, especially the “less-demanding consumers” of media messages. At the same time, universally valid value standards are frequently obscured, demagogically trivialized, or impertinently relegated to the periphery of the media axiological spectrum.

2. The values of the media and communication participants are, in a broader sense, defined and built as a multi-level system of relations and categories with discernible layers and respective axiological interfaces between them. A support layer of the media value system is the sphere of social values focused on a partner in a social relationship (in our case, it is the participant in online media communication). An intentional set of relationships is explicitly expressed by the value system of a social unit as a whole and objectified in social norms (for the notion of “value system”, see Geist 1992: 105). It is the bundle of social norms existing in a defined segment of online media communication, which allows the determination of the effectiveness of social interactions in media discourse.

3. I find the initial conditions, the contradictory interplay and interfaces of the social norms applied in the media *covid-culture* in the discourse of *pandemic* mediation, behaviour and actions of online media in a chain of three identifiers: **a**) the phasing of the pandemic period (*pars pro toto* in Slovakia: early 2020 – pre-spring 2022, with a diminishing focus on the issue in most countries), **b**) the selection of events, their conceptual processing into prefabricated products predetermined to perform the respective communicative functions, selecting opinions and shaping evaluations with real or assumed impact on the formation of social consciousness, and **c**) deploying elements of media reality in institutionalized media communication (correlated events, facts, reactions and actions of society, politicians, experts, authorities of various types, including media celebrities, genre models and variations). [For a generalized scheme of the links in the creation and maintenance of media reality, see Hłowiecki – Zasepa 2003: 22.]

In the online media discourse of the short-lived but intense covid era, including the (post-) vaccination period, I draw attention to the synergistic bundle of speech acts employed in addressing the issues conditioned by the topic of the study. These are linked, alongside the “obligatorily present” informational predestination, to **a**) maintenance, instructional, strongly persuasive, propagandistic, and manipulative purposes, and to **b**) secondary – supplementary, accompanying, framing, or colouring – credentials, e.g. to lighten media production, to promote or weaken interpersonal interactions, etc. In the online media communication sphere during the covid era, speech acts that fulfil a non-informational mission are deployed deliberately, surprisingly, and with extreme fre-

quency. At the same time, “each method of misleading can be used and applied in different ways in different domains, and its effectiveness depends on many circumstances. First, it depends on the general state of culture, on the extent to which the recipients can understand the specifics of the mass media’s action, as well as the possibilities of their critical reception” [Iłowiecki – Zasepa 2003: 80].

Considering the architecture and respecting the relational, often contradictory scope of the above social and communicative determinants has the ambition of creating acceptable conditions for pursuing the intention of the study. It becomes an effort to identify the methodological potential for presenting a media *covid-culture* that is non-terminologically defined, but, in practice, exists and operates with its contrastive interfaces in the online press, i.e., with advantages and limitations for the participants of online media communication.

2. Methodological definition of the problem

The methodological background of the paper includes the concept of a transformed media communication chain, applied to the interactive, inter-medial, and multimodal communication contacts in the tele-technological environment. [The author’s methodological reflections were inspired by Russ – Mohl – Bakičová 2005: 27–39. In their book, the changes in behaviour and values of the audience are described on pp. 39–41. On the issue of the value shift towards fictionalization and emotionalization of opinion-type online journalism, see Patráš: 2021].

The essence of the concept of a transformed media communication chain is the reformatted communication paradigm. The change is manifested in the following constituents:

a) The status of a journalist and an interactive recipient/addressee of hypertext is replaced by a combination of the two formerly separate communication roles in the status of a *wreader* (recipient-reader of hypertext taking over the functions of an author-writer; this *amalgam* term was introduced by G. Landow in 1992). In terms of the study objective, the above-mentioned fusion must evoke a change in the degree of control over the hypertext components and boundaries on the part of a recipient. In comparison with the “classic” texts, the fusion also affects the attitudes and responsibilities of *wreaders* towards hypertext within the paradigm of online media culture.

b) In the electronically determined environment, there has been a real transformation of media communication functions (missions) from the scheme: *informing – agenda setting – orienting – criticizing – controlling* into a new one: *attracting – orienting – selecting facts and procedures of their application – attitude – responsibility – remediation*, i.e., readiness of recipients to spread messages in cyberspace, e.g., through viral activities.

Parenti 1997; Iłowiecki – Zasepa 2003; Habrajska – Obrębska 2007; Ftorek 2017, and others have pointed out that in the media coverage of a crisis (a pandemic, in our case), persuasion – in its axiological sense – symptomatically develops into propaganda and manipulation. Language in its social role, as a value and as a product of value-creating activity, is contemplated by J. Dolník [Dolník 2000: 150–163] in his typical thought-provoking manner. While accepting the anthropological and cultural features of media crisis communication, K. Michalewski [Michalewski 2014] points to the negative categorizations of people according to their external (physical and anthropological) and internal (usually inferred characterological, psychological, customary, ideological, gender) features through evaluative grading (stigmatizing) in group communication. Michalewski highlights the strongly stereotyped, expressive-emotional attribute of stigmatization and its aggressive impact on public communication. Let me add: with the previously mentioned, quite transparent, easily identifiable, yet personally and humanly vulnerable semantic-pragmatic identifier, stigmatization means and methods are often abused in the form of deceptive or false arguments with emotional properties (*ad hominem, ad auditorem*). The intended purpose of doing so is quasi-objectivity and factuality (*ad rem*) with an offensive and defamatory intent, including online media communication and covid discourse in general.

The presumptive, even expected result of the study is the outline of a media *covid-culture* and the confirmation (?) of adaptation to the “new normal” in terms of Union politics and organization (see e.g. Cuhls et al. 2022).

To describe the observations and findings from the defined points of view, I have used the qualitative approach to media production (for more details on research methodology, see Sedláková 2014). The texts were published at different stages of the pandemic period (only temporarily withdrawn from the *agenda-setting* at the time of writing the study) while fulfilling the respective media credentials. The material source for assessing the selection is the author’s systematically built, supplemented, observed,

and interpreted research database of print-type web-based media covering the two major streams of journalistic activity – news and opinion journalism.³

3. Findings and outcomes

Considering the leading motive, targeting, and research objectives of the paper, it is important to present an integrated interpretation platform conceived within the pragma-communication framework. Its ambition is to contribute to the specification of the phases of media communication in the covid era, with the impact on the recognition of the value fields and interfaces of the media covid-culture in the eyes of individual or group recipients of media products (targeted, addressed, or general audience). Operators or administrators of sample media can extract and process contents, facts, and events from the agency resources, take cues and production from other media environments, and then edit, reinterpret (even deconstruct), source, and supplement their parts in a pragma-communicative way. They also add expressive-emotional components, including a rich register of purposefully dosed contextual expressivity. The binding agent of the media in question is the creation and dissemination of posts with a muted informational predetermination and a reinforced opinion line.

A value-profiled integrated interpretation platform (see **Figure 1**) is co-created by the architectural components with the social foundation of the covid era. It can be divided according to the phases of media communication (**A**), with a functional context and a repertoire of communicative functions (**B**), and with an appropriate linguistic-communicative and pragmatic inventory, which is selectively represented by the frequent speech acts (**C**). I have created the phase names according to the focal social dispositions and concurrent media activities that were dominant in the respective periods. Speech acts are divided into three subgroups, according to their value application in the media covid discourse. The division is used for the pragma-stylistic argumentation of their value or the value-creating engagement. The identifiers above are linked to the genre requirements, compositional predispositions, and possibilities of expression in the exam-

³ An overview of the online periodicals excerpted for the purpose of the study is included in the *References* as a separate subsection titled *Sources (electronic media sample inventory)* with 30 entries.

ined field of online media communication. I understand architectural components in synergy, the way they were dynamically applied in the previous period of existence, development, and the impact of the COVID-19 objects and narratives. Namely, this was in the decisive life period of the globalized communities, i.e. generally between January 2020 – February 2022 (in Slovakia including the fading media events in the summer 2022)⁴.

An integrated interpretation platform benefits from the interplay of the three areas (A-C). It utilizes the system of relevant indicators in their pragma-communicative inter-operation and/or deterministic chaos. In this context, the **A** area defines the causes, essence, and circumstances of the media rendering; the **B** and **C** areas are the consequences (phenomenal aspects) of the social conditions. The conceptual approach is linked to the specifically Slovak socio-cultural and media conditions. However, the experience is at least comparable with other communities related in terms of history, ethnic culture, and social communication.

⁴ The phase of reminiscences and, at the same time, the attempts to revitalize media interest in the *pandemic* and to forecast the further developments after February 2022 is not the subject of the study.

Fig. 1. *The integrated interpretation platform for the knowledge of media covid discourse with potential value interfaces of media covid-culture*

A. Media communication phases in the COVID-19 era dominantly developed type of journalistic activity (Tušer 2010; Rončáková 2019) in hierarchical order	B. Communication functions (Vybíral 2005, p. 31) and their hierarchy according to the effects of social interactions in the text (Geist 1992)	C. Speech Acts (SA) in descriptive definition (selection) focused by illocutionary component (Austin 1962) in media covid discourse applied along the line Ne... neutrally projected SA, Po... positively projected SA, Ng... negatively projected SA
1. <u>exposition-mobilization phase</u> - news - (secondary: opinion journalism of rational type)	information function	- generating interest in the object with media coverage (Po), - drawing attention to the objective narrative (Po), - selecting facts and events (Po), - compiling facts without sourcing (Ng), - publishing unverified circumstances, or questionable facts and events (Ng), - typologizing the objects and persons with media coverage (Ne)
	orientation function	- comparing facts and events (Ne), - classifying installed knowledge (Ne), - contrasting or identifying the experience of individuals and population groups (Ne)
	instruction function	- developing and explaining narratives (Po), - preaching, teaching the audience (Ne)
	persuasion function	- influencing – suppressing or escalating emotions (Ne), - arguing with counter-information (Po), - arguing with unverified/untrue or incomplete information (Ng), - concealing selected facts (Ng), - inciting stress in the present and projecting fears of the future (Ng)
	(potential phatic function)	- appealing to the “common good”, “solidarity” etc. (Ne), - unilateral, exclusive, aggressive appealing to “personal responsibility” (Ng)

A. Media communication phases in the <u>COVID-19 era</u> dominantly developed type of journalistic activity (Tušer 2010; Rončáková 2019) in hierarchical order	B. Communication functions (Vybíral 2005, p. 31) and their hierarchy according to the effects of social interactions in the text (Geist 1992)	C. Speech Acts (SA) in descriptive definition (selection) focused by illocutionary component (Austin 1962) in media covid discourse applied along the line Ne... neutrally projected SA, Po... positively projected SA, Ng... negatively projected SA
2. <u>testing-restriction phase</u> - opinion journalism of emotional type - opinion journalism of rational type - (secondarily: news)	information function persuasion and manipulation function, simultaneously instruction function	- media coverage (of both real and mock) authorities (Ne), - setting quasi-authorities and pseudo-celebrities (media prefabs) (Ng) - sycophantism, flattery, heroizing (Ng), - fabricating, constructing media objects (Ng), - lightening of motivically important subjects (Ng), - concealing the essence or parts of facticity (Ng), - opinion defence (Ne), - accusing, intimidating, verbal attack (Ng), - belittling individually or collectively personalized object of media coverage (Ng), - confrontational reasoning (Ne)
3. <u>vaccination-confrontational phase</u> - opinion journalism of rational type - opinion journalism of emotional type - news	(information function)	- arousing interest in the event (Ne), - selecting (attractive, sensitive) narratives (Ne), - taking over products of other media with modifications (editing, component rearrangements) (Ne), - compiling facts without sourcing (Ng), - publishing unverified circumstances, or questionable facts and events (Ng)

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<p>3. <u>vaccination-confrontational phase</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - opinion journalism of rational type - opinion journalism of emotional type - news 	<p>manipulation function, simultaneously persuasion function</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strong contrasting of parts of represented reality (Ne), - distracting by layering specialist parcels (Ne), - describing individual – real or fictional story (Ne), - polarizing groups/society (Ng), - (targeted, intentional) accusing (Ng), - reviving or constructing invectives (Ng), - ironizing, offending, ostracizing, defaming (concepts of <i>cancel culture</i>, or <i>call-out culture</i>) (Ng), - weakening thematic cores by information ballast (disguising) (Ng)
	<p>instruction function</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rational consideration of the declaratory value of facts, processes, and consequences (Po), - tension relief, self-satisfaction (Ne), - attacking, accusing/vindicating (Ng), - distracting (Ne), - direct, unequivocal attitude built on contrasted questioning (Po)
	<p>(potential operation function)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making news emotional by means of opinion narratives and persuasion (Ne), - conclusions without <i>the right to the last word</i> (Po)

A. Media communication phases in the COVID-19 era dominantly developed type of journalistic activity (Tušer 2010; Rončáková 2019) in hierarchical order	B. Communication functions (Vybíral 2005, p. 31) and their hierarchy according to the effects of social interactions in the text (Geist 1992)	C. Speech Acts (SA) in descriptive definition (selection) focused by illocutionary component (Austin 1962) in media covid discourse applied along the line Ne... neutrally projected SA, Po... positively projected SA, Ng... negatively projected SA
4. <i>relaxing-reminiscent phase</i> - news - opinion journalism of rational type - opinion journalism of emotional type	information function	- presenting narratives with retrospective framework (Ne), - publishing unverified objects, clearly impugnable facts (Ng)
	instruction function (potential conation function)	- selecting, classifying, and presenting objects of attention, acquired in a non-standard way but verified, in their causation and relational succession (Ne)
	aestheticizing function	- overlapping or swapping the order of components with various terms of origin (Ne) - meliorative shaping of narrative and socially focused issue (Ng)
	phatic function	- supporting justified opinion (Ne)
	(potential entertaining function)	- caricature of a negative media image (Ne) - hyperbolization of mainstream narratives (Ng)

Below, I present the intended relational-interpretive platform.

A. Procedural-communicative and linguo-cultural definition of the media covid era: I have stratified the media communication about COVID-19 in the Slovak environment into 4 phases. In this stratification, I present the commencing milestones of the respective phases, while the meanings of their names are understood in a communication-cultural sense. Hence, they are not narrowly synchronized with, e.g., government policies and powers, social interventions, changes in moods, behaviours and responses of the population, pandemic curves, and simultaneous, oftentimes contradictory measures of all kinds and demand rates. In the **A**

area, the respective phases are related to journalistic activities and procedures, which – especially in cyberspace – allow recording, gathering, selecting, content and media-communication editing, economic, political, and managerial supporting, technological providing and, finally, dynamic spreading of the respective media products. At a time of social crisis, an inconspicuous aspect is usually present in journalistic acts: each of the mentioned activities or expressions is applied dually, i.e. along with its counterpart. This fact relates to the media practices and products which, in addition to their facilities for the effective dissemination of contents and intentions, are equipped with persuasive potential, as well as manipulative instruments and techniques. For example, the subliminal purposeful cuts of media events are also activated when selecting the contents. Editing also includes softening, retouching, as well as exaggeration or caricature of the depicted essence, construction of a media image, “juggling” with its components, etc.

1. *From January 2020... exposition-mobilization phase.* Signal, quite fragmentary, incoherent, and often contradictory information about the origin and activation of an unknown (“new”), expanding, yet unnamed and virologically unseparated virus was put in the framework of the local media discourse. The political and decision-making spheres were dynamized, the health sector and the military were mobilized; different activities were carried out by the state administration, church and activist communities, individuals, charities, and non-governmental organizations. After the initial orientation of society and the declaration of the degree of danger, warning and protection measures were implemented in the form of restrictions on citizens’ access to the public. The obligation to wear face masks in public and to strictly comply with increased hygiene requirements was introduced. Administrative measures limited the physical movement of communities and individuals, dampened the economy, reduced the number of visitors to retail stores and the access to services and medical facilities. After the springtime blocking of mobility enforced by the military and a significant slowdown of social life, there was a partial, but only temporary relaxation of the restrictive measures in the summer. The citizens had only partially adopted a non-standard, uncomfortable way of living in more closed and fragmented communities, including all levels of schools and cultural and leisure activities.

2. *From September 2020... testing-restriction phase.* As a drastic measure, the Slovak government introduced a massive, extremely fast, one-time testing of the population for the presence of COVID-19 by anti-

gen tests. One of the consequences was the division of the Slovak society into two groups of so-called tested and so-called non-tested persons, with real restrictions of contact, ability to act, and physical movement in public for the positively tested or non-tested fellow citizens. The restrictions at the state of emergency level were formulated, imposed, required, and controlled by government institutions, the manufacturing and service sectors and municipalities. They had the legal form of government resolutions⁵, government gazettes, decrees of the Public Health Office of the Slovak Republic,⁶ and a whole battery of subsequent clarifying regulations. Short-term purposeful closings were introduced into the social life – the so-called lockdowns; in various intensities and forms, they persisted in the society until the pandemic subsided. *Lockdowns* and the related administrative restrictions affected the further slowing down of the society dynamics and every citizen's individual conditions and expressions of existence during the entire period they were in force.

3. From December 2020... vaccination-confrontational phase. After the informational and promotional setup and a widespread official presentation of the first pharmaceutical products with a declared (and strongly disputed) effect against the disease in the winter season, a graded and targeted multi-channel media campaign to “protect against infection and death” through the administration of an experimental chemical product to citizens and communities by an injection kit (vaccination) was developed. At the same time, the fragmentation of communities, groups and individuals continued by restricting physical movement, performance of work,

⁵ For example, the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 704 of 4 November 2020 on the proposal for further extension of measures within the declared state of emergency, pursuant to Art. 5 of the Constitutional Act No. 227/2002 Coll. on the security of the state at the time of war, state of war, state of emergency and state of exception, as amended, declared by the resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 587 of September 30, 2020.

⁶ Accessible and open information and data are to be found on the website of the Public Health Office of the Slovak Republic – <https://www.uvzsr.sk>, and the updated covid map – <https://mapa.covid.chat>.

The international sources include the *COVID-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU)* – <https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/bda7594740fd-40299423467b48e9ecf6> a highly followed portal during the time of crisis providing a situation overview.

occupations, and cultural needs. Everything was happening under the imperative of the risk of the disease and the responsibility of an individual for their surroundings. The distancing methods and procedures in social life were reinforced by further commercial measures and non-medical interventions. In addition to the experts with an unquestionable reputation in the society – e.g., public figures, decision-makers, social and cultural agents – some media-supported personalities, or persons, became promoters of vaccination, mood regulators in the society and/or in its structured components, or transmitters of ideas and intentions of various interest groups. Subsequently, some other (often contradictory) knowledge, facts, and interpretations in processing the COVID-19 issue were accumulated. An atmosphere of questioning the effectiveness of vaccination and denying the very purpose of its requisite application was growing in social consciousness. Vaccination procedures were accelerated by promoting and layering additional doses of the chemical substance. The economic, social, and political situation in the community was partially revitalized during the mentioned phase, and with the onset of spring and the transition to summer, the conditions became more acceptable, almost normal.

4. From February 2022... *relaxing-remembrance phase.* The autumn and winter season of 2021 was already outside the factual or declared danger zone. In the spring and summer of 2022, the interest of the public in the administration of booster doses decreased. Yet, the maintenance campaign to support vaccination using the data published on the front pages of mainly mainstream and corporate media, as well as vaccination offers, continued. The unofficial online sources with a diverse profile, reach and effect, and the independent/alternative media supplied the latest (not always verified and not always relationally and factually accurate) data from both the background and phenomenal aspects of pharmaceutical research, political consequences, and business. They were taking mainly analytical production outlining of the subsequent development of the mentioned event from other sources.

B. Selection and setting of communication functions in the covid discourse and their activation: online media communication and media production in the studied environment and in the individual phases testify to the synergy of the following functions in a hierarchical arrangement (their latent, indistinct application is indicated by parentheses):

Phase 1... (information) – manipulation, simultaneously persuasion – instruction – (operation) function;

Phase 2... information – persuasion – manipulation, simultaneously instruction function;

Phase 3... (information) – manipulation, simultaneously persuasion – instruction – (operation) function;

Phase 4... information – instruction – (conative) – aestheticization – phatic – (entertainment) function.

C. An activated pack of speech acts in the media argumentation of the examined covid era: considering the dual role of participants in electronically determined media communication (*wreaders*), the illocutionary component of a speech act reflects the assumed (on the part of the originator) or expected (on the part of the recipient) communication intentions and relations to the medialized fact.

During the four phases of covid discourse, the studied speech acts and their illocutionary components are applied in three distinct lines – as *neutrally projected speech acts* (labelled **Ne** in figure 1; this is an aspect-less evaluation standard in a pragma-stylistic sense), as *positively projected speech acts* (**Po**) and, finally, as *negatively projected speech acts* (**Ng**). Applying the neutrally and positively projected speech acts in media communication related to COVID-19 does not indicate their fixed value potential or value-creating contribution, although, in cultural frameworks and semiotic systems, they are usually assigned a generally positive, favourable meaning. *Covid-culture* – in our understanding, the conceptual validity of the denomination is limited to print-type online media communication – is increasingly marked with expressive-emotional plenitude, usually bound to a large scale of motives, attitudes, and expressions. It has already been mentioned that the *covid-culture* marker system includes components in their cooperation, i.e. even with their contrasting characteristics and predispositions. For example, the successfully applied and well-received speech acts (to explain: applied effectively, deliberately, with an appropriate response from the audience) from the **Ng** circle *using quasi-authorities and pseudo-celebrities (media prefabs), constructing media objects, lightening the essential motives, unilateral, exclusive, aggressive, appealing to “personal responsibility”, compiling facts without sourcing, concealing selected facts, sycophantism, flattery, heroization, meliorative shaping of the narrative and socially*

focused issue, hyperbolizing the mainstream narratives, etc., are often built and applied in the media environment with the support of a transparent, legible contextual expressiveness, i.e., also with a negative stylistic definition. Moreover, some of the speech acts from the **Ng** circle show an inclination toward the **Ne** standard, or affiliation to the **Po** speech acts. From the procedural point of view, I consider the effect of reformatting the pragma-stylistic value – favourable, constructive achievement or influence of intentions, goals, expectations, changes in communication attitudes, opinion shifts, etc. – as a stylistically and communicatively justifiable and acceptable, expressively remarkable phenomenon, often with the features of creativity.

The methodical, and yet partial approach, elaboration and causal interpretation of the integrated interpretation platform predestined for an understanding of the media covid discourse introduces a fundamental circumstance into the study. A culture-specific way of intertextual media presentation of contents, intentions, and effects in the so-called post-factual or post-truth era is formed and recognized as functioning at the intersection of the platform markers, which are laid out, parameterized, and precisely presented on three levels. (Both of the rather fashionable, not too accurate names were explored concerning the *unfounded beliefs* through the interdisciplinary lens by the research team of psychologists from the Slovak Academy of Science, Bratislava; see Jurkovič, Čavoјová & Brezina 2019.) The specific method in question can be applied when communicating any socially or individually sensitive topic. The covid era and its media coverage in a selected part of the media communication sphere is, undoubtedly, one of them.

4. Discussion, interpretations and conclusions

In the second comment of the introduction to the study, the attention is, in a broader sense, projected on the participants' values in part of the media communication sphere. I am convinced that in the case of the synthetic approach, the above-mentioned findings, knowledge, and statements point to a real-world of values – a dynamic relational-categorical system built and functioning on recognizable, appropriately flexible, yet normative social bases and rules, equipped with expansion zones. Such organization and arrangement are characteristic of every social system and, as such, also of the media communication sphere, which reflects reality in a crisis situa-

tion. The given insight justifies a not-at-all lapidary conclusion: media *covid-culture* in the online press becomes a social culture subsystem while adhering to its generalities and differentiating from its particularities, according to the developmental stage at which it is “living” and at which it is fulfilling the axiological missions or predestinations. The value aspects of this subsystem are quite an appropriate reflection of the synchronously flexible state of any society impacted and influenced by the media. The architecture of the mentioned subsystem is deeply connected with the human nature of communication and its participants; it is applied and evaluated in the relevant historically and socially determined environment. In general, the recognition of the subsystem reveals the ambition to contribute with deeper, more critical perspectives of situations in life that are demanding in terms of social, professional, cultural, human, and moral values, their management, and media coverage in an increasingly contradictory world torn by ever more frequent attacks and sharper contrasts.

The Noam Chomsky quote at the beginning of the study provides more general suggestions for several interrelated questions and for seeking and finding appropriate answers. Yet, the fundamental issue and the hyperonymic key to understanding the above-mentioned considerations is the knowledge with a conceptual basis: “A good reader of a newspaper” is a *homo sapiens* equipped with adequate cultural and communicative competences, who can be endowed with both valuable and value-creating talents needed to live a successful, fulfilled life in increasingly demanding conditions. Since even in electronic media we assume a permanently communicating person who “expresses their intellectual and social essence through *online* communication in digital networks” and “from their specimens new social communities are formed in cyberspace”, they can appear and act as *homo communicans* [Marcelli 2018, 26–27] who takes part in populating a special interactive communication area and who stimulates the shaping and development of cyberculture (on the concept of “cyberculture”, see Lévy 2000, Chapters 6–9).

So, who is/can be a co-creator, an interface determinant and, in a favorable sense, a competent recipient of media *covid-culture* (in this case, in the online press environment without distinguishing its typological affiliation)? Here I mean a self-conscious, responsible, individually, socially, and causally thinking, humble, empathetic, and equal citizen of the media landscape, without judging or condemning their generational affiliation or physical age, demographic characteristics, level of education, psychological

competence, mental inclinations, temperament, health condition, etc. I have in mind a (dis)content(ed) type of person with an acquired, cultivated language awareness and the necessary axiological capacity, who constantly learns, evaluates the conditions and appreciates the potential of the media with their structure, possibilities, and limitations. The one who is aware of their own life and experience, who does not allow themselves to be cheaply, discouragingly, uncritically, passively, submissively influenced only by the pseudo-truths and quasi-experiences of the majority, by templates, clichés, and mock-up mantras of the often-empty media communication. I support the opinion that *homo sapiens*, or *homo communicans*, knows not only **what**, but also **where** and **how** to search, find and influence effectively. They can anticipate, assertively expect, and successfully prepare for a potential future situation in terms of culture, values, and morals, if that situation turns out to be similarly subjected to an unprecedented (resistance) test and, at the same time, an unpleasant experience with the COVID-19 phenomenon.

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Sources (electronic media sample inventory)

- dominant communication functions: *information, orientation, instruction, persuasion*
<https://www.postoj.sk> – “*Postoj / The Attitude* conservative daily is a unique project among the Slovak media. It is the only one, which openly declares the conservative values and, at the same time, achieves a high professional standard. Our goal is not to push on increasing the readership; it is rather to try to resist this harmful trend and seriously engage in public debate from a conservative position. Therefore, we are a respected partner for the public authorities including the president, government members, leaders of parliamentary parties and important institutions, doctors, church dignitaries, scientists, artists, athletes... Although they often disagree with us, they are interested in a high-standard confrontation”
<https://www.pravda.sk> – *Pravda / The Truth* opinion-forming Slovak daily
<https://snn.sk> – Slovenské národné noviny / *Slovak national newspaper*
<https://www.eurorespekt.sk> – *Eurorespekt*
<http://www.zemavek.sk> – alternative interpretations, interviews
<https://www.slovanskenoviny.sk> – “to be understood by Humans...”
<https://cs.gatestoneinstitute.org> – “Gatestone Institute is a non-political and non-profit international policy council and think tank whose mission is to educate the public in the areas that have not been covered by the mainstream media”
<https://svobodny-svet.cz> – “the freedom of the individual leads to the freedom of society”
<http://www.stripkyzesveta.cz> – a foreign media and new books digest
<https://deliandiver.org> – “the Deliandiver continues with the traditional blog of the same name and does not feel liable or loyal to any political

party or ideology. We are a collective website to which anyone can contribute if they are interested and will be of benefit. The opinions of individual contributors may not always agree with each other. The publications cover mainly political, socio-scientific and cultural topics”

<https://www.armadnymagazin.sk> – magazine about the army, armaments, equipment, weapons, war conflicts, crises, global politics, peace activities and movements

<http://www.zvedavec.news> – anti-politically correct portal

<https://echo24.cz/p/o-nas> – “we want to be a counterweight to the oligarchized Czech media”

<http://outsidermedia.cz> – documentaries, commentaries, anniversaries, news

<http://www.czechfreepress.cz> – independent newscast

<http://www.hlavnespravy.sk> – *Hlavné správy / The Main News*, conservative daily

<https://www.hlavnydennik.sk> – *Hlavný denník / The Main Daily*

<https://www.topcz.net> – *Nekorektní top-cz / Incorrect top-cz* “...Everyone can read HERE what this website does in terms of personal data protection, so I can see no reason to create some stupid bars. If you do not like it, there is an X in the upper right corner of the monitor, just click on it”

- dominant communication function: (*information*), *persuasion/manipulation*, *operation*, *aesthetization*, (*entertainment*)

<http://www.ac24.cz> – commentaries

<https://cz24.news> – CZ24 News: “an independent news portal intended for the Czechs and Slovaks worldwide, by no means governed by the EU legislation”

<https://www.badatel.net> – *Badatel.net*; “the most popular health website”

<https://casopis-sifra.cz> – “magazine for those who can read between the lines”

<http://www.infovojna.sk> – *IV, InfoVojna / The InfoWar*; multimedia portal of the civic association

<https://necenzurovanapravda.cz> – “no censorship or political correctness”

<http://nadhľad.com> – *Nadhľad ponad protiklady / Top view over the contrasts*

<http://dolezite.sk> – multimedijum; documents, blogs, videos – digest
<https://slobodnyvysielac.sk>

<https://www.napaleta.sk> – “since 2015, we have been trying to broaden your horizons and enrich your life. We offer a wide range of information, news from home and from the world, guidance, interesting facts, inspiration, entertainment, lifestyle, impressive photos, videos, culture, interesting people and their stories”;

<http://pravdive.eu> – “information without lies”; information booklet - home, world

<http://www.infokuryr.cz/n> – “information from home and from the world”.

SAŽETAK

Vladimír Patráš

VRIJEDNOSNA SUČELJA MEDIJSKE COVID KULTURE U ELEKTRONIČKIM MEDIJIMA

Pojava bolesti COVID-19 dovela je do radikalnih podjela u zajednicama te preoblikovala značajan dio prostora interpersonalne komunikacije u suvremenome “glokaliziranom” svijetu. Standardi koji su rezultat povijesnog i kulturnoga razvoja, fleksibilno stabilni komunikacijski koncepti te univerzalno primjenjivi kodovi sa zamjetnom razinom persuzivnosti i ekspresivnosti rezultirali su ubrzanim odgovorima na posebne zahtjeve i izazove s kojima se diskurs suvremenih društvenih medija treba, želi ili može nositi. U pragmakomunikacijskome okviru koji obuhvaća pitanja povezana s bolešću COVID-19 očito su aktivirane i integrirane metode i sredstva profesionalnih (medicinskoga, psihološkoga, socijalnoga, ekonomskoga, političkoga, vojnoga) i medijskoga diskursa, uključujući ekstremnu persuzivnost, inherentnu kolokvijalizaciju te individualizaciju mrežnih medijskih proizvoda. U kontekstu istančanoga tematskoga i pragmatičkoga spektra, na sjecištu navedenih komunikacijskih značajki, stvoren je kulturalno specifičan način intertekstualnoga medijskog predstavljanja sadržaja, namjera i učinaka. Polazeći od prilagođene teorije govornih činova, ova je studija usmjerena na sociopragmatičku definiciju sučelja u području vrijednosti takozvane *covid kulture*, koja se javlja u suvremenim elektroničkim medijima koji donose tekstove u kojima autori izražavaju svoja mišljenja.

Ključne riječi: *interpersonalna komunikacija; teorija govornih činova; sfera medijske komunikacije; elektronički mediji; područje vrijednosti covid kulture*