

THE CONSTRUCTION OF POWER THROUGH LANGUAGE IN ONLINE NEWS MEDIA – A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This paper sets out to analyze how power is constructed through language in the Romanian news media, resorting to this purpose to a case study of the online presence of a prominent trust, Antena 3 CNN. More specifically, we are looking at the titles/headlines of the antena3.ro news website homepage, as they appear at a certain moment on the 21st of October 2025, in a snapshot of the page taken at a specific time mentioned in the presentation below. We start from the assumption that media is a powerful instrument in society, shaping power perceptions and management at various levels, which this analysis intends to demonstrate, power being more than the one distributed and attributed formally and openly to institutions and actors through the actual discourse and concrete messages of the content under scrutiny. In the body of the research, we start from lexical choices to depict how state actors are introduced as holding power, how conflict overrides the social scene both nationally and internationally, in visible and subtler ways and at more levels, and how the authority of the official agents is questioned due to failure to provide for the citizens, negative labels being assigned to them implicitly through the depiction of their bad performance and unseriousness. Gender issues are also transparent through a power interest lens, pointing to the assumption of the Romanian society and culture as a traditionalistic one. The study also investigates the presence of a poignant emotional component in the way in which news is rendered, revealing some of its functions and effects. Considerations on the journalistic style at hand follow, while the conclusions summarize the findings. The method is discourse analysis and cultural studies.

Keywords: journalism, news media, power, discourse analysis, culture

JEL Classification: H5, Z10

1. Introduction

In the context of the 2024-2025 events in the social and political landscape in Romania, power has become, once again, a relevant point of discussion. The annulment of the elections in November 2024, with the contested figure of Georgescu and the accusations

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brought to him, the assumption (at the time) of hybrid war and insidious influence of obscure state and non-state actors – as they were called initially – then the corresponding decision-making of high institutions and authorities, the subsequent vote for democracy and constitutionality embodied by the governmental Coalition and its contested performance afterwards have all made the notion of power central to people's mental atmosphere, as well as open for debate. Power has been denied, taken away, granted, entrusted, and these days it is highly contested. Freedom of speech provides the means to construct and reconstruct social entities and actors in terms of their empowerment in a very fluid manner. In the context of various crises, power is much less fixed, it shifts rapidly, and it leaves one place as soon as it has been attributed there, seeming a more versatile than usual reality that has become impossible to grasp and predictably get hold of.

Active and investigative journalism uncovers realities and reveals them to the public, talking about them openly and immediately, and, as these realities are unpleasant and involve unveiling corruption among authorities as well, distrust of the population in them is an immediate effect, which contributes to power being contested and seen as highly dynamic. That is because the placement of power is also a matter of trust and willingness to cooperate with the one holding it formally, and this willingness is lost once the bodies and institutions that are theoretically supposed to act ethically and even ensure justice are deemed and/or proven as less than ethical. In this situation, those unveiling facts to the public have a power of their own, and their perspective and rendering of information creates modes of power distribution as well, which leave an imprint on the collective consciousness – a way of dealing with power itself – raising awareness (yet another type of power) and giving power back to the audiences to exert it in their turn back on politicians and others through activism and votes. Journalism also puts pressure on those formally holding power, in a turning of tables type of situation, sometimes determining and speeding up the taking of steps and measures. Hence, the interplay of power is complex, and in our context starts with having knowledge and acquiring and exercising a voice.

We are interested here in performing an analysis of how power is constructed through language in the headlines on the Antena 3 CNN online news website ([antena 3.ro](http://antena3.ro)) homepage on a random day, which in our case is the 21st of October 2025, based on the way the page was at 5:20 p.m. We need to state the fact that power is understood not only in the limited sense of the institutions that officially and formally hold it, as their mere mention in the news is just part of our interest, but also as how authority, agency, control, dominance, and resistance are linguistically and discursively produced and what the implications of this manner are, socially and pragmatically. Hence, we are looking at how power is constructed in all the ways that we have mentioned above. We mean to investigate what the specific way of introducing the facts connotes socially, based on lexical, semantic and pragmatic insights. The approach is discourse analysis and cultural studies.

2. Analysis

To the aim introduced above, we start by considering as samples the first ten titles that appear at the top part of the page. Since Antena 3 is a Romanian news website, the headlines are in Romanian, but are provided below as English translations. These constitute a starting-point corpus for the research, but this study considers the whole of the announced text bits on the homepage.

- 1) Sources: Scandal in the Coalition over magistrates' pensions. PSD got angry with Bolojan and left the government meeting
- 2) The Coalition has decided on the date for local elections in Bucharest. Nicușor Dan's successor will be elected on December 7
- 3) Daniel Băluță on a possible candidacy for mayor of Bucharest: "I am thinking about it very carefully."
- 4) The Superior Council of Magistracy praises the Constitutional Court's decision to allow magistrates to retain their privileges: "It reaffirms the role of guarantor of the independence of the judiciary."
- 5) Russians reject Trump's proposal for Ukraine. Lavrov: "Ceasefire means Ukraine remains under Nazi regime"
- 6) The 30 trains suspended on Tuesday resume service. CFR announces that an agreement has been reached on debt repayment
- 7) Magistrates give up protests and announce that they will judge "all cases" after the Constitutional Court decides to maintain privileges
- 8) Russian sabotage operation on Romanian territory. SRI catches two Ukrainians, coordinators of Russian services, who were preparing attacks
- 9) "Russia's suicidal attempt to advance in Zaporizhia was a massacre." Huge losses for Putin's army after the latest assault
- 10) Mircea Badea's harsh message after the explosion in Rahova: "This is not a country, it's a carnival. You're surprised it still exists." [1]

We shall start from concretely looking at language use in the statements above, as well as then extend our attention and the notes to others on the page. We will take into account the lexical content, syntax and morphology and derive some insights based on these. Starting with the basic units that are lexical, we first notice the prevalence of the use of common nouns that have become proper ones because they have been arranged in various groupings to constitute names of bodies and institutions: the Coalition, the Superior Council of

Magistracy, the Constitutional Court, PSD, CFR, SRI. For instance, the Coalition refers to the reunion of the democratic parties that have officially agreed to govern together. The use of acronyms shows that the readers are supposed to have some kind of general knowledge of social and political life, as the abbreviations denote judiciary forces, intelligence services, parties and the national railway transport company, all of them functioning inside the country. There are other, proper nouns present in these headlines. Some of them refer to Romanian personalities: Bolojan, Nicușor Dan, Daniel Băluță, Mircea Badea, most of whom are public figures occupying various offices in our country – the Prime Minister, the President, the mayor of district four, in this order – the exception being Mircea Badea, who is a well-known political satirist, media critic and television host in Antena 3 CNN. Others are foreign personalities, such as Trump, Lavrov, Orban, Putin, who are heads of states (Trump, Putin), the Russian Ministry of the Exterior (Lavrov) and the Prime Minister of Hungary (Orban). Then, there are the names of the countries corresponding to these personalities, with the addition of Poland and Ukraine lower on the page. What we notice from these is that the foreign affairs news items center on the war between Russia and Ukraine, and how other actors make efforts to either prevent it from escalating or/and stop it, as well as safeguard the states of the NATO alliance and the inside status and protection ensured by it for them in case of escalation of conflict (see the news on Poland's comments on Putin being on a flight over its territory). This issue of war, then, is considered relevant and presented as such, given its prominence on the page, creating a sense of urgency and even fear, since the implication is that it is threatening to our country by its geographical proximity, which justifies the importance that it is granted in the economy of the homepage. Overall, however, the news on problems and issues inside the country prevail over the external ones. The numerous references to bodies and people holding power officially prove the preoccupation and concern with power overall, as these pieces of news hold primacy over others, appearing in the Main Columns section at the top of the homepage. They are also written in a larger font; hence, their positioning on the page, the font size and buzz words are meant to highlight concern with power and draw the readers' attention to this concept both consciously and subliminally.

Common nouns and noun phrases included in the most visible titles above refer to people or groups of people holding power (e.g.: magistrates, the government, successor, mayor, guarantor of the independence, the judiciary, coordinators), and to actions that involve dealing with power, attributing it and/or decision-making (e.g.: local elections, candidacy, decision, privileges, independence, proposal, regime, debt repayment, operation, attacks, massacre, army, assault, carnival). The presence of some terms referring to military operations introduces aggression in the linguistic landscape in an explicit manner, depicting mass violence and abuse. The reality of war has already been hinted at through the mention of the personalities involved in it as conflicting parties, collateral parties that may be affected or drawn in at some point, or negotiators for peace. In the enumeration of common nouns above, there are also emotionally charged terms that amplify this ingredient of

aggression, such as “massacre” and “scandal”, which create a sense of tension, stressing the existence of conflict at more levels, of actual physical clashes, as well as verbal and ideological ones. The use of the term “privileges” stresses power inequality and hints at potential abuse of power; moreover, its frequent use for a few times is meant to function as a constant reminder of these concepts and fuel frustration, the word becoming an enhancer of what is perceived by the population as social injustice. This idea and already-planted impression is naturally continued and amplified while resorting to noun phrases connoting moral condemnation and framing: “Nazi regime”, “carnival”, and then, lower on the webpage, “power excess”, “double stupidity”, “chaos”, which are inflammatory, as they suggest implicit unethical and immoral courses of action, hence picturing certain actors as fallen, falling and failing in their duties, as well as overreaching, morally suspect and thus corrupt and abusive.

Coming back to the notion of conflict, we can summarize then, based on the aspects stated above, that it is both denoted and connoted at more levels. There is, first, the material, armed conflict of war, at international and even global level, as suggested by news of territorial disputes and negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. Then, there is internal conflict, at national level, manifesting as disagreements inside the Coalition, as well as between various authorities, an example being the Coalition’s resolutions clashing with the CCR’s. Besides bodies being in antagonism, there is animosity between individuals who are prominent public figures, such as Bolojan and some leaders of PSD, the suggestion being that conflict is triggered not only by contrasting views on specific points that require decision-making, but also unspecific, more obscure ones, based on vested collateral interests and spheres of influence that are not directly related to the issues at hand, or even on personal matters – hint present in the formulation “PSD got angry with Bolojan”. There is, moreover, an underlying conflictual or tense state between the authorities and the population, based on and fueled by (assumptions of) corruption, faulty *modus operandi* and shady, difficult-to-explain or suspicious-looking actions, as well as the authorities not doing their job. This creates distrust between the state and society, the people who are impacted by the decision-making of the former entities.

The use of the noun “carnival” has rich connotations. It is employed in relation with the incident of the explosion that happened at a block of flats from Rahova based on a gas leak in the basement, which raises questions – and eyebrows – based on the assumptions of either faulty performance of Distrigaz or faulty legislation preventing a logical course of action in this case. Here, the authorities are suggested to be guilty in one way or another, as this kind of event should not be possible in a civilized country in which the state and bodies are doing their job. Apparently, Distrigaz could not do more than stop the gas supply and seal the outlets, as the law does not allow any taking of action from the company’s part, so the state authorities have not discovered this logical contradiction or the need for further regulation of such a context beforehand. As days have gone by from the accident, ANRE’s attributes also have come under scrutiny, to check whether its role was fulfilled and

irregularity could be related to this body as well or not. Coming back to the term of choice, “carnival”, historically, the carnival period preceding Lent refers, as early as the Middle Ages, to a suspension of the ongoing order for a period of time, during which a denial of all norms and rules takes place. Authority is paused, and disorder becomes the overarching principle instead. Medieval accounts of this period mention excess eating, the loosening of instinctive drives, and violent acts manifest in gang clashes such as the “bridge battles”, beatings, and even murder [2]. Also, during carnival, the use of masks obscures the identity of the actors involved in the event, thus also lifting the weight of responsibility for any damaging acts off the entities involved in any potential wrong-doing, harm or lawlessness [3]. Carnival is therefore a celebration of freedom understood in the pejorative sense of the phrase as well. The alternative world that carnival represents is one in which relationships are formed on the principle of the marketplace, i.e. of negotiation of status, of fluidity, informality and reinvention [4]. For more than one reason that we have just mentioned, carnival is a place of transgression and reinterpretation of boundaries, of the questioning of order as we know it or as it is normally understood. We have insisted a bit on this concept, looking at its roots and theorization throughout history, because its complex meaning traits are meant to be transferred to the authorities in our country, suggesting a dysfunctional or malfunctioning state. For the knowledgeable, Badea sends to all the interpretative content described above through the use of the concept of carnival, which he synthetically means to connote, accentuating precisely chaos and lawlessness. His intention is to imply the dystopic quality of our country as a space, which constitutes severe criticism with respect to the state. Disempowerment and lack of action from the part of the responsible bodies create powerlessness for the citizens. In discourse, the idea of accidentality associated with the tragic incident, is also suggested to characterize the officials, through their indifference, carelessness and incompetence (see the phrase “double stupidity”), which result in people’s helplessness and in an overall feeling of everything being random or the result of chance – hence, Badea’s contention that it is surprising that our country goes on at all. The feature of being inactive leads to dark scenarios. It also stands in opposition to the suggestion of dynamism when it comes to having vested interests hinted at above, in the construction of conflict as prevailing and dominating the political-social scene. In other words, the authorities are passive only when it comes to the citizens, but can be active in support of obscure interests or to antagonize one another. This creates, overall, the impression of corruption in the system. In support, validation and reinforcement of the ideas to which the notion of “carnival” sends, the noun “chaos” is used in another headline, referring to the cancellation of dozens of train trips causing agglomeration in railway stations and distress to those who only found out about them as they were already on the platforms, preparing to embark on the respective trains. Moreover, the word “chaos” gets repeated in another headline in the same segment of news, on the middle column, immediately to the right of the headline that we have examined, which strengthens, visually as well, the message conveyed above.

So far, a certain dysfunctionality of the system of the state has been suggested, along with passivity, carelessness, and lack of know-how and incompetence. However, state action is also depicted as hostile to the population in some announcements. One title reads “The city hall has increased the tax by 500% for several owners of dilapidated buildings in District 1 of Bucharest.” [5] The juxtaposition of the percentage, which is written in numbers rather than letters to maximize the impact of the figure, and the adjective “dilapidated” create an oxymoronic, blatant opposition, to point out scandalousness and illogicality and engender outrage against the officials, revealing their decisions as lacking common sense, and even as not making sense at all. This piece of news is placed right above the one using the phrase “double stupidity”, which appears next to the noun “populism”, the latter implying a desire to gain the benevolence of the masses, but also an intention to do so undeservedly, as part of a strategy to dupe or deceive.

If we analyze how state actors appear in the headline statements, these are depicted as active agents, powerful and uncontested. This impression is also rendered by the use of strong action verbs in relation with them, which are assertive, in the declarative mood, presenting statements as facts, the strong assertiveness contributing to an impression of definitiveness and authority. The state actors appear as holding the reins and being doers of actions, dynamic and efficient in making decisions, quantitatively (but not necessarily right in them, i.e. qualitatively). As pointed above, they are hinted as active in an abusive manner, deciding for the citizens without really representing their interests. When it comes to the interests of the population, the authorities are rather depicted as uninvolved, careless, unprofessional, incompetent and even ill-intended. The verbs that illustrate these statal entities’ behavior are “decided”, “reaffirms”, “announces”, “will judge”, “catches”, “has increased”, “threatens”, “will arrest” (“Poland threatens Putin with arrest/that it will arrest Putin if he enters Polish airspace on his way to Budapest”), “extends”, “can govern” (“Hungary extends state of emergency by six months, citing war in Ukraine. This allows Orban to govern by decree.”) [6] They denote domination and control. The number of occurrences also plays a role in the impression of power; for instance, a verb like “decide” appears many times on the webpage. Also, the tense is most often the present simple or the future, more rarely the present perfect and only accidentally the past. This is indeed a common journalistic feature, linguists attesting to this specific use of the present simple, known as the “historical”, “dramatic” or “narrative” present, to render facts [7]. The news items are thus made “fresh and vivid” (in Hamdan and Qais’ phrase) and become attention-grIPPING [8]. This technique helps news be “more exciting, fresh and immediate” [9]. The targeted effect, besides catching and retaining one’s attention, is making one feel connected, and, on the part of the journalists’ team, seeming professional and up to date with the latest events. There is a violent strain in the way the state actors mentioned above behave as well, mirrored by verbs such as “got angry”, “left”, “hits with a sledgehammer”, or emotionality/whimsicality, in “praises”, indicating aggressiveness and abuse, but also temperamentality hinting at unprofessionalism [10]. The infrequent use of the passive voice

is good from a power perspective, because this means there is no tendency to reduce agent visibility. The preference is for the active voice, to keep agents visible and strong. This also denotes professionalism, and completeness of information, from a journalistic point of view.

Non-state actors are less impactful; they are rather sufferers of actions than the ones performing them. This impression is given using state verbs and the passive voice. For example, the news headline of an incident regarding a wedding in Iran depicts the women involved as docile, describing their states, and not as agents, but as experiencers: “Their bride is in the palace, ours is in the ground.”; or, related to the same news, “Fury in Iran. While women are forced to wear hijab, a high official got his daughter married in a deep-cleavage dress” [11]. We notice the verb “be” describing a state of the respective women, and the passive form bearing on very personal matters, such as one’s clothing style and marriage, which are nevertheless outside the women’s control, decided upon by someone else. One may think that this is the case because of cultural traits, when it comes to a profoundly patriarchal country such as Iran. Let us examine other titles bearing on women who do not pertain to such markedly conservative environments, to see if the passivity changes and was only due to the cultural-geographical context. One headline informs that a seventeen-year old (Romanian) young woman “who fell with the floor two stories, is being operated on her spine”, so we have a verb denoting the suffering of an accident followed by one in the passive voice; another title says that “Mădălina is 17 and she has disappeared for a month” (in original, a passive form indicating her state of being unaccounted for is used); “An OnlyFans star who earns \$13 million a year surprised her fans. What photos did she post?”; “Mother of four reveals an essential daily ritual that has helped her avoid burnout”; “Jennifer Lopez has been accused of infidelity by her first husband. ‘The problem is you. You have been married four times.’” [12] If we look at the last three entries, we notice a few facts. Even the actions of a renowned international star, such as Jennifer Lopez, are framed within a passive construction, but this passivity is doubled by other elements to make her seem deprived of power. She is presented as subservient to a male authority judging her – her ex-husband – who is in a position in which he makes claims and holds her accountable for something (while, moreover, they no longer form a family), so there is clear gender imbalance in terms of power, the man holding the upper hand. Moreover, he passes judgment on his former wife, labelling her in calling her a “problem” and implicating that she has been superficial – to say the least – since she has been married more times, which is a sexist attitude. A hint to potential frivolity in romantic involvements is present in the “OnlyFans” piece of news, in which a woman is implied to be a predator, hence being active and empowered comes with the pejorative connotation of being manipulative, easy or/and dishonest. The dress worn by the bride in Iran is too revealing, which also highlights a sexist assumption that women wearing this kind of clothes are frivolous, on the one hand, labeling it as negative, and, on the other, that women should be more traditionalistic, which is also a form of shaming. The mother’s

resourcefulness saves her from being overwhelmed by her situation, so she is first presented as almost incapable of dealing with her reality. If we sum up, there seems to be a tendency to provide news which depict women as victims, a subordinate gender, powerless or in predicaments, the exception of agency being when they use their appearance or charms to deceive and obtain leverage and advantages inappropriately. This indicates an underlying presupposition that the readers and the country in which the news items are released is thought to be rather conservative, buzzable by this type of content relying on traditional views of gender(s). Romania is perceived, implicitly, as a mainly patriarchal culture. Resorting to posing women as victims or something related to a sexual predator when agents is also meant to strike emotional chords – of compassion and perhaps, respectively, outrage, which increases the involvement of the reader in the material (s)he is reading. This turns out to be a marketing feature.

There are other features that are meant to skyrocket the emotional component and response. One is the use of irony or even sarcasm. Mircea Badea's comment on how the country has come to resemble a carnival due to lack of involvement, care and professionalism of the authorities, which all create an unsafe environment for the citizens, insecurity, danger as well as disorder is seconded by one by Mugur Ciuvică, leader of Grupul de Investigații Politice (GIP) and journalist, who states that "After a month of prevarications, 4 musketeers from PSD wind up detecting unconstitutionality" [13]. We are safe to say that his comments are on the side of sarcasm, and a linguistic analysis proves it. First, mockery is present in the choice of terms in his statement, both nouns and the verb. He refers to the PSD representatives as the four musketeers, in a mocking way to draw a parallel with the heroic acts of the fictional characters, but in reverse, as the deed in this case is not heroic at all, but – the suggestion goes – only adversarial, counter to evidence and thus to normality, in the sense understood by him. The association of the respective personalities with the characters oriented towards performing good deeds for others is comical, since the underlying implication is that they are opposing public welfare, and becomes not only a form of criticism, but a jeering parody. He associates the real-life persons with the well-meant heroes in order to point to the former being the exact opposites of the latter in terms of core personalities. The term that Ciuvică uses to describe the action taken by the PSD representatives is – in Romanian – "tărăgănări". This poses a choice problem to translate into English, because the semantic content in the source language contains the features of [+delay] and [+intentional], so simply using "delays" for it in the target language would not cover all the meaning traits. Additionally, the larger context of the statement obviously sends to intentional, bad-faith delay, which makes the necessity to find a stronger, more accurate term to translate it even more pressing. A word such as "stalling" would cover the intention, but it loses some of the impact through the fact that it is singular (and the Romanian plural form adds momentum and dramatic content), as well as fails to render the action as ill-meant, a supplementary meaning trait implied in the wider context. Hence, a noun like "prevarications" seems to serve the function better, as it contains the features of

insidiousness and deception intent that is not done blatantly, besides the feature [+delay] or [+repeatedness]. As far as the verb is concerned, the Romanian “se trezesc” implies unexpectedness, something that happens out of the blue and thus somehow unfoundedly. What is hinted at here is that there are no real grounds for the conclusion of the four actants. The irony/sarcasm in these comments overall suggests a lack of respect for the people holding power, distrust in their honesty and good intentions, as well as, implicitly, a crisis of authority that may ensue once the public feels this way.

Other kinds of emotions are raised through a reference to the bear Baloo, captive in Straja, and the appeal to save it from the children who poke it with sticks. Helplessness – in people, especially women, which we have already discussed above, is reinforced through this article by a depiction of helplessness in animals. The latter is somewhat more poignant, as animals appear as being at the mercy of people more, generally speaking, and thus doubly defenseless, abuse against them seeming more brutal and raising pity. We may consider that animal abuse is a separate and somewhat more emotionally impactful type because of it. Besides captivity, so being outside the natural environment where an animal feels at home, the bear in question is also suffering violence inflicted by the beatings.

Fear and/or worry is also meant to be triggered by reading the news on this homepage. Weather changes and extreme phenomena are a worrisome theme these days, creating panic and being extremely topical in some circles and cultures. The Americans are particularly interested audiences when it comes to this subject, being sensitive to and fond of it as a nation. The factual aspect that fuels this concern is that the “U.S. faces more frequent extreme weather events”, and there is ongoing anxiety that people are not aware enough of it and the government is unprepared to keep the pace with reality, while official bodies sound the alarm [14]. However, the public is increasingly conscious of the existence of this problem: “Americans who think global warming is happening outnumber those who think it is not by a ratio of more than 4 to 1 (69% versus 15%)”, with 65% being “somewhat worried”, while 48% believe that they “are being harmed by global warming ‘right now,’” according to a national survey jointly performed by members of the “Yale Program on Climate Change Communication and the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication” in May 2025 [15]. Given these figures that clearly point to public interest, the competent bodies still feel that it is not enough, which points to the topic of climate change having become a national craze. In other parts of the world, such as on the European continent, increased awareness is visible in the steps that are being taken in the EU and the discussions regarding climate neutrality by 2050 in official forums.

To sum up some of the findings above, we have detected the use of irony, animal cruelty depiction, the portrayal of women as victims, tricksters or predators based on their charms, and the approach of extreme weather as a buzz topic for worry. All of these are emotionally charged and triggering topics. The potpourri of emotions that these give rise to is meant to cover as many dispositions as possible: despise, compassion, outrage, fear, revolt. This

approach ensures that attention is piqued, kept, and increases the involvement of the reader, making it more personal and thus ensuring attachment to the reading of news. A more dramatic presentation of facts determines an intensified attachment to the respective media representatives from the part of the audiences. It may also show, to do the journalists justice, a more involved attitude from their part as well, a desire to uncover truths and to present them to the public as they are, as well as an interest in staying connected to one's readers and audience. Powerful, evocative adjectives serve the same function: "powerful", "lethal", "captive", "serious", "major", "invaluable", "huge", "best", "fascinating", "vital", "strategic" etc. All of them have an augmenting effect, hyperbolizing facts. They thus create the impression that everything that is being presented is highly important or "big" as well, magnifying the relevance of the events, along with the impact that the news items have on the readers. One could say, on the negative side, that, in some cases, things get blown out of proportion, so that the reader may get the feeling that everything (s)he reads about is, metaphorically, apocalyptical. If one follows the text closely, there is a preference for some of these adjectives, which get repeated, such as "powerful" or "major". If we take into account the fact that these accompany the nouns and verbs mentioned above, which already have an inflammatory effect, then the resulting image is indeed almost apocalyptical. The overall notion that we get is the existence of a profound, generalized crisis and conflict.

Stylistically, we notice the recourse to oppositions and binary structures. In the examples analyzing terminology at the beginning of our study above, there are oppositions highlighted on the international arena which is a war theatre, between states (Russia and Ukraine, Russia and the United States), personalities (Zelenski and Putin, Trump and Putin) etc.; in our country, they are presented as existing inside the Coalition, so the governing forces, between both parties and individuals; between the authorities and the citizens, as the decisions of the former seem to work against the interests of the latter (the city hall and flat owners, Orban and the population in Hungary, once he is governing through decrees, Iranian law and customs and the population, as well as wealthy, privileged Iranians – and their possibility to circumvent traditions – and the less fortunate masses), the EU regulations for drivers getting stricter, EU failing to ensure drinking water; populism and the Constitution. Some of these parties are in open conflict, as pointed out above. Conflict is the dynamic between the respective parties, whereas the oppositions that we are mentioning here are created stylistically through syntax in the discourse. Of course, the actual state of conflict between the parties favors their placement in antithesis stylistically, and provides the best opportunity to present the message through this lens. These oppositions intensify and dramatize power struggles.

Directness and indirectness play a very important role in journalism and the construction of power. Declarative mood statements contribute to clarity and placement of power on the authorities, depicted as empowered agents, as exemplified above in this paper. Passive voice is sometimes used to refer to other entities that are usually presented as disempowered or downright victims (citizens, women etc.), and the passive constructions serve rather this

function of showing deprivation of agency than that of obscuring the actual performer of the action. Hence, passivization is not a means of hedging. Directness is generally the rule in the journalism that we see on this homepage. Quotations are another way to achieve it, as statements from empowered personalities are given in inverted commas. They introduce more voices in the discourse, leaving the impression of dialogue, accuracy, objectivity and professionalism. Indirectness is not resorted to, as, from a grammatical point of view, for instance, there are almost no conditionals and modals that would theoretically contribute to fuzziness, introducing hypotheses and uncertainty in various amounts. Hence, hesitation, caution, dodging or evading are not present. The only element that builds indirectness is the indication “Sources”, attached to certain news. This way of forwarding some pieces of news creates for the reader the feeling that (s)he benefits from a heads-up from the journalists, being the first to find out about something, having an advantage because (s)he is part of the audience of the respective media source. For the journalists, it creates the aura of thorough, relentless researchers who, as a result of their assiduous work, access hidden, difficult-to-get-to information. This technique is therefore empowering for both parties, who communicate between them inside info, as one has enhanced capacity to unveil secrets and behind-the-scenes insight, while the other accesses it more quickly. This is also a powerful binder, creating communion and community. As additional layers of meaning go, it can hint at a bit of self-praise when it comes to the journalists, as well as, in the idea of something being hidden from the eyes of the public, to lack of transparency.

Short-span temporality is created through the use of the adjective “breaking” before the news, the mention of how long it has passed from the moment the news was posted, which render the impression of recentness, but also immediacy, urgency, of something unfolding as we speak, and of pressure and stress, as actions are taking place in an ongoing manner, and one has to keep up in keeping oneself posted.

3. Conclusions

The journalistic style on the webpage under analysis avoids opaque phrasing and thus the overall impression is one of clarity, objectivity and straightforwardness in the transmission of the message. There is no intention to obscure information or be evasive on purpose, which is proven by the rare use of modal verbs or conditional constructions. Passives are used primarily when there is news about unfortunate events happening to individuals. There is an interesting way of constructing gender when it comes to power, as women are either victims or, if empowered, this is the result of having capitalized on attributes of their gender, such as temptress attractiveness, in some dishonest manner. In this respect, we may further observe that women are considered through a patriarchal lens, which frames their assessment based on aspects related to traditional roles and assumptions, such as luring

attractiveness, the need to be proper in conservative views, and being weaker than men. The implied presence of these assumptions proves that the journalists believe that they are addressing a culture that is still conservative and male-controlled.

As we have seen, the state is seen as the one holding power through its institutions, bodies and personalities, which appear as decision-making factors. They do not always act in the best interests of the citizens, professionally or transparently, however, being depicted as more at fault than performing well. All the headlines show that most actors described in them are overridden by conflict, in many of its forms. Linguistically and stylistically, the presence of oppositions and binary phrasing mirrors the concept of conflict. The main stance is one of accusation and blaming of the authorities for the situation the country is in – hence, the use of irony and heavily-connoted terms of “carnival”, “4 musketeers” etc. One could detect a recourse to moral framing, out of which the empowered state actors appear as blameworthy, and their holding of power is questioned and implied to be problematic, undeserved or even illegitimate. Failure of the state to ensure a corruption-free, professional, orderly and safe climate for its citizens raises the issue of contestable and contested authority, which is visible throughout the homepage.

There is a predisposition to dramatize and enhance the gravity of the events depicted, visible in the terms used, which tend to be impactful and radical, pointing to marked, overt and preponderantly theatrical, dramatic reactions. Emotionality plays an important role, the news raising a wide array of emotional reactions in the readers, as if a target to cover as many of them were set, these ranging from outrage, revolt, anger, frustration, to fear, as well as compassion or pity. We could say that negative emotions are triggered for the most part, the positive ones being almost absent. This depends on the selection performed by the journalists as well, but how the citizens’ lives are impacted negatively by the measures and decisions made by the officials takes primacy and is of the highest interest, which is only natural against a background of crisis. Hence, the negativity arises not necessarily from the way the news items are presented, but from what is actually going on in the public sphere at a time of generalized crisis.

As a result of the analysis, the idea that power is assigned not only to entities depicted in the news, but also others, outside the context of the news discourse, arises. Namely, the readers are empowered through various means, one being the way in which they become possessors of knowledge, as well as privy on secret information. The journalists are also empowered as sources of information, professionals and experts, as mediators of knowledge, decoders providing a hermeneutic of facts, as well as vigilantes, potential exposers of irregularities. They acquire brand image capital while siding with the citizens and working to serve their interests – i.e. those of the many, among whom they include themselves – appearing as professional, dedicated and even heroic, at an extreme. Going back to the idea of power, they become the ones imparting legitimacy through the uncovering of uglier truths, thus negotiating power and dealing with it in a dynamic way,

taking some of it away from the authorities and giving it back to the public through knowledge. A noteworthy aspect is that information online reaches far more numerous audiences than television news broadcasts, as it can be consulted anywhere at any given moment, free from time restrictions. We may conclude that power plays performed through journalism are far more complex than at the level of the actual content on the website homepage, taking place on a much wider arena and at plural levels, operating changes in society in mentalities and seeing its effects in activism and, further, in how power gets (re)distributed concretely.

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