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**PUBLIC HEALTHCARE CRISIS
COMMUNICATION.
A CROSS-CULTURAL PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	2
List of Figures and Tables	6
Introduction	8
0.1 Theoretical Argument	8
0.2 Personal Argument.....	10
0.3 An Outline of the Study	12
Chapter 1: Cross-Cultural Pragmatics. Setting the Theoretical Framework	15
1.1 Introduction.....	15
1.2 The Pragmatic Theory of Language. Basic Concepts	17
1.2.1 The Speech Acts.....	17
1.2.2 The Cooperative Principle.....	20
1.2.3 The Relevance Theory	21
1.2.4 The Theory of Politeness.....	23
1.3 Cross-Cultural Pragmatics.....	27
1.3.1 Definitions and Characteristics	27
1.3.2 Speech Acts and Cultural Backgrounds	32
1.3.3 A Framework for a Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Analysis.....	33
1.3.4 The Main Cross-Cultural Analytical Terms. Defining the Working Concepts	36
1.4 Conclusions	46
Chapter 2: Research Design and Corpus Compilation.....	47
2.1 Introduction.....	47
2.2 Review of Literature and Research Gap.....	48
2.3 Crisis Communication.....	56
2.2.1 Healthcare Communication Becomes Public Communication	57
2.4 The Press Release: A Genre	59
2.5 Methodology and Data	62
2.5.1 Topic and Objectives.....	63
2.5.2 Research Questions	64
2.5.3 Corpus Compilation	65
2.5.3.1 Inclusion Criteria.....	66
2.5.3.2 Corpus Size	68
2.5.3.3 Software	69
2.6 The Authorship - Different Speakers with Similar Messages	71

Chapter 3: Corpus Analysis of Press Releases during the COVID-19 Pandemic (1): Information and Persuasion in the Speech Acts of Crisis Communication	77
3.1 Tell and Opine: On Information and Its Realisation in the Press Releases.....	77
3.1.1 Tells.....	78
3.1.2 Opines	80
3.1.3 Tell/ Opines	82
3.1.4 Frequency of Occurrence	86
3.1.5 The Speech Act Perspective.....	87
3.2 Request and Suggest: On Persuasion and Its Realisation in the Press Releases	92
3.2.1 Requests	93
3.2.2 Suggests.....	101
3.2.3 Frequency of Occurrence	112
3.2.4 The Speech Act Perspective	115
3.2.4.1 Characteristics of the British English Corpus	116
3.2.4.2 Characteristics of the Spanish Corpus.....	119
3.2.4.3 Characteristics of the Romanian Corpus	125
3.2.5 Results	131
Chapter 4: Corpus Analysis of Press Releases during the COVID-19 Pandemic (2): Solutions, Excuses, Justifications and Gratitude in the Speech Acts of Crisis Communication.....	135
4.1 Resolve General Features.....	135
4.1.1 Qualitative Analysis	136
4.1.2 Frequency of Occurrence	147
4.2 Excuse/ Justify – General Features	150
4.2.1 Qualitative Analysis	150
4.2.2 Frequency of Occurrence	162
4.3 Thank - General Features	164
4.3.1 Qualitative Analysis	165
4.3.2 Frequency of Occurrence	178
4.4 Results and Discussion.....	182
4.4.1 The Outline of the Speech Acts in the Three Corpora	182
Chapter 5: Communicating Death – The Relevance of Sympathise as a Speech Act	190
5.1 Introduction	190
5.2 Elena Semino and the Death Talk	192
5.3 Communicating Death – The Climax of Crisis Communication	193
5.3.1 The Speech Acts of Communicating Death	193

5.3.1.1 Samples of Death Communication in the British English Corpus	197
5.3.1.2 Samples of Death Communication in the Spanish Corpus.....	200
5.3.1.3 Samples of Death Communication in the Romanian Corpus.....	203
5.3.2 Frequency of Occurrence	206
5.4 Results	209
Final Conclusions.....	211
Limitations of the Study and Further Research	218
Bibliography.....	220
Appendices	233

List of Figures and Tables

Tables

- Table no. 1 – Data concerning the compilation of the three corpora
- Table no. 2 – Request Head Acts. Levels of Directness
- Table no. 3 – The Tell/ Opine Coding Scheme Exemplified
- Table no. 4 – The Request Coding Scheme Exemplified
- Table no. 5 – The Suggest Coding Scheme Exemplified
- Table no. 6 – Request and Suggest. The Quantitative Speech Act Perspective in MEDENG
- Table no. 7 – Request and Suggest. The Quantitative Speech Act Perspective in MEDSPAN
- Table no. 8 – Request and Suggest. The Quantitative Speech Act Perspective in MEDRO
- Table no. 9 – The Resolve Coding Scheme Exemplified
- Table no. 10 – The Excuse/ Justify Coding Scheme Exemplified
- Table no. 11 – The Thank Coding Scheme Exemplified
- Table no. 12 – Number of Head Acts Distributed in the Three Corpora
- Table no. 13 – The Speech Acts of Death Communication

Figures

- Fig. no. 1 – Speech Act Typology According to House and Kádár (2021) Adapted to the Findings of the Corpora under Study
- Fig. no. 2 – Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Acts Tell and Opine
- Fig. no. 3 – Frequency of Occurrence for *know/think, saber/ creer* and *a ſti/ a crede*
- Fig. no. 4 – Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Acts Request and Suggest
- Fig. no. 5 – Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Act Resolve
- Fig. no. 6 – Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Act Excuse/ Justify
- Fig. no. 7 – Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Act Thank
- Fig. no. 8 – The Speech Act Distribution in the British English Corpus
- Fig. no. 9 – The Speech Act Distribution in the Spanish Corpus
- Fig. no. 10 – The Speech Act Distribution in the Romanian Corpus
- Fig. no. 11 – Frequency of Occurrence for *deaths/ fallecidos/ decese*

Appendices

- Appendix No. 1. – The Core Coding Categories of the Speech Acts
- Appendix No. 2. – Know/ Think in sketchengine.eu

Images

Image no. 1 – *sí que*

Image no. 2 – *want*

Image no. 3 – *must*

Image no. 4 – *hay que*

Introduction

0.1 Theoretical Argument

The last time humanity confronted a global pandemic was probably at the beginning of the 20th century, during the years of the Spanish flu (1918–1920), when an estimated 500 million people were infected. Almost a century later (between 2019 and 2022), the world faced another global pandemic caused by COVID-19 that infected more than 700 million people¹. In practice, this was a crisis that no one alive at the time could have imagined to be possible in this day and age. Countries were affected at all levels: economic, medical, social, and industrial. However, what marked an essential difference from the times of the previous crisis was access to information technology. This aspect significantly enhanced global communication, allowing countries to brainstorm for salvatory ideas and keep track of the evolution of the contagions.

Each country took measures to control the spread of the virus according to the recommendations provided by the World Health Organisation, while also adapting its regulations to national or local contexts whose specificities required governments to tailor their decisions accordingly. Thus, to make the population of a country comply with a new rule of living meant providing successful public health communication.

The present research encompasses three seemingly distinct fields that complement each other: linguistics, cross-cultural pragmatics, and public health communication. The analysis focuses on the linguistic and pragmatic characteristics of public health communication as it was conducted during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) in three European countries: the United Kingdom, Spain, and Romania, by their respective medical and political authorities. The corpus compiled for the current study comprises official press releases delivered in the national languages of these countries, and the analysis is conducted within the analytical framework of each language. However, the paper is written in English, due to its status as a lingua franca, as well as because it is the language in which the entire cross-cultural pragmatic theory was studied and elaborated.

Communication in English in the current globalised societies of Europe evolves according to a series of widely accepted specificities and norms which mainly define the Anglo-Saxon cultural space. Nevertheless, due to its preferential status as a language that serves as a means of international dialogue in numerous fields such as tourism, commerce, technology, and science, English seems to have greatly extended its territory and has undergone complex

¹ According to <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>, last accessed on June the 5th, 2025

immersion processes in almost all other European languages. Bennett and Muresan (2016) observe these conceptual interferences in a study on academic writing:

In the current climate of globalization, researchers operating on the semiperiphery of the world system are increasingly anxious to assimilate their discourse to that of the prestigious centre, distancing themselves from practices in their own cultures that they perceive to be backward or undeveloped (Bennett, ed. 2014; Lillis and Curry 2010) (...) traditional scholarly discourses gradually alter to become more like English as a result of constant contact with the lingua franca (Anderman and Rogers 2005; House 2008; Bennett 2014b, Muresan & Nicolae, 2015). (Bennett and Muresan, 2016: 97).

Even more recently, in a 2021 study conducted by Niall Curry on question realisation in economics research articles in English, French, and Spanish, the author acknowledges the challenges of using English as one of the studied languages,

due to the sheer vastness of speakers and users of English as well as its global standing and international prestige. (...) The epistemological traditions in English academic discourse vary greatly from those in French and Spanish and, as such, English language epistemologies have come to negatively impact ways of thinking and constructing knowledge in languages other than English. (Curry, 2021: 2, 3).

In cross-cultural pragmatics, this aspect has been highly emphasised and used as an argument to combat the renowned theory of universals in politeness developed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Anna Wierzbicka argues that “the supposedly universal maxims and principles of “politeness” were in fact rooted in Anglo culture” (Wierzbicka, 2003: vi), claiming that language is first and foremost culturally embedded and that the generic typologies established by scholars of pragmatics serve not to the study of the human language in general, but to the study of the English language in particular along with its wide extensions and modifications. In the age of globalisation and open access to communication technology, patterns of communicative behaviour are constantly exchanged and borrowed between languages. However, it is English primarily that imposes the framework and the operative means.

Moreover, when discussing its status as lingua franca from the perspective of the intercultural pragmatic analysis, that is, situations in which all of the participants are non-native speakers of English, House and Kádár insist upon the drawbacks of imminent generalisations and faulty first impressions of language behaviour: “The use of a lingua franca may lead to the spurious belief that the speakers share common conventions and related pragmatic practices

when, in reality, they may not.” (2021: 34). Although the present study does not make use of language samples in which English is used as a means of communication between non-native speakers, these observations are relevant in the sense that English was used at the European level as the transmitting vehicle of information related to medical updates concerning the worldwide evolution of the virus. These pieces of information were immediately incorporated into the other European languages, adapted according to each social and cultural entity to be transmitted further on to the lay audience.

A cross-cultural pragmatic analysis must not, however, be mistaken for an interdisciplinary approach which combines aspects related to sociolinguistics, language psychology or anthropology. While comparing human language use in different languages and cultures, it does so by performing “rigorous cross-cultural comparisons of cultural patterns (...) in a strictly data-based way.” (House and Kádár, 2021: 2). For a corpus of texts to be cross-culturally eligible, it must contain data that can be easily contrastable, that is to present various pragmatic phenomena which are sufficiently conventionalised in the respective linguacultures so that they can stand the process of relevant comparison. “Conventionalisation describes the degree of recurrence of a particular pragmatic phenomenon in how members of a social group or a broader linguaculture use and evaluate language.” (House and Kádár, 2021: 29). The main purpose of the present study is to compare and evaluate the conventionalised uses of performing a series of speech acts in institutionalised language throughout the same period and within similar communicative situations, while contrasting three different linguacultures.

0.2 Personal Argument

Romanian, Spanish, and British English have been chosen among other European languages as the object of study for a relatively simple reason: these are the languages with which the author of the study is highly familiar, albeit from different cognitive and emotional perspectives.

Among the three, Romanian is the mother tongue, the prime form of expression through which the surrounding reality has first been acknowledged. The intuitive perception of this language is more acute, and the first phase of any analysis tends to be performed instinctively in it, moving towards the logical and sequential pattern. That does not mean that this approach will be the one to adopt throughout this study; it is merely an acknowledgement of a possible peril of whose presence I am fully aware.

Although Spanish and English are acquired languages, there are significant differences in how the predominant advanced linguistic abilities have been perfected. Firstly, one of the most relevant differences is that if the Spanish language was learnt while living and studying in Spain, making it possible to acquire linguistic, cultural, and social values, the English language learning process has been a lifelong, constant endeavour, which was developed in a guided educational environment. I consider Spanish to be my adoptive language and culture, still carrying a powerful emotional component that makes it similar to Romanian regarding the intuitive perception of language.

Nevertheless, formal training in this language was absolutely necessary in order to be able to compile and analyse a corpus in Spanish. The Master's degree obtained from the University of Alicante in Spain was the result of a two-year study programme that examined the most important specialised languages relevant to the field of work, including legal, economic, and medical languages, as well as languages for tourism, alongside courses in applied linguistics. Conducted both in English and Spanish, this programme offered a parallel overview of how these two languages adapt their linguistic structures to the requirements of various specific purposes. Upon my return to Romania, I passed the examination organised by the Romanian Ministry of Justice, which enabled me to become a legal translator of the Spanish language, thus ensuring a continuous practice of Spanish for legal purposes.

The pandemic was a period of profound turmoil for the vast majority of people, and it produced changes whose effects are still visible in the present. As an English teacher myself, I observe these consequences in my pupils' behavioural and cognitive development. Transferring teaching and learning to an exclusive online environment affected our communication and social interaction. If I were to extend this thought to a broader social context, crisis communication has shaped our pandemic reality in such a profound way that it triggered behaviours and attitudes that determined the effectiveness of crisis management. All of these interests motivated me to undertake a critical and comparative examination of this pandemic reality, as it was communicated in the three languages I am highly familiar with, which could highlight common ground and, at the same time, delineate significant differences. The cross-cultural pragmatic approach provided me with a suitable analytical framework for the comparative study of speech acts, which are viewed as communicative units that offer insights from both linguistic and pragmatic perspectives.

0.3 An Outline of the Study

This research paper, titled *Public Healthcare Crisis Communication. A Corpus Analysis*, preceded by an introductory section and a list of figures, is elaborated according to the following structure:

Chapter 1. *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics. Setting the Theoretical Framework* provides a detailed insight into the most popular pragmatic theories of language, highlighting the key concepts that will be used extensively in the research. The chapter defines and explains fundamental pragmatic principles, such as speech acts, the cooperative principle, relevance theory, and the theory of politeness, while providing a chronological account of their conceptual development. Further on, the second subchapter focuses on defining cross-cultural pragmatics, a recent branch of study that has evolved in the past decades. A more detailed approach to studying the speech acts from a cross-cultural perspective is developed, alongside the analytical framework and the defining concepts with which the corpus-based analysis will operate in the following chapter.

Chapter 2. *Research Design and Corpus Compilation* is the chapter that outlines the methodology to be employed in this study. To begin with, a review of the specialised literature is performed and the research gap marked. A presentation of crisis communication and its specificities proved necessary, along with an emphasis on the fact that, in the context analysed here, healthcare communication was forced to become public communication. Since the crisis communication was performed through press releases, the following subchapter presents the main characteristics of this genre. Furthermore, the chapter offers a comprehensive description of the corpus, accompanied by detailed accounts of the data collection procedures and the methodological approach employed. Seven speech acts have been identified as relevant in the selected corpus, in terms of frequency of occurrence and meaning-bearing: Tell, Opine, Request, Suggest, Resolve, Excuse/ Justify, and Thank. Consequently, the following two chapters comprise the core of the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis conducted in this research paper.

Chapter 3. *Corpus Analysis of Press Releases during the COVID-19 Pandemic (1): Information and Persuasion in the Speech Acts of Crisis Communication* performs a cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of the first four most relevant speech acts identified in the corpus: Tell, Opine, Request, and Suggest. This is a mixed-method analysis which researches the structure of the speech acts in terms of Head Acts and supportive moves, highlighting the speakers' communicative intentions and emphasising morphological or syntactical features that became relevant to the understanding of the strategies of communication. Overall, this chapter researches two communicative purposes: to inform and to persuade. The speakers of the press

releases employed the four speech acts subjected to analysis here in order to meet those purposes. Tell and Opine/ Request and Suggest are analysed in pairs due to the nuances they share in their meanings and communicative intentions. Towards the end of this chapter, a set of characteristics is outlined for each of the three corpora in terms of Request use and linguistic realisation of persuasion. Moreover, the results presented in the last subchapter comprise preliminary conclusions of the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of the four speech acts.

Chapter 4. *Corpus Analysis of Press Releases during the COVID-19 Pandemic (2): Solutions, Excuses, Justifications and Gratitude in the Speech Acts of Crisis Communication* is the chapter that comprises the second part of the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of the speech acts identified in the press releases, by respecting the exact steps of the mixed-method analysis delineated in the previous chapter. Three speech acts became the object of study of this chapter: Resolve, Excuse/ Justify and Thank. The communicative intentions inferred in the core meaning of these speech acts were to provide solutions, to present apologies, and to justify specific measures that had to be implemented throughout the crisis, and finally, to express gratitude and acknowledgement. At the end of this chapter, an overview of the speech acts dispersal within the three corpora summarises the research results, emphasising both shared and distinctive features. These findings contribute significantly to the final conclusions of the research paper.

Chapter 5. *Communicating Death - the Relevance of Sympathy as a Speech Act* analyses the speech acts used whenever the authors of the press releases needed to focus on reporting the number of deaths caused by COVID-19. Talking about the end of life is no easy task in any given circumstance, and reporting the permanently increasing number of deaths is even less. This chapter presents Elena Semino's view on the matter as a seminal linguist who studied death communication in cancer patients. It is against this perspective that the corpus is analysed afterwards, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The conclusions of this chapter summarise the characteristics of death communication that were identified in the corpora selected for the three linguacultures.

The final conclusions are followed by an outline of the study's limitations, a bibliographic list, and an appendix. The appendix includes a table that synthesises all the cross-cultural pragmatic terms employed in the analysis, along with their definitions and examples to illustrate their use in each of the three languages. It also comprises snapshots taken during the research stages, which were performed with the help of linguistic software (AntConc version 4.2.0 and SketchEngine), in situations where the findings proved relevant to the study. References to these snapshots have been made throughout the analysis to illustrate specific key points.

This research paper aims to provide pertinent observations on the speech acts used with precise communicative purposes throughout the crisis communication carried out by medical and political representatives of Great Britain, Spain and Romania during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, further implications for crisis communication will be anticipated, along with suggestions for the optimisation of message effectiveness.

1.1 Introduction

The current chapter defines pragmatics, highlighting its most important characteristics, and provides a historical overview of its evolution. The cross-cultural branch of pragmatics will also be defined and described, alongside the analytical frame that will be used for the corpus analysis. A special subchapter is dedicated to the definition of speech acts, establishing the typology that will be applied to the current analysis.

Defining the concept of pragmatics as an independent linguistic area within the study of language is not an easy task. Since it was first used by Charles W. Morris in 1938, the word *pragmatics* has been defined several times, without having yet reached a complete and undisputable definition. At that initial moment, the philosopher Morris mentioned the term as a constituent part of semiotics, along with syntax and semantics. He delineated the three as follows: syntax is the study of “the formal relation of signs to one another”, while semantics is the study of “the relations of signs to the objects to which signs are applicable” and finally, pragmatics studies “the relation of signs to interpreters” (Morris, 1938: 6). This was the first time that humans, as active participants in the communication act and as creators of speech were included in a scientific analysis of language. It is this particular feature that distinguishes pragmatics from other fields of linguistics, a constant that remains throughout the several definitions attributed to this area of study.

During the following decades, a considerable number of prominent linguists dedicated their research to the new field, thus trying to establish a definition. Accordingly, pragmatics studies: “the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others” (Crystal, 1987), “how utterances have meanings in situations” (Leech, 1983), “how more gets communicated than is said” (Yule, 1996: 3). Still, in the years 2000s, the issue of providing one clear cut definition remains open to discussion. Yan Huang provides one in his *Pragmatics* from 2007, in which not only does he refer to the conceptual aspects of the new field, but at the same time enumerates the key terminologies which set the theoretical ground: “Pragmatics is the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, the use of language. The central topics of inquiry of pragmatics include implicature, presupposition, speech acts and deixis” (Huang, 2007: 4).

² Parts of this chapter were included in the article titled *Speech Acts. A Cross-Cultural Framework of Analysis* published in the Journal of Romanian Literary Studies 35/ 2023: 844 - 855

In order to understand the current state of affairs of the scientific context which sets the basis for the present study, it is of utmost importance to take a closer look at the history of pragmatics. Although it was first added to the linguistic terminology towards the end of the third decade of the 20th century, it was not until the 1970s that the field raised linguists' attention through the emergence of two different schools: the Anglo-American pragmatic thought and the European continental pragmatic thought. These two perspectives based their theoretical approach on defining pragmatics according to the other disciplines with which they associated this new linguistic field. Thus, the Anglo-American School promoted what is now known as the component view of pragmatics, meaning that pragmatics should be analysed and discussed as a "core component of a theory of language on a par with phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics" (Huang, 2007: 4). The European Continental tradition places pragmatics in a much broader context, "encompassing much that goes under the rubric of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and discourse analysis." (Huang, 2007: 4) In this case, however, Yan Huang considers that this broader context works in the detriment of establishing a new scientific field of study in its own right. The attempt to define pragmatics from a vague exchange and comparison between a series of already well-established disciplines, such as the ones mentioned above, makes it difficult to establish a clear agenda of research and study. Nevertheless, adding a new branch that supports and complements the previous ones to the theory of language seems to make more sense. Also, it opens an already established methodology of research.

The next chapter will delineate some key concepts in the theory of cross-cultural pragmatics, which will become the tools used to perform the current analysis. The definitions outlined further on enhance a better understanding of the steps taken within the analyses of the speech acts identified in the corpora. In this sense, - Appendix No. 1. – The Core Coding Categories of the Speech Acts was created and added to the research. It proved to be an extremely useful consulting tool because it comprises all the analytical concepts and the terminology delineated by House & Kádár's study from 2021, which sets the theoretical foundations for the present research paper.

1.2 The Pragmatic Theory of Language. Basic Concepts

1.2.1 The Speech Acts

The discussion on pragmatics cannot be made without the main keywords and concepts that define the study of this discipline. To begin with, John Langshaw Austin's book *How to do things with words*, first published in 1955 as a collection of twelve lectures that he gave at Harvard University, represents a milestone in the evolution of pragmatics as a self-sustained linguistic discipline. One of the study's main achievements is the introduction of a new concept defined as speech acts. According to Austin, "to say something is to do something, or in saying something we do something, and even by saying something we do something" (Austin, 1962: 100). This is a theory which states from the very beginning that it deals with a specific type of linguistic phenomenon, but whose in-depth study and analysis are yet to be performed. It is a theory that bridges grammarians and philosophers into creating a more complex perspective on human language, starting with philosophical questions and undergoing a logical type of analysis, while re-structuring the units and scope of the methodology.

Although Austin is recognised as having created and developed the theory of the speech acts, philosophers and linguists before him have paved the way and conducted studies that opened the direction for his new approach. To name only a couple, Karl Bühler (1879 – 1963) was the one who first described the dynamic between *the sender, the message, and the receiver* in his *organon model* of communication, which would later help Roman Jakobson in his definition of the functions of language. Second, the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951) described human communication as a language game in which the speaker and the receiver of the message alternate roles and play by certain rules which can convey a specifically desired meaning to the spoken utterances.

Speech act theory views utterances as acts and posits the speech act as the unit of linguistic communication. The speech acts were classified by Austin (1962) into three main categories: locutionary (the act of saying something, without further interpreting the underlying intentions), illocutionary (speakers' intention upon saying the utterance), and perlocutionary acts (the effect that the speech act has on the participants). It is a task of speech act theory to explain in which senses and under which conditions uttering something means doing something, thus providing a theory for describing and understanding the various kinds of linguistic action (apologising, promising, ordering, answering, requesting, complaining, warning, inviting, refusing, or congratulating). Consequently, Austin's theory makes the following delimitations:

To perform a locutionary act is in general, we may say, also and *eo ipso* to perform an illocutionary act, as I propose to call it. To determine what illocutionary act is so performed, we must determine in what way we are using the locution:

- asking or answering a question,
- giving some information or an assurance or a warning,
- announcing a verdict or an intention,
- pronouncing a sentence,
- making an appointment or an appeal or a criticism,
- making an identification or giving a description, and the numerous like (Austin, 1962: 104).

Austin's theory was later continued by the studies of his disciple, the American philosopher John Searle. He also promoted the idea that human language and human behaviour are interconnected manifestations that, if separated, lead to a fragmentary understanding. If language is a "rule-governed intentional behaviour" (Searle, 2011: 16), then all communicative acts occur with a purpose and are delivered according to a set of rules which facilitate communication:

speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so on; (...) these acts are in general made possible by and are performed in accordance with certain rules for the use of linguistic elements (Searle, 2011: 16).

Searle made a significant contribution to Austin's theory and built upon a perspective of analysis that has stayed and become quite appealing to linguists. A matter of major concern was the classification of the speech acts into determined typologies. If Austin theorised *an open-ended list* (Levinson, 2017:205) of types of speech acts which are prone to vary according to different cultural backgrounds, Searle identified five classes of speech acts and insisted on their universal character: "representatives (assertion-like), directives (questioning, requesting, etc.), commissives (promising, threatening, offering), expressives (thanking, apologizing, etc.) and declarations (blessing, christening, etc., which rely on special institutional backgrounds)" (Levinson, 2017:205).

As we approach the contemporary decades, one cannot help but notice that studying language from a pragmatic perspective means intertwining areas of greater diversity such as sociology, computer technology, behaviourism, psychology, philosophy and even educational sciences. Due to the notable advances in technology, human communication has become more dynamic than ever in a social context in which the traditional boundaries and limitations brought

forward by the limits of time and space have almost entirely disappeared. It is in this particular environment that linguists have started to realise that the attempt to define a set of universal speech acts which could apply to the process of communication is not only limitative, but it can purely be a mistake. If we maintain Searle's hypothesis, according to which language is a form of human behaviour that only becomes coherent and functional when following a set of predetermined rules, then the link between human communication and cultural/ societal backgrounds becomes the new matrix of language analysis. Levinson (2017:202) acknowledges the fact that "we need to decode or attribute speech acts at lightning speed, because it is the illocutionary force, not the meaning, that we primarily respond to." Thus, real communication is generated at an instinctual level, according to the intention either of initiating a new exchange or of answering to a received stimulus. Defining the typology of speech acts throughout a finite classification is probably an attempt similar to the Procrustean bed – as long as humans use language as a means of communication, the language will be created and it will re-create itself according to each communicative situation it is being used in; thus, a theory of language in use would aim mainly to describe the phenomena rather than establish structures and categories to be fitted.

Is there a finite set of speech act types, and if so how big is it? The answers are that we really don't know. Is the set universal in character? Not in the sense that all speech acts are pan-cultural (...), but it is an open question as to whether there is a pan-cultural core with such plausibly general functions as telling, questioning, requesting, greeting, agreeing, or initiating repair (Levinson, 2017:205).

Cross-cultural pragmatics looks into the problem of universals and aims to prove that human communication is culturally grounded: "speech acts are realised from culture to culture in different ways and these differences may result in communication difficulties that range from humorous to the serious" (Gass, 1996: 1). The choice we make every time we produce utterances lies embedded into the customs and the cultural mentality, we have either been brought up in or have been living in. Phenomena such as bilingualism or second language acquisition have made linguists reconsider the study of language from a new perspective. When children are taught to express themselves in their mother tongue, they follow behavioural patterns they first witness and then imitate. First language acquisition delineates verbal expression according to factors which characterise the child's environment from multiple perspectives: family background, education level (considering here the possibility of the child being brought up as a bilingual), social and economic status, linguistic features of the community or the region he/ she is raised in, ethnicity, and ultimately the culture and the

country. However, the intersection between cultures and thus, between different linguistic behaviours, can only occur when we consider second language acquisition. Observing how speech acts are performed by a non-native speaker during their process of language acquisition has raised many inquiries concerning their universal character and their already theorised typologies.

In second language acquisition research, there is a concern for the way in which learners learn and produce speech acts as part of the sociolinguistic component of their communicative competence. It has been established in previous studies that in speech act behaviour, as in other language areas, there is a discrepancy between a learner's receptive and productive abilities. Thus, in a study done with immigrants in Israel, it was found that while it might take as long as eight years to acquire native-like reception of speech acts, one may never truly acquire native-like production (Olshtain – Blum-Kulka 1985) (Cohen, 1996: 27).

This brief overview of the speech act theory was aimed at underlining the relevance and the importance of the basic unit of any pragmatic language analysis. Seen as an abstract concept, the speech act in itself does nothing more than to reinforce the philosophical idea according to which saying something will always mean doing something; behind every utterance, there is an underlying intention on the speaker's behalf that represents the key starting point which will delineate their verbal behaviour. The way people act can be at times hard to explain, but there is a general consensus according to which behaviour is influenced by culture, education, ethnicity and many other layers which shape human existence; and so is language.

1.2.2 The Cooperative Principle

Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) saw communication as a cooperative task between individuals, and it stands alongside his four maxims of conversation (quality, quantity, relation and manner). This principle promotes the idea that those involved in communication assume that both parties will generally seek to cooperate with each other to establish an agreed-upon meaning. Grice's maxims of conversation comprise a set of basic rules which, if respected accordingly, should lead to an effective and efficient communicative experience – that is, one in which the speaker transmits a message that is both understood as a conveyer of meaning and at the same time has the intention behind it being recognised by the hearer.

- The maxim of quantity refers to the amount of information which should be provided according to the current purposes of the exchange.
- The maxim of quality refers to the truthfulness of the speaker's information.
- The maxim of relation refers to the information's relevance to the context and the overall scope of communication.
- Finally, the maxim of manner advises avoiding obscurity of expression, ambiguity or unnecessary prolixity.

However, one cannot ignore the fact that any given communication, as simple as it may be, also includes a violation of these maxims. In practice, “what a speaker intends to communicate is characteristically far richer than what she directly expresses; linguistic meaning radically underdetermines the message conveyed and understood” (Horn, 2006: 3). The Gricean theory of *conversational implicatures* emphasises this difference between what is literally said in a sentence and what the speaker intended to say. More often than not, an utterance bears an indirect meaning which is not stated clearly, but rather implied. Searle established this difference by creating two categories of speech acts – direct and indirect - marking thus a difference between the literal and the non-literal meaning conveyed in an utterance. In his theory of *conversational implicatures*, (Grice, 1975: 45) refers to these aspects in terms of “sentence meaning” (what the sentence is literally saying) versus “speaker meaning” (the literal meaning combined with the speaker’s initial intention).

Apart from this duality which must always be considered when dealing with a pragmatic analysis of conversations, linguists have also reached the premise according to which the reason for violating Grice’s maxims would be related in a relevant number of cases to politeness: “when clarity conflicts with politeness, in most cases but not all, politeness supersedes [since]... it is more important to avoid offence than to achieve clarity” (Lakoff, 1973: 297-298).

Although later on argued and contested, Grice’s pragmatic approach represents a milestone in the development of pragmatics as a scientific field in its own right, and it also set the basis for further theories which focused on indirectly conveyed meanings or language behaviour.

1.2.3 The Relevance Theory

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson’s relevance theory (1986) brought a new perspective to the discipline. The French anthropologist and the English linguist both theorised that the

Relevance Theory's general objective was "to identify underlying mechanisms, rooted in human psychology, which explain how humans communicate with one another" (Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 32). As far as their perspective on the Gricean principle is concerned, they do agree on the fact that communication is a form of intentional behaviour and that understanding an utterance is a matter of recognising the intentions behind it. However, the authors of the relevance theory do not recognise the need for a cooperative principle in order to explain how humans communicate, since they believe that humans are genetically predisposed to undergo an intention-recognition cognitive process.

Their contributions to the pragmatic analysis framework are of significant importance also because they took a step forward while recognising their predecessors' work and building upon it. Thus, it was Grice's belief that expressing and recognising the speaker's intention is one of the most important processes to be taken into account when analysing human communication. He also acknowledged the importance of inference and considered that it is the hearer's responsibility to infer the speaker's intended meaning correctly by making use of whatever evidence they might identify throughout the communicative act. However, "the central claim of relevance theory is that the expectations of relevance raised by an utterance are precise and predictable enough to guide the hearer toward the speaker's meaning" (Sperber and Wilson, 2006: 607). This statement offers a psychologically-oriented perspective upon human communication and language, in the sense that it attempts to explain the turns both the speaker and the hearer take by looking into the ways in which they choose to decode the meaning on the one hand, and the choice they make when offering a reply to that first message, on the other hand.

The Relevance Theory was developed on two major principles through which its authors try to delineate a sequence of mental processes which take place naturally while engaging in communication: *the cognitive principle of relevance* and *the communicative principle of relevance*. According to the first principle, the authors claim that human cognition has an innate tendency in itself to look for the maximum point of relevance and chooses among the meanings of the utterances, precisely the ones which achieve the highest level of relevance in accordance with the communicative situation in which they were created. *The communicative principle* deals with the stimuli or the evidence which the receiver makes use of when reaching for understanding and reply. These stimuli are relevant in themselves sufficient enough not only to be taken into consideration, but also to be chosen as the most relevant, thus useful and necessary, for the processes of understanding and communication.

Relevance theory claims that humans do have an automatic tendency to maximize relevance, not because we have a choice in the matter – we rarely do – but because of the way our cognitive systems have evolved. As a result of constant selection pressures toward increasing efficiency, the human cognitive system has developed in such a way that our perceptual mechanisms tend automatically to pick out potentially relevant stimuli, our memory retrieval mechanisms tend automatically to activate potentially relevant assumptions, and our inferential mechanisms tend spontaneously to process them in the most productive way (Sperber and Wilson, 2006: 610).

Taking all of these into account, it seems that Sperber and Wilson have developed a theory of pragmatic analysis which reinforces the unpredictability of human communication and claims a certain degree of freedom when it comes to the mental processes and choices engaged in the communicative act.

1.2.4 The Theory of Politeness

Any attempt at defining the concept of politeness usually leads to two major observations: one, that it is an abstract term that refers to social constructions based on human relations and hierarchies; two, that there is probably no exhaustive definition that would comply with all the variations and changes that occur whenever communication is analysed from a pragmatic perspective. Over the years, many linguists who have described and included this concept in their studies on language and pragmatics have also provided definitions of the term. For example, Kummer (2005: 325) considers that politeness is “a diplomatic strategy of communication”, while Mey (1993: 23) sees it as “a pragmatic mechanism in which a variety of structures work together according to the speaker’s intention of achieving smooth communication”.

One of the first linguists to broach the concept of *politeness* in his work on pragmatics was G.N. Leech (1983), who mentioned it as one of the principles defining *interpersonal rhetoric*, alongside *the irony principle* and Grice’s *cooperative principle*. In his view, politeness stands for a “strategic conflict avoidance, which can be measured in terms of the degree of effort put into the avoidance of a conflict situation, and the establishment and maintenance of comity” (Leech, 1983:19). In his view, the principle of politeness has one central purpose: to enhance the acceptance inside the social group, thus enhancing its unity and balance. Leech refers to *social equilibrium* and *friendly relations* in order to describe the proper environment where interlocutors would seek cooperation for the sake of having a successful conversation. Within

the principle of politeness, six maxims have been delineated: tact, approbation, agreement, modesty, generosity and sympathy. There are different types of politeness required within a discourse, and Leech establishes that one could identify those different types if one also considers the following scales: indirectness, optionality, cost-benefit, social distance and authority. Apart from looking into the typologies of politeness that might be acquired depending on the context in which the conversation occurs, the linguist also discusses the negative and positive politeness. In doing so, Leech claims that certain speech acts are inherently polite (such as congratulating or praising), while others are of an impolite nature (such as criticising and blaming) - negative and positive politeness leading to minimising or maximising impolite/polite speech acts.

When referring to the principle of irony, Leech looks into how irony is used with the purpose of being polite. Although he sees irony as a way of offensive behaviour, he also claims that “if you must cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn’t overtly conflict with the principle of politeness, but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly” (Leech, 1983: 82).

Brown and Levinson (1978) are probably the two theoreticians most known for having dealt with this concept, and their perspective on the matter remains a reference point to this day. According to them, politeness “refers to socially correct or appropriate speech and behaviour” (Brown, 2017: 383). Throughout their theory they have claimed there is a universal manner in which people from different cultures and apparently unrelated backgrounds make use of polite utterances in order to avoid certain uncomfortable situations: “this is the extraordinary parallelism in the linguistic minutiae of the utterances with which people choose to express themselves in quite unrelated languages and cultures.” (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 60). Because of this, there have been many scholars who questioned the universal character of their approach since it did not apply to cross-cultural pragmatics, for example, nor did it offer a universal way in which politeness could be interpreted and conceptualized.

However, their theory on politeness set the ground for what has become nowadays an important tool for analysis and a concept that is hardly ever ignored when it comes to describing and investigating different forms of communication. A key notion in developing their theory refers to the concept of *face*. Brown and Levinson developed it from Goffman (1967) who stated that face is: “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (Goffman, 1967: 5). The image one has within their own social group seems to be of extreme importance for the interlocutors. In most of cases, what happens is that people try to live up to the expectations created by that particular image and behave, thus speak, accordingly. Participants in any social interaction would behave

so as to maintain the face the other participants expect them to have. Sometimes, it can even be about the speaker or the hearer's own self-image or the image they aim to create in the eyes of the others. However, the rules of conversation are variable and different societies or groups would adhere to specific rules or customs. Socialisation is a process through which people go all their lives in order to acquire and perfect the customary standardised practices of social behaviour and the concept of *face* is directly linked to this social dimension of the individual. Goffman acknowledges that *face* is culture-bound: "each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire of face-saving practices" (Goffman, 1967: 13). The so-called *face-saving practices* Goffman refers to are usually applied in *face threatening situations*, that is, situations in which either the speaker or the hearer feels that their image is either being attacked by their counterpart or is in danger of not meeting those pre-set expectations and finding themselves on an inferior position.

For example, punctuality can be a topic that leads to *face-threatening situations* in most of the European cultures and the speaker would generally be forced to make use of *face-saving practices*. Nevertheless, there are variations. In a country like Spain, for instance, when the time of a future encounter is established, usually the word "sobre"³ is used in front of the exact time and seldom does a delay become the cause of an argument or discontent. This mentioning would only portray a fragmented kind of truth if it were not to consider that these aspects can also vary depending on the relation or hierarchy between the participants or even on the level of formality that the respective meeting is expected to have. However, even when these things are considered, punctuality is not generally considered a sign of impoliteness, nor would it generate a *face-threatening situation* unless we look at very specific contexts (such as official timetables). But if it were to change the cultural perspective, arriving late in Romania can easily become a source of conflict and discussion. *Face* is threatened because the social obligation of respecting other people's time is not fulfilled. *Face-saving practices*, such as apologising or justifying, are expected and even so, the chances that the *face* stays altered are pretty high.

Brown and Levinson defined *face* as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61) and linked the face-saving practices to politeness strategies. In other words, politeness comprises instances of *face-work*, which means that all the expectations and concerns related to one's face and the face of others are in fact the main justification for the need of politeness. Furthermore, according to their view, *face* can be both positive and negative in the sense that positive face is "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" and negative face is "the want of every component

³ e.g.: "¡Quedamos sobre la una!" - which would mean that we'll meet *around* one o'clock. According to this unspoken convention, the fact that the meeting is expected to start later rather than sooner is implied.

adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 62). When they are confronted with a *face-threatening situation*⁴ interlocutors usually try to save face by recurring to the face-saving practices. It is a matter of choice and immediate decision making to know how to choose the most appropriate practice according to the previous reply, the relation between the participants, the social and the cultural background. According to the authors, there are four types of face which are usually affected by *the face-threatening acts*, in the sense that they run a greater risk of becoming ineffective by not fulfilling their part in the communicative act:

- the speaker's positive face (e.g. apologies, confessions, acceptance of compliments),
- the speaker's negative face (e.g. excuses, expression of thanks, acceptance of offers),
- the addressee's positive face (e.g. criticism, ridicule, disagreement), and
- the addressee's negative face (e.g. orders, requests, advice).

Their theory states that the speaker uses three social factors to evaluate the gravity of the threat before choosing a face-saving practice: power, distance, and ranking. What has been more than often contested about their theory was the claim that these social factors are universal despite the fact that they may undergo variations from one culture to another depending on what culture-specific mechanisms are used when facing these situations.

The Polish linguist Anna Wierzbicka (1985) is one of the critics of Brown and Levinson's theory and has conducted numerous comparative studies to prove her point. The same can be said about Matsumoto (1988), Gu (1990), or Spencer-Oatey (2008). However, despite all criticism, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness provides a useful framework for analysis, and their work remains a valid reference for any study of pragmatics.

⁴ Brown and Levinson name them *face threatening acts* and define them as acts that "run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/ or the speaker" (1987: 70)

1.3 Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

1.3.1 Definitions and Characteristics

George Yule (1996: 4) singles out the discipline of pragmatics as being “the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms”. Yule emphasises that among other linguistic branches, it is only pragmatics which “allows humans into the analysis” (1996: 4). Furthermore, when the author discusses the principle of regularity in language, he refers to a personal example of a situation he experienced while living in Saudi Arabia and trying to communicate in Arabic. In one of his conclusions, he states that “most people within a linguistic community have similar basic experiences of the world and share a lot of non-linguistic knowledge.” (1996: 5).

The concept of linguistic community is as important to the study of language from a pragmatic perspective as context and co-text are to the definition of pragmatics itself. Context and co-text are extremely important to any pragmatic approach because they delineate the parameters of understanding an utterance for something more than the basic meaning of the words or expressions which build up its general meaning. If pragmatics analyses how “more gets communicated than is said” (1996: 4), it means that the process of human communication and human interaction is analysed first and foremost, rather than the syntactic or semantic units which can be identified in a more traditional discourse analysis.

The idea that the “basic experiences of the world” (Yule, 1996) might be differently perceived according to one’s cultural background and thus, differently expressed according to that person’s mother tongue, represents a turning point in pragmatic research. This idea, on the one hand, sets the basis for socio-pragmatics, which in turn evolves towards two new sub-branches: cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics.

A clear differentiation between the two concepts is obviously necessary since they might be easily confused or mistaken for something else. Both cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics started to be considered relevant by the world of linguistic science relatively recently, towards the beginning of the 1990s⁵ and well into the years 2000.

There are several reasons why pragmatic research took this turn. These new perspectives were theorised mainly by linguists who entered the English-speaking world as immigrants from other languages and cultures and became interested in the dynamics that languages developed when confronted with one another. It was the perspective of an outsider to the Anglo community

⁵ It was actually towards the end of the decade of the 1980s when the field of cross-cultural pragmatics became a reality in the study of language and it gained authority through the publication of *Cross-cultural Speech Act Realisation Project*, edited by Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Juliane House, and Gabriele Kasper and first published in 1989. However, it wasn’t until the decade of the 2000s that new research has started to be conducted in this area.

that started to raise awareness of the fact that many pragmatic concepts referring to human communication were mainly features typical of the English language, as they were culturally based in English communication patterns.

Similarly, the linguist Istvan Kecske (2017), a Hungarian by birth, dedicated his study and academic interests to the Chinese language and later established himself as a renowned researcher in New York, USA. He focuses mainly on *intercultural pragmatics* and defines it as a new perspective of study which “focuses on interactions among people from different cultures, speaking different languages (...) It investigates the speech production and comprehension of interlocutors who represent different cultures and languages and use a common language (lingua franca) for communication” (2017: 400). Kecske bases his investigation on the idea that pragmatics research focused so far on the

positive features of communication such as cooperation, context, rapport or politeness while almost completely ignoring the untidy, trial-and-error nature of the process and the importance of the prior and emerging contexts captured in the individual factors such as egocentrism and salience that are as important contributors to the communicative process as cooperation, context and rapport. (2017: 406)

This observation was likely made throughout the study of communicative interactions between speakers of different cultural backgrounds who had different mother tongues, but primarily used the English language as a common linguistic code for communication. He observed thus that it was not the linguistic knowledge which sometimes made the conversation difficult, but the culturally based ways of relating to the world, which became a key component in the use of the lingua franca. Even in situations where communication did not suffer at all, aspects such as cultural misunderstandings or cultural references that were being missed by the other participants in the conversation were often due to their own mother tongue having different ways to react or refer to that particular situation.

Intercultural pragmatics focuses on merging and blending different cultural and social backgrounds in communicative acts that transcend any type of border. “Intercultural pragmatics adopts a socio-cognitive approach (SCA) to pragmatics that takes into account both societal and individual factors, including cooperation and egocentrism that, as claimed here, are not antagonistic phenomena in interaction.” (2017: 406) The linguist considers here that both the positive and the negative aspects, which might make conversations seem unsuccessful at times, are relevant to the discourse analysis. He believes that human interaction is not a process that evolves smoothly towards a profound understanding and delivery of meaning, as if reacting and following a set of clear-cut, almost school-like rules. Communication is seen here as an

extremely complex process which resides in human cognition, but, most importantly, always reacts according to the individual's social, cultural, and educational background.

On the same train of thought, the linguist Anna Wierzbicka refers to the concept of a bilingual speaker. She considers her own status as a Polish-born researcher who has lived and conducted linguistic research in the Australian cultural and linguistic context for more than 30 years. As she reflects on her own personal experiences, both as an Australian family member and as a researcher and professor at an Australian university, her perspective on discourse analysis shifts in response to her real-life observations, ultimately leading to what we now refer to as *cross-cultural pragmatics*. It goes without saying that a singular personal experience can hardly set the basis for a new theoretical approach in the field of language studies and this is why Wierzbicka's research extends over a long period of time and covers a series of other languages apart from the ones that she personally uses (which are Polish and English) such as Russian, German, Japanese, sometimes even French or Spanish. (Wierzbicka, 1997)

In her view, the bilingual should be referred to as a person who more than being able to withstand a conversation in a language different from their mother tongue, is someone who manages to adapt their mind-set to a new language (implying here that the culture being delivered or embodied by that specific language is as important), while keeping an essential part of their world views unaltered, according to the perspectives conveyed in their native culture and tongue.

I was learning new ways of speaking, new patterns of communication, new modes of social interaction. I was learning the Anglo rules of turn-taking ("let me finish!", "I haven't finished!") I was learning not to use the imperative (Do X!) in my daily interaction with people and to replace it with a broad range of interrogative devices (Would you do X? Could you do X? Would you mind doing X? How about doing X? Why don't you do X? Why not do X?, and so on). But these weren't just changes in the patterns of communication. There were also changes in my personality. I was becoming a different person, at least when I was speaking English (1997: 17).

One could infer that what Wierzbicka is trying to say is that engaging in the communicative process in a second language produces profound shifts and changes inside the human mind. If we consider language as being the verbal or written expression of a people's understanding of the surrounding world and that a language carries apart from sheer meaning, a culturally and traditionally based view of the world, one might add that living in a foreign country and emerging into that new culture by speaking the new language daily as a primary means of

interaction between humans, opens up a new conceptual perspective, while at the same time develops new interactional patterns at a communicative level.

When Wierzbicka's book *Cross-cultural pragmatics. The semantics of human interaction* was first published in 1991, her new views upon human interaction and her unique proposals for discourse analysis were if not completely ignored, at least elegantly looked over by the scientific community because it was probably too soon or on a still unfertile ground to question the key pragmatic concepts which had been acclaimed and consistently theorised throughout the second half of the 20th century. The second edition was published in 2003, and in the *Introduction to the second edition* not only does she mention the fact that it took more than ten years for the new perspective to begin to be accepted by her fellow researchers, but also that the speed with which pragmatic research was evolving was something completely unexpected, but of a good omen. Consequently, she admits that the initial rejection of her approach was in fact a trigger point. This key moment made her even more determined to pursue her lifelong observations into scientific research and to compile new data that might support her ideas. In 1997, in an article published in a Londonese scientific compendium, she starts from a personal testimony and easily walks into the scientific approach to make her point valid:

the rules for “friendly” and sociable acceptable interaction in Polish and in English were different. Consequently, I could never believe in the “universal maxims of politeness”, in the universal “logic of conversation”, and the “cooperative principle” promulgated by scholars such as Grice (1975), Leech (1983) or Brown and Levinson (1978). I knew from personal experience, and from two decades of meditating on that experience, that the Polish “maxims of politeness” and the Polish rules of “conversational logic” were different from the Anglo ones. I also knew that the differences between the Anglo “rules”, “maxims” and “principles” (presented in literature as “universal”) and, for example, Polish ones, were not superficial, but reflected differences in deep-seated, subconscious attitudes – attitudes which were fused with the core of a person's personality. Thus, I came to feel that by learning the Anglo ways I could enrich myself immeasurably, but I could also “lose myself” (1997: 20-21)

This new pragmatic approach to the study of language, grounded in a cross-cultural perspective, views human communication as a culturally and socially situated act. In a globalised world, where people travel faster and more easily, the intersections between languages have become more frequent than ever before. One cannot help but wonder how this phenomenon influences or alters human communication altogether. Both intercultural and cross-cultural pragmatics make a good attempt at coming up with scientifically proven answers,

but it is the cross-cultural perspective which offers a wider net of ideas and analyses concerning the processes of language acquisition along with behavioural and linguistic patterns.

Anna Wierzbicka summarises the main ideas which led to the development of this new pragmatic perspective as follows:

In different societies and different communities, people speak differently; these differences in ways of speaking are profound and systematic, they reflect different cultural values, or at least different hierarchies of values; different ways of speaking, different communicative styles, can be explained and made sense of in terms of independently established different cultural values and cultural priorities. (2003: 69)

When analysing discourse from a pragmatic perspective, one must not ignore these key differences because the analysis will become purely theoretical if put aside. To see language in the terms of Noam Chomsky as a highly ambiguous system that follows only its own internal rules and patterns seems outdated today and somehow unrealistic. Human communication is dynamic and unexpected; it can be based on a common desire for cooperation between the speaker and the hearer, while at the same time, it can intentionally (or unintentionally, for that matter) seek confusion, be misleading or even lie. In the latter case, one can even go a step further and analyse situations of lying through intentional omission or worse, conscious manipulation, and the status of using a second language could easily become the perfect excuse to shadow such intentions, standing behind certain messages. It is not a mission of pragmatic research to determine the truthfulness of any given discourse. It is, however, a matter of cross-cultural pragmatics to raise awareness of the presence of such phenomena in language usage and to identify possible culturally and socially based impediments that might aim to explain the outcome of a conversational interaction.

To summarise it better, the following definition delineates the area of study proposed by Anna Wierzbicka: “Cross-cultural pragmatics compares different cultures, based on the investigation of certain aspects of language use, such as speech acts, behaviour patterns and language behaviour” (as cited by Kecske, 2017: 401). Once a language is perceived as a behavioural manifestation, it might be easier to become aware of its flexibility, power of adaptation to different situations and contexts as well as of its abilities to create confusion and uncomfortable, if not unpleasant, interactions.

1.3.2 Speech Acts and Cultural Backgrounds

It is of utmost importance to understand from the very beginning that cross-cultural pragmatics sees language as “a tool of human interaction” (Wierzbicka, 2003: 69). Behaviour patterns shape human interaction because in most situations people react to a message according to a deep-rooted way of responding to external verbal stimuli. Going back to Austin’s definition of speech acts (1955), we should see them as basic units in the conversational scheme which perform a double function: to convey information and to perform an action. In the case of cross-cultural speech acts, linguists Gass and Neu (1996: 1) believe that “speech acts are realized from culture to culture in different ways and that these differences may result in communication difficulties that range from the humorous to the serious.” The speech acts which are usually mentioned and analysed are compliments, apologies, refusals, greetings, complaints or disagreements.

In order to exemplify and to better illustrate the importance of speech acts in any type of communication, be it a simple interaction among children or in a formal academic situation, we would like to refer first to the North American cultural space. The United States is probably one of the most prolific countries in the world when it comes to studying interactions between cultures and languages. Some studies point out that even some of the simplest speech acts, such as greetings, can cause difficulties among the citizens of the same country if they belong to different national and cultural backgrounds.

Our research shows that greetings are complex, involving a wide range of behaviours and sensitivity to many situational and psychological variables. Greetings in American English are made up of a range of linguistic and non-verbal choices which may include a simple wave or smile, a single utterance or a lengthy speech act set which can involve complex interactional rules and take place over a series of conversational turns. This study reveals that non-natives have significant difficulty in performing greetings in a manner that is acceptable to native speakers of American English. (Eisenstein, Ebsworth et al., 1995: 89)

Secondly, another example that highlights the different perspectives offered by a cross-cultural analysis is provided again by Wierzbicka. While wanting to introduce an Australian speaker in a meeting of a Polish organisation, the Polish host introduces their guest with an utterance in English as follows: “*Come please! Sit! Sit!*” The linguist argues in her further analysis that the use of the imperative in this particular context and, especially, in the English language is completely inappropriate, to say the least. In similar situations, the English native

prefers modal structures which have the key role of softening the imperative formulas and at the same time performing a polite request rather than something which might sound more like an order. (e.g. *Will you sit down?*, *Won't you sit down?*, *Would you like to sit down?*, etc.). More importantly, what should be singled out here is that the speaker did not perform an impolite act nor did they mean to be authoritarian; it was simply the Polish direct, upfront way of reacting in that particular context. It goes without saying that a translation into English of the Polish sequence leads to an inadequacy which could only be justified by the different cultural backgrounds and understanding of context and human relations.

The examples provided here illustrate the primary directions of analysis adopted by cross-cultural pragmatics, a rapidly developing linguistic branch. The observations and case studies provided so far by the specialised literature point to the fact that different cultures provide the human language with different linguistic realisations of the speech acts. Translations which focus on finding the exact equivalent in form or even in precise meaning have proven to be inappropriate to context or have even led to misunderstandings. Speech acts tend to be performed in numerous different manners because people's reactions and behaviours are more connected to beliefs, hierarchies, community rules, social, educational or cultural backgrounds.

1.3.3 A Framework for a Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Analysis

The present comparative study, which focuses on the public discourse provided by medical authorities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in three European countries (the U.K., Spain, and Romania), will be conducted from a cross-cultural perspective. Therefore, a specific framework needs to be presented accordingly. Since it is a new field of study, it has been quite a challenge to delineate the principles and methods a researcher should follow when analysing cross-cultural pragmatics. Even if the decade of the 2000s has provided us with some very important studies in this respect which could definitely be used as models and trustworthy reference (e.g. Wierzbicka, Staedler, Gass & Neu, Kecske, Blum – Kulka, Spencer-Oatey or House), there is still a need for more detailed description of the theory and the methodology of this type of analysis.

Thus, towards the end of 2021, Juliane House and Daniel Kádár published their own joint work on cross-cultural pragmatics in which they specifically describe the framework they used in the case studies and the analysis provided in their book. To begin with, one relevant example of this sort refers to a case study in which the two linguists analysed “war crime

apologies realised by representatives of the German and Japanese states following the Second World War" (House and Kádár, 2021: 152). Their analysis focused on one specific speech act (apologies) and they performed both a quantitative and qualitative study where different ways in which apologies were formulated, such as "expressing guilt and shame" or providing "explanation and account" (House and Kádár, 2021: 152) were looked into. Some interesting conclusions have been reached, which prove that the stereotypical or general beliefs about a culture (for example, that Germans master the appropriate way to present apologies or that the Japanese act according to their innate "shame culture") can be misleading and remain without a solid, justifiable base. For example, although apologies are usually provided while referring to an explanation aimed at presenting the motives which lay behind the respective act, in this particular case, explanations were generally avoided since those particular crimes could neither be explained nor justified. Moreover, the researchers observed that "the German apologies frequently involved Head Act Strategies of "expressing guilt and shame" much more than their Japanese counterparts, which flies in the face of the claim that Japanese is a so-called "shame culture" (House and Kádár, 2021: 152). This example clearly illustrates the relevance and importance of the cross-cultural approach for a better understanding of cross-cultural interaction in a deeply connected and cosmopolitan world and the very necessary acknowledgement that cultures are far more complex and diverse than their labelled stereotypes. The connection between how people choose to express themselves, the context they find themselves in, and their own personal cultural and linguistic background proves to be so important that it can no longer be ignored in a language analysis.

Moreover, House and Kádár (2021) presented another case study that looked into IKEA catalogues published in different languages. More precisely, they analysed the use of second-person T and V pronouns and how speakers of those different languages reacted to those usages. "This research was based on the issue that IKEA traditionally prefers using the T pronoun to promote the Swedish convention of egalitarianism" (House and Kádár, 2021: 153). Again, their cross-cultural framework of analysis succeeds in proving that when dealing with people and languages from all parts of the world, one single universal rule does not work as it was initially intended.

Based on their research, the two linguists formulated a set of principles that they consider absolutely necessary in all studies which aim to engage in a cross-cultural approach on human language. Before anything else, they constantly use the cross-cultural pragmatic term of *linguaculture* because it seems the most appropriate way to refer to the ways in which a culture presents itself through language. "We prefer this term over "culture" because it emphasizes the inherently close relationship between language and culture" (House and Kádár,

2021: 156). Then, they enumerate and explain in detail the following cross-cultural pragmatic principles:

1. Bottom-up research
2. Multimethod approach to researching language use
3. Relying on interrelated but distinct units of analysis and finite typologies of these units
4. Variation and/or more than one language
5. Relying on corpora and the Principle of Comparability
6. Using linguistically-based terminology (House and Kádár, 2021: pp. 152-156).

One of the recurrent ideas in this study refers to the danger of generalisations and of pre-conceived perceptions. To do *bottom-up research* is, in their perspective, to approach a language in an almost innocent way; that is, without allowing a generic type of previous knowledge about a certain culture to shadow or dictate certain directions throughout the analysis. The *multi-method approach* is rooted in the traditional contrastive analysis achieved through comparison and parallel looking into things, but the researcher is advised to always test and make sure that the validity of certain preliminary data remains unquestionable and is backed up by further proof. In this sense, they talk about *ancillary research* which “consists of interviews, DCTs, questionnaires and other data eliciting methods” (House and Kádár, 2021: 153).

Simply put, in quantitative research, the cross-cultural pragmatician examines and compares data by looking into the frequency of occurrence of a given pragmatic phenomenon. In qualitative research, the cross-cultural pragmatician engages in a detailed comparative examination of instances of language use in order to gain a deeper understanding of the pragmatic phenomenon under investigation (House and Kádár, 2021: 154).

Further on, they insist on the importance of choosing one specific unit of analysis, not in the sense of disregarding others which could be equally relevant, but because one particular unit acts as a “gateway to the linguaculturally embedded data” (House and Kádár, 2021: 154). Since we deal with data compiled from different linguacultures in cross-cultural pragmatics, it is essential to identify a relevant niche and analyse it with systematic and finite typologies, thus ensuring that the data are comparable in terms of quantity, quality, type, and forms of usage. If concepts and words which seem alike are simply juggled with, the results will not only be irrelevant and fake, but also easily questionable. Cross-cultural pragmatics usually deals with more than one language, although analysis between different dialects, gender or age might also

be relevant. A contrastive analysis of different linguacultures becomes even more challenging when dealing with “typologically distant languages” (House and Kádár, 2021: 154). It will also be the case of the current study, where Romanian and Spanish are more alike due to their Latin roots, whereas English follows a different pattern of Germanic origin. In this sense, the method provided here could be of real help:

the cross-cultural pragmatician can engage in complex contrastive work, e.g. by comparing how a particular pragmatic phenomenon is realized in typologically close and distant linguacultures – a procedure we call “double contrasting” in our book. For example, we contrasted patterns of speech act realization in the closing phase of historical family letters written in English, German, and Chinese, by first contrasting our linguaculturally close English and German data and then comparing the outcomes with what we found in our Chinese data. (House and Kádár, 2021: 155).

As far as the corpora are concerned, their size is not the most important aspect to be considered, but when dealing with different languages, one must make sure that they are more or less of the same length. The Principle of Comparability refers both to the corpora and to the core unit of analysis: “Whenever we use corpora compiled by others, we need to consider whether the generic, temporal, and other features of the corpora are actually comparable. As to the phenomena to be contrastively examined, we need to consider how representative and conventionalized they are in their respective linguacultures.” (House and Kádár, 2021: 155). And ultimately, as any other scientific field, cross-cultural pragmatics needs its own specific terminology even if, in this type of analysis, one mainly deals with the basic pragmatic terminology and principles.

However, what seems to be a dangerous direction to follow is the use of social, cultural or even psychological concepts in order to conduct what remains, after all, a linguistic analysis. This fallacy remains tempting because all of these concepts are strongly interconnected, and they do explain and justify certain phenomena only when seen in connection to one another; however, a cross-cultural pragmatic analysis must be a study of language seen in the most complex linguistic frame known to date.

1.3.4 The Main Cross-Cultural Analytical Terms. Defining the Working Concepts

Cross-cultural analysis is performed using a specific terminology which must be accurately employed so that the validity of the research is ensured. Further on, a series of key

terms will be explained in detail. Since the current study aims at analysing the realisation of speech acts in a specific communicative context, the most extended explanation refers to the structure of the speech acts, as it has been outlined in previous cross-cultural studies.

1. **Linguaculture:** a cross-cultural pragmatic term which refers to “*culture manifested through patterns of language use*” (House and Kádár, 2021: 5). This concept will be used extensively throughout the current study whenever there is a need to refer to the three languages and the implicit cultures they denote. The cross-cultural pragmatic analysis examines the diverse and complex uses of language, paying close attention to aspects such as context, cultural background, ritual frame, politeness, social distance, and hierarchy. To have kept only the term “language” to refer to the object of study would not have seemed quite enough since cross-cultural pragmatics studies the use of language in context, by analysing the choice of words in a given situation, the intention behind this choice and the outcome of the speech act.

2. **Pragmatic competence:** the ability to identify and apply the resources available in a language in order to realise the necessary illocutions, to use the proper sequences of speech acts accordingly and to be aware of the appropriate use according to the context of the linguistic resource proper to that specific language.

3. **Conventionalisation:** Cross-cultural pragmatic analysis is built upon the principles of comparison and contrast between different languages and different cultures. It is impossible, however, to compare and establish relevant contrasts between things which are either at opposite ends or find themselves in a state of constant shifting and fluctuation. One of the most important aspects delineated by Blum-Kulka et.al’s study was that if a linguistic phenomenon were to be analysed from a cross-cultural pragmatic perspective, then it needs, first and foremost, to be sufficiently conventionalised in the respective language (1989:13). Conventionalisation refers mainly to the frequency of use and the level of evaluation that a specific aspect has among the native speakers of the language. In other words, it “describes the degree of recurrence of a particular pragmatic phenomenon in how members of a social group or a broader linguaculture use and evaluate language” (House and Kádár, 2021: 29). The link between conventionalisation and pragmatic competence tends to be a tight one. Studies (Kasper and Rose, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig and Vellenga, 2012) have shown that more often than not, non-native speakers are not aware of the conventionalised pattern of realisation of a specific speech act. What is evident for a native speaker (although they might not be aware of the degree of conventionalisation and recurrence of a particular question and answer sequence), does not come naturally for the non-native either because they still follow a mental translation process

which seeks links to the mother-tongue or because they answer according to an apparent logical association in the target language, but which is simply not customary. Situations like these are referred to as *pragmatic failure* and have mainly been discussed in studies on intercultural pragmatics (e.g. Cenoz and Valencia, 1996). The preference for one expression or choice of words to the detriment of the other is strictly linked to the pragmatic competence one needs to acquire in the target language to be able to engage in a communicative situation successfully and adequately. In addition, the degrees of conventionalisation have been noticed to change over time. Diachronic modifications in the conventionalisation of specific pragmatic units reflect cultural and social changes that shape societies' evolution over time.

4. Ritual Frame Indicating Expressions (RFIEs): these expressions became one of the most important study units (along with speech acts and discourse) in the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis. Simply put, these are “expressions with strong conventionalised pragmatic use” (House and Kádár, 2021: 73) that indicate a reasonable degree of pragmatic competence on the speaker’s behalf. Appropriately using such expressions usually suggests that the speaker is highly aware of their rights, obligations and the conventions used in a particular standard situation.

Cross-cultural pragmatic research on RFIEs can easily focus on one-word expressions such as *please*, *sorry* or *bye* since the use of words of this type usually bears a consistent pragmatic meaning. Moreover, when engaging in contrastive analysis between different linguacultures, it is often noticed that there is a significant variation in the recurrence of the studied expressions. This variation is justified by the relations between these expressions and different pragmatic phenomena like politeness, sarcasm or irony, which are all strongly culturally embedded. RFIEs can be “speech act anchored” (2021:84) because they are expected to appear more frequently in the realisation of particular speech acts. Comparisons between linguacultures have shown that variations are also likely here.

Edmondson et. al (2023) distinguish among the RFIEs an important category of expression called *gambits*. Also referred to as *discourse markers* or *pragmatic markers*, the authors underline that *gambits* “do not forward an interaction towards a potential outcome and are optional elements in an interaction” (2023: 55). Another important feature that defines this category of expression, which was also observed in the current cross-cultural analysis, is that all *gambits* are used as time-gaining linguistic devices.

5. Speech acts: Probably one of the most studied and defined units of analysis in pragmatics, it has been commonly known as an utterance that bears meaning with a communicative intention behind it. Austin (1962) was the first language philosopher who

introduced the concept, saying that whenever one ceased to look at an utterance as a sentence (from an exclusively syntactical point of view) and started to see it rather as a verbal representation of an intention to get something done, then they will be studying it as an act of speech. His theory distinguishes between the *locutionary act*, meaning the words uttered, the *illocutionary act*, which refers to the intention that leads to that particular choice of words and the *perlocutionary act*, which encompasses the effects of the illocutionary force on the hearer or the recipient of the message. In cross-cultural pragmatic analysis, the focus falls both on the *illocutionary act* (the study of the intention and its realisation through different linguistic means chosen according to the culturally embedded context in which the utterance is produced) and the *perlocutionary act* (which makes the object of the ancillary analysis that confirms the appropriateness of the words or sequence used in the conversation). Later on, Searle (1969) took one step further in the study of the speech act typology and drew his categorisation, which continues to be highly cited to this day. According to him, speech acts can be *representatives* (or *assertives*), *directive*s, *commissives*, *expressives* and *declaratives*.

A more recent classification of speech acts developed by Edmondson and House (1981) was consulted for the present study, primarily because it was designed based on large cross-cultural corpora to analyse data concerning real-life interactions. House and Kádár (2021) also make use of this typology and underline its advantages as follows:

it consists of categories of a high degree of generality. (...) they reflect basic human needs, and there is of course significant linguacultural variation in the expression of these needs. This linguacultural variation is exactly what makes the cross-cultural pragmatic research of the realisation of speech acts such a rewarding task (106).

Apart from requests and apologies, which were clearly described in the 1989 CCSARP project, House and Kádár's study (2021) engages in a more detailed and complex overview of speech acts by providing explicit definitions and examples of the coding process while considering the head act and the corresponding core coding categories. Edmondson, House and Kádár's study from 2023⁶ proved extremely helpful in defining each speech act and acknowledging their possible interferences with one another when analysed in large corpora.

Two main categories (Substantive and Ritual), each divided into their own two sub-categories (Attitudinal and Informative for Substantive; Opening and Closing for Ritual), are included in this specific classification, which represents an update brought to the theoretical frame developed in 1989.

⁶ This is an updated version of Edmondson and House's study from 1981, which exploits the same pragmatic analytical frame enriched with the latest findings in the field.

The main differentiation which separates the first two clusters is made by considering whether or not the analysed speech act represents an inherent part of the conventional structure of the interaction. The inherent parts (such as greetings or wish-well) belong to the cluster Ritual and are usually expected to occur in any human interaction, no matter the linguaculture they belong to; if the case, their absence becomes meaning-bearer with a strong contextual base and it intensifies the overall feeling of the interaction or, in particular, the intention of the addresser, which could spring from happiness or trust to lack of respect or violent speech manifested through abrupt beginnings and/ or endings. However, despite being an inherent part of any conversation, cross-cultural analysis revealed significant linguacultural differences in the coding scheme of these speech acts. The cluster Substantive, with its two main sub-categories: Attitudinal and Informative, is not considered an inherent part of the interaction, thus the presence or the absence of a particular speech act fluctuates almost chaotically depending on the speaker's intentions, state of mind, the relation to the listener, as well as any other aspects which contribute to the context of a communicative endeavour.

Their speech act typology can be observed in the figure below, which was adopted from Edmondson and House (1981: 98). The speech acts to be analysed in the corpora have been highlighted in the table. More precisely, the speech acts that fall under the Ritual cluster are not of interest to this study since their presence and function seems somehow obvious given the fact that communication takes place in an official context in which the speakers act as representatives of state institutions. It goes without saying that their interventions would respect the conventional opening and closing procedures.

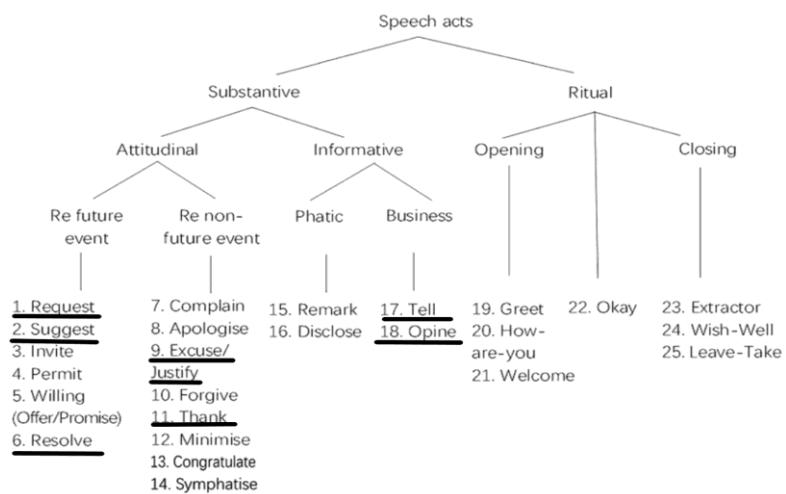


Fig. no.1 – Speech acts typology according to House and Kádár (2021), adapted to the findings of the corpora under study

Two observations must be made here related to how the denomination of the speech acts is being built in this analytical framework. On the one hand, verbal forms are used to name the speech acts: e.g., *Permit*, *Justify* instead of *Permission*, *Justification*. On the other hand, the names of all speech act categories are capitalised.

The dynamics of the occurrence of speech acts in a corpus of texts constitutes one of the primary objectives of pragmatic analysis. The comparison between corpora written in different languages is the objective of cross-cultural pragmatics.

In order to be able to develop a framework applicable to as many linguacultures as possible, all the pragmatically salient data identified in a corpus need to be coded. Thus, House and Kádár (2021) worked on and expanded Blum-Kulka's coding of the speech acts accordingly.

First and foremost, once having identified the speech act the researcher is looking for, one must look for and pin down the **Head Act(s)**. This can be made of one or more utterances which represent the minimal unit of the speech act itself. The level of *directness* of the studied speech act is a key element in determining the correct typology. *Directness* is meant as “the degree to which the speaker's illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution” (House and Kádár, 2021: 119), and since the different levels are entirely exclusive, that is, a Head Act can only be realised with one clear intention behind it, their classification is extremely important for an adequate understanding. The following table explains each of the identified levels and uses the speech act of Request as an example, but this categorisation can be easily applied to all speech acts.

Head act strategy	Definition	Example (s)
1. Mood derivable	The grammatical mood of the locution conventionally determines its illocutionary force as a <i>Request</i> .	- Leave me alone - Clean up the kitchen
2. Explicit performative	The illocutionary intent is explicitly named by the speaker by using a relevant illocutionary verb.	- I am <i>asking</i> you to move your car
3. Hedged performative	The illocutionary verb denoting the requestive intent is modified, e.g., by modal verbs or verbs expressing intention.	- I <i>must/have to ask</i> you to clean the kitchen right now.
4. Locution derivable	The illocutionary intent is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution.	- Madam you'll have to/should/must/ought to move your car.
5. Want statement	The utterance expresses the speaker's desire that the event denoted in the proposition come about.	- I'd <i>like</i> to borrow your notes for a little while.
6. Suggestory formula	The illocutionary intent is phrased as a suggestion by means of a framing routine formula.	- <i>How about</i> cleaning up the kitchen.
7. Preparatory	The utterance contains preparatory condition for the feasibility of the <i>Request</i> , typically one of ability, willingness, or possibility, as conventionalized in the given language. Very often, the speaker questions rather than states the presence of the chosen preparatory condition.	- <i>Can I</i> borrow your notes? - <i>Could</i> you possibly get your assignment done this week? - I was wondering if you <i>would</i> give me a lift.
8. Strong hint	The illocutionary intent is not immediately derivable from the locution; however, the locution refers to relevant elements of the intended illocutionary and/or propositional act.	- Will you be going home now? (Intent: getting a lift home).
9. Mild hint	The locution contains no elements which are of immediate relevance to the intended illocution or proposition, thus putting increased demand for context analysis and knowledge activation on the interlocutor.	- You have been busy here, haven't you?

Table no. 2 - Request Head Acts. Levels of Directness as cited by

Blum-Kulka et.al, (1989: 278 – 280)

According to Blum-Kulka's typology, these nine levels of directness can be grouped into three main categories of speech act realisations: *direct* (mood derivable, explicit performative and hedged performative), *indirect* (locution derivable, want statement, routine formulae and preparatory) and finally, *non-conventionally indirect* (strong hint and mild hint).

The other parts which compose the speech act, but are not essential for its realisation, are called **Core Code Categories** (House and Kádár, 2021: 114), and their presence or absence usually reveals important realisation patterns which can be proper to a specific linguaculture while inappropriate to another. Appendix no.1 provides a complete outline of these categories, as they have been explained by House and Kádár (2021), along with corresponding examples from the three corpora analysed in the present study. However, specific definitions and more detailed explanations of some of the most frequently encountered categories are necessary:

- **Alerter:** it is a category which typically precedes the Head Act, and its main function is to warn the hearer about the upcoming Head Act. Some of the most common alerters are identified as *title/ role* (doctor, professor, your honour), *surname, first name, nickname, endearment term* (darling, love), *offensive term, pronoun or attention getter* (hey, stop, listen).
- **Supportive Moves:** these can be either **mitigating** or **aggravating**, thus modifying the force of the speech act according to the speaker's intention, level of directness and verbal aggressivity. Also, depending on their place of occurrence, they can be **pre-posed** (if they occur before the Head Act) or **post-posed** (if they occur after the Head Act). Without claiming universality and being highly aware of the dangers of such a claim, studies have shown that these categories are present in a considerable number of linguacultures, especially among European ones. Some of the most common **Mitigating Supportive Moves** are: **grounder** (an utterance through which the speaker gives explanations, justifications and provides reasons for their intention), **expander** (the speaker flouts the Gricean Maxim of Quantity (Grice, 1975) by offering more information than necessary in an intent to hide fear and insecurity), **disarmer** (the speaker tries to prevent and discourage any potential rejection that the hearer might have), **imposition minimiser** (an attempt to minimise the force of the speech act's imposition upon the addressee) or **query precondition** (an attempt to throw doubt on the gravity of the situation). Conversely, among the typical **Aggravating Supporting Moves** are **threat, insult** or **moralising**.
- **Downgraders:** they modify the Head Act internally, “*by mitigating the impositive force of the speech act by means of syntactic choices* (**syntactic downgraders**: subjunctive,

conditional, aspect, tense, conditional clause) or lexical and phrasal choices (lexical and phrasal downgraders: understate, hedge, subjectiviser, downtoner)” (House and Kádár, 2021: 121,123)

- **Upgraders:** they also modify the Head Act internally but with the purpose of amplifying the pragmatic force of the speech act. As such, some examples would be: **intensifiers, commitment indicators, expletives, time intensifiers, or emotional expressions.**

Belonging to the cluster Substantive, the sub-category Attitudinal, are **Request, Suggest, Resolve, Excuse/ Justify, Thank** and **Sympathise**; the other two important categories also belong to the cluster Substantive, but the sub-category is Informative: **Tell** and **Opine**.

Request is a speech act in which the speaker addresses the listener to convince the latter to perform or to act in the interest of the former. It is a pre-event speech act used for asking the hearer to do or not to do something. This is a *face-threatening* act, according to Brown and Levinson (1978), in the sense that the speaker’s interests are imposed upon the hearer. In different languages, requests present a wide variety of strategies and modifiers necessary to either mitigate or aggravate their impositive effects. They are complex speech acts which involve a series of different elements combined. The Requests observed in this study’s corpora refer to verbal goods and services (“Do not leave your homes!”), whereas in many interactions they might include non-verbal goods as well (“Go home now!”). An important pattern in the realisation of this speech act is made of the following sequence: *Request-to-do-X* and *Request-not-to-do-X*. For example, the speaker may ask the listener to lift a series of restrictions, and the latter may refuse to accept it and stick to the initial regulations.

Suggest can be seen as a milder form of Request. Edmonson et. al (2023) acknowledge the fact that between the two speech acts, there might only be a fine line of distinction in the sense that lexical items could be used the other way round to construct the least expected speech act.⁷ Nevertheless, if Request is considered as an illocution performed in the interests of the speaker, in the case of Suggest, “the speaker communicates that he is in favour of the hearer’s performing a future action as in the hearer’s own interests” (2023: 126). Another important aspect to consider when analysing Suggest is the choice of the singular (‘you’) or the inclusive plural form (‘us’):

⁷ For example, ‘beg’ is used to perform Suggest (See a doctor, I beg you!) whereas ‘suggest’ is used to perform Request (I suggest this restriction be implemented immediately). Such confusing inferring situations have been encountered through the corpora in the case of other speech acts as well, mainly when discussing Tell and Opine.

If a speaker communicates that he is in favour of hearer's participating in a future joint activity, he is necessarily implying that he himself is willing to participate in this joint activity also. There is a distinction here then between a Suggest-for-you and a Suggest-for-us, though the same forms of linguistic expression may commonly be used for these two sub-categories of the Suggest (2023: 127).

Resolve is a speech act that refers mostly to the speaker's intentions and future actions. It occurs as a response to either Request or Suggest, whether in the form of Resolve-to-do-something or Resolve-not-to-do-something. The latter might imply a certain level of aggressiveness, especially in formal hierarchical contexts and can be mitigated by explanations or justifications, if so intended.

Excuse/ Justify bears a name that describes its blended meaning. Edmondson et. al (2023) admit that although there are clear differentiations between the meaning of the terms 'excuse' and 'justification', it proves very difficult to distinguish between the two speech acts when dealing with a pragmatic analysis of discourse, and that is why the name comprises the two facets.

If we seek to distinguish between an 'excuse' and a 'justification' in common-sense terms, we might say that, in the first case, a speaker admits that what he did was undesirable but suggests that there are or were mitigating circumstances which lessen the blame attached to himself (...). With a justification, however, the speaker seeks to persuade that what he did was 'justified', such that no blame attaches to himself for having done it. (...). In putting forward 'excuses', a speaker takes account of the hearer's beliefs but seeks to mitigate his guilt; in justifying his behaviour, however, a speaker explicitly denies that an offence has occurred (2023: 152-153).

The occurrence of this speech act bears significant relevance to the overall meaning while at the same time providing substantial input related to the intentions and certain attitudes of the speakers.

Thank shares some general similarities with Apologise in the sense that it also supports the addressee, and it is mainly realised through expressions with a strong ritual feature. Its mitigating character is also important to mention since at times, Thank can be used to acknowledge the positive outcome of a rather unpleasant or even difficult-to-grasp situation. Thank also recognises the merits of the addressee and their participation in the overall context, which might also ease a difficult conversation.

Sympathise is a speech act that requires a specific context, and that is why it is not very frequently encountered. However, the COVID-19 pandemic does seem to provide the proper

context for this speech act to be used when discussing fatalities. On the one hand, for this act to be performed within mutual acceptance, a certain degree of intimacy must exist between the speaker and the hearer, which was definitely not the case with the corpora chosen for this study. On the other hand, these are situations in which extended communication might turn into an offence rather than mitigate the strength of the speech act, and that is why there are seldom supportive moves following the Head Act.

Tell is probably the speech act with the most informative character since its main objective is to make information known. However, since the distinction between facts and opinions can be a somewhat subjective one, it might become truly challenging at times to differentiate Tell from Opine. “The assumption behind a Tell is that the content of the speech act – the ‘fact’ communicated – is of interest and relevance to the addressee, and Tells are therefore often made as a response to the addressee’s explicit or implicit, real or assumed, desire to know the fact” (House and Kádár, 2021: 111). As such, Tell can appear at times as a response to Request or vice-versa, a Tell can lead to a Request from the addressee to the first speaker.

Opine is a speech act whose meaning and illocutionary force mingle with those of Tell. The two speech acts tend to share the same interactional structures to the point at which their differentiation might become quite challenging for the researcher. There are, however, aspects which can have more generic features:

Opines (...) are common coins in the process of interactional negotiation. Opines are voiced in the hope of reaching agreement, that is an Opine is successfully realised when the addressee holds the same opinion. When initially agreement is not present – the interactants express different Opines – negotiation commences (House and Kádár, 2021: 112).

As far as the speech acts’ sequencing goes, Opine can also serve as an answer to a Request or Apologise, especially in the absence of clear-cut Tells and also with a mitigating intention on the speaker’s behalf.

From all the speech acts presented above, the current study’s corpus-based analysis will start with an in-depth analysis of Tell and Opine. These speech acts were chosen to initiate the study for multiple reasons: the quest for facts in highly opinionated messages became a significant issue of comprehension throughout the pandemic, particularly in the era of digital communication; moreover, the semantic core of these speech acts coincides almost perfectly with the two main characteristics of the press release as a genre: to inform and to persuade.

1.4 Conclusions

A pragmatic analysis of discourse can only be conducted if the theories, principles, and terminology are thoroughly studied and understood. This chapter is an absolute necessity for this study since it sets the theoretical ground and describes the framework intended to be consulted and followed during the research. It involved work and consultation from various sources in order to compile the most representative references, quotes, ideas and methodologies necessary for the elaboration of the chapters in which the current research will be outlined.

The introduction and the first subchapter presented the most important theoreticians in the field of pragmatics, their theories and terminology, in an attempt to underline the most significant developments in the study of language from this perspective. In the field of linguistics, alongside the other main branches of study such as phonetics, morphology, syntax and semantics, the field of pragmatics made room for a different kind of approach to the study of human language, an approach which from the very beginning accepted the connectivity with other branches of study such as philosophy, psychology or sociology. In a nutshell, pragmatics places a strong emphasis on the fact that, due to its immeasurable complexity, human language and its production cannot be reduced to a single type of approach or analysis. To achieve this, it aimed to create universal principles and methodologies that would enhance a more diverse and complex type of analysis. Moreover, even when the principle of universality of pragmatic concepts proved to be far from exact, the branch adapted itself and found new means of study. Thus, in the current age of communication that transcends the boundaries of space and time, when human communication itself undergoes significant modifications and alterations, cross-cultural pragmatics proposes a methodology of study that aims to observe and compare multiple languages to provide a deeper understanding of human language and behaviour.

The final part of the present chapter presents an overview of the most important pragmatic terminology which will be employed in the following analysis. Since the object of the current study is to identify and study *the speech acts* employed in the press releases delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic in three European linguacultures, it was of utmost importance to establish the theoretical framework of this analysis, to clarify the specific terminology and outline the different categories which will be compared and thoroughly looked into. The linguistic means through which the speech acts are achieved in various contexts and different linguacultures have proven to be a fruitful starting point for our research.

To conclude, the cross-cultural pragmatic framework of analysis provides a valuable tool for research that aims to study public healthcare discourse during one of the most critical moments in contemporary history – the COVID-19 pandemic – across three European linguacultures.

Chapter 2: Research Design and Corpus Compilation

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter delineated the theoretical framework of the present research paper. After having presented the basic concepts of the pragmatic theory of language, the main characteristics of cross-cultural pragmatics were defined and outlined.

The current research paper's main objective is to examine how different speech acts influenced crisis communication in press releases issued during the most critical moments of the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, this thesis comprises mixed-methods analyses of the most relevant speech acts selected for a trilingual corpus, which consists of press releases from the U.K., Spain, and Romania. Consequently, a significant amount of space was dedicated in the previous chapter to the definition of speech acts, highlighting the ones identified in the corpus and selected for a more in-depth analysis.

The theoretical framework comprises three cross-cultural studies. Their development should be examined in chronological order, as they are interdependent, with the newer ones building upon the latter by introducing fresh perspectives, analysis techniques, and interpretations. As such, the first of the three studies was published in 1989 by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper and focused on analysing two speech acts: Requests and Apologies. Later on, House continued on the same path and, alongside Kádár, published a study in 2021 in which they undertook a more complex cross-cultural analysis, including ritual frames indicating expressions, speech acts, and discourse analysis. Most recently, in 2023, House and Kádár, under the coordination of Edmondson, published an even more in-depth analysis of expression, speech acts and discourse from a cross-cultural perspective.

The present chapter also focuses on describing the corpus, which will later be submitted to the mixed-method analysis, and on establishing the main steps of the research. The first subchapters, however, are dedicated to reviewing the literature and identifying the research gap, outlining the characteristics of crisis communication within the COVID-19 global context, and describing the genre of the press release. Finally, this chapter ends with a presentation of the speakers whose messages compose the press releases selected for the corpora.

2.2 Review of Literature and Research Gap

Until recently, studies analysing different speech acts focused on the differences between native and non-native speakers of English. Thus, the pragmatic analysis was conducted from the perspective of language acquisition, either the mother tongue – in studies on very young children such as the one developed by López Montero (2017) in which the author records the evolution of speech competencies in a two-year-old girl, mainly how the structure of the speech act of Request becomes more complex and pragmatically salient – or the second language.

Balci (2009) conducted a comparative study in which she examined the production of requests and apologies expressed by Turkish and American teenagers, discussing the different head act strategies employed by native and non-native speakers. This study reinforces the fact that these two speech acts are culture-bound. Another study that reaches a similar conclusion regarding the choice of verbal expression based on cultural background is Eisenstein & Bodman's (1993), which investigated the speech act of gratitude performed by native and non-native speakers of American English from various linguistic backgrounds. Although the present study focuses on a different approach, mainly analysing the cross-cultural comparison between the realisations of speech acts by native speakers of three different languages, the intercultural approach brought numerous findings and established a clear framework and methodology, which proved to be helpful and applicable tools.

To begin with, the study conducted in 1989 by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper is probably among the first complex endeavours to observe the structure, usage, and frequency of requests and apologies produced by native and non-native speakers belonging to different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Requests, along with Apologies, are among the most studied speech acts in corpus-based pragmatic studies. Both speech acts have face-threatening features (Brown and Levinson, 1987), are culturally embedded and represent an essential pragmatic concept. They are also studied due to the significant variation in form and structure that requests exhibit in language, as well as their constant and recurrent presence in conversations. The findings of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) were published in a volume that continues to be highly cited and frequently applied in studies dealing with pragmatics, language acquisition, and even teaching. The authors describe their main goals as follows:

The general goal of the CCSARP investigation is to establish patterns of request and apology realisations under different social constraints, across a number of languages and cultures, including both native and non-native varieties... The goals of the project

are to investigate the similarities and differences in the realisation patterns of given speech acts across different languages, relative to the same social constraints (cross-cultural variation). (Blum-Kulka et. al, 1989: 12-13).

The languages that were analysed in this project were British, American and Australian English, Canadian French, Danish, German and Hebrew. This linguistic diversity presented a challenge to the authors, who sought to identify and develop a framework applicable in all circumstances. As far as the study's methodology is concerned, researchers employed a set of Discourse Completion Tests (still used in studies with similar objectives) in which participants were given incomplete dialogues to complete with their responses. The participants were challenged to produce the speech act that the dialogue was aiming at. The second step of the analysis consisted of an ancillary type of research, meaning that native speakers of that specific language assessed the answers collected from the Discourse Completion Tests in terms of appropriateness.

Juliane House, one of the authors of the CCSARP, published an extended manual of cross-cultural pragmatics in collaboration with Daniel Kádár, restating the “need in the field for a replicable cross-cultural pragmatic framework” (2021: 26). They also acknowledge the relevance of the 1989 project. Still, they decide to approach a different direction of analysis, intertwining the native versus non-native perspective with the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of different linguacultures.

I have argued that while the CCSARP Project has been widely criticised, it remains a milestone in the field. This is why many of the categories used in the CCSARP Project can and should be kept on the research agenda (...). My framework adopts many of the analytic categories and components of the CCSARP Project, specifically in the systematic analysis of speech acts, as they enable the conduct of cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of any data type. (House & Kádár, 2021: 24 – 26).

Their book functions as an updated cross-cultural pragmatics manual in the sense that it provides a diachronic overview of the field's evolution, including definitions and conceptualisations. Furthermore, it proceeds with a detailed and extended presentation of the framework and its operational concepts. The authors apply the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis by examining three main classes of pragmatic units: expressions, speech acts and discourse. The last part is dedicated to four case studies in which the framework was applied in different contexts and from surprising perspectives.

The first of them is a case study of learners of English and Chinese, where the ritual frame indicating expressions (RFIEs), *please* and *sorry*, were analysed in terms of appropriacy

according to the socio-cultural background. This study illustrates the application of cross-cultural research on expressions in applied linguistics, highlighting its relevance to intercultural pragmatics and translation.

Secondly, there is another study that focuses on ritual frame indicating expressions, namely the use of the T/V pronouns in IKEA catalogues from various linguacultures, aiming here at an analysis that brings forward “the language of globalised business” (House and Kádár, 2021: 177). By applying the same framework for collecting the data and then performing both contrastive and ancillary research, the study reaches insightful conclusions regarding language use in the chosen linguacultures.

Next, the study that closes the book deals with contrastive discourse analysis of war crime apologies issued over a long period (from 1957 to 2015) by Japanese and German officials following the war crimes committed during the Second World War. The researchers reach the conclusion that “there is significant linguacultural variation in the linguistic realisations of this speech act” (2021: 219) and conduct an analysis which strictly follows the established framework by contrasting the Head Act Strategies of the speech act Apologise, and thus obtaining reliable data to support their conclusions. In doing so, they also emit an important warning concerning pre-existing temptations of generalisations and generic presuppositions which could be applied to any kind of cross-cultural pragmatic analysis:

(...) in the cross-cultural pragmatic research of political language use, one needs to avoid relying on pre-assumptions and rather one needs to reach a conclusion on the basis of the analysis of pragmatic realisation patterns in the data under investigation (2021: 218-219).

Finally, the case study on speech acts served as a model for the present study, in that the framework of analysis was applied accordingly. House and Kádár studied historical letter Closings in three different linguacultures: Chinese, German and British English. The letter Closings were divided into different speech act categories, which were compared between linguacultures to establish both similarities and differences among the three culturally embedded patterns. Once the contrastive analysis had been performed, the final discussions of the study looked into the formality of Closings and the performative or non-performative realisations of Leave-Take. According to House and Kádár’s typology of speech acts, Closing consists of three interrelated speech act categories: Extracting, Wish-Well and Leave-Take. Depending on specific cultural rituals, habits related to formality and informality, or different forms of politeness applied according to similar contexts, the choice of using all of the speech act categories or only some of them, whether in a specific order or apparently at random, reveals

specificities of the communicative situations which can only be analysed through pragmatic analysis.

The literature reviewed so far in this subchapter aims to outline the most relevant studies and books on cross-cultural pragmatics. The importance of this endeavour is unquestionable since this is the linguistic branch according to whose principles the current research is conducted. However, it was also necessary to consult articles and studies performed over the years. The COVID-19 pandemic provided a highly appropriate context for studying public healthcare communication in comparative analyses between languages and cultures, as the virus triggered a global sanitary crisis in nearly all countries worldwide. Consequently, a series of articles and publications were consulted on the matter. In order to find publications that dealt with topics as similar as possible to the objective of this research paper, the following keywords, and various combinations among these, were inserted in search engines such as Academia or Research Gate: *crisis communication, the language of COVID-19, speech acts, press conferences, press releases, public healthcare communication, political leaders, medical representatives*.

He, S. et al. (2023) researched 195 transcripts of WHO COVID-19 press conferences held between January 2020 and February 2022 to investigate this international institution's ways of communicating COVID-19-related information. The authors of the study identified eleven "hot" topics, including anti-pandemic measures, disease surveillance, and various issues related to vaccines. These were found by employing syntactic parsing to extract frequent noun phrases. Their interest also shifted towards sentiment and emotion analysis, which was performed by using lexicon-based methods. The results of this study indicated that the WHO managed to maintain a neutral average tone throughout its crisis communication, with a significant decline over time in surprise, anger, disgust, and fear, as compared to the initial weeks of the pandemic outbreak when these emotions appeared more strongly. At the same time, the levels of joy, trust and sadness remained consistent throughout. This study represents a valid example of research on public communication related to healthcare and the COVID-19 pandemic, aimed at determining trends and recurring patterns in the language of emotions and their shifts in response to the seriousness of the topics being addressed.

Moreover, Mandl & Reis (2022) published a study that focused on the language of crisis in terms of spatiotemporal effects on healthcare communication caused by the evolution of the pandemic. The study analysed more than 1500 speeches delivered in the early months of the pandemic by all 50 U.S. state governors to observe the ways in which crisis communication presented variations due to either the space or the time at which COVID-19 cases arose. The speeches were analysed both grammatically and semantically in order to establish correlations

between their characteristics and the COVID-19 case trajectory. The findings of this study highlighted some interesting tendencies related to the speakers' ability to adapt their language according to the communicative intentions therein. For example, it was observed that as case rates rose, governors used stricter, more directive language for guidance; they increased the use of negative verb phrases to justify measures and express uncertainty, while using superlative and more vivid adjectives to emphasise severity. During periods of heightened stress, simple syntax and vocabulary were used for clarity and speed. The researchers highlighted in their analysis that U. S. public leaders adjusted their language dynamically, signalling urgency and authority to manage the crisis and influence public behaviour.

Another study that analysed healthcare crisis communication at a national level was the one published by Alghamdi & Alhamdan (2024). Unlike the previously mentioned article, where the corpus was formed from speeches produced by 50 different speakers, there is only one author in this case, who conducted the samples of crisis communication submitted to analysis: Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health. The objective of the study was to explore the messages delivered during the pandemic and observe how the speaker managed to resonate with the public while at the same time asserting authority. In order to achieve this, 72 video broadcasts via the Saudi Ministry of Health's YouTube channel delivered during the first half of 2020 were analysed. This is a sociolinguistic study that was developed in two analytical directions: rhetoric and linguistics. Among their conclusions, the researchers highlighted the fact that religious references were significantly integrated throughout the discourse, using Islamic teachings to legitimise public health behaviours. Furthermore, collective identity and unity in action were fostered by the strategic use of second-person and first-person plural pronouns and imperatives. Metaphors also compose a resounding part of the ministry's speeches, the most frequent being those referring to war, where fighting the virus becomes an act of national defence, alongside journey or space metaphors. The study of crisis communication delivered by a sole speaker reveals a context-specific mix of scientific reference, cultural and religious metaphors, and authoritative guidance, which proved highly effective in a society less open to debate and contradictions than European ones.

Furthermore, Ngai et al. (2020) published an article in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research* that analysed crisis communication on social media. This marked a turning point in the studies outlined so far, since the authors examined the online version of public healthcare communication. There is one significant similarity to the analysis performed on the Saudi Arabia Ministry of Health's interventions in the sense that this article focused exclusively on the messages delivered by China's leading state-run newspaper, *People's Daily*, published on their largest social media platform, *Sina Weibo*, between January and March 2020. The study

conducted a content analysis of 608 Weibo posts to research three key aspects: content frames (where they identified six subcategories: action, disease prevention, uncertainty, new evidence, reassurance and healthcare services), message style (where they analysed narrative versus non-narrative messages), and interactive features (such as external links, hashtags, questions or multimedia). The primary objective was to measure public engagement, as manifested through shares, comments, and likes. Their findings revealed tendencies that shaped a coherent image of the public's receptivity and the message formats that had the most substantial impacts. Consequently, the study concludes that the non-narrative style was predominant in most posts and that this style, combined with content referring to new evidence, drove fewer shares than expected. However, disease prevention content delivered in a narrative style resulted in significantly more shares, comments, and likes. Additionally, if the posts included links to external sources and multimedia material, the number of shares increased considerably. To conclude, the article by Ngai et al. shifts the focus from live to online crisis healthcare communication, significantly contributing to our understanding of the public's preferences regarding message style and interactive features. These elements are adapted to the content to elicit the desired response from the receiver.

The focus on social media crisis communication became predominant as the pandemic evolved, and researchers were interested in various aspects related to this matter. Catalán – Matamoros, Prieto – Sánchez and Langbecker (2023) wrote an article that also analysed crisis communication during the COVID-19 pandemic and caught my interest, particularly because of the extended combination of European languages they analysed: English, French, Portuguese, and Spanish. 3.75 million tweets were analysed with a focus on the AstraZeneca vaccine and the emergence of the Omicron variant. In order to develop their findings and draw a set of final conclusions, the researchers identified characteristics for each language, while at the same time considering similarities and differences in the linguistic approaches of the same COVID-19-related content. Consequently, some of the conclusions of the study observed that English and French tweets often centred on language referring to death; the Portuguese was the only community that mentioned a political figure directly; French and Portuguese communities expressed a clear negative sentiment predominance, the English discourse leaned towards a more positive or neutral tone, while the Spanish discourse succeeded in remaining balanced overall. This article served as an example of good practice for the use of multi-lingual corpora in order to make comparisons across linguistic and cultural features of different countries and communities.

In addition, it was necessary to research publications that engaged in comparative studies between series of languages, including Romanian, and addressed aspects related to crisis

communication or pragmatics. The articles published by Neagu, M. (2022) offer a comparative perspective on the use of metaphor in pandemic public communication between samples written in Romanian and British English. For example, when analysing the press statements made by Romanian President Klaus Iohannis and the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the author focused on how metaphors were used to make sense of the crisis and achieve public obedience. The study centres around the “war and enemy” metaphors, which appeared predominant mainly during the pandemic’s early peak. The conclusions illustrated that both leaders depicted the virus as an external enemy and used this war-based framing to underline urgency and foster collective mobilisation. However, evidence suggested that these metaphors did not have a strong influence on public compliance.

Research Gap. The articles reviewed so far presented different instances of analysis focusing on healthcare crisis communication and its impact on public behaviour. Peng & Hu (2022) conducted “A bibliometric analysis of linguistic research on COVID-19”, in which they aimed to map the linguistic research performed up to that date to identify trends and themes that were followed and developed in relation to the COVID-19 crisis communication. Their research revealed a notable underrepresentation of several linguistic theories and approaches: Conceptual Metaphor Theory (very little was researched beyond the widespread ‘war’ metaphor), Critical Discourse Analysis, Pragmatics (very few studies on speech acts, politeness or face-work), and Corpus-based Discourse Analysis. The authors emphasise the research gap that the scientific community has yet to address and insist on the importance of bridging this gap for a more comprehensive understanding of pandemic communication. The present research paper engages in addressing this situation by performing a cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of speech acts identified in press releases issued in three European countries and their respective national languages during the COVID-19 sanitary crisis. This analysis aims to observe and analyse the structure of these speech acts, their linguistic specificities, and their frequency in use in order to delineate a general overview of the speech act use in accordance with the speaker’s intention to guide and influence public health behaviour.

Similar conclusions are drawn by the editors of a special issue on *Corpus Linguistics and the Language of COVID-19*, Oakey & Benet (2024). In an introductory article to the collection of studies gathered by this publication, the editors advocate for bridging traditional corpus linguistics with applied, real-world research on language use, claiming that this pandemic is a valid opportunity for applied corpus linguistics to enlarge its relevance beyond academic inquiry:

(...) the papers in this Special Issue of Applied Corpus Linguistics will be of interest to applied corpus linguists due to the variety of perspectives they present in relation to a number of key issues of importance to the field: the data they draw on, the various theoretical frameworks which inform the research, the methods they use to collect and analyse the data, and the discussion of how their findings may be applicable to citizens, decision makers, consumers and other stakeholders in public and private contexts. (2024: 1)

Further on, they insist on the importance of collaborative and interdisciplinary work to address real-life issues related to crisis communication, public understanding and even policy impact.

The present research thesis studies the performance of speech acts in press releases issued during the years of the COVID-19 pandemic by medical and governmental representatives from the U.K., Spain and Romania. The purpose of the study is to identify the most frequently used speech acts in this context and to underline their linguistic specificities and pragmatic intentions, which shape public healthcare communication. Although studies have been made before on speech acts in each of the three languages, many in a comparative approach between English and Spanish (Bou-Franch & Lorenzo-Dus, 2008; Márquez Reiter, Rainey & Fulcher 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2003), the research gap that the current study attempts to fill refers to the comparison between the three languages in the same study. Moreover, most of the consulted studies focused on specific speech acts, such as Request (the ones mentioned above) or Apology (see Săftoiu, 2023 and Demeter, 2006, regarding Apology in Romanian). In contrast, the present analysis is interested in identifying the speech acts used in public health communication during the COVID-19 pandemic and then performing a pragmatic and linguistic analysis of the findings, while also underlining their relevance in terms of meaning and frequency of occurrence.

2.3 Crisis Communication

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented global medical crisis that affected the entire world. In dealing with this situation, public communication was a key factor in determining whether the crisis outcome would be successful or fail at different national levels. What is typical of any society that faces such situations is that leading figures emerge and take on the responsibility.

In this particular situation, apart from the political leaders who usually issue and enforce new regulations to maintain control, medical practitioners came forward with public press releases and declarations. The need to understand the causes and the effects of the newly developed disease became an essential part of the persuasive discourse through which officials from various fields (e.g. medical, technical, political, transportation, educational or economic) were trying to impose restrictions and measures to flatten the curve of the number of cases (Gallagher, 2020). The importance of maintaining highly effective public communication throughout the entire process of crisis management is unquestionable.

There are at least two important aspects to consider when examining the characteristics of this pandemic. On the one hand, all countries were confronted with the same invisible threat (Gallagher, 2020), but they had different means to face it, depending on their socioeconomic situation, medical infrastructure, and the rate of virus spread among their populations.

A crisis is defined as a threat to an entity's well-being that allows for little time to respond as the entity under attack faces the lack of appropriate resources specific to the situation at hand (Kramer & Tyler, 1995 as cited by Watkins and Walter, 2020: 54).

Therefore, time was a critical aspect in this crisis as well, since the more time passed without an appropriate intervention, the more people would end up infected or dead. However, the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world in 2020, coinciding with the high-speed technological era, which theoretically allowed information to be shared in real time and enabled countries to apply similar restrictions and take appropriate measures almost simultaneously. There were differences, nevertheless, and there were time overlaps.

The **hypothesis**, which stands at the basis of the present study, refers to the fact that even if crisis communication could be standardised to follow one singular universal pattern easily applicable by all countries and their governments, **crisis communication remains culture-bound and culture-specific, even if it deals with the same type of crisis, which requires the same types of measures.**

Cross-cultural pragmatics is the linguistic discipline that provides the most adequate analytical framework, allowing the researcher to perform a comparative study between three

linguacultures (in the case of the current study, British English, Spanish, and Romanian) to support the hypothesis mentioned above. **The present analysis's primary focus** is to observe and compare how speech acts are framed throughout the press releases, as well as their structure, repetitions, omissions, and overlaps. The speech act typology belongs to House and Kádár (2021), who based their theory on the 1989 Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP), where House was also a contributor.

2.2.1 Healthcare Communication Becomes Public Communication

A press release is a formal, often concise document issued by a government, institution, or organisation to provide factual, timely, and structured information to the media. In the context of public communication, the press release functions as a primary vehicle for distributing authoritative messages intended for broad public dissemination. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this connection became especially prominent.

The COVID-19 pandemic altered everyday life and radically reshaped how information was communicated globally. Public communication, typically characterised by its accessibility and focus on general-interest topics, underwent a significant transformation, increasingly adopting the tone, terminology, and intent of healthcare communication. This shift reflected the urgency of the crisis and the need for precise, authoritative messaging. During this period, public communication underwent a profound transformation, evolving into a specialised form of healthcare communication aimed at managing a global health crisis. This shift was driven by the urgent need to inform, educate, and guide populations amidst unprecedented uncertainty, misinformation, and rapidly changing scientific knowledge.

In the UK, the government's public communication during the early phase of the pandemic quickly adopted a medicalised, imperative tone. The slogan "Stay Home, Protect the NHS, Save Lives" became a central message disseminated via TV, radio, online platforms, and signage in public places. Daily press briefings featured not just politicians but also chief medical officers like Professor Chris Whitty, who explained epidemiological trends and medical risks to the public in clear, scientific terms.

In Spain, Dr. Fernando Simón, director of the Centre for Coordination of Health Alerts and Emergencies, became the face of Spain's COVID-19 response. His daily briefings—initially broadcast live—were a major channel for public health messaging.

In Romania, Dr. Raed Arafat, head of the Department for Emergency Situations (DSU), became the primary medical voice during the pandemic. His role transcended traditional

emergency response, effectively making him the chief medical communicator to the public. Arafat's briefings included medical data, but also government justifications for lockdowns and curfews. These briefings were hybrid forms of communication—political decisions framed through medical necessity.

In each of these countries, public communication underwent a profound transformation during COVID-19. What had once been the domain of politicians and general-interest media became a space where medical professionals, scientific data, and public health ethics guided the messaging. The UK leaned heavily on institutional clarity and emotional appeals, Spain emphasised transparent communication of data, and Romania merged medical messaging with political strategy in a complex trust environment. In all three cases, healthcare communication became public communication—a shift that may leave lasting effects on how societies manage health crises in the future.

2.4 The Press Release: A Genre

The definition of the press release as a self-sustained genre has long been a topic for debate. Among the most quoted definitions of *genre* is the one given by Swales (1990) where he insists upon the importance of sharing a “set of communicative purposes” (1990: 58). Further linguistic studies (Lassen, 2006) have shown that it appears extremely difficult, if not impossible to define and identify the ‘communicative purposes’ Swales had initially referred to. This is a valid observation, as their number can exhibit uncontrollable variability and variety. Generally speaking, “there may be substantial differences between what a text purports to do, what it is perceived by the recipient as actually doing, and what it actually does. (...) a text may do more than one thing at the same time” (Catenaccio, 2008: 13).

As far as the press release is concerned, two main features characterise it: the informative and the promotional (Catenaccio, 2008). These two characteristics impose a particular structure on the text, define in general terms the type of language employed and hint towards the speaker's main intentions. More often than not, the press release has been referred to in terms of a ‘hybrid genre’ since any attempt at defining it as a singular well-embedded genre seemed incomplete, if not utterly wrong:

Press releases are relatively short texts resembling news stories and containing what is considered by the issuer to be newsworthy information; they are generally sent to the journalist community (...) to have them picked up by the press and turned into actual news stories, thus generating publicity, in the conviction that third-party endorsement is the best way to promote a company's image and reputation. (...) they display a typical mix of informative and promotional which makes them prime examples of what have been called “hybrid genres” (Catenaccio, 2008: 11).

Bhatia (2000) extensively studies the phenomenon of genre-mixing, which was thought to happen because of “the tendency of market discourse to colonise other types of discourse” (Catenaccio, 2008: 11), mainly what Fairclough (1992) identifies as the ‘commodification of discourse’. In other words, if the discourse used in press releases is considered alongside its informative and promotional characteristics, it might be inferred that the persuasive intention (typical and indispensable to marketing) overlaps with the informative one – persuasion is more relevant to the speaker than the information is to the hearer. Catenaccio (2008) advances the idea that press releases have two persuasive targets of similar importance since one cannot function without the other. The front line is covered by journalists who must be convinced of the newsworthiness of the information so that they can pass it on and attribute to it a significant level of importance and relevance. Second, but not least, the ultimate purpose of press releases

is to persuade as large an audience as possible that things should be considered/ done/ accepted as they have presented them in the first place.

The language used to achieve the two primary objectives previously stated faces a paradox which could explain the “hybrid” character of this genre: “the less a press release manifests itself as promotional, the more it is likely to be used by journalists, and therefore the more potentially promotional it becomes.” (Catenaccio, 2008: 14). Thus, the press releases are texts that inform the large audience intending to persuade them into doing something which is justified and supported by the information presented initially. Moreover, press releases should not be confused with news releases generally published in written format. The message of the press releases is delivered in free speech. At times, it can be accompanied by presentations of graphs or tables to illustrate statistical data. The press releases selected for the current study either had their transcripts published on the official governmental webpages (as in the case of Great Britain and Romania) or were compiled using software to transform speech into text (cockatoo.com was used for the Spanish corpus).

Consequently, the press releases selected for the current study aim to inform and persuade simultaneously. However, I strongly believe that the context of a global pandemic brings nuances that the pragmatic analysis must consider.

All of the press releases were issued by three European governments that were facing an unprecedented crisis at the time. The unfolding of the events took place at different rates, mainly depending on the speed and rate of infection in their respective countries, on the one hand, and on the ability to impose the appropriate measures as soon as possible to get things back under control, on the other hand.

The overall structure is similar in the three linguacultures analysed. The introductory part presents data and statistics on the evolution of the pandemic, including the number of newly infected people and the death toll. The data are used to compare the situation in their respective country to the rest of the continent, mainly with neighbouring countries. This is generally the part in which the press is being informed and updated regarding the evolution of the crisis, and these data set the ground on which the new regulations will be communicated. Further, the press release focuses on presenting the new regulations, which will be imposed in the following period. The last part unfolds under the question-and-answer pattern as journalists address the issues of the day.

Although this generic structure can be easily delineated in all of the texts in the corpora, several particularities shape the features of each linguaculture.

To begin with, both the British English and Spanish corpora refer to the global situation of the pandemic, either before or immediately after presenting the data from their respective

countries. It is interesting to notice that apart from their neighbouring countries, referrals are also made concerning states which used to be former colonies (e.g. Argentina or Mexico in the case of Spain; India, Canada, or Australia in the case of the U.K.). As far as the Romanian corpus is concerned, remote countries such as Egypt, Nigeria, or Morocco are mentioned only to confirm that people infected in those countries entered Romania and are suspected of having been infected with the virus.

To conclude, all three corpora utilise slides with charts and tables to support the delivery of information and ensure its accuracy, which makes the comparison process valid.

2.5 Methodology and Data

The three corpora submitted for analysis comprise press releases issued almost simultaneously and in the same critical situation. Throughout the process of selection, there were a couple of guiding aspects kept upfront in order not to lose track of the true purpose of the research, as this can easily happen while dwelling on a plethora of information:

- ✓ What research methodology brings together three languages in a comparative study, which can outline both their common ground and their particular features?
- ✓ What subject matter would provide naturally occurring language produced by medical specialists with a clearly defined purpose in order to set the ground for a context in which the medical language would insert its terminology and generic features into public communication?
- ✓ How could the methodology mentioned above and subject matter define a coherent research objective and a set of valid aims?

To begin with, cross-cultural pragmatics proved to be the linguistic field which proposed a comparative study of language use in context. Austin's theory of speech acts (1962) was updated by the cross-cultural approach, which has become increasingly relevant in the more interconnected global society, where extraordinary advances in communication technology have brought together cultures, languages, and people. House and Kádár (2021) managed to present in exquisite detail a coding scheme of the speech acts (see Appendix no. 1) as they were identified in the typology proposed initially by Blum Kulka et al. (1989) in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP). What is more, this typology and its corresponding coding scheme are a replicable analytical framework which, as was initially intended, is universally valid, in the sense that all its categories can be identified in any sample of human speech, spoken or written, no matter the language. Referring to the same classification, Edmondson and House (2023) provide the following clarification:

The number of speech acts, in theory, could be infinite. But this leads to questions: What would be the point of such infiniteness? If one invents a new speech act to fit one's analysis, would such a speech act be comparable across linguacultures? The present typology proposes a radically finite system of empirically derived categories of illocutionary acts which fill slots in an international system (2023: 104).

The order in which the distinctive component elements are exposed, their frequency of occurrence, their intended meaning, and the presence or absence of specific categories are all meaning bearers. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are relevant and essential

in cross-cultural analyses, whose main objective is to identify and compare communicative patterns across boundaries.

Secondly, the COVID-19 pandemic turned out to be a pretty prolific context in which several linguistic barriers were broken, such as those that usually set apart a specialised language from the common tongue. Public communication became, in great part, healthcare communication mainly because of the abrupt and sudden changes and the newly enforced regulations, which turned people's lives upside down. All of these could only be adopted if the appropriate explanations were provided in such a way that they reached the greatest audience ever possible. Thus, governments worldwide began delivering press conferences as soon as the virus was identified in their countries' territories and continued to address the public as the situation worsened. Eventually, medical representatives, epidemiologists, or chief medical advisors were called upon to deliver weekly press releases as the pandemic progressed, explaining the advancements in medical phenomena and justifying the restrictions imposed on the population.

2.5.1 Topic and Objectives

Public healthcare communication during the COVID-19 pandemic has become a widely debated topic due to its overwhelming impact on all aspects of life. Consequently, many studies have been conducted on the matter, emphasising aspects such as crisis communication (He, S. et al., 2023), resonance and authority (Alghamdi & Alhamdan, 2023), or corpus linguistics and the language of COVID-19 (Oakey & Vincent, 2024). However, the current study aims to analyse the speech acts employed in this type of communication from pragmatic and linguistic viewpoints according to the cross-cultural paradigm. After defining and describing cross-cultural pragmatics, (using as a central departure point the studies of Blum-Kulka et. al, 1989⁸ and House & Kádár, 2021⁹), the study will set up a three-language specialised corpus which will undergo both a qualitative and quantitative analysis, highlighting the fact that although the topics developed through public communication during this pandemic were the same worldwide, at a national level, language and communicative intent were adapted to social and cultural constraints.

Therefore, the main objectives of the present research paper are:

⁸ Blum-Kulka et. al, (1989). *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*

⁹ House & Kádár, (2021). *Cross-cultural Pragmatics*

- to identify the most frequently used speech acts in the public healthcare communication during the COVID-19 pandemic in Great Britain, Spain and Romania;
- to conduct a mixed-method analysis of these speech acts to highlight both a common ground and specific features of the three languages.

To achieve these goals, several steps are required, the first of which have already been outlined in the previous chapter:

- ✓ reading the speciality literature critically in order to establish and argue the choice and use of specific theoretical frameworks in this research;
- ✓ defining cross-cultural pragmatics and outlining the characteristics which will be used in the corpus analysis, with a special focus on speech acts;
- ✓ critically approaching the genre of the press release and defining the characteristics and different nuances which made medical communication become public communication, and thus, served as a key factor in crisis management;
- ✓ setting the theoretical framework of speech act analysis in a cross-cultural approach aimed at performing a linguistic and pragmatic analysis, while at the same time setting the similarities and differences between the three languages and cultures;
- ✓ setting up a specialised corpus which will undergo both qualitative and quantitative analysis;
- ✓ analysing the press releases which contain medical data on contagions, vaccines and death rates;
- ✓ explaining the ways in which the relation between communicative intent and linguistic performance was conducted in the three languages.

2.5.2 Research Questions

Once the corpus was compiled, the study aimed to identify and analyse the speech acts of public/ medical communication within the context of a global medical crisis. Consequently, the following research questions set the base for the corpus analysis:

- **RQ1:** What speech acts are predominantly used in the press releases of each linguaculture?
- **RQ2:** What repetitive patterns of speech act decoding were identified in the pragmatic analyses in terms of Head Act occurrences, supportive moves, and speech acts that fulfil the role of supportive moves for other speech acts?

- **RQ3:** What specific verbs can be associated with the core meanings of the speech acts, and how relevant is their rate of occurrence in understanding the speech act unfolding throughout the press release?
- **RQ4:** In what ways could the predominant use of certain specific speech acts be linked to aspects related to social or cultural backgrounds?

The speech acts identified in the corpus are analysed according to the cross-cultural pragmatic framework. While looking into the structure and specificities of each speech act from a mixed-methods perspective (both qualitative and quantitative), the research questions served as a proper guideline, helping maintain a more rigorous and structured frame of analysis.

2.5.3 Corpus Compilation

A corpus-based analysis is a methodological approach rooted in linguistics that is used to investigate language and language use. The beginnings of corpus-based analysis go back to the 1950s, when data were first collected to provide a merely descriptive overview of language use. This was later referred to as “early corpus linguistics” by McEnery and Wilson (2001) who also define the approach as “the study of language based on examples of ‘real life’ language use” (2001: 1). The technological development of data compiling software has provided an incredibly useful tool for the study of language from a quantitative point of view. Patterns of occurrence for specific language chunks can be identified within seconds in large corpora. Biber et al. (1998) mark the importance of studying “the relevant association patterns” while at the same time insisting on the necessity of balancing the quantitative analysis with a qualitative one: “it is important to note that corpus-based analyses must go beyond simple counts of linguistic features (...) to explanation, exemplification, and interpretation of the patterns found in quantitative analyses.” (1998: 5).

The current corpus analysis was conducted to observe how medical officials communicated with the lay audience throughout the critical period of the COVID-19 pandemic in three European countries: the U.K., Spain and Romania. To do so, three corpora were created (one for each language), consisting of 32 press releases issued between March 2020 and February 2022. The corpora were compiled to comprise some of the most complex moments during this pandemic, according to a series of inclusion criteria that include the peak of the curve representing the number of infected patients, the imposition/ lifting of restrictions, or the vaccine administration scheme.

In the present study, the corpus-based analysis will be performed to identify “linguistic associations (lexical and grammatical)” (Biber et al., 1998: 6) which will be analysed as examples of Code Core Categories (mainly Supportive Moves, syntactical and lexical modifiers of speech – see Appendix no. 1), that is linguistic features used to modify the shape and implicitly the meaning of the speech act. The typology of the Code Core Categories belongs to House and Kádár (2021) and was used in case studies which identified and compared linguistic features in up to six languages¹⁰. The frequency of occurrence of different lexical or grammatical structures becomes relevant when trying to identify a culture-bound pattern of language use. Other important aspects will also be considered and outlined throughout the qualitative analysis, such as the speaker’s perspective and their communicative intentions conveyed through their language use, the typical moment of occurrence in relation to the Head Act, contextual meaning and comparison to similar structures and uses in the other two linguacultures.

All in all, the current study **aims to present a comparative analysis of language use in a specific international context where public healthcare communication has become an indispensable means of control, support and solution provision.**

2.5.3.1 Inclusion Criteria

The press releases were selected so that they share solid common ground: similar length, similar authorship (the majority of the press releases were delivered by medical professionals, with negligible interferences from political actors; however, there were cases in the Romanian corpus where medical professionals also fulfilled political functions), and similar topics such as lockdown enforcement, vaccination schemes, or death reports. This was necessary to ensure the relevance of the comparative approach and to highlight the differences that would eventually describe the specific features of each language and the communicative intents that needed to be adapted to the national and social contexts of each country.

Various factors were taken into consideration when selecting the corpora, so that the instances of the three linguacultures would have as many aspects in common as possible:

- **the time and space of the delivery:** the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly the years 2020, 2021 and the beginning of 2022;

¹⁰ One of their cross-cultural pragmatic studies examines the use of T/V pronouns in Ikea catalogues, that is, a ritual frame expression, by comparing the following linguacultures: Mandarin, Belgian French, Hungarian, Dutch, Belgian Dutch, German and Japanese (2021: 177-201).

- **the source:** all the press releases represent each country's official communication to the lay audience and have been downloaded from the respective governmental web pages;
- **the speakers:** the press releases have been issued in the form of press conferences where various speakers participated according to their area of competence; thus, although the interventions were made predominantly by medical representatives, political representatives of the government also took turns.
- **the topic:** only the press releases which dealt with the evolution of the pandemic and the measures to be enforced upon the population were selected; that is why all the compiled texts share a similar pattern of development: presentation of statistical data, an overview of the previously adopted measures and their outcome, the new changes to be applied in the following period concerning lockdown regulations or the vaccination campaign, followed by a question-and-answer session between the medical representatives and the press.
- **the size:** 10 press releases were initially chosen for each linguaculture, which translated into approximately 67.000 words for one lot. However, after consulting the statistical data and observing that the Spanish corpus did not meet this requirement, two extra press releases were compiled to meet the word limit, resulting in 12 press releases in this case.

Once the selection processes were completed, the texts were carefully read and annotated to identify the type of speech act, their head act, and core code categories alongside words or expressions, which would later be analysed statistically, as well.

In the following chapters, each speech act undergoes a qualitative analysis, as a first phase of the more complex mixed-method analysis. In this phase, two samples are extracted for each linguaculture: as an example, the speech act *Resolve* is analysed in terms of Head Acts, supportive moves, lexical and syntactical features in six samples extracted from the trilingual corpus (2 samples for each language). The selection of these samples was also made according to a series of inclusion criteria:

- The samples are representative and describe features that are specific to all the occurrences of the studied speech act.
- The samples illustrate key moments in the communication in which an extended in-depth analysis can be performed in terms of identifying different supportive moves and observing how different speech acts overlap one another.

- The samples also illustrate culture-bound specificities of each linguaculture, even if they illustrate healthcare communication on common topics and delivered in similar contexts.

2.5.3.2 Corpus Size

The present research paper proposes a cross-cultural pragmatic analysis that involves three languages and their respective cultural backgrounds: British English, Peninsular Spanish, and Romanian. The object of study is a corpus that compiles 32 press releases delivered between 2020 and 2022, the period of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The authors of these texts are medical representatives designated by the countries' governments to lead public communication during the crisis management process. At times, political officials also intervened, and their speeches were analysed, as well. Consequently, the analysis will be performed on three sub-corpora in three different languages referred to further on as follows:

- MEDENG for the corpus in British English,
- MEDSPAN for the corpus in Spanish,
- MEDRO for the corpus in Romanian.

Therefore, a corpus of 205.792 words was compiled, comprising 10 press releases in British English and Romanian, and 12 press releases in Spanish. Two more press releases were selected in Spanish to match the similar word count of the other two corpora.

The analysis performed in the current research paper was conducted on written texts. Although the press releases were delivered orally in front of the cameras, their transcripts were used. The corpora were compiled with texts taken from the corresponding institutions' official websites in the case of Great Britain and Romania, where the transcripts were made available. This was necessary to ensure the data's validity and to provide access to real-life language. In the case of Spain, the relevant videos were first selected, and then their transcripts were obtained using the software cockatoo.com. The press releases were selected among many of the same type, depending on whether at least one of the authors was a medical practitioner. The table below (Table no.1) outlines the exact sources, the dates and the software used to transcribe the speeches in cases where the transcriptions were not found on the government's official webpage.

Characteristics		MEDENG British English 10 press releases	MEDSPAN Spanish 12 press releases	MEDRO Romanian 10 press releases
Total number of words		68.479 words	69.547 words	67.766 words
Dates of release	2020	23.04; 21.05; 22.06; 21.09; 12.10.	04.04; 01.05; 05.06; 15.09; 09.10; 30.11; 14.12.	27.03; 16.06; 05.10; 06.11.
	2021	25.01; 01.02; 28.04; 01.03; 27.05.	16.01; 18.01; 29.03; 19.04; 31.05.	05.01; 25.05; 22.10; 08.12; 10.12.
	2022	-	-	20.01.
Web-sources		https://www.rev.com/blog/transcripts/	Ministerio de Sanidad - Áreas - Ruedas de prensa - COVID19	https://gov.ro/ro/guvernul/sedinte-guvern/
Transcription software		not necessary	www.oxfordreference.com	not necessary

Table no. 1 - Data concerning the compilation of the three corpora

Although it had been initially intended to compile 10 press releases for each linguaculture, modifications had to be implemented to ensure that the three corpora had a similar number of tokens per corpus. The statistical data would not have remained valid or reliable if significant differences existed between the total number of words selected for each linguaculture. This is why the Spanish corpus has 12 press releases, as opposed to the other two, which respect the initial approach and sum a total of 10 press releases each.

2.5.3.3 Software

For the statistical data, in terms of frequency of occurrence, whether as single words or as part of more extended phrases, the software **AntConc version 4.2.0** was used. In the age of modern technology, conducting statistical analyses on larger and larger corpora has become possible and broadly accessible. AntConc displays keyword-in-context (KWIC) lines, which are helpful in examining how words are used in context. It identifies words that frequently appear near a target word, allows frequency analysis and keyword extraction, detects recurring word patterns, and visualises the distribution of terms across a corpus. For example, in a study from 2022, researchers Li and Ping from Donghua University in Shanghai employed AntConc to investigate the usage of the discourse marker "I think" in two genres within the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA): fiction and television. The study analysed

frequency, position, collocation, and function, uncovering genre-specific pragmatic functions of the marker.

Afterwards, where it proved helpful in the research, the corpora were submitted to SketchEngine. Subsequently, whenever it was beneficial for the research, the corpora were analysed in greater detail using SketchEngine, which revealed the most frequent grammatical associations of specific terms within each corpus. For example, if the particular usage of a verb proves relevant to the researcher, this software presents its most frequent meanings, its modifiers, its objects and subjects, the prepositional phrases, its pronominal objects and subjects and the wh-words following it, all in descending order. SketchEngine is an online software that brings extra analysis pathways compared to AntConc. One of SketchEngine's key features is the "Word Sketch", a one-page summary of a word's grammatical and collocational behaviour. Based on large data samples, this gives a quick overview of how a word typically behaves. It also uses Corpus Query Language (CQL) for complex searches (e.g., searching for specific grammatical patterns or parts of speech). In a study from 2018 published by Cornell University, Araúz and San Martín discussed the development of a semantic sketch grammar within Sketch Engine. Since it facilitates the extraction of semantic relations such as hyponymy and metonymy, this tool enhances terminological research.

Two additional software types were utilised to obtain transcripts of press releases not available on the official websites of the corresponding institutions. First, the entire Spanish corpus was compiled using Cockatoo Transcription¹¹, as the webpage of the Spanish Ministry of Health only provided video recordings of the press conferences. Second, not all the press releases that were relevant to the study were published on the British Government website. Seven of them were downloaded from <https://www.rev.com/transcripts>, a website that provides transcriptions of some of the most important press releases.

¹¹https://www.cockatoo.com/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=20033100137&gbraid=0AAAAABSAV8sssTc8_gfxAUidFiRQHLDXBB&gclid=Cj0KCQjwhafEBhCcARIsAEGZEKLQlpDChzfOCDHXV5IEfVUxKzqPjuhXA8xQr7m3Zwa-53-dyodDtlaAmvcEALw_wcB

2.6 The Authorship - Different Speakers with Similar Messages

The previous subchapter provided a detailed description of the three corpora selected for analysis alongside the methodology applied in the current research. For each linguaculture (British English, Spanish and Romanian), a corpus of 10, respectively 12 in the case of the Spanish language, press releases were compiled. What mattered the most in the compilation process was that the speeches were released approximately in the same period, and that the topics coincided. However, because the spread of the virus evolved chaotically, and each country managed the crisis to the best of their knowledge and according to their particular situation, there were delays or overlaps. Since the primary interest of this study is of linguistic nature, it was necessary to find common ground among the three corpora, mainly in terms of length and content.

Another essential aspect to be considered when dealing with the corpus description is the authorship of the analysed texts. There were significant differences between the three countries concerning the number of people who participated in the conferences and delivered the press releases. The greatest variety of speakers was observed in the case of Great Britain, where 12 speakers intervened in the selected conferences. However, doctors like Chris Whitty, Susan Hopkins and Jennifer Harries have the longest and most significant contributions. Spain's informative campaign was mainly led by Dr. Fernando Simón, the head of Spain's coordination centre for health emergencies and alerts. He delivered almost all of the speeches, but there were moments when other medical professionals, such as Dr. Silvia Calzón or Dr. María José Sierra, substituted for him. In total, four speakers produced relevant press releases and were included in the current research. Finally, in the case of Romania, seven speakers took part in the selected press releases, with Raed Arafat and Valeriu Gheorghiță providing the most consistent speeches, relevant to the present analysis.

This subchapter presents an overview of some of the most prominent personalities whose speeches contributed significantly to the composition of the corpora analysed here. Although these are mainly medical professionals involved in managing the sanitary crisis, some political representatives took the floor and addressed the population on public health matters. As such, the authors of the press releases selected for the British English corpus contributed according to their attributions in the respective institutions.

The governmental webpage, gov.uk¹², presents information on Dr. Susan Hopkins's professional attributions throughout the sanitary crisis. Professor Susan Hopkins, in her position as the Chief Medical Advisor at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), led the Clinical

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/susan-hopkins>, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

and Public Health Group, providing professional health security, clinical, and public health leadership. Her responsibilities included overseeing the UK's response to infectious diseases and advising on public health strategies. In her capacity, Professor Hopkins guided the UK's pandemic response, including the development and implementation of testing strategies, public health guidance, and infection control measures. She also contributed to significant research efforts, such as the SARS-CoV-2 Immunity and Reinfection Evaluation (SIREN) study, which aimed to understand immunity and reinfection patterns among healthcare workers.

Moreover, **Dr. Jennifer Harries** was also an important medical representative who participated mainly in the press conferences compiled for the corpus. Commonly known as Jenny Harries, she served as the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for England from June 2019, providing expert advice and public communication during the early stages of the crisis. In this capacity, she was involved in key decisions and public health messaging, including guidance on mass gatherings and the use of face masks. According to Health Data Research UK¹³, in May 2021, Harries was appointed as the inaugural Chief Executive of the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), a body formed by merging Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace. Under her leadership, the UKHSA protected the nation from external health threats, including managing the ongoing pandemic response. Harries oversaw initiatives related to testing, contact tracing, and the rollout of vaccines.

Another essential medical professional who contributed greatly to the management of the pandemic was **Dr. John Newton**. He is a British epidemiologist and public health expert. According to the European Centre for Environment and Human Health¹⁴, in April 2020, Newton was appointed as the national coordinator of the UK Government's COVID-19 testing programme. In this role, he oversaw the expansion of the country's testing capacity, including the establishment of new laboratories and the integration of testing efforts across various sectors. He also contributed to developing the UK's COVID-19 Infection Survey, which provided critical data on the population's infection rates and antibody prevalence.

Sir Jonathan Van-Tam, a British physician specialising in influenza and respiratory viruses, served as England's Deputy Chief Medical Officer (DCMO) from October 2017 to March 2022. In this role, he contributed significantly to shaping the UK's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing scientific advice to the government and the public. Van-Tam was known for his clear communication style. He also played a key role in the UK's vaccine rollout, contributing to the acquisition and distribution strategies.

¹³ <https://www.hdruk.ac.uk/people/jenny-harries/>, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

¹⁴ <https://www.ecehh.org/person/john-newton/>, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

Sir Patrick Vallance co-chaired the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) alongside Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty, providing scientific guidance to the government. Vallance was a prominent figure in public briefings, explaining the reasoning behind government decisions and the scientific understanding of the virus. He played a crucial role in establishing the Vaccine Taskforce in April 2020, which coordinated efforts to develop and deploy COVID-19 vaccines in the UK.

It is the figure of **Chris Whitty**, however, who held the first line in the British COVID-19 crisis management. According to the *Guardian*¹⁵, he became the ‘de facto prime minister’ during the crisis due to his calm and clear communication style. From his position as England’s Chief Medical Officer, he provided scientific and medical advice to the government, frequently appearing alongside Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance in daily briefings.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was the leading name among the political figures involved in the public communication process, alongside Matt Hancock and Rishi Sunak.

Boris Johnson was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from July 2019 to September 2022. His government was initially criticised for a delayed reaction, with Johnson admitting to having underestimated the virus’s seriousness in early 2020. More than once, Johnson emphasised the unprecedented nature of the crisis and the efforts made to mitigate its impact. His tenure during the pandemic remains a subject of extensive analysis and debate, reflecting the complexities of leadership in a global health emergency.

According to information posted on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)¹⁶, **Matt Hancock**, as the UK Secretary of State for Health and Social Care from 2018 to 2021, played a central role in managing the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He oversaw key initiatives, including the launch of NHS Test and Trace and the early stages of the UK’s vaccination campaign. Under his leadership, emergency health regulations were introduced to enforce lockdowns and social distancing. Hancock emphasised the importance of domestic vaccine production.

Finally, **Rishi Sunak** was the UK’s Chancellor of the Exchequer from February 2020 to July 2022 and played a pivotal role in managing the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. According to data from the *Guardian*¹⁷, he introduced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough), which covered up to 80% of wages for millions of workers, aiming to

¹⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/nov/21/chris-whitty-england-voice-of-calm-authority-during-covid-crisis>, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/matthew-hancock>, last accessed on May the 7th, 2025.

¹⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/mar/20/how-covid-changed-the-british-state>, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

prevent mass unemployment during lockdowns. Additionally, he launched the “Eat Out to Help Out” initiative in July 2020 to stimulate the hospitality sector by subsidising meals.

All in all, these are the British governmental and medical representatives whose speeches and contributions to the press conferences became relevant to the current research.

The second corpus for analysis comprises press releases from the Spanish linguaculture. Although it was necessary to compile the texts from 12 press releases to meet a similar number of words to the other two corpora, Spain put forward the smallest number of medical representatives. There were only three doctors whose speeches were found relevant in terms of content to the current study: Dr. Fernando Simón, Dr. Silvia Calzón and Dr. María José Sierra. Salvador Illa was the political representative whose speech was included in the analysis.

Dr. Fernando Simón Soria is a Spanish epidemiologist who served as the director of the Coordination Centre for Health Alerts and Emergencies (CCAES) under Spain's Ministry of Health. In this role, he became the public face of Spain's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing daily updates and guidance. According to the *Guardian*¹⁸, while many appreciated his calm and clear explanations, others questioned the government's handling of the crisis, leading to calls for his dismissal by some medical organisations. Despite facing personal attacks and political pressure, he remained committed to his role, later reflecting in an interview taken by journalist Jordi Évole¹⁹ on the emotional toll and complexities of managing a public health crisis.

Dr. Silvia Calzón Fernández, a Spanish epidemiologist and public health expert, served as Spain's Secretary of State for Health from August 2020 to November 2023, during the critical period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Appointed amid a resurgence of cases, she coordinated the national health response, working closely with regional authorities to manage outbreaks and implement containment measures. Calzón advocated for increased healthcare spending and emphasised the importance of preventive measures and vaccination campaigns.

Dr. María José Sierra Moros is a Spanish physician specialising in preventive medicine and public health. As the Head of the Area at the Coordination Centre for Health Alerts and Emergencies (CCAES) within the Ministry of Health, she stepped into the national spotlight in March 2020 when she temporarily replaced Dr. Fernando Simón as the spokesperson for the Ministry during his COVID-19 illness, according to the National Library of Medicine²⁰. In this capacity, Sierra delivered daily briefings, interpreted epidemiological

¹⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/15/spains-general-medical-council-calls-for-covid-health-chief-to-be-fired-fernando-simon-doctors?utm>, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

¹⁹ https://www.atresplayer.com/lasexta/programas/lo-de-evole/temporada-6/fernando-simon_67af41dec40e9200077572e6/, last accessed on April 24th, 2025

²⁰ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7812423/?utm>, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

data, and communicated health measures to the public during the initial and most critical phase of the pandemic. She co-authored several scientific publications analysing the spread of COVID-19 in Spain, including assessments of risk factors and the effectiveness of public health interventions.

Salvador Illa Roca served as Spain's Minister of Health from January 2020 to January 2021, overseeing the nation's response during the critical first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite lacking a background in healthcare, his appointment was seen as a strategic move, leveraging his managerial skills and political decision-making. Early in his tenure, Illa coordinated the repatriation and quarantine of Spanish nationals from Wuhan, China, and managed the initial containment of the virus, including the first confirmed case in La Gomera. As the pandemic escalated, he implemented nationwide measures such as suspending large gatherings, closing schools, and coordinating with regional governments to enforce restrictions.

The Romanian corpus consists of texts authored by 6 doctors and one politician, Ludovic Orban, the country's prime minister at the time. The person who, by far, had the most numerous and consistent interventions was the State Secretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and head of the Department for Emergency Situations (DSU), **Raed Arafat**. In March 2020, Arafat announced bans on large gatherings and the closure of schools, aiming to curb the spread of the virus. He also advocated for the public to wear masks, even homemade ones, emphasising their importance in preventing transmission. Dr. Arafat was also involved in strategic planning and international collaboration. He managed the National Committee for Special Emergency Situations (CNCCI), overseeing quarantine measures and intensive care capacity. In December 2020, he coordinated Romania's first batch of COVID-19 vaccines, marking the beginning of the national vaccination campaign.

Dr. Valeriu Gheorghita, a military physician specialising in infectious diseases, coordinated the National Committee for COVID-19 Vaccination Activities (CNCAV). Appointed in November 2020, he was responsible for developing and implementing the country's vaccination strategy, overseeing logistics, and leading public communication efforts. Dr. Gheorghita participated in numerous informational events, including collaborations with academic institutions like the University of Bucharest²¹, to address vaccine hesitancy and misinformation. Despite these efforts, Romania faced challenges in achieving high vaccination coverage, particularly in rural areas²². To address this, initiatives like mobile vaccination caravans were introduced to improve access and outreach.

²¹ <https://unibuc.ro/specialists-from-the-university-of-bucharest-and-doctor-valeriu-gheorghita-in-a-dialogue-on-the-COVID-19-pandemic-and-the-importance-of-vaccination/?lang=en&utm>, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

²² https://health.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-12/2021_chp_romania_english.pdf, last accessed on May 7th, 2025

The last speaker whose contributions proved extremely relevant and were used extensively in the analysis was **Nelu Tătaru**. He spoke as a doctor and a political representative since he held various positions in the Romanian government at the time. A surgeon and member of the National Liberal Party (PNL), he served as Minister of Health during the critical early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tătaru's tenure was marked by efforts to stabilise Romania's health system, implement containment measures, and manage outbreaks in high-risk areas such as Suceava, which became a significant hotspot early in the crisis. He also oversaw the expansion of testing capacity and the development of protocols for patient care and hospital management. Throughout his time in office, Tătaru frequently communicated health updates and safety guidelines. He emphasised the importance of personal responsibility and adherence to public health measures.

This chapter has outlined the roles and responsibilities of key medical and political figures who managed the COVID-19 pandemic across the selected three European contexts. Scientific advisors such as Professors Chris Whitty, Fernando Simón, and Dr. Raed Arafat provided evidence-based guidance. At the same time, political leaders, including Boris Johnson, Salvador Illa, and Ludovic Orban, communicated urgent public health policies. The successful rollout of vaccination campaigns, led by coordinators such as Dr. Valeriu Gheorghiță and Secretary Silvia Calzón, further exemplified the logistical and strategic dimensions of pandemic governance. Their actions and decisions during this period offer valuable insights into the dynamics of public health leadership and underscore the importance of preparedness, transparency, and intersectoral collaboration in managing future global health crises.

Nevertheless, the objective of the current research is to examine how they employed language to build effective communication in which their pragmatic intentions would reach and convince a broad audience. The choice of words, the choice of speech acts, and their supportive moves are aspects that will be analysed in profound detail in the following chapters.

Chapter 3: Corpus Analysis of Press Releases during the COVID-19 Pandemic (1): Information and Persuasion in the Speech Acts of Crisis Communication

3.1 Tell and Opine: On Information and Its Realisation in the Press Releases

Distinguishing between facts and opinions has long been an essential feature of critical thinking, a skill that is absolutely necessary in the age of information technology. As is the case with all major crises, the COVID-19 context brought confusion and a lack of reliability, which made the quality of public communication even more critical. It was the proper ground for multiple undocumented theories, division of opinions and questioning of facts. In their annual report *Word of the Year 2020*, lexicographers from Oxford Languages (2020) underlined the idea that “we have all become armchair epidemiologists” and that “governments often claim to be following the science” (p.13).

From a pragmatic point of view, both the speaker's choice of words and the hearer's ability to interpret the message accordingly are equally important. As previously stated, the main purposes of the press releases that compose the corpora of the current study are to inform and persuade the lay audience to accept the new situation and change their behaviour according to the latest regulations.

From a linguistic point of view, there are several indicators of the human perception of information as a fact (which has a generic, indisputable character) and an opinion (which bears different degrees of subjectivity). Kaiser and Wang (2020) claim that “our ability to recognise opinion-based information can be distorted by linguistic packaging” (p. 116). Their study shows that the choice of subjective or objective adjectives along with their position in the sentence (whether as a prenominal modifier, as a part of an appositive relative clause or as predicative) builds a certain level of subjective perception on behalf of the addressee.

The speech acts of Tell and Opine are the pragmatic embodiment of the semantic concepts of fact and opinion. Edmondson et al. (2023) underline the fact that Tell is “the most neutral Informative illocution” (p. 169) and that it is not possible to distinguish it from Opine. In the present corpora, where direct interaction in the form of question and answer took place in the guided context of the press release, the separation of the two proved equally challenging. This happened not only because of the similarities that exist at a semantic level between the two illocutions but also because of the structure of the speech act, that is, its component coding categories, which overlap chaotically in free speech. “When not produced explicitly as responses to Requests for Tells, Tells commonly occur as Supportive Moves.” (Edmondson et al., 2023: 169). Tells were identified mostly in the introductory part of the press releases, where

the statistical data concerning the spread of the virus were presented. Here, it could be inferred that Tell is used as a response to Request, although Request is not explicitly formulated beforehand but implicitly acknowledged by the public's expectations. Further on, it was observed that Tells behaved as Supportive Moves for Opine or for other speech acts such as Explain/ Justify, Suggest or Resolve, mainly as grounders, expanders or disarms, acting as scientific evidence to justify a stance. Thus, Tells are produced because they are "relevant to the hearer's concerns and interests, and the speaker assumes that the Tell will be accepted as true" (2023: 173).

Opines, however, are usually "voiced in the hope of reaching agreement" (2023: 173), meaning that the hearer might bear a different viewpoint or is challenged to consider a new perspective on the matter presented by the speaker. Consequently, Opine is a speech act often identified in argumentative discourse, usually implying a persuasive intention. In the case of the studied corpora, Opines did not appear according to a predetermined pattern of occurrence, but rather whenever the speaker was in the position of voicing an opinion.

All things considered, by underlining the coding scheme of these speech acts and observing the word choice through which they are being expressed in the corpora, the researcher manages to delineate a type of communicative approach. While this approach has certain standard features, distinctive characteristics of each linguaculture will also be emphasised.

In the study of the three corpora, the head acts were manually coded and counted. The presence of the head act, as the minimal core unit of a speech act, indicated the realisation of said speech act. One of the most challenging aspects concerning the coding of these two speech acts was their blurred and often unclear boundaries, meaning situations in which the head acts of both Tell and Opine were expressed very close by, making it thus difficult to distinguish between them. When this was the case, the analysis considered a third type of speech act, named simply Tell/ Opine. These occurrences increased the confusing potential of the text's message, to the detriment of clarity and precision. Another difficult-to-tackle situation was the one where speech acts intertwined; one of the head acts behaved as a Supportive Move for the other.

3.1.1 Tells

Tells were considered only those speech acts that either communicated the evolution of the state of affairs with constant references to figures and results obtained from statistical data (1) or presented scientifically proven, backed-up truths and generally accepted knowledge (2).

The following examples were taken from the corpora to illustrate the above-mentioned characteristics:

a). (1) *As of today, 6.6. millions have now received a vaccine against COVID-19. (Matt Hancock, 25.01.2021)*

(2) The sample was sequenced through our sequencing laboratories, and reported to be this P1 variant. (Susan Hopkins, 01.03.2021)

b). (1) *Estamos haciendo muchas pruebas diagnósticas, más de 15.000 pruebas diagnósticas al día. (Fernando Simón, 09.10.2020)*

(2) Hemos conseguido implementar a nivel nacional un sistema de vigilancia que nos permite reaccionar realmente rápido. (Fernando Simón, 05.06.2020)

My translation:

(1) We are performing a lot of tests, more than 15.000 tests per day.

(2) We have managed to implement a national surveillance system that allows us to react rather quickly.

c). (1) *În intervalul 9 decembrie ora 10:00 - 10 decembrie ora 10:00 au fost înregistrate 931 de cazuri de persoane nou pozitive cu virusul SARS-CoV-2. (Raed Arafat, 10.12.2021)*

(2) Această variantă a acumulat cel mai mare număr de mutații din variantele circulante până la acest moment și care sunt cunoscute, evident. (Valeriu Gheorghită, 10.12.2021)

My translation:

(1) Between December 9th, 10 a.m. and December 10th, 10 a.m. there were 931 new registered cases of people who turned positive for the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

(2) This variant accumulated the highest number of mutations in comparison to all the variants that have been circulating up to this moment and have been identified, obviously.

These examples illustrate a series of features which have been recurring throughout the corpora. In general, all of the head acts for Tells are built in the most objective shape a language can provide:

- lack of adjectives (the few encountered qualify as ‘simple subjective adjectives’, meaning they “make reference to one dimension (e.g. height, speed) and require that a certain threshold along that dimension is met.” (Kaiser and Wang, 2020: 117),
- the extensive use of the passive voice (*was sequenced, au fost înregistrate*²³),

²³ were registered

- the use of impersonal subjects (*the sample, cazuri, această variantă*²⁴) or, as is the case with the Spanish corpus, the use of the first-person plural form of the verb (*estamos, hemos*²⁵) which is preferred instead of using the passive. The latter is a linguistic preference which was also encountered in the Romanian corpus but to a much lesser extent.

Moreover, apart from figures that illustrate a statistical analysis used to validate the truthfulness of the Tell, these head acts constantly refer to temporal and spatial dimensions (*as of today, al día, a nivel nacional, până la acest moment*²⁶).

3.1.2 Opines

Conversely, Opines usually carry a higher degree of subjectivity which is conveyed through a series of linguistic features illustrated in the following examples, typical occurrences of this speech act:

d). *I think the thing that we know is that children are going back to school and that each point is likely to increase interactions with others. And therefore, we are likely to see an increase in the number and potentially more transmissions. (Susan Hopkins, 01.03.2021)*

e). *A mí me gustaría que ese plazo se pudiera cumplir, incluso acortarlo lo más posible, pero con la experiencia que hemos vivido y con los riesgos a los que nos exponemos, si se produce un nuevo repunte de casos, creo que tenemos que ser todos muy conscientes de que la prudencia nos debe de guiar. (Fernando Simón, 01.05.2020)*

My translation:

I would like for this deadline to be met, even shortened as much as possible, but according to the experience we have already gone through and the risks we expose ourselves to, if there is another bounce in the number of cases, I believe we all have to be aware of the fact that prudence must guide us.

f). *Sunt lucruri extrem de importante, sunt cât se poate de relevante și cred că, din aceste date, trebuie să învățăm ca, în perioada următoare, să nu mai repetăm din nou această situație dramatică prin care această țară a trecut. (Valeriu Gheorghieș, 10.12.2021)*

²⁴ cases, this variant

²⁵ we are, we have ('have' is used as an auxiliary. Whenever it refers to possession, the Spanish language uses another verb altogether which is 'tener')

²⁶ up to date, at a national level, to this moment

My translation:

These are extremely important things; they are as relevant as they can be. I believe that from these data, we must learn that in the following period, we should not repeat the dramatic situation our country has gone through.

Opines tend to have a mitigating character in the sense that they convey a personal viewpoint on the current matter, which might aim to provide a better understanding and an easier acceptance of facts.

This is why one important observation refers to the presence of adjectives and adverbs, not in the way in which they might be used in descriptive language (whose purpose is to embellish, exaggerate or create vivid images or metaphors) but to an extent where the perception of the speaker about the matter is openly expressed.

To exemplify, in the above-quoted excerpts, adjectives are not used in the British English example, but adverbs such as *likely* and *potentially* hint at the speaker's belief in the probability of future occurrences. These are used as hedging devices, a cautious type of language that minimises the strength of claims.

In the Spanish excerpt, the presence of the superlative is relevant to this discussion, *lo más posible*²⁷. Even if, when translated into English, this structure becomes a comparative (as translated by <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/translate/>), the Spanish language imposes the use of the superlative in this case. According to the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy²⁸, this is a particular case when the relative superlative is used as a restrictive object (*complemento restrictivo*). In the present context, the speaker refers to a deadline that would be preferable to be shortened as much/as soon as possible. Along with the superlative, the metaphoric use of the structure *la prudencia nos debe de guiar*,²⁹ brings a certain level of sensibility to a requestive act whose face-threatening imposition is being mitigated through a softer version of what could have been *Sed prudentes!* (our translation: Be prudent!), simply put. This choice of metaphoric expression could also be seen as a persuasive device.

The example from the Romanian corpus comprises subjective adjectives in the superlative, such as *extrem de importantă, cât se poate de relevante, dramatică*³⁰, but no adverbs are used. In Romanian, Opines are also framed within deontic modality – *trebuie să învățăm* – i.e. imposition mitigated only by the first-person deixis (we = you + I, us).

²⁷ as much as possible

²⁸ <https://www.rae.es/buen-uso-espa%C3%B1ol/los-superlativos-el-superlativo-relativo>

²⁹ we must guide ourselves with caution

³⁰ extremely important, as relevant as possible, dramatic

Another aspect which proved very helpful when performing the head act identification process was the presence of verbs of thought and opinion. These are encountered in all of the examples provided above (*I think, a mí me gustaría, creo que, cred că, trebuie să*³¹). The following observations cannot be omitted when comparing the verb forms of the three linguacultures. In British English, all of the verb forms are indicative (think, know, are going), whereas other verb moods are used in Spanish (conditional: *me gustaría*³² and subjunctive: *que se pudiera*³³) and Romanian (subjunctive: *să învățăm, să nu mai repetăm*³⁴). Both the subjunctive and the conditional are verb moods which potentiate the degree of subjectivity that the message acquires when expressed in Spanish and Romanian, and both of them are frequently used. English, however, chooses other means to convey subjectivity, mainly through adjectives and adverbs.

3.1.3 Tell/ Opines

As acknowledged from the very beginning of this chapter, the need to have a third category when analysing these two speech acts occurred because of the difficulties encountered in the selection of the head acts. Also, the semantic proximity between fact and opinion makes it difficult to separate and classify utterances. Wherever figures, statistical data, scientifically proven truths and references to thoughts, opinions or personal perspectives occurred almost simultaneously or along an intertwined sequence of utterances that made it almost impossible to separate the head acts, Tell/ Opines were considered altogether.

Corpus	Example	Speech Act Coding Scheme
MEDENG	<i>Sadly, of those who tested positive for coronavirus across all settings, 36,042 have now died. And that's an increase of 338 fatalities since yesterday. This is a deadly virus and it's brought pain to so many, both here and across the world, but we are making some real progress. (Matt Hancock, 21.05.2020)</i>	DISARMER HEAD ACT for Tell (locution derivable – see Appendix no.1) GROUNDER IMPOSITION MINIMISER (an Opine as a supportive move for Tell)

³¹ I would like to, I believe that (first in Spanish, then in Romanian, we have to

³² I would like to

³³ to be possible

³⁴ to learn, not to repeat again

MEDSPAN	<p><i>Portugal ha tenido una evolución de la epidemia en principio bastante buena. Sí que es cierto que las autonomías, las comunidades autónomas limítrofes con Portugal, españolas, tenían una evolución epidémica similar, en algunos casos incluso con menos incidencia. Andalucía, por ejemplo, tenía algo menos.</i></p> <p><i>Si no recuerdo mal, hace ya unos días que no hago los cálculos, pero si no recuerdo mal, Extremadura andaba poco más o menos en las incidencias que había tenido Portugal y Galicia, alrededor de lo mismo, ligeramente superior, si no me equivoco, pero con unos números parecidos en número de casos por población. (Fernando Simón, 05.06.2020)</i></p>	<p>HEAD ACT for Opine (locution derivable)</p> <p>EXPANDER. This is an example of Tell as a Supportive Move.</p> <p>GROUNDER. This is Opine as a Supportive Move.</p> <p>HEAD ACT for Tell (locution derivable)</p> <p>EXPANDER. This is again Opine as a Supportive Move.</p>
My translation:	Portugal has had a fairly good evolution of the pandemic. It is indeed true that the autonomies, the autonomous communities bordering Portugal, the Spanish ones, had a similar epidemic evolution, in some cases even with a lower impact. Andalucia, for example, had it lower. If I do remember correctly, it's been days since I stopped doing the math, but if I do remember correctly, Extremadura had more or less the same figures as Portugal and Galicia, around the same, a little bit superior, if I am not mistaken, but with a similar number of cases per population.	
MEDRO	<p><i>Avem în continuare o rată insuficientă de vaccinare la persoanele cu vîrstă de peste 80 de ani, unde este de circa 25,3% și cred că aici este foarte important să creștem eforturile de convingere și de schimbare a percepției persoanelor vizavi de vaccinare, în sensul în care trebuie să înțelegem că vaccinarea în momentul de față este măsura prin care putem reduce riscul de a face o</i></p>	<p>EXPANDER. This is Opine as a Supportive Move.</p> <p>HEAD ACT for Tell (locution derivable)</p> <p>HEAD ACT for Opine (locution derivable)</p> <p>GROUNDER</p>

	<i>formă gravă. (Valeriu Gheorghită, 10.12.2021)</i>	
My translation:	We continue to have an insufficient vaccination rate with people over 80, meaning approximately 25.3% and I think that here it is very important to increase our persuasion efforts related to the people's perception towards vaccination, in the sense that we must understand that for the time being vaccination is the only measure to reduce the risk of becoming seriously ill.	

Table no. 3 – The Tell/ Opine Coding Scheme Exemplified

The above examples were selected to justify a particular choice in the present analysis (the one to consider Tell and Opine as a singular unit), and by no means should they be viewed as unique or as a singular replicable pattern. According to Van Dijk, “there is no such thing as a complete discourse analysis: a full analysis of a short passage might take months and fill hundreds of pages. Complete discourse analysis of a large corpus is therefore totally out of question” (2001: 99). It is hereby acknowledged that this sample of speech act analysis is aimed at illustrating one particular case (which is reused in the press releases as many times as it serves the speakers’ communicative intentions) that comprises, however, features proper to each linguaculture which are also identified in the other parts of the current study.

In the example from the British English corpus, the speech act identified is Tell, and one of the Supportive Moves (imposition minimiser) qualifies for an Opine. In between these two speech acts, a disarmer and a grounder have been identified as other Supportive Moves. Throughout the excerpt, the degree of subjectivity is maintained by features similar to the ones identified in the characterisation of Opines: the use of adverbs to convey emotions (*sadly*) or to describe (*deadly*), the use of metaphoric constructions that soften and mitigate the face-threatening act (*brought pain*). This appears to be necessary also because the topic of the message is a most serious one, and by their choice of words, the speaker acknowledges the possible distress it might cause to the hearer. Opine’s primary purpose here is to soften the Tell, which is expressed using figures, and it includes specific references to time and space. The message is delivered clearly, while at the same time sympathetically.

In the case of the Spanish corpus, the interference between the speech acts and their corresponding Supportive Moves leaves a general impression of confusion and uncertainty. The first head act is an Opine followed by a Tell as an expander. The following head act is a Tell preceded by an Opine as a grounder and then succeeded by another Opine as an expander. As confusing as this sequence might look, it is a common occurrence in free speech, since ideas are never conveyed in a linear or clear sequential pattern, but rather through linguistic choices

that the speaker makes according to their communicative needs as the discourse proceeds. The analysis at a lexical level makes it even more difficult to follow the train of ideas. First of all, the Tells have no statistical data to support the claims and the head acts are expressed through adjectives and adverbs that convey approximation: *una evolución epidémica similar, con menos incidencia, andaba poco más o menos*³⁵. This speech act is introduced by the expression *sí que es cierto que* (our translation: it is indeed certain that) which reinforces the idea of truthfulness, but since it is not backed up with tokens of objective language, the utterance throughout makes the hearer question its reliability. The structure *sí que* is used in Spanish whenever there is a need for emphasis, (according to the *Diccionario panhispánico de dudas*³⁶) and appears in this corpus 127 times (see. **Image no. 1 – sí que**). The most frequent collocations that begin with this affirmative adverb are *sí que es cierto que* (35 times) and *sí que es verdad que* (8 times). The words *cierto* (certain) and *verdad* (true) can be considered synonyms whenever used to convey veracity to a statement. However, the emphatic structures in which these two words are used can only bear two intentional meanings inferred in this situation: on the one hand, there is a need for the speaker to reassure the hearer of the truthfulness of what he is about to say and on the other hand, there is a matter of acknowledging the current situation while attempting at the same time to bring forward a new input or a different perspective of the type: *it is indeed certain that..., but... .* When an utterance begins as such, the first impression might lead to the idea that a fact is about to be communicated and the speech act of Tell would develop accordingly. However, if the main features which qualify an utterance as a Tell (data, generally accepted truths, etc.) are not immediately communicated, but rather a sequence of subjective adverbs and adjectives follows it, then it is highly probable that the speech act is an Opine, or to be on the safe side, a Tell/ Opine, with a rather increased degree of ambiguity.

Moreover, the following observations were made concerning the linguistic features of Opines:

- they abound in noun and verb phrases supported by adjectives and adverbs: *en principio* (32 times), *bastante buena* (16 times) , *ligeramente superior*, *números parecidos*³⁷.
- there is also an extended display of verbs of thought or verb phrases that refer to personal assessment: *si no recuerdo mal* (repeated twice – 11 times throughout the entire corpus), *si no me equivoco* (7 times), *hace días que no hago los cálculos*³⁸.

³⁵ with a similar epidemic evolution, at a lower incidence, it was more or less

³⁶ <https://www.rae.es/dpd/s%C3%AD%AD>, last consulted on May 1st, 2025

³⁷ as a principle, good enough, slightly superior, similar numbers

³⁸ if I remember correctly, if I'm not wrong, it's been days since I lost draw the numbers

All of these characteristics have been observed in the Spanish corpus at such a rate of occurrence that makes them relevant to the pragmatic analysis in the sense that their increased usage brings ambiguity to the overall message, dressing up facts under a veil of subjectivity and uncertainty.

Finally, the Romanian excerpt displays a rather more linear sequence of speech acts in the sense that Tell and Opine are closely linked by the conjunction *and*. The head act of Tell is expressed in percentage and is preceded by an expander that is an Opine as a Supportive Move. This provides additional information expressed by a simple subjective adjective (Kaiser and Wang, 2020): *rată insuficientă* (insufficient rate), an appreciation validated immediately by the provided datum. The verb of thought *cred că* (I believe that) introduces the Opine; the superlative *foarte important* (very important) is then used along with the subjunctive *să creștem* (to grow). The grounder which follows the head act brings supplementary explanations and justifications to support the previously stated opinion and qualifies for Excuse/ Justify as a grounder.

3.1.4 Frequency of Occurrence

It also proved relevant to consider a quantitative analysis of the occurrence of the three speech acts illustrated above. Results revealed significant differences in the communicative approach delivered in the three linguacultures. **Figure no. 2** below presents the frequency of occurrence of the three categories of speech acts as they were identified in the three corpora.

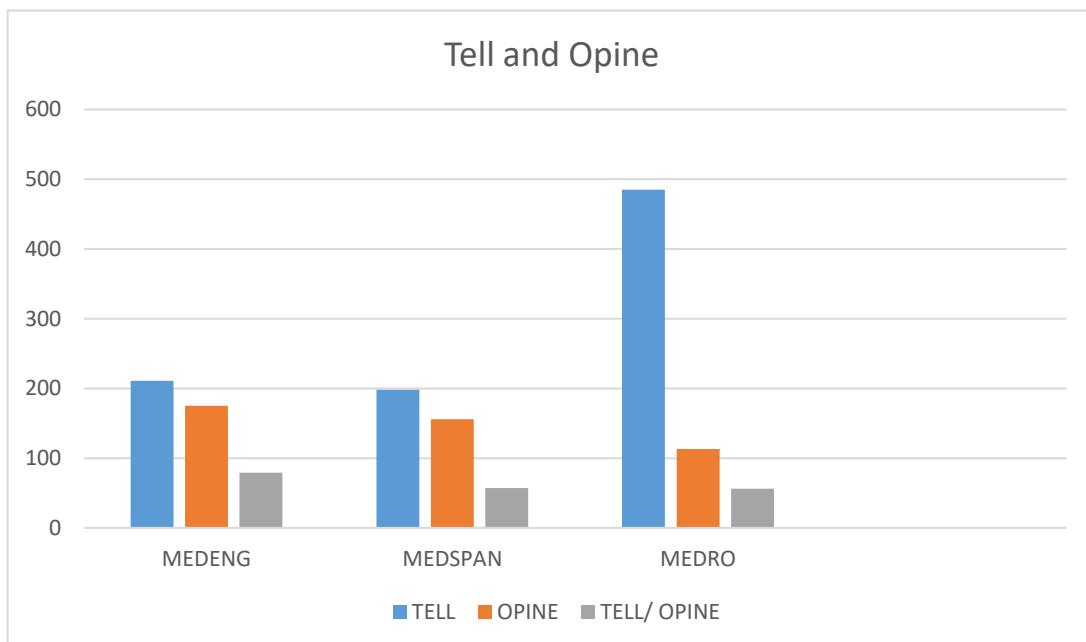


Fig. no. 2 - Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Acts Tell and Opine
(data obtained manually)

To begin with, the highest frequency of occurrence of Tells was identified in the Romanian corpus, where the press releases abounded with figures, percentages and statistical data. Also, the difference between the number of Tells (485 head acts) and Opines (113 head acts) is the highest of all three corpora, while having the rate of Tell/ Opines (56 head acts) almost similar to the values identified in the Spanish corpus (57 head acts). Apparently, these data might indicate an increased level of objectivity when it comes to delivering the intended message, but when dealing with public communication, this high influx of data becomes difficult to follow or remember for the general audience. That is why, in the question-and-answer section, this corpus presented the highest rate of situations in which data from the introductory part had to be restated and explained in more detail. Further on, it was in this last section where most of the Opines and Tell/ Opines were identified.

The data highlighted in Figure no. 2 show that the British English and the Spanish corpora show a similar number of occurrences both for Tells (211 head acts versus 198 head acts) and Opines (175 head acts versus 156 head acts). Something similar happens with Tell/Opines: 79 head acts versus 57 head acts.

Of the three corpora analysed in this study, the British English corpus showed these values at a rather balanced level in the sense that the difference between the number of Tells and Opines is a rather small one, with Tells being in the front rank. The Tell/Opines have the highest rate of occurrence.

3.1.5 The Speech Act Perspective

When discussing the speech acts of Tell and Opine and the levels of objectivity and subjectivity of discourse, the perspective concerning the speaker or the addressee's orientation also becomes relevant. Given the fact that the press releases are delivered by representatives of institutions and were aimed at as large an audience as possible in the context of a medical crisis that affected people worldwide, it is the following perspectives on discourse that raised interest in the course of this analysis: speaker-orientation (*I*) and speaker and addressee – orientation (*we*).

In order to be able to analyse these perspectives under the Tell/ Opine semantic frame, that is to observe how facts and opinions are expressed in the three corpora, the speech acts (which, as it has been shown in the previous subchapter, can extend over large chunks of texts

and can overlap each other's blurry boundaries) have been narrowed down to two verbs: *know* and *think* (with their correspondents *saber/ creer* and *a ști/ a crede*). This way, quantitative and comparative analyses of the speaker/ speaker and addressee orientations could be performed. This should by no means signify that the speech acts Tell and Opine identify themselves only within the immediate vicinity of these verbs. But it is within the verb phrase where the presence or absence of the first-person singular/ plural forms can be identified.

Accordingly, Figure no. 3 shows how the highest rate of occurrence of the two verbs is reached in the Spanish corpus: *saber* appears as a verb 258 times and *creer* occurs 246 times. The small difference between the two (only 12 occurrences) supports the observation made previously, according to which the Spanish corpus builds an increased level of vagueness by overlapping Tell and Opine, creating the impression of a lack of clarity. In Grice's terms (1975) this implies flouting the maxim of manner.

Next, in the British English corpus, the verb *think* is the one that is identified with more occurrences (185 times as compared to 140 times the verb *know*). And finally, the Romanian corpus displays the smallest number of occurrences with 93 times for *a crede* and 127 times for *a ști*. These values are aimed at portraying an overall picture of the three corpora and would not bear much meaning (since their occurrence does not exclusively determine the presence of either Tell or Opine; the possibilities of expression of the speech acts are infinite in number and they can be realised without using these two verbs) without a more extended analysis of the verb phrase which also includes details about the pronominal subjects of the verbs.

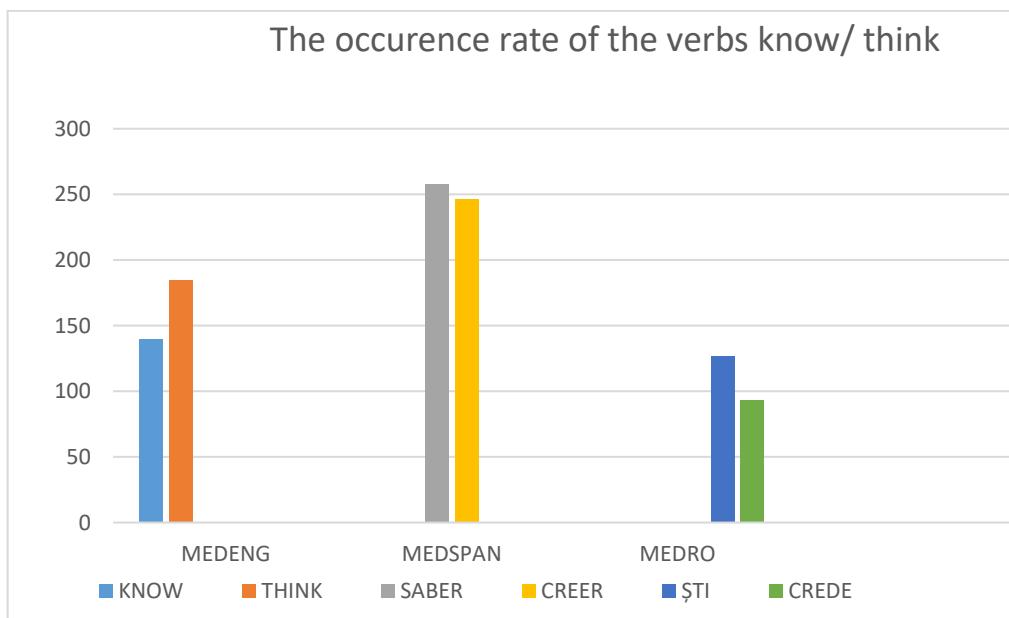


Fig. no. 3 – Frequency of Occurrence for know/think, saber/ creer and a ști/ a crede

(data obtained with <https://app.sketchengine.eu/>).

In trying to observe the different verb forms and their pronominal subjects, various problems were encountered:

- ✓ In British English, the pronominal subject precedes the verb and is always expressed, whereas in Spanish and Romanian, the meaning of the pronominal subject is usually borne by the verbal ending, and the expression of the personal pronoun becomes optional. It can be chosen in order to emphasise the person who performs the action stated by the verb. This is why only for the British English corpus the <https://app.sketchengine.eu/> was used here as well because it identifies collocations and verb sub-categories (see Appendix no. 2.) However, this app did not prove as efficient when dealing with Spanish and Romanian since it did not single out different forms of the same verb; for the latter two languages the AntConc software (version 4.2.0) was used.
- ✓ The first-person plural form of the subject may carry two different perspectives: (1) *we*, meaning the speaker and the addressee, who in this case counts as the entire audience who receives the message or (2) *we*, meaning the speaker and their colleagues or the members of the institution they represent.

Considering all of the above and according to the findings compiled from the corpus analysis software, the following observations have been made.

First, in the British English corpus, *know* is seen as a collective process (which can either involve solely the scientific/ political community or all the people who access the messages delivered by the speakers) with 46 occurrences of *we know* as opposed to 31 instances of *I know*. However, *think* is mostly used to denote an individual process, having 140 occurrences of *I think* as opposed to only 11 for *we think*.

Second, in the Spanish corpus, the perception of knowledge remains similar with 73 occurrences of *sabemos* and 58 for *sé*. As for the perspective of thought, this corpus has the highest number of occurrences for a first-person singular form, *creo*, which was identified 223 times, out of which 108 times as part of the expression *yo creo que*. This expression also uses the personal pronoun as the subject of the verb and the particle *que*, which introduces the following clauses. As for the plural form, *creemos* occurs only 4 times in the corpus.

Third, when considering the Romanian corpus, it is observed that the highest rank is for the singular form of *cred*, which appears 76 times as opposed to the plural form *credem*, which was identified only twice. As far as the *know* variants are concerned, the singular form appears 36 times, *știu*, and the plural, 31 times, *știm*.

After having identified the most relevant speech acts from the corpora and having chosen the proper research methodology, Tell and Opine marked the first step of the current analysis. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the selected press releases aimed at achieving the most important communicative purposes of the genre, to inform and to persuade, with speakers who tried to facilitate successful communication acts. The data showed that both the British English and the Spanish corpora provided a rather balanced display of language in terms of quantitative analysis, which waltzed through facts and opinions without altering the reception of the message. However, the qualitative analysis of the Spanish samples showed a higher degree of ambiguity because of the choice of adverbs and adjectives and the unclear overlapping of the speech acts. The Romanian corpus also displayed stances of confusion and difficulty in processing the message because of an exaggerated occurrence of Tell since too much information impedes the main ideas from getting filtered and being easily accepted.

The coding scheme of the speech acts revealed that the unfolding of the different components can happen in an infinite number of ways, making it impossible to design a replicable pattern. That is why in all three linguacultures, language choices seek to meet the speaker and the addressee's communicative needs first and foremost. However, in doing so, each linguaculture accesses its own linguistic system and corresponding structures, displaying some interesting features:

- ✓ In the British English corpus subjectivity is conveyed mainly through the use of subjective adjectives and adverbs;
- ✓ In the Spanish and Romanian corpora subjectivity is conveyed through the use of the conditional and the subjunctive. From a pragmatic standpoint, the conditional may function as a strategy for mitigation, politeness, or communicative caution. Its use does not necessarily indicate temporal hypotheticals, but rather reflects the speaker's intention to convey uncomfortable, uncertain, or potentially face-threatening information. Bosque (2001: 132) sees the conditional as a marker of epistemic modality and reiterates that, especially in journalism, the role of the conditional is to express a lack of commitment to the truthfulness of the message. Similarly, in Romanian, linguist Zafiu (2001: 185) considers that the conditional is frequently used in public communication to highlight the speaker's subjectivity and strategic positioning, as they distance themselves from the content, leaving room for ambiguity.
- ✓ In the Spanish corpus, the occurrence of the thought verb *creer* in first-person singular reached a staggering number of occurrences – 223; it is followed in ranking by the British English corpus with 140 occurrences, while in the Romanian corpus, it appears only 76 times.

To conclude, the cross-cultural analysis made it possible to observe the selected speech acts of Tell and Opine and to compare their realisation patterns. The information provided by the researched data contributes to a better understanding of human communication in and outside the cultural borders which have always been defining languages.

3.2 Request and Suggest: On Persuasion and Its Realisation in the Press Releases

The previous subchapter analysed the presence of Tells and Opines in the three corpora chosen for the current study and pointed out that these two speech acts were the most frequently encountered. The primary communicative purposes of the press release, that is to inform and to persuade, have been met through the use of the two speech acts, and the following observations have been made within the analysis: Tell is the informative speech act *per se*, where language is constructed so that information can pervade in as objective a manner as possible. Opine is used to soften and sometimes to emphasise a personal interpretation of the data, and it makes good attempts at persuading the hearer. However, the pragmatic device through which persuasion is more often achieved is the speech act of Request.

The alternation between Request and Suggest as speech acts with a stronger persuasive purpose is explained by the different degrees of illocutionary force achieved throughout the conversation. Request is considered a *face-threatening act* (Brown and Levinson: 1978) and imposition or even protest is usually expected and anticipated. Suggest is milder and acts as a mitigating device, especially when Request is not considered necessary and the speaker worries that its imposition might cause the opposite effect rather than the desired one.

From a statistical viewpoint, as the graphs will demonstrate further in the analysis, the frequency of occurrence in the case of Request is considerably higher than that of Suggest. This does nothing but confirm the appropriateness of the language to the register imposed by the communicative context in which the chosen press releases took place. Not only is there a hierarchical relationship of superiority between the speaker and the hearer due to the speaker's position as a medical specialist, politician or head of a department, but there is also an increased level of formality whenever public communication addresses the lay audience through representatives of state institutions. Moreover, the specificity of a worldwide pandemic delineates a communicative context in which bills and regulations had to be imposed almost overnight, and the population of the three democratic societies analysed in the current study had to be convinced of the efficiency and necessity of such new laws. When describing the general features of this speech act, Edmondson et al. (2023) acknowledge and explain this particularity of Request when considered in situations that unfold under the pressures of social hierarchies:

societies have systematised ways of facilitating cooperating actions – a simplistic case is that in which a type of public figure is invested with a social power such that Requests and suchlike stemming from this power carry (general) acceptance in the social community. An ‘order’ or ‘command’ for example (these are specific words in English

denoting particular types of Requests) may be seen as a Request which implies only *one* responding option – that of compliance. (2023: 106).

The speakers in the press releases studied herein represent figures of authority who deliver their messages with a clear goal in mind: making things happen as a consequence of their wording.

According to the pragmatic perspective, this is the core meaning of any speech act whose study aims at pointing out *how to do things with words* (Austin: 1952). This subchapter proposes the following research objectives:

- To decode the speech acts in terms of Head Acts and their corresponding supportive moves
- To study the morphological and syntactical means through which the requestive and suggestive forces will be imposed upon the hearer
- To identify verbs which are semantically associated with the core meanings of the two speech acts and highlight their most frequent collocations
- To analyse the rate of occurrence of these verbs

3.2.1 Requests³⁹

The illocutionary force of Request is best measured in situations where there is something at stake for both of the parties implied. That is why, similar contexts in terms of gravity and urgency were chosen for the examples extracted from the three corpora.

Corpus	Example	Speech Act Coding Scheme
MEDENG	<i>I thought it might be helpful to say a few words on the clinical basis for the current shielding program, what we're advising now and what we might see in the future. And that is particularly to the adults, but specifically, also the children who've been shielding. This is a new virus. We're continuing to learn about its transmission. And that knowledge will continue to grow over the coming years. At the start of the</i>	PREPARATOR GROUNDER

³⁹ Parts of this subchapter were included in the article titled *The Use of Requests in Pandemic Press Releases. A Cross-Cultural Case Study* published in SYNERGY volume 19, no. 2/ 2023: 210 - 225

	<p><i>epidemic in the U.K., using the information we had available, and our best understanding gained from other respiratory viruses, such as flu and SARS, we recognize that some people were likely to be more vulnerable to severe outcomes from disease than others. This included older people and those with underlying medical conditions. And those are normally the people who would have a flu vaccination each year. This clinically vulnerable group we advise to be particularly stringent in following social distancing guidance. And that recommendation continues.</i></p> <p><i>But senior clinicians recognize that, for a small subset of the population, there may be an even greater risk. So, for example, this would be those who may be on particularly high combinations of immunosuppressive treatments or where their disease was particularly poorly controlled. And this group, the clinically extremely vulnerable, were those that we advised to shield. Shielding doesn't alter the risk to an individual of illness if they become infected, but it does reduce the likelihood of meeting the virus in their daily lives. (Jennifer Harris 22.06.2020)</i></p>	<p>HEAD ACT (explicit performative)</p> <p>UPGRADER</p> <p>GROUNDER:</p> <p>Repetition of HEAD ACT (explicit performative)</p> <p>IMPOSITION</p> <p>MINIMISER:</p>
MEDSPAN	<p><i>En cuanto a la movilidad, vamos a ver, la movilidad es una de las razones por las que las epidemias como esta del coronavirus se extienden de zonas de alta incidencia a zonas de baja incidencia. Tenemos que tener muy claro que hay situaciones como</i></p>	<p>UPGRADER</p> <p>GROUNDER:</p>

	<p><i>por ejemplo este fin de semana, es un puente, ahí el lunes es festivo en no sé si en todo el territorio o en gran parte del territorio, la verdad es que no lo sé, en un puente de estas características en otros años, no tengo los datos exactos, pero si no recuerdo mal, viene a salir de Madrid entre un millón doscientos mil y un millón quinientos mil madrileños, con las incidencias que tenemos, que se vayan a su segunda residencia en la sierra, a su segunda residencia en un pueblo del sur de Madrid, o que se vayan a su segunda residencia o de vacaciones simplemente fuera de la Comunidad de Madrid, por supuesto, siendo una de las zonas de mayor incidencia, aunque se haya ido estabilizando poco a poco, sigue siendo una zona de muy alta incidencia, implica riesgos.</i></p> <p><i>Yo creo que tenemos que ser conscientes y yo creo que esta es una de las razones a las que me refería antes cuando apelaba a la responsabilidad de las personas, independientemente de todas las decisiones judiciales o técnicas que se puedan sacar o que se puedan poner en marcha entre hoy, mañana y el sábado, como muy tarde.</i></p> <p><i>Yo creo que tenemos que ser conscientes todos y que tenemos que buscar la manera de que esto dure 15 días un mes en lugar de durar cuatro o cinco meses y ese sería el objetivo. (Fernando Simón, 09.10.2020)</i></p>	<p>EXPANDER</p> <p>MORALISING</p> <p>HEAD ACT (Mild Hint)</p> <p>THREAT</p>
My translation	As far as mobility is concerned, let's see, mobility is one of the reasons why epidemics, such as the coronavirus extend from areas of high incidence to	

	<p>areas of low incidence. We have to clarify that there are situations like this weekend, there's a bank holiday, and Monday is off I don't know if in all the region or only in part of it, truth is, I don't know, a typical bank holiday as we know it from previous years, I don't have the exact data, but if I remember well, around one million two hundred thousand or one million five hundred people leave Madrid, with the current incidence, they leave to their second home in the mountains, or in a village south of Madrid or for holidays outside of the Madrid Community, obviously with Madrid being one of the areas with the highest incidence, although we managed to get it a bit stabilised, it still is an area of high risks. I believe we have to be aware of all this and this is one of the reasons I was referring to before when I claimed people's responsibility, no matter what the judicial or technical decisions might be taken or be enforced today, tomorrow or Saturday, at the latest. I believe we all have to be aware of it and search for the best way to make this last 15 days or a month instead of four or five months, this would be our objective.</p>	
MEDRO	<p><i>Mai este o decizie care a fost luată și anume referitor la organizarea sărbătorilor religioase și care este permisă numai cu participarea persoanelor care au domiciliul sau reședința în localitatea unde se desfășoară activitatea, fără participarea persoanelor sau pelerinilor din alte localități. Acest lucru este <u>extrem de necesar</u> pentru că - vreau să explic - , riscul major nu este numai participarea la fața locului, riscul major este pe durata transportului, în autocare, în timpul în care se deplasează către localitatea respectivă sau înapoi acasă. Dacă se stă într-un autocar sau într-un mijloc de transport ore, este suficient să fie o singură persoană infectată ca să se</i></p>	<p>HEAD ACT (locution derivable)</p> <p>UPGRADER</p> <p>GROUNDER</p> <p>THREAT</p> <p>IMPOSITION MINIMISER</p>

	<p><i>întoarcă toți care au călătorit în mijlocul respectiv infectați acasă.</i></p> <p><i>Acest lucru trebuie să fie limitat și sper că populația ne înțelege pentru această decizie și, cum am zis, deci sărbătorile se fac, doar că participanții vor fi vor fi doar cei care au domiciliul sau reședința în localitatea în care se desfășoară activitatea respectivă și nu se permite participarea unora din afara localității respective. (Raed Arafat, 05.10.2020)</i></p>	MANIPULATION/ APPEASEMENT
My translation	<p>There is another decision that has been taken and which refers to the celebration of religious holidays that is allowed only with the participation of those people who reside in the same place where the celebration occurs, without having people or pilgrims coming from different places. This is extremely necessary because – I want to explain – the major risk does not occur while participating in the celebration, but during transport, in coaches, while they travel back and forth from their hometown. If one sits in a coach or in any means of transport for hours, it is enough to have one infected person in order to have the rest of the travelling people return home infected. This needs to be limited, and I hope the population will understand why we took this decision. As I said, the holidays will be celebrated, but only with people who reside in those respective places where the event is being celebrated and it is not allowed to have people from other places going there.</p>	

Table no. 4 – The Request Coding Scheme Exemplified

To begin with the British English corpus, the overall impression in its case was that of clarity, of more being said in fewer words. This aspect does not remain simply an impression, as numerous studies acknowledge the English quest for clarity and precision, especially when considering academic or professional languages (e.g. Bennett and Muresan, 2016).

One of the most obvious particularities of the Request realisation in this corpus is the recurrence of the explicit performative form of the Head Act. This aspect makes Requests rather easily identifiable to the researcher and it helps in keeping the message clear. A reason why this may be so is the necessity of an expressed subject in the English clause. Although this could be

avoided through syntactic devices such as passive voice or impersonal verb structures, in the analysed corpus the presence of the first-person plural pronoun of the person deixis is highly notable: 1541 occurrences of ‘we’ in the MEDENG corpus (measured in AntConc, as it can be seen in Image no. 6).

Another feature that was observed while analysing this corpus was the constant presence of the Grounder. It is used both as a pre-posed and post-posed Supporting Move and it focuses mainly on providing detailed explanations rather than justifying the speech act. In the first speech act sequence exemplified in the table above, the following sequence was noticed:

Grounder – Head Act – Upgrader – Grounder – Head Act – Imposition minimiser

What needs to be emphasised here is not so much the repetition of the same Head Act, which might occur at times, especially in the spoken language out of the need for precision and reinforcement, as the presence of a different Grounder before each of the Head Act’s occurrences. One possible interpretation of this sequence would be that the need for clarity is fulfilled by providing short pre-posed explanations.

The absence of the Aggravating Supportive Moves as components of the examined speech acts serves as an argument for the idea that, in the patterns identified in this corpus, there is a preference for reason and scientifically backed-up explanations at the detriment of emotional triggers. This is an observation strictly based on the analysis of the sequence units of Request, which does not imply that in other speech acts throughout the corpus, these Aggravating Supportive Moves might not be present. These devices are extremely relevant when looking into persuasion or manipulation techniques and their absence from this particular niche under study does not exclude by all means their presence in other parts of the corpus.

All in all, the main features of the British English patterns of Request realisation are:

- Head Acts are realised directly mainly at the explicit performative level,
- Grounder is a Mitigating Supporting Move which almost always precedes or follows the Head Act,
- The Aggravating Supportive Moves are absent from the studied speech acts.

To move further, the Spanish texts provide an extended amount of space in which numerous data are discussed and interpreted from the virus expansion point of view. Aspects related to the current international and national crisis are detailed and explained in long utterances that waltz through figures and percentages alike. The beginning of the Romanian press releases also refers to statistical data regarding the evolution of the virus spread, but in a considerably shorter space, which is exclusively dedicated to discussing the situation inside the

country. The focus, however, is placed upon the measures that the government enforces to control the pandemic, and it is in this context where most of the Request speech acts were identified. Conversely, in the Spanish corpora, the Request speech acts were identified in the second part of the press releases, which consists of a question-and-answer sequence. In these cases, the Request speech acts are challenged by topics and situations addressed by the reporters.

Both languages showed similarities concerning the length of the utterances, which tend to be quite extended with two or more subordinated clauses, and in terms of some syntactic aspects. There is a great preference for:

- the use of the passive-reflexive voice (*s-a decis, s-a gestionat/ se han identificado, se reciben*) which is specific to objective, academic texts that abscond the actor
- the first person plural form of the verb (*vom vedea, suntem intr-un moment/ hemos dicho, sabemos*)
- starting the sentence with impersonal verb structures (*există motive, este imposibil/ es cierto que, no hay*) or for the recurrent use of the first person, either singular or plural form of the personal pronoun.

On the other hand, regarding the realisation of the speech act of Request, one striking similarity is related to the fact that both linguacultures use Aggravating Supporting Moves in the proximity of the Head Act. Whether it is **Moralising** or **Threat**, this type of supportive move was observed in both corpora with frequency. As far as the general features of the Supporting Moves, both corpora showed that the supportive moves can be pre-posed or post-posed without delineating a clear pattern of occurrence.

Conversely, and from a cross-cultural pragmatic perspective, the two linguacultures showed precise differences in their realisation patterns of Request. The upgrader is a Supporting Move which increases the force of the speech act by means of lexical or emotional exaggeration. All of the Requests from the Spanish corpora were preceded by upgraders (time intensifier, commitment indicator or emotional expression) whereas none of the speech acts identified in the Romanian corpora had upgraders.

Moreover, there is a distinction between the types of Head Act that the two linguacultures employ. More than half of the speech acts identified in the Spanish corpora presented Head Acts with a non-conventionally indirect level of directness that is, either strong or mild hints. This is an aspect which balances smoothly the use of upgraders and their emotional triggers. Oppositely, almost more than half of the speech acts identified in the

Romanian corpora presented Head Acts with direct levels such as locution derivable. These types of Head Acts are usually preceded by grounders, preparators or expanders.

The different types of Head Act realisation identified in the corpora provide information regarding the level of directness approached in the Request realisation patterns. On the one hand, this is related to aspects of politeness and it is important to remember here that Request is considered a *face-threatening act* (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and as such, it exerts certain imposition upon the hearer. Given that all the texts in the corpora were delivered in what is considered by all three linguacultures, a formal context and by highly educated members of society (medical professionals, secretary of state, head of different medical departments) it would be expected that the rules of politeness are followed accordingly. And this occurs so, to a certain extent. The types of Head Acts identified throughout the analysis were either *direct* or *non-conventionally indirect (strong and mild hint)*. All of the ones identified in the British English corpus were *direct*, mainly *explicit performative*, although there were a few *mood derivable* as well. In the Spanish and Romanian corpora, both typologies were observed, although the occurrence of the *non-conventionally indirect* was more frequent in the Spanish texts (predominantly *mild hint*). It would be tempting to say that the higher the level of indirectness, the higher the level of politeness. However, it is my opinion that these differences are linked to the inner characteristics of the linguacultures, which makes them stand as independent manifestations of language. British English's need for clarity and precision is also fulfilled through this level of directness, whereas the other two linguacultures seek to achieve the realisation of Request through less direct means of expression, simply because this is how they meet their communicative objectives. According to Leech (1983), this involves applying the Tact Maxim, whereby the speaker uses more direct, unmitigated forms to ensure rapid comprehension and compliance: “minimize the expression of beliefs that cost the hearer; maximize the expression of beliefs that benefit the hearer” (1983: 132).

Moreover, the data used for the study shows interesting phenomena related to the use of Supporting Moves. Apart from the Head Acts, which are the basic unit of Request realisation, observing these types of moves and their pattern of occurrence outlines some interesting aspects. In the case of Mitigating Supportive Moves, the presence of upgraders and grounders is relevant to the present discussion. On the one hand, it was noticed that upgraders have the greatest rate of occurrence in the Spanish corpus. Conversely, these moves appear the least frequently in the British English corpus. On the other hand, grounders were mostly present in the British English corpus, mainly in their explanatory form. It must be said that grounders are a quite common type of Supportive Move, but their reoccurrence in the British English texts

cannot be ignored and it served perfectly to this linguaculture's objectives of clarity and precision.

However, when the Aggravating Supporting Moves are considered, the data continues to support the culturally embedded features of each linguaculture. These moves were not identified at all in the realisation patterns of Request studied in the British English corpus. They were present nevertheless, in the other two corpora, at almost comparable levels of occurrence.

3.2.2 Suggests

Identifying the Head Acts of Suggest was rather challenging and less clear in comparison to Request. Nevertheless, certain criteria were taken into account when performing the cross-cultural analysis. Firstly, what the speaker wanted to make the hearer do, was of less importance to the former; it did not necessarily involve both parties and that is why the illocutionary force of the speech act, which in the case of Request could cause serious impositions, became milder and bore a mitigating intent. Secondly, because of the lessening of the illocutionary force, the language used to convey the concept of suggestion showed a high degree of variation.

Table no. 5 illustrates samples of Suggest extracted from the three corpora in order to exemplify the coding scheme of the speech act.

Corpus	Example	Speech Act Coding Scheme
MEDENG	<p>(1) <i>I really hope that we won't have to go into back into anything like a national lockdown of the kind that we did in March and in April. And I really hope that with the package of measures that we've got, if properly implemented and enforced, we can get the R down.</i> (Boris Johnson, 12.10.2020)</p>	HEAD ACT 1 (strong hint) HEAD ACT 2 (strong hint) GROUNDER
	<p>(2) <i>(...) we want to take local authorities with us, obviously a local approach can be immensely valuable in enforcement. There's the local knowledge of the places where the virus may be transmitted, local activity and</i></p>	HEAD ACT 1 (want statement) GROUNDER

	<p><i>closing down people who are transparently breaking the rules. Local enforcement, local perception, these can be fantastically powerful and we want to work with local authorities to deliver this. (Boris Johnson, 12.10.2020)</i></p>	GROUNDER (reiteration of the same idea with another suprasegmental emphasis) HEAD ACT 2 (want statement)
MEDSPAN	<p>(1) <i>Debemos intentar que los auténticos protagonistas, si me lo permiten, de la Navidad, que siempre fueron las niñas y los niños lo permitan, y habrá otras franjas de edad de la población que probablemente tengamos que decidir relacionarnos esta vez con menos gente, con menos personas de las que lo hacemos habitualmente en otras fiestas y tener esa decisión individual de centrarnos más en los que más queremos y no exponerlos a riesgos innecesarios. (Silvia Calzón, 30.11.2020)</i></p> <p>(2) <i>Sí que tenemos cierta sensación de que los ingresos de hoy son menos que los ingresos de ayer y no solo en Madrid, en otras comunidades también. Hay que estar vigilantes, preparados, pero es verdad que las cifras hablan a favor de esta decisión. (María José Sierra, 04.04.2020)</i></p>	HEAD ACT 1 (hedged performative) HEAD ACT 2 (hedged performative) HEAD ACT 3 (mild hint) GROUNDER (justification + threat) SUGGEST AS GROUNDER (locution derivable) HEAD ACT for REQUEST (hedged performative) TELL AS GROUNDER
My translation	<p>(1) We are now maintaining some figures due to the pressure put on healthcare assistance which makes us worry, but we could easily fall under the temptation, which is understandable, of believing that we are on a descendant path concerning the cumulative incidence, which is true.</p> <p>(2) We should try that the true protagonists, if you allow me, of Christmas who were always the children, and there will be other age groups with whom we will probably have to decide to get together with fewer people, with fewer people than we would normally do in other holidays and take this individual</p>	

	<p>decision of focusing more on the ones we love and not expose them to unnecessary risks.</p> <p>(3) It is indeed true that we have a certain sensation that today's admissions are fewer than the ones we had yesterday, and not only in Madrid but in other districts as well. We have to stay vigilant, ready, but it is true that the figures speak in favour of this decision.</p>	
MEDRO	<p>(1) <i>Acum, depinde cât de mare va fi impactul, depinde, bineînțeles, în același timp, de cât de mult vom respecta regulile. Clar că nu toată lumea va respecta regulile, dar noi sperăm, totuși, ca majoritatea să respecte recomandările și regulile care sunt. (Raed Arafat, 10.12.2021)</i></p> <p>(2) <i>Cei care au doar o schemă de vaccinare, trebuie să își facă Boosterul, așa cum este recomandat, după minim șase luni. Această doză de Booster, repet, este înalt recomandată, mai ales celor vulnerabili și desigur că prioritatea tuturor și a noastră, la nivel de sănătate publică, va fi să creștem numărul celor care se vaccinează cu prima schemă, dar trebuie să dăm posibilitatea celor care au debutat schema de vaccinare să își consolideze răspunsul imun, inclusiv cu această doză de Booster. (...) Aici, este un lucru cât se poate de evident, dar, persoanele care, repet, au făcut o primă schemă de vaccinare, este foarte important și acest lucru este recomandat de Centrul European de Control al Bolilor, să își efectueze boosterul. (Valeriu Gheorghita, 10.12.2021)</i></p>	<p>OPINE AS GROUNDER</p> <p>HEAD ACT (strong hint)</p> <p>HEAD ACT FOR REQUEST (hedged performative)</p> <p>SUGGEST AS GROUNDER (locution derivable)</p> <p>HEAD ACT 1 (mild hint)</p> <p>HEAD ACT 2 (strong hint)</p>
My translation	(1) Now it depends on how big the impact will be, it depends of course, at the same time on how much we will respect the rules. It is clear that not	

	<p>everybody will obey the rules, but we hope still that the majority will respect the recommendations and the rules available.</p> <p>(2) The ones that have only one vaccination scheme must have the Booster, as it is recommended, after six months. This Booster dose, I repeat, is highly recommended especially to the vulnerable ones, and of course it is our priority, at the public health level, to increase the number of those who get vaccinated with the first dose, but we also must give possibility to those who began the vaccination scheme to consolidate the immune response, including through this Booster dose. (...) Here, this is as evident an aspect as it can be, but, I repeat, people who had a first vaccination scheme, it is very important, and this is also recommended by the European Centre of Disease Control, to have the Booster.</p>
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Table no. 5 – The Suggest Coding Scheme Exemplified

At first glance, a pertinent observation concerning the examples provided to illustrate the speech act of Suggest indicates that a clear delimitation of the Head Acts appears almost impossible. They are either placed as grounders for Request or are repeated and chaotically inserted between their Grounders.

Firstly, if the British English corpus is carefully examined, the Head Acts identified here have the following levels of directness: *strong hint* (2) and *want statement* (2). Although this choice of perspective serves the intention of elusiveness, the fact that the Head Acts can be identified as separate units fulfils the communicative purpose of clarity and a valid attempt at precision. These characteristics of the British English linguaculture have also been observed in previous analyses of the speech acts identified in the corpus. Even if Suggest is probably among the *fuzziest* (Lakoff, 1972) language uses, it still manages to adhere to the cultural background in which it is being used.

From a semantic viewpoint, the Head Acts identified in example number (1) communicate a requestive intention: asking the population to adopt and respect the new package of measures to avoid another complete lockdown. However, the words that express this intention only hint towards it by projecting a positive future outcome under the semantic frame of *hope* (34 times in the corpus). The type of speech act is Suggest-for-us, and in this particular example, the sequential pattern unfolds as follows: '*I hope that we ...*'. The speaker places himself under the same possible outcome as his hearers. Still, he is the one making the suggestion, thus hoping that the resolution would be favourable for all parties involved. This

provides a sense of inclusion which mitigates the force of the speech act and, simultaneously, provides a feeling of optimism since the pressure is not placed solely on the hearer.

Moreover, it must be acknowledged here that one of the most prominent pragmatic means through which mitigation or lack of imposition upon the hearer is conceived refers to hedging. It was Lakoff (1972) who popularised the concept and opened up this branch to further study. In the discussion of Request and Suggest, it was considered that Request was the *face-threatening act* (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and Suggest, the mitigating one, the softener, the speech act that re-establishes the balance between the speaker and the hearer, by causing less of an imposition. Brown and Levinson insist on this role of attenuating the strength of the speech act:

Now, the thrust of our argument is that ordinary communicative intentions are often potential threats to cooperative interaction. Communicative intentions are regulated and encoded in speech acts, and if one looks at the conditions on the felicitous use of speech acts, the sources of threat become clear...Consequently, to hedge these assumptions – that is, to avoid commitment to them – is a primary and fundamental method of disarming routing interaction threat. (1987: 146)

In order to meet this communicative goal, hedging is achieved through the use of both morphological and syntactical means. Firstly, the verb *hope* is preceded in both cases by the adverb *really* to convey reassurance and to make a stronger emphasis. Other hedges, such as anything like, of the kind, appeal to the hearer's previous knowledge and imagination with the intent of raising approximations and comparisons. At a syntactical level, the concept of *hope* reiterated twice in previous structures, is conditioned through a subordinate *if clause*. This is a syntactical means used by the speaker to convey the idea that hope can become a reality if certain conditions are complied with. From a semantic point of view, it could be inferred that the underlying intention behind this structure is actually that of a request: *I ask you to fulfil this condition in order to reach a commonly desired outcome*. However, the speech act performed here is Suggest, which is why the force of the illocution is not strong enough to be considered and assimilated as a Request. However, the requestive intent can be read between the lines, and the expectations of compliance are always there, no matter the force of the chosen speech act.

The suggestion implied in this context is supported by a grounder expressed through a second-type *if clause*, where the auxiliary verb from the passive structure is missing: *if properly implemented and enforced*. The absence of the auxiliary *to be* is most likely due to the economy of language typical of live speech; however, through this choice of words and

structures, the speaker makes a short but pungent mention of the necessary condition for their suggestion.

The Head Act strategy identified in the second example extracted from the MEDENG corpus is *want statement*. A very interesting contrast is conveyed in the case of the former because it combines the core meaning of the speech act Suggest, which refers to the fact that the speaker's intention of performing a future action is in the interest of the hearer, with the speaker's desire concerning the outcome of the illocution. In other words, the speaker wants something to be accomplished as a consequence of their speech act, and this want is claimed to be in the best interest of the hearer. Edmondson et al. (2023: 128) differentiate between Suggest-for-you and Suggest-for-us, stressing the fact that in the case of the latter (which is also the case of the example analysed here) "a direct Suggest-for-us may be authoritative or simply enthusiastic". Here, it is clearly an authoritarian Suggest-for-us reinforced also by the presence of the first-person plural *we* as the subject of the verb. But a Suggest-for-us may also imply the speaker's willingness "to participate in this joint activity also" (2023: 127).

To sum up, the coding scheme for the speech acts identified in the selected paragraph shows that the message begins with the Head Act of a Suggest-for-us, then continues with an extended grounder in which the authority is transferred from the speaker onto a common ground shared between the speaker and the hearer. This is achieved by suprasegmental emphasis expressed through the persistent repetition of the adjective *local* in a series of different noun phrases: *local authorities, local approach, local knowledge, local activity, local enforcement, local perception*. Finally, before expressing the second Head Act (which is actually a conclusive reiteration of the first), the emphasis reaches its climax in a superlative construction: *fantastically powerful*.

Secondly, in the extracts taken as examples from the Spanish corpus, the coding of the speech acts evinces several features. To begin with, the Head Acts' strategies are:

*hedged performative (2), locution derivable (1 - when Suggest acts as grounder for Request)
and mild hint (1)*

Next, identifying Suggest as an independent speech act proved challenging, as in more than half of the situations, Suggest was identified as a Supportive Move for Request.

The first excerpt from MEDSPAN illustrates a case of involuntary *anacoluthon*. The text undergoes various shifts from one syntactic construction to another, so paragraph parsing becomes difficult and inconsistent. The anacoluthon is typical for the spoken language, due to distractions, hesitations and on-the-spot decisions to change the register or the sequence of ideas and communicative intentions. Three Head Acts have been identified here: the first two use the

hedged performative strategy (*debemos intentar, probablemente tengamos que decidir relacionarnos*⁴⁰). In contrast, the third one uses the mild hint strategy (*tener esa decisión individual de centrarnos*⁴¹). The breach in syntactic logical sequence appears from the very beginning when the subject of the first subordinate clause is left without the predicate: *Debemos intentar que los autenticos protagonistas...??*⁴². The receiver of the message will intuitively deduce the fact that the true protagonists of the holidays need to be fewer than usual. However, this core idea is hedged by the three Suggests, probably because in similar situations, avoiding spelling out an unpopular political move becomes more important and relevant to the speaker's intentions than respecting the basic pragmatic principles of clarity and precision. Instead of continuing the clause with an appropriate predicate, a parenthesis is opened in which details about different age groups are provided. If it were to decode the excerpt, the unfolding of speech acts and their core-code categories would look something like the following:

- Head Act 1** (interrupted by a phrasal downgrader, namely a cajoler⁴³: *si me lo permiten*⁴⁴; the clause remains incomplete after this interruption)
 - + details about age groups
 - + **Head Act 2** (introduced by the subordinate conjunction *que* without having a logical connection to any main clause)
 - + details about the number of people who usually gather around the holidays
 - + **Head Act 3** (which centres on individual responsibility)
 - + **Grounder** (aimed at naming a possible threat).

Two observations become particularly relevant and important in achieving a deeper understanding of how the message is communicated. On the one hand, it must be acknowledged that the syntactical flow gets interrupted and is never recovered right after using the cajoler. To soften the strength of the speech act, a long digression is preferred to the detriment of clear expression, flouting the maxim of quantity (Grice, 1975). Moreover, this is probably the reason why the Suggest is chosen, and a mild tonality is maintained throughout. On the other hand, all three Head Acts compose Suggest-for-us, with the main verbs in first person plural: *debemos, tengamos, hacemos, centrarnos, queremos*. Not only does the speaker insist on softening the discourse as much as possible by using all of the above-mentioned persuasion techniques, but

⁴⁰ we have to try, we will probably have to decide to get in touch

⁴¹ To have that personal decision of focusing

⁴² We should try that the true protagonists....??

⁴³ The Cajoler is a phrasal downgrader acknowledged by House and Kadar (2021: 123) as “conventionalised speech items (...) that are interspersed to increase, establish, or restore harmony between the interlocutors, which may be endangered through the speech act.”

⁴⁴ *If I may* (our translation)

they also position themselves in a similar situation to suffer the same consequences as the receivers of their message.

The second extract from the Spanish corpus illustrates a Suggest that acts as a grounder for Request. In this situation, the speech act strategy is locution derivable. The speech act strategy for Request is a hedged performative, exercising a direct imposition through the imperative use of the modal *must* (*hay que*). The Request comes as a stronger reinforcement to counterbalance the acknowledgement expressed in the speech act of Suggest, according to which, the number of hospital admissions appears to have decreased. In this situation, Suggest acts as a grounder for Request, and there seems to be a shift of paradigm: Suggest is no longer aimed at softening what might be perceived by the receiver as an aggressive illocutionary force, but it is rather the speech act of Request that re-establishes the balance precisely through its illocutionary force. This happens because the grounder implies a tendency towards a general impression which might minimise the state of affairs, and it is this particular Suggest that the speaker wishes to contradict, while at the same time feeling the need to acknowledge the truthfulness of the data. That is why, in the end, Request is followed by a Tell as grounder, which refers to the data that the initial Suggest was based upon.

Thirdly, the extracts taken from MEDRO provide examples of speech acts that have the following Head Act strategies:

strong hint (2), mild hint (1), and locution derivable (1 – when Suggest acts as grounder for Request)

This is the only corpus that provides examples of *strong hint* and coincides with the Spanish corpus in using *the locution derivable* strategy when Suggest acts as a grounder for Request.

The first excerpt positions the Head Act (*strong hint*) at the end while being preceded by two grounders. The first one is a justification that prepares the speech act of Suggest by shadowing a sense of uncertainty. This is obtained by using numerous lexical and phrasal downgraders or, at times, upgraders:

- The verb phrase *it depends* (*depinde*) is repeated twice; this is an effective way, frequently used in the Romanian language whenever the speaker is either unsure of the answer or considers various case scenarios which keep the answer between unclear levels of understanding.

- The second use of the previously mentioned verb phrase is followed by the cajoler⁴⁵ of course (*bineînțeles*) through which the speaker acknowledges a common ground of understanding between themselves and the receivers of their message.
- Temporal deixis is used twice in the utterance: one is placed at the very beginning (*now – acum*), preceding the first verb phrase and the second follows immediately after the cajoler (*at the same time – în același timp*). The first acts more as a cajoler (in the sense of a “conventionalised speech item”, House and Kadar, 2021: 123) than an upgrader, since it does not refer to the present moment of speaking and time is not at all relevant to the rest of the message. However, it proves to be an effective introductory particle. On the contrary, the second time reference is indeed an upgrader since it emphasises the link between the magnitude of the impact and the level of rule compliance, stressing the importance of them occurring within the same time frame.

All of these features work together to create a grounder for the speech act of Suggest aimed at explaining the context and establishing its pre-conditions. At the same time, the speaker makes sure that they leave room for interpretation (*it depends*) in case their predictions turn out to be unrealistic in the end.

The second grounder of Suggest is achieved through another speech act, in this case, an Opine. It seems relevant at this point in the analysis to remember that Opines are generally “voiced in the hope of reaching agreement” (House and Kadar, 2021: 112), so using one to introduce a Suggest might be a predictable choice on the speaker’s behalf, especially if formulated as a generally accepted truth. The utterance begins with an adverb phrase (*clar că – clearly/ it is clear that*) and states what could be perceived as an absolute truth – not everybody will obey the rules. However, despite the choice of words and linguistic structures, this grounder voices the speaker’s opinion on the matter, not a scientifically proven fact. It serves the purpose of softening the imposition which might be caused by the illocutionary force of the speech act, nevertheless.

The Head Act is linked to its grounder through the adversative conjunction *but*, and achieves the strong hint strategy by employing the first person plural form of the verb next to its subject expressed through the corresponding personal pronoun. The mentioning of the personal pronoun as the subject of the verb is not necessary in the Romanian language, since the verb termination already expresses the information conveyed by the pronoun. Consequently,

⁴⁵ A cajoler is a mitigating element in discourse used to reduce the illocutionary force of a speech act (e.g., a request), to protect the hearer’s face (in terms of politeness theory, Brown and Levinson, 1987) or to increase cooperation or solidarity between speaker and listener.

its usage has a reinforcement function: it reassures the receiver of the message of the strong desire nurtured by the speaker that everybody will eventually obey the rules and regulations.

The second excerpt presented as an example from the Romanian corpus shows three Suggests: one unfolds as a grounder for Request in which case the Head Act strategy used is *locution derivable*, while the other two speech acts use a *mild hint* and a *strong hint* as their strategies.

The text begins with a Request formulated as a *hedged performative* Head Act strategy with the modal *must* intensifying the requestive force. The same idea is repeated in the grounder, but with structures and sequences that convey a milder tonality, thus serving the communicative purposes of Suggest:

- an impersonal passive structure (*este înalt recomandată – it is highly recommended*) used to shadow the author of the recommendation on the one hand, and to convey authority and formality to the argumentation, on the other hand. This example is taken from the press release, and it was used as such by the speaker, although this structure sounds more like an exact translation from English, rather than a typical Romanian expression. On the contrary, instead of using the adverb *highly* (the Romanian counterpart is *înalt*), the Romanian language would more likely prefer words such as *cu siguranță/fără îndoială*⁴⁶ or would probably leave the adjective *recommended* without any determiner since it cannot be used in comparative or superlative structures. This unusual choice of words could be inferred either as a mistake or as an unverified collection of information from sources originally delivered in English.
- the Suggest-for-us strategy, where *us* refers here both to the speaker–hearer pair and to the public health authority, refers to the idea that the suggestion is to the benefit of all parties involved, and the hearer is expected to react accordingly because their actions are in everyone's interest: *prioritatea tuturor și a noastră – everyone's priority but also ours*.
- the above-analysed structure is preceded by a cajoler (*desigur – of course*) as a means of reassurance.

This grounder provides justifications to support the requestive force of the previous speech act and effectively introduces the next Suggest, which is formulated according to the *mild hint* strategy.

In the case of this particular Head Act strategy, it is necessary to clarify the core meaning embedded in the pragmatic encoding: that is, everyone who has already had at least one dose

⁴⁶ certainly, beyond any doubt

of the vaccine should complete their vaccination scheme with the booster. With an obvious persuasive intention behind it, the speaker communicates this idea from a caring and permissive perspective: *trebuie să dăm posibilitatea celor care au debutat schema de vaccinare să își consolideze răspunsul imun* – *we must give the possibility to those who began the vaccination scheme to consolidate their immune response*. The speech act Suggest is built with the modal *must*, which does not imply an obligation on the hearer's behalf here. It is, in fact, the speaker's obligation to make sure that all the necessary conditions are met. The last part of the Head Act uses an expression which belongs to the specialised medical language (*to consolidate the immune response*) and appeals to the power of scientific authority.

The same technique is used in the last Suggest exemplified in this excerpt, which follows the *strong hint* strategy. Similarly to the Suggest as grounder analysed earlier, this speech act begins with an impersonal passive structure reinforced with a superlative, in this case: *este foarte important* – *it is very important*. Further on, the recommendation is reiterated, the institution's name is mentioned, and it functions as the Agent of the passive structure, thus validating its importance and truthfulness.

To conclude, the chosen excerpts outline features that characterise the speech act of Suggest, and the analysis performed up to this point of the study has singled out both common and singular aspects. In order to better observe these aspects, along with both their similarities and differences, a clear presentation of the Head Act strategies proved useful. This is so mainly because the Head Act is the core unit of analysis, and the strategy the speaker chooses to employ communicates their intention to a greater extent. It significantly influences the unfolding of other core-code categories such as grounders, different types of downgraders or upgraders.

Consequently, one observation that is directly related to the base meaning of Suggest is the presence of the *mild/ strong hint* strategy. The three linguacultures analysed in the current study use it when building the speech act of Suggest. The semantic link between the verbs *to hint* (“to say or do something that shows what you think or want, usually in a way that is not direct”, according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary& Thesaurus⁴⁷) and *to suggest* (“to communicate or show an idea or feeling without stating it directly or giving proof”, according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary& Thesaurus⁴⁸) refers to the level of indirectness conveyed to the communication: to suggest something or to hint at something implies an indirect approach of the matter on the speaker's behalf who acts according to their persuasive intention to serve the hearer's own interest.

⁴⁷ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/suggest>, last consulted on January the 4th, 2025

⁴⁸ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/hint>, last consulted on January the 4th, 2025

Another common feature is observed between the Spanish and the Romanian corpora (MEDSPAN and MEDRO). In these two linguacultures Suggest was identified as a grounder for Request, in which cases the adopted Head Act strategy was *locution derivable*. This type of interference between the speech acts of Request and Suggest is due to politeness: the need to soften the requestive force is met by building a Suggest as a grounder to fulfil the role of explaining and justifying. In the case of the excerpts analysed from the British English corpus, the Head Acts of Suggest are supported by grounders which appeal either to logical deductions or emphasis.

As for the differences observed among the three corpora, the *want statement* strategy is encountered solely in MEDENG, while the *hedged performative* strategy appears only in MEDSPAN. In the first case, the Head Acts are built alternatively with the following subject-verb combinations: *I hope/ we want*. Even if the verb *want* can be considered a typical expression of Request, and it might cause a relevant degree of imposition upon the hearer, the following sequences of utterance, combined with the grounders, manage to soften it enough to become a Suggest. In the second situation, the hedged performative strategy is implemented in the Spanish corpus through modal verbs (*debemos/ hay que*) or through adverbs that show modality and convey the idea of supposition (*probablemente tengamos que/ sí que temenos cierta sensación de que*). The case is similar to the one exemplified by the British English corpus in the sense that the verb weakens the requestive force due to the adjacent core-code categories. However, a singular situation has been observed in the second excerpt of the Spanish corpus: when looking into the distribution of forces between a Request and its grounder formulated as a Suggest, the analysis showed that the balance needed to restore the communicative intentions was achieved through the speech act of Request, formulated as a counter-part.

All in all, it is a matter of cross-cultural pragmatic analysis to present and decode the speech acts that comprise public communication, in order to determine communicative intentions alongside contextual and cultural patterns.

3.2.3 Frequency of Occurrence

Apart from the qualitative analysis performed in the previous subchapter, where the speech acts of Request and Suggest were described and decoded, a quantitative analysis of the three corpora is necessary in order to complete the study of public communication during the sanitary crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The statistical data concerning the frequency of Request and Suggest in the three corpora provide relevant information about the speech acts that comprise this communication.

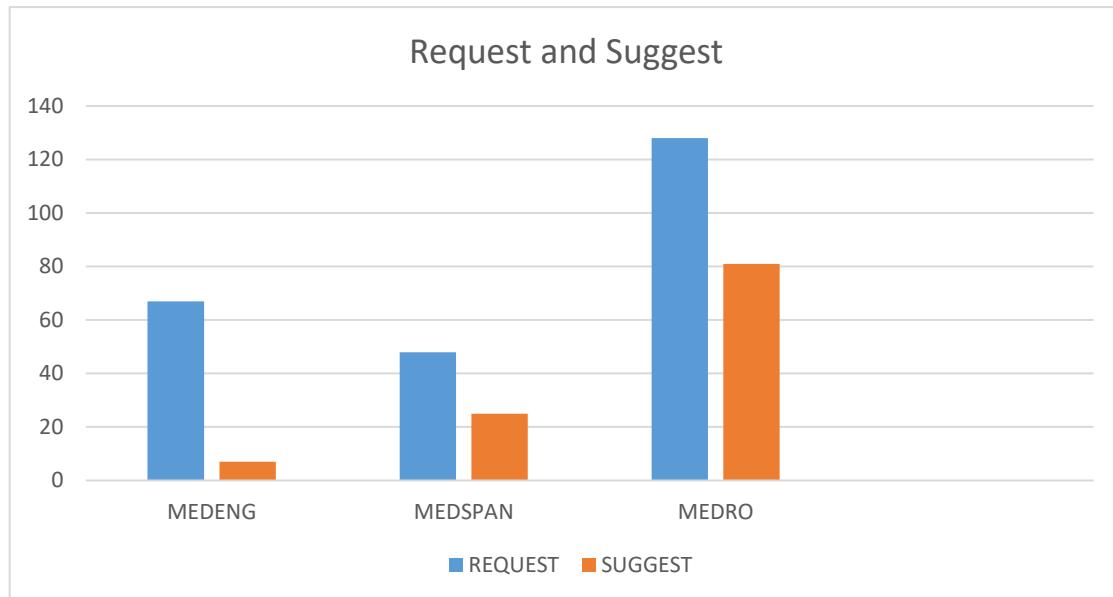


Fig. no. 4 - Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Acts Request and Suggest
(data obtained manually)

The results in the diagram above show a peak and a minimum: the Romanian corpus contains the highest number of Request occurrences (128), while the British English corpus has the lowest number of Suggest occurrences (7). The Romanian corpus also has the highest number of Suggest occurrences (81) and this corpus exploits the relation between the two speech acts the most. Finally, the Spanish corpus has the lowest number of Request occurrences of the three.

Regarding the similarity between the Spanish and the Romanian corpora already noted in the qualitative analysis, this is reinforced by the data provided here. All the pieces of information collected in this regard indicate there is a tight relationship in the building of the two speech acts; in both corpora, cases where Suggest acted as a grounder for Request have been identified. Statistically, it is observed that in the case of MEDRO, the number of Suggest occurrences represents 63% of the total number of Request occurrences. Similarly, in the case of MEDSPAN, the number of Suggest occurrences represents 52% of the total number of Request occurrences. These percentages confirm that both linguacultures employ the same strategy when facing the imposition of addressing a Request. On the one hand, the level of imposition that this speech act can cause upon the hearer is felt as being particularly strong and on the other hand, the constant presence of Suggest as a softener of the requestive force indicates the need for balance.

As for the British English corpus, the occurrences of Suggest at such a low rate reflect this linguaculture's acknowledged need for precision and accuracy. Moreover, the Suggest occurrences represent only 2% of the total Request occurrences. These data align with the fact that Suggest was identified as Head Act and not as a Supportive Mood for Request in the qualitative analysis. Consequently, this could mean that the imposition a Request might have on the hearer is not considered strong enough to require a softener such as Suggest. This finding might fit perfectly into the theory of positive and negative politeness, which argues that:

Politeness strategies and their hierarchy are another major area of cross-cultural politeness research. Many studies⁴⁹ were conducted to investigate the preferences of people from different cultural backgrounds for one strategy over another, focusing especially on positive politeness as opposed to the negative one. The findings of such investigations resulted in a cross-cultural division dubbing some cultures like the British and Japanese as negative cultures and others like American and Spanish as positive cultures. However, this gave rise to extra counterclaims for the universality of politeness strategies hierarchy. Since positive politeness is preferred sometimes to negative politeness, this means that the strategies are ordered differently from one culture to another. (Maha, 2014: 60)

Moreover, Mills and Kádár (2011) underline the dangers of justifying individual behaviour through cultural norms: "we need to be much more cautious about referring to politeness norms within or across cultures, since often when statements about linguistic cultural norms are made they appear to be conservative, profoundly ideological and based on stereotypes" (2011: 15).

Some of the objectives of the current study are to conduct analyses of the speech acts that compose the public crisis communication and to make observations derived from the cross-cultural pragmatic methodology related to their structure and coding scheme. As tempting as linking these findings to generic cultural stereotypes may be⁵⁰, the analysis remains true to the initial proposal and refrains from such endeavours. It is acknowledged here, nevertheless, that the British English corpus describes a different pattern.

⁴⁹ Maha (2014) refers here to studies such as Sifianou (1992), Hikey & Varquez Orta (1996), or Marquez Reiter (2000).

⁵⁰ Such as justifying the different code scheme observed in the British corpus – Suggest does not act as a grounder for Request, as it happens in the other two corpora, but it acts as a separate speech act – by claiming that this is due to a negative politeness approach typical to the entire British English linguaculture.

3.2.4 The Speech Act Perspective

Analysing the speech act perspective involves observing the dynamics that occur throughout the conversation, that is, whether the speaker is willing to fall under the incidence of the illocutionary force as much as the hearer is expected to.

In the case of Request and Suggest, one key difference must constantly be considered when dealing with the speech act perspective. The speaker performs a Request because they want the hearer to do something according to their intentions – the Request is made in the speaker's interest (Edmondson, House and Kádár, 2023: 114) or, as observed in the corpora, in the interest of both the speaker and the hearer. In the case of the latter, it is the speaker's responsibility and intention to persuade the hearer that their request serves the interests of both parties. Conversely, the speaker performs a Suggest considering first and foremost the interest of the hearer, or better said, what they believe to be in the hearer's best interest. A perspective shift occurs whenever Suggest acts as a Supporting Move for Request. In this case, the speaker's main interest is to soften the requestive force to achieve their persuasive purpose, so the speech act perspective fails to prioritise the hearer's interests.

When analysing the speech act perspective in the previous subchapter for Tell and Opine, the verbs that bore the core meaning of the respective speech acts were looked up in the corpora and compared according to their frequency of occurrence or most frequent collocations. The analysis for Request and Suggest turned out to be more complex and, for that matter, more challenging, since apart from the semantic relevance to the speech acts of the verbs *want* and *hope* (with their correspondents *querer/ esperar* and *a vrea/ a spera*), expressions of modality also needed to be considered (British English – *must/ should/ could*; Spanish – *deber/ hay que/ poder*; Romanian – *a trebui/ a putea*). The tables below (Table no. 6, 7 and 8) show a separate outline of the figures encountered in each corpus.

For the three linguacultures, the frequencies of the verb occurrence were studied for the infinitive, the 1st person singular, and the plural forms of the verb. Then, depending on each linguaculture's morphological particularities, other verb forms were looked into as they were able to provide relevant information to the study of the two speech acts. As before, the figures were obtained with AntConc (version 4.2.0), while sketchengine.eu proved useful in analysing the British English corpus. The significant differences between the total and the occurrences of the forms of the verb are due to the fact that these verbs are also collocated with subjects expressed through numerous other parts of speech, such as noun phrases, numerals, and so on.

3.2.4.1 Characteristics of the British English Corpus

Firstly, Table no. 6 below presents the number of occurrences of the selected verbs in the British English corpus:

	WANT	HOPE	MUST	SHOULD	COULD
1st person singular	53	15	0	5	11
1st person plural	16	4	13	8	7
3rd person singular	10	-	0	2 (it)	3 (it)
Total	110	34	19	52	56

Table no. 6 – Request and Suggest. The Quantitative Speech Act Perspective in MEDENG

The highest value in this table represents the occurrences of the verb *want*, and almost half of the cases are in the first person singular. The following clarification is needed at this point in the analysis: although the semantic connection between the meaning of this verb⁵¹ and the one conveyed by Request (*I want you to do something*, where *I* stands for the speaker and *you* for the hearer) is easy to observe at any level, the pragmatic analysis underlines the fact that this high presence of the verb *want* is by no means the absolute proof that Request is performed directly so many times. In fact, as can be seen in Image no. 2, the infinitive objects of *want* are, in descending order of their frequency of occurrence: *to say*, *to thank*, *to make sure* and *to add*. This aspect weighs a lot in the assessment of the requestive intention of the speaker especially since in more than half (75 cases) of the total 110 occurrences *want* is used as an introductory sample, acting more as a cajoler to all sorts of utterances which can be part of entirely different speech acts such as Tell or even Thank. The following examples stand by this hypothesis:

- (1) “And in particular, I want to thank ambulance service staff who stepped up...”
- (2) “I want to say this to our international partners.”
- (3) “We want to make sure that this whole system lands well.”

⁵¹ According to <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/want>, last consulted on January 8th, 2024, which states that “want means to wish for a particular thing or plan of action and it is not used in polite requests”

To sum up, despite the base meaning of *want*, which, without any contextual reference, leads to the concept of request almost instinctively, the uses of this verb adopt a different facet, and it becomes a cajoler, serving purposes of politeness and formal speaking.

Conversely, *must* is used according to its base meaning and it does form structures that comply with the requestive intention of the speaker. As far as the speech act perspective is concerned, 13 out of the 19 occurrences are formulated in the first-person plural form of the verb. This indicates, as it is clearly shown in Image no. 3, that the speaker imposes upon themselves the same obligations and the same necessity of compliance as they expect from the hearer. Moreover, *should* also expresses a requestive intention, although there are cases in which it becomes Head Act of Suggest:

- (4) “people should stay at home, unless they absolutely have to leave.”
- (5) “unpaid carers should be in vaccine band six.”

The figures in the table show that this is the verb that has the smallest number of pronominal subjects, whether in the singular or plural. There are two occurrences with the impersonal form *it*, 5 in first person singular and 8 in first person plural, while the remaining difference – of 37 occurrences – is covered by utterances where the subject is expressed through various other parts of speech. These figures indicate that the speech act perspective in situations where *should* is used refrains from putting forward either one of the participants in the communication. There is an implied consensus that everyone is involved, but this is not expressed explicitly, as in the case of *must*.

In the case of the verb *hope*, a significant number of occurrences (15 out of 34) are in the first person singular (as opposed to only five occurrences in plural). On the one hand, these figures demonstrate a personal approach to the matter and the desire the speaker has concerning future outcomes and on the other hand, the fact that the plural perspective might have been unable to communicate the same level of sincerity achieved in the singular. However, in the results provided by AntConc, the following piece of information also proved relevant. In 5 cases, the verb *hope* expressed in the first person singular is followed by a clause whose subject is *we*:

- (7) “I hope **that we** can keep encouraging people...”
- (8) “I hope **that we** can have some good news for you... “
- (9) “I really hope **that we** won’t have to go back....”
- (10) “I very much hope **that we** won’t have to wait...”

(11) “I very much hope **that we** will (get a vaccine) and we’re working increasingly hard...”

The speech act typology indicates a Suggest-for-us, meaning that the speaker involves everyone, including themselves and the institution they represent. There is also a variation in the substitutes the pronoun stands for: *we* sometimes refers to the medical team or the ministry’s representatives in charge of handling the crisis, or to the entire population affected by the spread of the coronavirus.

As a final point, the modal *could* has the highest number of occurrences after *want*, with a predominance, as well, for the first person singular. The observations in this case are similar to the ones made in the case of *want*, mainly because of the modal’s versatility. That is how only in very few cases, *could* is used as a means of building Suggest. When analysed in the corpus, *could* refers to: ability (2), possibility (30), permission (9), request (11) and suggest (3). These figures were obtained manually, by consulting the samples of sentences provided by AntConc when identifying the modal verb. The three occurrences when the suggestive intention was clearly stated should be completed by the other 2 instances when the meaning of possibility also implied a suggestive intention on the speaker’s behalf.

COULD	
Explicitly meaning “suggest something”	Showing “possibility” while at the same time implying a suggestion
(12) “(...) one of ways forward out of the lockdown could be to vary restrictions based on geography”	“but there are quite a lot more additional things that could be done within that with local guidance.” <i>*Suggest by implying the need for local guidance</i>
(13) “Now, better blood tests could be used to help people assess their individual risk.”	“All the while avoiding a disastrous second peak that could overwhelm the NHS.” <i>*Suggest by implying that a second peak should be avoided due to its serious effects on the NHS.</i>

And, of course, the occurrence of *could* while bearing the meaning of ‘request’ is also relevant to the present discussion. In 11 cases, a polite request was performed, but these cases are situations in which the speaker would ask for help with the PowerPoint presentation or another

speaker (in this particular case, one of the journalists) would use the modal more as a cajoler to stress the polite tonality of their utterance:

(14) “Please, could you tell us why....? / Please, could you explain the difference between their groups?”

In summing it all up, when it comes to decoding the speech acts of Request and Suggest, the analysis performed in the present subchapter of the study revealed the following features of the British English corpus:

- ✓ The highest number of frequencies was identified for the verbs *want* and *could*, both used in the first person singular, with a speaker-oriented perspective. Both verbs become means of conveying politeness and behave rather as a cajoler (*want* – formal speech; *could* – polite request) than as the nucleus of the Head Act. Of the two, the modal *could* is observed to carry more meanings (ability, possibility, permission) while serving at the same time as Head Act for Request and Suggest.
- ✓ Another verb that served both for building Request and Suggest, but in a rather unclear position, marking a fine line of interpretation between the two speech acts, is the modal *should*. It is the verb with the lowest frequency of pronominal employment, with its subjects being expressed through nouns, numerals or indefinite pronouns. The speech act perspective is thus impersonal.
- ✓ The modal *must* has the lowest number of occurrences throughout the corpus with no singular forms. Obligation is reiterated in an inclusive first-person plural form, which conveys a speaker-and-addressee-oriented perspective to the speech act of Request.
- ✓ *Hope* is mainly used in the first-person singular form. The speaker-oriented perspective conveys a personal approach in expressing a Suggest-for-us.

3.2.4.2 Characteristics of the Spanish Corpus

Secondly, the Spanish corpus is presented with its particularities regarding the speech act perspective for Request and Suggest. Table 7 below summarises the verbs that were studied in terms of their occurrences in different forms related to their number, person, and mood. The two correspondents for *want* and *hope* – *querer* and *esperar* – are analysed in the first two columns, and as far as modality goes, the verb *deber* and the impersonal verb phrase *hay que* were chosen (both meaning *must/ have to*). Since the verb phrase *hay que* is an impersonal

phrase, only the total number of occurrences was identified together with the most frequent collocations, while for the other verbs, more categories needed to be considered besides the verb forms in the first person singular and plural. Next to the first-person plural indicative, the subjunctive forms (of the same person and number) were counted in the case of *esperar* because the number of occurrences in the subjunctive was considerably higher than the ones in the indicative. No subjunctive forms were identified in the corpus for the other two verbs. The second-person formal plural (which coincides with the third-person plural) was analysed because it brought relevant insights to the speech act perspective. This could not be applied to the British English corpus since the pronoun *you* and its corresponding verb forms serve both the informal and the formal register. The infinitive forms were also researched because in Spanish, this structure often fulfils the function of the direct object and follows verbs which show modality.

	QUERER	ESPERAR	PODER	DEBER	HAY QUE
Infinitive	0	13	37	0	67
1st person singular	17	9	30	0	-
1st person plural indicative	24	6	92	14	-
subjunctive		11	18		
2nd person formal plural (3rd person plural)	2	0	70	10	-
1st /3rd person singular present conditional	-	-	55	-	-
Total	43	39	302	24	67

Table no. 7 – Request and Suggest. The Quantitative Speech Act Perspective in MEDSPAN

The verb *querer* was encountered 43 times in the corpus in various forms. It is second in terms of frequency of occurrence, after the verb phrase *hay que*, which was identified 67 times. All of the forms of the verb are in the indicative mood. The highest value is the first-person plural (*queremos*), thus the most frequent speech act perspective is speaker-and-addressee oriented, with the necessary differentiation between the two groups of people that the

implied *we* refers to: the speaker and the rest of the population (1) or the speaker and their peers, where the speaker acts as the representative of an institution (2). Similar to the British English corpus, *queremos* also acts as a cajoler, serving the speaker's need for politeness when introducing other speech acts such as Tell or Thank (3). The following examples support the analysis above:

- (1) "Tenemos que entender que si queremos que venga el turismo, tenemos que hacer un esfuerzo"⁵²
- (2) "Queremos desde el Ministerio insistir en que...."⁵³
- (3) "En primer lugar queremos transmitir nuestra enhorabuena a todos los policías nacionales"⁵⁴

Similar uses are observed in the case of the singular forms. However, several abrupt requests were made using *quiero*, which might be perceived as a firm type of addressing prompt likely to cause serious impositions on the hearer.

- (4) "Quiero que entiendan la magnitud del problema. / (...) tambien lo quiero dejar claro, doblegamos la segunda ola sin el confinamiento."⁵⁵

The two uses comprised in the table for the second-person formal plural and the third-person plural are exemplified below:

- (5) "la tercera ola, si lo quieren llamar así"⁵⁶
- (6) "grupos de personas mayores de 60 años que quieren ponerse una dosis"⁵⁷

In example (5), the speaker uses the second-person formal plural to build an explanatory clause in which they concede the hearer the right to their own interpretation of the ongoing phenomena. This is done as a pre-occurring means of persuasion in which the speaker acknowledges the hearer's perspective and is willing to accept it in order to ensure the flow of the communication and later on meet their persuasive objectives. Example (6) is simply a common use of the verb with the meaning of 'will' or 'desire'.

The verb *esperar* poses a particular challenge for the current research due to its polysemy. Apart from the meaning that interests this analysis, where *esperar* is 'to hope', it is also used in Spanish with the meaning of 'to wait/ to expect'. The former is the main focus here

⁵² (1) We need to understand that if we want tourism, we need to make an effort

⁵³ (2) From the Ministry, we would like to insist on...

⁵⁴ (3) First of all we would like to present our congratulations to all of the national policemen

⁵⁵ (4) I would like you to understand the gravity of the problem (...) I also want to make it very clear, we will double the second wave without confinement

⁵⁶ (5) the third wave, if you want to call it that way

⁵⁷ (6) groups of people over 60 that want to have a dose done

because it introduces the speaker's expectations with the intention to communicate advice or make suggestions. It is also the only one of the verbs which occurs in the infinitive, but this form bears the meaning of 'to expect' entirely, so it does not make the object of the current discussion.

Conversely, this does not happen with the pronominal forms. Both the singular and the plural are used in the sense of having hope, building, thus, future expectations and contributing to Suggest. The plural forms are predominant (17 occurrences, as opposed to only 9 in the singular), forming a speaker-and-addressee-oriented perspective. The uses of *esperamos* (plural indicative)/ *esperaremos* (plural subjunctive) comprise the concept of 'we' meaning the institution the speaker represents, as well as the more generic reference to all of the participants in the communication. What marks a difference in this case, apart from the similar references of 'we' seen before in the current analysis, is the fact that in various instances the subjunctive implies a strong suggestion, even an urge that the speaker throws on the hearer:

(7) "es cierto que podria haber algun problema, esperemos que no, esperemos que no."⁵⁸

(8) "Esperemos que puedan conseguir controlar la epidemia de una forma."⁵⁹

In these samples, the core meaning of Suggest is built as a type of 'let us do this together' exclamation where the speaker directly encourages the hearer to engage in this act. *Esperar* is never used in the second or third-person plural. It is improbable that these forms might be used in formal contexts since the second-person plural is typically employed in familiar environments. Both forms are mainly used with the meaning of *you/ they are waiting for something* rather than *hoping*.

Next, the verb *poder* was considered for analysis and its presence in the corpus compared to the other researched verbs marks a staggering difference, with a total of 247 occurrences. The first-person plural form in both the indicative and the subjunctive sums 110 occurrences, followed by the third-person plural form, which appears 70 times. One of the challenges faced while analysing this verb in terms of decoding Request and Suggest was to separate the contexts that served this interest from the many facets the semantics of this verb proposed, especially because there were five different forms in which the verb was identified in the corpus, depending on different grammatical categories such as mood, tense, number or person. Similar to the English *could*, the verb *poder* shows ability, permission or possibility. The latter meaning became the focus here because it contributed to building Suggest.

⁵⁸ (7) it is true there might be certain problems, but let's hope not, let's hope not

⁵⁹ (8) Let's hope they will be able to control the pandemic one way or another

When used in the first-person plural, as *podemos*, the meaning in context refers to giving permission (9), but it also conveys politeness when used as a cajoler to build Suggest (10 – especially when used in collocations such as *podemos pensar*, *podemos valorar*, *podemos hacer*, which have been identified at a significant rate of occurrence by the software).

(9) “Yo creo que los datos los podemos dejar aquí y podemos pasar a las preguntas.”⁶⁰

(10) “Yo creo que no podemos pensar que nosotros tengamos el mejor sistema sanitario.”⁶¹

Another verb form of significant occurrence was the third-person plural present indicative, *pueden*. The two most frequent collocations (verb + infinitive direct object) of this form are *pueden ser/ pueden tener*, which show probability (11) and possibility (12), contributing thus to the building of Suggest.

(11) “Es suficientemente razonable como para entender los riesgos a los que pueden exponer a las otras personas a su alrededor.”⁶²

(12) “Producen cuadros muy grave que pueden incluso causar la muerte.”⁶³

The present conditional form of this verb (*podría*), identified 55 times in the corpus, was also considered because apart from bearing all the meanings exemplified above, it is also used in contexts where the question or the request needs to be addressed in a very polite manner (13) or in situations where the speaker intends to create confusion and consequently, transmits insecurity (14). After all, they either try to avoid the answer or do not know it altogether.

(13) “¿Podría aclarar qué ha ocurrido con la serie de Madrid?”⁶⁴

(14) “En algún momento la variante británica se ha comentado que podría ser más grave. Eso podría ser una razon.”⁶⁵

On the whole, the verb *poder* bears an important significance to the decoding of Suggest, mainly, in this corpus due to its high number of occurrences, on the one hand, and to the versatility of both its forms and shifts of meaning, on the other hand.

The fourth of the verbs analysed in this stage, *deber*, has no infinitive and no first-person singular forms. The first-person plural indicative occurs 14 times, and there are 10 occurrences

⁶⁰ (9) I believe we can leave the data here and we can move on to the questions

⁶¹ (10) I don't think we can consider we have the best sanitary sistem

⁶² (11) It is reasonable enough to understand the risks that one can submit the people around themselves to

⁶³ (12) They cause serious complications, which can even cause death

⁶⁴ (13) Could you clarify what happened to the Madrid series?

⁶⁵ (14) It was said, at a certain moment, that the British variant could be more serious. This could be one reason.

of this verb in the third-person plural (only one of these stands for the second-person formal plural – example (9)). The latter forms are irrelevant to this discussion because their subjects differ greatly, and there is no recurrent pattern to be determined.

All in all, this speech act perspective is speaker-and-addressee oriented; the obligations implied in Request comprise everyone involved in the communication (example (10)).

(15) “¿cree que deben de dimitir?”⁶⁶

(16) “esta pregunta (...) nos ayuda a ilustrar precisamente que no debemos relajarnos en ningún momento.”⁶⁷

Lastly, the impersonal verb phrase *hay que* was the last item analysed from the Spanish corpus, due to its synonymy with the verb *deber*. It has no variations related to number, person or verb mood, and it has the highest number of occurrences shown in **Table no.7**. Thus, the quantitative speech act perspective, in this case, is impersonal, oriented towards the object rather than the subject. In other words, the speaker’s intention in using this verb phrase is to stress **what** needs to be done and not necessarily **by whom**. Consequently, the most frequent direct objects to this verb phrase were the following, as can be observed in Image no. 4: *tener* (*mucho, un poquito de cuidado/ en cuenta*), *hacer, seguir, valorar, articular, ir+gerundio, mantener, ser*. Similar to the verb *deber*, this verb phrase has a strong requestive force, and this is precisely why an impersonal form is preferred: when the force of the speech act is strong, omitting the subject, that is, the person responsible for the imposition committed by the speech act, becomes a mitigating means.

To conclude this stage of the analysis, the following particularities have been identified in the decoding process of Request and Suggest in the Spanish corpus:

- ✓ The speech act perspective in the case of the four verbs analysed here is speaker-addressee oriented. The difference is marked by the impersonal verb phrase *hay que*, which shows a more generic perspective since, in the absence of the subject, the focus is placed on the object of the verb: on the **what** of the matter rather than on **whom**. It has the highest number of occurrences in the corpus. Although it is a synonym of *deber*, the verb phrase is preferred due to its impersonal feature.
- ✓ Similar to *want* in the British English corpus, the verb *querer* sometimes acts as a cajoler. However, its first-person singular form, *quiero*, bears a strong requestive force which places significant imposition on the hearer.

⁶⁶ (15) Do you consider you should resign?

⁶⁷ (16) this question (...) helps us prove precisely the fact that we must not let the guard down in any moment

- ✓ The analysis of the verb *esperar* was particularly challenging because of its polysemic character: in Spanish, it means both ‘to hope’ and ‘to wait/ to expect’. The research focused on the former meaning, with more occurrences identified in the subjunctive mood, thus realising a strong suggestion.
- ✓ The verb *poder* marked the highest frequency in the entire corpus. The majority of its occurrences were in the first-person plural, establishing a speaker-and-addressee-oriented perspective of the speech act Suggest which it influenced to a large extent.
- ✓ The verb *deber* was not used in the infinitive or the first-person singular. This verb is frequently used as Request, and its perspective falls on both the speaker and the hearer, stressing the need for both parties’ involvement.

3.2.4.3 Characteristics of the Romanian Corpus

Thirdly, in the Romanian corpus, three verbs were researched in terms of the speech act perspective of Request and Suggest: *a vrea* (want), *a spera* (hope) and *a trebui* (must). Similar to the analysis performed on the Spanish corpus, the infinitive form was considered alongside the first-person singular and plural forms. This form is used, however, in structures typical of the Romanian language. In this case, the infinitive is sometimes a part of the conditional and follows right after the auxiliary verb *a avea* (to have) with its specific forms⁶⁸ and other times a part of the future indicative and follows right after the auxiliary verb *a vrea* (to want) with its specific forms⁶⁹. The third verb presented in Table 8, *a trebui*, is impersonal whenever it shows an obligation.

	A VREA	A SPERA	A PUTEA	A TREBUI
Infinitive (in the conditional structure: “<i>a avea</i> + infinitive”)	53 (as part of the conditional)	0	72 (as part of the conditional or the future form)	35 (as part of the conditional or the future form)
1st person singular	32	6	143 (the same form for the third-person plural)	-
1st person plural	5	13	106	-

⁶⁸ The specific forms of the verb *a avea*, when used as an auxiliary verb in the present conditional, are: *as*, *ai*, *ar*, *am*, *ai*, and *ar*.

⁶⁹ The specific forms of the verb *a vrea*, when used as an auxiliary verb in the future indicative, are: *voi*, *vei*, *va*, *vom*, *veți*, and *vor*.

Impersonal form	-	-	-	191
Total	90	19	321	226

Table no. 8 – Request and Suggest. The Quantitative Speech Act Perspective in MEDRO

Table no. 8 above displays the findings from MEDRO obtained with AntConc. The following aspects proved important to the current discussion.

The verb *a vrea* appears in the corpus 90 times, and more than half of the cases use the infinitive form as a part of the conditional structure. Apart from the typical occurrences in *if clauses*, the conditional is used as a polite form of addressing in the formal register. This particular context of the press release analysed here dictates a formal and distant relation between the interlocutors. All the exchanges and addressing are performed by using the formal second-person plural of the pronoun of politeness (Rom-specific) – *dumneavoastră*, which enhances great social distance specific to scientific, academic contexts. In British English, it can only be translated as *you* while the formal register is built through other means; the Spanish correspondent is *usted* for singular and *ustedes* for plural, and these forms establish the verb agreement with the third person form of the verb in singular and plural, respectively.

The infinitive shown in the table is a part of the first-person singular conditional form *aș vrea*, which appears 46 times (the difference up to 53, as is recorded in the table, are third-person forms (2 – *ar vrea*) and indicative third-person singular (5 – *vrea*). With its significant number of occurrences, the conditional conveys the meaning of ‘I would like to’ and acts as a cajoler, not a Head Act. The few occurrences in the indicative do use this verb to express a want, but their number is too small to make a difference in the analysis:

(1)“Aici aș vrea să explic puțin ce înseamnă acest maraton național.”⁷⁰ (conditional mood)

(2)“Managerul spitalului de acolo a anunțat că cine vrea poate merge să se vaccineze.”⁷¹ (indicative)

As a cajoler, *a vrea* fulfils two important roles in developing the communication act. On the one hand, it suits the speaker to adapt their choice of words to the register imposed by this context, which, according to Romanian societal rules, must always stay formal. On the other hand, it serves as a mitigating means of softening the imposition caused by the speech acts it

⁷⁰ (1) Here, I would like to explain a bit what this national marathon means

⁷¹ (2) The hospital’s manager announced that whoever wants to can go and have their vaccine done

introduces – in example (1) above, it is an Explain/ Justify which acts as a grounder for a previously expressed Tell.

The first-person indicative also appears in the corpus a significant number of times: 32 times as *vreau*. In many of these cases, the verb acts as a cajoler as well, but there are situations in which the speaker makes use of the requestive force of this verb form:

(3)“Eu nu vreau să discut decizii și hotărâri ale instituțiilor statului.”⁷²

This example shows how the imposition caused by the force of the speech act is used to stop the conversation from continuing in a direction not approved by the speaker. The force is also strengthened by expressing the pronominal subject *eu*, which is unnecessary from a semantic point of view since this information is already included in the verb's inflection.

Considering all the aspects previously mentioned – mainly the predominance of the first-person singular forms - and taking into account that the plural form of this verb occurs at a very low rate, the quantitative speech act perspective in the case of the requests built with *a vrea* is speaker-oriented.

The second verb researched in this corpus – *a spera* – marks a low recurrence of only 19 times, but the predominant form is the first-person plural (13 times). What marks a difference in comparison to the occurrences of the corresponding translations in the other two corpora is the fact that here the plural refers to the speaker as the representative of the institution (4). There is only one occurrence with an inclusive reference of the type ‘let's hope together that...’ (5).

(4) “Noi sperăm să îl avem nu până la jumătatea lunii, sperăm să îl avem aprobat în această lună.”⁷³

(5)“Să sperăm că vedem un impact la aceste 30 de zile.”⁷⁴

In three situations, the first-person plural form *sperăm* is preceded by the corresponding form of the personal pronoun, *noi*. This occurrence hides an intention to emphasise the speaker's belonging to a larger group, sharing the responsibilities of the decisions with their peers, since from a syntactic point of view it is not necessary to mention the pronominal subject once the information is comprised in the verbal inflection. Romanian and Spanish share this characteristic, whereas in English, the subject of the verb (especially if it is a pronominal subject) must always be expressed for the utterance to convey meaning, and it does not bear any intention of emphasis. This verb does not appear in the infinitive in MEDRO.

⁷² (3) I do not wish to discuss decisions and statements coming from statal insitutions

⁷³ (4) We hope to have it not by the end of the month, we hope to get it this month

⁷⁴ (5) Let's hope we will see an impact after these 30 days

The verb *a putea*, which stands for *could* in English and *poder* in Spanish shows many similarities to its presence in MEDSPAN. To begin with, it has the highest number of occurrences, not only in this corpus but from all of the data analysed in the three corpora – 321 times. Next, it is subject to great variations both in its form, which modifies according to mood, tense, person and number, but also to its various shifts in meaning.

The infinitive of this verb is used here as a component of the present conditional and the future indicative. These forms show probability (6) and possibility (7). Similar to the situation encountered in MEDSPAN, here too, they built Suggest.

(6) “Impactul s-ar putea să fie intrafamilial pe cei vulnerabili.”⁷⁵

(7) “Măsurile de relaxare, care au intrat în vigoare de ieri, ar putea să ducă la o creștere a ratei de infectare.”⁷⁶

The highest figure referring to this verb is the form *pot* – 143 times. As mentioned in Table no. 8, this verb form coincides with two persons when conjugated in present indicative: the first-person singular, identified in the corpus 80 times, and the third-person plural, identified in the corpus 63 times. This separation between the number of occurrences of the two verb forms was made manually by marking the subject of the verb in each sequence counted by the software.

When identified in the singular, the high number of occurrences can be explained by the fact that apart from the typical references of this verb to permission/ prohibition (8), ability (9) and possibility/ probability (10) there are many contexts in which it is used as a cajoler (11), aimed at either postponing the delivery of an essential or uncomfortable piece of information or as a means of establishing a polite and formal relation with the audience. It is, however, surprising that in the Romanian corpus, this first person singular has such an increased occurrence, followed by the same form of the same verb in the Spanish corpus (30 times, the form *puedo*), although at a high difference.

(8) “Cetățenii din aceste țări, pot să stea pentru trei zile în România, pot veni cu un test negativ efectuat în ultimele 48 de ore.”⁷⁷

(9) “Acestea pot fi prescrise inclusiv și de medicii de familie.”⁷⁸

(10) “Și persoanele vaccinate pot să ajungă la spital, și ele se pot infecta.”⁷⁹

⁷⁵ (6) It is possible for the impact to be inside families, affecting those who are vulnerable

⁷⁶ (7) The relaxing measures, effective since yesterday, might bring an increase in the infection rate

⁷⁷ (8) Citizens from these countries can stay in Romania for three days, they can bring a negative test, taken within the last 48 hours

⁷⁸ (9) These can also be prescribed by the general practitioners

⁷⁹ (10) Even people who got vaccinated can end up in the hospital, and they can also get infected

(11) “Acesta evaluări există și sunt centralizate in Registrul Electronic Național și pot să vă spun că numărul este foarte mic.”⁸⁰

Using *pot* as a cajoler here also helps validate the information because it appeals to the speaker’s authority, in the sense that the subtextual meaning for utterances like this one could be: *I can tell you this because I am among the few that have access to this kind of information.* This particular type of Suggest appears quite often in this corpus since collocations such as: *pot să vă spun, pot să vă răspund, pot să vă dau un răspuns ferm, pot să vă reamintesc*, all occur 27 times – as seen in Image no. 5 (Appendices) - *pot*.

When identified in the plural, the verb has the form *putem*, and it appears in the corpus 106 times, a value almost similar to the one in the Spanish corpus for the same verb form. In almost all of these cases, the plural refers to the speaker, their peers and the institution they represent.

Establishing a clear-cut speech act perspective in the case of *a putea* in MEDRO proved particularly challenging. The figures indicated that the plural form was more dominant, and the singular also marked a significantly high value. When the form *pot* was initially researched, it marked the highest number of occurrences among all the verb forms identified in the three corpora. However, this became a false assumption since the same form is used for two persons at different numbers in the conjugation. Consequently, the speech act perspective remains speaker-oriented when all the data are put together.

The last verb analysed in the Romanian corpus was *a trebui*. There is a particular challenge in researching the occurrences of this verb because it is often considered unipersonal and impersonal (Rădulescu, 2015: 74). When establishing the number of occurrences, AntConc counts that the infinitive form appears 35 times. But, as it happened with *a vrea*, a closer look at the analysis provided by the software revealed that the infinitive was part of either the present conditional structure *ar trebui* (in the excerpts provided in example (6), the implied subjects are *we* and *they* respectively), or the future indicative – *va trebui* in example (7). These are the only forms that the verb *a trebui* has for all the persons conjugated at these two tenses and moods exemplified above. Both of these forms contribute significantly to building Suggest:

(12) “Asta ar însemna că ar trebui să primim săptămânal undeva la un million de vaccinuri. / Ați spus că, practic, autoritățile locale ar trebui să se implice mai mult.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ (11) These evaluations exist, and they are recorded by the National Electronic Registry and I can tell you that their number is very little.

⁸¹ (12) This would mean receiving nearly a million vaccines every week./You have basically said that the local authorities should get more involved

(13)“S-a decis să nu fie condiționare, dar va trebui mască, bineînțeles, și doi metri pătrați pe persoană.”⁸² (impersonal reference).

Although it translates as ‘must’, when used in the present conditional, *a trebui* means ‘should’. The speech act expressed in example (6) is Suggest, and the requestive force is mitigated by the use of two present conditionals (*ar însemna/ ar trebui* – it would mean/ it should), which greatly enlarge the frame of possibilities and bring a high degree of relativisation. In example (7), the subject is not explicitly stated, the passive voice is used (‘it was decided/ a mask would be necessary’) and this way an overall impression of impersonality is created.

Moreover, when used in the impersonal form, *trebuie* (which means the subject is not expressed at all), this verb form has the highest number of occurrences compared to all the verbs analysed from the three corpora in this subchapter – 191 times. Used like this, the verb *a trebuie* refers to a non-negotiable obligation, a ‘must’, which builds the Head Act for Request.

(14)“Asta înseamnă că atunci cand se intră în magazinul respectiv, trebuie să fie controlat certificatul verde./ (...) medicii de familie trebuie să aibă ghiduri clare și o evaluare a pacientului.”⁸³

Without having mentioned the subject, it is not relevant for the speaker of this message **who** performs the request, but rather **what** obligation (the direct object) is there to comply with and **by whom** (the agent of the passive voice). The latter aspect is generally understood to imply all participants in the conversation, including the speaker, their peers, and the institutions they represent.

By summing it all up, the following features are highlighted after decoding Request and Suggest in the Romanian corpus, the last of the set of three corpora subjected to analysis in the present study:

- ✓ The infinitive forms identified with AntConc were analysed as components of the present conditional and the future indicative, which follow their corresponding auxiliaries.
- ✓ The verb *a vrea* occurs mainly in the first-person singular and establishes a speaker-oriented perspective, whether used in the present conditional or the present indicative.

⁸² (13) It was decided to go without conditioning, but the mask will be necessary, of course, and two square metres per person.

⁸³ (14) This means that when they enter the store, they must be asked for their green certificate/ (...) The general practitioners need clear regulations and an evaluation of the patient

When used in the conditional, its meaning shifts to ‘would like to’ and acts as a cajoler, not a Head Act.

- ✓ The verb *a spera* has a dominant first-person plural occurrence, where *we* refers mainly to the institution the speaker represents. Given the optimistic feeling conveyed by the core meaning of this verb, the speaker’s intention in pointing out the subject shows an attempt to restore balance and finish on a positive note.
- ✓ The case of *a putea* was a surprise due to its high number of occurrences, the diversity of verb forms, and the meanings conveyed in context. The conclusion of the analysis established that the speech act perspective in this situation was speaker-oriented, considering that the speaker can imply the person delivering the message, but also their peers and the institution they represent. Five different verb forms (the infinitive – divided between its uses as part of the present conditional and the future indicative, first-person singular indicative = third-person plural indicative, and the first-person plural indicative) proved relevant to this analysis in terms of frequency of occurrence and speech act decoding. This verb has the highest rate of occurrence among all the verbs analysed in the three corpora.
- ✓ The shifts in meaning caused by the change of the mood observed in the case of the verb *a trebui* posed challenges to the analysis and led to some interesting conclusions. When used in the conditional, the verb’s meaning becomes ‘should’ and is used extensively in the building of Suggest; when used in the impersonal form of the indicative, it means ‘must’ and it becomes the nucleus of the Head Act of Request.

3.2.5 Results

This chapter outlined the current research findings regarding the speech acts Request and Suggest. For each of the three corpora, verbs semantically associated with the core meanings of the two speech acts were analysed in terms of rate of occurrence and speech act decoding. Apart from *want* (which stands for request) and *hope* (which stands for suggestion), modality was also considered since it proved even more relevant in performing the two speech acts. A morpho-syntactic analysis of the different verb forms encountered alongside their most frequent collocations resulted from the quantitative analysis of the recurrence of these verbs. Thus, the following results were reached after researching the speech act perspective:

1. Three types of speech act perspectives were identified for Request and Suggest in the three corpora analysed in the current study. According to the typology established by House & Kádár (2021: 119), there is one additional type that was not identified in this analysis: the addressee-oriented perspective. This fact meets the initial expectations, and given the formal register appropriate to the genre of the press release, the occurrence of this perspective was not expected. The perspectives observed and analysed in the three corpora were the following:

- **The speaker-oriented perspective:** 3 verbs in the British English corpus (*want, could and hope*) and 3 verbs in the Romanian corpus (*a vrea, a spera and a putea*);
- **The speaker-and-addressee-oriented perspective:** 1 verb in the British English corpus (*must*) and 4 verbs in the Spanish corpus (*querer, esperar, poder, deber*);
- **The impersonal perspective:** 1 verb from each of the three corpora – British English (*should*), Spanish (*hay que*) and Romanian (*trebuie*).

All the perspectives were identified in the British English corpus. In the Romanian corpus, the two speech acts did not have any speaker-and-addressee-oriented perspective. In the Spanish corpus, the two speech acts did not have any speaker-oriented perspective. The impersonal perspective is shared by the three linguacultures in the sense that in these three situations, the meaning of ‘obligation/ necessity’ is conveyed similarly.

2. Significant differences can be spotted between British English and the other two linguacultures at a simple glance over the three tables that detail the findings from the corpora (Table no. 6, 7, and 8). These are differences related to structural aspects that affect the way the verb phrase is built in each language. It was necessary to differentiate between the verb moods (indicative/ subjunctive and conditional) in Spanish and Romanian because choosing one particular form to the detriment of the other is based on the speaker’s intention to achieve a certain effect. For example, the repetitive use of the subjunctive first-person plural form *esperemos* in the Spanish corpus in order to emphasise the gravity of the situation and reach the hearer poignantly; or when the speaker chooses to use the personal pronoun *eu* before the verb form *vreau* in the Romanian corpus in order to mark a limit and take the conversation in the direction they desire. The latter case points to the speaker’s need for emphasis precisely because mentioning the pronoun is not necessary to convey meaning in these two languages, and its absence would not alter the communication by any means. Another challenge which affected the pattern of the analysis consistently was caused by the fact that the same verb form could be used for different persons or numbers: in Spanish, the second-person formal plural makes the

subject-verb agreement with the third-person plural form of the verb; or in Romanian, the case of *pot* which can be preceded by a first-person singular or by a third person plural.

3. The differences mentioned above in point number 2 are structural and by no means are they to show specificities of the corpora studied here. It is among the purposes of the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis to point out how a specific type of communication (in this case, public healthcare crisis communication) is influenced by the context and the speaker's choices. As observed here, the choice of verb mood, person, and number was also relevant in Spanish and Romanian, alongside the more typical choice of words. One remarkable example in this sense is the use of the impersonal perspective in Request/Suggest. In the British English corpus, this was identified with the modal *should*, which occurred less frequently than the other verbs and in the majority of the cases was not preceded by pronominal subjects. It contributed greatly to building Suggest, and it was an effective means to convey necessity and sometimes obligation. In Spanish, the expression *hay que* was preferred to the verb *deber*, according to the number of their quantitative prevalence. The speech act built with this expression has a stronger requestive force than *should* has in British English, but due to its impersonality and the focus that it placed upon the **what** of the matter rather than on the **who**, *hay que* is chosen in many cases. Lastly, something truly interesting happens in Romanian: the verb *a trebui* means *should* when used in the present conditional and *must* when used in its impersonal form *trebuie*. Choosing one verb form instead of the other is a choice that testifies to the speaker's will to build a stronger or a weaker speech act, depending on whether they intend to cause an imposition on the hearer or to protect them.

These results show, besides other features that set a common ground among the three corpora, that each linguaculture performs these speech acts according to specificities that have to do with customary behaviour typical to this context which is both restrictive, in the sense that the press release must usually respect a certain degree of formality given by the authoritarian position of the speaker and the seriousness of the matter, and unusual since never before did any of these speakers have to attend a crisis of the magnitude of a global pandemic which affected their countries.

Considering the quantitative speech act perspective, the British English corpus presents the most balanced combination by providing examples where the three types of perspective were used, but with a considerable predominance of the speaker-oriented one. The Spanish corpus uses mostly the speaker-and-addressee-oriented perspective, and in specific situations, the speaker opts for the impersonal structures. Lastly, the Romanian corpus is similar to British

English in this respect, as it uses the speaker-oriented perspective in most cases but prefers impersonal structures for specific cases, just like it happens in the Spanish corpus.

Chapter 4: Corpus Analysis of Press Releases during the COVID-19 Pandemic (2): Solutions, Excuses, Justifications and Gratitude in the Speech Acts of Crisis Communication

4.1 Resolve General Features

The previous subchapter identified and analysed the speech acts of Request and Suggest in the three corpora selected for the current study. Their increased occurrences made these two speech acts relevant for cross-cultural pragmatic analysis, that is, to identify patterns of communication that the three linguacultures have in common or situations in which a speech act is constructed differently due to reasons related to linguistic structures or cultural constraints. The decision to analyse these two speech acts together is motivated, on the one hand, by their semantic similarities (in both cases, the speaker expects the hearer to do something) and the fact that what differentiates them is the speaker's intention and perspective towards the requestive force. The latter can be intentionally more aggressive and in the speaker's interest in the case of Request, or it can be looking for mitigating devices and addressed in the hearer's own interest in the case of Suggest.

According to the speech act typology developed by House and Kádár in their 2021 study on cross-cultural pragmatics, Resolve falls under “speech act categories anchored in attitudes towards Future events” (2021: 107) - alongside Request and Suggest. Consequently, the researchers mention that “in a Resolve, the speaker states that now he is going to perform an action in his own interest. (...) Sequentially, Resolve often follows a Request or a Suggest.” (2021: 109).

In the context of the three corpora considered for analysis in the current research paper, Resolves were identified in situations in which the speaker stated their intention to perform an action in everyone's interest and to everyone's benefit, including their own. Because the pandemic generated a crisis that affected everybody, and because to combat and face the demanding situations meant that each and every single person, including the authors of the press releases, needed to play their part according to their abilities and the positions they occupied, Resolve was a speech act used to anticipate future moves that concerned the interest of all.

Since Resolve is placed under the same analytical categories as Request and Suggest, one primary concern would be the degree to which the hearer might feel offended by the impositions caused by this speech act. This aspect marked one of the key differentiations between Request and Suggest, where the former had a strong imperative force upon the hearer, and the latter softened the discourse by making a point of being cautious and not offensive.

Edmondson et al. (2023: 141) claim that “Resolve as an illocution essentially concerns the speaker’s actions and interests. The dangers of offending the hearer are therefore much smaller with this type of illocution than, for example, with Requests, Invites, Complains and the like.” This appreciation suffers slight alterations because of the context in which the speech act was performed: the speakers’ actions affected the general audience directly and significantly, and the intent to persuade as broad an audience as possible of the fact that the speaker’s interest was in the benefit of all, marked a turning point which influenced the flow of the speech and the unfolding of speech acts considerably.

4.1.1 Qualitative Analysis

In performing the qualitative analysis of Resolve, two excerpts were selected for each linguaculture. Throughout the compilation process, one observation proved relevant to understanding this speech act’s realisation patterns. In the three corpora, without exception or differentiation, Resolve was mostly used by speakers with a political function. It is the only speech act that marks such a distinction between the various speakers included in the corpora. The qualitative analysis performed in Table no. 9 below highlights the different Head Acts identified as Resolves, their supportive moves, and ultimately specific linguistic particularities.

Corpus	Example	Speech Act Coding Scheme
MEDENG	<p><i>(1)No one affected by this will be left to fend for themselves, and we're going to expand our unprecedented economic support to assist those affected by these decisions, extending our job support scheme to cover two thirds of the wages of those in any business that is required to close and providing those businesses with a cash grant of up to 3000 pounds a month instead of 1500 pounds every three weeks. And extra funding too, for those in the very high category for local test and trace and enforcement. (Boris Johnson, 12.10.2020)</i></p>	<p>RESOLVE – HEAD ACT</p> <p>1</p> <p>(locution derivable)</p> <p>GROUNDER</p> <p>TELL AS GROUNDER</p>

	<p>(2) <i>So you can see here from the map particularly we already have more than 30 drive through centers, and these are increasing to around 48. As the secretary of state mentioned, home testing option is also now in place, and we will increase this further. We also want to use an approach we call a satellite approach where test kits are delivered in batches to a single site and then returned in batches, and then finally, as you heard, we are also currently working with the army on a new pop-up mobile testing option which was developed for us by the army, and it was really working very well. So we're going to have 48 of these pop up facilities which can travel around the country to where they're needed most. For example, in care homes. (John Newton, 23.04.2020)</i></p>	<p>TELL AS GROUNDER</p> <p>RESOLVE – HEAD ACT</p> <p>2</p> <p>(locution derivable)</p> <p>RESOLVE – HEAD ACT</p> <p>3</p> <p>(locution derivable)</p> <p>RESOLVE – HEAD ACT</p> <p>4</p> <p>(locution derivable)</p> <p>TELL AS GROUNDER</p>
MEDSPAN	<p>(1) <i>El ritmo de vacunación es óptimo en estos momentos. Los dos últimos días hemos alcanzado cifras en torno a los 90.000 personas vacunadas en un solo día. Les anuncié que esta semana pensábamos que adquiriríamos velocidad de cruceo, la hemos adquirido. El ritmo, insisto, es óptimo. Y el objetivo, el propósito, la misión que tenemos es uno, y lo vamos a lograr. De aquí al verano, conseguir que un 70% de los ciudadanos españoles hayan recibido las dosis correspondientes de vacunas para estar inmunizados. Este es nuestro objetivo, el 70% de la población vacunada en verano. Y con una estrategia que funciona, lo vamos a lograr. (Salvador Illa, 16.01.2021)</i></p>	<p>OPINE AS GROUNDER</p> <p>TELL AS GROUNDER</p> <p>OPINE AS GROUNDER</p> <p>(repeated)</p> <p>RESOLVE – HEAD ACT 1</p> <p>(locution derivable)</p> <p>RESOLVE – HEAD ACT 1</p> <p>repeated</p> <p>GROUNDER</p>

	<p>(2) Comentarles que se está en estos momentos debatiendo y trabajando sobre cuál es el método ideal para aplicar. Y adelantarles también que ya no solo hablamos de PCR, sino que entran en juego otras posibles pruebas diagnósticas que hay que analizar con calma, porque es un tema al que queremos ser especialmente prudentes, haciendo una validación técnica de todas las pruebas, pero que no sería descartable incorporar otras pruebas que no son PCR. Por ejemplo, las pruebas de antígenos, etcétera. Pero todavía estamos en proceso de validación técnica. Eso me gustaría recalcarlo mucho. (Silvia Calzón, 15.09.2020)</p>	GROUNDER RESOLVE – HEAD ACT 2 (locution derivable) GROUNDER RESOLVE – HEAD ACT 2 repeated GROUNDER
My translation	<p>(1) We have reached the appropriate level of vaccination right now. In the last few days, we got figures of around 90,000 people vaccinated in one day. I have told you we would reach a cruise speed level this week, which we did. The rhythm, I insist, is the appropriate one. And the objective, the aim, the mission that we've got is one, and we are going to make it. From now on until summer, we want to have 70% of the Spanish citizens immunised after having received the corresponding dose. This is our objective: to have 70% of the population vaccinated before summer. And, with a working strategy, we will accomplish this.</p> <p>(2) I just wanted to let you know that at this very moment, there is a debate and a work in progress over which method is the best to apply. And also tell you that it is not only about the PCR, but that we are considering other diagnostic tests which need to be analysed carefully, since this is a topic we have to be very prudent with; we need technical approval for all the tests, but it is highly likely to adopt other tests which are not PCR, such as the antigen tests, etc. But we are still in the validation process. I want to insist and underline this.</p>	
MEDRO	(1) Etapa a doua a campaniei de vaccinare, aşa cum am spus, începe cu vaccinarea	TELL AS GROUNDER

	<p><i>persoanelor care sunt, în momentul de față, interneate în centrele medico-sociale. Din acest punct de vedere, vaccinarea se realizează cu echipe mobile, deci, legat de acest aspect, lucrurile clar sunt în timp și vor fi respectate. În ceea ce privește echiparea propriu-zisă a celorlalte centre de vaccinare și obținerea avizelor necesare, acest lucru va fi finalizat în perioada zilelor următoare și, rând pe rând, așa cum am mai precizat deja, în momentul în care un centru este gata, intră în funcțiune. (Valeriu Gheorghijă, 05.01.2021)</i></p> <p><i>(2) La nivelul unităților sanitare din faza 1, faza 2 și, ulterior, faza 3 vom asigura acel necesar de aparatură, de materiale sanitare și de echipamente sanitare de protecție, precum și acel număr de teste în care toți cei care, conform unor anghete epidemiologice, intră într-un protocol de testare. Menționez suplimentar, personalul medical va avea prioritate prin aceste unități la acea testare. (Nelu Tătaru, 27.03.2020)</i></p>	<p>RESOLVE – HEAD ACT 1 (locution derivable)</p> <p>RESOLVE – HEAD ACT 2 (locution derivable)</p> <p>EXPANDER</p>
My translation	<p>(1) The second phase of the vaccination campaign, as I have already said, begins with those people who are currently admitted to the socio-medical centres. From this point of view, the vaccination is performed by mobile teams, so related to this issue, things work according to schedule, and so shall be respected. Concerning the equipment necessary for the other vaccination centres and how to obtain the necessary permits, all this will be finalised in the next few days, one by one, just as I have already mentioned; when one centre is ready, it starts functioning.</p> <p>(2) For the sanitary units from phase 1, phase 2 and finally phase 3, we will provide the necessary machinery, sanitary materials, and sanitary protection equipment as well as the necessary number of tests for those who, according</p>	

	to epidemiological investigation, need to follow a certain testing protocol. I would like to add an extra piece of information, according to which the medical staff will have priority in the testing scheme.
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Table no. 9 – The Resolve Coding Scheme Exemplified

Firstly, in the excerpts selected from the British English corpus, Resolve is identified four times: once in the first excerpt and three times in the second. The level of directness is the same in all cases – *locution derivable*. This is one of the most straightforward levels, and it ensures the force of the speech act stays strong and direct.

Excerpt number (1) illustrates an example where Resolve is triggered by a Request previously stated. In short, the speaker addresses the Resolve to compensate for the possible inconvenience caused by a Request which announced a “ban on all social mixing”. Almost as a promise of compensation, the speech act describes a plan of financial resilience addressed to all those affected by the requested measures imposed upon businesses, which are expected to work to the detriment of economic progress. The Head Act is supported by a grounder that provides a detailed description and explanation of the economic support. Finally, a Tell is used as a second grounder where the speaker uses specific numbers to exemplify as accurately as possible the consistency of the promised support. Both of these grounders are used with the intention of making the initial resolution more believable, and reassuring the hearer that the Resolve will compensate for the impositions caused once the Request is complied with.

The language remains clear, easy to follow, concise, and precise throughout. The use of personal pronouns and pronominal determiners sets a clear line between the support givers and their receivers. Consequently, the verb phrase in the Head Act is made of a first-person plural personal pronoun followed by a future tense expressed with a ‘be going to’ (“we’re going to expand”), which stands by the necessity of communicating future plans and intentions. Moreover, in the first grounder, the solution is expressed as “*our* job support scheme”, with the mention of the first-person plural pronominal determiner as a way of assuming the ownership. The beneficiaries are referred to as “*those*”, which appears three times as a personal pronoun and once as a demonstrative determiner in the phrase “*those businesses*”.

To conclude, this is a Resolve through which the speaker openly attempts to compensate for the possible inconvenient outcome their previous Request might have caused for the hearer. It also reassures that both parties are facing this crisis together, and that ultimately, the Resolve is in everyone’s interest, even if performed only by the speaker and the institutions they represent.

The second excerpt (2) exemplifies Resolve as a sequence of three Head Acts formulated one after the other, communicating measures to be put in place in the foreseeable future. This sequence is preceded by a Tell as grounder, which sets the context by providing information related to the number of drive-through centres already in operation. From this state of affairs, the speaker develops the three Resolves, enumerating the new testing facilities that will soon be implemented: the home testing option, the satellite approach concerning test kits, and ultimately, the pop-up mobile testing option. The last one is described in more detail by using another Tell as grounder that brings information related to the number of facilities expected to aid wherever they will be needed in the country.

At a linguistic level, there are similar features to the ones identified in the first excerpt analysed above. The first-person plural form of the personal pronoun ‘we’ is used six times as a subject; the speaker acknowledges in this choice of words that he fulfils a representative role and takes this responsibility to the fullest. As for the verb phrases, they all project future events expressed through various tenses and structures: future simple: ‘we will increase’; present continuous: ‘we are also currently working with’; and the expression ‘be going to’: ‘we’re going to have 48 of these’.

In general, the excerpts taken from the British English corpus describe the following pattern of occurrence for Resolve:

- ✓ The speech act is addressed by a speaker who assumes a representative role for the institution they stand by and uses the first-person plural excessively.
- ✓ Resolve is expressed as a response to a Request in the first case and as an enumeration of soon-to-be implemented measures necessary for the management of the sanitary crisis.
- ✓ The language stays clear and precise, void of metaphorical or emotional triggers, but rather focuses on building a cohesive and coherent development of proposed solutions.

Furthermore, two other excerpts were selected from the Spanish corpus, showing examples of Resolve occurrences in this linguaculture. The Head Acts identified here share a similarly high level of directness as the one from the British English corpus, that is, *locution derivable*. This is a justifiable feature, especially if the core meaning of the speech act and the reasons that trigger it are considered. On the one hand, a Resolve is uttered when the speaker wishes to announce their intention to perform something in their own interest soon. The nuance given here by the context of the COVID-19 pandemic is that the speaker’s own interest becomes everyone’s interest. Consequently, the need for clarity and precision becomes even more prominent. On the other hand, in cases where Resolve is not triggered by a Request, there is

usually a wider reasoning that makes the speaker perform this speech act: it is either the need to persuade their audience or the intention to soften what could be perceived as a more aggressive speech act, such as a Request.

The first Head Act identified in the examples from the Spanish corpus has two striking particularities: firstly, the same idea is stated twice in a subsequent repetition of the Head Act; then, the occurrence of the Head Act is prepared by the following unfolding of supporting moves:

Opine as grounder + Tell as grounder + Opine as grounder (repetition of the first)

The speaker initiates the intervention by providing a personal evaluation concerning the vaccination rate, which they consider optimal. In order to support this initial opinion, the Tell includes the exact number of people vaccinated in one day. Afterwards, the initial opinion is reiterated as if to assure the hearer of the reliability of this piece of information. This alternation and persistence in emphasising the positive development of the vaccination process is, in fact, preparing the hearer for the Resolve. By expressing the Head Act, the speaker announces their intention of reaching a 70% vaccination rate by summer. Similar to Opine, the Head Act is repeated twice, the speaker insisting on reiterating their promise and the commitment to fulfil it. Finally, the intervention ends with a grounder built with the same reassuring function that the goal will be met with the right strategy.

The following observations proved relevant in a linguistic analysis concerning the choice of language and grammatical structures. The first-person plural verb form is predominant when referring to previous accomplishments or future plans and intentions: ‘hemos alcanzado, pensábamos, adquiríamos, tenemos, lo vamos a lograr’⁸⁴. The speech remains clear and easy to follow, but the speaker uses repetition as an emphatic linguistic device to convince. As such, words such as ‘el ritmo’ and ‘óptimo’⁸⁵ mark the repetition of Opine where the speaker chooses to use the same words. The expression ‘lo vamos a lograr’ is also repeated at the end of the intervention. The word ‘objetivo’⁸⁶ is not only repeated, but in the first occurrence is followed by an enumeration of synonyms in the sequence: ‘el objetivo, el propósito, la misión’⁸⁷.

These repetitions put together mark the most important keywords of the speech and also infer the speaker’s intention to persuade and reassure the hearer. Moreover, in the second Opine, the speaker chooses a visual metaphor in order to better illustrate the fact that a previously made

⁸⁴ we have accomplished, we were thinking, we would acquire, we have, we will make it.

⁸⁵ the rhythm; optimal

⁸⁶ objective

⁸⁷ the objective, the purpose, the mission

promise has been accomplished and the vaccination process has reached the desired rhythm. This rhythm is compared to the speed of a cruise ship⁸⁸, an image that instinctively evokes positive emotions, as concepts such as comfort, relaxation, or holiday can be inferred. It might also imply that, as is the case with a cruise holiday, there are people in control of the direction and speed of the ship who make sure to take care of the passengers' comfort and safety. Similarly, the speaker and the institution they represent assume the management roles to conduct the national vaccination campaign.

The second excerpt (2) from the Spanish corpus also exemplifies one Head Act of Resolve, which the speaker repeats, similarly to the first example. However, there is a general impression of hesitance and caution in this example because by producing a Resolve, the speaker proposes here a type of medical solution never tested before. The novelty creates insecurities in this case, along with a need for precaution and the benefit of the doubt. In other words, the speaker wishes to bring to the public's attention the fact that new types of tests are being evaluated in order to find more adequate means of diagnosis and that, soon enough, other tests, different from the already available PCRs, will start to be used. In this context, they insist on the fact that the testing is in progress and that technical approval is yet to be given, claiming a need for calm and patience.

Although expressed in a more timid and hesitant register, this message comprises an unfolding of speech acts and supportive moves similar to the one analysed in the previous excerpt in the sense that the Head Act is repeated twice. Three grounders are inserted: one before the Head Act, another between its repeating sequences and the last one at the end of the intervention. In this case, the grounders do not form other Head Acts and their contribution to the overall meaning resides in either presenting pieces of information (the first grounder informs the hearer that there are ongoing testing processes and debates concerning which method would be more appropriate) or in voicing the need for caution while insisting that no clear decision had been taken yet because the process of technical validation was still in progress.

From a linguistic point of view, the speaker chose the words and the structures according to their pragmatic purpose, which in this case is to announce a new type of test used in the diagnosis of COVID-19. This is achieved through a hesitant, almost fearful Resolve and the language used complies with this pragmatic objective. As such, a variation in verb forms is observed. To begin with, in three cases, the speaker uses the first person plural form of the verb

⁸⁸ 'velocidad de crucero'

in structures where she validates her position as a representative of a certain institution, thus speaking in the name of her team: ‘hablamos de, queremos ser, estamos en’⁸⁹.

Moreover, the first two sentences start with an infinitive form, which is incorrectly used (‘comentarles, adelantarles’⁹⁰) according to the grammatical norms of the Spanish Royal Academy, but are acknowledged as a frequently used structure, especially by the media. On the official website of the Spanish Radio and Television (RTVE), in a section dedicated to media professionals, there is a specific subchapter entitled ‘Incorrect uses of the infinitive’⁹¹. This use of the infinitive is incorrect because its presence can only be justifiable if one considers that a verb of intention (such as ‘want or would like’, etc.) or any other verb in the personal form was omitted. The infinitive is an impersonal form, and its uses as a personal verbal form are considered erroneous. These situations in Spanish are named ‘introductory or phatic infinitive’⁹² and are usually identified with verbs of ‘saying’, such as: *express, remind, add, inform or declare*. In the excerpt analysed here, two situations of this kind were identified, both at the beginning of the intervention, in the first grounder.

After introducing the context in which the new testing will take place, the speaker builds the Head Act of Resolve with a metaphorical structure: ‘*entran en juego*’⁹³. Referring to the ‘game’ of finding the right test for an accurate diagnosis, more vocabulary which implies the ideas of risk, uncertainty and caution is used: ‘*posibles, analizar con calma, especialmente prudentes*’⁹⁴.

Ultimately, apart from the indicative, the use of conditional forms to convey possibility and probable hypotheses also helps to transmit the general impression of caution and uncertainty. The conditional form of the verb is used twice: ‘no sería descartable’ and ‘me gustaría’⁹⁵. The latter form is used in the last sentence and contains a first-person singular pronoun. The speaker takes full responsibility for insisting on the importance of the technical validation before the approval of the appropriate type of test.

In general, the samples taken from the Spanish corpus to illustrate occurrences of Resolve show a certain level of similarity with the ones identified in the analysis performed in the British corpus, in the sense that the speech act perspective remains in the first-person plural. The verb phrases from the Head Acts, and also from their supportive moves, are built in the

⁸⁹ we are talking of, we want to be, we are in

⁹⁰ to let you know, to bring it forward for you

⁹¹ <http://manualdeestilo.rtve.es/el-lenguaje/6-5-los-verbos/6-5-1-usos-erroneos-del-infinitivo/>, last accessed on May the 2nd, 2025.

⁹² infinitivo introductorio o infinitivo fático

⁹³ they enter the game

⁹⁴ possible, analyse calmly, especially careful.

⁹⁵ it wouldn't be impossible and I would like

first-person plural alongside pronominal determiners used in the same form. The speaker acknowledges their representative status and validates the contribution of various members. However, the use of the plural could also imply a need to share responsibility for the decision-making process on the one hand, as well as a need to involve the hearer in stated future plans, on the other hand.

Furthermore, there are certain features which were identified exclusively in the Spanish corpus:

- ✓ Both Head Acts identified in the two excerpts have been repeated by the speaker close to one another. Repetition is used here as an emphatic means, and the speaker reiterates the core idea to make sure the hearer understands and remembers what is most important.
- ✓ It is the only corpus where Opine is used as a grounder for Resolve. What is more, repetition is also used here, since Opine is repeated once with a Tell as grounder between the former and the latter Opine. In fact, the context for the Head Act is prepared through this interchange between a repeated Opine and a Tell placed in the middle. In the other cases, the grounders do not form Head Acts.

The other two excerpts were selected from the Romanian corpus to observe the production of Resolve in this linguaculture as well. The speech act is maintained at the same level of directness as in the two previously analysed corpora: *locution derivable*. Since the primary objective of this speech act is to announce the speaker's ongoing intentions on the matter at stake, there is a subsequent need for clarity and precision. This is why a high level of directness is expected in the case of its Head Acts. One Head Act was identified in each of the two examples taken from the Romanian corpus.

The first excerpt starts by setting the context, and the speaker uses two Tells as grounder to provide the necessary pieces of information. Immediately after the two supportive moves, the Head Act is expressed. The speaker announces that the second stage of the campaign will start by vaccinating those admitted to the medical-social centres. This will be achieved through the use of the mobile teams. By building a Resolve within this context, they estimate that the other vaccination centres will be fully equipped and authorised during the following days. Although the speaker's status as a representative of a medical institution is implied, the overall feeling is one of impersonal detachment. The information is not made personal; there is no clear mention of someone doing something for the benefit of all, which leads, consequently, to the idea that when personal involvement is avoided, responsibility is eluded as well.

From a linguistic point of view, a series of relevant observations proved important to the pragmatic analysis. Firstly, there is a significant difference in comparison to the other two

corpora in terms of the speech act perspective. If in the previous stages of this analysis, an important predominance of the first-person plural form of the verb phrase was underlined, alongside similar uses in the case of pronominal determiners, very few occurrences of this kind were identified in the Romanian corpus. To be more specific, there are only two personal references identified in the examples chosen for analysis, one in each of the two excerpts. Consequently, towards the end of the first excerpt, the following structure is used to mark a connection to a detail previously mentioned: ‘aşa cum am mai precizat deja’⁹⁶. In this case, the person and the number corresponding to the subject of the verb are not explicitly voiced through a pronominal form, but they can be deduced from the form of the auxiliary *to have*, used here to form the Romanian past form called *perfect compus*⁹⁷. Coincidentally, the form of this auxiliary in the first-person singular and plural is the same. The logical thread of the message leads to the conclusion that here, the speaker refers to the singular, since the entire phrase is used to link the current message to something they specified before.

The absence of the personal pronouns as subjects or any pronominal reference, for that matter, conveys an overall impression of impersonal involvement and marks a distance between the speaker and their message. This impression is supported further by even more linguistic markers. One of these is the use of the *passive voice*. In the first excerpt, it is used twice, once in the Head Act of the second Tell (as grounder) and the second time in the Head Act of Resolve: ‘vaccinarea se realizează cu echipe mobile’ and ‘acest lucru va fi finalizat’⁹⁸. Another remarkable aspect in this sense is the fact that even where the verb stays active, the sentence is built in such a way that it bears an impersonal subject, such as: ‘etapa a doua începe’ or ‘în momentul în care un centru este gata’⁹⁹.

The example provided in the second excerpt follows the pragmatic and linguistic trends identified in the first, but with only a few significant differences. While it conveys a similar overall impression of impersonal detachment, this might also be because the type of information presented here refers mainly to data and machinery. The speaker begins abruptly with the Head Act, where they announce that all sanitary units will receive the necessary equipment and the tests required by each unit. The speech act perspective here is first-person plural, marked by the auxiliary verb for future tense, ‘vom asigura’¹⁰⁰. The speech continues with an expander which does not form any Head Act. The expander develops the information related to the number of tests provided for each unit. The speaker introduces this extra information directly, using the

⁹⁶ as I have already mentioned before

⁹⁷ A verb tense which bears a similar meaning to past simple in English.

⁹⁸ ‘the vaccination is realised with mobile teams’ and ‘this will be finalised’

⁹⁹ ‘the second phase begins’ or ‘the moment when a centre is ready’

¹⁰⁰ we will make sure

first-person singular: ‘menționez suplimentar’¹⁰¹. This might be interpreted as a precautionary measure where they announce that the medical staff will be tested first when the tests arrive in the medical units. This last mention is also formulated as an impersonal structure (‘personalul medical va avea prioritate’¹⁰²), and the speaker avoids saying who decides to prioritise the testing of the medical staff.

To conclude, the excerpts studied from the Romanian corpus for in-depth qualitative analysis of Resolve showed the following characteristics:

- ✓ The overall impression of the message is highly impersonal and detached. At a linguistic level, this is conveyed through passive constructions and a few occurrences of pronominal subjects or determiners. By choosing this approach, the speaker also makes sure that no responsibility is assigned.
- ✓ As far as the supportive moves are concerned, Tell is used as grounder. Still, in structures that do not include any figures or statistical data, that is, the information provided is not supported by objective evidence. Apart from grounders, an expander is also formulated closely to the second Head Act. The information brought up through the use of this supportive move has a precautionary intent. It is aimed at softening any possible impositions which might appear as a consequence of Resolve.

4.1.2 Frequency of Occurrence

In the previous subchapter, the speech act Resolve was analysed in excerpts from the three corpora according to pragmatic and linguistic methodologies. Although there were many common characteristics which the three linguacultures shared concerning patterns of the unfolding of the supportive moves (they all use Tell as grounder) or the level of directness of the Head Acts (*locution derivable*), there were also significant differences which made each of them stand out in its own way.

With the same comparative intent in mind, a quantitative analysis is necessary to complete a corpus description. Fig. no. 5 below illustrates the frequencies of Resolve used as a speech act in each of the three corpora. As in the case of a qualitative analysis, both similarities and differences are meaning-bearing.

¹⁰¹ I bring an extra mentioning

¹⁰² The medical staff will be prioritised

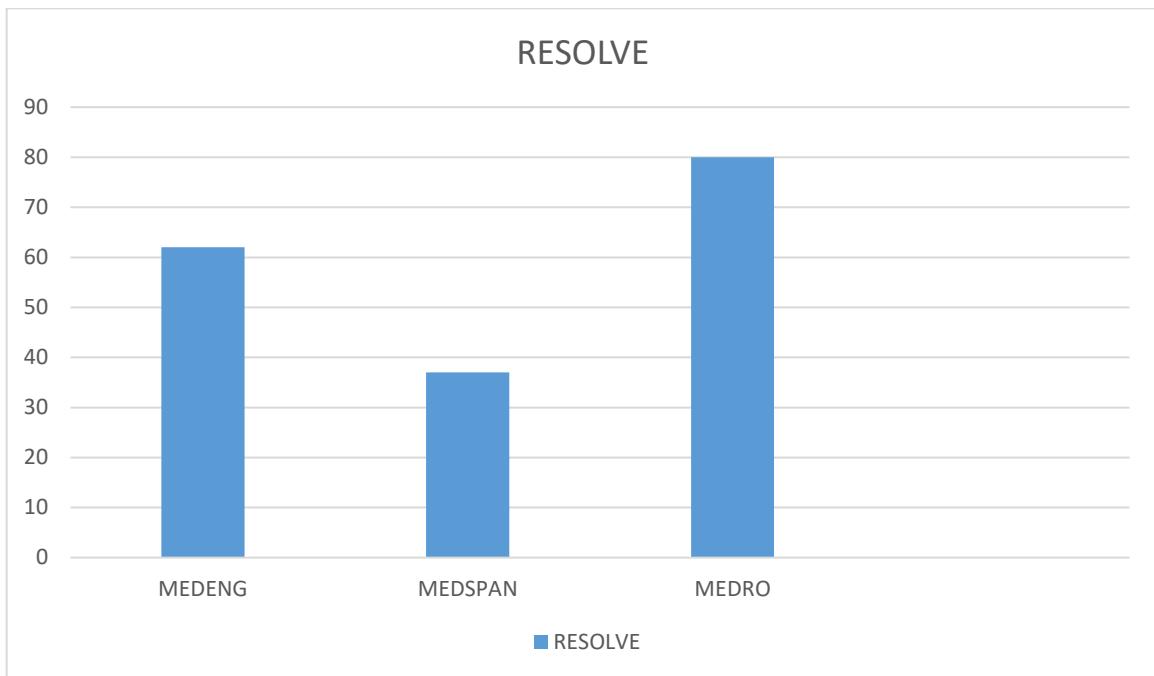


Fig. no. 5 - Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Act Resolve
(data obtained manually)

Figures show that the minimum use of Resolve was achieved in the Spanish corpus (37 times), while facing a staggering opposite figure (more than double) in the Romanian corpus (80 times). The data obtained from the British corpus show an intermediate number of occurrences, but closer, however, to the Romanian total (62 times). The statistical outline of the data conveys objective pieces of information that bring supplementary confirmation to the findings already analysed in the qualitative analysis.

As such, the occurrence of Resolve in the case of the British English corpus marks a statement of clarity, precision and balance in assuming leading positions with responsibility. The speakers seem to understand and fulfil their roles as representatives of medical or political establishments. Consequently, the language maintains a balanced rhythm throughout, avoiding overstimulating metaphors of emotional triggers. Resolve is sometimes used as an answer to Request or in enumeration sequences through which future measures are announced. The fact that Resolve appears 60 times in the corpus, an intermediate value positioned between those of the other two corpora, supports the general tendency towards calm and equilibrium in getting things done.

Moreover, the case of Resolve analysed in the Spanish corpus is singled out both by the number of occurrences (which is the lowest since Resolve appears only 37 times) and, also, by the specific linguistic features which mark a speech delivered subjectively, in structures where the speaker gets their opinions involved. The level of personal and emotional involvement is the highest, and language is used to meet this specific end: repetitions, abundance of adjectives

and synonyms, use of pronominal determiners. It is also the only corpus where *Opine* was used as a supportive move. What the Spanish samples have in common with the examples provided from the British English corpus is the speech act perspective, which remains predominantly in the first-person plural.

As for the last corpus taken for analysis, the *Resolves* identified in the Romanian texts had the highest number of occurrences, which shows a specific need of the speakers to anticipate future measures. However, what remains highly different from the examples provided from the other two linguacultures is the absence of personal pronouns or pronominal determiners. If the other two corpora shared a common speech act perspective in the first-person plural, in the Romanian corpus, the use of the passive voice was recurrent. The speech remains void of emotional markers, but not with the objective intent in mind, as in the case of the British English texts. On the contrary, pragmatic intentions such as cautious behaviour and avoiding responsibility might instead be inferred.

All in all, *Resolve* is a speech act which proved relevant and essential in the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of the selected corpora.

4.2 Excuse/ Justify – General Features

Excuse/ Justify is a speech act that due to its repetitive occurrence through the corpora also became relevant in determining communication patterns typical to the context analysed in the three linguacultures. As the name might imply from the very beginning this is a speech act used with a double intention to obtain one single outcome. Edmondson et. al (2023) define it and explain this particular denomination in their typology:

If we seek to distinguish between an ‘excuse’ and a ‘justification’ in common-sense terms we might say that, in the first case, a speaker admits that what he did was undesirable but suggests that there are or were mitigating circumstances which lessen the blame attached to himself – for example, physical, mental or emotional stress, ignorance and so on. With a justification, however, the speaker seeks to persuade that what he did was ‘justified’, such that no blame attaches to himself for having done it. In practice, however, it is impossible to always distinguish these two cases: we therefore have one category of illocution here, named the Excuse/ Justify. (2023: 153).

Given the formal context and the speakers’ position in the press releases analysed here, the second meaning is encountered more often, and the persuasive intention is predominant. Thus, Excuse/ Justify was identified in the three corpora mainly as a grounder for Tell, Request or even Suggest, primarily fulfilling the role of a persuasive means.

Similar to the discussion in which the differentiation between Request and Suggest was marked by the speaker’s intention to use the requestive force or not, here too, a clarification must be made concerning the level of directness of this speech act. This level fluctuates depending on the offence supposedly committed before the speech act or an offence anticipated by the speaker as an act of resistance and opposition on the hearer’s behalf. The analysed corpora use Excuse/ Justify mainly to convince the audience of the necessity of certain measures, despite the fact that these will cause great imposition. The speakers almost always argue that complying with these measures means understanding that accepting the imposition implies a greater benefit for all in the immediate future.

4.2.1 Qualitative Analysis

Similar to the other speech acts, Excuse/Justify was identified manually in the three corpora. Its co-dependence on other speech acts such as Apologise, Complain (Edmondson et.

al., 2023), or, as is the case in the corpora analysed here, Tell or Request, makes it necessary to use extended samples of text to be able to perform the decoding process as accurately as possible. Thus, in the table below, large examples from each corpus are provided, with Excuse/Justify shown individually and in relation to the other speech acts which it determines either as grounder or disarmer.

Corpus	Example	Speech Act Coding Scheme
MEDENG	<p>(1) <i>if the NHS is having to spend a large proportion of its effort in trying to treat Covid cases because the numbers have gone up very, to very high levels and trying to put in place, in place, large numbers of systems to try and reduce the risk of transmission in hospitals, it will lead to a reduction in treatment for other areas, in early diagnosis of disease, and in prevention programmes. And so there is an indirect effect on deaths and on illness from this impact on the NHS if we allow the numbers to rise too fast. But on the other side, we also know that some of the things we've had to do are going to cause significant problems in the economy, big social impacts, impacts on mental health, and therefore ministers making decisions, and all of society, have to walk this very difficult balance. If we do too little, this virus will go out of control and we will get significant numbers of increased direct and indirect deaths, but if we go too far the other way, then we can cause damage to the economy which can feed through to unemployment, to poverty and to deprivation, all of which have long-term health effects.</i> (Chris Whitty, 21.09.2020)</p> <p>(2) "They described it as just a total lack of respect for a region where you potentially</p>	EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY AS GROUNDER FOR TELL HEAD ACT FOR TELL EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY AS GROUNDER FOR REQUEST HEAD ACT FOR REQUEST EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY AS EXPANDER FOR REQUEST Possible offence in the question

	<p><i>won't win any votes. Is it that, or is it just the chaos of trying to organize a lockdown?"</i></p> <p><i>"I think it's wrong to say that any particular area has been treated any differently to any other. We value all jobs and all people's livelihoods equally. The schemes that we've put in place are national. So wherever you happen to be, wherever you live, whatever job you have, not just regions in England but wherever you are in the United Kingdom, you'll be treated the same. And this is a national scheme. (Rishi Sunak, 21.09.2020)</i></p>	<p>EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY – HEAD ACT (locution derivable)</p> <p>TELL AS GROUNDER FOR EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY</p>
MEDSPAN	<p><i>(1) ¿tienen ustedes una estimación similar y cuándo nos van a dar los datos de estos pacientes que no figuran en las estadísticas?</i></p> <p><i>Sí, lo que hemos hecho hasta ahora en la vigilancia de esta enfermedad, debido a la capacidad diagnóstica que ha habido que ir aumentándola en los últimos días, ha sido centrarnos en confirmar especialmente casos con una cierta patología, con una cierta severidad, casos graves y casos en profesionales sanitarios y en personal esencial. Por lo tanto, sabemos, seguro, hay muchísimos más casos leves que no están siendo confirmados hasta ahora porque, como decía, la capacidad del sistema se ha volcado en todo lo que han sido los casos más graves. Entonces, seguro, vamos, somos conscientes y de hecho se está vigilando de una manera indirecta que hay muchísimos más casos leves que no están en estas cifras de casos que estamos dando. De hecho, hace poco se ha publicado algún artículo científico</i></p>	<p>Possible offence in the question</p> <p>EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY – HEAD ACT 1 (strong hint)</p> <p>EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY – HEAD ACT 2 (strong hint)</p> <p>EXPANDER</p> <p>HEAD ACT FOR TELL</p> <p>Possible offence in the question</p>

	<p>(...), para que se hagan una idea, hablan del 15% de personas que ya han podido pasar la enfermedad. (María José Sierra, 04.04.2020)</p> <p>(2) <i>Hace un mes y medio que llegó la alerta sobre la cepa británica y ya deberíamos tener una estimación de su extensión en España. Tenemos ya el dato y, en caso contrario, ¿cuándo podremos disponer de él?</i></p> <p><i>En cuanto a la cepa británica, no es fácil ahora mismo, ni aquí ni en ningún país, determinar el nivel de circulación. Para determinar el nivel de circulación con seguridad de una cepa concreta, perdón, de una variante concreta, deberíamos de secuenciar prácticamente todas las muestras que tenemos para ser capaces de saber exactamente esta variante cuánto está difundida. Lo que tenemos ahora mismo son aproximaciones, pero aproximaciones que tienen algunas ciertos sesgos y otras menos sesgos, pero también tienen su dificultad a la hora de la interpretación. Cuando se hacen estudios sobre personas, sobre muestras de personas que tienen alta probabilidad de tener la variante británica, obviamente estamos sesgando el resultado. Si las muestras se toman de personas que regresan de Reino Unido, el porcentaje de ellas que sean positivas a la variante británica, por supuesto, será mayor que la circulación real de la variante británica en nuestro territorio.</i></p> <p>(Fernando Simón, 18.01.2021)</p>	<p>EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY – HEAD ACT (strong hint)</p> <p>GROUNDER</p> <p>HEAD ACT FOR TELL</p> <p>EXPANDER FOR TELL</p> <p>EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY – HEAD ACT (locution derivable)</p>
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My translation	<p>(1) Do you have a similar estimate and when will you be able to provide the data on the patients who have not been included in the statistics?</p> <p>Yes, what we have been doing up to now regarding the supervision of this disease and thanks to our capacity to diagnose which has increased in the past few days is to focus on the confirmation of cases that particularly had a specific pathology, that were serious cases, cases of medical professionals or essential professionals. Consequently, we know, of course, that there are many more light cases which have not been confirmed up to now, because, as I was saying the system's capacity was centred on the more serious cases. Then, of course, truly, we are aware and in fact, it is observed indirectly that there are many more light cases not comprised in the figures that we publish. In fact, a scientific article has been published recently (...), so that you can get an idea, where it is said that 15% of the population might have already had the disease.</p> <p>(2) As for the British strain of the virus, it is not easy right now, not here, not in any other country to determine the level of circulation. To certainly determine the level of a specific strain, excuse me, of a specific variant, we would have to practically sequence all the samples we have to find out the exact spread of this variant. What we have right now are approximations, but approximations out of which some have certain patterns and some have fewer patterns, but they all present a level of difficulty when it comes to interpreting them. When they conduct studies on people, on samples from people with a high probability of having the British variant, we are obviously influencing the result. If the samples are taken from people returning from the UK, the percentage of positive results for the British variant will of course, be higher than the real circulation of the British variant of the virus in our land.</p>	
MEDRO	<p><i>(1) Atât în mediul urban, cât și în mediul rural sunt oameni care cred foarte multe teorii ale conspirației. De exemplu, sunt foarte mulți oameni care cred că vaccinarea este o afacere. Dacă ați avea în față o astfel de persoană cum ați convinge-o că nu e așa? Sigur că de multe ori este greu să schimbi perceptia unei persoane asupra unor teorii</i></p>	<p>Possible offence in the question</p> <p>EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY – HEAD ACT (mild hint)</p>

	<p><i>conspiraționiste, însă cred că, atunci când mesajul vine de la o persoană de încredere, și aici cred că persoana cu cea mai mare autoritate și care beneficiază și de încredere este medicul, care este în măsură să ofere pe înțelesul persoanei respective toate informațiile de care are nevoie, trebuie să înțelegem și oamenii trebuie să înțeleagă în momentul de față că singura soluție care ne oferă o predictibilitate și un control pe termen lung din punct de vedere al pandemiei o reprezintă vaccinarea. (Valeriu Gheorghita, 25.05.2021)</i></p> <p><i>(2)... am văzut cazul Episcopului Devei și Hunedoarei, care a încetat din viață în urma unui stop cardiorespirator la a treia doză, având a treia doză. Este o situație care îi îngrijorează pe oameni și îi face cumva să nu se mai vaccineze. De aceea, vă întreb care este opinia dumneavoastră?</i></p> <p><i>Dar cum a intrat în stop cardiorespirator? Mă întrebați ceva despre care eu nu știu, nu știu cum s-a întâmplat. Poate că nu are nicio relație a treia doză cu ce s-a întâmplat acolo. Faptul că a luat a treia doză, după care i s-a întâmplat ceva, poate să fie total disociat. Nu are rost să le asociem, să le legăm una de cealaltă. Cum am zis altădată, sunt peste patru miliarde de oameni vaccinați în lume și lumea merge mult mai bine în multe zone decât mergem noi acum, unde s-a ales ca 70% să nu se vaccineze. (Raed Arafat, 22.10.2021)</i></p>	<p>HEAD ACT FOR REQUEST</p> <p>Possible offence in the question</p> <p>EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY – HEAD ACT (explicit performative)</p> <p>TELL AS GROUNDER FOR EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY</p>
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My translation	<p>(1) Both in urban and rural areas, there are people who believe in many conspiracy theories. As such, there are many people who believe vaccination is a business. If you were talking to such a person, how would you convince them that this was not true?</p> <p>It is certain that many times it is difficult to change a person's perception of certain conspiracy theories, but I do believe that when the message comes from someone they trust, and here I think the person with the highest authority and most trustworthy is the doctor – the one qualified to express in lay language all the information the person needs – we must understand and people need to understand that for the time being the only solution which offers predictability and a certain control of the pandemic in the long run is vaccination.</p> <p>(2)...we have seen the case of the Deva and Hunedoara Archbishop who died because of cardiac arrest, having gotten vaccinated three times. This is a situation that makes people worry and they stop getting vaccinated. That is why I am asking for your opinion.</p> <p>But how did he have the cardiac arrest? You are asking me about something I do not know, I don't know how that happened there. Maybe it has no connection with the third dose of the vaccine. The fact that he had the third dose and afterwards something happened to him could be two separate things. It makes no sense to associate the two and link them to one another. As I have said before, there are more than 4 billion people vaccinated in the world and people have improved in many areas more than we did because 70% chose not to get vaccinated.</p>
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Table no. 10 – The Excuse/ Justify Coding Scheme Exemplified

The examples shown in Table no. 9 were chosen for their illustrative character in the sense that they provide a recurrent pattern of the specific characteristics Excuse/ Justify portrays in the three corpora. A general overview singles out the speech act in the three linguacultures as follows:

- Excuse/ Justify appears in the British English corpus more frequently as a supportive move for Tell or Request rather than as an independent speech act;
- In the Spanish corpus, Excuse/ Justify appears as an independent speech act more frequently than in the other corpora;

- In the Romanian corpus, Excuse/ Justify appears as an independent speech act, but has a Tell for grounder and establishes an intertextual relation with Request.

In the British English corpus, the mitigating role of Excuse/ Justify is highly illustrated by the supportive moves the speech act performs. In excerpt (1), Excuse/ Justify is identified four times. Firstly, it precedes a Tell and acts as its grounder. By performing an Excuse/ Justify in this case, the speaker builds up the necessary explanations to justify the conclusion expressed as Tell. This is why, the grounder takes up a significant amount of space and it brings extended details formulated as a main and subordinate *if clause*, a structure which bases its logic on the cause and effect reasoning.

Secondly, right after the Head Act of Tell, another Excuse/ Justify acts again as grounder but this time for Request. Here, this justification is introduced by the contrastive conjunction *but*, followed by the expression *on the other side*, which reinforces the contrastive approach. The speaker adopts an attitude of acknowledgement which stands by the idea of formulating excuses and explaining oneself. The subjects are expressed in the first-person plural – *we also know that, we've had to do* –, and the speaker refers here to all of the decision-makers involved in the process. All of these mitigating preparations were aimed at softening the requestive force of the upcoming Head Act where the speaker transfers the consequences of the aforementioned decisions from *we* to *all society*.

Moreover, such is the force of the Request that the speaker continues their speech with another Excuse/ Justify, built this time as an expander. This one, too, similar to the grounder for Tell, is expressed through a sequence of main and if clauses, and it is aimed at enumerating the possible unfortunate outcomes that might occur provided the balance is lost.

Excerpt (2) provides one example from the British English corpus where Excuse/ Justify stands alone and develops an independent Head Act. However, this speech act also needs a trigger for its occurrence. The speech evolves as a question-and-answer sequence and it is precisely in the question where a possibly offensive sentence is uttered: the person addressing the question implies a lack of impartiality in the decision-making by favouring certain regions in the country to the detriment of others. The Excuse/ Justify is performed as a counter-act and it shows a self-defensive mechanism: the first subject is in first-person singular – *I think it's wrong* – but the following ones switch to the plural – *we value, we've put in place* - because they refer to general approaches and attitudes which back-up the speaker's initial argument. The level of directness of this Head Act is *locution derivable*, meaning that the speaker's intention in performing this speech act can be identified directly from the meaning of the locution. This is also important in achieving the counter-balance effect that the speaker seeks

to prove that the offence in question was false and unnecessary. And to be even surer that this effect is easily perceivable, the speech continues its direction with a Tell which acts as the grounder of the Head Act. It is notable here the repetitive presence of the second-person pronominal subject, *you*, reiterated five times within the same sentence. The direct address of the hearer has an overt persuasive intention.

To sum it up, the two excerpts from the British English corpus display a smooth unfolding of the speech acts identified here: in the first example, Request is preceded by Excuse/ Justify as grounder and then followed by another Excuse/ Justify as expander. This message core was prepared with a Tell also preceded by an Excuse/ Justify as grounder. The speaker's primary objective in building this sequence was to ask something: to perform a request. In order to soften the requestive force while attempting to win the hearer over, justifications and facts were intertwined as effectively as possible. In the second example, Excuse/ Justify becomes the purpose of the message and as such, develops its Head Act. The offence that the speaker perceives in the previously addressed question triggers the production of this speech act. Whether used as a mitigating device for another imposing speech act (in the examples provided here, a Request) or as a defensive reaction to an offensive question, Excuse/ Justify is used in the British English corpus to serve communicative purposes such as persuasion, information and counter-argument effectively while at the same time complying with the rigours of a formal environment.

The examples extracted from the Spanish corpus show a repetitive tendency throughout the texts compiled in this linguaculture: Excuse/ Justify appears as an independent speech act in the majority of cases, and it is triggered by offences or possible threats that the speaker identifies in the questions or replies of their interlocutors. In the excerpts from Table no. 9 four Excuse/ Justify were identified. The first three are Head Acts whose level of directness is *strong hint*, and the last is *locution derivable*.

To begin with, the question which opens sample (1) implies that several patients were not included in the official statistics where the infection rate with COVID-19 was being monitored. The speaker admits this claim as true and attempts a justification that might excuse the situation. As the speech unfolds, the sequence of speech acts and their supportive moves creates an overall impression of confusion and insecurity. Once the acknowledgement of the situation is made – through an abrupt *yes* at the very beginning of the answer – the first Excuse/ Justify is performed at a *strong hint* level of directness, implying the fact that the absence of those patients is because the statistics comprised only the serious cases, leaving out the infections with light symptoms. The second Excuse/ Justify (again formulated as *strong hint* instead of a more explicit manner) reiterates the same idea expressed previously. This

repetitiveness contributes immensely to the feeling that much is being spoken, but little is being said. In this sense, both these Head Acts abound in cajolers, which makes the following of the train of thought even more difficult: *si, debido a, con una cierta, por lo tanto, sabemos, seguro, como decía, entonces, vamos*¹⁰³. This second Head Act is followed by an expander in which it is explicitly acknowledged that the light cases are not part of the current statistics. The speaker also implies that these cases are considered, although not included in the official figures. Finally, a Tell is produced, which communicates a percentage from a study, but without mentioning the name or the source of that scientific article.

In excerpt (2) from the Spanish corpus, there is more variety in the unfolding of the several Head Acts, and less repetitiveness, with grounders and expanders introduced appropriately. All of these lead to more clarity and precision. The initial offence in the question that triggers the first Excuse/ Justify refers to the British variant of COVID-19 and the possibility of it spreading throughout the Spanish territories. The speaker uses the conditional of the verb *deber* in the first-person plural, which translates in English as a modal perfect (*ya deberíamos tener una estimación* – *we should have already had an estimate*), implying that something should have been accomplished up to the moment of speaking, but it did not happen as such. The justification in the answer comes as a Head Act that has a *strong hint* level of directness. The situation is again acknowledged, but the speaker hints at its general, worldwide character, suggesting that the responsibility should not be placed solely on local authorities. The grounder of this Excuse/ Justify offers a more extended explanation to back up the initial claim stated in the Head Act. This is one of the many situations encountered in the corpora where scientific knowledge is used to explain the current state of affairs. The speaker describes a process typical of medical research using specific terminology such as *determinar el nivel de, secuenciar, muestras*¹⁰⁴. None of these come with clear definitions and even if they did, relating to such complex procedures is usually challenging for the lay audience. Therefore, the way in which the speaker makes the shift from professional terminology back to a common ground with their hearers is by building a Tell to inform that for the moment, no clear conclusions have been reached. Tell continues with an expander that brings more information on how the studies are made and returns once more to the description of the scientific research. Both scientific references inserted in the speech as grounder and expander are aimed at justifying and creating a reason to explain why the estimate of infected people with the British variant is not available to the public. Finally, the last Excuse/ Justify, is expressed as a *locution derivable* Head Act,

¹⁰³ Our translation: *yes, due to, with a certain (occurring twice in an enumeration), therefore, we know (in the sense of the crutch word 'you know'), of course (occurring twice in an enumeration), as I said, so, let's...*

¹⁰⁴ Our translation: *to determine the level, to sequence, samples.*

which means that the speaker's intention is easily deduced from the locution. It is another justification that the speaker uses to round up the excusable motives for which the estimate that the initial question was asking for cannot be accessed.

To add it all up, the two excerpts chosen for analysis from the Spanish corpus showed that the order in which the speaker decides to create certain speech acts and their move can make the difference between clarity and confusion, between precision and hesitation. Consequently, repeating the same speech act risks unfulfilling the speaker's conversational purposes. Paradoxically, this analysis proved that the more intricate the decoding of the speech acts becomes –, i.e., in the sense that apart from the typical grounders and expanders, one speech act becomes a supportive move for another speech act – the more efficient the communication is.

Lastly, the Romanian corpus also significantly contributed to the overall decoding process of Excuse/ Justify in the three selected corpora. The examples chosen from the corpus illustrate the occurrence of two Excuse/ Justify at different levels of directness: one is *mild hint* and the other is *explicit performative*. Both are constructed independently and form their Head Acts, starting from a triggering offence expressed in the question.

In excerpt (1), the topic of the conversation is the vaccination against the COVID-19 virus. The reporter explicitly states in their question that some people consider vaccination another business scheme. The answer to this begins, similar to cases exemplified by the Spanish corpus, with the speaker making an acknowledgement. By admitting that it is often difficult to change someone's opinion, the justification hints at a side topic and evades the matter proposed in the question. The speaker's justification emphasises that when it comes to conspiracy theories, they believe that counter-messages and pertinent explanations should come from a person with authority and expertise; in this case, the doctor is the one who can provide accurate advice on the vaccine matter. The speaker performs this speech act to justify why people believe in unverified theories. As such, they portray the doctor as a central figure in their message, thereby avoiding a direct confrontation with the question and providing an answer based on the assumption of its falsehood. Consequently, the purpose of this Excuse/ Justify is to respond to an offence with a justification that would shift the focus to something entirely different. Furthermore, the next Head Act is the nucleus of a Request, which is syntactically linked through a comma to the previous speech act. The requestive force is aimed here to underline the importance of vaccination. The hearers are summoned to accept vaccination as the only predictable and controllable solution to the sanitary crisis.

This sample shows that decoding speech acts can sometimes reveal communicative intentions of divagation and persuasion. An offence or an accusation is addressed with an

Excuse/ Justify that, instead of admitting or denying the claim, presents an explanation as to why that particular claim might happen. The topic shifts onto a central figure, only to be abruptly interrupted by a Request for compliance. To achieve all this unfolding of forces, two Head Acts follow one another in a rapid and effective change of perspectives, where the idea of 'business' - a key part of the initial question – is avoided altogether.

The second example cited in this analysis also deals with the topic of vaccination, but this time the speech acts identified offer a different display of Head Acts and moves. The question that triggers the Excuse/ Justify describes the case of someone who died despite having the vaccination scheme in place. The interlocutor claims this example might make even more people refuse the vaccination, and he asks for an official opinion on the phenomenon. The answer comes as an impulsive reaction, as an interrogation that questions the very process which led to that person's death. The Excuse/ Justify that follows immediately after has a Head Act with an *explicit performative* level of directness. The speaker openly admits that they do not know what happened in that particular case and that more data is needed. The suggestion implied in the initial question that the relation between the vaccine and the person's death was cause and effect is contested. This Excuse/ Justify holds a strong feeling of spontaneity, rendering the message more genuine and honest. This feeling is achieved through an initial interrogation concerning details of the cardiac arrest's occurrence, followed by an excuse where the speaker admits openly to a lack of knowledge on the matter. Admitting something of this kind is highly unlikely in such a context. An unknown piece of information would rather be avoided by changing the direction of the conversation, placing the focus somewhere else, or promising more research that would provide a later answer. Because of its unlikelihood, this answer marks an exception and confers more pragmatic meaning. Tell used as grounder for Excuse/ Justify reinforces this spontaneous spark of honesty because it extends the topic by providing statistical data from around the world.

By summing up the information from the Romanian corpus, the two excerpts analysed here show two Excuse/ Justify identified with their independent Head Acts, used to achieve different communicative purposes. The first one changes the focus of the conversation from the main topic to a one-sided argument while attempting to persuade the hearer to comply with the following request addressed altogether in the same utterance. The second speech act is expressed as an honest, but impulsive reaction that questions and admits to not knowing. In a formal and highly professional context such as the one dictated by the rigours of the press release genre, this particular Excuse/ Justify stands as a sample of humanity which might be as crucial to successful communication as all the other rules of conduct.

4.2.2 Frequency of Occurrence

In the previous subchapter, examples from each corpus were provided to analyse Excuse/ Justify. Aspects related to the structure of the speech act – the Head Act and the supportive moves – and its sequence or interference with other speech acts were looked into. The excerpts selected for analysis were chosen according to representative criteria, that is, they are examples that frequently occur throughout the corpora, but at the same time reveal specificities in their linguaculture in terms of the speaker's intentions and communicative goals.

Up to this point in the present study, the following speech acts have been researched under a similar analytical paradigm: Tell, Opine, Request and Suggest. Excuse/ Justify is the fifth of seven speech acts identified as relevant to the study of crisis communication. In the case of this speech act, a quantitative analysis was also necessary to observe how much Excuse/ Justify is being used in each sample selected from the three linguacultures.

Consequently, Fig. no. 5 shows how often this speech act was identified in each corpus. The graph shows that the Romanian corpus (78 times) had the highest number of occurrences, the British English (41 times) had the lowest, and the Spanish corpus was positioned somewhere between the previous two (68 times).

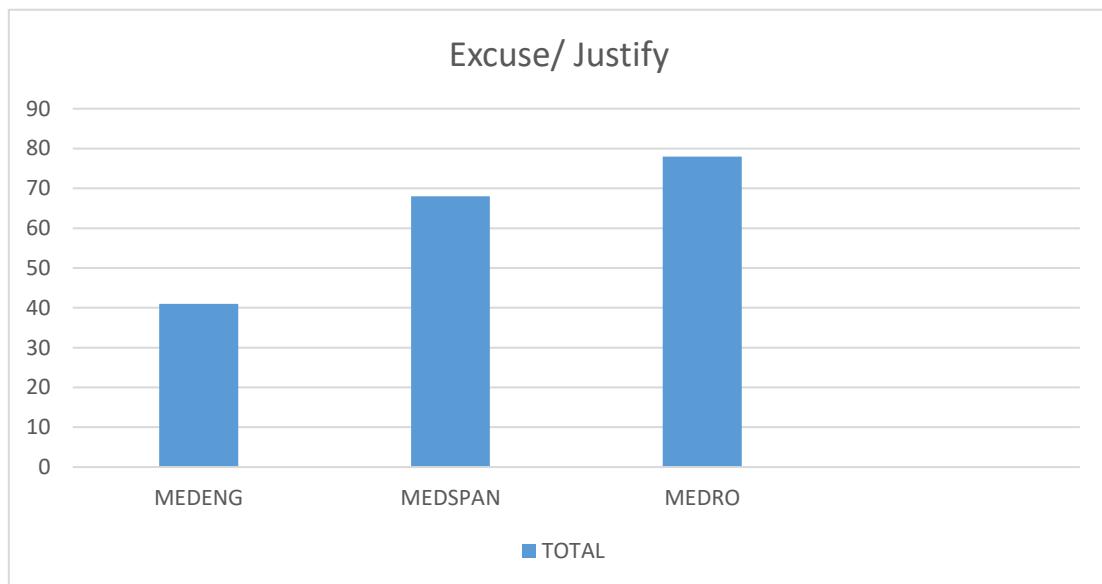


Fig. no. 6 - Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Act Excuse/ Justify
(data obtained manually)

The qualitative analysis revealed that the British English corpus offers the most balanced approach when employing excuses or justifications to present arguments and clarify complex situations. From a statistical point of view, the corpus chosen to represent this linguaculture has the lowest occurrence of this particular speech act. It is either used as a

mitigating device for face-threatening acts such as Requests or as a defensive mechanism whenever an offence is perceived. This low occurrence is an indicator of the fact that neither of the triggering cases is highly present in the corpus and that communication develops at a smooth pace. Overall, Excuse/Justify is employed in British English to support communication goals like persuasion, information sharing, and counter-argumentation while maintaining formality.

Compared to the other two corpora summoned to analysis in this study, MEDSPAN is positioned between as far as the number of occurrences of Excuse/ Justify is concerned. However, this corpus stands out due to the fact that Excuse/ Justify appears more often here as an independent Head Act rather than a supportive move for other speech acts: 48 times identified as an independent Head Act and 20 times as a supportive move for Request or Tell. These data bear pragmatic meaning precisely because they show a preference for using this speech act more as a defensive mechanism than as a mitigating device. The qualitative analysis revealed that in these cases, Excuse/Justify is constructed by enumerating repetitive structures linked with numerous cajolers, thereby creating confusion, insecurity, and unclear messages. Repeating the same speech act without variation can lead to unfulfilled conversational goals. Interestingly, the analysis also showed that the more complex the interplay between speech acts (where one act supports another), the more effective the communication becomes.

The Romanian corpus also singles out specificities. Firstly, it is the corpus in which Excuse/ Justify has the highest number of occurrences, which means that on the one hand, the triggering situations are more common than in the other two corpora, and on the other hand, other imposing speech acts, such as Request or Tell are softened by Excuse/ Justify. The first example in Table no. 9 shifts the conversation from the main topic to a one-sided argument, aiming to persuade the hearer to comply with a request. The second example is an honest, impulsive reaction that questions and admits uncertainty. In the formal, professional context of a press release, this second Excuse/Justify highlights the importance of showing humanity in communication, which can be as crucial as adhering to formal rules.

4.3 Thank - General Features

In the previous subchapter, Excuse/ Justify was the speech act identified in the three corpora and analysed according to the cross-cultural pragmatic frame. The analysis demonstrated that this speech act usually occurs as a response to a triggering factor such as an offence or a threat to the speaker's social status and image. It can also mitigate the force of other speech acts when used as a supportive move. The examples provided in the qualitative analysis demonstrate that Excuse/ Justify serves communicative intentions, such as persuasion or diversion. In most cases, it also suits the rigours of formality specific to the press release genre.

Thank is another speech act that proved relevant to the pragmatic analysis of crisis communication. Its relevance is due both to meaning and frequency. From a cross-cultural perspective, Thank provides interesting pragmatic insight because it is “a speech act strongly supporting the addressee” (House and Kádár, 2021: 110). In the context of COVID-19 and according to the speakers' objectives throughout the press releases, ‘supporting the addressee’ can sometimes be a strong means of persuasion and, other times, a genuine, empathetic approach towards others in a critical situation. However, the high number of occurrences of this speech act is due to another one of its specific uses that was identified in the corpora: “expressions used for Thank tend to be ritual” (2021: 110), and in the present analysis, they were often identified when an exchange was either initiated or ended.

When Thank is built explicitly inside the press release and inserted as an independent Head Act among other speech acts, significant pragmatic information is communicated. As such, Edmondson et al. explain it as follows:

If the benefit for which one wishes to express a Thanks occurred at a point in time preceding the ongoing encounter, the Thanking illocution may initiate Head (Act). Here the thankable is likely to be specified, and ‘embedding’ expressions are possible – for example, one can actually Thank somebody by saying that one wishes to thank them: ‘I would like to express my sincere thanks to’ (2023: 158).

Similar occurrences were identified in the corpora where the Thanks were addressed to different professional categories that contributed to crisis management. The pragmatic analysis seeks to observe the sequences in which Thank is used with intentions of appraisal and gratitude, along with its interaction with the other speech acts unfolding throughout the communication.

The ritual-framed expressions for Thank interest this analysis in terms of frequency of occurrence first and foremost. The three linguacultures use Thank to initiate or to end an

exchange, but there were significant differences in the frequency with which they were used. As such, Edmondson et. al (2023: 159) acknowledge that “a Thank may even be occasioned by a Request for a Tell or Opine – for example, in certain formal contexts: ‘thank you for your question’.”

In the three linguacultures analysed here, Thank was employed considerably more frequently as a ritual-framed expression at the beginning or end of an exchange than as a gratitude-bearing speech act.

4.3.1 Qualitative Analysis

After the manual collection of data concerning Thank from the corpora, it was clear that although this speech act was more often used as a ritual-framed expression at the beginning or the end of an exchange, the occurrences as Head Act revealed more information on the speakers’ intentions and how, according to these intentions, the speaker shaped the content of the conversation. This is why Table no.10 below comprises examples of Thank that were identified as independent Head Acts, intertwined with other speech acts or accompanied by their corresponding supportive moves. The numerous cases in which Thank accompanies the greetings as a ritual-framed expression used mainly to respect formal conventions typical to the context in which the press releases were delivered are not analysed hereafter, but they are included in the analysis concerning the frequency of occurrence of the speech act performed in the following subchapter.

Apart from the conventional aspects analysed for every speech act, such as level of directness, head acts and supportive moves, speaker’s intention and meaning-bearer morpho-syntactic elements, in the case of Thank there is another category worth discussing: when the speaker addresses a Thank, the hearer needs a clear and immediate answer to the question ‘what for?’. The reason for thanking must always be explicit; otherwise, the speech act loses its force and, ultimately, its meaning. However, this aspect becomes redundant when Thank is used as a ritual-framed expression following the greetings. In these cases, the reason for using it becomes implicit and is usually linked to norms of politeness and courtesy. What interests this analysis first and foremost are the situations where the reason for thanking is not inferred in the greeting ceremony, but rather it must be explicitly detailed in supportive moves such as grounders or expanders.

Corpus	Example	Speech Act Coding Scheme
MEDENG	<p>(1) <i>I'm so proud of the team who've now vaccinated 9.2 million people across the UK. That includes 931,204 vaccinations just this weekend. And to put that into context, that's one in every 60 adults in the whole United Kingdom vaccinated in one single weekend. It's a mammoth effort. I know just how much these jabs mean to people, and I'm so grateful for all the messages that we get, all the pictures that I'm sent of people being vaccinated. It fills me with pride that so many people are doing so much to help for this rollout to happen so smoothly, and I want to say thanks to you all.</i> (Matt Hancock, 01.02.2021)</p>	<p>Tell as GROUNDER</p> <p>Tell/ Opine as GROUNDER</p> <p>THANK – HEAD ACT 1 (locution derivable)</p>
	<p>(2) <i>You'll know there have been suggestions that areas that have been fastest in getting people vaccinated will have supplies cut to help other areas catch up, but can you tell us if that is the case? And are you able to tell us what portion of England's supply of vaccines is due to go to the northeast in February and March?</i></p> <p><i>Thanks, Jonathan. I'm very grateful that you're asking this question because I want to put to bed a myth that has been circulating in some cases online about the fair share of vaccines.</i> (Matt Hancock, 01.02.2021)</p>	<p>THANK – HEAD ACT 2 (want statement)</p>
		<p>THANK – HEAD ACT 3 (locution derivable – uptaker¹⁰⁵)</p>

¹⁰⁵ Uptakers, by definition, act as a speaker's acknowledgement of the preceding utterance from the interlocutor. The acknowledgement may be neutral, meaning 'I have heard what you have to say', or may communicate a speaker-attitude towards what he has just heard – for example, doubt, surprise, amazement, dismay. (Edmondson et al.: 2023, 49)

	<p>(1)Para concluir, una vez más, transmitir nuestro cariño, nuestro apoyo y nuestro homenaje de todas las Fuerzas Armadas al personal sanitario y a todos aquellos que están combatiendo esta epidemia en primera línea. <u>Su ejemplo nos inspira y nos empuja a continuar la lucha todos unidos, todos unidos cada uno en su papel. Muchas gracias.</u> (María José Sierra, 04.04.2020)</p> <p>(2)<i>Quiero de nuevo agradecer a todos el esfuerzo y la responsabilidad que habéis mostrado toda la población durante la Semana Santa y desde luego quiero agradecer a todos los que se han vacunado ya porque nos correspondía y a todos los que os vais a vacunar porque os va a corresponder el esfuerzo y el aceptar la vacuna porque es lo que realmente va a permitirnos conseguir acabar con esta pandemia. Es verdad que no podremos cantar victoria hasta que se haya conseguido a nivel global, pero desde luego cada país que vaya consiguiendo altas coberturas de vacunación va a contribuir a que entre todos acabemos con esta epidemia.</i> (Fernando Simón, 19.04.2021)</p>	<p>THANK – HEAD ACT 1 (locution derivable)</p> <p>THANK – HEAD ACT 2 (want statement)</p> <p>THANK – HEAD ACT 3 (want statement)</p> <p>EXPANDER</p>
My translation	<p>(1)To conclude, I would like to send once more our deepest care, our support and our homage to all the Armed Forces, to the medical staff and to all those who fight the first line to combat this epidemic. Their example inspires us and forces us to continue fighting together, all together united in our individual roles. Thank you very much!</p>	

	<p>(2) I would like once more to thank everyone for the effort and responsibility that the population has shown during the Holy Week and of course, I want to thank everyone who has already been vaccinated according to the vac scheme and to those of you who will get vaccinated when your turn comes up. I want to thank you for the effort and the fact that you agreed to get vaccinated since this is what will actually help us overcome this pandemic. Indeed, we cannot celebrate victory until this is achieved at a global level, but each country that manages to obtain increased vaccination rates contributes to the end of this epidemic.</p>
MEDRO	<p><i>(1) Aici vreau să reamintesc că au fost mai multe acțiuni de sprijin spre România și ne adresăm cu mulțumiri tuturor celor care ne-au sprijinit în perioada care a trecut, începând cu Organizația Mondială a Sănătății, dar și țările care au venit cu sprijin din Uniunea Europeană sau din afara Uniunii Europene. Vreau să revin asupra faptului că România a participat la foarte multe misiuni în afara României, peste 36 de misiuni executate, majoritatea lor sub egida Mecanismului de Protecție Civilă Europeană și multe dintre ele în colaborare cu forțele Aeriene Române și cu colegii de la Ministerul Apărării. Acesta este unul dintre motivele pentru care, la nivelul UE, la nivelul de fapt Direcției Generale de Asistență Umanitară și Protecție Civilă, s-a decis anul acesta să se transmită cartea de felicitare pentru Anul Nou cu o poză din România, ca recunoaștere pentru efortul pe care l-a făcut România prin implicarea ei în acțiunile de protecție civilă la nivel european și în afara spațiului UE, sub coordonarea Mecanismului de Protecție Civilă. Vreau să le mulțumesc tuturor</i></p>

	<p><i>colegilor care s-au implicat în aceste misiuni. (Raed Arafat, 10.12.2021)</i></p> <p><i>(2)Bună ziua. Vă mulțumim frumos pentru participarea la o altă conferință organizată de Comitetul Național de Coordonare a Activităților privind Vaccinarea împotriva COVID-19. O să dau citire câtorva elemente de noutate, care fin de campania de vaccinare. (Valeriu Gheorghită, 25.05.2021)</i></p>	THANK – HEAD ACT 3 (locution derivable)
My translation	<p>(1)I would like here to remind everybody that there were many supportive actions for the benefit of Romania. We would like to thank all of those who supported us recently, starting with the World Health Organisation and continuing with the countries that supported us from the inside or the outside the European Union. I want to remind everyone that Romania took part in many international missions, more than 36 missions accomplished, most of them coordinated by the Mechanism of the European Civil Protection and many others in collaboration with the Romanian Aereal Forces and colleagues from the Ministry of Defence. This is one of the reasons for which at a European level, actually at the level of the General Assembly of Humanitarian Assistance and Civil Protection, it was decided that this New Year's card have a picture from Romania. This is a symbol of acknowledgement of Romania's effort to participate in civil protection actions both at a European level, but also outside the EU, under the supervision of the Civil Protection Mechanism. I would like to thank all the colleagues involved in these missions.</p> <p>(2) Good afternoon. Thank you so much for taking part in yet another conference organised by the Coordinating National Committee for Activities concerning the COVID-19 Vaccination. I will present some new information regarding the vaccination campaign.</p>	

Table no. 11 – The Thank Coding Scheme Exemplified

The features identified in the examples selected for Table no. 10 are repetitive throughout the corpora and mark a pattern of occurrence for Thank. Firstly, this speech act was never identified as a supportive move for other speech acts. In all of the examples above, Thank

appears as a Head Act and is sometimes followed by an expander or preceded by Tells as grounders. Secondly, the level of directness is among the highest, with Head Acts identified as *want statements* and *locution derivable*. This happens because it is inherently necessary for Thank to be as explicit as possible; otherwise, the speech act loses its force and the message of acknowledgement and gratitude fails to reach the hearer effectively. Thirdly, Thank is the first of the speech acts identified and analysed up to this point, which makes extended use of language that conveys emotional appeal. Although the COVID-19 pandemic set a context for powerful emotions¹⁰⁶, the speakers maintained a distant and objective approach in the corpora selected for the present study. However, in the case of Thank, expressing emotions proved helpful for the speakers' communicative purposes.

Firstly, three Head Acts were identified in the examples provided in the table from the British English corpus. As for the level of directness of these Head Acts, two of them were *locution derivable* (both have a first-person singular subject: 'I'm so/ very grateful') and one was stated as a *want statement* (again in first-person singular 'I want to say thanks').

In sample number (1), the first Head Act is preceded by two grounders: a Tell and a Tell/ Opine. As previously stated, the more direct the force of the Thank, the better the chances are for the hearer to receive the message and reach the speaker's intentions accordingly. Moreover, the level of directness is strongly linked to the reasons for thanking. In this case, Thank is expressed because of events that occurred before the moment of speaking, so the speaker makes a point of presenting them in detail. This way, they set the context and outline the reason for thanking the hearer. In the first example cited in Table no.10, this process is achieved through two grounders. The first one is a Tell, which presents figures concerning the number of people who have already received the vaccine ('9.2 million people across the UK') and the number of vaccinations ('931,204 vaccinations') performed the weekend before. The second was interpreted as a Tell/ Opine because the speaker acknowledges here the magnitude of the effort made by those involved in the vaccination process. As such, the speaker's appreciation is conveyed by using the superlative 'a mammoth effort', the first-person singular form of the verb 'to know', all building a less formal register throughout. A less formal communication register is generally used either because the context and the social relationships allow it or because the speaker seeks to reach a more personal level of connection with their

¹⁰⁶ He S, Li D, Liu C-H, Xiong Y, Liu D, Feng J, et al. (2023) conducted a study where they analysed the categories of emotions which could be found in press conferences organised by WHO during the pandemic. Their findings showed that the most predominant categories of emotions were trust and anticipation, followed by fear, sadness, joy, surprise, anger and disgust.

hearer. The choice of the noun ‘jab’ to refer to the COVID-19 vaccine also supports the latter reasoning¹⁰⁷.

These two grounders set the context from two perspectives, making it more believable and trustworthy. On the one hand, the speaker delivers their speech objectively by using statistical data concerning the number of vaccinated people in the country. On the other hand, in the second grounder, there is a clear intent to appeal to the emotional side of the hearer, and so the language becomes more subjective. The following part of the excerpt is composed of the two Head Acts, which occur one after the other. The subjective and highly emotional tonality continues to be exploited in the expression of the two Thanks, and it is achieved through the following linguistic means:

- The repetitive use of the adverb ‘so’; this adverb acts as an intensifier preceding adjectives or other adverbs: ‘so grateful/ so many/ so much/ so smoothly’. The intended exaggeration on the speaker’s behalf becomes an emotional trigger, pointing out the relevance and the importance of their acknowledgement and gratitude.
- The repetitive presence of the word ‘all’ used as a noun determiner (‘all the pictures/ all the messages’) or as a pronoun (‘thanks to you all’); this might also be interpreted as an intended exaggeration with the purpose to underline the great extent of the phenomenon which justifies through its intensity and magnitude the thankful approach and the gratitude of the speaker.

The first extract from the British corpus shows two examples of Thank, built as a consequence of a happy outcome. The two preceding grounders explain and justify this occurrence with objective data and its impact on the speaker’s perception. The relevance of these data makes the speaker feel grateful towards their hearers.

The third Head Act from the British English corpus was identified in the second excerpt at a *locution derivable* level of directness. This means the speaker’s illocutionary intent derives directly and explicitly from the utterance’s meaning. In this example, Thank occurs as an Uptaker¹⁰⁸ and is used both to introduce the speaker’s main topic (the ‘fair share of vaccines’) and also as a polite answer to a previous question. This is why it is important and relevant for the present analysis to consider the previously addressed question Matt Hancock answers with

¹⁰⁷ In the Word of the Year report issued by Oxford Languages in 2021, the use of the noun ‘jab’ is explained as follows: “In British English, one of the most common colloquialisms used to refer to vaccination is jab, both as a noun (as in ‘they were given the jab’) and as a verb (as in ‘encouraging people to get jabbed’).” (2021: 14).

¹⁰⁸ A speaker uses an Uptaker in order to signal to his conversational partner that he has received his message and accepts it as relevant to the ongoing interaction. The cause of a Thanks may be a preceding illocutionary act – here the Thanks are often ritual and function as Uptakers, acknowledging receipt of the preceding communicative act. A Thanks may even be occasioned by a Request for a Tell or Opine – for example, in certain formal contexts. Here the Thanks is probably a time-gaining device, an elaborate type of Uptaker. (Edmonson et al., 2023: 57, 158 - 159).

a Thank. The journalist engaged in the conversation by asking whether the new vaccine doses would be distributed according to equity criteria, while also considering the need for compensation in areas that received fewer doses than other regions where higher numbers have been administered. Put together, the question-and-answer displays a Request for Tell here. The speaker delivers the information required by the journalist, but first, they use Thanks as a “time-gaining device”. The Thank becomes an Uptaker aimed at acknowledging the journalist’s question and postponing the moment the answer is offered. They also seize the opportunity to imply that the journalist’s initial suggestions stem, in fact, from a larger context created by information circulating online. To sum it up, this is an example where Thank is used with various purposes in mind: to acknowledge the interlocutor’s question, to express gratitude for the opportunity to tackle a somewhat delicate topic which the speaker intended to tackle but needed the proper context to do so, and not the least important, to gain valuable time to prepare the requested Tell appropriately.

All things considered, the Thanks extracted from the British English corpus showed the following features:

- ✓ The level of directness identified within the speech acts is among the highest; this shows a need for explicitness and clarity.
- ✓ Thank occurs only when the context is set and the reason for thanking is either explicitly stated or clearly implied.
- ✓ The two Head Acts identified in the first extract are prepared by an objective Tell as grounder supported by statistical data intertwined with a Tell/ Opine which uses emotional triggers to achieve a more intense and heartfelt thank.
- ✓ The last Head Act serves as an Uptaker fulfilling various pragmatic intentions: to acknowledge the interlocutor’s intervention, to express gratitude, to gain time to prepare a more accurate Tell, and to justify further explanations.

Secondly, the two excerpts taken as examples from the Spanish corpus reveal their own patterns while sharing some features with the Thanks previously analysed in the British English corpus. One of the first common aspects is related to the level of directness identified within the Head Acts: the first Head Act has a level of *locution derivable*. At the same time, the other two are expressed as *want statements*. Although the main reason remains the same – the more direct the speech act, the stronger its effect on the hearer – there are significant differences in the constituency of the speech act, especially when considering the relation between the Head Act and its supportive moves and also the morpho-syntactic means employed to convey meaning and serve the speaker’s communicative intentions.

In the analysis of the first excerpt, only one Head Act has been identified. There are no supporting moves preceding or following it. The absence of supportive moves poses various challenges concerning the logical connections to the rest of the speech on the one hand, and to the reasons for thanking on the other hand. In the examples analysed from the British English corpus, Thank was triggered either by a happy outcome described in objective terms with figures interpreted as superlative achievements or as an answer to a question the speaker uses as a pretext to achieve their communicative goals of delivering a Tell or an Opine further on.

The excerpts from the Spanish corpus reflect neither of these situations. The first is the ending of a speech delivered by the first speaker, Doctor María José Sierra, to address the public in a larger press release where five representatives of different institutions (the Ministry of Health, Armed Forces and the government) take the floor. After having presented data of interest related to the evolution of the virus in Spain and the measures enforced to combat the pandemic, doctor Sierra introduces Thank with a conclusive discourse marker – ‘para concluir’¹⁰⁹. This is not to be confused with the use of Thank as a ritual frame expression, which does not make the object of the analysis conducted at this moment.

At the beginning of this subchapter, when Thank was introduced as a relevant speech act in the analysis of the corpora, an important distinction was made between the two most frequent occurrences identified herein: Thank was primarily used in all the press releases as a ritual frame expression at the end of the communication, which acted as a pre-posed move before the Leave/ Take act; however, the situations where Thank was elaborated more extensively with an independent Head Act and its corresponding supportive moves were considered in this stage of the analysis because they provide a richer content open for analysis and interpretation. The first excerpt from the Spanish corpus is an example of the latter, and the fact that it is positioned at the end of the speaker’s intervention is simply an occurrence.

Consequently, the Thank built in this excerpt makes use of an extended stretch of language. This Head Act is highly descriptive, and the speaker uses various linguistic means to touch an emotional cord and convey honesty:

- Pronominal forms used in the first-person plural such as: ‘nuestro’ in ‘nuestro cariño, nuestro apoyo y nuestro homenaje’¹¹⁰; ‘nos’ in ‘nos inspira y nos empuja’¹¹¹.
- The pronoun ‘todos’ in ‘todos aquellos que’ or ‘todos unidos’¹¹².

¹⁰⁹ to conclude;

¹¹⁰ our: our love, our support and our homage;

¹¹¹ us: inspires us and forces us to;

¹¹² everybody/ all: everybody who or all united.

- Nouns which convey positive emotions such as admiration, acknowledgement and gratitude: ‘cariño, apoyo, homenaje’.
- The metaphor according to which the pandemic becomes a combat where everybody fights a personal battle that sums up the common victory: ‘a continuar la lucha todos unidos, cada uno en su papel’¹¹³.

All these features, taken together, indicate an intense effort to show gratitude and appreciation to the armed forces and the healthcare staff for their hard work and dedication. It might also be inferred that Thank substitutes here the Leave/ Take speech act since nothing else is added by the speaker. This is a common occurrence in the three corpora analysed in the current study, whether it happens as a ritual frame expression or as an extended speech act. There are several reasons why this happens. One has to do with aspects of courtesy: whenever the situation allows it, a ‘thanks’ is used next to a ‘goodbye’ or as a replacement for the latter. The other is rooted in the specificities of the context in which these press conferences took place, meaning the COVID-19 sanitary crisis. In many cases, the Thank was among the few speech acts through which a glimpse of optimism, acknowledgement and hope was conveyed. Many press releases focused on alarming data and discouraging measures, which imposed unprecedently high stress and discomfort on the population. By expressing Thanks to those who are putting in the effort to combat disease and death, the speakers acknowledge that no matter how chaotic and worrying the data may be, there is a continuous attempt to regain control of the crisis.

The second sample exemplifies a Thank, which develops more extensively and comprises two Head Acts and an expander as the only supportive move. This speech act also occurs towards the end of an intervention, but this time from Dr. Fernando Simón. To be more exact, once the doctor finishes presenting the data concerning the evolution of the virus spread in Spain, he presents this Thank. Then he moves on to attend to the questions addressed by the journalists.

The analysis of these two Head Acts reveals that both have the same level of directness – *want statement*. The structure ‘quiero agradecer’¹¹⁴ is repeated twice and introduces each Head Act. The Thank is addressed to the general population, without mentioning a specific professional category. The focus is placed on what has been achieved lately and its significance in the evolution of the virus, rather than by whom it has been accomplished. In summary, the first Head Act acknowledges people’s effort and responsibility during the Holy Week, when

¹¹³ to continue fighting all together and each one fighting according to their own role.

¹¹⁴ I want to thank

almost everyone was expected to reunite with families and friends. The second Head Act addresses those who got vaccinated or are willing to get the vaccine as soon as their turn comes. The speaker is grateful for having accepted the idea that the vaccine is the only valid path to getting in control of the pandemic.

The two Thanks are realised openly and directly. The language is not used to appeal to the hearer's emotions but rather shows more informative characteristics. None of the previously highlighted features can be observed here: the speaker makes no use of pronouns, descriptive adjectives, superlatives or intensifiers; nor does he include figures or any statistical data to prove that his reasons for thanking are valid. The latter aspect is justifiable because the statistics that attest to the spread of the virus and the incidence of cases are presented in detail at the beginning of the speech. Consequently, against its conciseness, the first Head Act is used both to summarise previously detailed information and reiterate the speaker's acknowledgement and gratitude.

The second Head Act is more developed and is continued with an expander. The speaker insists more on the topic of vaccination with inferred persuasive intentions. The Head Act conveys the acknowledgement and the gratitude and is addressed to those who have already received the vaccine and those who are waiting for their turn. Then, they continue to stress the vaccine's relevance in controlling the pandemic and eventually reaching its final point. The expander details and develops aspects to convince the hearer that the vaccine is the only valid solution to the current health crisis. In an attempt to leave their audience with a promise for better times, the speaker builds a message with poignant, persuasive intentions and uses the following linguistic features:

- The verb tense is predominantly future: 'os vais a vacunar', 'os va a corresponder', 'va a permitirnos conseguir acabar', 'va a contribuir'¹¹⁵
- Inclusive indefinite pronouns: 'todos'¹¹⁶
- Personal assessment: 'está claro que'¹¹⁷

All in all, the Thanks exemplified by the Spanish corpus share both similarities and differences with those from the British English corpus. On the one hand, the level of directness of the Head Acts remains similarly high to ensure that the speech act's impact remains strong enough to be relevant. On the other hand, the Spanish use fewer or no supportive moves, but compensate with descriptive and highly emotional language.

¹¹⁵ you will get vaccinated, your turn will come, it will allow us to reach the end, it will contribute to;

¹¹⁶ everyone

¹¹⁷ it is clear that

Thirdly, the samples exemplified in Table no. 10 show occurrences of Thank also in the Romanian corpus. In this case too, the selection was made to underline those occurrences of Thank where the speech act is used either as a strong illocutionary force or as an Uptaker.

The first sample is more extended and two Head Acts were identified: one is used at the beginning and is completed by two supportive moves, and the other marks the ending of the speaker's intervention. Similar to the observations in the previously analysed two corpora, the level of directness of the Head Acts is among the strongest: *locution derivable* in the case of the former and *want statement* for the latter. From the very beginning, the speaker makes a point in clarifying to whom the Thank is directed, meaning the international organisations which supported Romania alongside different countries both inside the European Union and outside its borders. The speech act perspective is achieved using the formal plural 'we', and the speaker maintains a distant and formal tonality throughout the speech. The Thank is built with a less usual choice of words: 'ne adresăm cu mulțumiri tuturor celor care ne-au sprijinit'¹¹⁸. This structure conveys a high level of formality typically used among high-ranking institutions. Moreover, a Tell is built as a grounder for the previously formulated Thanks. This supportive move brings details related to Romania's contributions on an international level, expressed here as a form of compensation for the help received from abroad. The idea that Romania also contributed significantly to combating the pandemic at an international level is developed further on with an Expander; it refers to an appraisal offered to the Romanian state by the European Union, which published a photograph from Romania in their New Year's card. The speaker describes this accomplishment in detail and reinforces the gratitude and appreciation expressed by the European Union towards the Romanian institutions.

The following observations related to the linguistic means the speaker uses proved relevant to the current analysis:

- The verb 'want' is used in the first person singular three times: 'I want to remind you/ to go back to/ to thank'. These three stances mark that the speaker is in complete control of the communicative act and are used to point to the different directions of the discourse. In contrast, the first Thank is addressed on behalf of 'us' with the verb taking a first-person plural form.
- This intervention abounds in an enumeration of different institutions which contributed to the management of the pandemic; the speaker makes a point of naming them in their full denomination, which takes up a significant part of the entire speech (e.g. 'Organizația Mondială a Sănătății', 'Mecanismul de Protecție Civilă', 'Direcția

¹¹⁸ we address a 'thank you' to all those who supported us

Generală de Asistență Umanitară și Protecție Civilă¹¹⁹). This choice of denomination does not bear any relevant meaning to the overall message. It does, however, gain time and provides the speech with an intense feeling of authority and solemnity.

- The speech is void of any emotional references or metaphorical constructions, but neither does it contain statistical references (the only figure mentioned refers to the 36 accomplished missions Romania led outside its borders) or scientific references.

The speaker focuses on the numerous organisations Thank is addressed to and, thus, unfolds them into a long enumeration. This is the background set for the second Thank, a message the speaker addresses to their colleagues: a first-person singular *want statement* addressed to all those involved in the previously mentioned missions. This Head Act plays a conclusive role and rounds up the discourse initiated with the first Thank. Similar to the former, this latter Head Act is built without any emotional triggers, more as an automated outcome of the context built throughout the Expander.

The second excerpt (2) taken for exemplification from the Romanian corpus highlights an introductory use of Thank. The Head Act bears a *locution derivable* level of directness and follows immediately after the greeting. The speech act is addressed to the other participants in the press release and the general public. The reason for thanking is simply the participation in the conference, which reinforces the idea that, in this particular case, the fundamental role of Thank is to expand the greeting instead of expressing gratitude or conveying acknowledgement for a successful endeavour. Next to the greeting, Thank is used here as a “time-gaining device” (Edmonson et al., 2023: 159). The previously observed tendency of naming the organising institutions by their complete name (in this case, the Coordinating National Committee for Activities concerning the COVID-19 Vaccination) is maintained in this example, and contributes significantly to the time-gaining intent. Further on, the speaker announces the outline of their speech, which will continue with pieces of news related to the vaccination campaign.

All in all, the examples selected from the Romanian corpus could be characterised by the following:

- ✓ The levels of directness of the speech acts remain the same as in the other two corpora: *locution derivable* and *want statement*;
- ✓ There is an obvious concern for referring to the institutions that contributed to the crisis management with their full names – this takes up a lot of space in the speech without bearing any relevant meaning. The only visible effect on the hearer is the

¹¹⁹ The World Health Organisation, The Civil Protection Mechanism, The General Assembly of Humanitarian Assistance and Civil Protection

impression of strong authority and a feeling of solemnity. If it were to assess this preference from the perspective of the speaker's communicative intentions, one could infer that by mentioning all these institutions with their full name, the speaker aims to transmit a stance of power and control over a challenging situation, while at the same time reinforcing the country's important role in the management of the pandemic among the other countries suffering in the world in general and in the European community in particular.

- ✓ There are only a few supporting moves around the Head Acts, which the speaker uses merely to set the context and to provide reasons for their thanking.
- ✓ In general, the language is kept within a formal and objective frame, bearing no metaphorical meaning nor using any emotional triggers.

The analysis provided in the current subchapter underlines a set of features identified in a series of selected excerpts from the three corpora. The purpose was mainly to observe the unfolding of Thank in terms of Head Acts, supporting moves and choice of language, while inferring on the speaker's communicative intentions. However, a complete analysis in which the three corpora are regarded as a consistent whole must also comprise a quantitative analysis in terms of frequency of occurrence and its correlation to meaning and perlocutionary effects.

4.3.2 Frequency of Occurrence

From the very first lines of the subchapter dealing with the analysis of Thank, an important distinction was made between the two types of occurrences observed in the case of this speech act: as a gratitude-bearing speech act or as a ritual frame identifying expression (RFIE).

The qualitative analysis performed previously focused on situations in which Thank was used as a gratitude-bearing speech act. The examples selected from the three corpora identified independent Head Acts accompanied (or not) by their supportive moves with inferred communicative intentions on the speaker's behalf. The analysis's main objective was to observe the unfolding of these speech acts and their role in achieving the communicative goals, but also to identify the speaker's intentions and expectations from their audience.

The second type of occurrence identified in the corpora was Thank used as a ritual frame identifying expression, accompanying either the opening or the ending greeting formulae. These situations were identified in each of the three corpora, counted and compiled. The figures

determine their frequency, and the data support the features outlined in the previously conducted qualitative analysis.

Fig. no. 7 below distinguishes between the three linguacultures by highlighting the frequency of Thank occurrence. Also, it proved relevant to emphasise how many of these occurrences were, in fact, independent Head Acts used by the speakers to show gratitude and acknowledge efforts and accomplishments. Looking at the graph, it can be seen that the difference between the two types of occurrences is staggering. In each of the three corpora, Thank was used mainly as a ritual frame indicating expression. In contrast, the Head Acts used to show gratitude make up small percentages: 14% in the British English corpus, 12% in the Spanish corpus and 8% in the Romanian corpus. These figures are not at all surprising since the general context in which they are formulated (the COVID-19 sanitary crisis), and the main objectives of the press releases (to inform the population of the ongoing evolution of the virus spread, and, if necessary, impose new measures and restrictions on the population) does not offer the proper ground for acknowledging success and expressing gratification. Considering all these, it is expected that Thank is used as an independent speech act when the show of gratitude might prove effective and helpful, and in logical connection to the reasons for thanking and the people whose acts become worthy of acknowledgement and thankfulness. Such specific situations, along with their characteristics, have been described in the qualitative analysis performed previously, and it is the category of the ritual frame identifying expressions which proved relevant in terms of frequency of occurrence.

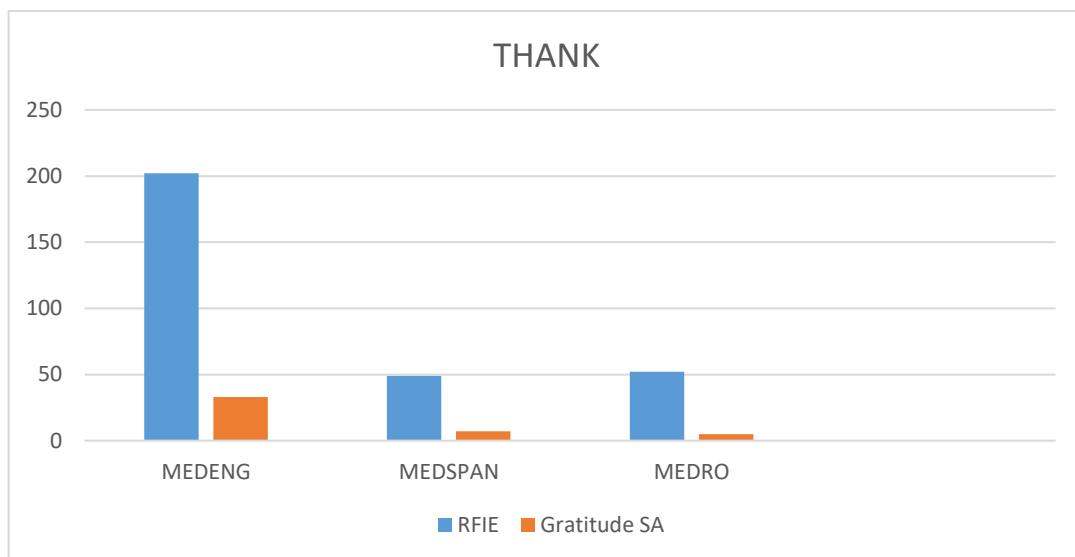


Fig. no. 7 - Frequency of Occurrence for the Speech Act Thank
(data obtained manually)

As such, Thank is used as an RFIE 202 times in the British English corpus, 49 times in the Spanish corpus, and 52 times in the Romanian press releases. In other words, Thank is used approximately four times more frequently in the British English press releases than in the Spanish or Romanian ones.

A similar difference has been observed in earlier cross-cultural pragmatic studies conducted on corpus analysis. For example, in his 2015 study, Carlos de Pablos-Ortega compares the occurrences of Thank in a corpus of 128 textbooks (64 in British English and 64 in Peninsular Spanish) and reaches the following conclusion: “thanking is a speech act which tends to be used more widely in English than in Peninsular Spanish” (de Pablos-Ortega, 2015: 166). In an earlier study from 1994, Stenström performed one of the first analyses of speech acts using corpus data, and she makes a similar differentiation among the various occurrences of Thank: the speech act is used either to express gratitude or as a politeness device. According to House and Kádár’s analytical framework, which is the one applied in the current research paper, RFIEs are acknowledged as “politeness markers”, but they are also important “in the realisation of many other pragmatic phenomena, such as humour” (2021: 83). Moreover, Aston (1995) compared the use of Thank in Italian and English bookshop encounters and realised that, mainly when used in conversation closing, the realisations of Thank are influenced mainly by cultural differences concerning perceptions of the overall situation.

As a conclusion, and after considering both the qualitative and quantitative analyses, the following characteristics build up an overall image of the realisation of Thank throughout the three corpora:

- ✓ The British English corpus displays the most complex network of Thank usages. The speech act occurs 235 times. When used as an RFIE, Thank can appear as an Uptaker, in which case it is used to open the speech by having the speaker acknowledge their interlocutor's intervention; in these situations, Thank becomes a time-gaining device through which the speaker also complies with rules of politeness. At the same time, Thank as an RFIE is used for closing the interaction, a situation in which the speaker might express gratitude for the public's participation in the press conference, and marks thus, a polite and formal ending. When used as a gratitude-bearing speech act, Thank is usually built with the help of various supportive moves. Other speech acts, such as Tell and Tell/ Opine, appear as supportive moves for Thank. This occurrence makes the speech more formal and objective, while it also provides a sense of trustworthiness and reassurance. The reason for thanking is clearly backed up by information (in numbers and figures), which builds up clarity and gives the impression of honesty.

- ✓ The Spanish corpus has the lowest number of Thank realisations, since it appears only 56 times. One of the most striking differences which makes the occurrences of Thank stand out in comparison to the other two corpora is the use of descriptive and highly emotional language, along with the tendency to place the Head Acts very close to one another, as in a repetition.
- ✓ In the Romanian corpus, Thank appears 57 times, a figure very close to the one identified in the Spanish corpus. Another similarity between these two corpora is the low occurrence of supportive moves. Tell appears as a supportive move for Thank twice from a total of five speech acts constructed as gratitude-bearers. What stands out in the qualitative analysis of this corpus is the fact that all the institutions are referred to by their full name. Not only does this choice not bear any significant meaning to the communicative goals, but it also does not prove helpful in its perlocutionary intent. It might look like a time-gaining device, but in reality, the focus of the interlocutor is lost, and the core meaning gets more and more diffuse.
- ✓ There are two common features which characterise Thank in all three corpora: the level of directness remains among the highest – *locution derivable* and *want statement* –, enhancing thus the strength of the speech act; and Thank is used both as a means to convey gratitude, appreciation and acknowledgement, as well as a ritual frame indicating expression which accompanies the initial or the closing greetings.

4.4 Results and Discussion

The main objective of the third chapter was to conduct the corpus analysis of the speech acts identified in the press releases selected for the current research paper. The introductory subchapters presented a series of characteristics of the corpora, such as the press release genre, perspectives on public and medical communication, the data in the corpus, the methodology employed, and a general outline of the main speakers. Then, the focus shifted towards the speech acts with a review of the specialised literature, the research questions and the limitations of the study.

The conclusions of the corpus analyses performed from that point on will be structured similarly: the first observations will be made in relation to the general outline of the speech acts inside each of the three corpora, and then, each speech act will be discussed comparatively, according to its realisations in the three linguacultures.

4.4.1 The Outline of the Speech Acts in the Three Corpora

The three corpora were read various times to perform the corpus analysis in search of different speech acts. Finally, seven speech acts were identified frequently enough to become relevant for the general characterisation of the texts: Tell, Opine, Request, Suggest, Resolve, Excuse/ Justify and Thank. To reach a better understanding of how many times these speech acts were seen in the corpora, Table no. 12 below synthesises the number of Head Acts corresponding to each speech act as they were identified in the three linguacultures:

NO.	SPEECH ACT	MEDENG	MEDSPAN	MEDRO
1	TELL	211	198	485
2	OPINE	175	156	113
3	TELL/OPINE	79	57	56
4	REQUEST	72	48	128
5	SUGGEST	2	25	81
6	RESOLVE	62	37	80
7	EXCUSE/JUSTIFY	41	68	78
8	THANK	235	56	57

Table no. 12 – Number of Head Acts distributed in the three corpora

In the final stages of the analysis, it became important to observe in a comparative context the extent to which speakers of one linguaculture prioritised certain speech acts over others. As such, Fig. no. 8 below illustrates how the speech acts were distributed in the British English corpus. The speech acts were counted manually and then turned into percentages to obtain better visual effects of the corpus's composition.

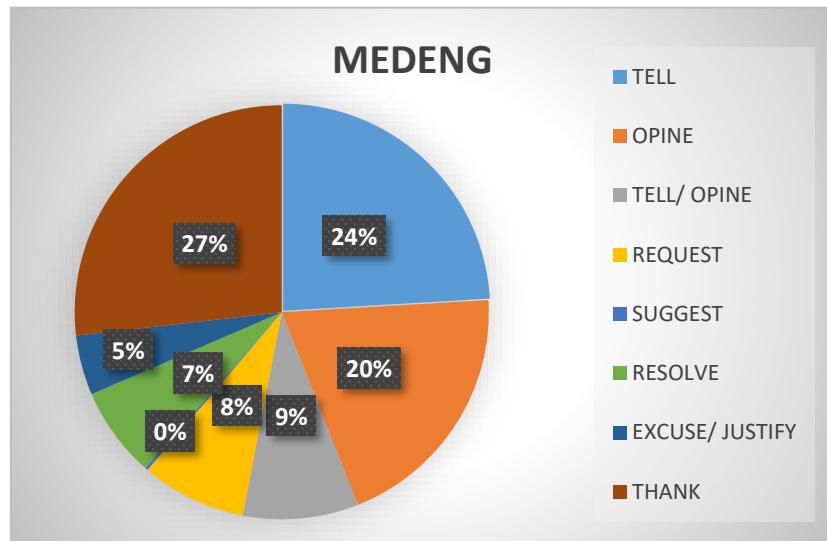


Fig. no. 8 – The speech act distribution in the British English corpus

More than half of the speech acts identified in this corpus are almost equally divided between Thank and Tell. The speech act Opine covers a staggering 20%. The difference between Opine(20%) and the next percentage is pretty high, since Tell/ Opine represents only 9%.

To better understand the information these percentages convey and their significance in relation to the realisation of this public communication, it would probably be advisable to look back at Austin's (1975) theory of speech acts since he was the one who defined the term for the first time. According to him, speeches are not only information bearers, but actions can be performed through speech. On this train of thought, the data presented in the figure above attests to the fact that the speakers mostly thanked their hearers, informed them, and simultaneously expressed their opinions on the matter.

Further on, Fig. no. 9 shows the speech act distribution in the Spanish corpus:

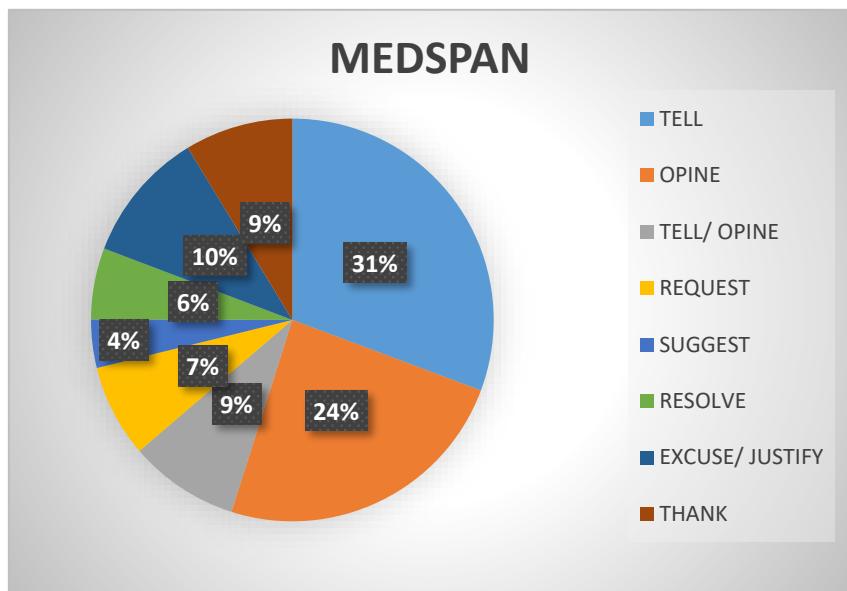


Fig. no. 9 – The speech act distribution in the Spanish corpus

More than half of the speech acts identified in this corpus are almost equally divided between Tell and Opine. Excuse/ Justify occupies the third position (10%), although two other speech acts occur practically the same number of times (percentage of 9%): Tell/ Opine and Thank.

The predominance of Tell confers an informative character to this corpus. However, it is counterbalanced by the high occurrence of Opine, which suggests the speakers' personal appreciation of the data they present. Up to this point, the similarities between the British English and the Spanish corpus are marked by the high occurrence of Tells and Opines. As for the differences, they are observed in the extremities: if in the British English corpus, Thank occupies first position with the highest number of occurrences, in the case of the Spanish corpus, the third position is occupied by Excuse/ Justify, followed closely by Tell/ Opine, and Thank. In the case of Thank, the difference between the two corpora is significant: 27% in the British English as opposed to only 9% in the Spanish corpus. What remains most interesting in relation to the second corpus analysed here is the high rate of occurrence of Excuse/ Justify. This means that a considerable part of the Spanish press releases is dedicated to justifying the data delivered through Tells or the opinions expressed by the speakers.

In the case of the third corpus, Fig. no. 10 presents the speech act distribution in the Romanian texts accordingly:

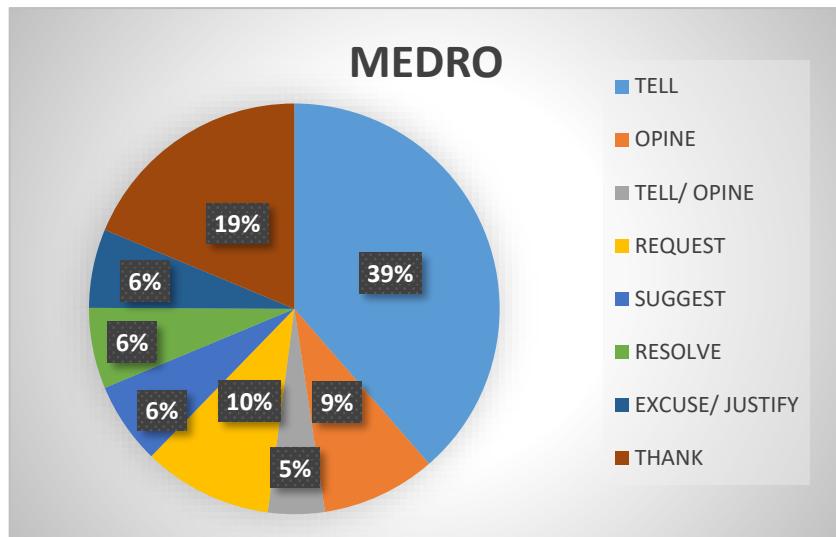


Fig. no. 10 – The speech act distribution in the Romanian corpus

Similar to the figures identified in the British English corpus, the vast majority is divided between Tell and Thank here as well. Nevertheless, the rate of occurrence of Tell is the highest recorded in this study. Surprisingly enough, Request is in third position (10%), higher than in the other two corpora, where it was identified in proportions of 8% in the British English corpus (fifth position) and 7% in the Spanish Corpus (sixth position). These data indicate that Romanian speakers allocate a significant amount of space to presenting information. Thank is also a speech act used extensively, but the high rate of Requests indicates a communicative intention which is not present in the other two corpora.

Request is a speech act with a notable illocutionary force, which tends to be preceded or followed by softening pragmatic devices such as grounders or expanders. Moreover, Requests are used here in a context of social hierarchy in which public figures (be they doctors or politicians) are invested with social power. When this happens, Requests “stemming from this power carry general acceptance in the social community” (House & Kádár, 2021: 106). The present research paper does not look into the perlocutionary force of the speech acts, that is, to measure the impact of this force on the hearer. However, with its high occurrence rate in the Romanian corpus, this characteristic of Request indicates an authoritarian approach to public communication.

In the following sections, each speech act will be presented in a comparative analysis of its occurrences and its features across the three corpora.

Tell and Opine

To begin with, **Tell** is definitely one of the most prominent speech acts. If it were to establish a hierarchy among the three linguacultures, Romanian would definitely come first with a percentage of 39%, followed closely by Spanish with 31% and then British English with

24%. Given the context of crisis communication, this high rate of occurrence in Tell comes as no surprise since the primary objective of the press releases was to keep the public up to date regarding the evolution of the virus spread.

The pragmatic analysis showed that, in general, the imposing force of Tells was usually softened by Opines, which acted as a supportive move. In other words, the speakers presented an opinion to accompany the data and combined the two to fulfil their communicative goals. This happened in the three corpora without any significant difference.

From a linguistic point of view, a set of recurring features across the corpora indicates that Head Acts for Tells are consistently constructed using highly objective language. This is reflected in the minimal presence of adjectives—primarily simple subjective ones—as well as the frequent use of passive voice and impersonal subjects (e.g., *the sample, casos, această variantă*). In the Spanish corpus, the first-person plural form (e.g., *estamos, hemos*) is often used instead of the passive, a tendency observed to a lesser extent in Romanian. Furthermore, these Head Acts regularly incorporate temporal and spatial markers and are typically accompanied by statistical data to substantiate the validity of the Tell.

Opines occur at significant rates in the British English corpus (20%) and the Spanish one (24%), but are less used in the Romanian texts (only 9%). Apart from conveying the speakers' opinions on the matter and bringing their own personal views into the communication, Opines also play a role in connection with the hearer, through which the speaker assumes a certain degree of responsibility for interpreting the data. Avoiding expressing an opinion could mean either a lack of knowledge and expertise or a cautious attitude in the face of adversity.

In terms of pragmatic analysis, Opines often appear as supportive moves aimed at softening an imposing illocutionary force in cases such as Tells or Requests. Given the core meaning of this speech act, which is to bring a personal view to the speech, Opine builds a certain degree of subjectivity through the texts. This was also notable at a linguistic level. In British English, subjectivity is mainly expressed through adjectives and adverbs, while Spanish and Romanian rely more on the conditional and subjunctive, often as strategies for mitigation or distancing. Notably, the Spanish corpus showed a high frequency of the verb *creer* in the first person (223 instances), compared to 140 in British English and 76 in Romanian.

Thank

This is a speech act that occurs frequently in British English (27%) and Romanian (19%). Spanish uses it considerably fewer times (only 9%). However, it is important to remember that thanking is a cultural act first and foremost. It can accompany the greeting either

at the initiation of the conversation or at its ending as a form of conveying politeness and adapting the speech to a formal context.

The analysis of the Thank speech act reveals notable cross-cultural differences. British English shows the most complex and frequent use, where Thank serves both as a politeness strategy and as a structured part of formal communication, often supported by objective information and other speech acts like Tell. In contrast, Spanish and Romanian feature fewer occurrences, with Spanish tending toward emotional language and repetition, while Romanian includes full institutional names that may hinder clarity. Despite these differences, all three corpora share two key traits: high directness and the dual function of Thank as both genuine gratitude and a formal greeting marker.

Request and Suggest

Out of the three corpora, **Request** is most used in Romanian, where 128 Head Acts were identified for this speech act, as opposed to only 72 in British English and 48 in Spanish. It also covers a significant proportion of the Romanian corpus (10%).

The analysis of Requests highlights key distinctions and similarities across linguacultures. In British English, Requests are typically direct, often using explicit performatives, and frequently accompanied by Mitigating Supportive Moves like grounders, which enhance clarity and politeness; Aggravating Supportive Moves are notably absent. Both British English and Spanish show syntactic similarities, such as extended sentences with passive-reflexive constructions, impersonal verb structures, and first-person plural forms. However, Aggravating Supportive Moves—such as moralising or threats—appear frequently in Spanish and Romanian, reflecting their cultural norms. Additionally, Spanish Requests include a high rate of upgraders, emphasising emotional appeal, whereas British English emphasises explanatory grounders to maintain objectivity and precision.

Suggest, just like it happened in the case of Opine, acts mainly as a softening device for more forceful speech acts such as Request. The most interesting finding regarding this speech act occurred in the British English corpus, where only two Head Acts were identified. This is why, in Fig. no. 8, Suggest appears as a 0%, its rate of occurrence being extremely low. In the Spanish corpus, 25 Head Acts were identified, and in the Romanian one, 81. These data show that British English does not use this softening device, probably because there is no pragmatic need for it to be used. The high number of Requests identified in the Romanian corpus aligns smoothly with a high number of Suggests, which, in this case, meet a socio-pragmatic need. This must be fulfilled to enhance an effective communicative process.

Suggest is shaped by indirectness and politeness across the three linguacultures. Hedging is achieved through both morphological and syntactic strategies, such as the use of conditionals and vague expressions. While Suggest lacks the direct force of a Request, it often carries implicit expectations of compliance. All three corpora use hint strategies to convey suggestions indirectly, reflecting persuasive intent to serve the hearer's interests. Suggest often functions as a grounder for Requests in Spanish and Romanian, softening their impact through politeness. British English, by contrast, tends to support Suggest with logical appeals. Unique strategies also emerge: British English includes the want statement (*I hope/we want*), while Spanish uses hedged performatives with modal verbs and adverbs to lessen imposition. A particularly notable case in the Spanish corpus demonstrates the balance between Suggest and Request, which serves to meet communicative goals, further highlighting the nuanced interplay between these acts.

Excuse/ Justify

Excuse/ Justify is the third speech act to occur most often in the Spanish corpus, covering 10% of the corpus. However, the Romanian corpus identified the highest number of Head Acts, 78, as opposed to 68 in Spanish. The British English corpus is significantly different from the two, with only 41 Head Acts.

The analysis of Excuse/ Justify speech acts reveals distinct patterns across the three linguacultures. British English uses this act the least, typically as a polite, balanced tool for mitigating face-threatening acts or offering clarification, reflecting a generally smooth and formal communication style. In contrast, Spanish exhibits moderate use, with a notable preference for Excuse/Justify as an independent Head Act, often marked by repetitive structures and cajolers that can dilute clarity and weaken communicative effectiveness. Romanian exhibits the highest frequency, suggesting more frequent use of justification in response to triggering situations and a tendency to soften stronger speech acts like Requests. Notably, Romanian also highlights the emotional and human dimension of communication, even in formal contexts such as press releases.

Resolve

This speech act maintains a similar proportion in all three corpora: 6% in Romanian and Spanish and 7% in British English. However, regarding the number of Head Acts, the Romanian corpus has the highest, 80 instances, followed by British English with 62 and 37 Head Acts identified in Spanish.

The speech act of Resolve reflects distinct communicative styles across the three corpora. The moderate frequency of the British English corpus supports a tone of clarity,

balance, and responsibility, with speakers maintaining formal, composed language free of emotional overtones. In contrast, the Spanish corpus features Resolve the least but shows the highest level of personal and emotional engagement, marked by subjective language, repetition, and the rare use of Opine as a supportive move. Meanwhile, the Romanian corpus records the most occurrences of Resolve, emphasising anticipation of future actions. However, its detached tone—marked by passive voice and absence of personal markers—suggests a tendency toward cautious communication and distancing from accountability.

5.1 Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and its immediate effects on human life laid the groundwork for the social and medical context in which three European linguacultures could be analysed together, examining similarities and differences to identify the means through which public healthcare communication was realised during this time and place. The previous chapter conducted a corpus analysis of the speech acts that were found to be relevant in terms of semantic significance and frequency of occurrence. Seven speech acts were identified as such, and an in-depth analysis of these was performed. Tell, Opine, Thank, Request, Suggest, Excuse/Justify and Resolve became the component parts of the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis.

However, the most crucial and impactful topic in the press releases was left aside in the previous stages of the study, as it is in the current chapter that the focus lies on providing an in-depth analysis of how medical and political representatives managed the announcements of the death tolls caused by COVID-19 among their respective populations. Communicating death was an essential endeavour that the speakers engaged in throughout all the press releases selected for the corpus. Medical professionals had to navigate the emotional weight of constant exposure to death while maintaining authority and composure. A major ethical challenge for medical representatives was striking a balance between truth-telling and the imperative to avoid panic.

Since death is, beyond any shadow of a doubt, among the most sensitive subjects to be tackled in the public healthcare communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, it proved relevant to study how the speakers in the three corpora chose to unfold and mix different speech acts whenever they had to deliver figures related to COVID-19 casualties. Early in the pandemic, uncertainty about the virus's fatality rate, its effect on various demographics, and the impact of hospital overload led to cautious, sometimes ambiguous communication. Underreporting or minimisation of death tolls—whether intentional or systemic—sparked criticism. In the Spanish corpus, for example, various situations were identified where the discussion topic between the medical representative and the reporters referred to significant incongruencies between the values of the death tolls given at different times. Medical professionals advocating for transparency often found themselves at odds with political authorities, especially when discussing deaths in under-resourced facilities or among marginalised groups. Notably, in the examples selected from the British English corpus, a

discussion is conducted regarding discrepancies in figures related to cases in home care facilities.

Another key point on which the following analysis focuses is identifying the speech act of *Sympathise*, observing both its presence and absence. This research paper was conducted according to the speech act typology defined by House and Kádár (2021), which establishes that *Sympathise* falls under the category of Attitudinal Speech Acts (see Fig. no. 1), meaning “speech act categories anchored in attitudes towards Future and Non-future events.” (2021: 107). That is why the absence of *Sympathise* whenever the speakers of the press releases approached the death topic becomes meaningful. In the previous chapter, *Tell* was identified as one of the most recurrent speech acts throughout the corpus, supporting the predominant informative function of this type of communication. As a continuation of this pattern, the findings of the present chapter will highlight the fact that death was described through an excessive use of statistics. Daily death tolls were presented through figures, graphs, and curves. This quantified discourse helped contextualise the scale of the crisis, yet it often stripped death of its human dimension. Consequently, the tension between statistical abstraction and individual narrative became a key dynamic in pandemic communication.

5.2 Elena Semino and the Death Talk

In times of serious illness or approaching death, language becomes more than a medium of exchange — it becomes a means of shaping experience, expressing suffering, and constructing meaning. Elena Semino, Professor of Linguistics at Lancaster University, has been a leading voice in understanding how people talk about death, particularly through metaphor. Her research, most notably the Metaphor in End-of-Life Care (MELC)¹²⁰ project, provides critical insights into how metaphorical language affects communication between patients, caregivers, and healthcare professionals.

Although the study of metaphor is not the objective of the current research paper, Semino's observations proved relevant because she offers insight into matters related to inferred meaning, discrepancies between communicative intentions and conversational outcomes, and the ways in which conceptual metaphors shape people's perceptions of reality. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, she published various articles discussing the impact of language on crisis communication, highlighting the metaphors used predominantly.

In a 2021 article published in *Health Communication*, Semino critiques the prevalent use of war metaphors (e.g., "fighting the virus") in public discourse. She argues that while such metaphors can convey urgency, they may also lead to negative consequences, such as increased anxiety and justification for authoritarian measures. Semino advocates for alternative metaphors, like those involving fire, which can more accurately represent the nature of the pandemic and the collective efforts required to manage it.

Moreover, in an opinion article published in the same year in *The Guardian*, she explores various metaphors used to describe the pandemic, including war, fire, and waves. She discusses how these metaphors influence public perception and behaviour, emphasising that while metaphors can enhance understanding, they can also mislead or oversimplify complex situations.

Subsequent to Professor Semino's input on the use of metaphor in end-of-life healthcare communication, it proved relevant to research what kind of metaphors, if any, were used in the corpora submitted to analysis in the current study. In the following subchapters, the focus is on the passages where the authors of the press releases provided data regarding the death tolls, with an emphasis on the speech acts employed and the presence or absence of metaphors.

¹²⁰ <https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/melc/>, last accessed on May the 21st, 2025

5.3 Communicating Death – The Climax of Crisis Communication

5.3.1 The Speech Acts of Communicating Death

Communicating death statistics during the COVID-19 pandemic represented the climax of crisis communication, influencing public perception, trust in authorities, and the overall management of the crisis. As the virus spread rapidly across continents, the communication of death statistics became a central aspect of public discourse. In the early stages of the pandemic, daily updates on infection rates and death tolls became a routine part of news cycles.

In the press releases compiled for the three corpora, death tolls are usually presented in the introductory part alongside data related to the infection rate, numbers of hospital admissions, or percentages that describe the spread of the virus nationwide. Table no. 13 below exemplifies death communication in the three corpora. Two excerpts were selected for each corpus according to how severe the situation was and how challenging it was for the speakers to communicate publicly, especially when possible human error was implied; one of the aims of this analysis was to observe the presence or absence of Sympathise and it made sense to select excerpts that highlighted some of the most tense moments related to deaths caused by COVID-19. The table presents the cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of the speech acts, including the identification of Head Acts and their supportive moves, as well as the level of directness. Furthermore, observations are made regarding any relevant morphological or syntactical structures that support and explain the pragmatic outline of the analysis. Similar to the procedure in the previous subchapter, the excerpts in Spanish and Romanian are translated into English in a separate row in the table.

Corpus	Example	Speech Act Coding Scheme
MEDENG	<i>(1) In the last week in the UK, we have seen 37,258 cases of Coronavirus on average each day. The NHS is under intense pressure across all parts of the country with 37,899 people in UK hospitals with COVID-19 and that includes 4,076 people on ventilators. Sadly, today 592 more deaths were reported and we must never forget the real impact of this disease. The loved ones that we've lost, the grandparents, parents, friends, colleagues, we grieve for each one and</i>	Head Act for TELL (locution derivable)

	<p><i>the pressure on the frontline I can tell you is just so relentless. (Matt Hancock, 25.01.2021)</i></p> <p><i>(2) Turning now, unfortunately, to deaths. You can see the size of the third peak in the third wave in the UK compared with the first peak high seven day rolling average. That's that horizontal blue line that goes midway across the chart. But thankfully you can see that we are now down, in the last seven days, to an average of 22 deaths per day related to COVID. Still, regrettable of course, in terms of deaths that we wish weren't happening, but obviously in a very different place to where we were in those dark first few weeks of 2021. (Jonathan Van-Tam, 28.04.2021)</i></p>	<p>Grounder (descriptive language)</p> <p>Head Act for TELL (locution derivable)</p> <p>Head Act for SYMPATHISE (locution derivable)</p>
MEDSPAN	<p><i>(1) En otros casos ha habido errores en la transcripción de datos, que eso es algo que no es excesivamente frecuente, pero sí que pasa un cierto número de veces a la hora de trabajar con información que se tiene que teclear en una base de datos. Esto puede pasar, ahora mismo se está corrigiendo todo eso, (...) y no se preocupen que los datos de fallecidos en España serán los más claros posibles. (...) En todo caso, incluso si tuviéramos una variabilidad de 13 fallecidos arriba o 13 fallecidos abajo, aún siendo muy duro y sabemos todos que cada fallecido pesa como una losa, dentro de 27-28 mil fallecidos, esa cifra desde el punto de vista epidemiológico no es una variación significativa. (Fernando Simon, 05.06.2020)</i></p> <p><i>(2) El resto de los indicadores vienen más o menos a ser estables con lo que observamos en</i></p>	<p>EXCUSE/ JUSTIFY as grounder</p> <p>RESOLVE (locution derivable)</p> <p>Head Act for TELL/ OPINE (locution derivable)</p>

	<p><i>días previos. Sí que es cierto que los fallecidos en los últimos días se siguen manteniendo en cifras mucho más bajas de lo observado el mes pasado, por ejemplo, y ahora nos estamos manteniendo en cifras de alrededor de 222 en los últimos siete días con los datos recibidos a día de hoy. (Fernando Simon, 29.03.2021)</i></p>	Head Act for TELL (locution derivable)
My translation	<p>(1) There have been other cases where errors were committed regarding the data transcription, which does not occur frequently, but it does occur a certain number of times when it comes to processing information which needs to be typed down in a database. This can happen, they are currently correcting all this (...) and do not worry that the data concerning the deceased in Spain will be as clear as possible. (...) Anyways, even if we had a variation of 13 deceased more or 13 deceased less, as tough as it may be and we all know that this weighs more than a tombstone, when we discuss about 27 – 28 thousand deceased, from an epidemiological viewpoint this number does not represent a significant variation.</p> <p>(2) The rest of the indicators appear to be more or less stable, as we saw in the previous days. It is indeed true that the deceased registered in the last days maintain lower values than last month, for example, and right now the situation is maintained at approximately 222 in the past seven days, according to the data we received today.</p>	
MEDRO	<p><i>(1) Astfel, în intervalul din ultimele 24 de ore au fost înregistrate 39 de decese. Trei dintre decese au fost înregistrate la categoria de vîrstă 30 și 39 de ani, unul la categoria 44 și 49 ani, trei la categoria 50 – 59 ani, șapte la categoria 60-69 ani, 10 la categoria 70-79 ani și 15 la categoria de peste 80 de ani. Dintre decesele din categoria de vîrstă cuprinsă între 30 și 39 de ani, avem următoarele date: pacient de sex masculin din București, în vîrstă de 30 de ani, nevaccinat, care prezenta comorbidități; pacient de sex</i></p>	Head Act for TELL (locution derivable) Head Act for TELL (locution derivable) Head Act for TELL (locution derivable)

	<p><i>masculin din Covasna, de 34 de ani, nevaccinat, care prezenta comorbidități și un pacient de sex feminin, din Suceava, de 33 de ani, nevaccinat, care prezenta comorbidități. Din totalul deceselor, în ultimele 24 de ore, toți pacienții decedați prezintau comorbidități.</i></p> <p><i>(2) Reporter: Tot social-democrații au acuzat guvernul că "a cosmetizat datele privind numărul îmbolnăvirilor, privind raportările legate de infectările cu coronavirus"… Există posibilitatea să fi fost niște date care să…?</i></p> <p><i>N. T: Nu există nicio posibilitate și, după cum știți, menționăm de vreo două luni de zile, de când a început să apară și în media și în diverse publicații, acest lucru. Poate cei 1.400 de decedați nu există, poate medicii și asistentele care au trecut, personal medical fiind, prin îmbolnăvire și au trăit aceste momente nu s-au îmbolnăvit, poate că n-am avut decese nici rândul cadrelor medicale. Am ales, ca Minister al Sănătății, ca Institut Național de Sănătate Publică, să fim transparenti și să raportăm fiecare caz, fiecare deces, fiecare pacient aflat în terapie intensivă. În acest moment suntem pe panta descendentală, vom continua cu aceeași raportare, vom continua, ca corp medical, să ne ocupăm cu aceeași sensibilitate de tot ce înseamnă pacient infectat cu COVID sau non-COVID. (Reporter and Nelu Tătaru, 16.06.2020)</i></p>	<p>Head Act for TELL (locution derivable)</p> <p>Head Act for OPINE (locution derivable)</p> <p>Head Act for OPINE (locution derivable)</p> <p>Head Act for RESOLVE (locution derivable)</p>
My translation	<p>(1) As such, 39 deaths were registered in the last 24 hours. Three of these deaths were registered in the 30- 39 age gap, one in the 44- 49 age gap, three in the 50 – 59 age gap, seven in the 60- 69 age gap, ten in the 70 -79 age gap</p>	

	<p>and fifteen in the over 80s age gap. Among the deaths from the 30- 39 age gap, we have the following data: a male patient from Bucharest, aged 30, unvaccinated, with comorbidities; a male patient from Covasna, 34 years old, unvaccinated, with comorbidities and a female patient from Suceava, unvaccinated, with comorbidities. In the case of all deaths registered in the last 24 hours, all patients presented comorbidities.</p> <p>(2) Reporter: The social-democrats also accused the government that they “made up data related to the number of infections, concerning the reports on the coronavirus contamination”... Is there any possibility that there were some data that....?</p> <p>N.T: There is absolutely no possibility, and as you know, we have kept mentioning for the past two months since this first came out in the media and in other publications. Maybe those 1.400 deaths are not real, maybe the doctors and nurses who went through the disease, because they are medical staff, and lived through those moments, did not have the disease after all, maybe there were no deaths among the medical staff. On behalf of the Health Ministry and the National Institute for Public Health, we chose to be transparent and report every case, every death, every patient in the ICU. We are now on a descending path, and we will continue with the same reports, and as medical practitioners, we will continue to attend to COVID or non-COVID patients with the same sensitivity.</p>
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Table no. 13 – The Speech Acts of Death Communication

5.3.1.1 Samples of Death Communication in the British English Corpus

Two speech acts were identified in the first excerpt from the British English corpus: a Tell and a Sympathise. The level of directness in both cases is *locution derivable*. The speech act perspective is speaker and addressee, with the first-person-plural personal pronoun (*we*) as a subject three times. No supportive moves were identified in this sequence. The data are presented clearly and coherently.

However, it is easily noticeable that the speaker appeals to their hearers' emotions. The simple fact that a Sympathise follows Tell shows that the speaker is aware of the impact that the data they presented might have upon the hearer and is interested in soothing the hearer's reaction and interpretations. Moreover, if the speech act perspective is also considered, the

speaker finds themselves in the same situation as the hearer, thus facing the same consequences. The level of direction is among the highest to ensure clarity and precision.

The choice of words serves the same communicative purposes as the ones behind the core meanings of the two speech acts: to inform in the case of Tell, and to comfort and acknowledge a complex, severe and unpleasant situation in the case of Sympathise. Three noun phrases prove this point: *under intense pressure, the loved ones, and the pressure on the frontline*. In terms of Elena Semino's theory on metaphor as a means to talk about death, these noun phrases insist on the existence of a high level of pressure exerted over the NHS. The idea of *the frontline* depicts a general picture of combat and a fight. Semino (2020) identifies the so-called war metaphor as a frequent stylistic device used by patients and medical staff to refer primarily to critical situations, particularly those near the end stages of disease. The linguist suggests that using this metaphorical assessment on the situation tends to worsen the general state of affairs, mainly because it can foster anxiety alongside feelings of fright, pain, and even despair. However, the context and certain specific situations might turn the tide in favour of using such metaphors: "an argument can be made even for War metaphors to be used to suggest that an urgent threat requires an immediate collective effort. Similarly, while War metaphors for cancer can have the harmful effects I have already described, there is also evidence that they can be empowering for some people with cancer." (2020: 52).

In the excerpt submitted for analysis here, the speaker refers to the frontline to emphasise the seriousness of the situation. The high number of deaths can justify this critical situation described previously. On the other hand, the war metaphor justifies the use of a Sympathise, seen as a human reaction to other people's loss and suffering. An impactful adjective introduces this speech act – *sadly* – through which the speaker transmits their personal attitude towards the whole context. In the end, *the pressure of the frontline* is described as *so relentless*: another powerful adjective preceded by a strong intensifier. This closure summarises and closes up the information presented as a Tell, and the personal attitudes towards that information, structured as a Sympathise.

The second excerpt from the British English corpus provides another relevant example of how death communication was conducted in the press releases. The metaphors used here to describe the death rate during the pandemic refer to waves and darkness. As for the speech acts identified in this sequence of language, a grounder precedes the Tell, which a Sympathise immediately follows. The level of directness of the Head Acts is the same as in the previous excerpt, meaning *locution derivable*. The introductory sentence centres the adverb *unfortunately*, to mark the speaker's attitude concerning the data they are about to explain. The grounder for Tell uses descriptive language which comprises the following noun phrases: *third*

peak, third wave, the first peak, that horizontal blue line. They are primarily used to describe a graph that the speaker presents in order to introduce the evolution of the death rate more accurately. This description is realised through terms that could be used to depict natural landscapes and natural phenomena. Both terms (*peak* and *wave*) refer to height and powerful representations which could impose a cautious attitude on the viewer, or the hearer, in this case. From the same semantic frame, the phrase *horizontal blue line*, which is used here merely to point to a specific feature of the graph, could lead to a mental visual of the horizon, metaphorically symbolising hope. On the same train of thought, Tell is announced with the adverb *thankfully*, and the speaker presents the average of 22 *deaths per day* as a positive aspect since the evolutionary trend is descending. Nevertheless, Sympathise is immediately performed to soften the absurdity of seeing even one death as something positive. This speech act is introduced through a sequence of adverbs aimed at expressing acknowledgement and regret: *still, regrettable, of course*. There are at least two communicative purposes that this speech act meets here: to show compassion and empathy in the face of human loss, and to provide hope when looking back to a more concerning and threatening beginning. The reference point in comparison to which the current situation is more promising, even though it announces 22 deaths, is referred to as *those dark first few weeks*. The metaphor of darkness, used to refer to a previous, more serious situation, contrasts strongly with the current state. The dichotomy of light-dark is generally employed to infer the life-death contrast.

On the whole, the following characteristics describe the excerpts from the British English corpus:

- ✓ Sympathise is a speech act used when presenting data related to the death rate; it usually follows the speech act of Tell.
- ✓ Sympathise is built with the help of adjectives and adverbs, which convey an emotional and empathetic dimension to the speech; the noun phrases are descriptive and build metaphorical imageries aimed at reaching a better level of understanding of the situation and the risks at stake.
- ✓ The evolution of the death rate is presented with the help of graphs and charts, which are accurately described.
- ✓ The speaker's cautious attitude resides in the careful alternance between graphs and numbers and empathy towards the impact of what these figures represent to the hearer.

5.3.1.2 Samples of Death Communication in the Spanish Corpus

Four speech acts were identified in the excerpt selected from the Spanish corpus: a Tell/ Opine, a Tell, a Resolve and an Excuse/ Justify as grounder. The level of directness of the Head Acts is *locution derivable*, aimed at conferring precision and clarity. From the very first glance, it is interesting to observe how Sympathise is not used at all; in fact, it scarcely appears in this corpus, namely, three times.

In the first excerpt, the information concerning death rates is outlined towards the end as a Head Act of Tell/ Opine. This speech act is preceded by a Resolve, which is introduced by an Excuse/ Justify as a grounder. The dynamics of the pieces of information delivered in this excerpt lead to an unfolding of speech acts that portray a subtextual communicative intention: to justify and explain incongruencies related to the real number of deaths. This has been a recurrent situation throughout the pandemic and has been debated in many European countries. Spain, in particular, underwent a severe crisis related to the daily reports on the death rate caused by the coronavirus, generated by conflicts between the politicians and the medical staff. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya¹²¹ conducted a study only to discover a staggering discrepancy of 20,000 deaths, which were not reported to the media at the beginning of the pandemic.

In summary, the speaker uses Excuse/ Justify to explain the errors in the reports on the number of deaths. These errors are attributed to a fault caused by the need to type the data manually and introduce them into the database. It is emphasised that although this does happen, it is not common. Once the problem is acknowledged through the use of this speech act, a Resolve is uttered as a promise that all the data will be clearly presented in the end. The Head Act of Tell/ Opine reports an impressive 27 – 28 thousand deaths. However, this figure is mentioned only to emphasise that minor errors, such as, for example, a plus-minus 13 deaths, would not mark a significant difference from an epidemiological point of view. The speaker attempts a certain degree of sympathy by shifting from the objectivity of numbers towards a more heartfelt, metaphorical construction. Within their message, they acknowledge that this is a very hard situation; in the same semantic frame of harshness, they compare the suffering caused by each death with the weight of a tombstone.

This approach, which considers a small number of deaths as a positive aspect compared to the overall statistics, is similar to the one analysed in the second excerpt, exemplified from the British English corpus. Both examples highlight the difficulty of finding the perfect balance between the human perspective on death, where each loss counts immensely and carries an overwhelming sadness to families and close ones, and the perspective of medical professionals

¹²¹ <https://www.uoc.edu/en/news/2022/283-data-covid>?, last accessed on May the 5th, 2025

or political decision-makers, whose main priority is to see the numbers decrease. For this reason, they needed to focus on the figures recorded at the national level and make decisions based on the national trend concerning the increase or decrease in the number of deaths. It was probably one of the most challenging situations this pandemic brought with it. Consequently, the language each speaker chose to use in such communications, the sequence of speech acts, and the morphological and syntactic structures of the sentences marked key differences between a successful delivery and confusion, panic, or bewilderment.

From a linguistic viewpoint, in the first excerpt from the Spanish corpus, the following features were identified as relevant to the construction of the speech acts, in particular, and the effectiveness of the communication, in general:

- Superlatives are used to describe this critical context. They appear in the three Head Acts identified here: *no es excesivamente frecuente* (to refer to the low frequency of human errors which might appear when compiling data related to the deceased – in Excuse/ Justify), *los más claros posibles* (to refer to the final version of the data concerning the deceased at a national level), *muy duro*¹²² (to refer to the fact that each death is important and unbearable).
- The verb forms used to perform the three speech acts identified in the excerpt are adapted according to the speech act and the communicative intention implied in its core meaning (to explain in the case of Excuse/ Justify, to promise soon-to-be-implemented solutions in the case of Resolve, and to express opinions on the role of certain information in the case of Tell/ Opine). What interests here the most is the person of the verb, especially when considering that the Spanish language can build the verb phrase without having to mention the subject – it can be an impersonal verb phrase or have the person conveyed by the verb inflection. Three impersonal verb structures (the last two in passive-reflexive voice) were used in Excuse/ Justify: *pasa*, *se tiene que*, *se está corrigiendo*¹²³. This choice cannot be accidental since the speaker opts for a verb structure that avoids mentioning the subject, that is, the performer of the action, when talking about human errors and the attempts to correct them. The verb phrase central to the Head Act of Resolve is a second-person plural imperative: *no se preocupen*¹²⁴. In other words, this particular choice also reassures the promise that things will be remedied eventually. Finally, in the last speech act, the perspective switches to speaker

¹²² it is not excessively frequent, the clearest possible, very tough

¹²³ it happens, it has to, it is being corrected

¹²⁴ do not worry

- and - addressee with two verbs in the first person plural: *sí tuviéramos, sabemos*¹²⁵.

The first form is the beginning of a second conditional through which the speaker invites the audience to imagine a variable situation of plus or minus 13 deaths, and the second introduces the certainty that each death weighs terribly. In both situations, these verb forms bring the speaker and the hearer together, as participants in the same situation.

The second excerpt from the Spanish corpus is an example of death communication realised in a cold, detached manner, with an emphasis on figures and what they represent in the overall picture of the pandemic's evolution. The level of directness remains the same as in the previous excerpt, namely, *locution derivable*. The only Head Act identified here is a Tell preceded and followed by time intensifiers (*en días previos, en los últimos días, el mes pasado, ahora, en los últimos siete días, a día de hoy*¹²⁶). Considering the fact that the numbers of deaths are seen at a low or at a high only in comparison to previous data, it makes sense to mention the exact time when those numbers were registered. However, too many noun phrases which refer to different moments in the past, and at times, noun phrases that are not precise enough (such as *the previous days*) might lead to confusion and convey a sense of uncertainty and vagueness. According to the most recent data, the speaker reports 222 deaths in the last seven days. Before presenting this datum, they compared the situation with the one recorded the previous month and appreciated that the current numbers are significantly lower.

As far as the speech act perspective is concerned, the speaker–addressee view is maintained here as well, since in two cases, the verb form is first-person plural: *observamos, nos estamos manteniendo*¹²⁷. The last one is the verb phrase that introduces the death rate, implying that this number affects everyone.

To conclude, the excerpts selected from the Spanish corpus presented the following characteristics:

- ✓ Superlatives were used frequently to convey both the gravity of the situation and the personal interpretation of the consequences this situation brought upon all the people affected by the virus.
- ✓ The metaphorical comparison through which the speaker associates the burden of having to live with the loss of someone close to the weight of a tombstone also implies the idea of an exaggeration being used in order to paint a serious situation.
- ✓ The use of the first-person plural in key verb forms, that is, especially when delivering the death rates, suggests the fact that in the speaker's view, these dreadful figures

¹²⁵ if we had, we know

¹²⁶ in previous days, in the past few days, last month, now, in the last seven days, up to date

¹²⁷ we observe, we are keeping our level

cause suffering and distress to everyone who takes part in the communication. This is a common act of solidarity in the face of danger and death.

- ✓ Particularly in the case where Tell was the only speech act used to deliver information on the death rate, an abundance of time intensifiers was identified. They were used mainly to illustrate the optimistic trend of the virus's evolution, which marked a very low number of deaths compared to previously collected data.
- ✓ A wider variety of speech acts used to talk about death in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic were identified in the Spanish corpus: Excuse/ Justify, Resolve, Tell/ Opine, Tell. Sympathise did form Head Act in these two examples, although feelings of acknowledgement and sympathy were conveyed through linguistic means such as the use of superlatives.

5.3.1.3 Samples of Death Communication in the Romanian Corpus

The speech acts identified in this corpus predominantly used to build death communication were Tell and Opine, with Tell being the more preferred of the two. The first excerpt selected for analysis is an illustrative example of this kind, as four Head Acts for Tell were identified. These Head Acts are neither preceded nor followed by any supportive moves, and the level of directness is *locution derivable*, here too. The language is void of any emotional trigger; there is no show of acknowledgement or sympathy, and the rhythm of the sentence sequence is rather mechanical. The speaker provides an accurate description of data, without offering any interpretations or personal views on the matter.

In summary, the excerpt starts by presenting the number of deaths recorded in the past 24 hours. Then, the deaths are grouped by different age categories, ranging from the youngest category (30-39 years old) to those over 80. Further on, the speaker provides medical demographic details on the patients' sex, their place of residence, and whether they were vaccinated or presented with other comorbidities, referring to three patients who belonged to the first category. The final sentence underlines that all the patients who died within the previous 24 hours had presented with comorbidities.

Linguistically speaking, the following characteristics also support an impersonal descriptive style of communication:

- The data are communicated using the passive voice, thus avoiding any personal involvement in structures such as *au fost înregistrate*¹²⁸.
- There is only one first-person plural verb form, which is used to introduce the detailed information on the three patients belonging to the youngest age category. This plural does not refer to the speaker and the addressee (as in the cases identified in the British English and the Spanish corpora). However, it refers to the institution the speaker represents in this context¹²⁹.
- The only time intensifier used in this excerpt (*în ultimele 24 de ore*¹³⁰) is employed both in the first and the last sentence, as if opening and closing the circle of the death rate registered within this specific time frame.

The second excerpt illustrates a slightly different approach. Since it is a question-and-reply kind of interaction, as opposed to a unidirectional presentation of data, it can easily be anticipated from the question that the primary purpose of the message will not be to inform, but rather to clarify an uncomfortable situation in which the speaker finds themselves in the position to put down rumours concerning a supposed artificial alteration of data related to coronavirus contagions. The speaker addresses such a supposition with fierce negation, followed immediately by an ironic sequence of clauses denying the very existence of the pandemic and its terrible consequences (*Poate cei 1.400 de decedați nu există, poate medicii și asistentele care au trecut, personal medical fiind, prin îmbolnăvire și au trăit aceste momente nu s-au îmbolnăvit, poate că n-am avut decese nici rândul cadrelor medicale*¹³¹). In the end, a sentence of reassurance closes up the speech and reiterates the medical professionals' commitment to all patients (*vom continua cu aceeași raportare, vom continua, ca corp medical, să ne ocupăm cu aceeași sensibilitate de tot ce înseamnă pacient infectat cu COVID sau non-COVID*¹³²).

What makes this excerpt even more interesting as an example of death communication is the fact that although it also provides several deaths, there is no Head Act for Tell identified here, nor is there a Head Act for Sympathy. The speech acts of this communication are Opine (which appears twice) and Resolve, both at the same level of direction, meaning *locution derivable*. There are no other supportive moves.

¹²⁸ were registered

¹²⁹ In Romanian official documents, institutions often refer to themselves using a plural form—a phenomenon known as *pluralul autorității*. This institutional plural serves as a marker of formality and authority, whereby a single institution adopts the plural to enhance its official voice or status. - <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/plural/definitii?utm> last accessed on June the 3rd, 2025

¹³⁰ in the last 24 hours

¹³¹ Maybe those 1.400 deaths are not real, maybe the doctors and nurses who went through the disease, because they are medical staff, and lived through those moments, did not have the disease after all, maybe there were no deaths among the medical staff.

¹³² we will continue with the same reports, and as medical practitioners, we will continue to attend to COVID or non-COVID patients with the same sensitivity.

The following remarks were considered relevant to describe the language chosen to convey the communicative intentions of these speech acts:

- The first-person plural form of the verb is also used, as the *institutional plural*. Verb phrases such as: *menționăm, să fim transparenti, să raportăm, vom continua*¹³³ are used in the first Opine (where the speaker denies the accusations suggested by their interlocutor) and in Resolve (where the speaker reassures the audience of their honesty and professionalism). In both situations, the speaker answers in the name of the institutions they represent, and they even specify the name of those institutions: the Ministry of Health and the National Institute for Public Health. Calling the institutions by their full names as a sign of authority and in search of validation is a feature previously analysed in the Romanian corpus, more precisely in the excerpts where the speech act of Thank was analysed. However, there is one situation in which the plural is used with an inclusive intent, as in the following structure: *suntem pe pantă descendenta*¹³⁴. The purpose here is to inform the audience about the latest contagion trend, a phenomenon that affects everyone, regardless of their role in the ongoing conversation.
- The sentence the speaker uses to answer with irony to the reporter's question is an enumeration of scenarios in which none of the dreadful consequences of the COVID-19 contagion occurred. The parts of this enumeration are linked with the adverb *poate*¹³⁵ (epistemic modality), which the speaker repeats three times. Moreover, there is a sequence of three verb phrases in the negative forms: *nu există, nu s-au îmbolnăvit, nu am avut decese*¹³⁶. The number of deaths (1400) becomes the subject of the first negative verb phrase. The speaker does not intend to inform the hearer on the matter; they use this number to raise awareness that this situation cannot be ignored or altered. The purpose of irony in this context is not mockery or disrespect. Similar to Socratic irony¹³⁷, the speaker attempts to clarify what they consider a persistent misunderstanding.
- The time intensifiers appear in this excerpt at the beginning and end to mark the two-month time lapse during which the rumours had been spreading. The speaker emphasised the moment of speech as a time marker for Resolve. When using this last

¹³³ we have been mentioning, (for us) to be transparent, to report, we will continue

¹³⁴ we are on a descending path

¹³⁵ maybe

¹³⁶ do not exist, did not catch the disease, we did not have any deaths

¹³⁷ In Plato's dialogues, Socrates claims ignorance, but he does so to highlight that others claim knowledge they do not actually possess.

speech act, the communicative intention was to reassure the hearer that what had been done so far was the right thing, which was why they would continue likewise.

These two excerpts selected from the Romanian corpus show different examples of how death communication was realised in the context submitted to analysis: the first one is an informative sample, where figures are enumerated in an abundance of data that the speaker does not interpret in any way and in the second case, information on deaths is used ironically to contradict a rumour. The following characteristics describe the patterns used in the Romanian corpus whenever the speakers engaged in death communication:

- ✓ Communication is done in an impersonal manner by including a plethora of data about the patients' age, vaccination status or other comorbidities. Time references are relevant for comparisons between specific moments from the past when the data were recorded and the situation at the moment of speaking. Impersonality and professional detachment are achieved through the use of the *institutional plural*, the passive voice and a mechanical sequence of sentences void of emotional markers.
- ✓ When using a more personal approach, the communicative purpose becomes defensive and ironic. Data on COVID-19 deaths are used to point to the fact that the situation is serious and must not be denied. However, since irony is a stylistic device aiming to emphasise one aspect by expressing its exact opposite, it is highly possible that by using it, one raises confusion rather than clarifies a problematic matter. Also, in a question-and-answer type of interaction, irony helps convey a feeling of superiority on behalf of the speaker.
- ✓ Tell (the most frequently used), Opine and Resolve were identified as the speech acts predominantly used to communicate death in this corpus. Sympathise was not identified in this corp.

5.3.2 Frequency of Occurrence

Observing the frequency of occurrence of the speech acts identified in the three corpora and selected for analysis in chapter 2 of the current research paper proved relevant. When dealing with death communication, the present chapter researched the ways in which this communication was realised in terms of the speech acts the speaker developed and the linguistic specificities they employed to convey their intentions. Consequently, specific data was necessary in order to complete this analysis, also with a quantitative approach.

To begin with, the three corpora were attentively researched for fragments in which the speakers presented the rate of mortality or the number of deaths recorded in a given period. As such, 18 death reports were identified in the British English corpus, whereas in the other two corpora, Spanish and Romanian, 15 reports each were identified. These data were compiled manually.

The quantitative analysis of this chapter also used AntConc (version 4.2.0) to check for the most frequently used terms in this specific situation. Fig. no. 11 below shows that the word *deaths* was used 56 times in the British English corpus, the word *fallecidos* was used 47 times in the Spanish corpus and the word *decese*, 29 times in the Romanian corpus.

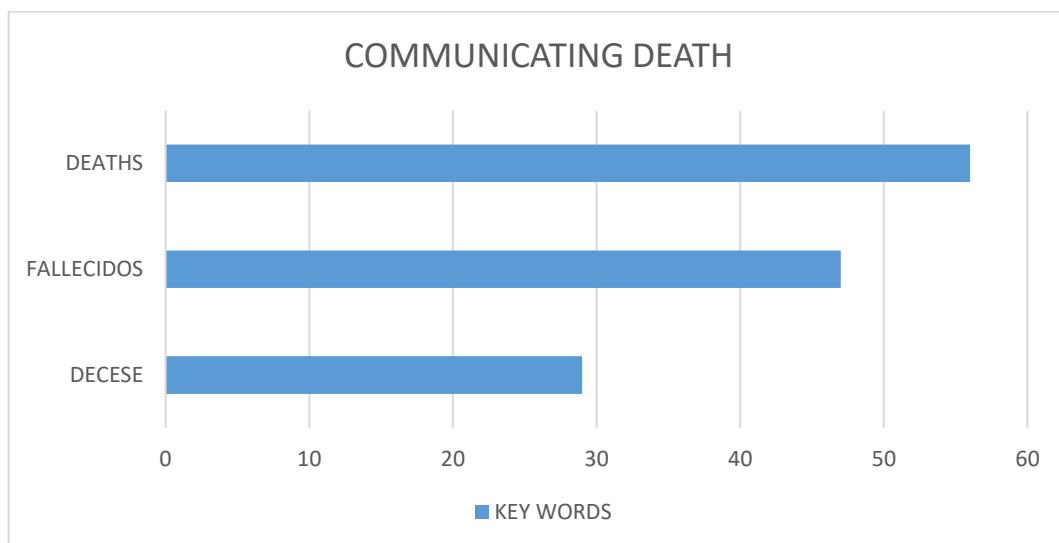


Fig. no. 11 - Frequency of occurrence for *deaths/fallecidos/decese*

In a morphological analysis of these terms, the following observations infer pieces of information concerning the cultural background and the history of each language. In British English, the word *death* is the noun that defines the moment life ends¹³⁸. In this context, it is used in the plural since it refers to the number of people whose lives ended because of COVID-19; another way to refer to this reality would probably have been to talk about the deceased. However, this term does not appear at all in this corpus. Spanish uses the term *fallecidos*, the past participle form of the verb *fallecer*. Past participles, which are used as adjectives through conversion, can become nouns and develop categories such as number and gender accordingly. Nevertheless, *muerte* and the verb *morir* are also frequently used in Spanish to talk about the end of life, especially in less formal contexts or when engaging in a more philosophical discussion. Something similar happens in Romanian, where *moarte* and *a muri* are commonly

¹³⁸ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/death> last accessed on June the 3rd, 2025

used in lay contexts and also when discussing life and death from an existential perspective; *deces* and *a deceda* are usually preferred in more formal contexts.

Ultimately, each corpus exhibits its own unique combination of speech acts in death communication. The British English corpus combines Tells (38 Head Acts) with Tell/ Opine (7 Head Acts), Sympathise (12 Head Acts) and Resolve (10 Head Acts). In the Spanish corpus, Tell (25 Head Acts) was also the most frequently used, followed by Tell/ Opine (19 Head Acts), Excuse/ Justify (11 Head Acts) and Resolve (9 Head Acts). The Romanian corpus uses Tell (60 Head Acts) excessively, followed by Resolve (20 Head Acts) and Opine (15 Head Acts).

One of the most important aspects that these data emphasise is related to the presence or the absence of Sympathise. While it is moderately used in the British English corpus, it barely appears in the other two, and not always as a Head Act, but rather as an emotional trigger or inference.

5.4 Results

The communication of death during the COVID-19 pandemic presented an acute rhetorical and ethical challenge in public health discourse. As death remains one of the most sensitive and emotionally charged subjects, the way it was framed in official communication varied across cultural and institutional contexts.

In the initial phase of the pandemic, the ambiguity surrounding the virus's lethality, coupled with infrastructural stress, led to inconsistent and sometimes opaque communication. Particularly in the Spanish corpus, discrepancies in reported death tolls highlighted institutional tensions, with medical experts often at odds with political authorities over the transparency of information. Similar dissonances surfaced in the British corpus, notably in discussions about deaths in care homes.

Central to this analysis is the presence - or marked absence - of the speech act *Sympathise*, classified by House and Kádár (2021) as an Attitudinal Speech Act, reflecting the speaker's emotional attitude toward past or prospective events. Its strategic use - or omission - sheds light on underlying communicative intentions.

In the British English corpus, *Sympathise* frequently followed the act of *Tell*, blending statistical data with an empathetic tone. Emotional language, descriptive noun phrases, and metaphors were employed to humanise the data, even as graphs and figures dominated the presentation. This careful oscillation between objective reporting and emotional acknowledgement reflects a deliberate communicative balance aimed at both informing and consoling the public.

Conversely, the Spanish corpus demonstrated a broader variety of speech acts, including *Excuse/Justify*, *Resolve*, and *Tell/Opine*, often marked by rhetorical intensifiers and the inclusive first-person plural. These linguistic choices signalled collective empathy and solidarity. Though *Sympathise* was not always present as a Head Act, affective meaning was often conveyed implicitly through metaphor and superlative expressions, highlighting the psychological and social gravity of the crisis.

In stark contrast, the Romanian corpus presented a dual pattern: a predominantly impersonal, data-heavy discourse marked by institutional detachment, and an ironic tone used at times to counter misinformation. Deaths were primarily conveyed through *Tell*, supplemented by *Resolve* and *Opine*, but with no significant use of *Sympathise*. The impersonality was reinforced by passive constructions, the institutional plural, and emotionally neutral sequences, all of which contributed to a communicative tone that prioritised factual

delivery over affective engagement. When personal tone did surface, irony became the stylistic tool of choice, though it risked generating ambiguity rather than clarity.

Quantitative analysis further reveals a hierarchy in speech act usage: Tell dominated across all corpora, with notable variations in the supporting acts. The British corpus exhibited a balanced pattern of Tell (38 Head Acts), Sympathise (12), and Resolve (10), reflecting a hybrid of statistical rigour and emotional resonance. The Spanish corpus, while also Tell-driven (25 Head Acts), leaned heavily on Tell/Opine (19) and Excuse/Justify (11), signalling a more interpretive and persuasive approach. The Romanian corpus, however, showed a marked overuse of Tell (60 Head Acts) and minimal diversification, resulting in a colder, more technocratic narrative.

Ultimately, the presence or absence of Sympathise emerged as a defining element in how each linguistic and cultural context chose to represent death. While British communicators integrated empathy within a statistical framework, Spanish speakers relied on collective identity and rhetorical intensity, and Romanian officials defaulted to impersonal rationalism, occasionally punctuated by irony.

Final Conclusions

This study has relied on a cross-cultural pragmatic framework to analyse public discourse during the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on speech acts in British English, Spanish, and Romanian press releases. Grounded in a theoretical exploration of cross-cultural pragmatics, the research highlights the role the speech act theory plays in interpreting public healthcare communication during a crisis.

Three key phrases summarise the directions of analysis conducted within this thesis: cross-cultural pragmatics, public healthcare crisis communication, and speech acts. First, cross-cultural pragmatics provided the theoretical framework and methodology that enabled a comparative analysis of three languages. House and Kádár (2021) present a comprehensive framework for analysing speech acts across different cultures and propose a typology that categorises them based on their interactional and relational functions. Their method combines both qualitative and quantitative analyses, using corpora to explore speech acts in various cultural contexts. Furthermore, they emphasise the concept of 'linguaculture' to highlight the strong connections between language and culture in shaping speech acts. The authors provide examples of studies where they applied the proposed cross-cultural pragmatic frame and analysed three key pragmatic units: ritual frame indicating expressions, speech acts, and discourse. This thesis aimed to conduct a cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of speech acts, adhering to the model established by them.

Second, the context which generated the press releases selected for the corpus analysis in the present thesis became the pretext and the reason to bring together samples of texts in three different languages (British English, Spanish, and Romanian). As research has shown (Peng & Hu, 2022; Oakey & Benet, 2024), the COVID-19 sanitary crisis provided a fertile field of research in areas such as public discourse and crisis communication. The management of the pandemic relied extensively on the ability of public communicators to transmit their message clearly and efficiently so that the highest possible number of people would comply with the new and constantly changing guidelines. This is how public healthcare communication evolved into crisis communication, and authorities had to adapt their language to control a similarly global crisis at the national level. Researchers (Peng & Hu, 2022) drew attention to the fact that pragmatic concepts, such as speech acts, politeness, and relevance, were significantly understudied in this new context. It is important to take advantage of the opportunity created by this gap in the speciality literature and encourage the findings to be used beyond academic inquiry for the purposes of achieving a better, more resilient, and versatile crisis communication.

Third, the speech act typology described by House and Kádár (2021) was employed in this thesis to identify and analyse the speech acts used in the press releases selected for the trilingual corpus. It proved engaging and challenging at the same time to look for the same specific speech acts, to analyse their structure and to observe morphological and syntactical features in three different languages with the final aim of finding both similarities and differences. The speech act became the unit of analysis that helped to measure the values of information, persuasion, finding solutions or excuses, gratitude and sympathy in public healthcare communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The thesis can be divided into four main parts that merge to enable an adequate qualitative and quantitative analysis of the speech acts identified in the corpus:

- ✓ The first part set the theoretical framework and defined the working concepts that were later employed in the analysis. In a chronological overview of pragmatics, the cross-cultural field evolved as a complementary area of study where mixed-method analyses were used to examine concepts such as speech acts, ritual frame indicating expressions or critical discourse.
- ✓ The second part aimed at delineating the research design, the objectives, the research questions, as well as the methodology and the tools that the thesis employed to conduct the research. It presented the corpus compilation with the inclusion criteria, with a focus on identifying the research gap and describing the press release as a genre alongside an overview of the authorship of the corpus.
- ✓ The third part was the most consistent part of the thesis because it comprised the corpus analysis, which extended over two chapters. Both of them engaged in the speech act analysis, applying a mixed-method approach and studying Head Acts, supportive moves, morphological and syntactical features, and frequencies of occurrence. The speech acts were grouped in two separate chapters according to the communicative intentions they served: to inform and persuade in the former; to provide solutions, to offer justifications and excuses, or to thank in the latter.
- ✓ The fourth part aimed at studying the ways in which death was communicated in the press releases selected for the corpus. The analysis centred on the speech act of Sympathise, examining its structure and frequency of occurrence across the three languages.

The longest and most important part of the thesis was dedicated to the corpus analysis, where the speech acts were sequenced and analysed cross-culturally from pragmatic and linguistic perspectives. Therefore, the following software tools were chosen and proved helpful in reaching the aims and conclusions of the thesis:

- ✓ As a useful tool in the progress of this analysis, Antconc (version 4.2.0) was used primarily to establish the frequency of occurrence of different words or phrases, to identify words that frequently appeared near a target word, or to detect recurring word patterns.
- ✓ SketchEngine (accessible via sketchengine.eu) was used in the research for this thesis for its feature named ‘Word Sketch’ through which a target word’s grammatical and collocational behaviour was summarised.
- ✓ Cockatoo (accessible via cockatoo.com) was used to compile the Spanish corpus (12 press releases). Unlike the other two languages, where the transcription of the press releases was made available online in text format, the Spanish government only uploaded the videos of the conferences to their official webpage. For this reason, this online transcription service was used to convert the videos into text and perform a similar analysis to the one applied to the British English and Romanian corpora.

Each stage of the research concluded with an outline of the results. Consequently, each chapter, and even the more extended subchapters, contains a final part aimed at summarising the most important and relevant findings of the mixed-method analysis. The purpose of this final chapter is to present the contribution of the present thesis to the speciality literature by answering the research questions addressed at the beginning:

RQ1: What speech acts are predominantly used in the press releases of each linguaculture?

The corpus analysis identified seven core speech acts - Tell, Opine, Request, Suggest, Resolve, Excuse/Justify, and Thank - whose distribution varied significantly across the three linguacultures.

- Tell emerged as the most frequent speech act, reflecting the need for information dissemination during the crisis, with Romanian texts showing the highest usage.
- Opine and Thank were used to soften assertive acts and build rapport, though with varying frequency and forms across corpora. Notably, British English emphasised politeness and empathy, Spanish combined personal engagement with justification, and Romanian communication leaned toward impersonal, authoritative tones.
- The frequent use of Request and Suggest in the Romanian corpus indicates a more directive and hierarchical style of public address. At the same time, British English displayed a more balanced tone with emotional awareness, particularly through the use of Sympathise, which is almost absent in the Romanian texts.

- In the case of Resolve, the analysis performed on the British English corpus showed that the speaker assumes a representative role, using clear and precise language to build a cohesive and coherent outline of the proposed solutions. Similarly, the Spanish corpus analysis indicated that the speaker acknowledges their representative status, validates the contribution of various specialists in the decision-making process and attempts to involve the hearer in the stated plans. The highest rate of occurrence for this speech act was in the Romanian corpus. However, the qualitative analysis emphasised the use of a highly impersonal and detached tone, leaning towards avoiding responsibility.
- In the British English corpus, Excuse/ Justify is used to persuade, inform and formulate counter-arguments, while at the same time complying with the rigours of a formal environment. Spanish press releases stood out for their rhetorical intensity and frequent use of Excuse/Justify, suggesting a persuasive communicative strategy marked by emotional engagement and collective identity. In this case, too, the Romanian corpus has the highest rate of occurrence. The speech act might shift the conversation from the main topic to a one-sided argument or admit uncertainty, thus hinting at a more vulnerable and humane approach to the matter.

RQ2: What repetitive patterns of speech act decoding were identified in the pragmatic analyses in terms of Head Act occurrences, supportive moves, and speech acts that fulfil the role of supportive moves for other speech acts?

In general, the analysis showed that the use of speech acts shapes and reshapes the language in accordance with the speaker's communicative intentions. The presence or absence of supportive moves, or the use of speech acts to support specific Head Acts, occurs almost chaotically. However, the findings in the qualitative analysis delineate specific features for each linguaculture:

- In the British English corpus, Resolve commonly functions as a response to a prior Request and serves to outline upcoming actions in managing the sanitary crisis. Excuse/Justify most often appears as a supportive move – particularly for Tell or Request – rather than as an independent speech act. Overall, in British English, Excuse/Justify is used to mitigate, persuade, inform, and counter-argue, while maintaining a formal tone. The British English corpus shows the most complex and frequent use of Thank, with 235 occurrences. Gratitude expressions are often accompanied by supportive moves, such as Tell and Tell/Opine, which enhance objectivity, trust, and formality. Justifications include factual data, contributing to perceived honesty and clarity.

- In the Spanish corpus, the Head Acts of Resolve are often repeated close to one another, serving an emphatic function to reinforce the main message. Additionally, this is the only corpus where Opine is used as a grounder for Resolve. In this corpus, Excuse/Justify appears more frequently as an independent Head Act than in the other corpora - 48 times as independent versus 20 times as supportive move. This indicates a greater tendency to use it as a defensive mechanism rather than for mitigation. The findings also emphasise that communication becomes more effective when Excuse/Justify is interwoven with other speech acts, rather than repeated independently. The Spanish corpus contains the lowest number of Thank instances (56 times). Its emotional and descriptive language, and the repetition of Head Acts, add expressiveness, although it may affect clarity.
- In the Romanian corpus, Tell is used as a grounder for Resolve, marking an impersonal and detached tone. Moreover, when Excuse/Justify occurs as a supportive move, it suggests a preference for softening imposing acts, such as Request or Tell. It generally appears as an independent speech act with Tell as a grounder, often tied intertextually to a Request. This indicates that in Romanian, even in formal contexts such as press releases, expressing vulnerability and humanity is perceived as communicatively valuable. In the Romanian corpus, Thank appears 57 times, nearly matching the Spanish count. Similar to Spanish, it includes a few supportive moves (e.g., Tell used twice across five gratitude-bearing acts).
- The analysis of death communication evinced important data concerning the presence or absence of the speech act of Sympathise in comparison to the other speech acts. In the British English corpus, Sympathise often follows Tell, blending empathy with statistics. The Spanish corpus shows greater variety in speech acts, such as Excuse/Justify, Resolve, and Tell/Opine, often enhanced with rhetorical intensifiers and inclusive language ('we'). In contrast, the Romanian corpus follows a more impersonal and data-driven approach, using Tell, Resolve, and Opine without a significant presence of Sympathise. Quantitatively, Tell dominates across all corpora, but supporting acts vary:
 - ✓ British: Tell (38), Sympathise (12), Resolve (10) – indicating a balance of factual and emotional discourse.
 - ✓ Spanish: Tell (25), Tell/Opine (19), Excuse/Justify (11) – suggesting a persuasive and interpretive style.
 - ✓ Romanian: Tell (60) – showing a technocratic, impersonal tone with minimal variation.

RQ3: What specific verbs can be associated with the core meanings of the speech acts, and how relevant is their rate of occurrence in understanding the speech act unfolding throughout the press release?

The answer to this research question focuses primarily on the speech acts that generally have a stronger imposing force (the ‘face-threatening acts’, according to Brown and Levinson, 1987): Request, Suggest, Tell and Opine. The use of their corresponding verb phrases, in their specific mood, person or number, highlighted important findings in the analysis:

- In the British English corpus, ‘know’ is often framed as a collective process (e.g., we know – 46 times versus I know – 31 times), reflecting institutional or public knowledge. In contrast, ‘think’ appears predominantly as an individual perspective (I think – 140 versus we think – 11), emphasising personal opinion. Moreover, ‘want’ and ‘could’ are the most frequent verbs, used in the first-person singular to express polite intent. ‘Should’ is less frequent, often appearing with non-pronominal subjects, creating a detached or impersonal tone, blurring the line between Suggest and Request. ‘Must’ has the lowest frequency, used only in the first-person plural, indicating shared obligation. ‘Hope’ (first-person singular) is used to suggest softly, showing a personal and optimistic tone in Suggest acts.
- In the Spanish corpus, a similar trend is observed in expressions referring to personal knowledge, with ‘sabemos’ (we know) occurring 73 times and ‘sé’ (I know) 58 times. However, the use of ‘creo’ (I think) is exceptionally high (223 times), often in the form ‘yo creo que’ (I believe that), showing a strong preference for explicit personal opinion. The plural form ‘creemos’ is rare (only 4 times), highlighting an individualised approach to thought. ‘Hay que’ is the most frequent form for Request, chosen over ‘deber’ due to its impersonal and objective tone. ‘Querer’ behaves like ‘want’, sometimes softening requests, but ‘quiero’ (I want) can convey strong imposition. ‘Esperar’ is complex due to its polysemy (‘to hope’ and ‘to wait/expect’); the analysis focused on ‘hope’, often in the subjunctive mood, signalling strong Suggest acts. ‘Poder’ (can) is the most frequent verb in the corpus, mainly in the first-person plural (92 times), reinforcing collective suggestion. ‘Deber’ (should/must) is used to express Request, involving both speaker and hearer in obligation.
- The Romanian corpus also shows dominance of the first-person singular in expressions of thought (‘cred’ – 76 times versus ‘credem’ – 2), and a more balanced use in knowledge expressions (‘ştiu’ – 36 versus ‘ştim’ – 31), though still slightly favouring the singular form. ‘A vrea’ (to want) appears mostly in the first-person singular,

especially in the conditional, functioning more as a cajoler than a Head Act. ‘A spera’ (to hope) is used predominantly in the first-person plural, usually representing the institution, aiming to balance messages with optimism. ‘A putea’ (can) showed the highest frequency, with five verb forms contributing to diverse speaker-oriented meanings. This verb was central in decoding Suggest acts. ‘A trebui’ (must/should) posed challenges due to meaning shifts across moods: in conditional (meaning should) it was used for Suggest, whereas in impersonal indicative (meaning must), it was used as a Request Head Act.

RQ4: In what ways could the predominant use of certain specific speech acts be linked to aspects related to social or cultural backgrounds?

The data summarised above indicate that the British and Spanish corpora presented a balanced mix of factual and opinion-based language, supporting effective communication. However, Spanish samples showed higher ambiguity due to vague modifiers and overlapping speech acts, while collective identity was blended with rhetorical force. In contrast, British English favours polite and formal individual expressions. In the Romanian corpus, an overuse of Tell led to information overload, making it harder for key messages to stand out and be easily processed. Romanian showcases institutional detachment and grammatical complexity, especially in mood-based meaning shifts.

Finally, the study demonstrates that speech act distribution and linguistic features not only reflect communicative intent but also embed deeper cultural and institutional values. The initial **hypothesis**, which stated that **crisis communication remains culture-bound and culture-specific, even when dealing with the same type of crisis, has thus been confirmed**. Differences in how death was communicated – ranging from empathetic acknowledgement in British discourse, rhetorical collectivism in Spanish, to impersonal factuality in Romanian – further reveal the influence of national communicative styles on crisis discourse.

In sum, the comparative analysis confirms that speech acts, when pragmatically examined, offer profound insight into the interplay between language, culture, and context in public communication. The patterns observed in this study underscore the importance of pragmatics in shaping and interpreting discourse, particularly in moments of global uncertainty and volatility.

Limitations of the Study and Further Research

While this study provides a detailed analysis of the speech acts identified in press releases issued during the COVID-19 sanitary crisis in Great Britain, Spain, and Romania, it is essential to acknowledge its inherent limitations. No research endeavour is without constraints, and recognising these boundaries is essential in ensuring the transparency and validity of the analysis. The present chapter outlines the principal methodological, analytical, and contextual limitations that may influence the interpretation and generalisability of the findings. By addressing these limitations, this chapter aims to contextualise the study's conclusions and provide a framework for future research directions.

Firstly, one of the study's limitations is the size of the corpus: 10 press releases were selected for each linguaculture, approximately 70.000 words each. It would be almost inappropriate to claim that the findings outlined here could be considered general rules. The speech act analyses identify patterns of occurrence and unfolding of Head Acts and supportive moves, which are then compared between the three linguacultures.

The context in which the press releases were created and their selection criteria might also impose some limitations. Although certain features have been identified as characteristic of crisis communication, it is also true that no two crises are the same, and specific stages of the COVID-19 pandemic required unprecedented measures. Consequently, the language choice is adapted to the unpredictable reality of the moment.

Another possible limitation would be related to the fact that it was decided not to conduct any ancillary type of research, that is, to ask for an appropriacy assessment from native speakers of the three languages employed. This was due to the fact that the study's main aim was to observe and compare specific sequences of language identified throughout the corpus. Moreover, it was considered that evaluating whether the use of particular structures proved effective or not, as far as the communicative objectives being met, was a question for another piece of research.

This paper proposes at least two primary directions for further research. On the one hand, other languages could be included in the study of the speech acts used in public communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. These languages should by no means be limited to the European space; it would actually prove more rewarding to compare more distant cultures, such as those from Asia or even Africa. Since this was a worldwide pandemic, the context allows researchers to engage in any comparisons they might find doable. On the other hand, the cross-cultural pragmatic framework used in this research, and theorised by Edmonson, House and Kádár, proposes two other concepts that could be explored in similar corpora: ritual frame indicating expressions and discourse. This research focused exclusively on identifying

the speech acts used in the press releases and their supportive moves. It analysed how the speakers' communicative intentions were met through their language use. Similar endeavours could be attempted in analyses focusing on specific expressions or discourse.

To conclude, despite the outlined limitations, the current research provides insight into the ways in which representatives of COVID-19 crisis management constructed their speeches and chose to express their data, thoughts, and intentions.

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Appendices

Appendix No. 1 – The Core Coding Categories of the Speech Acts according to House and Kadar(2021)¹³⁹

Nr.	Core Coding Category	Modifies the Head Act	Definitions	Subcategories and Typologies	Examples		
					English	Spanish	Romanian
1.	Alerter	External	- to alert the recipients' attention to the ensuing speech act	Title/role Surname First name Nickname Endearment term Offensive term Pronoun Attention getter	<i>professor, secretary of state, doctor</i>	<i>doctor, secretaria de estado, profesor</i>	<i>Domnule doctor, domnule secretar de stat, doamna profesor</i>
					<i>Johnson</i>	<i>Perez</i>	<i>Popescu</i>
					<i>Peter</i>	<i>Francisco</i>	<i>Ioan</i>
					<i>Pete</i>	<i>Pepe</i>	<i>Nică</i>
					<i>darling</i>	<i>cariño</i>	<i>dragă</i>
					<i>stupid cow</i>	<i>imbécil</i>	<i>prostule</i>
					<i>you</i>	<i>tú</i>	<i>tu</i>
					<i>hey, listen, excuse me</i>	<i>(muy) bien, bueno</i>	<i>Vă rog, da, bun</i>
2.	Speech Act Perspective	Internal	- a speech act can be realised from the viewpoint of the speaker, the addressee or both	Speaker-orientation The occurrence of the 1 st person singular pronoun <i>I</i>	<i>Do you think I could....?</i>	<i>¿Cree que yo podría?</i>	<i>Credeți că eu as putea?</i>

¹³⁹ The theoretical information comprised in this Appendix belongs to House and Kádár's study (2021). The examples, however, are a compilation of the exemplifications they provided in English and what I considered to be a pragmatically salient corresponding translation in Spanish and Romanian; when appropriate, examples were also taken from the trilingual corpus.

			or any explicit mentioning of the agents can be deliberately avoided	Addressee-orientation The occurrence of the 2 nd person singular pronoun <i>you</i>	<i>Could you?</i>	<i>¿Podrías tú....?</i>	<i>Ai putea tu?</i>
				Speaker and addressee-orientation The occurrence of the 1 st person plural pronoun <i>we</i>	<i>Could we....?</i>	<i>¿Podríamos nosotros....?</i>	<i>Am putea noi....?</i>
				Impersonal	<i>people, they, one</i>	<i>la gente, ellos, aquel</i>	<i>oamenii, ei, acela</i>
3.	Level Of Directness	Internal	- the degree to which the speaker's illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution	Mood derivable (for Request and Invite)	<i>No social gathering!</i> (infinite forms) <i>Next slide, please!</i> (elliptical sentence structure) <i>Get the vaccine!</i> (‘raw’ imperatives)	<i>Sin juntarse!</i> <i>Siguiente diapositiva, por favor!</i> <i>Pongase la vacuna!</i>	Fără reuniuni! Următorul slide, vă rog! Faceți vaccin!
				Explicit performative	<i>I am asking you to</i>	<i>Te pido que.....</i>	<i>Te rog să.....</i>
				Hedged performative	-Modal verbs: <i>I must ask you to</i>	<i>Necesito pedirte que.....</i>	<i>Trebuie să te rog să.....</i>
				Locution derivable	<i>You will have to</i>	<i>Tendrás que.....</i>	<i>Va trebui să.....</i>

				Want statement	<i>I would like to</i>	<i>Me gustaría que.....</i>	<i>Mi-ar plăcea să....</i>
				Routine formulae	<i>How about.....? Why don't you.....?</i>	<i>¿Qué dices si..? ¿Por qué no?</i>	<i>Ce-ai zice să.....? De ce nu</i> ?
				Preparatory -ability, willingness or possibility, according to the conventions of the given language	<i>Can I.....?</i>	<i>¿Podría.....?</i>	<i>Aș putea să....?</i>
				Strong hint (while intending to borrow some notes)	<i>I wasn't at the conference yesterday.</i>	<i>No estuve en la conferencia de ayer.</i>	<i>Nu am fost ieri la conferință.</i>
				Mild hint (while intending to get a lift home)	<i>I didn't expect the meeting to end this late</i>	<i>No me esperaba que la reunión acabara tan tarde.</i>	<i>Nu mă așteptam ca reuniunea să se termine atât de târziu.</i>
4.	Syntactic Downgraders	Internal	- depending on the different languages, consider only those syntactic devices that are	Interrogative	<i>Can I borrow your notes?</i>	<i>¿Podrías prestarme tus notas?</i>	<i>Mi-ai putea împrumuta notițele tale?</i>
				Negation of a Preparatory Condition	<i>Shouldn't you be getting a jab?</i>	<i>¿No deberías de ponerte la vacuna?</i>	<i>Nu ar trebui să te vaccinezi?</i>

		optional in a given context and then determine whether that syntactic choice has a mitigating feature	Subjunctive	<i>Might be better if you were to leave now.</i>	<i>Sería mejor que te vayas ya.</i>	<i>Ar fi mai bine să pleci acum.</i>
			Conditional	<i>I would suggest you leave now (in English the indicative form is also possible, so the use of the conditional here is a choice)</i>	<i>Sugeriría que te vayas ya! (even if the conditional form of sugerir is possible and grammatically correct, the familiar context in which an utterance like this is used imposes the use of a different verb altogether, preceded by the personal pronoun as I.Oⁱ: <i>Te diría que te vayas ya!</i>)</i>	<i>Ti-ăs sugera să pleci acum! (in Romanian the conditional form could be appropriate to the context, but similar to the Spanish example, the personal pronoun as I.O. is necessary.</i>
			Aspect / modos verbales/ moduri verbale	<i>I am wondering if you could help me (again, a simple form is also possible and the use of the continuous shows an intention to mitigate)</i>	<i>Estaba preguntándome si me pudieras ayudar (the equivalent variant in Spanish for the continuous aspect is substituted in Romanian by</i>	<i>Mă întrebam dacă m-ai putea ajuta. (the continuous aspect is substituted in Romanian by</i>

					is <i>estar</i> más <i>gerundio</i>)	another verb mood)
			Tense -past tenses whenever they are used with present-time reference without changing the semantic meaning of the utterance	<i>I wanted to ask you to.....</i>	<i>Querría preguntarte si....</i>	<i>Voi am să te intreb dacă.....</i>
			Conditional Clause	<i>I was wondering if you could present your paper a week earlier</i>	<i>Estaba pensando en sí podrías presentar el proyecto una semana antes.</i>	<i>Mă intrebam dacă ai putea să prezinți proiectul o săptămână mai devreme</i>
5.	Lexical And Phrasal Downgraders	Internal	-to soften the impositive force of the speech act by modifying the Head Act internally through specific choices of lexical and phrasal structures	Understater -adverbial modifiers	<i>a teeny bit, little, slightly, considerably</i>	<i>un poco, a penas, bastante</i>
				Hedge -adverbials used to avoid a possible threat	<i>somehow, somewhat, otherwise</i>	<i>de alguna manera, por lo tanto,</i>
				Subjectiviser -the speaker uses elements to convey his personal subjective opinion	<i>I am afraid...</i>	<i>Temo que...</i>
						<i>Mă tem că.....</i>

				Downtoner -sentential or propositional modifiers	<i>possibly, perhaps, maybe</i>	<i>posiblemente, quizás, tal vez,</i>	<i>probabil, poate, posibil</i>
				Cajoler -conventionalised speech items aimed at restoring harmony between interlocutors	<i>as you know, as you can see you know, I mean, I think that's why..... So look, my views on the inquiry are...</i>	<i>Como sepas, como puedes ver, sabes, quiero decir, pienso que por eso.... Así que mira, yo pienso que.....</i>	<i>După cum știi, după cum poți vedea, ce vreau să spun este că.... Uite, eu cred că.....</i>
				Appealer -a speech item used in order to appeal to the addressee's benevolent understanding	<i>...., will you?, ok?</i>	<i>....., si?, a que si?, verdad?</i>	<i>...., da? ..., aşa-i?</i>
6.	Lexical Upgraders	Internal	-to increase the pragmatic force of the speech act	Intensifier	<i>terribly, carefully, desperately,</i>	<i>Atentamente, con cuidado, desesperadamente</i>	<i>În mod desperat, teribil, cu atenție</i>
				Commitment indicator	<i>surely, certainly, absolutely, undoubtedly</i>	<i>Sí que es cierto que, sin duda</i>	<i>Cu siguranță, fără îndoială, sigur că da</i>
				Expletives	<i>bloody, damn</i>	<i>mierda, al carajo</i>	<i>pe naiba, fir-ar</i>
				Time intensifier	<i>(right) now, immediately, soon</i>	<i>Ahora mismo, de inmediato, pronto</i>	<i>Chiar acum, imediat, în curând</i>

			Lexical uptoner	<i>mess, disaster, catastrophe, pandemic</i>	<i>Desastre, catástrofe,</i>	<i>Dezastru, catastrofă</i>
			Determination marker	<i>That's that This is it It is what it is</i>	<i>Es lo que hay, eso es</i>	<i>Asta e Mai mult un se poate</i>
			Autographic/suprasegmental emphasis -marked pausing, stress and intonation to achieve heightened or dramatic effects	<i>So it's really important that we continue the research.</i>	<i>Es realmente importante que continuemos con la investigación.</i>	<i>Este aşadar extrem de important să continuăm cercetarea.</i>
			Emphatic addition -set lexical phrases used to provide additional emphasis	<i>Let's go and do it! Go and see for yourself!</i>	<i>¡Vamos a por ello! ¡Vete y ve por ti mismo!</i>	<i>Hai/ Haide! Du-te și vezi singur!</i>
			Emotional expressions/exclamations	<i>Oh, my! Dear Lord! My God!</i>	<i>¡Ay, por favor! ¡Dios mío! ¡Ay señor!</i>	<i>Dumnezeule! Dumnezeule mare!</i>
			Pejorative determiner	<i>Solve this problem here!</i>	<i>¡Arregla esto ya!</i>	<i>Rezolv-o acum!</i>
7.	Supportive Moves	External (can become Head Act)	-used in order to mitigate or aggravate the	Preparator	<i>I'd like to ask you something. May I ask a question?</i>	<i>¡Querría pedirte algo! ¿Puedo preguntarte algo?</i>

<p>(the first 8 types are mitigating, whereas the last 3 are aggravating)</p>	<p>force of the speech act</p>	<p>Getting a pre-commitment</p>	<p><i>Could you do me a favour? Could you help/ assist me?</i></p>	<p><i>¿Podrías hacerme un favor? ¿Me podrías ayudar?</i></p>	<p><i>Poți să îmi faci o favoare? Mă poți ajuta?</i></p>
		<p>Grounder -reasons, explanations or justifications</p>	<p><i>I lost my phone. Could you lend me yours to make a call?</i></p>	<p><i>Acabo de perder mi teléfono. Me podrías dejar el tuyo para hacer una llamada</i></p>	<p><i>Mi-am pierdut telefonul. Mi-l-ai putea împrumuta pe al tău ca să dau un telefon?</i></p>
		<p>Expander -more information than needed is provided often in order to hide insecurities or embarrassment</p>	<p><i>The current vaccines have not yet been studied against this variant, and we will need to wait for further clinical and trial data to understand the vaccine effectiveness against this variant</i></p>	<p><i>Las vacunas de ahora todavía no se han estudiado para este variante, así que tendremos que esperar para que más ensayos clínicos nos puedan enseñar una eficacia en contra de este variante</i></p>	<p><i>Vaccinurile acestea un au fost încă studiate și pentru această variantă, aşa că va trebui să așteptăm datele clinice ca să putem înțelege eficacitatea pe care o are împotriva acestei variante.</i></p>
		<p>Disarmer</p>	<p><i>You'll understand, given the history, why it's so important that we have</i></p>	<p><i>Verás, dado el tema, porque es tan importante tener reglas que</i></p>	<p><i>Stii, având in vedere ce s-a întâmplat, de ce este atât de</i></p>

				<i>protective rules for those who live in care homes.</i>	<i>protejan a los de las residencias.</i>	<i>important să avem reguli care să îi protejeze pe cei din aziluri.</i>
		Imposition minimiser		<i>Would you give me a lift, but only if you are going my way?</i>	<i>¿Te importaría llevarme, pero solo si te pilla de camino?</i>	<i>Ai putea să mă duci și pe mine, dar numai dacă îți este în drum?</i>
		Query precondition -to throw doubt on a previous arrangement		<i>Are you sure that....?</i>	<i>Estás seguro de que....?</i>	<i>Esti sigur că....?</i>
		Manipulation/ appeasement -the speaker tries to manipulate by distracting the addressee's attention from the speech act		<i>But we also know that there are risks and health consequences of not having visitors or not allowing care home residents to visit out without, as you say, having then to isolate within the home when they come back. So I hope some good news for you soon. Is there</i>	<i>Desde el día de hoy ya estamos de nuevo con un periodo de 14 días completo en los que la incidencia completa sin un exceso de días festivos y por lo tanto ahora ya podemos valorar correctamente lo que ha podido estar pasando y</i>	<i>După cum știi, noi am discutat și despre utilizarea certificatului electronic COVID, despre adoptarea unui act normativ care să permită utilizarea acestui certificat electronic și am legat utilizarea lui de o creștere</i>

				<i>anything you'd like to add?</i>	<i>da la sensación que sí que podríamos estar en una situación en la que se ha estabilizado ya .</i>	<i>de trei săptămâni consecutive a incidenței sau a numărului de cazuri multiplicat cu 1,5. Aceste măsuri sunt luate pentru că avem o situație în care incidența la nivel național este apropiată de 1.</i>
			Insult	<i>stupid, worthless, good for nothing piece of scum</i>	<i>estúpido, vago, gilipollas</i>	<i>Idiot, prost, irresponsabil, nesimțit</i>
			Threat	<i>Respect the lockdown or there will be more deaths to come!</i>	<i>¡Quedaros en casa o habrá más muertos!</i>	<i>Dacă un respectați lockdown-ul, vor mai muri oameni!</i>
			Moralising -general moral maxims	<i>Every vaccination brings us hope</i>	<i>Cada vacunación nos trae esperanza</i>	<i>Fiecare vaccin făcut ne aduce speranță.</i>

8.	Mode	Internal	<p>-determines whether an utterance is meant as it is said, in a neutral meaning or whether it has an additional ironic, sarcastic or humoristic meaning</p>	Neutral	<i>Excuse me, could you....?</i>	<i>¿Perdona, podría....?</i>	<i>Scuze, ai putea să.....?</i>
				Marked	<i>Excuse me, could I humbly beg for.....?</i>	<i>¿Perdona, podría por favor pedirle que....?</i>	<i>Mă scuzați, oare aș putea să vă rog să.....?</i>

ⁱ I.O. – Indirect Object

Appendix no. 2. – Know/ Think in sketchengine.eu (my own compilation)

know as verb 140×			
pronominal objects of "know"			
you	2	7.8	virus . I know you 've just announced
it	1	7.4	I knew it
pronominal subjects of "know"			
we	46	10.0	we know
I	31	10.5	I know that
you	18	10.2	as you know , we
they	1	6.5	they knew

think as verb 185×			
pronominal objects of "think"			
it	21	11.7	I think it
you	5	9.0	that if you think you need it
one	2	10.7	I think one of the things
pronominal subjects of "think"			
I	140	12.5	I think
you	17	9.9	do you think
we	11	7.9	we think that the

Image no. 1. – *sí que* (my own compilation)

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 69547
MEDSPAN.docx

Total Hits: 167 **Page Size:** 100 hits **1 to 100 of 167 hits**

	File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
46	MEDS...	pero no quiere decir que estén en un incremento importante.	Sí que	es cierto que el hecho de que la
47	MEDS...	a ser estables con lo que observamos en días previos.	Sí que	es cierto que los fallecidos en los últimos
48	MEDS...	estamos todos preocupados. Me imagino que la gente estará preocupada.	Sí que	es cierto que la incidencia, este incremento que
49	MEDS...	a priori se infectan más o menos como los adultos.	Sí que	es cierto que por el tipo de relaciones
50	MEDS...	lo harán, de acuerdo todos dentro del marco del Consejo. 17:06	Sí que	es cierto que hay comunidades que, por su
51	MEDS...	viene bien porque reducimos cierto nivel de transmisión entre comunidades. 18:24	Sí que	es cierto que esa movilidad de ese día 23
52	MEDS...	de preparación que se está teniendo nos permitirá hacerlo correctamente. 20:57	Sí que	es cierto que podría haber algún problema, esperemos
53	MEDS...	digo que no creo que esté descartada del todo, pero	sí que	es verdad que si no se acaba de
54	MEDS...	sólido que nos va a permitir reaccionar a tiempo, pero	sí que	es verdad que va a ser un esfuerzo
55	MEDS...	diferentes a los que ya teníamos en nuestro territorio. Pero	sí que	es verdad que en Portugal en estos últimos
56	MEDS...	fase clara de ascenso. 04:09 Entiendo, centrándonos ya en España, España	sí que	es verdad que tiene una evolución, seguimos ascendiendo
57	MEDS...	en varias comunidades autónomas. No están todavía completamente corregidos pero	sí que	es verdad que poco a poco tenemos esta
58	MEDS...	o menos y puede cambiar la comunidad más afectada, pero	sí que	es verdad que hay dos o tres comunidades
59	MEDS...	ahora mismo lo que más nos preocupa. Pero dicho eso	sí que	es verdad que la evolución puede indicar que
60	MEDS...	sociales comunes, entre ellos el uso de la mascarilla. Pero	sí que	es verdad que en colectivos concretos, en situaciones
61	MEDS...	que la población es cada vez más consciente de ello.	Sí que	es verdad que de aquí al día 9 de
62	MEDS...	hecho un esfuerzo magnífico para tratar de controlar la epidemia.	Sí que	es verdad que estos brotes nos pasaron a
63	MEDS...	diciendo, pero son situaciones puntuales que se van a corregir.	Sí que	es verdad que a medida que se detectan
64	MEDS...	por lo tanto nos tiene que hacer tener mucho cuidado.	Sí que	es verdad que tenemos fuentes de información alternativas,
65	MEDS...	sea donde sea, casi todos serán ya por variante británica.	Sí que	es verdad que el que se haya producido
66	MEDS...	podía ser de otra manera, creemos que en estos momentos	Sí que	es muy importante hacer medidas muy precisas. A
67	MEDS...	ocho o nueve días desde el puente de San José,	Sí que	es muy probable que este incremento que estamos
68	MEDS...	previos no hayan tenido ningún cuidado con no infectarse. Eso	Sí que	es más peligroso y eso sí que recomendaría
69	MEDS...	capitalario cuando tienen una vida social como cualquier otra persona.	Sí que	es más fácil identificar aquellos que manifiestan únicamente

Search Query Words Case Regex **Results Set** All hits **Context Size** 10 token(s)

sí que

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100%

Image no. 2 – *want* (my own compilation)

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 68479
MEDENG.docx

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Total Hits: 110 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 100 of 110 hits

	File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
9	MEDE...	to take longer than the decrease in admissions. I do	want	to say one other thing about what's happening
10	MEDE...	help for this rollout to happen so smoothly, and I	want	to say thanks to you all. Matt Hancock: (01:17) Getting
11	MEDE...	The sacrifice, though, has been for a purpose. And I	want	to thank every single one of you. We knew
12	MEDE...	our colleagues in the NHS and local authorities." And I	want	to thank every single person who's helped us
13	MEDE...	the UK science showing in this awful pandemic. I particularly	want	to thank the National Institute for Health Research, the
14	MEDE...	alongside this appalling workload that they've had. And I	want	to thank the patients, tens of thousands of them
15	MEDE...	thanks also to our ambulance workers. And in particular, I	want	to thank ambulance service staff who stepped up over
16	MEDE...	science allows. I will leave no stone unturned and I	want	to thank everybody involved for their dedication. The second
17	MEDE...	absolute backbone of everything that we've done. And I	want	to thank NHS frontline clinicians who somehow have fitted
18	MEDE...	of them working every weekend, every evening often, I particularly	want	to thank the 80,000 people who've stepped forward to
19	MEDE...	played their part in rising to this challenge and I	want	to thank them all. Matt Hancock: (05:43) In addition to
20	MEDE...	as you know, working in the Isle of Wight. We	want	to make sure that this whole system lands well
21	MEDE...	you are at higher risk of having caught coronavirus, we	want	to make sure that rolls out in exactly the
22	MEDE...	testing regime because we are vigilant at the border and	want	to make sure that we don't see a
23	MEDE...	the jab, only everybody age 30 and over. But we do	want	to make sure that there is a route to
24	MEDE...	you mentioned, but also the manufacturing of these products. We	want	to make it an impossible choice for a pharmaceutical
25	MEDE...	t go online can still apply through their employer. I	want	to make it as easy as possible for people
26	MEDE...	to hold down. John, I don't know if you	want	to add anything. John Newton: (51:38) Well, Secretary, you put
27	MEDE...	that inquiry might cover, I don't know whether you	want	to add anything. My view is it should cover
28	MEDE...	Professor Newton to answer the second. The only thing I	want	to add is that the point about supporting those
29	MEDE...	normal Christmas. Boris Johnson: (23:06) But Chris, is there anything you	want	to add on, on that? Thanks very much Charlotte.
30	MEDE...	are essential. Matt Hancock: (30:47) Thanks very much, Jonathan. I just	want	to add one thing to that, which is that
31	MEDE...	know that the release of the measure is something you	want	to do absolutely when you're sure you've
32	MEDE...	And we want to prevent that spreading because what we	want	to do is to prevent viruses with mutations being

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s) Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100% < >

Time taken (creating KWIC results): 0.1196 se

Image no. 3 – *must* (my own compilation)

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus

Name: temp

Files: 1

Tokens: 68479

MEDENG.docx

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Total Hits: 19 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 19 of 19 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 MEDE...	us like dashboard warnings in a passenger jet, and we	must	act now. And yet the only parts of the
2 MEDE...	us like dashboard warnings in a passenger jet, and we	must	act now. So we're giving local authorities across
3 MEDE...	remain the same for every community. And the reason we	must	all do that is this is to protect the
4 MEDE...	symptoms. And as we approach a bank holiday weekend, we	must	all renew our efforts over the course of this
5 MEDE...	in the meantime, it reinforces the critical message that we	must	be cautious. For all of us, our response must
6 MEDE...	we must be cautious. For all of us, our response	must	be extra careful. Stay at home, maintain social distancing.
7 MEDE...	if people have symptoms they must self-isolate and we	must	find their contacts so that they can isolate, and
8 MEDE...	protect the whole community, all communities. And all of us	must	find ways around this, of whatever faith. But I
9 MEDE...	between households and private places, including gardens. Pubs and bars	must	close unless they can operate solely as a restaurant
10 MEDE...	And that's why it's important that this job	must	get finished. Next slide, please. And in terms of
11 MEDE...	move. We haven't met them yet and therefore we	must	keep the social distancing measures in place. Patrick? Sir
12 MEDE...	not be forgotten and their stories will live on. We	must	maintain our resolve and follow the social distancing rules
13 MEDE...	on ventilators. Sadly, today 592 more deaths were reported and we	must	never forget the real impact of this disease. The
14 MEDE...	anybody even thinking about stretching the rules in those areas	must	not. Matt Hancock: (22:24) Now, of course, further measures are
15 MEDE...	is helping us to bring back our freedom and we	must	protect this progress. The biggest risk to that progress
16 MEDE...	out our roadmap, we always expected cases to rise. We	must	remain vigilant. The aim of course, is to break
17 MEDE...	to isolate the virus. So if people have symptoms they	must	self-isolate and we must find their contacts so
18 MEDE...	see it's headed in the right direction and we	must	stay firm with the measures we're taking. Matt
19 MEDE...	slip. So let's all of us do what we	must	to get this virus under control. We're now

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)

must

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100% < >

Time taken (creating KWIC results): 0.0802 sec

Image no. 4 – *hay que* (my own compilation)

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus
Name: temp
Files: 1
Tokens: 69547
MEDSPAN.docx

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Total Hits: 67 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 67 of 67 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 MEDS...	zona. Entiendo, lleven o no un pasaporte. Por lo tanto,	hay que	tener cuidado con la interpretación de lo que
2 MEDS...	las afirmaciones. Una cosa que sí que creo es que	hay que	tener cuidado de distinguir lo que son deseos,
3 MEDS...	del cribado, pueden no estar recomendados. 20:06 Se pueden usar, ahora	hay que	tener mucho cuidado al interpretar el resultado. En
4 MEDS...	evolución que estamos teniendo ahora mismo nos indicaría eso, pero	hay que	tener mucho cuidado con estas interpretaciones. Y en
5 MEDS...	anterior y en las UCI es igual. Pero es que	hay que	tener en cuenta que los servicios sanitarios han
6 MEDS...	nos viene esa variante puede ser de otro país. Entonces	hay que	tener un poquito de cuidado y la Organización
7 MEDS...	todo esto sigue siendo igual de importante. En esta fecha	hay que	hacer un llamamiento al consumo responsable, por supuesto,
8 MEDS...	mucho más intensa, con lo cual incluso en esos territorios	hay que	hacer un trabajo muy importante de concienciación a
9 MEDS...	el gen S no se detectaba por la PCR. Ahora	hay que	hacer la secuenciación y valorar cuántas de esas 14
10 MEDS...	entorno de nuestros lugares de residencia, y ahí es donde	hay que	hacer y continuar haciendo un esfuerzo especial. Y
11 MEDS...	la cadena de transmisión. Yo creo que ahí es donde	hay que	seguir centrando los esfuerzos, sobre todo cuando las
12 MEDS...	no se puede alejarse aún más de los demás. Todos	hay que	seguir haciéndolo. Eso sí, eso no es incompatible
13 MEDS...	el bar como si no pasara nada. manteniendo las distancias,	hay que	seguir manteniendo las mascarillas siempre que se pueda,
14 MEDS...	opciones alternativas y habiendo opciones alternativas hay que valorarlas todas.	hay que	valorar cuál es el conjunto de medidas que
15 MEDS...	situación. Como he dicho antes hay que valorar los datos,	hay que	valorar las coberturas de vacunación, pero es muy
16 MEDS...	de julio estaremos en la situación. Como he dicho antes	hay que	valorar los datos, hay que valorar las coberturas
17 MEDS...	la iniciativa territorial del sistema nacional de salud y si	hay que	articular nuevas medidas, lo vamos a valorar y
18 MEDS...	quedá y aplicar un confinamiento domiciliario. Usted dice que si	hay que	articular nuevas medidas lo valorarán. ¿Se plantea modificar
19 MEDS...	que se detectan y luego si se hospitalizan o no,	hay que	ir actualizando la ficha de cada uno de
20 MEDS...	mi punto de vista son más problemas de fondo que	hay que	ir solucionando y que se han ido mejorando
21 MEDS...	la actual, si la gente es consciente de que todavía	hay que	mantener durante un tiempo las medidas de control
22 MEDS...	partidos de fútbol y el 8M dijo que si bien	hay que	mantener la higiene en ambos casos hay cosas
23 MEDS...	los últimos siete días, con la fecha de hoy, pero	hay que	ser muy prudentes, sabemos que los fines de
24 MEDS	al principio van a llegar bien, pero por cierto	hay que	ser un poco prudentes. 20:29. Aunque algunas medidas se

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s) Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100% < >

Time taken (creating word list results): 0.0446 sec

Image no. 5 – *pot* (my own compilation)

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus

Name: temp

Files: 1

Tokens: 67766

MEDRO.docx

KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Total Hits: 143 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 100 of 143 hits

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 MEDR...	Omicron, deoarece foarte de curând am mai primit noi informații,	pot	să vă spun că mai sunt în acest moment,
2 MEDR...	de vaccinare adresată copiilor cu vârstă cuprinsă între 5 și 11 ani,	pot	să vă spun că platforma de programare a fost
3 MEDR...	decembrie, se vor reactiva și fluxurile de AstraZeneca. De asemenea,	pot	să vă spun că, în ceea ce privește acoperirea
4 MEDR...	sesizat, a fost constatat și s-au aplicat sanctiuni. Dar	pot	să vă spun în felul următor: centrul de vaccinare
5 MEDR...	s-au livrat, poate ca s-au livrat ieri, nu	pot	să vă spun asta. Deci aici, de la IGSU
6 MEDR...	în timpul acestor petreceri, în timpul unor... Raed Arafat: Nu	pot	să vă spun că avem astfel de cifre. Știm
7 MEDR...	este de circa 250.000 de persoane. Din acest punct de vedere,	pot	să vă spun că ieri erau vaccinate, la ora 20:00,
8 MEDR...	noi la cunoștință de situația de la spitalul din Găești;	pot	să vă spun următoarele lucruri: faptul că au fost
9 MEDR...	că este o discuție la Parlament și chiar nu mai	pot	să vă spun acum care ar fi impactul dacă
10 MEDR...	a 50.000 de lei de persoană. Raed Arafat: Nu știu, nu	pot	să vă spun acum. Reporter: Eventual, sanctiuni în ceea
11 MEDR...	ministrul Bode. Știu că s-a depus ceva, dar nu	pot	să vă spun când sau care sunt detaliile. Reporter:
12 MEDR...	Călin Alexandru, de la nivelul Departamentului pentru Situații de Urgență.	Pot	să vă spun încă de la început, din punct
13 MEDR...	țin neapărat de managementul activităților dintr-un centru de vaccinare.	Pot	să vă spun că m-am uitat și eu
14 MEDR...	Acste evaluări există și sunt centralizate în Registrul Electronic Național.	Pot	să vă spun că numărul este foarte mic, tocmai
15 MEDR...	evoluție, sunt principalele categorii recunoscute de Organizația Mondială a Sănătății.	Pot	să vă spun că am transmis această adresă către
16 MEDR...	noi cunoștință de această decizie sau discuție din Marea Britanie.	Pot	să vă spun că, la acest moment, decizia este
17 MEDR...	octombrie? Coincid cu aceste 15.000 de decese. Adriana Pistol: Nu, nu	pot	să vă răspund la această întrebare, pentru că trebuie
18 MEDR...	întrebare, pentru că trebuie să verificăm care sunt cifrele. Nu	pot	să vă răspund la această întrebare, pentru că trebuie
19 MEDR...	definitivă. De ce durează atât de mult? Adriana Pistol: Nu	pot	să vă răspund de ce durează atât de mult;
20 MEDR...	Comitetelor județene pentru Situații de Urgență. Reporter: .../ Ludovic Orban: Nu	pot	să vă dau un răspuns legat de fiecare caz
21 MEDR...	și căți dintre ei? Valeriu Gheorghită: Căți dintre ei nu	pot	să vă dau un răspuns ferm. Vorbind de datele
22 MEDR...	le răspunde robotul și atât. Valeriu Gheorghită: Eu ceea ce	pot	să vă spun, și avem colegii de la Serviciul
23 MEDR...	la unul dintre componentele prevăzute în acest tip de vaccin.	Pot	să vă spun, din discuțiile pe care le-am
24 MEDR...	a dozelor de vaccin și nu de capacitatea de vaccinare.	Pot	că vă acuza, că în momentul de fată, pentru

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s)

pot

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Start Adv Search

Progress 100%

Time taken (creating KWIC results): 0.0756 sec

Image no. 6 – *we* (my own compilation)

AntConc

File Edit Settings Help

Target Corpus KWIC Plot File View Cluster N-Gram Collocate Word Keyword Wordcloud

Name: temp Total Hits: 1541 Page Size 100 hits 1 to 100 of 1541 hits

Files: 1 Tokens: 68479 MEDENG.docx

File	Left Context	Hit	Right Context
1 MEDE...	on, and we, if we do not change course, then	we'	re going to find ourselves in a very difficult
2 MEDE...	by this will be left to fend for themselves, and	we'	re going to expand our unprecedented economic support to
3 MEDE...	not only going to have to intensify the measures, but	we'	re going to have to enforce generally the social
4 MEDE...	Test and Trace, all that basic stuff is essential if	we'	re going to come out of this and allow
5 MEDE...	get the number of new cases down and the more	we'	re going to be able to release social distancing
6 MEDE...	careful to stop passing it on because that's how	we'	re going to get this under control. Thank you
7 MEDE...	To make sure that this is very successful going forward,	we'	re going to ensure that we attract onshore here
8 MEDE...	is concerned, which is in a few weeks time, and	we'	re going to keep monitoring the data. But as
9 MEDE...	showed earlier demonstrate. That is no longer the case. So	we'	re going to have to live with Coronavirus, much
10 MEDE...	the army, and it was really working very well. So	we'	re going to have 48 of these pop up facilities
11 MEDE...	while. When it gets back to the winter, I think	we'	re going to have a different tool and that
12 MEDE...	lockdown restrictions, there's been a lot of hints that	we'	re going to see the two meter social distancing
13 MEDE...	see the two meter social distancing rule drop to one,	we'	re going to have hospitality reopening at the start
14 MEDE...	is only just below one. How concerned are you that	we'	re going to follow Germany down that route and
15 MEDE...	s what the leveling up agenda is all about. So	we'	re going to redouble our work on leveling up
16 MEDE...	that they isolate, of course, which is the way that	we'	re going to get this under control. Thank you
17 MEDE...	you very much. Matt Hancock: (32:17) Thanks very much indeed, Chris.	We'	re going to first go to questions from the
18 MEDE...	and sequencing every single positive case. Working with local authorities,	we'	re going door to door to test people in
19 MEDE...	contact and get a test when the opportunity arises and	we'	re going door to ensure that people have the
20 MEDE...	Well, first Robert, it's absolutely correct to say that	we'	re working with local authorities across the country, but
21 MEDE...	which is obviously particularly important. Therefore, it's something that	we'	re working with them and others on, and it
22 MEDE...	supplies that we have contracted from Pfizer and AstraZeneca, and	we'	re working with our European partners to ensure those
23 MEDE...	going to work and I make no apologies for that.	We'	re working with many top names to help us
24 MEDE...	progress is the risk posed by a new variant. So	we'	re working on our plans for booster shots too

Search Query Words Case Regex Results Set All hits Context Size 10 token(s) Start Adv Search

Sort Options Sort to right Sort 1 1R Sort 2 2R Sort 3 3R Order by freq

Progress 100% Time taken (creating KWIC results): 0.1731 sec