Dorota Góreczna / Magdalena Wawrzyniak-Śliwska (eds.)

Communication, Strategy and Perception in the Changing World

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Danuta Stanulewicz

Communication, strategy, perception – and language studies – in the changing world: An introduction

The Editors have asked me to write an introduction to this volume, and I really feel honoured to have the opportunity to present the chapters by my Colleagues affiliated with the Faculty of Languages at the University of Gdańsk, specializing in linguistics, translation studies and foreign language teaching.

Nowadays we witness not only a rapid technological development and its consequences in all spheres of our lives, but also unexpected twists and turns. The changing world poses a wealth of challenges to the inhabitants of our planet, including researchers attempting to provide interpretations of what happens. The volume *Communication, Strategy and Perception in the Changing World: Studies in Language, Translation and Education* offers its prospective readers eight studies whose aim is to grasp the recent human experiences from a linguistic perspective. The studies also present research and offer practical solutions in the fields of translation and glottodidactics.

The first four chapters deal with different linguistic aspects of our reality, ranging from consolatory speech acts during the COVID-19 pandemic via shaping opinions on the refugee crisis and constructing a city brand to multisensory processing of information.

In the first chapter, entitled "Demiurgic performativity? Comforting speech acts in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: The case of Spanish-speaking communities", Marek Baran analyzes consolatory speech acts, employed to comfort people suffering from the disease (cf. Kondzioła-Pich 2015). The speech acts have been identified in the comments posted on the platform YouTube. Expressions such as *sanarás* 'you will heal', *tú te vas a recuperar pronto* 'you will recover soon', *lo conseguirás* 'you will make it' and *venceremos* 'we will win' represent – according to the author – a special type of performativity which coincides with "ritualized positive thinking", typical of Spanish-speaking communities. This study makes use of ethnolinguistic theories developed, among others, by Anna

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Chudzik (2002). Moreover, it demonstrates that the features of the speech acts of "demiurgic performativity" go beyond the features of classical speech acts as proposed by J. L. Austin (1962) and John Searle (1969) (cf. Komorowska 2008).

Anna Socka, the author of the second chapter, entitled "War refugees from Ukraine and irregular immigrants via Belarus: Stancetaking in two Polish newspapers with strong ideological leanings", concentrates on opinion articles published in two Polish newspapers which represent opposing ideological perspectives: the leftist *Krytyka Polityczna* and the rightist *Gazeta Polska Codziennie*. The theoretical framework of this corpus study is provided, among others, by Ronald Langacker (2013). Socka takes into consideration issues such as cognitive factivity, cognitive attitudes, ignorative attitudes, epistemic modals, indirect inferential evidentiality and information reformulation. The corpus tools allow her to confirm the hypothesis that the ideological bias of the newspaper influences the use of epistemic and effective stance expressions, yet this impact happens not to be as great as expected. It is worth stressing that only a corpus study may allow us to arrive at such conclusions (cf. Stefanowich 2020).

The third chapter, entitled "Web corpus as a linguistic mirror of city brand perception: A case of Gdańsk", written by Paula Gorszczyńska, also offers a corpus study. Gorszczyńska explores the image of Gdańsk in a large collection of texts published on the Internet. City branding has recently become a popular interdisciplinary topic – see the studies e.g. by Anna Bączkowska and Yelena Khokhlacheva (2019), and Meimei Yang and Tingting Zhu (2022). From Gorszczyńska's study of collocations with the name of the city, Gdańsk emerges as a place which is both old and modern, remembering the past events and, at the same time, being future-oriented. Moreover, the study clearly demonstrates that Gdańsk is a city that has strong regional bonds, but also happens to be seriously interested in international partnerships all over Europe.

The fourth chapter, authored by Karolina Janczukowicz, entitled "Sound perception in the classroom: An analysis of a 'flame' experiment as a case for polysensory processing of information", addresses the issue of the perception of sounds. Janczukowicz explores the perception of linguistic and non-linguistic sounds, conducting – in the classroom environment (previous experiments were carried out in laboratory conditions) – an experiment inspired by Edward Sapir (1925) who suggested that the same sound may be differently interpreted depending on the context. Janczukowicz recalls experiments on lateralized brain activity which indicate that several separate perceptual linguistic phenomena have a strong correlation with the left hemisphere during experiments in the laboratory, but they appear to require the cooperation of both hemispheres in actual speech (Kurcz 2011).

The four remaining chapters present studies in translation and glottodidactics which not only contribute to the theoretical body of knowledge in these fields,

but also provide practical solutions to be implemented by translators and language teachers. The chapters cater for both facets of these fields, offering scholarly interpretations and valuable suggestions to practitioners.

Maciej Kur, the author of the fifth chapter, entitled "Impact of the increase in CpL and CpS parameters on the readability of audiovisual texts: A pilot study", designed an experiment measuring the influence of the increase in Characters per Second (CpS) and Characters per Line (CpL) parameters on the readability of subtitled films. To conduct the experiment, he used a webcam-based eye tracking platform (see e.g. Lavaur / Bairstow 2011). The results of the pilot study suggest that the increase in Characters per Second and Characters per Line may lower the readability of subtitled films, because viewers notice fewer details in the visual-non-verbal channel.

The sixth chapter, entitled "Songs of Skyrim: Semiotic transformation of poetry in game localization", concentrates on localizing poetry in games. As an example, its author, Ewa B. Nawrocka, conducts an analysis of the poem *Tale of the Tongues* from the series called *Songs of Skyrim* of the game *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* and its Polish version. The author recalls ideas of numerous scholars, including Charles Sanders Peirce (1994 [1931–1935]) and Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956). She examines translation shifts on the microstructural (linguistic and literary) and macrostructural (fictional and universal) levels, arriving at the conclusion that game localizers enjoy so much freedom and creativity that we should use a special term, *transcreation*, to refer to their activity.

In the seventh chapter, entitled "Motivation beyond proficiency: What drives high-achieving EFL students?", Dorota Góreczna explores the motivation of secondary school students who have already achieved a high level of English language proficiency. Taking into consideration the classical works on motivation by Dörnyei (2001), Gardner (1985) and other scholars, she designed a survey study examining different aspects of motivation. The study results emphasize the importance of addressing the evolving motivational needs. The author also offers teachers practical solutions whose aim is to maintain a high level of engagement of advanced learners.

In the eighth chapter, "Reflection in teacher education: To what extent do eTwinning projects develop evaluation skills in foreign languages student-teachers?", Magdalena Wawrzyniak-Śliwska explores the opinions of students – teachers-to-be – about the use of eTwinning (online educational projects – see e.g. Huertas-Abril / Muszyńska 2022, Lembicz / Muszyńska / Wawrzyniak-Śliwska 2023, Tokarz 2018) not only in education as such, but also as part of the curriculum of their studies. The chapter stresses the benefits of eTwinning projects for learners, teachers and student-teachers.

Broadly speaking, the authors of the chapters point to the strategies used in online communication, press discourse and sound perception. They prove that corpora and their tools allow us to verify hypotheses concerning certain phenomena (cf. Brezina 2018, Stefanowitsch 2020), such as the influence of ideology on the coverage of the immigration crisis and the role of collocations in shaping the image of a city. Studying the linguistic aspects of current events and situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the migration of refugees from Ukraine, and trying to shed new light on old problems require new approaches and new tools. However, the authors still find the works of Sapir (1925), Peirce (1931–1935), Whorf (1956), Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Gardner (1985) inspiring. Also, the authors prove that traditional research techniques, such as surveys, are useful in investigating opinions on various topics, including eTwinning and motivation.

The authors demonstrate how to investigate recent phenomena from the linguistic perspective, employing new tools and – simultaneously – how not to ignore the traditional approaches to language. I cherish the hope that this volume will encourage its readers to follow the scholarly paths it proposes and provide them not only with theoretical considerations, but also with practical solutions which they can use in their work.

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Marek Baran

Demiurgic performativity? Comforting speech acts in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: The case of Spanish-speaking communities

Abstract
This study explores a distinctive category of speech acts employed during the COVID-19 pandemic by members of Spanish-speaking communities on YouTube, particularly those addressed to individuals publicly sharing their illness experiences. These expressions — such as *saldrás caminando* ('you will walk away') or *sanarás* ('you will heal') — are analysed as instances of what the author terms 'demiurgic performativity': utterances with a strong intention to effect change in the emotional or psychological reality of both the speaker and the addressee. Drawing on pragmatics, discourse analysis, and ethnolinguistic perspectives on magical speech acts, the chapter argues that these comforting formulations, while not meeting canonical criteria for performative acts, nevertheless carry a significant performative force. This force manifests through their directive-exhortative structure, emotional engagement, and shared belief in the transformative power of language. The study contextualises these acts within the broader framework of digital discourse on YouTube, highlighting how such platforms foster participatory, emotionally charged interactions. It concludes that the examined utterances serve not only as expressions of solidarity and hope but also as mechanisms of psychotherapeutic and symbolic resilience. They simultaneously aim to alter external conditions and restore inner balance, resonating with traditional functions of magical speech in folk cultures — reframed here in a virtual, pandemic-shaped communicative environment.

Keywords: comforting speech acts, COVID-19, Spanish-speaking communities, digital discourse, performativity

1. Introduction

In the present study we will approach a specific type of speech acts which, during the COVID-19 pandemic, were addressed to the sick people who shared their experience through the YouTube platform in Spanish. The analysed formulas include the following ones: *saldrás caminando* ('you will get through this'), *sana-*

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rás ('you will heal'), *tú te vas a recuperar pronto* ('you will recover soon'), *lo conseguirás* ('you will make it'), *venceremos* ('we will win'), *saldremos de esta* ('we will get out of this') ... In our opinion, these formulas correspond to a special type of performativity, coinciding, moreover, with the socio-pragmatic convention of "ritualised positive thinking", which would be typical of Spanish-speaking communities. In our study, we will try to verify to what extent the identified speech acts demonstrate typological and functional features of verbal behaviours of a magical nature, as conceived by the ethnolinguistic theories developed, among others, by Engelking (1991a) and Chudzik (2002). We will also try to show that, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the consolatory speech acts were based on a specific "demiurgic performativity" (although the analysed speech acts do not meet all the formal criteria of "canonical" performative acts [Austin 1962, Searle 1969], their "performative intentionality" seems to be strongly marked, becoming a catalyst for change in the analysed discursive context).

2. YouTube and interactional connectivity

We start from the assumption that the interactional behaviours and positionings that we will study can be viewed from the perspective of *online* participation patterns that are undoubtedly closely linked to the discursive semiotics of digital platforms, as well as to a whole range of emotional, cognitive, social and cultural inferences that, in this particular case, are also marked by the experience of the pandemic. The research material gathered for the needs of this study comes from the YouTube platform,[1] considered to be one of the main platforms for the publication of videos and user comments on different topics, including what it was like to live in times of the pandemic or to be confronted with COVID-19. In this part of the study, we therefore consider it appropriate to reflect briefly on the communication model that is emerging on the web, including through YouTube.

Nowadays, it seems almost trivial to note that the web has become a meeting point for those who want to exchange experiences of different kinds. YouTube is one of the most popular and widely used platforms that makes it possible to create a space of convergence between audiovisual narratives and digital text.[2]

1 YouTube was created on 14 February 2005; in November 2006 it was acquired by *Google*. The site, on the one hand, allows the search and viewing of videos together with certain interactive functionalities (rating by *liking/disliking* videos, following users, including comments, etc.) and, on the other hand, makes it possible to create user profiles (the so-called channels), through which the videos produced by the users themselves can be stored and disseminated.

2 It is the second most frequently used *social media* platform in the world (1.9 billion users in 2019, 2 billion in 2020, 2.29 billion in 2021 – data from *WeAre Social* and provided by Veysel Ertemel and Ammoura 2021, p. 871).

This space of convergence contributes to the actualization of a double dynamic: on the one hand, from the inside, users tell their stories through the videos uploaded on the platform, and on the other hand, from the outside, viewers focus on different types of stories, with the option of reacting through *the likes* or comments they leave. In this sense, YouTube is presented as "a fundamental tool for online participation and communication in an asynchronous way, where users, through a conscious or unconscious language, express their feelings of appreciation [...]" (Chamorro Maldonado 2018, p. 66) [own translation].

We are convinced that the modes of participation created through YouTube can amount to a "strong dialogical interaction" (Chamorro Maldonado 2018, p. 66), although such *dialogism* undoubtedly presents a different nature from real face-to-face interactions. Pragmatic-interactional approaches (and, among them, conversational analysis) hold that the notion of communicative interaction applies primarily to situations in which the addressee can influence or modify the sender's behaviour in an unpredictable, almost "abrupt" way, while the latter is still constructing his or her discourse. In this sense, we think that the so-called principle of immediate feedback, or, as it is called in interactional studies, the phenomenon of reflexivity[3] (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005, p. 17) applies basically to prototypical interaction situations whose features are not always reproduced or are reproduced in a particular way in the case of YouTube-like digital platforms. The latter should therefore not be underestimated as participatory spaces for exchange. Nor should we forget that new technologies, including social networks, play an essential role that García González (2013, p. 80) calls modes of connectivity, in agreement with several postulates of the so-called *participatory culture.*[4] The notion of connectivity refers to a specific conceptualisation of new technologies that are not only presented as providers of new technical artefacts, but constitute an essential element in the paradigmatic change of interactive culture

3 Obviously, in a different sense from the one actualised in the sciences in which *reflexivity* refers to the relationship that a given element maintains with itself. *Interactional reflexivity* always means a relationship between two (or more) interlocutors who influence each other in the course of the exchanges they engage in (Baran 2019, p. 59).

4 *Participatory culture* is understood as "culture constructed by the participants involved, who do not merely receive the messages, but also create and process them" (Stunża 2017, p. 92, quoted by Baranowski 2019, p. 9) [own translation]. Undoubtedly, such a culture of participation is closely linked to the way *ICTs* (*Information and Communication Technologies*) revolutionise and democratise forms of communication between groups, organisations and individuals. In a digital context, participatory culture can refer to the way people create and share content online, engage in online discussions, contribute to the creation of software or participate in projects based on the knowledge and experiences of the community. The main characteristics of participatory culture include: democratisation of access to technological tools that enable the creation and sharing of content, shared creation (and not just reception and observation), bottom-up activities, collaborative learning (so-called participatory education), dialogue and cooperation.

in which brevity of content together with immediacy respond to the need for stimuli and the desire for exchange. We can therefore speak of a permanent form of relationships (also interpersonal relationships) that are forged through "digital discourse". Information mediators (including YouTube) offer spaces which, in a way, put an end to unidirectional communicative processes. Users resort to certain social networks not only (or not so much) to give or receive news, but, fundamentally, to make contact with others.[5] In this sense, YouTube and other networks act as mediators between active protagonists in the communicative act (Chamorro Maldonado 2018, p. 68). The protagonism to which we refer is, of course, linked to a whole series of modifications or even substantial changes in the perception and management of elements or variables that, in sociolinguistic or pragmalinguistic terms, determine the communicative act. We mean the typical sociolinguistic variables (sex, age, socio-economic status, etc.) or the forms of identification to which network users resort. In a virtual or media space, the personal, the corporeal or the spatio-temporal take on a different dimension, making us think of the so-called "emergent identity", a notion proper to linguistic anthropology developed, among others, by Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 2005).[6] New modes of identification or interactive participation do not, however, diminish the potential of an "interactive action" in which and through which users exchange dialogues, forming a collectivity (which, in some respects, may resemble what is known in sociolinguistics as a *community of practice*).[7] The dynamics thus established are translated into discursive expressions where language denotes an "action of intentions" (a term used by Chamorro Maldonado 2018, p. 69). In this way, it can certainly be stated that YouTube contributes to the formation of a community essentially revolving around the reception of a video and the creation of messages that are directed towards the contents of the video or in response to the comment of a user who expresses themselves about the video (Chamorro Maldonado 2018, p. 69). From this perspective, YouTube is fundamentally presented as a participatory website in which the users have the option to watch, but also to give their opinion and interact (in the case that

5 Pelttari (2020, p. 46) conceptualises YouTube in terms of a "digital microcosm in which especially representatives of generations Y and Z spend their time and interact with each other, not to mention the widespread use of other social networks" [own translation].

6 The researchers think that identity (= "social positioning of self and others") is always emergent (= not pre-existing before language contact) and corresponds to four other typological principles, namely the principle of positionality, indexicality, relationality and partiality.

7 We refer, obviously, to the concept forged in the theory of Eckert and McConell-Ginet (1992). *Community of practice* is basically perceived as a group of individuals who come together around a commitment into a common enterprise. The practices they refer to in the name of the concept emerge in the course of that engagement, constituting an essential part of the identities that are constructed in the interaction.

interests us in particular in this study, this potential for interaction can also be translated into the expression of solidarity).

3. The COVID-19 pandemic: Temporal context, psychosocial impact

At the end of December 2019, some 40 cases of viral pneumonia were detected in the city of Wuhan (Hubei province, China), mostly among people who were vendors and distributors at the Huanan Seafood market. The World Health Organisation (WHO) characterised the aetiological agent as a new coronavirus and called it *novel corona virus 2019* (2019-nCoV), or also as SARS-CoV-2 (*severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2*) (Sandín / Valiente / García-Escalera / Chorot 2020, p. 2). On 11 January 2020, the first death from this new disease occurred in China, which soon spread not only throughout the Asian continent, but all over the world, so on 30 January 2020, the WHO declared the disease "a public health emergency of international concern". On 11 February, also by WHO decision, the new coronavirus disease was named COVID-19 (*coronavirus disease 2019*). As the disease spread across the globe at an unprecedented speed, the WHO declared it a global pandemic on 11 March 2020 (at that time, COVID-19 already affected more than 100 countries, with more than 100,000 infected cases). The first cases in Europe occurred at the end of January 2020, first in France, then in Germany and Italy. On 31 January 2020, the first cases were reported in Spain, Sweden, the UK and Russia. In Spain, the first COVID-19 fatality was announced on 4 March in Valencia. A few days later, on 14 March (almost 6,000 cases and 200 deaths had been reported on that day), the Spanish government decreed a state of alarm throughout the national territory, in an attempt to curb the spread of the new coronavirus cases and reduce the health emergency that was occurring at that time (Sandín / Valiente / García-Escalera / Chorot 2020, p. 2). The government also imposed lockdown that lasted in Spain until 21 June 2020. The state of alarm together with the confinement amounted to a situation of global quarantine throughout the country's territory, which implied conditions of social distancing, isolation in one's own home, significant limitations on citizens' freedom of movement, suspension of normal commercial and educational activity; only activities related to basic necessities (such as those related to the purchase of food and medicines), and attendance at health or work centres were authorised. As of 30 June 2023, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Spain was around 13.9 million, with almost

122,000 people killed by the coronavirus (data provided by datosmacro.expansion.com [4 January 2023]).[8]

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the first case of COVID-19 was identified on 26 February 2020 in the city of São Paulo. Nearly 65 million cases and more than 1.6 million deaths were reported in the region up to 31 March 2022. Several waves of COVID-19 occurred between 2020 and early 2022, with the largest wave of infections occurring in late 2021 and early 2022 in response to the spread of the Omicron variant. The time when the number of deaths reached its highest level, being the first stage of the pandemic, was 12 April 2021, with 5,547 deaths, a period in which the percentage of the population vaccinated with a full schedule against COVID-19 in Latin America reached only 2.7% of the region's population (Cid / Marinho 2022, p. 13–14). Comparing the evolution of the pandemic in Latin America and the Caribbean with the other regions of the world confirmed the particular vulnerability of the region to COVID-19, which was reflected in a permanent over-representation of COVID-19 infections and deaths in most of the time between March 2020 and March 2022 (although the population of Latin America and the Caribbean corresponds to 8.4% of the total world population [UN estimates 2019], the region maintained an average of 27% of total global COVID-19 deaths in the period from 1 March 2020 to 9 March 2022 [by mid-2020 that proportion even reached 57% of the global total]) (Cid / Marinho 2022, p. 15–16).

The real scale of the COVID-19 pandemic is still the subject of studies in several disciplines, but there is no doubt that its consequences were (and still are) being felt in different areas. Apart from serious difficulties in the health sector itself, the pandemic generated several problems in the social sphere, including job insecurity, unemployment, economic insecurity, isolation of the elderly population in diverse socio-economic contexts, over-information and fake news. Due to social isolation, suffered not only by the elderly, psychological distress increased, sometimes resulting in mental health problems. So far preliminary studies suggest that the psychosocial consequences of the pandemic consisted mainly of stress, psychological distress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, among other manifestations of distress (Leiva et al. 2020, p. 8), which often led to an increased risk of developing coronary heart disease and stroke. Feelings of apprehension, fear or nervousness accompanied the anticipation of a threat, thus increasing the emotional state of uncertainty. Therefore, several scholars, including Cedeño et al. (2020), considered the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine as crisis-generating situations with components of high levels of uncertainty, anxiety and stress.

8 In order to interpret these data, it is important to know that Spain currently has more than 48 million inhabitants.

4. Purpose and objective of the research: Methodological guidelines

The context of the pandemic not only generated different concerns but also led to the exchange of experiences on how to deal with the pandemic reality. Testimonies of COVID-19 patients, among others, appeared on the YouTube platform, where they talked about the contagion, the symptoms and the treatment they received. On numerous occasions, the testimonies of the patients were accompanied by comments from the user-viewers who not only gave their opinions on the reality of the pandemic, but also frequently addressed words of encouragement and comfort to the patient-authors of the testimonies. In the case of Spanish speakers, among different strategies for expressing encouragement and consolation, we have detected a peculiar type of acts in the form of apparent assertions whose temporal projection points towards the future; the future which, according to the belief expressed by the commentators, will be better. In the following part, we will try to find out what exactly the discursive-interactional nature of such acts consists in, asking, likewise, about their possible performative scope and their alleged link with so-called magical acts.

In compiling the analytical material for this study, we have employed the following methodological technique:

1. Firstly, using the YouTube platform, we proceeded to the viewing of 10 testimonies of Covid-19 patients. Specifically, the following videos (in the order in which they were viewed):
   (1) "El crudo relato de un paciente tras ser diagnosticado con #Coronavirus. Testimonio de Rafael de Venezuela" [31 March 2020]; 316 517 views; 764 comments [13 April 2021]; provided by: La Tercera LT VIDEO; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6PWA2all_0
   (2) "Covid: paciente brinda su testimonio. Testimonio de Sergio de Perú" [27 March 2020]; 139 543 views; 345 comments [13 March 2021]; provided by: TVPerú Noticias; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7oQxPHfM5pc
   (3) "La experiencia de un enfermo de coronavirus. Testimonio de un joven español" [13 March 2020]; 2 728 967 views; 3214 comments [13 March 2021]; provided by El Mundo; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJ49HkgFylc
   (4) "Lo más difícil al enfermar de covid-19: el testimonio de un enfermero que sobrevivió el virus. José Santaigo de Puerto Rico que se contagió de covid-19 en un hospital de Nueva Jersey" [7 May 2020]; 25 909 views; 32 comments [13 March 2021]; provided by CNN en Español; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YXS4pcN19RE

(5) "Cómo es vivir con coronavirus? Entrevista a uno de los primeros casos en España, Juanfran Barberá" [8 March 2020]; 2 054 540 views; 2100 comments [13 March 2021], facilitated by Tiempo de Juego COPE; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y72K37LNep4

(6) "Mexicano sobreviviente de Covid-19 da su testimonio. Noticias con Francisco Zea" [10 April 2020]; 223 352 views; 923 comments [13 March 2021]; provided by Imagen Televisión Mex Noticias; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vn63hlcOTQE

(7) "Es la historia de Pala Cano, dio positivo al Covid-19 el 15 de marzo" [24 March 2020]; 1 443 143 views; 3599 comments [13 March 2021]; provided by Luis Campos; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaLrlfAZrOA

(8) "Viviendo con coronavirus, el día a día de una enfermera infectada. Testimonio de Paula de Barcelona" [23 March 2020]; 76 552 views; 108 comments [13 March 2021]; provided by Euronews in Spanish; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QZjxHRf_YI

(9) "Yo era incrédulo": antioqueño que superó el coronavirus cuenta su experiencia con la enfermedad. Andrés Felipe Arroyo Pérez, de 29 años, relató que se contagió de COVID-19 luego de tomar unas vacaciones en Curazao y a los 5 días empezó a tener los síntomas" [13 April 2020]; 141 712 views; 400 comments [13 March 2021]; provided by Noticias Caracol (Colombia); https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6mH1l7PCx0

(10) "Mi experiencia con Covid 19/ Corona virus. Testimonio de Cicharles" [17 May 2020]; 4608 views; 63 comments [13 March 2021]; provided by Cicharles himself [http://www.instagram.com/Circharles_]; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlqEeFmXCLkhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QlqEeFmXCLk

2. We consciously chose the video testimonies (some of them also in the form of an interview) which, from a thematic and structural point of view, present a certain degree of similarity. In particular, we refer to what could be called the narrative plot. We therefore exclude those videos which, due to their high degree of drama, could provoke very strong reactions, especially from an emotional point of view, on the part of the commentators. All the videos, except for the first one (recorded in a hospital), take place in a relatively neutral setting (in almost all cases, it is the home environment in which people recounting their experience find themselves). The testimonies we have selected for our study are constructed in a very similar way, as follows: (1) references to the appearance and form of the first symptoms of COVID-19; (2) details of the precautions taken previously; (3) type of treatment received at the medical centre or hospital; (4) appeal to take the coronavirus seriously.

3. In the selection of the videos we did not use the relevance filter[9] offered by the YouTube network itself; the criterion that guided us was fundamentally related to the origin of the videos, so we decided to choose videos from different parts of the Spanish-speaking world (Spain + Latin America [Venezuela, Peru, Mexico, Costa Rica, etc.]) whose level of visualisations together with the comments expressed varied quite considerably.
4. Once the search on YouTube had been completed, the collection and selection of comments whose communicative purpose could be considered as encouraging or expressing solidarity was carried out. For the purposes of this chapter, we have focused in particular on a category of acts that we have considered to have a *performative purpose*.
5. In our approach we take into account the methodological caveat formulated by Mancera and Pano (2014, p. 313), researchers who raise the awareness of the need to reflect on the complex communicative context that characterises interactions in social networks. In this sense, we are aware that the comments that constitute our corpus are embedded in a certain semiotic environment, which can sometimes be quite complex given the combination of elements such as videos, photographs, tags or links.

5. Projections into the future, *demiurgic acts*

Undoubtedly, we are dealing with a very striking subgroup of apparent assertions whose temporal projection points towards the future; the future which, according to the belief expressed by the commentators, will be better (the sick will be cured, the pandemic will stop wreaking havoc, etc.). As in the case of the good wishes often addressed to the COVID-19 patients, who testified on YouTube, there is an implicit superstition underlying all these formulations, which gives words a magical power. We believe, moreover, that a projection that we would describe as performative is expressed through statements such as *Pronto saldrás de esto* ('Soon you will get out of this'), *Vas a salir caminando* ('You are going to walk out of this'). Those who verbalise their solidarity and affection must be aware of the gravity of the situation, however, they draw a hopeful perspective that not only serves as a consolation, but that, in itself, aims to change reality. In our analysis, we will therefore adopt a twofold stance: on the one hand, we will

9 By default, the website orders the results of a search based on the relevance parameter. This criterion takes into account the adequacy of the video's metadata with the items that guide the search. The positioning of the video depends on the number of views, the interaction recorded by the video (*likes* and comments, the time spent by the user watching the content, the age and activity of the channel, as well as the number of subscribers (Sánchez-Olmos / Hidalgo-Marí 2016, p. 121).

try to reflect on the extent to which the projections into the future that form part of our sample could be conceived in terms of magical or demiurgic speech acts, and, on the other hand, we will try to characterise the character and scope of the performative aspect of such acts.[10]

The exemplifications that fit into the category of projections into the future are the following ones:[11]

- *Saldrás caminando, seguro* ('You will get through this, for sure')
- *Tú vas a salir caminando, piensa en positivo, tú vas a poder, vamos, tú vas a sanar* ('You will do just fine, think positive, you can do it, come on, you are going to heal')
- *Vas a salir CAMINANDO!!! Lo declaro en el nombre de Jesucristo* ('You're going to get through this! I declare it in the name of Jesus Christ')
- *Sales caminando con la ayuda de nuestro señor* ('You're gonna get through this with the help of our Lord')
- *Dios mediante saldrás caminando ten fe* 🙏 ('God willing you'll get through this have faith 🙏')
- *Pronto saldrás de este mal solo ten fe* ('Soon you will get out of this evil just have faith')
- *Muy pronto saldrás de ahí, oraremos por ti, vamos, solo hay que tener fe* ('Very soon you will get out of there, we will pray for you, come on, you just need to have faith')
- *Saldrás bien!!! Es duro verte pero debes tener claro que saldrás adelante!!!* ('You will do just fine !!! It's hard to see you but you must have faith that you'll get through this!')
- *Saldrás de esta seguro!!! Visualízate cada día saliendo de la clínica andando como has dicho!!! Tu mente es muy poderosa, utilízala!!!* ('You will get out of this for sure! Visualize yourself every day leaving the clinic walking like you said!!! Your mind is very powerful, use it!!!')
- *Se que saldrás de esto resiste* ('I know you will get out of this resist')
- *En España se ha curado mucha gente! Saldrá caminando de ahí! Mucho ánimo!* ('In Spain many people have been cured! You will get out of there! Lots of encouragement!')
- *Es duro verte pero debes tener claro que saldrás adelante!!!* ('It's hard to see you but you must be sure that you will get through this!!!')
- *Te vas a recuperar* ('You will recover')
- *Ánimo ya te vas a recuperar!!!* ('Cheer up, you will recover!!!')
- *Te vas a recuperar y esta va a quedar como una experiencia de vida* ('You are going to recover and this is going to be a life experience')

10 We also analyze this category of acts in Baran (2025, p. 81–89).

11 All examples are provided in their original spelling and grammar.

- *Dios fue el que eligió esto y ay que superarlo Dios nos protege y nos pone retos en el camino porque sabe que lo vamos a recuperar* ('God was the one who chose this and we have to overcome it. God protects us and puts challenges in our way because he knows that we are going to recover')
- *Gracias a Dios soy ya negativo y lo serás tú* ('Thank God I'm already negative and you will be negative too')
- *todo esto va a pasar así sea. Amen* ('all of this is going to pass so be it. Amen')
- *Lo conseguirás, confío que con la ayuda de Dios y la ciencia lo lograrás* ('You will make it, I trust that with the help of God and science you will make it')
- *Valiente guerrera el mundo todavía te necesita pa adelante que lo lograrás* ('Brave warrior the world still needs you, go ahead you'll make it')
- *Te vas a curar en el Bendito y Poderoso Nombre de Jesús. No estás sola, solo es una prueba de fuego q estas pasando y la vencerás* ('You will be healed in the Blessed and Mighty Name of Jesus. You are not alone; it's just a trial by fire that you are going through and you will overcome it')
- *tú vas a sanar* ('You are going to heal')
- *Animo linda pronto sanarás primero dios !* ('Courage pretty soon you will be healed first God!')
- *Seguro que te curas eres fuerte* ('I'm sure you will heal, you are strong')
- *Te mando mucho ánimo y fuerza porque ya mismo estarás bien* ('I send you lots of encouragement and strength because you will be well right away.')
- *Ánimo, eres sano, seguro lo superas* 👍🙏 ('Courage, you are healthy, I'm sure you'll get over it. 👍🙏')
- *Mucha fuerza y mucho ánimo!! Lo conseguirás* 🙏 *confío que con la ayuda de Dios y la ciencia lo lograrás* ❤️💪 ('Lots of strength and courage! 🙏 You will make it, I trust that with the help of God and science you will make it ❤️💪')
- *No estás sola, solo es una prueba de fuego q estas pasando y la vencerás* ('You are not alone, it is just a trial by fire that you are going through and you will overcome it')
- *Ganaremos esta batalla!* ('We will win this battle!')
- *a ese maldito virus le vamos a combatir* ('We are going to fight that damn virus')
- *Venceremos!!!* ('We will win!')

Among the collected examples, those with two verbs of movement clearly stand out: *salir* and *caminar* which, in the vast majority of cases, are used in the simple future or in the periphrastic variant *ir + a + infinitive*: *salir caminando, saldrás caminando, vas a salir caminando, pronto saldrás de este mal, muy pronto saldrás de ahí, saldrás bien, saldrás de esta seguro, saldrás de esto.* Also outstanding are the sentences announcing the recovery (or, even, a quick recovery) of the sick: *Ánimo ya te vas a recuperar! te vas a recuperar, Seguro te voy a ver en otro vídeo –*

recuperado, *Gracias a Dios soy ya negativo y lo serás tú, te vas curar, seguro que te curas, pronto sanarás*. The illness conceptualised as a challenge to be overcome leads, in the same way, to the verbal updating of future projections expressed in terms of an achievement: *you will succeed, you will do it*. There are also metaphorical conceptualisations of a warlike nature: *we will win this battle!, we are going to fight that damned virus, we will win! it is just a trial by fire that you are going through and you will overcome it* etc. From a stylistic-rhetorical point of view, the clearly prophetic or demiurgic tone of such formulations is striking.

In the light of the discursive data we have just reviewed, we could advance the hypothesis that this type of utterances actually function as indirect directive/exhortative acts through which their authors incite their interlocutors to take an optimistic and hopeful attitude towards the experience of the pandemic they are going through. We believe, however, that behind the formulation of future projections of these characteristics, there are also other intentions, both implicit and explicit, motivated by the ancestral belief in the power of the word. Perhaps we are faced with the mechanism of creating *gestalts* of verbal actions of a magical nature by means of which it is intended to dominate – in some way – a dangerous, unpredictable, painful reality.

Undoubtedly, the conviction that words can change the course of events is part of the universal collective imagination. Regardless of the time and geographical location, there was and still is faith in the power of action of words, hence the conscious and premeditated aspiration to make use of this quality. In traditional folk culture, rituals of a magical nature had four basic purposes: to avoid unwanted situations (so-called avoidance rituals), to prevent dangerous situations (prevention rituals), to create desired states of affairs (creation rituals) and to break or undo spells (disenchantment rituals) (Engelking 1991a, p. 157–165; 1991b, p. 75–85). Obviously, the future projections that are of interest to us in this particular case and whose semantic load includes the ideas of healing and overcoming cannot be conceived in terms of magic rituals as they are conceived in ethnolinguistics: the verbal performances of folk magic rituals are fundamentally inscribed in the framework of a "mythical folk ideology", which implies a strongly marked dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, a particular temporality, specific social relations between senders and recipients, as well as three levels of relationship between them: the physical level (peculiar props and actions), the verbal level (often marked by specific formulas) and the mental level (specific intentions / intentionalities) (Chudzik 2002, p. 32–33). Evidently, the reality of YouTube together with the context of the coronavirus pandemic is far from forming a magical ritual scenario; however, it cannot be ruled out that acts such as *saldrás caminando, saldrás de esta seguro, tú te vas a sanar, lo lograrás, lo conseguirás, venceremos!!!* fully comply with certain features of magical speech

acts. Reviewing the typological proposal of "magical speech acts" elaborated by Chudzik (2002, p. 57–58), we refer in particular to:

(1) the psychotherapeutic and performative functions of the acts we have gathered in the present work (we will develop both concepts further below);
(2) the structure of a directive-causative nature, which corresponds to an exhortative intentionality;
(3) the conviction that the act of uttering certain formulas constitutes a form of action and that can change the reality;
(4) the semantic-formal variability of speech acts conceived as "magical".

It is worth emphasising the fact that, as in the case of so-called magical speech acts, the interpretation of the utterances collected in the present study depends to a large extent on the emotional states experienced by the speakers. Let us not forget that, in this case, those states are strongly influenced by the situation of generalised worry and unrest, which is generated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1987, p. 215) points out that the most powerful stimuli are those whose nature is unknown and unexplained. In this sense, the motivation that comes from the state of anxiety is one of the most important factors influencing human actions. Assuming the weight of emotional motivation of human actions (which, therefore, do not appear only as a result of knowledge and rational deduction), magical behaviours (including those of a verbal nature) appear mainly as negatively motivated, i.e. by a difficult and frustrating situation (such was certainly the time of the coronavirus pandemic). If behaviours of a "rational" nature (i.e. based on the laws of physics and conventional interpersonal communication) are not effective or if their effectiveness does not sufficiently relieve the emotional tension, magical performances/behaviours occur. As Chudzik (2002, p. 42) points out, magical behaviour of a verbal nature essentially involves the use of appropriate verbal formulas[12] which should lead to a change in the state of affairs in accordance with the sender's intention. A given formula usually has a pictorial-symbolic character and uses the scheme of direct manipulation. Obviously, in general, perlocutionary effects cannot be guaranteed (as in the case of the utterances we are analysing: the interlocutors who encourage COVID-19 sufferers through the formulas such as *saldrás caminando* ('you will get through this'), *te sanarás* ('you will be healed'), *tú te vas a recuperar pronto* ('you will recover soon') can – in no way – assure them of recovery or good health). In this case, another element seems, however, more important: the result of the verbal

12 In the Spanish-speaking world, there is an abundance of different incantation formulas (= *conjuros*) which, being basically oral forms, stand out for their rhythmic structure and for being pronounced with a marked strength of voice. For more details on this issue, see Macuil García (2020), Pedrosa (2000) or Suárez López (2016).