POLITICAL DISCOURSE AS IDENTITY WORK FOR THE *REHEARSED SELF*. A SPEECH ACT APPROACH TO CHARACTERISATIONS IN LOCAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN SLOGANS

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Abstract: The political slogan, as "the most public and the most concentrated example of political language"[1], is a message conveyed by politicians through a "catch-phrase", i.e. a minimum number of words designed for a maximum effect, meant to persuade audiences into affiliation and ideally vote in their favour. As a type of political campaign discourse, the slogan is a major component of political communication, largely associated with public election campaigns, at all levels, from local to international. Slogans are designed for the traditional participation framework of political discourse, as a particularised form of preset, unilateral communication initiated by a speaker i.e. candidate, towards a receiver consisting from both the public i.e. electors, and political opponents i.e. counter-candidates to the same position. The use of slogans in election campaigns is a rhetorical practice of communicating ideas collectively through a variety of goal-oriented speech acts performed by politicians i.e. candidates, in the aim of obtaining the desired public position. One of the means for achieving the mentioned goal is identity work for the construction and configuration of the persona projected by the candidate, which, through minute preparation, amounts to a "rehearsed self", felicitously delivering an appropriate and effective image and message to the target audience. As primary data for analysis, the study uses political slogans presented on campaign posters in the Romanian local elections of June 2024. The aim of the study is to discover and reveal the elements slogans are comprised of and have in common, examining (the practice of) characterisation as speech acts, at a level of proposition and representation (reference and predication, specificity, as well as the nature of the implied relation to the audience), textual relations (cohesion and connotation in concision/condensation), and prosody (rhythm, rhyme, alliteration), as keys to decrypting the meaning beyond the message that the speaker wants the audience to remember, encouraging a blind-eye approach on the surrounding aspects of the issues in question. The uses of slogans as textual manifestations of political discourse in election campaigns are at least far-reaching. Based on a survey of the relevant field literature and acknowledging that political discourse is considered retrograde in the Romanian society[2]), the study invites reflection on the current status quo of political discourse in local settings, through a description and classification of the speech acts used in slogans as communication with the public, and can be regarded as an examination of contemporary language "at its most resourceful"[3].

Keywords: political discourse analysis, campaign slogans, local elections, speech acts, identity work

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[1] Geoffrey Hare, Studying political slogans as communication. *Francophonie*, 3, 1991, pp. 24-29.
[2] Liliana Ionescu Ruxăndoiu, The Historicity of Democracy. In Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu et al. (Eds.) *Parliamentary Discourses across Cultures: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, pp. 197-207; Daniela Rovența-Frumușani, *Analiza discursului: Ipoteze și ipostaze*, București, Tritonic, 2004.
[3] Geoffrey Hare, Studying political slogans as communication. *Francophonie*, 3, 1991, pp. 24-29.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is an exploratory study, aiming to describe the current status quo of local political discourse, revealing and interpreting some popular features in the textual genre of the slogan, through a presentation of several general tendencies identified in the language used by the candidates to positions of mayor in cities of Romania, including the capital Bucharest, in the campaign which took place ahead of the local election in June 2024.

Elections are unexceptionally much awaited and highly entertaining public events and political discourse is always in the attention of the audience. Nevertheless, despite this popularity, observations drawn by analysists of discourse in relatively recent studies are pointing towards an increasingly unsubstantial quality and duller nature of political discourse: "E foarte mult amatorism în campaniile astea […] din asta rezultă lucruri foarte plicticoase care nu atrag atenția nimănui", claims Șerban Alexandrescu, advertisement expert[4], characterising the local election campaign in June 2024. Unsurprisingly, an "increasing rhetorical poverty" of political discourse is a worldwide phenomenon, stated by linguists in recent studies[5], which is present and reflected in the mentioned local election, not as a characteristic, original feature of the mentioned event, but rather as a manifestation of "the complex whole"[6]. A look into its current forms is nevertheless worthwhile as political discourse is eloquent from a wide socio-cultural perspective.

The year 2024 in Romania was labelled by the press and commentators as a super-election year[7], as the population is invited to vote in four sets of public elections before the end of the year: local elections (9 June), European Parliament (9 June), presidential elections (24 November and 8 December), parliamentary elections (1 December).

The data for analysis consist of a selection of 160 slogans extracted from campaign posters of candidates to positions of mayor in various cities of Romania, accessed on the official websites of political, and official pages on social media and online political advertisements in press sources. There are currently approximately 3000 mayors in Romania and each of these positions is disputed by a number of candidates, thus this dataset reflects a reduced but representative sample. The data collection process was not based on any sampling techniques but applied random selection. The approach used in the analysis is pragma-semantic and critical discourse analysis (CDA), leaving syntactical aspects out of the discussion for the

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[4] "There's a lot of amateurism in these campaigns, which results in very boring things that don't attract anyone's attention" [translation mine] https://www.euronews.ro/articole/campania-electorala-epopeea-afiselor-ce-unelte-de-comunicare-folosesc-echipele-de

[5] Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *Le débat Le Pen / Macron du 3 mai 2017: Un débat « disruptif »?*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2019 [kindle edition].

[6] Edda Weigand, *Dialogue: The Mixed Game,* Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010.

[7] https://romania.europalibera.org/a/super-anul-electoral-2024-alegeri-in-65-de-state/33029122.html

moment, as a topic for another study. The findings and discussion present the main tendencies identified in the dataset, also pointing out towards several socio-cultural characteristics of the current Romanian society. The relevance of the findings applies within the limits of the analysed dataset.

2. PREMISES AND THEORETICAL LINES

Nowadays society exhibits a general tendency of evolution towards plainer, simpler, shorter structures and faster flow, in all areas of life. Concerning discourse and language analysis, this general tendency translates into a certified "increasing rhetorical poverty"[8] noticed at a level of public events, debates and campaign discourse in broad lines. Political discourse in Romania is considered *backward* compared to 'standards', as our country has experienced a saliently less evolved culture related to the democratic aspect of electing public leadership, public discourse. Thus political discourse presents itself as retrograde, as an example among many aspects of society in general. This remark is forwarded by Romanian researchers, i.e. Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu[9], Rovența-Frumușani[10], and is largely confirmed by this analysis. Regardless of the status quo, political discourse, as well as the political class, can be taken as a reflection of the current features of discourse and language, as a manifestation of "the complex whole"[11].

From a theoretical point of view, the study follows and applies several major theories in the field of sociolinguistics and political discourse. Starting from the basic concepts of face and social interaction discussed by Erving Goffman in his early works[12], via one of the most popular speech act theories[13], the study analyses data as political discourse in the terms of Teun A. van Dijk[14], also applying notions of CDA (representation, agency etc) as proposed by Theo van Leeuwen[15], all in the framework of "language as a complex whole", as developed by Edda Weigand[16].

2.1. Political communication

Ahead of elections and campaigns, the greatest challenge of candidates and their teams is always the message transmitted to the public. Deciding upon what words to

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[8] Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *Le débat Le Pen / Macron du 3 mai 2017: Un débat « disruptif »?*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2019 [kindle edition].

[9] Liliana Ionescu Ruxăndoiu, The Historicity of Democracy. In Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu et al. (Eds.) *Parliamentary Discourses across Cultures: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, pp. 197-207

[10] Daniela Rovența-Frumușani et al., It Takes Two to Tango: Gender in Romanian Media Organisations. In Ross, K. & Padovani, C. (Eds.) *Gender Equality and the Media*, Routledge, 2015, pp. 171-183.

[11] Edda Weigand, *Dialogue: The Mixed Game,* Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010.

[12] Erving Goffman, On Face-Work, *Psychiatry*, 18: 3, 1955, pp. 213-231; *Forms of Talk*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.

[13] John Searle, A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society*. Vol 5, No 1, pp. 1-23.

[14] Teun A. Van Dijk, *Discourse and Ideology*, London, Sage, 1998.

[15] Theo van Leeuwen, Discourse and Practice. New Tools for CDA, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.

[16] Edda Weigand, *Dialogue: The Mixed Game,* Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010.

use, what stance they should take, or how subtle they should be in sabotaging the opponents are no trivial aspects, given the stake of winning or losing the desired public position. In the communicative situation of local elections, these challenges of transmitting the right messages are served, among other textual genres, through the formulation of slogans.

A preliminary examination of the dataset consisting of randomly selected slogans presented on local election campaign posters, will can distinguish two major components of discourse, i.e. a positive component and a negative component. The positive component basically consists of a promotion of virtues and views of the candidate, positive self-evaluation and commitment to moral values, positive prospects, affiliative attitude and connivance with the public. The negative component of discourse basically presents attacks addressed to political opponents, negative evaluation, invalidation, negative prospects related to the opponent(s), as well as sabotaging, unreliability, disaffiliation.

2.2. Political discourse

Starting from several basic concepts proposed by Erving Goffman in *Forms of Talk*[17], examining the communicative situation of local public elections, in the specific interaction between candidates and the public, all members of a society are ratified participants[18].

The participation framework can be summarised as consisting of a speaker (politician, candidate) addressing a multiplex interlocutor/receiver, i.e. the public, as well as the political opponent(s).

The interaction performed through political discourse is significantly shaped by the political event within which it takes place, and generally consists of *recited speech* and *fresh talk*[19]. As a main aspect of political discourse, the interaction is characterised by polarisation, i.e. us vs. them, and can be largely summarised as positive self-representation and negative other-representation[20]. The talk evolves between a speaker, i.e. politician, who simultaneously address both other politicians, as opponents, and the public. The public unexceptionally remains the receiver or addressee of the communicative act, not engaged verbally in the talk but being a factor of validation and legitimation of the entire performance. In the Bakhtinian approach of dialogism[21], the public would be seen as a superaddressee, i.e. a superordinate participant in the communicative situation.

Political discourse also includes the public event in occurrence, as it is the nature of the event that shapes the talk, imposing standards of formality and

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[17] Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981.
[18] Idem.
[19] Idem.
[20] Teun A. Van Dijk, *Discourse and Ideology*, London, Sage, 1998, p. 25.
[21] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four essays*. Michael Holquist (ed.). Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

seriousness, as well as rules of turn-taking, timing etc, when the case, depending on the genre of discourse. Regardless of the genre, pragmatically discourse is always an expression of antagony between the speaker (holder of the floor) and all the others, through positive self-representation and negative other-representation, using a number of strategies for the representation of social actors and social actions (practcies), e.g. inclusion/exclusion, affiliation/disaffiliation, validation/invalidation etc (van Leeuwen, 2008).

From a pragma-semantic perspective, political discourse basically displays contrastive meanings, as a realisation of the antagonistic relationship between political opponents, complementing the above-mentioned characteristics of the positive-negative components.

Beyond its entertaining nature and eloquence about a current status quo at a socio-cultural level, political discourse functions and is shaped by a number of generally valid principles, among which the current analysis considers the above-mentioned (1) participation framework, (2) the forms of talk and (3) the pragmatic and semantic polarisation.

2.3. Face-work

To explain and delimit the second concept in the title, identity work and the rehearsed self, which are obviously related through consequentiality, I appealed to the notion of *face* and *face work*, proposed by Erving Goffman in his early essay *On face-work*[22], emphasizing on the social component of discourse, given the features mentioned previously.

Face is a social construct and a claim, made by a speaker, for positive social value in the eyes of others, aiming for public approval for good showing. The construction site, so to say, is the public event the discourse occurs within and is "located in the very flow of events"[23].

Face-work refers to the social uses which Goffman proposes for *face*, i.e. actions consistent with invariable aim of political discourse, as a goal-oriented type of discourse, i.e. obtaining the desired public position. One of the means for achieving the mentioned goal is identity work for the construction and configuration of the persona projected by the candidate, which, through minute preparation, amounts to a "rehearsed self", felicitously delivering an appropriate and effective image and message to the target audience. To sum up, identity work is done by politicians to create the rehearsed self and claim positive values through the publicly presented face and its multiple uses, i.e. face-work[24].

The uses of face, mentioned by Goffman[25] and largely identified in the present dataset, include the following: *to have face, to save one's face, to lose face,*

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[22] Erving Goffman, On Face-Work, *Psychiatry*, 18: 3, 1955, pp. 213-231.
[23] Idem, p. 214.
[24] Idem.
[25] Idem.

to be in face, to give face, to be in wrong face, to maintain face, to retain face, to be out of face, to gain face, to show a wrong face / no face / defacement. The complete definition of face, as presented by Goffman, is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self, delineated in terms of approved social attributes - albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself"[26].

3. METHODOLOGICAL POTENTIALS

To reflect how thoughts and perceptions are expressed in the evolving landscape of political discourse in local elections, I examine several pragma-semantic aspects, also utilizing critical discourse analysis (CDA), revealing some systematic language usages and investigating the interplay of linguistic and thematic choices in shaping narratives.

The data are analysed in terms of speech acts[27] as manifestations of "language as a complex whole"[28], through a pragma-semantic approach, examining the slogans' propositional content, i.e. reference and predication, as well as lexicalisation, i.e. theme and rheme, meaning relations. Additionally, through a CDA approach, the study proposes an examination of the representation of agency, i.e. social actors and actions[29], also including a variety of rhetorical aspects.

Considering that "every utterance that you perform is the case of performing an action"[30], the selected slogans have been categorised into classes of speech acts, according to the taxonomy proposed by Searle[31], i.e. COMMISSIVES (acts which commit a speaker to doing something in the future: promises, planning, vowing, betting etc), DIRECTIVES (acts in which the speaker tries to make the addressee perform an action: questions, requests, orders, advice, invitations, begging etc), EXPRESSIVES (acts in which speakers express feelings or emotional reactions: thanking, apologizing, welcoming, deploring etc), REPRESENTATIVES (express beliefs about the truth or falsity of a proposition: suggesting, boasting, concluding, swearing) and DECLARATIONS (acts which bring a change in the external situation, bringing into existence or causing the status quo: blessings, firing, baptizing, bidding, sentencing, excommunication). Additionally, to serve the current dataset, the category of REPRESENTATIVE-DECLARATIONS, "a popular hybrid formula"[32], has

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[26] Idem, p. 213.
[27] John Searle, A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society*. Vol 5, No 1, pp.1-23.
[28] Edda Weigand, *Dialogue: The Mixed Game,* Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010.
[29] Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New tools for CDA*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.
[30] John Searle, UC Berkeley - Philosophy of Language, lecture 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P8rBECMnNAk&ab_channel=SocioPhilosophy [27:50].
[31] John Searle, A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society*. Vol 5, No 1, pp. 1-23.
[32] Idem.

been included in the taxonomy, denoting speech acts which present a multi-layered evolution, from the level of a statement which can be interpreted as true or false towards a declaration which brings a change of the status quo.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

As briefly mentioned above, the data analysis is mainly based on a pragma-semantic approach and CDA, with a focus on (1) illocution and illocutionary force, (2) propositional content, i.e. reference and predication, (3) representation of agency, i.e. social actors and social actions (practices) and (4) rhetorical aspects.

Before going into the analysis, I will present the data through six sample sets categorising the selected local campaign slogans into classes of speech acts, listing the examples in Romanian and English versions (translation mine), with no reference to the political affiliation of the speaker i.e. candidate or place of candidacy.

a. REPRESENTATIVES:

Ne facem bine.	We're getting well / doing ourselves good.
Eu nu dorm.	I don't sleep.
Un oraș curat, ordonat, verde și frumos ca o floare.	A town as clean, tidy, green and beautiful as a flower.
Am crescut ca voi, nu ca ei.	I grew up like you, not like them.
Un om fericit poate să facă un oraș fericit.	A happy man can make a happy town.

b. DIRECTIVES:

Votează căluțul!	Vote for the horsey!
Alege Constanța proiectelor noastre	Choose Constanta of/for our projects
Să păstrăm ce avem.	Let's keep what we have got.
Hai să facem treabă!	Let's get to work!
Alege Aradul fericit!	Choose the happy Arad!
Înapoi la muncă!	Back to work!

c. COMMISSIVES:

Facem treabă!	We are doing (our) job!
Facem Suceava bine.	We do Suceava well.
Totul pentru Recaș	Everything for Recaș
Totul pentru tine, dulce Românie.	Everything for you, sweet Romania.
Facem lucrurile cu cap!	We do things head-on! (wisely)
Destul! Prioritatea vei fi tu.	Enough! The priority will be you.

d. EXPRESSIVES:

Hai Tulcea CURAJ	Go Tulcea COURAGE
Trăiască Târgu Mureș. Sus cu el!	Long live Târgu Mureș. Up (with it)!

În sfârșit, ai cu cine!	At last, you've got someone (to vote with)!
Micul Paris? Nu. Marele București!	Little Paris? No. Big Bucharest!
Iubesc Brașovul!	I love Brasov!
Ne votăm primarul.	We vote for our mayor.

e. DECLARATIONS:

O alegere inteligentă!	A smart choice!
Din 9 iunie s-a terminat cu lenea.	From June 9, no more laziness.
9 iunie, Ziua Schimbării!	June 9, Change Day!
Este momentul schimbării!	It's time for change!
Stop abuzurilor administrației locale	Stop local government abuses

f. REPRESENTATIVE-DECLARATIONS:

Ilie, la Primărie!	Ilie, (at the) City Hall!
Și TU ești patriot!	YOU too are a patriot!
Un doctor pentru salvarea Bacăului. Doctor Brăila Ștefan	A doctor to save Bacau. Doctor Brăila Ștefan
Misiune imposibilă la Pitești	Mission impossible in Pitesti
Umaniști suntem!	Humanists we are!

4.1. Preliminary assessment

As a preliminary assessment of the data, I will present some basic quantitative and qualitative considerations, outlining the main characteristics of the distinct categories listed above, listing key attributes such as frequency, structure and function/representation. REPRESENTATIVES are the most frequently encountered category of speech acts with 30 occurrences, primarily following the declarative sentence structure (Subject-Verb-Object) and the word to world direction to fit, function/representation overdetermination[33], which implies an excess of meaning or explanation beyond what is necessary. COMMISSIVES are the second most frequently encountered category of speech act in the dataset with 24 occurrences, including both exclamatory and declarative sentence structures and a world to word direction to fit, function/representation activation, which entails the commitment to a future action or decision. DIRECTIVES have been identified with 23 occurrences, with a dominantly imperative sentence structure, focusing on verb (V) usage and a world to word direction to fit, function/representation motivation, indicating the intent to prompt action or response from the interlocutor. EXPRESSIVES have been identified with 8 occurrences, a structural form which combines both declarative and interrogative forms, no direction to fit, function/representation collectivisation, suggesting a focus on social or group identity and values. DECLARATIONS have been

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[33] Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New tools for CDA*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008.

identified with 6 occurrences, structural form nominal phrases (NPs) and reversible direction to fit (world to word, word to world), function/representation rendition, indicating the enactment or performance of a certain action through speech.

4.2. Data analysis

(1) "Urlați împreună!"

This slogan functions as a double-layered speech act, due to its dual interpretation caused by the polysemous nature of "Urlați", as both a proper noun, referring to a town, and the plural imperative form of the verb "a urla" (to shout), producing an amusing effect through incongruency. Primarily as a DECLARATION and secondarily as a DIRECTIVE, this slogan urges collective action or unity among the audience, suggesting that they should come together or raise their voices in unison. The illocutionary force is motivational and solidarity-inducing, aiming to create a sense of unity or collective identity, in response to a common cause or objective. At a propositional level, the slogan implies that only through collective effort can their voices be heard, appealing to a sense of solidarity, particularly in a context where communal action is seen as necessary. From a rhetorical perspective, the slogan is short and inevitably employs a proper noun in the form of an imperative (through homonymy), making it powerful and memorable, carrying a strong emotional appeal, which can evoke a sense of urgency and empowerment. The mentioned semantic ambiguity is the vector for an additional double-layered representation through impersonalisation/personalization, collectivization[34]. The inclusive "împreună" (together), syntagmatically close to "we, the most political pronoun"[35] lexical choices, reinforces the idea of unity and collective effort.

(2) "Ciupilan 2024"

Evaluated by commentators as "minimalistic" and a "lack of inspiration", this slogan was interpreted as probably originating in the candidate's "facebook password"[36]. Formally, it is a DECLARATIVE speech act, which simply states the candidate's name along with the election year, without making any explicit promise or request. The illocutionary force is assertive and identity-establishing. The slogan works to establish the candidate's presence and association with the upcoming election, aiming to make the name recognizable and associated with the year 2024. From the point of view of the propositional content, the slogan asserts that "Ciupilan" is a name to be associated with the year 2024, presumably in the context of the local elections. It doesn't provide further information or make any explicit claims. The representation of the social actor is performed through personalisation – determination, nomination[37], representing the candidate as a significant figure in the upcoming election. The minimalism suggests

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[34] Idem.

[35] Teun A. Van Dijk, Text and context of parliamentary debates. In Bayley, P. (ed.). *CrossCultural Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004, p. 360.

[36] https://www.vremeanoua.ro/ciupilan-2024-cand-in-loc-de-slogan-electoral-folosesti-parola-de-facebook/

[37] Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New tools for CDA*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 73.

confidence and possibly a pre-established reputation where the candidate's name alone is enough to convey the message. Rhetorically, the slogan is extremely concise and timeless in its appeal, leveraging the simplicity of the candidate's name and the election year. It's memorable and focuses on name recognition rather than detailed promises or issues. The association of the year 2024 anchors the campaign in a specific electoral context.

(3) *"Un primar – pita lui Dumnezeu"*

This is a DECLARATIVE speech act that also carries an EXPRESSIVE element. It describes the (candidate for the position of) mayor using an absolute superlative in the form of a metaphor that expresses positive quality or virtue. The illocutionary force is both descriptive and commendatory, aiming to praise the (candidate for) mayor, likening him to "God's bread", which implies benevolence and a nurturing presence, suggesting that this option for mayor is as vital as the bread provided by God, also signifying warmth, care and a blessing. Additionally, the slogan is a reference to the candidate's personal well-off condition as a businessman producing high-quality bread, ranked as a "traditional original product, based on a 300-year-old recipe"[38]. The slogan represents the mayor as a virtuous and essential figure, someone who is wholesome and beneficial to the community, much like bread is to sustenance, appealing to traditional, religious, or rural values. Rhetorically, through the use of metaphor and religious imagery ("pita lui Dumnezeu" – "God's bread"), it aims to create a powerful and positive image of the mayor, through appeal to pathos, evoking strong emotions, especially in religious or conservative communities, aligning the candidate with values of goodness, reliability, and divine favor.

On similar patterns, from both structural and functional perspectives, candidates formulated numerous slogans employing overstatements and superlativeness, such as

"Primarul perfect" (The perfect mayor), "Candidat de felul ăsta nu ați mai văzut" (You have never seen a candidate of this kind) or "Singurul candidat care nu face promisiuni pompoase" (The only candidate who doesn't make pompous promises).

(4) *"Punem Iașiul pe primul loc"*

In an explicit act of mimesis of success models, inspired by the world-famous "America first" used successfully by Donald Trump in the American presidential election of 2016, this slogan, along with an entire series of similar examples, functions as a COMMISSIVE. The slogan "Punem Iașiul pe primul loc" literally means "We put Iași first", indicating a promise to prioritize the city's needs and interests, which would ideally resonate with local voters who are concerned about the development and well-being of their community. It implies a commitment to prioritize the city of Iași above all else. The illocutionary force here is promissory and prioritization-oriented. The candidate or party is making a commitment to put Iași first in their agenda, appealing to local pride and the importance of the city (pathos). On a pattern similar to the one discussed in (1), the

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[38] https://www.romaniajournal.ro/society-people/the-santimbru-bread-based-on-a-300yo-recipe-famous-across-europe/#google_vignette

slogan uses inclusive language ("Punem" meaning "We put"), which suggests a collective effort between the candidate and the electorate. The phrase "pe primul loc" (on the first place) is a strong appeal to prioritization and urgency. The use of the city's name enhances local identification and connection. In similar lines, structurally and functionally numerous other slogans employing the ordinal first or related alternatives were identified in the dataset, such as "Punem comuna Bălțați pe primul loc" (We put the commune of Bălțați first), "Orădenii în primul rând" ([The people from] Oradea first), "Blajul înainte de toate" (Blaj before all).

5. DISCUSSION

Eliciting behaviour through speech acts, political discourse aims to "maintain the adherence of the audience ... or to conquer the 'hesitant', seeking to determine the adherence of a larger segment of the population"[39]. Considering that speech acts can be used to build global (macro) speech acts, which are seen as a goal and micro speech acts, which are viewed as strategies employed to achieve that goal, an inevitable question arises: what are these slogans actually saying?

As a macro speech act, it is a manifestation of campaign discourse, invariably oriented towards a goal of persuasion/seduction of the public. At a level of a micro speech act, the slogan employs heterogeneous strategies to achieve the mentioned discursive goal.

As discussed in the analysis section, political discourse can be conceptualized as a macro speech act that can realize the speaker's various intentions through different illocutionary forces. Slogans primarily aim to persuade and inform the public about the candidates to public leadership positions by micro speech acts of statements/assertions, making commitments, giving directions, positive / negative statements – self- / other-characterisations, all contributing to the macro speech act of persuasion and seduction of the public.

The analysis of the dataset revealed a series of tendencies, from a structural and functional perspective. REPRESENTATIVE (assertive) speech acts are most frequently used by the speakers/candidates in slogans, followed by COMMISSIVES, EXPRESSIVES and DECLARATIONS, as well as REPRESENTATIVE-DECLARATIONS. Assertive illocutionary force was the most dominant in the dataset achieving several communicative functions: motivating, identity-establishing, promissory or prioritisation-oriented.

Each of the analysed slogans performed specific speech acts, employing relatively common rhetorical strategies to convey its message and appeal to voters. The use of DIRECTIVES, COMMISSIVES, and DECLARATIVES in different contexts shows how language can be employed to motivate, promise, or simply establish a

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[39] Stanca Măda, Analyzing Political Discourse as a Macro Speech Act, *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique – Romanian Review of Linguistics,* 1-2, 2018, p. 133).

presence in the electoral landscape. The rhetorical aspects, including metaphor, brevity, and local identification, further enhance the impact of these slogans, making them memorable and effective in their political context.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Through the textual genre of the slogan, as "the most public and the most concentrated example of political language"[40], a message is conveyed by politicians through a "catch-phrase", i.e. a minimum number of words designed for a maximum effect, meant to persuade audiences into affiliation and ideally vote in their favour.

The present study revealed the use of six classes of speech acts in local election slogans and a rich variation of linguistic features.

As results from the data analysis and findings, the examination of political slogans in the local electoral context revealed a marked preference for plain language and a straightforward approach. This trend underscores the importance of unembellished expressions and direct communication in crafting messages that are both accessible and easily understood by a broad audience.

The slogans typically avoid complex rhetorical elements, which suggests an intentional strategy to resonate with voters through clarity and simplicity rather than through persuasive or elaborate language techniques.

A noticeable absence of rhetorical devices such as metaphors, analogies, or alliteration points to a focus on functionality over flair, largely confirming the conclusion drawn by Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni in her analysis of the 2017 French entre-deux-tours between Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen, sustaining that "an increasing phenomenon of rhetorical poverty can be observed in the discourses of candidates"[41], an observation related to presidential discourse which can easily be transferred to all political candidates.

The mentioned minimalist approach is commonly be designed to enhance the relatability and memorability of the slogans, ensuring that the core message is not lost or obscured by ornate language. However, this simplicity also reveals a significant reliance on copied ideas and a lack of originality. Many of the slogans echo familiar phrases or concepts, contributing to a sense of homogeneity across the political landscape, where accessibility and familiarity are prioritized over innovation and distinctiveness, raising questions about the potential or interest for innovation in political communication and the role of creativity in differentiating political candidates or parties.

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[40] Geoffrey Hare, Studying political slogans as communication. *Francophonie*, 3 (June 1991), pp. 24-29.

[41] Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *Le débat Le Pen / Macron du 3 mai 2017: Un débat « disruptif »?*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2019 [kindle edition].

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