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COV-19 RELATED DISCOURSE GENERIC ANALYSES

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 related discourse has been gaining widespread attention due to its extension and coverage area (geographical area, age groups, layers of society, etc.). It can therefore be argued that the problem is global and sorting it out goes far of the local medical interventions. Cov-19 related discourse, presented by authoritative persons on the press conference (which is not a coincidental area and plays an intermediary role), responsible for preventing the society from killing virus requires not only medical treatment but the real art of communication as well. On the one hand, selecting an efficient communicative strategy and on the other, analyzing a real idea lying under meticulously chosen generic features requires generic analyses of either discourse or a text. This paper is established on corpus based linguistic analysis, which enabled us to identify the frequency and apportioning of each discourse marker observed in target empirical material, to highlight dominant and supplementary discourse features, to strengthen hypotheses that Cov-19 related discourse or a text is hybrid. Over and above that, analyses outcome, sheds new light on generic features of COVID-19 related discourse and opens a wider scope for a socio-critical look at what responsible persons do with language and why do they do it.

Introduction.

Modern world, regardless its society, culture or nationality, faces with one and the same problem, Coronavirus. Taking into consideration its extension and coverage area, it could therefore be said that the problem is global and sorting it out goes far the local medical interventions. As far as the Cov-19 related issue, presented by authoritative persons, responsible for disseminating relevant, on time and due information for society aimed at informing, preventing them from the virus, persuading them to believe authoritative persons' words, follow the WHO guidelines and vaccinate, goes far the medical discourse. It's worth to mention, that authoritative figures hold press-conference to impact on a wide mass for a short while and to be applauded by them for effective working and acting while pandemic. As for as a press conference is not only the deliberately chosen area for premeditated discourse utterance, its structural peculiarities serve to intermediary role. According to Taylor press conference is run after a number of the roundtable discussion and conclave, accordingly, questions, despite their spontaneity, never seem to be contradictory or unexpected and linguistic markers used while directing discourse are planned and intentional. Press conference hold by authoritative persons reveals which genre peculiarities do authoritative figures prefer according to their communicative aim.

Both functions of the language (expressive and communicative) serve to reflect the complex reality of rapid-changing society and world, but in recent years, there has been considerable interest in

modern communication as it is not just passing idea or information aimed at accomplishing particular communicative objectives but it's art.

On the one hand, selecting efficient communicative strategies and on the other, analyzing a real idea lying under meticulously chosen generic features requires generic analyses of discourse as it opens wider scope for more socio-critical look at what people do with Language and why do they do it?

According to Bhatia "The main goals of genre theory are: 1. to represent and account for the seemingly chaotic realities of the world; 2. to understand and account for the private intentions of the author, in addition to socially recognised communicative purposes; 3. to understand how language is used in and shaped by socio-critical environment.

As for genre perception itself, recent literature offers a number of definitions that led to a more profound understanding of it. Bhatia states that though we know that genres serve typical socially recognised communicative purposes, yet we often find genres being exploited to convey private intentions. Bhatia, and Fairclough, also draw our attention to modern communication peculiarities and propose that "We all manage to identify individual generic artefacts, yet in the real world they are often seen in hybrid, mixed and embedded forms.

In their definition of genre Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) question the need for bearing in mind the fact of changing communicative behaviors in modern society and state that Although genres are identified on the basis of conventionalized features, yet we know they are constantly developing.

When it comes to analyzing cov-19 related discourse directed by responsible persons, minding Berkenkotter and Huckin definition of genre, we should consider not only socially recognized purposes (to solve pandemic related problems, to save lives, etc.) but authors' private intentions like fulfilling personal responsibilities efficiently to deserve excitement from the society.

According to Miller Genre can be recognized as a system for achieving social purposes by verbal means as a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or form of the discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish.

Based on observations, Trosborg states that a certain genre may employ several text types (also referred to as modes of presentation), but usually one of them is identified as the dominant type. Accordingly, she underlines the need of a two level typology of text types: at a macro level, that is the dominant function of a text type exhibited in or underlying a text, and micro level text types that result from the process of textualisation determined by the producer's strategy (1997:16).

Like Trosborg, Bhatia underlines the complex reality of the world that imposes lack of pure genres in practice. Hereinafter, we find genres in mixed or embedded forms as they are expressed to achieve a mix of communicative purposes, or to communicate 'private intentions' within the context of 'socially recognized communicative purposes' (1995).

Cov-19 related discourse presented by responsible persons on press conference drew my attention from both sides: to perceive complexity of a Cov-19 reality and the art of Cov-19 discourse generic construction.

Materials and methods.

Generic analysis of Cov-19 related discourse is based on corpus analysis of a limited number (20) of discourses directed on press-conference by authoritative persons (administrative and medical) in the USA. For the validity and relevance of the research, we selected Cov-19 related discourses directed by different authoritative persons (mostly Donald trump, Antony Fauchi, Joe Biden) in a 2019-2022 timeline in order to avoid analysis of a personal speech peculiarity.

Under the corpus based analyses, we identified and selected different markers peculiar for that discourse (Medical discourse markers, each of them signified with M and its own cardinal number, for example: M1 stands for medical vocabulary and terms, M2 – description of covid situation, M3 – recommendations, M4 – reliefing pacients, Political discourse markers, each of them signified with p and own cardinal number: P1 – threatening, P2 – highlighting own achievements, P3 – addressing, P4 – promising, P5 – stylistic devices (methonymy, metaphor), P6 – comparing with other countries, P7 – blaming the other side for negative results, P8 – others (mentioning authoritative persons, avoiding to give an accurate answer, using idioms), Rhetoric functional style signified with R and own cardinal number: formulated addressing (R1 – salutation, R2 – expressing gratitude, R3 – formulated congratulation, R4 – pathos, R5 – repetition, R6 – rule of three, R7 – formulated farewell, R8 – parallelism, R9 – listing, etc.), tagged that particular marker into empirical material, and analysed

results using software orange. Reasons for selecting that particular marker for each discourse (Medical, Political, Rhetoric functional style) was frequency of their usage that was observable even without software based analysis. Corpus based analyses gave us an absolute and correlative number (number of each discourse marker usage correlated with the total number of a sentence used in each discourse) of each discourse marker usage.The paper presents a corpus based linguistic analysis, which enables to identify the frequency and apportioning of each discourse marker observed in target empirical material, to highlight dominant and minor discourse features, to strengthen hypotheses that Cov-19 related discourse is hybrid. In addition, cumulative study results, sheds new light on generic features of COVID-19 related discourse and opens a wider scope for a socio-critical look at multipurpose use of a various linguistic means and general trends while directing Cov-19 related discourse.

Results.

A corpus-based analysis showed that the discourse surrounding COVID-19, directed at press conferences in the United States, does not essentially represent a single discourse genre. The discourse was initially anticipated to be primarily medical in nature, since the COVID pandemic is a medical topic. However, corpus-based analysis altered our expectations to focus on the hybridity of COVID-19-related discourse, a more recent generic feature of contemporary communication. Firstly, observation and subsequently corpus-based analysis showed that, regardless of genre or discourse type, presenters primarily employ rhetorical functional style markers in conjunction with political and medical discourse markers.

It should be noted that the range of chosen discourse types, as determined by usage frequency, is as follows: discourse related to COVID-19 that is directed by authorities during press conferences in the United States is more political (0.17%) than medical (0.16%), and it contains more political discourse markers than either medical or rhetorical functional style markers.

Corpus based linguistic analysis revealed that authority applies a wide range of political discourse markers: threatening, highlighting own achievements, addressing, promising, stylistic devices (methonymy, metaphor),comparing with other countries, blaming the other side for negative results, others as mentioning authoritative persons, avoiding to give an accurate answer, using idioms), but should be noted that the most preferred markers are P2 - highlighting own achievements, P3 - addressing to society, P1 - threatening, P4 - promising and P5 - stylistic devices.

Not only the absolute and correlative number of political discourse markers surpasses the absolute and correlative number of medical discourse markers, but the total number and variety of medical discourse markers as well. Representatives of authority basically use medical vocabulary and terms, descriptions of COVID situations, recommendations, and relieving patients. The range, based on frequency of usage, is as follows: M1: medical terms (0.8), M4: relief patients (0.05), M2: description of the COVID situation (0.1), and M3: recommendations (0.06).

As for rhetorical marker usage, it should be noted that though the absolute and total number of rhetorical marker usage falls behind political and medical marker usage numbers, the choice of markers itself is broader (salute, expressing gratitude, formulated congratulation, pathos, repetition, rule of three, formulated farewell, parallelism, listing, etc.), but the most preferred markers are R2 (expressing gratitude), R5 (repetition), R4 (pathos), and R6 (rule of three).

Discussion.

As I mentioned before, matter of discussion is medical, but a speech by authoritative persons serves political purposes, therefore it represents as medical as political discourse, saturated with peculiarities of rhetoric functional style.

Cov-19 related discourse directed by the authoritative persons, as a form of Rhetoric, consists of formal, as well as formulated addressing (salutations, farewell, congratulations or expressing gratefulness): (example 1, 2, 3).

(1) *"Everyone, thank you for the beautiful day in the Rose Garden. I appreciate everybody being here today"* (ABC News, 2020).

(2) *"We are deeply grateful to every person who has worked round the clock on this monumental national project to save livesThank you all for your tremendous gifts to humanity"* (The Telegraph, 2020).

*(3)* *"Thank you for taking the time to listen. I look forward to seeing you"* (CNBC Television, 2021).

Setting and situation development, sparing time for the question and answer part along with formal addressing in Cov-19 related discouse are another peculiarity of rhetoric. As Taylor states (1997) speech presented by authoritative persons is usually composed and rehearsed at a roundtable discussion, accordingly, in spite of spontaneity, they never seem to be contradictory and unexpected. Based on that consideration, we can conclude that usage of particular markers in cov-19 related discourse are not unintentional, that's why it drew our attention.

As we mentioned before, matter of authority discussion belongs to medical discourse, therefore we often face with medical discourse markers (16%). The first peculiarity that differentiates medical discourse from all the rest is medical language, which is literally obstacle into the communication of a physician and a patient. Taking into consideration risks, physicians are recommended speak clearly, with a proper pronunciation, accent and intonation, shape ideas clearly and translate medical terms to colloquial language to prevent the case of misunderstanding or a complete ignorance from patients (Nikola Woods, 123). The art of communication is the oldest and significant tool for a doctor – patient communication and In spite of the progress of medical services offered by providers, "listening part" still is a strong point. Daniel Ofrey, in his work "what patients say what the doctors hear" states that, the result of a successful communication along with a rich anamnesis is patient satisfaction, identifying their needs and preferences, that can support either patients' recovery or worsening.

Scientists often address medical language as objective, sharply medical and mostly incomprehensible for the society as much as Medical language is one, with terminology for particular disease, symptom or treatment, which plays a significant role in doctor – patient communication (Woods, 120-121).

As for as the Cov-19 discourse target audience is a wide mass, authoritative persons mostly use popular medical terms and vocabulary, which do not hinder understanding as much as terms used while the doctor-patient consultation (Medical emergency, corona virus, disease, virus, rooms, medical screening, cluster of coronavirus cases, fever, symptoms, emergently shortness of breath, emergency room, testing, uh test, infection control, nursing home, infection, pandemic, rem deserver, steroid treatment, therapeutic research, fatality risk, oxygen treatment, high flow oxygen ventilator, asymptomatic, immunity, antibodies, clinical trials, side effects, vaccination cenetres, quarantine, doses of vaccine, unvaccinated persons, booster, measles, immunological, clinical efficacy, ancestral strain, immune response, etc.)

Corpus based analysis enables us to distinguish the usage of popular medical terminology by healthcare workers (Antony Fauchi), and representatives of the administration.
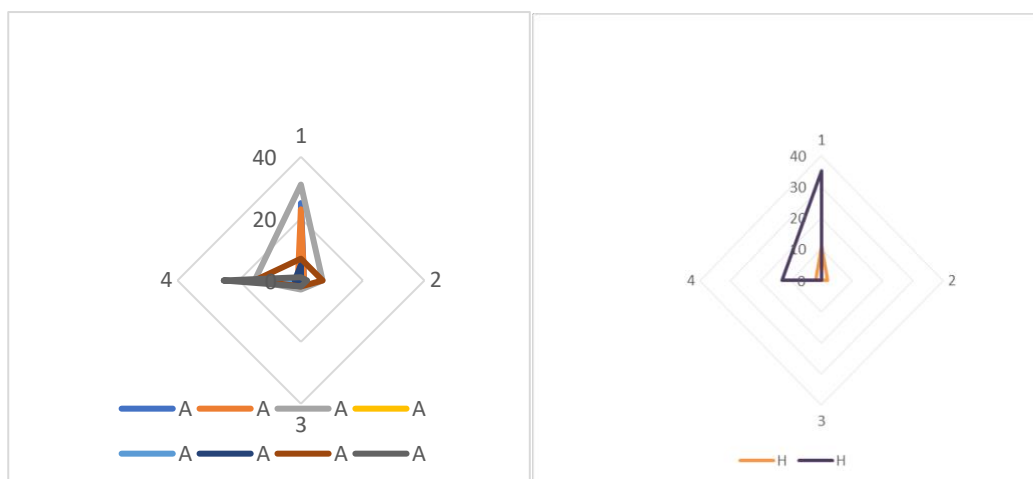
Figure 1.
Usage of medical terminology
by administration.

Figure 2.
Usage of medical terminology
by healthcare workers.

Table of figures shows that healthcare workers (H) mostly use 2 markers (M1- medical vocabulary and M4- relieving patients) while representatives of the administration (A) use all four with the highest frequency of M1 and M2.

The fact that the medialization process has greatly impacted at forming a political discourse should be pointed out. It became shorter spoken and focused on presenting up-to-date issue. Considering the fact that the audience goes far the conference hall, and even other listeners won't or can't sit down to a whole speech, Speechwriters write a script the way to make media interested, and get an earful for the listeners. Accordingly, terms used by authoritative figures are medical but not literally, unlike medical discourse grammar constructions are simple, therefore easy to understand.

According to Woods, diagnosing, treating, and giving recommendations are strategies identified at different stages of doctor-patient communication. It should be noted that medical discourse directed by authoritative persons is aimed at giving recommendations and treatment to an extent. Tsimpri (2018) states that treatment strategies in medicine usually consist of the regulation of psychological conditions, comforting, information dissemination, and treatment. The strategy is aimed at efficient and painless treatment. The comforting strategy helps decreasing and uprooting the negative emotional condition. Strategy ensures reversal to normal worldview.

Taking into consideration the importance of communication for gaining confidence, modern day doctors often have to make decision tell the truth about the severity of the disease to the patient or not. (Woods, 120) Therefore, like medical discourse, cov-19 discourse directed by authoritative persons are saturated with a description of cov-19 situation: (example 4).

(1) "Unfortunately, one person passed away overnight, which was a wonderful woman, a medically high-risk patient in her late 50s. Four others are very ill, but thankfully, 15 have either fully recovered or are well on their way to recovery, and in all cases, they've been going home" (ABC News, 2020*).*

The aim of depicting severity of covid 19 situation by authoritative persons like medicals is not only the information dissemination but threatening: (example 5).

(2) "The China virus is a vicious and dangerous illness" (USA TODAY, 2021).

Threatening is immediately substituted by relieving patients as authoritative persons are aware of the importance of a consolation for the society (as patients while medical consultation). Even ancient philosophy, especially Plato's Republic and Hippocrates himself is reputed to have advised being economical with the truth in the interests of civil harmony (Woods, 120). (example 6)

(3) "We're working with very talented and brilliant people, and it's all going to work out, and it is working out" (USA TODAY, 2020).

Provided consolations are usually followed by delivering recommendations: (example 7).

(4) "Wear a mask. socially distance and repeatedly wash your hands practice very good sanitary means you have to do this you have to just you have to look at it differently wash your hands often i'm finding more and more people are saying wash your hands so wash your hands" (USA TODAY, 2020).

Corpus based analysis shows that like medical discourse, covid-19 related discourse features the same lexical peculiarities, notably, usage of popular medical terms the most frequently, as for communicative behavior preferred while directing the discourse is pacifying the society. As for recommendations delivered by authoritative persons, they not only feature medical peculiarities but likewise political discourse, authoritative persons refer to appealing to society, bodies or other authoritative persons. (example 8)

(5) "Our plan is based on unity, and all of us acting as one nation requires families and neighbors looking out for one another, health care providers and businesses, civic, religious, and civil rights organizationsand unions all relying together on a common purpose with urgency and purpose and resolve, which requires reasserting our global leadership" (CNBC Television).

Covid-19 related discourse, as in political discourse, we quite often witness putting the blame on the other side for sever covid-19 condition in the country: (example 9).

(6) "I don't think any administration or president has accomplished as much as we've accomplished, from energy to health to so many other things, and then this came in, and the plague— I call it the plague—came in. The terrible thing that should have been stopped wasn't stopped; it came in. We had to shut things down to potentially save millions of lives" (USA TODAY, 2020).

Based on the corpus analyses we can conclude that the most frequently used political discourse marker by authoritative figures is highlighting own achievements.
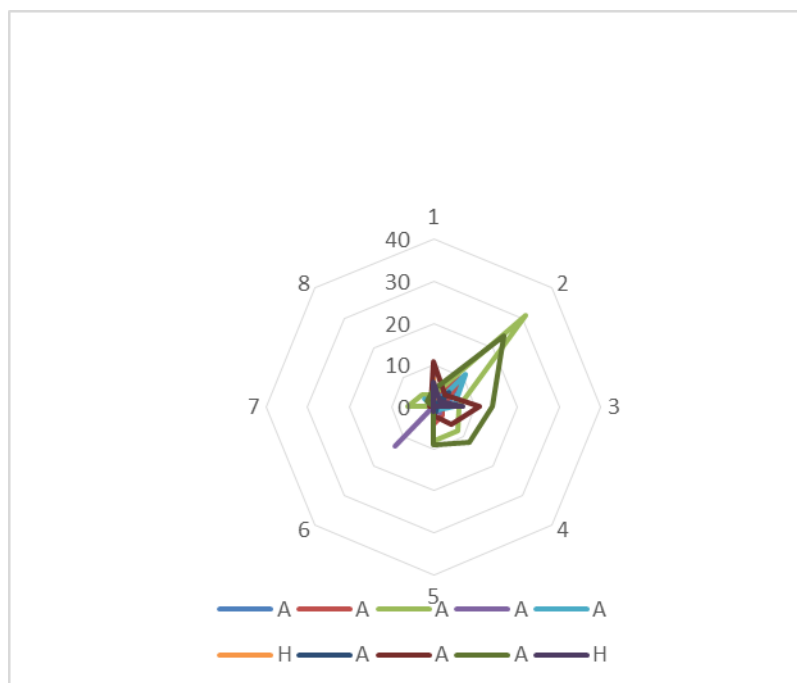

Figure 3.
Political discourse marker usage.
(example 10).

(4) *"We really have a group of people that are so talented and they are working around the clock. For that reason, I really wish that we could really report exactly what's happened and how well we're doing under quite adverse circumstances, but we're doing really well, very professionally handled, and our country is prepared for any circumstance. We hope it's not going to be a major circumstance; it'll be a smaller circumstance, but whatever the circumstance is, we're prepared, and I'd like to just ask and caution the media. We would respectfully ask the media, politicians, and everybody else involved to do anything to incite panic because there's no reason to panic at all."* (ABC News, 2020)

Mention must be made that along with highlighting own achievement, authoritative figures always use pronoun "we", "us", "our". (Shavladze, 2017:78) Conversely, from medical discourse, political discourse and rhetorical functional style doesn't feature impersonal form usage as the author doesn't have necessity, in contrary, the authors try to make press conference discourse like real/live communication. Personal pronoun "we" could mean I and you/ me and people I represent but not you, and I, the people I stand for and you too (Woods, 73-74). As Sauer (1997) explains the reason for using personal pronoun is not only personalization of the relationship between politicians and society but creating a political image as well. He stated that the purpose politicians participate in different talk shows and TV programs serves not developing any politics but creating political image.

Deserves attention marker of comparing own achievements and results with other country's statistics and situation: (example 11).

(11) *"The U.S. is conducting 50 percent more tests than Europe, and we've conducted nearly three times as many tests as all of the other countries in the western hemisphere combined"* (USA TODAY, 2020).

Corpus based analysis result show that the most frequently used markers out of nine political markers are highlighting own achievements, appealing society and promising.

Galperin (1977:287) states that unlike medical discourse, which is absolutely free from figurative language and stylistic devices, discourse directed by authoritative persons is saturated with different stylistic devices and emotionally colored colloquial elements, serving permanent and profound impact on common sense, brainwashing the target audience to persuade them.

We often meet with metaphor in medical discourse like political discourse, but mostly they are related to body organs and their functioning. (Woods, 127) (example 12, 13)

(12)   "We will get to the other end of that tunnel very quickly. We hope the light is starting to shine. We will get there very quickly" (USA Today, 2020).

*(13)   "As I explained last week, we'll move heaven and earth to get more people vaccinated for free and create more places for them to get vaccinated" (*CNBC Television, 2021).

The second most frequently used political discourse marker is metonymy, mostly associated with Covid pandemic.

*As discussed yesterday, **the China virus** poses the greatest threat to our senior citizens.*

Based on the analysis of empirical material, high is the frequency of pathos usage: (example 14).

(14)   "There were husbands, wives, sons, daughters, grandparents, friends, neighbors, young and old, who left behind loved ones unable to truly grieve or heal, even to have a funeral, but I'm also thinking about everyone else who lost this past year to natural causes by the cruel fate of accident or other disease; they too died alone, and they too left behind loved ones who were hurting badly" (CNBC Television, 2021).

As much as we see, pathos is expressed through free language structures: short and simple sentences, colloquial vocabulary, individual style of speech, which is expressed by repetitions as well. (example 15)

(15)   "We'll go back. I let those people know we'd go back, and we'd go back so fast, and we'd go back with a force like nobody has ever seen" (ABC NEWS, 2020).

Recalled that the audience predicates on the memory, keynoter most frequently uses repetition, that leads the audience to listen and concentrate on the matter of discussion. Another aim or using repetition as a marker is to persuade society, states Cristal (2016).
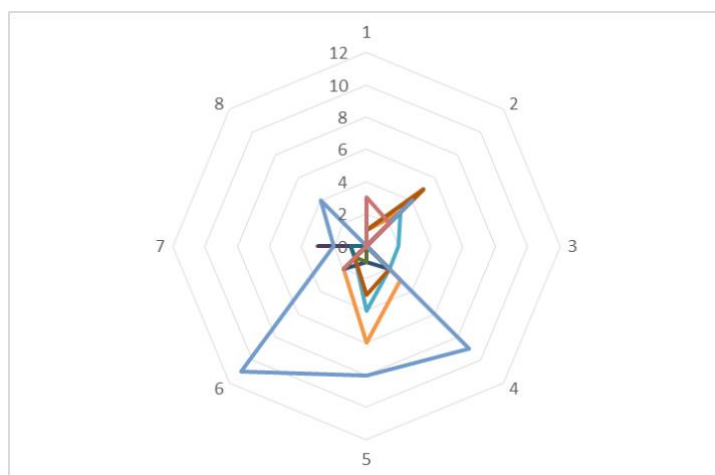

Fugure 4. Rhetorical style marker usage.

While directing political discourse, earning audience excitements is a top rate purpose, as far as it is the private intention of a politician, accordingly, rhetoric is developed in a way to let listeners express their excitement. Usage the rule of three serves that purpose. As David crystal confirms, rule of three enables the speaker to make his/her speech memorable, complete and accentuate important topics (2016). (example 16)

(11)   "We'll end up with a cure. We'll end up with therapeutics. We'll end up with a vaccine very soon" (USA TODAY, 2020).

As much as we see Cov-19 related discourse presented either in press conferences or publications, present embedded genre, with dominant feature of political discourse, where the medical discourse is a matter of discussion as for way of information dissemination is rhetoric.

Results.

Corpus based analysis of cov-19 related discourse clarifies that cov-19 related discourse directed on press-conference is a hybrid text with a features of political (17%), medical (16%) discourse and rhetoric functional style peculiarities (7%), but based on the percentage we can say that the political discourse is a dominant one.

Corpus based analyses enables us to differentiate peculiarities of discourse directyed by administrative and medical representatives.

Based on a table of figures, given below, we can say that healthcare workers most frequently use medical terms than political ones and rhetoric functional style while Representatives of the administration do it in contrary.

Corpus based analysis results illustrate that politicians most frequently use highlighting own achievements the directing and threatening community by mentioning statics of death and upcoming danger out of nine political discourse markers. As for medical discourse markers, where we identified four most frequently used ones (medical terms, Depicting Cov-19 situation, delivering recommendations and relieving,) speakers most frequently employ medical terms and relieving the society.

Based on the corpus analysis of rhetoric marker usage, we can say that the most frequently used marker is the formal and formulated manner of directing (greeting, congratulation, expressing gratefulness) as well as usage of repetition and pathos.

Based on the cumulative results, highest frequency medical discourse marker – relieving the society and political discourse marker – highlighting own achievements, highest frequency rhetoric marker – formulated addressing and repetition we can conclude that private intention of speakers is effective governance.

Though, study results will lead to a more profound understanding of hybridity of Cov-19 related discourse (mix of political and medical discourse, rhetoric style), it doesn't enable us to generalize the results for Cov-19 related discourse directed in a timeline out of 2019-2021 period, as Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) state "although genres are identified on the basis of conventionalized features, yet we know they are constantly developing". Study results may change based on the communicative purposes in a particular context.

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