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**“Fast” food for thought? Exploring the not-so-easy-to-digest language of Albanian newspapers**

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La propagande et ses masques de la vertu  
Propaganda and its masks of virtue  
La propaganda y sus máscaras de la virtud

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Article abstract

Pressured to increase their market share and capture more people's attention, newspapers are under influence. The search for sensationalist exclusivity leads to uniformity and rudeness. For the purpose of this article, several Albanian newspapers were examined in order to find out how the news are produced or « constructed ». We found a tendency to hide rather than publicize news, offering selected and readymade news that require little effort of hindsight and analysis. This dynamic reveals the deterioration of the conditions of access of the public to information allowing to question the politico-media news. The text ends with a call to reconnect with the journalistic ideal.

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Discours « vertueux » et démobilité de la pensée / “Virtuous” discourse and demobilization of thought / Discurso « virtuoso » y desmovilización del pensamiento

## “Fast” food for thought? Exploring the not-so-easy-to-digest language of Albanian newspapers

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*Poussés à accroître leur part de marché et à capter davantage l'attention des gens, les journaux d'information sont sous influence. La recherche d'exclusivité sensationnelle conduit à l'uniformité, aux impolitesses et à la grossièreté. Aux fins de cet article, plusieurs journaux albanais ont été examinés afin de découvrir la manière dont l'actualité est produite ou construite. Nous avons constaté une tendance à cacher plutôt qu'à rendre publiques les nouvelles, en offrant des informations sélectionnées et prémâchées qui nécessitent peu d'efforts de recul et d'analyse. Cette dynamique témoigne de la dégradation des conditions d'accès du public aux informations permettant de questionner l'actualité politico-médiatique. Le texte se termine par un appel à renouer avec l'idéal journalistique.*

*Mots-clés : nouvelles, impolitesse, sensationnalisme, propagande, uniformité, journaux.*

*Pressured to increase their market share and capture more people's attention, newspapers are under influence. The search for sensationalist exclusivity leads to uniformity and rudeness. For the purpose of this article, several Albanian newspapers were examined in order to find out how the news are produced or « constructed ». We found a tendency to hide rather than publicize news, offering selected and readymade news that require little effort of hindsight and analysis. This dynamic reveals the deterioration of the conditions of access of the public to information allowing to question the politico-media news. The text ends with a call to reconnect with the journalistic ideal.*

*Keywords: news, impolite, sensationalist, propaganda, uniformity, newspapers.*

*Empujados a aumentar su cuota de mercado y a captar más la atención de la gente, los periódicos informativos están bajo influencia. La búsqueda de la exclusividad sensacional conduce a la uniformidad, a la descortesía y a la grosería. A los efectos de este artículo, se han examinado varios periódicos albaneses para descubrir cómo se produce o construye la noticia. Hemos constatado una tendencia a ocultar en lugar de hacer públicas las noticias, ofreciendo informaciones seleccionadas y premeditadas que requieren pocos esfuerzos de retrospectiva y análisis. Esta dinámica refleja el deterioro de las condiciones de acceso del público a las informaciones que permiten cuestionar la actualidad político-mediática. El texto concluye con un llamamiento a recuperar el ideal periodístico.*

*Palabras clave : noticias, descortés, sensacionalista, propaganda, uniformidad, periódicos.*

## Introduction

The current paper aims to explore the world of written media in Albania, more specifically, newspapers. We navigated through Albanian newspapers for a period of three months and examined news and opinion editorials in order to find out the most frequent types of events portrayed. What we witnessed is that the intention of journalists is to catch the readers' attention at all costs, sometimes at the expense of politeness and depth. The desire to sell prevails, and, often, we find news and events being portrayed in uniform ways in different newspapers, accompanied by a tendency towards banality, misrepresentation, distortion of reality, and propaganda disguised in different ways. The examples we found were grouped in different categories that shared common features. The paper starts with some general considerations of what constitutes successful communication in an attempt to outline principles of communication. We then refer to the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Noam Chomsky in order to explore problematic areas of media and propaganda as described by each of them respectively. Their considerations will help us devise a list of 'maxims' of 'fast' food for thought, illustrated by concrete examples taken from the corpus of our study. The paper ends with some conclusions derived from our study, aiming at raising awareness about the current state of the portrayal of current events in Albanian newspapers.

## Literature review on the principles of effective communication

Herbert Paul Grice, a well-known language philosopher, contributed to the field of pragmatics with his work on meaning and communication. His key insight was that meaning in communication is more than the literal (or conventional) meaning of the words one says. Grice (1989) formulated a theory whereby he classified different sorts of conversational implicature and tried to explain how they arise and are understood. Human communication should be explained as a form of social interaction whose success depends on the interactants' presumption that communicative behaviour is driven by certain norms and rules. In his view, the most important of these norms is the generalization that communicators are co-operative in that they aim to make their communicative acts appropriate to the situation of communication both in its content and its form. He thus postulated a general "principle of cooperation" (CP) and four "maxims" specifying how to be cooperative. According to Grice, it is common knowledge that people generally follow these rules for efficient communication (Davies, 1998, p. 11). The Cooperative Principle follows the principle of making your conversational contribution *such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged*. The maxims included in the Cooperative Principle are: 1) *maxim of quantity* (be as informative as required), 2) *maxim of quality* (make your contribution true, do not convey what you believe is false or unjustified), 3) *maxim of relation* (be relevant), and, 4) *maxim of manner* (be perspicuous; avoid obscurity and ambiguity, and strive for brevity and order) (Davies, 1998, pp.11-12).

Geoffrey Leech also offered a Gricean pragmatic account of politeness, proposing a Tact Maxim (1977) and, more generally, a Politeness Principle PP (1983) as complementary to Grice's (CP). Unlike grammar, which is rule-governed, pragmatics is, according to Leech, principle-governed. The PP postulates that interactants, on the whole, prefer to express or imply polite beliefs rather than impolite beliefs. Like the CP, the PP is a principle that can be observed breached, suspended, or flouted; it can also, like the CP, be subclassified into more specific "subprinciples" or (as Grice calls them) maxims (Leech, 2014, p. 35). To account for polite linguistic behavior, Leech maintains that all societies have developed social principles that help to minimize the conflict that

might arise from the self-centered pursuit and gratification of face needs and sociality rights. Thus, Leech (1983, p. 132) postulates six maxims, summarized in the imperative mood as follows:

- 1) Tact maxim (in impositives and commissives)
  - a. Minimize cost to other
  - b. Maximize benefit to other;
- 2) Generosity maxim (in impositives and commissives)
  - a. Minimize benefit to self
  - b. Maximize cost to self;
- 3) Approbation maxim (in expressives and assertives)
  - a. Minimize dispraise of other,
  - b. Maximize praise of other;
- 4) Modesty maxim (in expressives and assertives)
  - a. Minimize praise of self
  - b. Maximize dispraise of self;
- 5) Agreement maxim (in assertives)
  - a. Minimize disagreement between self and other,
  - b. Maximize agreement between self and other,
- 6) Sympathy maxim (in assertives)
  - a. Minimize antipathy between self and other,
  - b. Maximize sympathy between self and other.

In his updated model, Leech (2005, 2007, 2014) explains that PP, analogous to Grice's CP, is a constraint observed in human communicative behavior, influencing us to avoid communicative discord or offence, and maintain or enhance communicative concord or comity (Leech, 2014, p. 87). He adds that we can still think of maxims in the sense described above as factors influencing communicative behavior and bringing about default interpretations—that is, unless overridden by some other maxim(s) or contextual factor(s). There is less risk of a misunderstanding if we conceive of pragmatic maxims of politeness simply as more specific realizations or manifestations of the GSP. The list of maxims is thus expanded, including labels such as generosity, tact, approbation, modesty, obligation (of self to other and vice versa), agreement, opinion reticence, sympathy, and feeling reticence (Leech, 2014, p. 91).

Other post-Gricean research revises Grice's sets of maxims. As noted by Moeschler in *The role of explicature in communication and in intercultural communication*, the main issue that divided pragmatists and split theoretical frameworks is the nature of the principles responsible for the processing of inferred meaning. This difference separates Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory (RT) from Levinson's Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature (TGCI). J. Moeschler explains that while RT resorts to a single principle of relevance, TGCI triggers implicatures either from the Q-Principle derived from the Gricean Maxim of Quantity (Grice 1975) or the I-Principle (principle of informativeness, derived from the Maxim of Quality and the Maxim of Relation – R-Principle in Horn 1984, 1988) (Moeschler, 2007, p. 80). In RT, relevance is a comparative concept, defined through the cognitive effects produced by the utterance in a specific context, as well as through the cognitive effort implied by the processing of the utterance, as supported by the more recent version of RT (1995), where the principle of relevance has been split into the cognitive principle of relevance and the communicative principle of relevance (Moeschler, 2007, p. 81).

The notion of relevance itself within RT relates primarily to information. Based on the assumption that information has greater value for users when it is new as opposed to given, and that users will prefer, all things considered equal, information that is more easily processed. Relevance theory formalises these two concerns as “contextual effects” and “processing efforts” respectively, with the general idea being that the greater the cognitive effects, and the smaller the degree of processing effort, the greater relevance information has for an individual. This means that the degree of relevance that arises in the course of processing an utterance is thus argued to be the basis on which hearers understand speaker meaning, including implicatures, given the assumed primacy of the Principle of Relevance. (Sperber and Wilson 1995, pp. 260–270, cited in Haugh, 2015, pp. 73-74).

In summary, we state that for a successful communication to happen, we need, among other things, to be informative, truthful, polite, concise, orderly, unambiguous, and optimally relevant, among other context-dependant features of communication. Flouting one or more of these principles may result in intentional or unintentional unsuccessful communication. What interests us in this paper are cases when journalists break or alter rules of successful communication with the aim of propaganda and/or use newspapers as profitable media, aiming to sell, advertise, and serve purposes other than providing ‘food for thought’ for people. As we have witnessed, most of the Albanian journals we have used as corpora for our study manifest a decline of politeness and a tendency to hide rather than to show news as a result of the pressure to make the newspaper a market success. Therefore the ‘food for thought’ is transformed into ‘fast’ food for thought, giving the audience ready-made, uniform and easy-to-digest news, reducing readers’ expectations and giving them news that does not require too much effort, deep analysis, or careful consideration. Thus, the diverse functions of language, such as regulatory, interactional, representational, personal, imaginative, instrumental, and heuristic, are reduced dramatically.

### **Breaking maxims of communication in media and newspapers**

In order to demonstrate the phenomena observed in the current state of Albanian media, we have examined the following Albanian newspapers: *Gazeta Dita*, *Panorama*, *Shqiptarja.com*, *Fjala*, *Gazeta Tema* and *abcnews.al*. *Gazeta Dita* published in print and online since November 1, 2012. *Gazeta Dita* has been a member of the *Alliance for Media Ethics in the Media Council* since September 2019 and a member of the *World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers* (*wan-iffra.org*) since its establishment. It currently has 69.1k followers on Facebook, 54.3k followers on Instagram, and 10.4k subscribers on YouTube. *Panorama* has 310k followers on Facebook since its creation in June 2011. The newspaper *Panorama* is a daily newspaper published in Tirana in Albanian. The publishers state on their own Facebook page that *Panorama* is the best-selling newspaper in the country and one of the main reasons for its success is the fact that it is unbiased and portrays news with accuracy. *Shqiptarja.com* originated from a collaboration among journalists, entrepreneurs, and civil society representatives aiming to establish an independent editorial group in Albania, free from political influence. Many contributors had professional backgrounds at *Gazeta Shqiptare*, *BalkanWeb*, and *News24*, all renowned for their credibility and independence over the past 18 years. The initiative, led by the ‘Free & Fair Media Group’, emphasizes the professional development of journalists based on principles of free speech. The Group operates in multiple media, with 671k followers on Facebook and on Instagram, and 436k subscribers on YouTube (under *ReportTV*). *Fjala* is a daily independent newspaper, published for five years and it has 169k followers on Facebook and 10.1k subscribers on YouTube. *Gazeta*

*Tema* is a politically unaffiliated daily newspaper published in Tirana and it currently sells about 15,000 daily copies nationwide and has 164k followers on Facebook. *Tema Online* also provides an English edition for its international readers. *Abcnews.al* is Albania's primary news website associated with ABC Television. It emphasizes independent news verification by its editorial team. The reorganized newsroom ensures comprehensive coverage of recent developments, both locally and globally, with a qualified and professional staff. *Abcnews.al* stands out as an avant-garde media outlet, prioritizing accuracy in reporting and incorporating the latest innovations in online media, with 458k followers on Facebook, 85.3k followers on Instagram, and 428k subscribers on YouTube.<sup>1</sup>

We have focused in particular on the ways news is portrayed on the front page of these newspapers as well as on the editorial/opinion section. The problems observed were outlined and then examples were grouped into categories. Our general outlook was inspired by two approaches that will be outlined below. The first is the approach of the French sociologist and intellectual Pierre Bourdieu and his detailed analysis of television, censorship, circular circulation of information, working under pressure and fast-thinking, debates truly false and falsely true, contradictions and tensions, all developments made possible by the power of television. He also raises the problem of the power of journalism by stating that we must examine how the structural pressure exerted by the journalistic field, itself dominated by market pressures, more or less profoundly modifies power relationships within other fields (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 68). It is clear, Bourdieu states, that the authorities, and the government, in particular, influence the media not only through the economic pressure that they bring to bear, but also through their monopoly on legitimate information – government sources are the most obvious example (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 69).

We provide below a summary of the main phenomena observed on television, as described by Bourdieu, which are not only currently witnessed today on television, but also hold true about the state of Albanian journalism, as we are going to prove with examples in the subsequent part of this paper. Bourdieu states that we live in a world ruled by the fear of being boring and anxiety about being amusing at all costs, a world characterized by demagogic simplification that goes contrary to the democratic goal of informing or educating people by simply interesting them, a world in which people are obsessed with 'scoops' and everything has to be made interesting to the point that what is offered is simply a litany of events, a variety show, with no beginning or end. Increasingly, journalists are getting closer to advertisers, following the principle 'to be is to be perceived,' in search of the greatest market share, battling for greater audience ratings, reaching the largest audience, albeit, the narrowest minds.

In search of sensationalist news, stories are pushed on viewers, and journalists, like magicians, direct the reader's or viewer's attention to something else, rather to what they are doing. Under the pressure of reaching market success imperatives, nearly identical headlines are produced, all about banality, sex, crime, and blood. Rather than producing food for thought, fast thinking is promoted, false representations are conveyed to the audience, and the search for exclusivity yields banality and uniformity. More often than not, the journalist becomes the fireman who sets the fire and constantly lowers the standards for entering the field. The logical chain of reasoning is broken and what is offered is 'cultural' fast food and mask of virtues, already pre-digested, pre-thought. The reality hides beneath masks of virtue, and the real aims of the media are distorted, whereas people are deprived of their right to see through, analyze, and interpret information. Readers are

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1. All of the data have been extracted from the official websites of the newspapers and/or online media, accessed January 2024.



not involved in thinking for themselves but in the ‘fast’ thinking of the ready-made views of the journalist’s prefabricated ‘reality.’

Another perspective that falls in line with our approach is the one embodied in *Propaganda in the information age - Still Manufacturing Consent* (2019), an updated version of Edward. S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s propaganda, portraying a model of 21<sup>st</sup> century media edited by Alan MacLeod. As he states, these two people have done more than perhaps anyone else to expose propaganda to the light of critical scrutiny. In 1988, Herman, an economist from the Wharton School of Business at the UPenn Philadelphia and Chomsky, a linguist from MIT in Boston, laid bare the media’s societal function and the factors that influence what becomes news in their seminal book, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. Together, they laid out the most concise, cogent, and influential explanation of the function of the media, and why many stories never make it to the news while others are constantly featured (MacLeod, 2019, p. 2). Their ideas, after more than 30 years, continue to be relevant and are explained in detail in the quoted book.

The media, as MacLeod confesses, is not your friend. The media cannot bite the hands that feeds it. The media is not made up of plucky truth-tellers but, for the most part, of enormously powerful corporations propagandizing us for their own interests and agendas. They do not challenge power; they are power, the voice of the powerful. The mass media is not trying to provide the public with factual information, but rather to gaslight and propagandize them into subservience and support for elite positions, most of which are against our own interests. The media is crucial in providing necessary illusions (values, virtues, etc.) masking reality from the public in order to keep them from challenging the material interests of the elite (MacLeod, 2019, p. 1). He adds that if people cannot be controlled by force then they must be controlled through other methods, emphasizing that it is crucial that it not be perceived as propaganda. He thus confirms that the greatest achievement of modern propaganda is in persuading us of its non-existence (MacLeod, 2019, p. 1). It is precisely this illusionary effect that we aim to debunk through the current paper, by highlighting ‘maxims’ of communication in contemporary Albanians newspapers, which, as we will illustrate and comment upon, do not serve the real purpose of the media, to inform and communicate, but, on the contrary, create an illusionary veil of pseudo-information and pseudo-communication, providing information that limits people’s right to think or analyze news in depth. It does so through exploiting people’s primal passions, reinforcing stereotypes, feeding anxieties and phobias, and reducing events to the level of banality and absurdity. Such a ‘virtuous’ veil deforms the true responsibility of the media and transforms the critical apparatus of the people, who, sooner or later, get used to consuming such ‘fast-food’ for thought and forget the essence and flavor of real, untreated ‘food for thought.’

For Herman and Chomsky (1988) the societal purpose of media is to manufacture consent for elite policies and decisions and, thus, they lay out what they call a propaganda model of the mainstream American news media or a structural critique of the media. According to them, there are *five filters* that all potentially newsworthy events must pass through before they reach a TV screen, smartphone, or newspaper:

1. the size, concentration, as well as elite ownership and for-profit motive of the media;
2. reliance on advertising as their primary source of income;
3. reliance on information provided by government, big business, and other official “experts” funded by the powerful;

4. flak as a disciplining mechanism; and
5. a national religion of anti-communism, which functions as an instrument of discipline and control.

Raw stories are processed through these five filters before they reach the audience, and the filters determine which stories become news and which are discarded (MacLeod, 2019, pp. 3-4).

Despite the controversial criticism the book has faced, Robert McChesney described it as "arguably the most important work in news media criticism ever written" (McChesney in Herman, 2018). Cult journalist Matt Taibbi (2017) said it was a "bible" of media criticism for an entire generation of dissident thinkers, lamenting that there was no sequel; "now more than ever, we could use another *Manufacturing Consent*." (MacLeod, 2019, p. 5). The quoted book – *Propaganda in the Information Age* – does provide such a sequel, starting with an interview with Noam Chomsky and his current views on changes in the media landscape and his thoughts on current issues in the modern media, to be followed by new research on the propaganda model, the strength and relevance of the five filters today, modern issues of propaganda, the application of the propaganda model in Hollywood films, and Bollywood cinema. The book ends with the propaganda model from a journalist's perspective, while all chapters explore the propaganda model's continued relevance in the digital era.

Based on the first and the second part of the paper, specifically on the particular problems of the media as demonstrated, we outline below 'maxims' of communications that are observed in Albanian newspapers, supporting our argument of the development of 'fast' food-for-thought modern media.

### **'Maxims' of communication witnessed in Albanian newspapers**

Tell me, do you never read the Daily Express?  
'No.'  
'Nor the Daily Mail?'...  
Shearwater shook his head.  
'Nor any of the evening papers?'  
'No.'  
'Never,' said Shearwater. 'I have more serious things to think about than newspapers.'  
(Huxley, 1923)

Based on our corpus of study, we have outlined the following 'maxims' of communication in daily Albanian newspapers. The general tendency is to reduce the level of understanding and/or analysis, by manufacturing 'easy'-to-access news. We therefore propose the following categories of fast-food-communication in the form of 'maxims', illustrated by examples of news, websites where the news is taken from and a short explanation in English.

#### **The less you know, the better off you are**

This maxim relates to news that tends to avoid intellectual curiosity and choose polemics over rigorous arguments. We present some examples below:

In the first example ("Denoncimi për rritjen," 2023) the polemics that accompany the news about the rise of prices in Albania is disguised within 'factual' information that eating "110 gram of goat cheese a day would be a higher standard of living than living in France itself."



The next three examples chosen from Albanian newspapers (“Peshkatarin e prisnin”, 2024; “Protestuesi me kale”, 2023; “Rrëzimi i një”, 2023) seem to be on the verge of the ridiculous, or, at least, entertainment; the first lets the audience know that a fisherman’s punishment had been diminished from 4760 years of imprisonment to 4480 years; the second, ‘informs’ the audience that a protester is headed towards the parliament on a horse, whose hair has been painted blue (the relevance of the latter information is not made obvious in any way); and, the third, under the section ‘culture’ lets the audience know that a British playwright and writer has fallen and has been hurt to the point that he cannot scratch his nose.

#### **Irony and humor to reinforce stereotypes**

Media should not create stereotypes or enhance them, nevertheless, the following example (“‘Xhuxhi’ që”, 2022) shows the story of a 21-year-old actor who aims to overcome prejudice, yet the title reinforces such stereotypes by saying that the ‘dwarf is aspiring to become a famous actor.’

#### **Feed anxieties and phobias**

We have found lots of examples under this ‘maxim’ of fast-food communication in Albanian journals. It seems that people are attracted to news that feeds their worst anxieties and phobias, such as murders and horrid details depicting violent acts. It is not just the news about what has happened (the act of killing a wife, a sister, a mother) (Shoqera jone, 2023a); it is the details and the language used to describe those details that is as disturbing as the horrid events themselves.

While the first example tends to raise awareness about the fact that our ‘cowardly’ society in Albania is quite misogynistic and kills women, all other examples under this category (“Kronika e rëndë”, 2023; “Dan Hutra”, 2023; “Vëllai i Dan”, 2023; “Kishte planifikuar”, 2023; “Doja të prisja”, 2023; “Gjashtë orët”, 2023) are from news that portray exactly the same story, in different newspapers, the fact that a highly dangerous man, possibly a serial killer, has killed not only his cohabiting partner, but also his ex-wife as well as relatives of both of these women. Details of the crime are given with great precision, raising levels of hatred and morbid curiosity at the same time. Unfortunately, people are attracted to such news, involving crime, blood, murder, and anxiety.

#### **Reduce events to the level of the absurd, uniformity, and banality**

Another tendency is to serve the audience with news that is reduced to the level of absurdity, uniformity, and banality. The use of adverbs in this example (Vula qe, 2023b) reinforces the debate that is currently going on in the Albanian political arena about the democratic party and the official seal that it has been ‘denied’, thus, the news reads ‘the seal will either reaffirm or eventually tear down the democratic party; while the whole debate and its frequent portrayal on the news seems to be reduced to the level of the absurd, not contributing to any ‘real’ news.

Furthermore, we have juxtaposed two news sources that refer to both of the accidents, but from two different approaches. In the first case, the article only tells us the name of the journalist who was killed in a terrible accident, whereas, the second, the article, serving the requirements of real journalism, makes an effort to go beyond describing the accident as a simple event, another example of the frequent car accidents that happen in Albania, trying to discover where the responsibility for such occurrences lies (“Studentja e”, 2023; Kreshnik Spahiu, 2023).

Another example in the news tells of the case of a young couple that sells their unborn child for 5,000 Euro, but does attempt to uncover the reasons why the couple would resort to such a dramatic act ("Prindërit nga", 2023).

Another instance gives the news of a 'horror' event in the city of Durrës (Albania) where an employee is found 'burned'. The headline is just a way to attract readers' attention. In fact, the employee had been involved in an accident and due to his close proximity to the heater in his place of work, had suffered major burns, resulting in death. This was not a horror event, but it was served up as such to attract more attention ("Horror në", 2023).

### **'Create' reality**

We witnessed many cases during our search in which journalists are the ones that 'fabricate' the reality that was served up to the audience. Such cases mostly relate to upcoming elections ("Rama: Përgëzoi", 2023; "Takimi me", 2023; "Pagat duhet", 2023). In the first example, the 'news' is that the mayor is being praised by the Prime Minister for his job and his optimism, in the second example, the leader of one of the opposing parties expresses confidence in his ability to win, and, in the third example, the Prime Minister outlines the fact that there should be a pay rise, but does not give the audience any facts about real action behind the promise.

We have also selected several examples that show the same news in different newspapers ("Jetonte me", 2023; "E kapën", 2023; "Vrasja gabimisht", 2023; "U vra", 2023; "Historia e trishtë", 2023). Sadly enough, in the middle of what seemed to be an attempted gun attack aimed at some restaurant owners in an act of revenge, an innocent woman working there as a bartender, got killed. The news the next day had all this covered, most of the papers saying that the woman was 'accidentally' or 'unfairly' killed. Such use of the word unfair does not point out the real problem or the real people who ought to be held accountable, in this case, the people who were armed, or the reason they possessed a gun. It also disguises the fact that, if the real people to whom the attempted attack was directed had been murdered, the crime would not be 'accidental' or 'fairer'. The audience gets confused, misinformed, and uninformed all at once.

Other cases that we have included in this category are articles that relate to the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo. There are countless examples that 'play with words' to 'sell' the news that the conflict is finally moving towards a final resolution, that the proposal about the resolution is not being given up on, that compromise should be sought, that there is hope for signing agreements, that progress toward a resolution is being made, that a resolution might be just few months ahead, when, in fact, the news in this case is simply that much more lies ahead until something actually gets done. In all these examples, the use of adverbs and modal verbs is essential to disguise or distort information ("BE dhe", 2023; "Propozimi evropian", 2023; "Gjermania thirrje" 2023; "Brnabiç: Vuçiç", 2023; "Bujar Osmani", 2023; "Kosova dhe", 2023; "Po pergatitemi", 2023; "Plani i", 2023; "Takimi mes", 2023; "Kurti marreveshja", 2023; "Kurti marreveshja", 2023).

### **Truly false or falsely true**

Positioning readers somewhere where what is said is either truly false or falsely true is also one of the consequences of current newspapers and the way journalists write. The example in this category goes against such a tendency, trying to guide the readers to read and to analyze properly, going beyond the masks of propaganda ("Si duhet", 2023; "Carlo Bollino", 2023).

In the first example, the article relates to the way Russian writers should be read after the war between Russia and Ukraine, whereas, the second, attempts to raise awareness among the audience about the proper way to read the data of the report of journalists without borders, which in reality only disguises the real problem of the Albanian media today.

### **Exploit primal passions**

Newspapers, in search of exclusivity and a greater market share, exploit primal passions such as murder, death, nudity, etc. What is even worse, newspapers do not raise questions such as *Is this just an image?* or *Is this a just image?*

In the first example taken in this category (“Bollino”, 2020), the news is about one political party attacking another over the insensitivity of publishing photos of corpses on the hospital floor during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, to raise further interest from the audience, the same photos are reproduced, doing the same thing that the other party is being accused of – being insensitive and unethical towards the victims and their families. In the second example (“A mund të”, 2023), even though the news raises the problem of ethics, in this case of the selfies asked of Maria de Filippi during the funeral of her husband Maurizio Costanzo by their fans, the news reproduces the same photos from the funeral.

The next examples (“Qyteti ku”, 2023; “Për të”, 2023; “9 Mars”, 2021; “Më bëj”, 2023) all refer to the act of kissing in public and the fact that such an act is prohibited in some European countries, but the images chosen only add banality to the news.

The last examples (“Vajza e”, 2023; “Vera e”, 2023) refer to some other sad incidents that currently occurred in Albania: some adolescent girls involved in a fight in school, were filmed by another girl. The video went viral. The first article from the examples above reproduces screenshots of the video, thus, raising the desire for the ‘scoop,’ whereas the second, juxtaposes the news of the viral video to the underlying ailments of Albanian society, thus, serving the purpose of real journalism.

### **Raised awareness about current state of Albanian journalism**

After having illustrated maxims of ‘fast’ food-for-thought modern media, we would like to emphasize that there were also examples that aimed at raising awareness and deepening reflection about the current state of Albanian journalism. Such cases, as illustrated below (“Nënë Liza”, 2023; “Nje keqkuptim”, 2023; “Shenim nje”, 2023; “Gjeba ndaj”, 2023 “Vaj si” 2023; “Hipokrizia e”, 2023) point out the informality of current media, the way media misinforms the readers about reality, ‘stinking’ journalists, rich journalists, etc. There were also cases that served to show that the power of the media is the power to mobilize. This happened recently, when, due to the continuous insistence of journalists and their articles in daily newspapers, a mother who was unfairly imprisoned got reunited with her children.

### **Conclusions and suggestions for further research**

They swallow what's given them.... Cinemas, newspapers, magazines, gramophones, football matches, wireless, telephones – take them or leave them, if you want to amuse yourself”. An ordinary man would not be free. Because he wouldn't know how to occupy his leisure except in some way that would be forced on 'im by other people. People don't know 'ow to entertain themselves now; they leave it to other people to do it for them. They swallow what's given

them. They 'ave to swallow it, whether they like it or not. Cinemas, newspapers, magazines, gramophones, football matches, wireless, telephones - take them or leave them, if you want to amuse yourself. The ordinary man can't leave them. He takes; and what's that but slavery? And so you see, Mr Gumbriel, Mr Bojanus smiled with a kind of roguish triumph, 'you see that even in the purely hypothetical case of a man with indefinite leisure, there still would be no freedom. (Huxley, 1923)

This paper aims at explicating the maxims of successful communication as well as the problems witnessed in communication in media today, more specifically, Albanian newspapers. Based on the corpus of our study, we have devised some 'maxims' of 'fast' food-for-thought modern media in Albania, illustrated with examples taken from the corpus of our study. We agree with what Lutfi Dervishi, of the most well-known and well-reputed journalists in the Albanian media has stated: *In the absence of an ideal world, we are in search of the ideal direction. Journalists today are in constant competition with ordinary people, powerful people, business people, and show people, who communicate with the audience via social networks. It might be the time for people to turn to ideals, for journalism to turn back to being one of the most beautiful professions in the world. An ideal journalist respects ethics and professional standards, is committed to the investigation of abuses of power and corruption, is willing to undertake risks and protect his/her rights, works professionally, collaboratively and in solidarity, is constantly being updated, and, an ideal journalist knows the difference between news, propaganda, lies, half-truths, fake news, and disinformation. An ideal journalist knows the difference between 'public interest' and 'interesting for the public.'* There are no free journalists, when media owners are themselves deprived of freedom (Dervishi, 2023). We do hope that through intellectual discourse such lack of freedom is reinstated. We thus conclude our paper with the words of Pierre Bourdieu: *"Intellectual discourse remains one of the most authentic forms of resistance to manipulation and a vital affirmation of the freedom of thought."* (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 11, cited in Dick, 2020, p. 177).

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