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From Campus Closure to Campus Reopening: Strategies of American Universities to Avoid Social Crisis in COVID-19 Communication[1]

Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the life on university campuses in the world has changed significantly, and the USA is not an exception. At the end of winter and beginning of spring 2020, when the pandemic began, all campuses switched almost immediately to distance learning as very little was known about the new virus and the main aim was to prevent its spread by limiting

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[1] The article was written and submitted for review at the end of 2021. At the time of publication in 2022, of course, some things have undergone changes. However, we have decided to publish

all the contacts. All real-life interaction stopped immediately. Everybody was frightened and unsure what to do. Unfortunately, switching to remote education was not the best solution as it caused additional problems for students who had limited access to technology or health problems, and it revealed a lot of other obstacles for learning and teaching online that could have led to social unrest, quite unwanted and unacceptable for the universities.

American universities have always been more than just a place to earn a degree. A campus of an American university is the place where the big university community studies, interacts, participates in a great number of events, and lives life to the fullest. The creation of such a place is made possible due to years of hard work of the university administration, faculty, staff, students, and all the people involved.

During the pandemic, the main task of the universities was to survive: to continue the educational process using all resources available and to preserve the reputation and communities of the universities. They had to maintain the trust earned over the years, look for alternatives, find new solutions for the educational process and ways to reopen the campuses. Establishing and communicating crisis-oriented policies was the key to this.

In the pre-pandemic times, the websites of the universities always contained all the up-to-date information regarding the educational and extracurricular components of the campus life presented with the help of multimodal messages combining verbal and nonverbal elements. During the pandemic, the universities continued to use their websites as one of the key channels of communication and engagement of all the participants of the educational process in the achievement of the set aims.

When participating in the communication process, the sender of the information is guided by the aim of communication and chooses the most effective and successful ways to achieve it. In Discourse studies, communication is seen as the realization of participants' intentions. Intentions have verbal expression and are realized through certain strategies and tactics. Issers defines communication strategies as a complex of actions aimed at achieving the goal of communication. The process of describing the strategies consists of identifying typical tactics that implement one strategy or another (Иссерс, 2021, p. 54). Tactics is a homogeneous in intention and implementation line of behavior of the communicant, which is used to achieve a strategic perlocutionary effect (Безугла, 2007).

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the article in the original version because the pandemic period is, unfortunately, not over yet, and a lot of the universities are still implementing some of the strategies which are discussed in the article.

Linguists have studied communicative activity of the sender and the receiver, their communication strategies and tactics in the argumentative, pragmalinguistic, linguistic, and cultural aspects on the material of different types of discourses. Thus, scholars have focused on the communicative and pragmatic features of messages produced in political (Pidkuĭmukha & Kiss, 2020; Tincheva, 2019), media (Griebel et al., 2020; Johnson & Milani, 2010), advertising discourse (Bargiela Chiappini et al., 2013; Cook, 2001). However, the communication strategies and tactics that American universities have implemented in communication in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to avoid social crisis have not yet been identified and classified.

This article investigates how the universities communicated all the information and updates about the educational processes and the operation of the campuses during the pandemic through their websites. It also focuses on the communication strategies and tactics that were implemented to achieve the set aims and the verbal and nonverbal markers of these communication strategies and tactics.

The aim and the tasks of the research determine the methodology which requires an integrative multidisciplinary approach. This approach encompasses the methods and former research findings of such disciplines: communicative linguistics (the notion of the communication process, communication strategies and tactics; Grice & Warner, 2001; Searle, 1995; Бацевич, 2004; Безугла, 2007), cognitive linguistics and discourse studies (theory of discourse as a cognitive and communicative phenomenon; Bieliekhova, 2019; Fairclough, 2018; Gee, 2017; Wodak, 2021; Бондаренко et al., 2017), visual semantics (the relationship between visual images and culturally defined world issues used for creating meaning; Kress & Leeuwen, 2020). Cognitive and discourse analysis have been used to establish the aims of communication on American universities' websites during the pandemic and to distinguish the communication strategies and tactics that were implemented. Semantic analysis and content analysis have been employed to analyze the multimodal texts which were created by American universities and to establish the verbal and nonverbal markers of communication strategies and tactics. The results of this study are presented in three subsequent parts and each one focuses on the solution of a set task followed by general conclusions.

The material of the research encompasses multimodal messages published on the websites of American universities in winter 2020-fall 2021. A total of approximately 150 universities, one to three from each state, both private and public, were taken into account in order to provide the most representative sample. Taking into consideration the events that took place, four periods are distinguished: the beginning of the pandemic (winter 2020-spring 2020),

partial campus reopening (summer 2020-fall 2020), vaccination campaign (winter 2020-fall 2021), campus reopening (late spring 2021-fall 2021). The vaccination campaign and campus reopening partly overlap but, nevertheless, are singled out as separate time periods because each one is rather significant in the functioning of the campuses. As universities in the United States have rather significant autonomy, their structure and hierarchy vary. That is why it is not always clear who is involved in creating the content for university websites (some universities have special marketing teams, others engage the faculty and students, etc.). However, the information on the institutional websites generally represents the university's mission, vision, and policies established by the university administration (a branch of the university which is in charge of the maintenance and supervision of the university). Based on the aims of communication and the engagement of the university in informing about the coronavirus, regulating the operations on campus, and motivating the students and staff to take action, informational, regulational, and motivational strategies are distinguished. All three strategies were implemented during each time period.

Informational strategy

The **informational strategy** is implemented with the aim of providing all the participants of the educational process with information about different topics related to the current COVID-19 situation and to maintain a positive image of the university during the pandemic. This strategy involves the following tactics: *presentation of topic variety, creation of the university's positive image*. One of the main aims of implementation of the informational strategy is to provide clear, full and objective information about the pandemic in order to educate, prevent fear, and ease the social unrest.

The tactic *Presentation of topic variety*. Throughout the pandemic, the universities strive to keep all the participants of the educational process up to date with everything related to COVID-19. The topics covered include general information about the new virus, its symptoms, preventive measures, medical screening, vaccination, peculiarities of campus reopening. This tactic was utilized during all time periods, especially in winter 2020-spring 2020 when the virus began to spread and in winter 2021-summer 2021 when the vacci-

nation campaign started. At the beginning of the pandemic everybody was very frightened and the universities published numerous materials explaining what COVID-19 is, which symptoms should be taken seriously, and what can be done to stop the spread of the virus (Fig. 1–3).
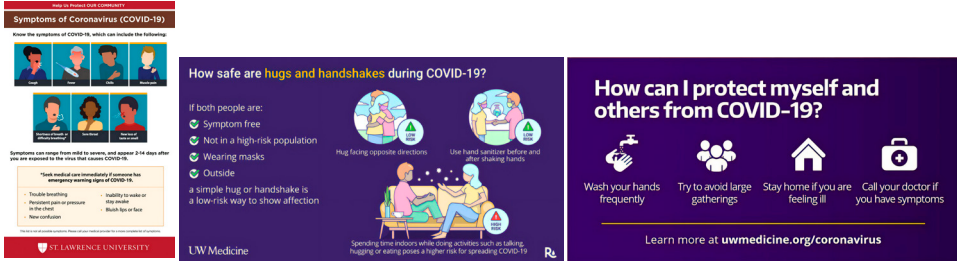

Fig. 1[2]   Fig. 2[3]   Fig. 3[4]

The universities constantly presented updated information regarding the pandemic and changes in different policies on campus. Most of these messages started with the phrase *COVID-19 update*, some of them included the date when the message was released due to the high frequency of such messages (Fig. 4–5).
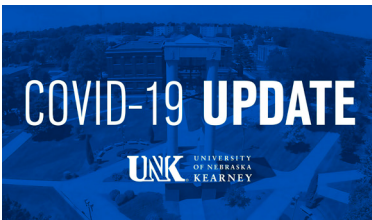

Fig. 4[5]   Fig. 5[6]

One of the types of the updates was the information about the new rules and new terms that were introduced. Social distancing was one of them. This

[2] Multimodal message published by St. Lawrence University, retrieved June 12, 2020, from https://www.stlawu.edu/offices/always-forward-returning-st-lawrence

[3] Multimodal message published by University of Washington Medicine, retrieved June 6, 2020, from https://www.uwmedicine.org/

[4] Multimodal message published by University of Washington Medicine, retrieved June 6, 2020, from https://www.uwmedicine.org/coronavirus

[5] Multimodal message published by University of Nebraska at Kearney, retrieved June 10, 2020, from https://unknews.unk.edu/2021/02/09/university-of-nebraska-at-kearney-covid-19-response-status-moves-to-phase-ii/

[6] Multimodal message published by University of Nebraska at Lincoln, retrieved June 18, 2020, from https://covid19.unl.edu/

term was frequently used at the beginning of the pandemic as one of the main tools in preventing the spread of COVID-19. The multimodal message of University of Nebraska (Fig. 6) explains that social distancing in the new normal reality during the pandemic stands for keeping 6 ft apart from each other and replacing (especially at the breakout of the pandemic) in-person communication with virtual forms.

Fig. 6[7]

When the COVID-19 vaccines were approved and became available to the public, the universities intended to give as much information as possible about staying safe and the different vaccines available in order to answer the questions that the students, faculty and their families might have. The universities also strived to achieve the educational aim of providing information connected with the pandemic and possible solutions. As part of this tactic, the universities recorded podcasts, organized webinars, and produced visual materials to provide additional resources.

For example, the University of Michigan created multimodal messages (Fig. 7–9) to advertise a series of podcasts and webinars featuring different viewpoints about the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccines available, tried to reduce the fear, anxiety, and stress that were very common before and throughout the vaccination campaign.

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[7] Multimodal message published by University of Nebraska at Lincoln, retrieved June 18, 2020, from https://covid19.unl.edu/

Fig. 7[8] Fig. 8[9] Fig. 9[10]

During the vaccination campaign, many universities opened COVID-19 vaccine clinics to increase the number of vaccinated people on campus. The informational messages which were created included information about the location of the clinics, their time of operation, and the vaccines available, as can be seen in the example of the University of California, Berkeley (Fig. 10).
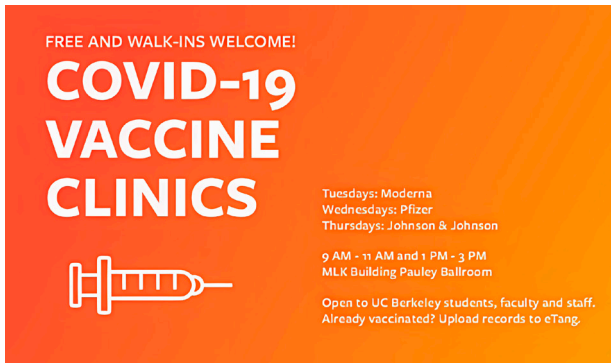

Fig. 10[11]

The verbal markers of the tactic *presentation of topic variety* consist of lexical and syntactic features. The lexical peculiarities are the usage of unified medical terminology (virus, COVID-19, respiratory disease, symptoms (fever, coughing, sneezing), testing, immunization, medical screening, temperature

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[8] Multimodal message published by University of Michigan, retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://sph.umich.edu/podcast/coronavirus/one-year-of-covid-19.html

[9] Multimodal message published by University of Michigan, retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://sph.umich.edu/podcast/coronavirus/what-you-should-know-about-the-covid-19 -vaccine.html

[10] Multimodal message published by University of Michigan, retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://sph.umich.edu/podcast/coronavirus/vaccine-hesitancy-and-covid-19.html

[11] Multimodal message published by University of California Berkeley, retrieved June 21, 2021, from https://uhs.berkeley.edu/coronavirus/vaccines-covid-19

check, names of the vaccines, etc.) to present clear and consistent information; adjectives *new, novel, unknown* to emphasize the novelty and unpredictability of the pandemic; nouns *update, recent information, more details* to provide the most current information; coinage of new words such as *new normal* and *close to normal* to represent the new rules and way of life.

The syntactic features are the use of the Q&A (question and answer) format to answer possible questions that students, faculty and their families might have; bulleted and numbered lists to structure the information; varied sentence structure and length to provide as much detail as possible; hyperlinks for additional information to provide authoritative sources with more in-depth data.

The nonverbal markers of this tactic are images of the virus, masks, thermometers, soap, house, vaccination process to illustrate the information presented, attract attention to it, and encourage reading.
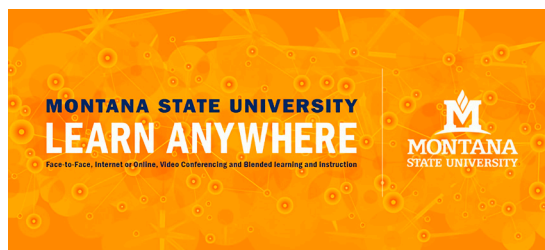
The tactic *creation of university's positive image* has been used on campuses long before the pandemic started. However, with the outbreak of COVID-19 this tactic became even more important as it was vital for the universities to preserve their reputation and the trust of all the present and potential participants of the educational process. Thus, the universities strived to provide detailed information about what was done on campus to maintain a safe environment and save lives.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, when the university campuses were closed and all classes were transferred online, the universities generally published messages regarding the virus itself and ways to stop it, they urged the students and faculty to stay at home as much as possible to prevent the spread of the unknown virus. In such a way, they attempted to show that they cared about the lives of the university community.

During the summer 2020 many university campuses were planning to reopen in fall and their main aim was to persuade everybody that the campuses were secure environments where all the safety measures were taken. This is when the phrase *covid conscious campus* appeared and became widely used (Fig. 11–12).
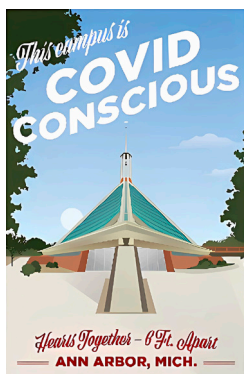
Fig. 11[12]   Fig. 12[13]

In fall 2020, no US campuses were able to return all classes to campus. Nevertheless, all of them did their best to continue the educational process by incorporating various methods of instruction and making education available without time and space restrictions (Fig. 13). Some universities offered the hybrid (blended) learning format for the classes with a smaller number of students.

Fig. 13[14]

In winter 2020-spring 2021, as the vaccines became available, the universities were actively engaged in the vaccination campaign. As part of the tactic of creating a positive image, universities attempted to show that they supported vaccination and saw it as the best option for returning everybody to campus.

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[12] Multimodal message published by Concordia University Ann Arbor Michigan, retrieved September 1, 2021, from `s://blog.cuaa.edu/hearts-together-six-feet-apart-a-covid-conscious -return/

[13] Multimodal message published by Concordia University Wisconsin, retrieved September 1, 2021, from https://blog.cuw.edu/covid-conscious-return/

[14] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved June 21, 2021, from http://ato.montana.edu/learnanywhere/students/

The universities accepted the challenge to do everything they could to get as many people vaccinated as possible in the shortest possible amount of time, as shown in the message of Columbia University (Fig. 14).

Fig. 14[15]

As the vaccination campaign continued and more and more people got vaccinated, the universities prepared to reopen the campuses in fall 2021. During summer 2021, messages with campus reopening and recovery plans appeared, and the universities were very eager to welcome back all participants of the educational process and make them feel at home again (Fig. 15–17).

Fig. 15[16]   Fig. 16[17]   Fig. 17[18]

[15] Multimodal message published by Columbia University, retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://covid19.columbia.edu/vaccine-info

[16] Multimodal message published by Winston-Salem State University, retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://www.readkong.com/page/campus-reopening-recovery-plan-spring-2021-covid-19-9970004

[17] Multimodal message published by the Catholic University of America, retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://communications.catholic.edu/news/spotlight/2021-commencement.html

[18] Multimodal message published by Harvard College, retrieved August 20, 2021, from https://dso.college.harvard.edu/return-campus-resources

The verbal markers of this tactic are the usage of the phrases *secure environment, covid conscious campus*; the university's name, hashtags with the university's abbreviation in most of the informational messages to emphasize the university's role.

The nonverbal markers of this tactic prevail over the verbal ones and include the use of the university's logo on informational messages to build trust to this specific university; the use of genuine photos of the universities to provide visual information about what the campus looks like during the pandemic, emphasize the distance between groups and individuals, opportunities of studying outside, in larger classrooms.

Overall, the informational strategy was implemented in the context of the pandemic to fulfill the university's mission to create and disseminate knowledge in a safe environment. The universities aimed to become authoritative institutions that would be treated as one of the main sources of information during the pandemic. The tactics *presentation of topic variety* and *creation of university's positive image* were realized by the universities to teach how to behave during the pandemic by providing accurate information, including different points of view to avoid distrust and maintain a positive image.

Regulational strategy

The **regulational strategy** is put into practice by American universities in order to establish the rules, set guidelines, be in charge of everything that is going on and show that the situation is kept under control. In order to implement the regulational strategy the universities carried out the following tactics: *formulation of aims, setting guidelines.*

The tactic *formulation of aims* is utilized in order to explain why certain rules and restrictions have been introduced. The universities set the following aims throughout the pandemic: stop the spread of COVID-19, save lives, maintain a safe environment on campus, vaccinate the students and faculty, return to campus, and keep the classes on campus.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the main aim which was emphasized in regulational messages was to stay home and save lives in order to stop the spread of the pandemic (Fig. 18).

Fig. 18[19]

As some of the campuses began to partially reopen in summer 2020, safety measures to be taken on campus were emphasized, and the set aim was to respect and protect the lives of others (Fig. 19). During the vaccination campaign, the main aim was to get vaccinated in order to return to campus as soon as possible (Fig. 20).

Fig. 19[20]

Fig. 20[21]

The verbal markers of this tactic are use of imperatives, hashtags, short sentences or phrases, and verbs of necessity, such as *need*, *require*. Most of the messages include the formulation of the aim and a short explanation of why it is needed. The nonverbal markers are illustrations of the aims, actual photos of students and faculty on campus.

The tactic *setting guidelines* is implemented to explain what has to be done in order to reach the set aim. During each time period the universities provided strict and detailed step-by-step instructions explaining what each person should do to stay safe while continuing studying/teaching.

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[19] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved June 20, 2020, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/index.html

[20] Multimodal message published by the Catholic University of America, retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://commencement.catholic.edu/senior-fun/index.html

[21] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved June 20, 2021, from https://ato.montana.edu/

During the first time period, the emphasis was made on taking all the safety measures, such as washing hands frequently and thoroughly, wearing masks, observing social distancing (Fig. 21–22).

Fig. 21[22]   Fig. 22[23]

At the time of partial campus reopening, the emphasis on the necessity of following all the rules and regulations was even stronger, and the main motivation for this was to continue studying in-person and keep the classes on campus (Fig. 23–24).

Fig. 23[24]   Fig. 24[25]

[22] Multimodal message published by University of Nebraska at Lincoln, retrieved March 6, 2021, from https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/online-resource-created-for-covid-19-signage/

[23] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved March 6, 2021, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/health-safety/practice-social-distancing.html

[24] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved August 1, 2021, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/resources/index.html

[25] Multimodal message published by Elon University, retrieved March 1, 2021, from https://www.elon.edu/rr

During the vaccination campaign, the universities implemented the tactic of setting guidelines to compel people to get vaccinated (Fig. 25–26).

Fig. 25[26]   Fig. 26[27]

The phase of returning to campus also features a number of guidelines which have to be followed in order to study or work on campus (Fig. 27). Some of the universities introduced mandatory health checks, others allowed only vaccinated people to be on campus. The implementation of the regulational strategy facilitates providing step-by-step instructions regarding what should be done.

Fig. 27[28]

[26] Multimodal message published by the City University of New York, retrieved June 1, 2021, from https://www.cuny.edu/coronavirus/university-updates/administrative-announcements/covid-19-supplemental-policy-no3/

[27] Multimodal message published by Miami University, retrieved June 1, 2021, from https://www.miamioh.edu/covid19/vaccine/work-impact/

[28] Multimodal message published by Maricopa Community Colleges, retrieved September 11, 2021, from https://www.maricopa.edu/

The verbal markers of this tactic are the use of modal verbs, imperative form of the verbs for polite requests and orders; words *please* and *thank you* to soften the guidelines; phrases *reopening protocols*, *reopening plans* and detailed instructions represented in lists or schemes to structure the rules and provide an explanation why the measures are needed.

The nonverbal markers are the use of images to symbolize what should (use of green color, underlining) and shouldn't (red color, stop signs, crossing out) be done, graphs and visuals to compliment the verbal instructions, images of the signs on campus, pictures of how the rules are implemented on campus.

Therefore, the regulational strategy is implemented via the tactics *formulation of aims* and *setting guidelines* to notify about the rules and regulations imposed by the administration on university campuses. Simultaneously, the universities make an attempt to give reasons for the necessity of such actions and clarify the rational decision-making processes during the pandemic.

Motivational strategy

The motivational strategy is implemented to unite, motivate, and support all the participants of the educational process during the phases of the pandemic, inspire them to take action. This strategy encompasses the tactics of *attracting attention, fostering a sense of community and mutual responsibility, supporting each and every person.*

The tactic *fostering a sense of community and mutual responsibility* is utilized to demonstrate that the whole campus is fighting with the new virus and that this battle can be won by uniting the efforts of each person involved. All people on campus are seen as part of the university community, where everyone is responsible for each other. For example, the University at Buffalo and Villanova University stress the importance of the university community and of being together during the difficult times (Fig. 28–29).
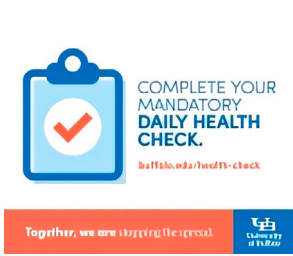
Fig. 28[29]

Fig. 29[30]

Montana State University and the University of Georgia use the mascots of the universities in their messages as a symbol of the university community where everybody takes care of each other (Fig. 30–31).

Fig. 30[31]

Fig. 31[32]

The verbal markers of this tactic are the use of pronouns *we*, *our*, words *community*, *together*, *do your part*, names of the mascots of the universities. The nonverbal markers are images of the university's mascots with a group of students, as well as groups of students and faculty.

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[29] Multimodal message published by University at Buffalo, retrieved August 5, 2021, from https://www.buffalo.edu/coronavirus/resources/health-and-safety-information-resources/hsg-posters.html

[30] Multimodal message published by Villanova University, retrieved August 5, 2021, from https://www1.villanova.edu/university/return-to-campus/commitment.html

[31] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved September 12, 2020, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/covid-download-gallery.html

[32] Multimodal message published by University of Georgia retrieved May 1, 2021, from https://coronavirus.uga.edu/

The tactic *attracting attention* is implemented to gain the attention of the participants of the educational process, to encourage them to follow the university's messages and updates, to keep to the rules and guidelines, and motivate participants to take action. Sometimes the university provides fun alternatives for the activities that everybody is used to but cannot perform during the pandemic, draws on funny associations to make the rules easier to remember. This tactic is also implemented for entertaining purposes to make everybody less nervous and distract them from everyday worries.

For example, Montana State University uses the images of toilet paper rolls in the illustration of social distancing during the pandemic as a humorous recall of the people's buying habits at the beginning of the pandemic (Fig. 32). The phrase "new normal" in the message of the MBA Center attracts attention because of the unusual phrase and curiosity regarding what the new normal will bring in the future (Fig. 33).
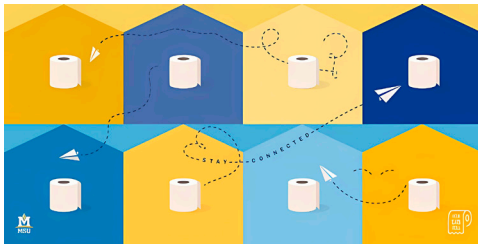

Fig. 32[33]   Fig. 33[34]

In Fig. 34–35, the universities used word play to attract the attention of the readers, to provide a fun alternative (cycling) for limiting the contacts at the beginning of the pandemic and *taking a shot* (getting vaccinated and by this taking a shot at going back to campus). One more thing that draws attention in this message and motivates to take action is the picture of students without masks on campus, which is quite unusual to see after all the restrictions. Vaccination is promoted as an injection of trust (Fig. 36) and hope for a return to the normal way of life. This tactic was also used for additional motivation of all people on campus during the vaccination campaign as universities provided additional freebies and bonuses for those who got vaccinated.

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[33] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved May 1, 2020, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/covid-download-gallery.html

[34] Multimodal message published by University of California Berkeley, retrieved June 1, 2020, from https://mbacenterglobal.com/university-of-california-berkeley-mba-coronavirus
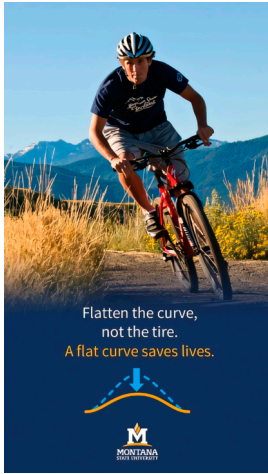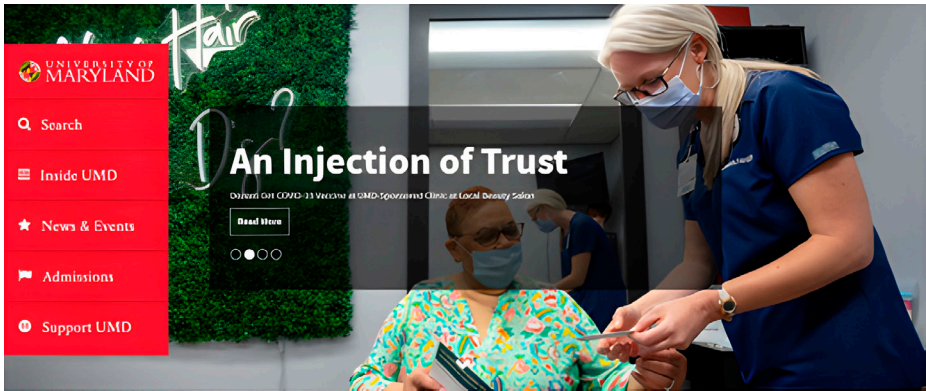
Fig. 34[35]

Fig. 35[36]

Fig. 36[37]

The verbal markers of this tactic are the use of metaphors, wordplay, humorous phrases, slogans *Stay home*, *save lives*, *It's worth a shot*, *Getting back to normal*, *Live life to the fullest*. The nonverbal markers are visual metaphors, bright and funny pictures, images of the students and faculty on campus (both individuals and small groups).

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[35] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved May 1, 2020, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/covid-download-gallery.html

[36] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved June 1, 2021, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/archived-comms/index.html

[37] Multimodal message published by University of Maryland, retrieved June 1, 2021, from https://today.umd.edu/injection-trust-7255b902-6c02-47a6-b45c-5d5d3df93b00

The tactic *supporting each and every person* is utilized with the aim of providing help and support for every participant of the educational process during the difficult times of the pandemic. The universities create supportive messages to inform that most people who get ill recover and have mild symptoms, offer psychological help to overcome the fears and anxiety related to the virus and returning to campus (Fig. 37–39). Contact information of faculty and administration is provided to offer either face-to-face or online help and give answers to possible questions, to reassure that the university representatives are always there when they are needed. Virtual support in the form of chat bots and health check applications helps to gain additional information or to fulfill the requirements in order to return to campus. Social distancing has been considered as one of the best ways to stop the spread of the virus at the beginning of the pandemic; however, as the pandemic continued, the universities tried to emphasize that social distancing is not emotional distancing and to replace the term with physical or facial distancing (Fig. 40).
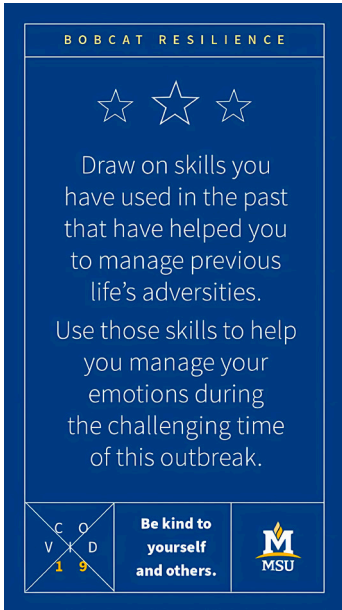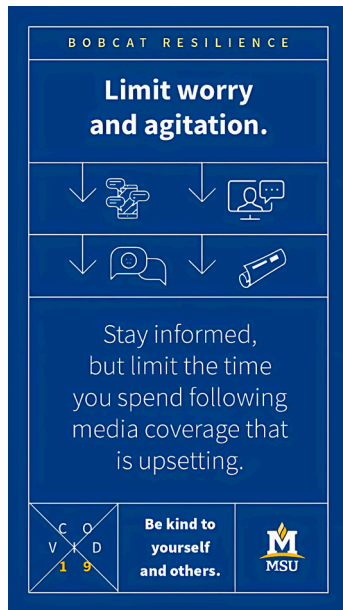
Fig. 37[38]   Fig. 38[39]

[38] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved May 10, 2020, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/resources/index.html

[39] Multimodal message published by Montana State University, retrieved May 10, 2020, from https://www.montana.edu/health/coronavirus/faq.html

Fig. 39[40]

Fig. 40[41]

The messages created by the universities emphasize the importance of being together when returning to campus after campus reopening and reuniting on campus, providing support for each other (Fig. 41).

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[40] Multimodal message published by Ivy Tech Community College, retrieved September 12, 2020, from https://www.ivytech.edu/

[41] Multimodal message published by University of Utah, retrieved September 12, 2020, from https://healthcare.utah.edu/healthfeed/postings/2020/03/coronavirus-social-distancing.php

Fig. 41[42]

　　The verbal markers of this tactic are phrases *contact us*, *contact information*, *chat bot*, *health monitoring app*, *support*, *help*, *call*, *write* which inform about possible communication channels. Nonverbal markers are images of phones, computers, letters, emails and photos of campuses.

　　Consequently, the implementation of the motivational strategy is aimed to lead to strengthening the university community, renewing the interpersonal communication that many people lack during the pandemic, thus inspiring them to take action in order to stop the pandemic as soon as possible.

Conclusions

　　Overall, the communication on the campuses of American universities has generally shifted to online communication during the coronavirus pandemic. The websites of the universities presented multimodal messages which contained up-to-date information regarding the actions taken by all the participants of the educational process. Throughout the four time periods of the pandemic (beginning of the pandemic, partial campus reopening, vaccination campaign, and campus reopening), the university representatives dealt with constantly changing working conditions, looked for new solutions, alternatives and ways to bring everybody back to campus in order to make returning to normal life, the life to which everybody was used, possible.

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[42] Multimodal message published by Brooklyn College, retrieved September 1, 2021, from http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/about/initiatives/initiatives/return.php?utm_source =Website&utm_medium=Return&utm_campaign=Return

As an attempt to achieve the set goals of continuing the educational process using all resources available, preserving the university's reputation and communities, the universities implemented the informational, regulational, and motivational communication strategies. Each strategy is realized through a series of tactics, characterized by specific verbal and nonverbal markers. The informational strategy is utilized with the aim of providing all the participants of the educational process with clear, full and objective information about different topics related to the current COVID-19 situation in order to prevent fear, ease social unrest, and maintain the university's positive reputation during the pandemic. The regulational strategy is put into practice by American universities in order to establish the rules, set guidelines, clarify decision-making processes during the pandemic, and show that the situation is kept under control. The implementation of the motivational strategy is aimed at uniting and strengthening the university community, supporting all the participants of the educational process during the phases of the pandemic, renewing the interpersonal communication that many people lack during the pandemic, and inspiring to take action in order to stop the pandemic as soon as possible. All the universities from the research sample have implemented the informational, regulational, and motivational strategies. Most of the tactics of the first two strategies are quite similar among all the universities. The main difference lies in the implementation of the motivational strategies. Many universities attempted to adjust this strategy to their own main values, traditions, and the interests of the faculty and students which resulted in some variations of the tactics. One more difference that should be pointed out is the different amount of verbal and nonverbal components presented in the multimodal messages. Some universities aimed to emphasize the textual part in order to give as much information as possible, while others accentuated the visual part to attract the attention of a larger target audience. The universities generally implement a combination of strategies and tactics instead of realizing each one individually in order to cope with the educational and social crisis and address such issues as inequality, social distancing, psychological problems, lack of communication and community.

The perspective of this research is seen in the expansion of the research material and inclusion of the multimodal messages that were published on universities' social media accounts, as well as the responses of the students, faculty, and staff to these messages. This will enable the analysis of the reactions to the universities' multimodal messages in the public discourse.

Postscript

We wrote this article when the world was struggling through the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a global crisis, which at first paralyzed the lives of many. People all over the world had to learn how to live in the new reality that COVID-19 had brought.

As American universities and universities all over the world have gradually transitioned from the lockdown during the pandemic and have made pretty successful attempts to reopen their campuses, February 24, 2022 has brought yet another global crisis into the lives of people worldwide. On that day, breaking news about Russia's invasion of Ukraine spread all over the world extremely quickly. A great number of governmental officials, businesses, educational institutions, and ordinary people reacted to what had happened. Universities all over the world were not an exception. Many of them responded to the unbelievable invasion of the territory of a sovereign European country. It has become clear that the world is facing yet another global crisis.

It should be mentioned that Ukraine's territorial borders have been violated many times in history, but Ukraine has never given up. The occupation of Crimea and Donbas in 2014 has changed the lives of many Ukrainians. The invasion of the Russian army on February 24, 2022 has significantly impacted not only the lives of Ukrainians but also the worldviews of many people all over the globe.

February 24 became a new temporal border for many people of different ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds. This very dark morning divided the lives of Ukrainians into before and after. It was followed by numerous unplanned territorial border crossings, new cross-border experiences, and constant attempts to preserve the Ukrainian national identity in different parts of the globe.

Close cooperation of the Department of English Philology at Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University and the Chair of North American Literary and Cultural Studies at Saarland University began in 2014 and since then has grown and expanded. When the war started, Prof. Dr. Astrid Fellner, her fantastic team at the Chair of North American Literary and Cultural Studies, the International office and so many wonderful people at Saarland University as well as Prof. Dr. Stefan Diemer and his great team at Trier University of Applied Sciences have

helped us and our families, as well as the families of our colleagues to be able to continue our teaching and research activities in a safe place.

Ukrainian educational institutions are constantly under attack. Nevertheless, they continue the educational process and strive to survive no matter what. During these eight months we have been working together on continuing the cooperation between the universities to be able to go on with the educational and research activities at Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University and to support the colleagues and students who are currently in Mykolaiv, different parts of Ukraine and other countries.

It is our firm belief that although many of us have been forced to relocate and are currently in various parts of Ukraine and different countries of the world, it is very important to tell the world about Ukraine, to preserve Ukrainian national identity, support our home University, which has a long-lasting history of international cooperation, to enhance the research network with new contacts, to work together on innovative projects, and to stay strong together.

We express our gratitude to our relatives, friends, and colleagues worldwide who have reached out to us and offered help. We are extremely grateful to our new friends whom we have met on our way to safety in Ukraine, Poland, and Germany and who have now become an inseparable part of our lives. We would like to thank the educational institutions all over the world that have offered support to displaced Ukrainian scholars. We appreciate each and every person who stands with Ukraine and does everything possible to help Ukrainians fight for freedom.

Our thoughts are constantly with our courageous warriors and our dear relatives, friends, colleagues, and students who are currently in Ukraine.

We appeal to the whole world to stand with Ukraine and to support Ukraine! We believe that only together we can do everything possible to stop the war.

INTERNET SOURCES

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Multimodal message published by Columbia University: https://covid19.columbia.edu/vaccine-info

Multimodal message published by Concordia University Ann Arbor Michigan: https://blog.cuaa.edu/hearts-together-six-feet-apart-a-covid-conscious-return/

Multimodal message published by Concordia University Wisconsin: https://blog.cuw.edu/covid-conscious-return/

Multimodal message published by Elon University: https://www.elon.edu/rr

Multimodal message published by Harvard College: https://dso.college.harvard.edu/return-campus-resources

Multimodal message published by Ivy Tech Community College: https://www.ivytech.edu/

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Multimodal message published by University of Maryland: https://today.umd.edu/injection-trust-7255b902-6c02-47a6-b45c-5d5d3df93b00

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Multimodal message published by University of Nebraska at Lincoln: https://covid19.unl.edu/, https://news.unl.edu/newsrooms/today/article/online-resource-created-for-covid-19-signage/

Multimodal message published by University of Utah: https://healthcare.utah.edu/healthfeed /postings/2020/03/coronavirus-social-distancing.php

Multimodal message published by University of Washington Medicine: https://www.uwmedicine .org/, https://www.uwmedicine.org/coronavirus

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Od zamknięcia kampusu do jego ponownego otwarcia. Strategie uniwersytetów amerykańskich mające na celu uniknięcie kryzysu społecznego w komunikacji na temat COVID-19

W niniejszym artykule zbadano, w jaki sposób uczelnie wykorzystywały swoje instytucjonalne strony internetowe jako jeden z kluczowych kanałów komunikacji i angażowania wszystkich uczestników procesu edukacyjnego w czasie pandemii COVID-19. Przedmiotem uwagi są wdrożone strategie i taktyki komunikacyjne, wraz z ich wyznacznikami werbalnymi i niewerbalnymi. Zakłada się, że uczelnie na ogół łączą różne strategie i taktyki zamiast realizować każdą z nich indywidualnie, tak aby poradzić sobie z kryzysem edukacyjnym i społecznym oraz zająć się takimi problemami, jak nierówności, dystans społeczny, problemy psychologiczne, brak komunikacji i wspólnoty.

Słowa kluczowe: taktyki komunikacyjne, strategie komunikacyjne, pandemia COVID-19, komunikacja na temat COVID-19, kryzys społeczny, zaangażowanie uczelni, strony internetowe uczelni

From campus closure to campus reopening: Strategies of American universities to avoid social crisis in COVID-19 communication

This paper examines how the universities used their institutional websites as one of the key channels of COVID-19 communication and engagement of all participants of the educational process in the achievement of the set aims during the pandemic. The article investigates which communication strategies and tactics were implemented and what the verbal and nonverbal markers of the communication strategies and tactics are. It is assumed that universities generally implement the combination of strategies and tactics instead of realizing each one individually in order to cope with educational and social crisis and address such issues as inequality, social distancing, psychological problems, lack of communication and community.

Keywords: communication tactics, communication strategies, COVID-19 pandemic, COVID-19 communication, social crisis, university engagement, university websites

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