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VERBAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRECEDENT SITUATION OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE

Summary. The article focuses on the means of verbalization of the precedent situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in contemporary political discourse. Any references to the precedent phenomenon of the Covid-19 pandemic, including both the direct implementations constituted by the so-called pandemic vocabulary directly nominating realia of the Covid-19 period, direct citation, etc. and the indirect references made through indirect citation, semantic modifications of precedent statements, as well as allusions, metaphors, etc. are regarded as intertextual elements realizing certain pragmatic functions in the present-day political communication. Mainstream British political discourse of the pandemic period serves as the material for the research covered in the article. The objectives pursued in the article are to analyze the means of verbal implementation of the precedent situation of Covid-19 pandemic in the current political discourse; to examine the Covid-related verbal facts as an effective mechanism for building the political intertext; to explore the functions of the Covid-19-related verbal facts in political communication. Methodological framework of the research includes political discourse analysis, theory of intertextuality, and precedent phenomena study. In the course of the study, methods of semantic, contextual, and intertextual analysis were used to identify the functional status of the Covid-19-related verbal facts as intertextual elements. The Covid-19-related verbal facts are being actively incorporated in the current political discourse to highlight all important precedent phenomena characteristic of the pandemic period. Initiated by politicians and political media, they are actualized in speech as units of encoded meaning familiar to and, hence, comprehensible by a vast number of recipients sharing a common corpus of references in the current social-political environment. The means of verbalization of the Covid-19 precedent situation in the language of political communication vary greatly, all of them contributing to the formation of political intertext of the pandemic period and satisfying a number of the key objectives of political communication.

Key words: political discourse, precedent phenomenon, verbalization of precedent situation, intertext, intertextual element, Covid-19 pandemic.

Introduction. The role of the precedent situation of Covid-19 pandemic has remained dominant on the modern media scene for two years so far. Covid-relating statistics concerning new cases of those diagnosed and hospitalized with, vaccinated for, or deceased due to Coronavirus, are being updated every day both on the local and global scale. Covid-relating neologisms, along

with the short-lived informal coinages represented by a variety of stylistically neutral and jocular blends, acronyms and clippings, have entered our everyday lexicon, invaded all types of discourse and become an effective tool for shaping public opinion. Covid-relating metaphors and other rhetorical means reflect the dynamics of the pandemic and create the infodemic reality we live in. This trend is blatantly obvious in the political discourse where current political events are often addressed and analyzed through direct or indirect reference to the Covid factor. Covid-relating precedent phenomena in the current mainstream and oppositional political narratives allow for a more precise interpretation and thorough assessment of an event, and by attaching new connotations to the well-known facts bring about changes in the perception of the current political situations by the mass recipient. Thus, Covid-relating verbal facts as multifunctional precedent units regularly reproduced in the current political discourse in a variety of newly generated meanings and updated contexts, form the object of the study, the results thereof will be presented in this article. The objectives of the study are as follows: 1) analyze the means of verbal implementation of the precedent situation of Covid-19 pandemic in the current political discourse; 2) examine the Covid-related verbal facts as an effective mechanism for building the political intertext; 3) explore the functions of the Covid-19-related verbal facts in political communication.

Research prerequisites. Thanks to intertextuality, defined by J. Kristeva as “textual interaction that occurs within a certain text” [1, p. 46], the amount of information contained in the text, i. e., its informativity, expands, new intra- and intertext links are established, a special, often complex, and multilevel intertext is formed.

The fact that the texts of the previous culture and the texts of the contemporary culture interact was recognized by the well-known French semiotician and literary critic R. Barthes as far back as in the middle of the XX century. “Fragments of cultural codes, formulas, rhythmic structures, fragments of social idioms, etc. are all absorbed by the text and mixed in it since there is always a language before and around the text [2, p. 99]. Barthes asserted that a necessary condition for the formation of meaning is the interaction of the text with the semiotics of culture. He considered intertext as “a blur of anonymous formulas, unconscious or automatic quotations without quotation marks”, and thought intertextuality to be an invariable feature of any text, since “the text exists only due to intertextual relations.” [3, p. 427].

Intertextual links in the text continuum can be organized in different ways. Along with the intertextuality proper, realized mainly through quotation or allusion, there are other, more complex forms of text interaction. These include, in particular, metatextuality – the relationship of a text with its pretexts (precedent texts), when one text becomes a commentary on another text, as well as hypertextuality, where the connection between a pretext and hypertext (subsequent text) is established through imitation, parody, adaptation, etc. [4, p. 54–55].

According to the broad interpretation, the formal criterion that determines the intertext is any reference to a precedent phenomenon. It should be noted that precedent phenomena incorporate precedent texts, utterances, names, and situations that present minimal cultural signs that perform a specialized pragmatic function and serve as indigenous culture bearers. Besides, according to the definition by D. B. Gudkov, they form units of speech that are familiar to the vast majority of the community, stored in its collective memory and regularly actualized in speech [5]. A precedent situation can be defined as a significant event that happened in the life of an ethnic group or civilization, its sign being a precedent name or a precedent statement [6].

There is hardly any doubt that Covid-19 pandemic has already become an unprecedented event in its scope and effect and brought about drastic changes to the perception of the world by all of us. For many, it has become a new *terminus a quo*, a new measure of value, a new factor shaping their lives, a new metaphor. Familiar to everyone, it is being encoded in contemporary culture and language to remain there for long. Political discourse, both primary (produced by politicians) and secondary (reproduced by political journalists and media), is being much affected by the Covid-19 pandemic situation which becomes a new intertextual link in political communication worldwide.

Valuable for our study, proposition which reflects the dynamics of political intertext is Michael Riffaterre's thesis that intertext evolves with time, and the corpus of references common for a certain generation of recipients changes as long as their worldview does [4, p. 57]. It explains, in particular, the dependence of political intertext on the current political environment, formed by a combination of such factors as the current political party in power, the efficiency of the current government, government policies, the current legal framework, various interest groups, political events, people running politics, etc., along with the social, economic and other factors determining the current political agenda.

Results and discussion. The Covid-19 pandemic has undeniably become one of the most essential agenda-forming factors over the course of the last two years. Emerging at first as horrible breaking news, this non-political precedent phenomenon was gradually taking on some other tasks on the world media scene. It should be mentioned here that when it comes to the political context, language and everything it generates and employs, are dictated by the fundamental pragmatic tasks and functions of political communication, such as instrument (struggle for power), regulatory (influencing), magical (based on the mythologized perception and the use of manipulative techniques), ritual (in some types of political discourse), and creative (by which, according to L. M. Terentii, the desired response of the public to a political situation or select political figures is created, whereby an imaginary world built with the help of the language can completely replace the existing reality) [7, p. 29]. The verbal implementations

of the precedent situation of the Covid-19 pandemic seem to have been increasingly politicized and involved in playing politics in today's infomedia.

Studying functional perspectives of contemporary journalism, A. O. Khudolii highlighted its communicative-pragmatic value, which is not so much about informing as social-psychological influencing the mass audience by suggestion, persuasion, and emotional involvement [8, p. 4]. This assertion seems equally applicable to the political media discourse study. The pragmatic function of political communication is implemented through various semantic, syntactic, and textual mechanisms, including, *inter alia*, intertextual links.

Thus, in our synchronic study, we will consider some of the most recent intertextual implementations of the precedent situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in political discourse and offer some interpretations of the Covid-19-related contexts exerting certain manipulative influence.

Quite often pandemic words become subjects to occasional semantic modification when it is dictated and, hence, justified by the intentions and objectives of a journalist, e. g., in voicing criticism or achieving the comic effect. Thus, a popular Australian columnist for *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Peter FitzSimons sounds rather insolent in his article "I've got a plan to get all the anti-jabbers to get their shots": "*You have believed all the jibber-jabber and so refused the jab. But you still want to get in the tightly-closed environment of an aeroplane or long-haul bus and put your fellow jibber-jabber-anti-jabber at risk? Well, sorry, but no. Your all-areas pass is now restricted. ... No jab, no cab to the airport...*" (The Sydney Morning Herald: May 23, 2021 [9]). Stylistically reinforced by reduplication of similar in sound form *jibber-jabber*, the author's nonce word *jibber-jabber-anti-jabber* is more than just a jocular characteristic of those who ignore the new public order. It seems a lucky coincidence that semantics of *jibber-jabber* also plays into the journalist's hands, as the word denotes "the incoherent and unintelligible rapid speech, often in slang, used in the UK as a disparaging name for other languages such as French, Spanish or American; nonsense or foolishness" [10]. Peter FitzSimons's play on words involves not only aforementioned linguistic associations but also a certain visual linking to the protagonists of a Canadian children's television series about twin brothers, Jibber and Jabber, who like to imagine things [11]. Thus, due to a bunch of associative links (allusions) simultaneously realized in the journalistic coinage, the cartoonish image of those vaccine sceptics is created, and the evaluative potential of the pandemic word as an intertextual element is extended.

We might assume that Covid-19 realia have become a new measure of value that is applied to both common people and those in power, in the latter case non-conformity to the accepted ethics can bring about journalists' mockery and lead to a politician's discredit. According to the *Guardian* analyst Catherine Bennett, "*even before academics identified a connection between anti-mask attitudes and the 'dark triad' of personality traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy), research confirmed the depth of the divide between those who do and those who do not conform with pandemic restrictions*" (The Guardian: Dec. 3, 2021 [12]). Her observations become necessary prerequisites to the suggested further, antithetical image of the British prime minister who watched *Macbeth* "with his face uncovered": "*A masked audience watching Macbeth recently noticed that the prime minister, squished into*

a crowded little theatre, preferred to follow the on-stage psychopathy with his face uncovered. In doing so, he perhaps revealed more about himself than idiot contrariness" (The Guardian: Dec. 5, 2021 [12]). At a time when face covering is regulated and required by law, at least in most indoor public places, and in the country where the issue has been so much politicized, the very fact of a top politician's disregard for the law is enough to fuel the public anger. If this fact is highly seasoned with various intertextual elements, the effect produced is many times stronger. The quoted psychological theory, together with the precedent literary name of Shakespeare's famous tragedy, allow for immediate interpretation of both allusions and serve as a powerful reinforcement for the journalist's outrage. As the oppositional journalist, Catherine Bennett seems to have succeeded in her attempt to debase the political image of the prime minister by creating a mainly anti-social image of a politician who can no longer lead by example.

The idea of a pandemic as a political instrument is not new in political communication. It explains why this precedent situation has easily become an inherent part of the political narrative of all political actors. It proves to be effective in exercising control over public opinions, needs and wants. *The Guardian* analyst Andy Beckett notices that "A pandemic is a political event. It exposes who is vulnerable and who can afford to escape, who is prioritized for treatment and who is neglected. The politics of a pandemic are both large-scale and intensely personal" (The Guardian: Oct. 22, 2021 [12]). Acceptance of this idea makes categorization easy and inescapable, provides a new point of reference in value paradigm, contributes to the dissemination of such idioms as 'immunologically naïve populations', 'Little Britain mentality', pre-Covid normality, a deadly social experiment, illusion of protection, Covid Christmas, 'Freedom Christmas', Christmas partygate, Covid doom loop, Covid déjà vu, scientific populism, etc. which suggest the idea of an updated R & R matrix on a re-drawn by the pandemic, map of the world.

It happens quite often that a political message does not contain a direct reference to the precedent situation of the pandemic and its intertextual links are implemented through allusion. Such is the case with *the Christmas party*, the much-employed in the British political milieu allusion to the Christmas 'partygate' with Boris Johnson and Number 10 Office: "His [B. Johnson's] judgment is so poor and it's a clear pattern here, with at least three things – Dominic Cummings, Owen Paterson and now the Christmas party – which creates a narrative rather than a sense these are one-off events" (The Guardian: Dec. 12, 2021 [12]). In her analysis for *The Guardian*, Isabel Hardman mentions *the Christmas party*, yet another example of the unprecedented episode in the British Prime Minister and Downing Street's action in a pandemic environment. The traditional idea of a merry Christmas party has become sullied by the dishonorable conduct of Downing Street officials joking about a staff party during the peak of lockdown in December 2020. Thus, in the current political discourse, a fine centuries-old festive tradition related to the most known Biblical precedent phenomenon of Nativity of Jesus has become associated with scandalous Christmas video revealing Number 10's disrespect and disgrace, while the phrase itself has acquired the negative evaluative connotation when used in the political context.

Another example of the verbal implementation of a precedent situation is 'cheese and wine' *Westminster bubble*, or its variants 'Westminster Conservative bubble' and 'cheese and wine' parties.

These refer to Boris Johnson and staff garden parties held in May 2020, during the first pandemic lockdown. As soon as the photograph of the event went public, it brought about much fury on the part of the opposition who described it as 'a slap in the face of the British public' (The Guardian: Dec. 19, 2021 [12]). Jessika Murrey, *the Guardian* analyst, in her coverage of the North Shropshire byelection win by Lib-Dem, quotes the new MP for North Shropshire Helen Morgan, who said: "The electorate has moved on and it seems to me that they recognize that voting for a Liberal Democrat who's very rooted in community politics, who is focused on listening, is a massive contrast to this Westminster Conservative bubble where they go to cheese and wine parties after work" (The Guardian: Dec. 27, 2021 [12]).

Due to the newly acquired associations, the word *party* has turned into a popular allusion much used by political journalists for both voicing their harsh criticism of B. Johnson's behaviour and Covid-handling policies and expressing emotion. The columnist for *the Guardian*, Marina Hyde, headlined her opinion article on The Conservatives, of December 17, 2021, as: "No party could be worth the hangover Boris Johnson is now suffering" (The Guardian: Dec. 17, 2021 [12]). The headline sounds somewhat preachy; its critical content seems to be served to the embittered audience under proverbial dressing. Having received a well-executed metaphoric prolongation in the new context, the intertextual element gains some expressive value allowing for the realization of the emotive function.

Sometimes, politicians' statements and promises about improving the pandemic-handling measures, especially those most unlikely and infeasible, initiate screaming headlines and develop into journalistic clichés. For example, Boris Johnson's promise to get every eligible UK adult boosted by the end of December 2021, to fight Omicron (made on December 12, 2021). In a televised address to the nation, B. Johnson declared Omicron 'emergency' and spoke of the national mission of 'getting everyone boosted now, before the New Year' (BBC: Dec. 12, 2021 [13]), which, according to NHS experts, would mean vaccinating around 1 million people a day. Johnson's words caused much chaos and confusion among the British population as it was obvious that Johnson and NHS officials made conflicting promises over booster rollout, Johnson's being far from realistic.

Johnson's words heard by millions in Britain, have been frequently retold and commented upon by media, and the tone of their commentary is far from optimistic. Now known in media sources as 'Johnson's vaccination promise' or, paraphrased by journalists, 'a million-jabs-a-day promise', the phrase has become a cliché suggesting something false and unrealizable. Johnson himself was for the umpteenth time referred to as 'overpromising and underdelivering' prime minister, characteristic that has become a catchphrase. A British political columnist Simon Jenkins says that "if no one listens to Johnson over Omicron, that's his fault" (The Guardian: Dec. 13, 2021 [12]), and further continues: "It is easy to accuse Johnson's vaccination promise of coming too late, and its implausible but impressive-sounding million-jabs-a-day target as merely a flashy distraction from his woes. It is also easy to point out that his messy private life and inability to treasure truth make a mockery of his Sunday-night lecture to the nation on moral duty" [ibid].

Another political columnist, Marina Hyde's commentary sounds insulting if reasonable: "I don't know about you, – she argues, – but

I'm getting a bit tired of having my vital public health messages delivered by someone who looks as if he's just been forcibly dragged away from a knee-trembler in the stationery cupboard at one of Downing Street's famous Christmas parties. What a shock that a guy who spent last week insisting there had been no party in Downing Street will now only say he personally didn't break any rules. It'll be the same with this million-jabs-a-day promise." (The Guardian: Dec. 14, 2021 [12]). Thus, we can see that precedent phrases 'Downing Street Christmas party', 'a million-jabs-a-day promise' come about in different contexts, adding much to both text informativity and text pragmatics. Their frequent occurrence in political contexts proves their effectiveness as intertextual elements: their reference to the precedent situation familiar to the audience, firstly, makes their meaning transparent and easily decoded by this audience, and secondly, ensures the right perception of the encoded message due to the established associations.

The pandemic precedent has already revealed numerous cases of the authorities' infeasibility to effectively control the situation and brought about the idea of 'devaluation' of the government's promises. Larry Elliott, in his political analysis for *the Guardian*, questions the reliability of the British government and undermines the idea of allegedly maximum protection guaranteed by it. He alludes to the *maximum protection* pledge of December 12, 2021, made by B. Johnson, according to which "the good news is that our [British] scientists are confident that with a third dose – a booster dose – we can bring our level of protection back up" (reported by Sky News [14]): "Once everybody has had the third jab, so the Downing Street mantra goes, this country will have maximum protection and the pandemic and economic recovery will be ensured" (The Guardian: Dec. 16, 2021 [12]). Thus, suggesting a new cliché of *maximum protection mantra*, the journalist compares the current political situation with another historic precedent of a hundred years ago: "Set against this [pandemic] reality, the idea that fully jabbing the whole of the UK provides permanent protection is the modern-day equivalent of the Maginot Line, the system of supposedly impregnable defences constructed by the French in the 1920s but which were easily circumvented by the Germans in the spring of 1940" (The Guardian: Dec. 16, 2021 [12]). In terms of intertextual links, this context provides both an example of how a new intertextual element (*maximum / permanent protection*) is actualized in political discourse, and an illustration of how the existing intertextual element (*the Maginot Line*) is employed to add to the meaning of the new one.

Similar intertextual interaction can be observed in Tim Adams' commentary on the British government's incompetency during the pandemic period, though the mechanisms of intertextual implementation, in this case, are quite different: "That old adage of Marx insists that historical events occur first as tragedy, then as farce. The government's handling of the pandemic in the UK long ago undermined that progression: tragedy and farce have, since the very beginning of the crisis, always been a double act" (The Guardian: Dec. 18, 2021 [12]). The journalist rephrases one of the most quoted aphoristic statements attributed to K. H. Marx, a German philosopher and political theorist. Suggesting the caricature image of the British government's fruitless attempts to handle the pandemic failing tragically each time either because they are too late or inefficient, Tim Adams' commentary implies that both the rhetoric and the action of the PM and his cabinet can no longer be taken seriously as they are exactly the same as one

year ago – 'destructive' and 'showing no sign of changing'. Among the highlighted invariable attributes of the one year ago and present-day political agenda and headlines, Tim Adams, as well as many other journalists, mention the well-worn 'new variant' phrase (originally referred to the new SARS infection, then to the new Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and, doubtfully that final, Omicron variant). Having lost its communicative novelty in the global media scene, it seems to gain its effectiveness as a rhetorical means used to arouse public fear and anxiety over the effects of the next virus mutation detected, thus serving the manipulative function in the current social and political discourse.

Some phrases initially precedent within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, have quickly earned the cliché character in the current political communication. Such are the phrases 'go Swedish', 'Swedish experiment' suggesting 'the Swedish model of dealing with Covid' characterized by the 'herd immunity approach', 'China model' and 'Zero-Covid policy' implying China's strategy of mass mobilization and a zero-tolerance policy, 'stay-at-home' policy, 'stay-at-home' order, *cancel Christmas*, etc. As intertextual elements, these idioms no longer require any explanation of their content; due to their high recurrence rate in the world media within the pandemic period, they are ready-made verbal units capable of enforcing the nomination function. On seeing the headline that reads: "A wounded PM and ailing economy force England 'go Swedish' on Covid" (The Guardian: Jan. 2, 2022 [12]), one can easily foretell the content of the article that will be exposed to its readers. It is also worth noting that within one context the same intertextual element can implement different functions. Thus, further analyzing the prime minister's Covid strategy during the pandemic period, *the Guardian* columnist Larry Elliott says that "The prime minister's flirtation with the 'Swedish experiment' was brief, and at the end of March 2020 a draconian lockdown was imposed" [ibid]. Incorporated in the original metaphor, 'Swedish experiment' implements stylistic rather than informative function; its clear pandemic-related denotation allows the reader to fully enjoy the author's sophisticated metaphor and antithesis.

We might also assume that it is the intertextual elements of this type (those implementing nomination functions), that are likely to enrich the inventory of political neologisms associated with the pandemic environment. One of such political coinages, as well as effective intertextual elements, is the term 'infodemic' (a blend of 'information' and 'epidemic') coined in 2003, according to Merriam-Webster dictionary [14], and having renewed its usage in the time of Covid-19. Originally denoting 'a rapid and far-reaching spread of both accurate and inaccurate information about something, such as a disease', within the context of the coronavirus pandemic it is applied to 'a situation in which a lot of false information is being spread in a way that is harmful' [16]. Produced by social media and stimulated by the tech giants just 'to keep their revenues flowing', *infodemic*, like any other computational propaganda, is much blamed by political media for its detrimental effect on vaccination campaigns throughout the world: "Fearmongering has played a part, with some of those responsible profiting politically or financially. Social media has produced an 'infodemic', allowing unfounded claims to spread internationally in hours or days..." (The Guardian: Nov. 22, 2020 [12]). Thus, the pandemic-related terms *infodemic* or *disinformation pandemic* are verbal instruments that link the pandemic precedent situation to the global issues of today's information ecosystem (along with recent elections-

related coinages, such as *participatory disinformation*, *top-down propaganda*, etc.).

When the pandemic issue is incorporated in the political discourse (other than utterly informative, such as a news item on Covid spread) to form its structure, it contributes directly to the communicative function of influencing the audience. Any of the addresses recently delivered by the British prime minister to his nation in which he announced the launch of the Omicron emergency booster campaign or spoke of ‘the national mission to get everyone boosted’ to slow the new variant spread, can illustrate the way the text-forming function of the pandemic-related intertextual elements is implemented.

On December 24, 2021, B. Johnson took full advantage of his yearly Christmas address to the nation, which is supposed to be a ritual and hence, fit into the usual mould of the type, to encourage the UK population to get vaccinated. Entirely focused on vaccination, Johnson’s Christmas address 2021 diverges from the conventionalized Christmas message content. Set against the Queen’s Christmas message of 2021, or even PM’s own of the pre-pandemic 2019, the difference becomes obvious. In her Christmas address, the Queen referred to Covid only once, saying that “While Covid again means we can’t celebrate quite as we may have wished, we can still enjoy the many happy traditions, be it the singing of carols as long as the tune is well-known, decorating the tree, giving and receiving presents, or watching a favorite film where we already know the ending...” (The Guardian: Dec. 24, 2021 [12]). While the Queen encouraged the nation to see the joy in simple things in her yearly Christmas speech, Boris Johnson urged the UK public to get their booster vaccine, in his: “*There is still a wonderful thing you can give your family and the whole country, and that is to get that jab, whether it is your first or second, or your booster*” (BBC: Dec. 24, 2021 [13]). Johnson even yielded a sustained metaphor, saying that “*if the pile of crumpled wrapping paper is bigger this year it is precisely because across the country, in the run-up to Christmas, we have been giving each other an invisible and invaluable present [Covid vaccine]*” [ibid]. Having lost his credibility as a politician, much due to the aforementioned partygate incidents, Johnson remains an eloquent orator who relies on pathos in his speech and turns to the well-known biblical quotation from the Gospel of Matthew 12:29–31, to persuade the nation to get vaccinated: “*Getting jabbed not just for themselves, for ourselves, but for friends and family and everyone we meet. <...> And that, after all, is the teaching of Jesus Christ, whose birth is at the heart of this enormous festival – that we should love our neighbours as we love ourselves*” [ibid]. The prime minister’s desperate appeal to the nation for getting their jabs, made on Christmas Eve, seems calculated for effect yet is compliant with Johnson’s political narrative and justified by his political agenda. Such philanthropic and altruistic rhetoric might be explained by his urgent desire to save face and his reputation which has been tainted by his ‘contempt for the rest of us [British people]’ (as the *Guardian* analyst John Harris has put it) and lack of compassion, exposed so many times earlier. Thus, the pandemic recurrent theme reinforced by the biblical intertextual inclusions serves to shape an overwhelmingly positive image of the leader genuinely concerned about his people. It should be noted that in many political contexts the implementation of the text-forming function by the pandemic-related intertextual elements presupposes the realization of the conative function as well. The latter finds its effective expression in evocative

and imperative utterances, hence, is widely used in different kinds of official and ceremonial addresses to the public.

It’s noteworthy that Johnson’s ‘festive’ slogan ‘to get jabbed on Christmas’ received a huge media response and was echoed with ‘jingle jabs’ reminiscence in hundreds of headlines of news agencies worldwide: “*Covid boosters available on Christmas Day in NHS ‘jingle jab’ campaign*” (The Guardian: Dec. 24, 2021 [12]), “*Thousands line up for ‘jingle jabs’ on Christmas*” (Central Illinois News: Dec. 25, 2021 [17]), “*Santa hats at the ready as ‘jingle jabs’ go on at Christmas vaccination centres*” (The Guardian: Dec. 26, 2021 [12]), “*12,000 ‘jingle jabs’ delivered on Christmas Day*” (National Scotland: Dec. 27, 2021 [18]), “*Jingle jabs, cancelled flights: How COVID-19 has impacted Christmas around the world*” (Global News: Dec. 25, 2021 [19]). This simple example shows how fast the intertextual links are made within the contemporary information ecosystem as well as how varied the mechanisms of establishing these links can be. With no precedent context of Johnson’s Christmas message such semantic modification involving play on words could hardly take place and even if it did, its application would not be that wide.

Another impressive example of the intertext implementation can be fully comprehended only within the framework of the UK current political narrative, dominated by the British prime minister’s recent statements. It is found in the *Guardian* opinion cartoon by Ben Jennings, published on December 28, 2021. It’s entitled ‘*Boosterism*’ and contains bitter mockery of Boris Johnson and his *idée fixe* of ‘*getting everyone boosted now*’. The cartoon features Boris Johnson and the National Health Service’s official’s dialogue revealing the likely political underpinning of Johnson’s month-long booster urge:

B. J.: “*Are the boosters working?*”

NHS official: “*Well, the latest data suggest, that hospital administration ...*”

B. J.: “*No – I meant am I popular again?*” (The Guardian: Dec. 28, 2021 [12]).

The cartoonist’s allusion to a record number of the prime minister’s recent speeches on the importance of vaccination is quite obvious. The dialogue, or rather the absence of it, between B. Johnson and NHS officials, is the reminiscences of their miscommunication and, hence, conflicting promises. The target of this political cartoon is Johnson’s overpromising tactics as a means of retaining his grip on power by regaining his popularity with voters. The ‘*Omicron emergency booster*’ campaign much accelerated by Johnson as well as the much-hyped slogan of ‘*national mission of getting everyone boosted now*’ (from Prime Minister’s address to the nation on booster jabs, of December 12, 2021, available at GOV.UK [20]) are referred to by Jennings as an instance of Johnson’s *boosterism*, this time materialized in the literal sense by way of a play on words, due to its direct link to Johnson’s precedent slogan. To discern the effect achieved by this accidental play on words, one should be reminded that the word ‘*boosterism*’ is not new in political language; it denotes ‘*the practice of actively promoting (‘boosting’) a city, region, etc. and its local businesses*’ [21].

In the UK political discourse, the word ‘*boosterism*’ has already become closely associated with Boris Johnson’s political methods. Already known for his ‘*anti-business boosterism*’ (Financial Times: Oct. 8, 2021 [22]), associated with Johnson’s ‘*failure of delivery*’ slogan in the context of supply chain turmoil in post-Brexit and Covid-affected Britain, this time Johnson produced a new

slogan that generated new intertextual links and inferences. His 'vaccination boosterism' has become a new target for journalists as soon as the Covid booster theme emerged in the PM's narrative. 'The Independent' editorial of November 30, 2021, headlined "Now is the time for Boris Johnson's famous boosterism", explains the way Johnson's boosterism works: "The prime minister needs to get people out of their armchairs, out into the cold, and into the Covid walk-in clinics" (Independent: Nov. 30, 2021 [23]). The authors' irony concerning Johnson's 'mindless optimism and baseless boosterism' [ibid] seems to be, in literary terms, dramatic, at least if to look retrospectively at the prime minister's chaotic and unpredictable actions to handle the pandemic in the UK. As can be seen from the above, migrating from one political context to another, the intertextual element accumulates and retains new meanings which are likely to be inferred in a context to come.

Conclusions. The nature and structure of the intertext of the political discourse should be studied in terms of the global social-political environment, which vastly determines the current political agenda, as well as political strategies which impose the mechanisms of influencing the mass audience. As an extraordinary precedent situation that made the global population share a common experience, the Covid-19 pandemic provided new realia, challenges, and values that elicited similar associations from the representatives of different linguistic cultures. At the same time, it is often the national political context that dictates the bias in which the precedent phenomena are likely to be verbalized.

Certain political, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds affect the possibilities of verbal implementation of the precedent situation, particularly in cases that involve various types of semantic modifications of the precedent text (play on words, metaphors, etc.).

The Covid-19 pandemic intertext manifests itself in the political discourse in various forms: the direct and indirect citation of the precedent text, allusions, reminiscences, deliberate semantic modifications of the pretext, metatextual interaction of verbal precedent unit with the convergent text (political cartoon, parody, etc.).

In the current political context, the pandemic-related intertextual elements are used to 1) declare seminal and urgent decisions, officially inform about the current situation; 2) characterize and assess political decisions or situations; 3) form the image of political figures (discredit opponents, justify political actors, regain credibility, etc.); 4) shape and manipulate public opinion; 5) make public speech more emotional, expressing empathy; 6) identify and name new policies, standards, regulatory actions; and 7) form political narrative.

The pandemic-related intertext implementations, as well as their proper perception and decoding by an addressee, in political communication rely on the common knowledge of the precedent texts generated by politicians or political media.

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Абрамичева О., Петровський М. Вербалізація прецедентної ситуації пандемії COVID-19 у політичному дискурсі

Анотація. Статтю присвячено дослідженню засобів вербалізації прецедентної ситуації пандемії Covid-19 у сучасному політичному дискурсі. Серед інтертекстуальних елементів, що реалізують певну прагматичну функцію в сучасній політичній комунікації, розглядаються різноманітні випадки вербалізації прецедентного феномена пандемії Covid-19, у тому числі, так звана *пандемічна лексика*, яка номінує реалії періоду пандемії, пряме й непряме цитування, а також семантичні модифікації прецедентних висловлювань, алюзії, метафори тощо. Матеріалом даного синхронічного дослідження є мейнстримний британський політичний дискурс періоду панде-

мії. Завдання дослідження ставилося проаналізувати засоби вербалізації прецедентної ситуації пандемії Covid-19 в актуальному політичному дискурсі; розглянути пов'язані з пандемією мовні одиниці як ефективний механізм, що формує політичний інтертекст; вивчити функції цих мовних одиниць в політичній комунікації. Методологічною базою дослідження стали роботи з аналізу політичного дискурсу, теорії прецедентності й інтертекстуальності. Під час виявлення функціонально-прагматичного статусу інтертекстуальних елементів, що вербалізують реалії пандемії, застосовувалися методи семантичного, контекстуального й інтертекстуального аналізу. Одиниці, що вербалізують реалії пандемії, активно інтегруються в сучасний політичний дискурс, віддзеркалюючи

характерні ознаки періоду пандемії та утворюючи складний, часто багаторівневий інтертекст. Виникаючи в мовленні політиків і засобів масової інформації, що висвітлюють політичні події, вони актуалізують смисли, знайомі й зрозумілі масовій аудиторії, яка володіє загальним корпусом референцій в умовах певної соціально-політичної ситуації. Засоби, що вербалізують прецедентну ситуацію пандемії Covid-19 у політичному дискурсі, є доволі різноманітними; сприяючи формуванню політичного інтертексту періоду пандемії, вони одночасно використовуються задля досягнення основних прагматичних цілей політичної комунікації.

Ключові слова: політичний дискурс, прецедентний феномен, вербалізація прецедентної ситуації, інтертекст, інтертекстуальний елемент, пандемія Covid-19.