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MECHANISMS OF GENERATING EMOTIONS IN AUDIO-BASED MEDIA

An affective element has always been present in the media content, in line with the claim that the addressees react more to emotions rather than facts and ideas. Media strategies of presenting disasters, crises or personal aspects in a given broadcast shape the attention of audiences in a specific way. However, the emotional content has become so intense today that it is considered the most dynamic factor behind the generation and consumption of media content, as well as a key element redefining the classic idea of journalistic objectivism.¹ Researchers assess that it is an effect of the media permeating people's everyday lives, of personalisation of information, interactivity and the pace at which the news spread. In the era of excess information and distracted audiences,² the dominance of emotional messages over cognitive reception³ becomes an even more exploited tendency in media content.

The radio is regarded, by nature, as intimate, direct, and generating emotions quite easily, as it targets only the sense of hearing. The unique perception of a radio message involves an impression of simultaneity and a lack of spatial distance.⁴ Being non-visual is seen as a determinant of how the mes-

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¹ Charlie BECKET and Mark DEUZE, "On the Role of Emotion in the Future of Journalism," *Social Media + Society* 2, no. 3 (2016): 2.

² Susanna PAASONEN, "Fickle Focus: Distraction, Affect and the Production of Value in Social Media," *First Monday* 21, no. 10 (2016).

³ Stanisław MICHALCZYK, "Kognicje i emocje w procesie recepcji mediów," *Rocznik Prasoznawczy* 11 (2017): 11–31.

⁴ Siobhan MCHUGH, "Audio Storytelling: Unlocking the Power of Audio to Inform, Empower and Connect," *Asia Pacific Media Educator* 24, no. 22 (2014): 141–56.

sage is constructed and how the relationship with the audience is formed. The power of the radio lies in its social potential, ability to create a community of listeners and to fulfil the idea of conviviality, defined anew in the era of algorithms and media platforms.⁵ These are the salient features of audio media, covering not only broadcasting but also digital radio, internet radio and podcasts.

The radio is described as a resilient medium,⁶ and its role manifests itself especially in times of crisis.⁷ During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the radio “once again plays a leading role in this pandemic situation among those who faithfully follow it.”⁸ Research suggests that the radio is still a very popular medium. In the United States of America, 83% of the consumers stated that they’re listening to as much or more radio as they were before the pandemic.⁹ A change in consumption of audio-based media was observed. Before the pandemic, the greatest listening ratings were registered in the morning and while the users commuted to work. During the lockdown, the listening ratings were steadily high, with the radio accompanying the users in their remote work.¹⁰ It shows how deeply the audio-based media are connected with routine and everyday lives of their users. It is significant that the rate of trust towards radio messages is high: in Europe it is 58%, while the social media score much lower (19%).¹¹ Listening to favourite radio broadcasts, allows radio listeners to get access to reliable information. Simultaneously,

⁵ Tiziano BONINI, Belén MONCLÚS, and Salvatore SCIFO, “Radio as a Social Media,” *Radio Journal: International Studies in Broadcast & Audio Media* 18, no. 1 (2020): 5–12.

⁶ Guy STARKEY, “Radio: The Resilient Medium in Today’s Increasingly Diverse Multiplatform Media Environment,” *Convergence* 23, no. 6 (2017): 660–70; Madalena OLIVEIRA, Grażyna STACHYRA, and Guy STARKEY, eds., *Radio: The Resilient Medium – Papers from the Third Conference of the ECREA Radio Research Section* (Sunderland: University of Sunderland, 2014).

⁷ Reginald F. MOODY, “Radio’s Role during Hurricane Katrina: A Case Study of WWL Radio and the United Radio Broadcasters of New Orleans,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 16, no. 22 (2009): 160–80; Patric R. SPENCE ET AL., “Serving the Public Interest in a Crisis: Radio and Its Unique Role,” *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 16, no. 2 (2009): 144–59.

⁸ Emma RODERO, “Radio: The Medium That Best Copes in Crises. Listening Habits, Consumption, and Perception of Radio Listeners during the Lockdown by the Covid-19,” *El Profesional de La Información* 29, no. 3 (2020): 10.

⁹ “Radio is ‘Comfort Food’ as Media Consumption Rises amid COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Nielsen*, March 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2020/radio-is-comfort-food-as-media-consumption-rises-amid-covid-19-pandemic>.

¹⁰ “More Than Dialed In: Audio Is a Co-Worker Remote Employees Can Rely On,” *Nielsen*, August 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2020/more-than-dialed-in>.

¹¹ “Trust in Media 2021,” *EBU*, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://rm.coe.int/ebu-mis-trust-in-media-2021/1680a83792>.

an increase in the popularity of podcasts in the daily news format was observed.¹² A psychological influence of the radio (a sense of belonging to a community, alleviation of loneliness, reduction of stress, anxiety, panic) was also acknowledged.¹³

This article attempts to present audio mechanisms of evoking emotions related to audio productions realised during the first wave of the pandemic, which began in March 2020, together with the first infections reported and bans imposed in the social functioning, until June 2020, when they were lifted. The analysis is based on a radio-centred perspective, referring both to audio production and reception. The described tendencies are illustrated by media practices from Europe, USA, and Australia in the context of the specificity of this industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research design addresses four major aspects of the radio substance: spoken word, music, acoustics, and silence. The research method relies on the tools specific for media studies and sonic skills,¹⁴ allowing for an in-depth interpretation of audio messages.

1. AUDIO PRODUCTION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: EVOLUTION IN THE JOURNALISTIC PRACTICE

During the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, media authorities needed to take extraordinary measures in relation to journalists' work in order to provide safety, continuity of broadcasting and attractiveness of programmes.¹⁵ Production of

¹² Nic NEWMAN and Nathan GALLO, "Daily News Podcasts: Building New Habits in the Shadow of Coronavirus," *Reuters Institute*, November 19, 2020, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/daily-news-podcasts-building-new-habits-shadow-coronavirus>.

¹³ Emma RODERO ANTÓN and María BLANCO HERNÁNDEZ, "El papel de la radio en situaciones de crisis. Iniciativas en la pandemia del coronavirus," *index.comunicación* 10, no. 3 (2020): 193–213, <https://doi.org/10.33732/ixc/10/03Elpape>; "Radio is 'Comfort Food' as Media Consumption Rises amid COVID-19 Pandemic," *Nielsen*, March 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2020/radio-is-comfort-food-as-media-consumption-rises-amid-covid-19-pandemic>.

¹⁴ Karin BIJSTERVELD, *Sonic Skills. Listening for Knowledge in Science, Medicine and Engineering (1920s–Present)* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

¹⁵ Julie POSETTI, Emily BELL, and Pete BROWN, "Journalism and the Pandemic: A Global Snapshot of Impacts" (survey report), *International Center for Journalists*, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.icfj.org/our-work/journalism-and-pandemic-survey>; Dariusz TWORZYDŁO et al., *Praca dziennikarza w okresie koronawirusa i lockdown* (report), Polska Agencja Prasowa, Instytut Rozwoju Społeczeństwa Informacyjnego, June 2020, accessed November 10, 2022,

audio materials is based on a direct contact between journalists and their interlocutor. In the context of social distancing, the specificity of the work of journalists had to change, which was observed in the formula of broadcasts¹⁶ and in the limitations experienced by radio reporters. This was confirmed by the studies in the group of journalists in Poland¹⁷ and the United Kingdom.¹⁸ A consequence of conversations being held over the phone or internet communicators are the recordings with noise, sound fading in and out, pauses, which used to be regarded as faults. The pandemic circumstances made it possible to omit this standard for the sake of information value and relationship with the listener. A human voice, processed by technology, became an acoustic feature of the media narration about the pandemic.

Never before have the professional radio stations broadcast amateurish material realised by their characters so often. Comments and bits of conversations were recorded with the use of smartphones and sound editing software. This helped to achieve a feeling of closeness and privacy. A similar function is played by an exchange of interactions with the author's narration. From the material's structure point of view, it is an effective way to combine single comments, to unify various sound quality and introduce new information. It is quite curious that the author's identity revealed in a radio report was regarded as exceptional in Poland,¹⁹ with the listeners' attention focused solely on the topic and characters of the report. During the pandemic, the author's comments were viewed as lacking in professional neutrality and rich in a subjective character. Journalists recorded their interviewees, interspersed the recording with comments related to their work, revealing details of producing the material during the lockdown. Katarzyna Błaszczyk's broadcast makes use of the recording of her children, e.g. a conversation with her daughter: "Natałka, now Mummy needs to call someone.... Be quiet for a moment, will you?" or a redundant comment made during one of the

https://pap-mediaroom.pl/sites/default/files/2020-12/Raport_Praca_Dziennikarza_w_czasiekورونا_wirusa.pdf.

¹⁶ Krajowa Radia Radiofonii i Telewizji, "Zmiany ramówek, audycje specjalne, zawieszona produkcja, łączenia online," *gov.pl*, accessed November 10, 2022, <http://www.krrit.gov.pl/dla-abonentow-i-konsumentow/covid--19---media/media-w-polsce/news,2962,zmiany-ramowek-audycje-specjalne-zawieszona-produkcja-laczenia-online.html>.

¹⁷ TWORZYDŁO ET AL., *Praca dziennikarza*.

¹⁸ Stephen JUKES, Karen FOWLER-WATT, and Gavin REES, "Reporting the Covid-19 Pandemic: Trauma on Our Own Doorstep," *Digital Journalism* 10, no. 6 (2021): 997–1014.

¹⁹ Katarzyna MICHALAK, "Powiedz to głośniej... Autor-narrator w reportażu radiowym po 1989 roku," in *Trzydzieści. Polska w reportażu – reportaż w Polsce po 1989 roku*, ed. Elżbieta Pawlak Hejno and Magdalena Piechota (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2020), 31–40.

recordings: “I’m now hiding under the laundry, it’s quiet here.”²⁰ The first-person narration became a means of shortening the distance and intensifying the emotional message.

First-person storytelling became a journalistic tendency in the audio-based media during the pandemic. According to the study conducted by Rebecca C. Nee and Arthur D. Santana,²¹ even in the typical news podcasts produced by professional news agencies (e.g. BBC, ABC, NPR), a reporter is presented in the role of an expert of the main character of the news. Journalists expressed their own opinions and provided anecdotes from their professional lives. Subjectivity²² and personalised narration²³ are of a great emotional value, therefore they become an effective strategy of drawing the public attention. The pandemic contributed to the strengthening of this practice as used in the audio-based media.

Social media play an ever-increasing role in the journalists’ work, not only as a source of information but also as a room for contact to get opinions, comments, recordings. Anna Gmiterek-Zabłocka, a reporter for Radio Tok FM, describes the character of her work: “Recently I have been reaching out, through Twitter or Facebook, to people I don’t know but who post interesting comments. I contact doctors, paramedics, teachers, lawyers. I contact those who organise the campaign #WidzialnaRęka (Visible Hand) (offering help to those in need during the pandemic, AWW) or those who sew masks, free of charge, on a massive scale. Sometimes I get contacted through Twitter and Facebook. Quite a few times I asked my followers at Twitter to record some short material for me that I could use for the news at Radio Tok FM.”²⁴ An original sound project was realised by the journalists of two regional radio stations, Katarzyna Michalak from the Polish Radio in Lublin and Magdalena Świerczyńska-Dolot from the Polish Radio in Gdańsk. They

²⁰ Katarzyna BŁASZCZYK, “‘Pamiętnik z czasów zarazy.’ Szkoła i praca w czasach pandemii” (audio), *Polskie Radio*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/9/325/Artykul/2483054,Pamietnik-z-czasow-zarazy-Szkola-i-praca-w-czasach-pandemii>.

²¹ Rebecca C. NEE and Arthur D. SANTANA, “Podcasting the Pandemic: Exploring Storytelling Formats and Shifting Journalistic Norms in News Podcasts Related to the Coronavirus.” *Journalism Practice* 18, no. 8 (2021): 1559–77.

²² Rosalind COWARD, *Speaking Personally: The Rise of Subjective and Confessional Journalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

²³ Mia LINDGREN, “Personal Narrative Journalism and Podcasting,” *Radio Journal* 14, no. 1 (2016): 23–41; LINDGREN, “Intimacy and Emotions in Podcast Journalism: A Study of Award-Winning Australian and British Podcasts,” *Journalism Practice* (25 June 2021).

²⁴ Anna GMITEREK-ZABŁOCKA, “Zmęczona, ale szczęśliwa,” *Press* 5–6 (2020), https://www.press.pl/magazyn-press/artykul/61435,warsztat---zmeczona_-ale-szczesliwa.

initiated the campaign titled *Nie słyszę* (I can't hear) in the social media, inviting the listeners to comment on their experience of the pandemic. The recordings, collected from 13 April 2020 to 1 July 2020, were published on the blog nieszysze.pl, and later as a radio report, broadcast on the air and available online.²⁵ Many people of different ages and interests, from all over the world, were involved in the project. This journalist initiative was a novel attempt to realise a trans-media, audio project, nominated to the international Prix Europa award, in the category of Best European Digital Audio Project of the Year.

Another original form of radio broadcasting during the pandemic are “live” broadcasts from home, e.g. done by Hirek Wrona or Beata Pawlikowska. The latter, in her invitation to Polish Radio Three, posted on her Facebook profile: “I am sitting on the roof of my house, where I have coverage. I am not at the studio in Myśliwiecka [Street] in Warsaw, where I usually record my programme. I am at home because, unexpectedly, it turned out two days ago that I know someone who knows someone who is COVID-positive.”²⁶ She greeted her listeners with the same message on air.²⁷ The host of *World at One* on BBC Radio 4, Sarah Montague, addressed her listeners via Twitter: “Like millions of others, working from home today. My kitchen table is now @BBCWorldatOne studio,”²⁸ while Iain Dale hosted his evening broadcast in the LBC from his bedroom: “Because it’s the only room in the house with a carpet, so it sucks up the echoes. The duvet, the quilted headboard, the curtains—they all make it much more of a studio sound.”²⁹ Such a broadcast was possible due to technical conditions offering sufficient sound quality, a dedicated internet connection. It is an interesting example of how production design can be adapted to the radio and how content is arranged to fit internet

²⁵ Katarzyna MICHALAK and Magdalena ŚWIERCZYŃSKA-DOŁOT, “Reportaż ‘Nie słyszę,’” *nieszysze.pl*, July 6, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://nieszysze.pl/?p=378>.

²⁶ Agata MAŁKOWSKA-SZOZDA, “Beata Pawlikowska na kwarantannie, program prowadziła z domu,” *Press*, August 10, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, https://www.press.pl/tresc/62804,beata-pawlikowska-na-kwarantannie-program-prowadzila-z-domu?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium.

²⁷ “Blondynka na dachu,” *Polskie Radio*, August 9, 2020, https://www.polskieradio.pl/9/8796/Artykul/2562040,Blondynka-na-dachu=email&utm_campaign=Pressletter&uid=1629.

²⁸ “These Radio Presenters Are Now Working from Home,” *RadioToday*, March 17, 2020, <https://radiotoday.co.uk/2020/03/these-radio-presenters-are-now-working-from-home>.

²⁹ Miranda SAWYER, “It’s What People Turn To’: Lauren Laverne, Iain Dale and Others on Why Radio is Thriving in Lockdown,” *The Guardian*, May 31, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2020/may/31/its-what-people-turn-to-lauren-laverne-iain-dale-and-others-on-why-radio-is-thriving-in-lockdown>.

media. What is worth noting is the launch of RadioSpacja.pl, an internet music-oriented radio station, at the very beginning of the pandemic (March 2020). Its specific feature is journalists' broadcasting from home, whether from Warsaw, Paris, Berlin, San Francisco, Bali.³⁰ Broadcasting from a private space modifies the communicative situation, even if the design and structure of the broadcast have not changed. The presenters shorten the distance between themselves and listeners, and the relationship between them becomes more personal.

A substantial part of the audio market are streaming platforms and ever-increasing podcasts. New online programmes were created in relation to the pandemic, e.g. the series *Coronavirus: Fact vs Fiction* produced by CNN,³¹ *Coronacast* (ABC) produced in Australia,³² *Das Coronavirus-Update* (NDR), a record-breaking medical podcast in Germany,³³ or *Pandemic Economics*, focusing on global economic challenges.³⁴ The podcast series *Checking in* offers expert advice offered by Susan David, a psychologist from Harvard Medical School, connected with emotion management during the quarantine.³⁵ *The Distance: Coronavirus Dispatches* is a series of materials from all over the world, presenting how the coronavirus changed people's lives.³⁶ Of the Polish productions, we should mention audio programmes by Miłka Malzahn, titled *Dziennik Zmian* (The Diary of Change), which are coherent in form, perfectly performed and full of phonic experiments, playing with echo, aftersound, looping, and sound conversion.³⁷

³⁰ "Paweł Sito założył radio internetowe RadioSpacja.pl. Wśród prezenterów Novika, Mateusz Hładki i Marzena Chelminiak," *wirtualnedia*, March 24, 2020, <https://www.wirtualnedia.pl/artykul/radio-internetowe-radiospacja-pl-szefem-pawel-sito-wsrod-prezenterow-novika-mateusz-hladki-i-marzena-chelminiak>.

³¹ Sanjay GUPTA, *Coronavirus: Fact vs Fiction* (podcast series), CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/specials/health/transcripts-coronavirus-fact-vs-fiction>.

³² Norman SWAN and Tegan TAYLOR, *Coronacast* (podcast series), ABC, <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/coronacast/>.

³³ *Das Coronavirus-Update von NDR Info* (podcast series), NDR, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/podcast4684.html>.

³⁴ BECKER FRIEDMAN INSTITUTE, STITCHER, *Pandemic Economics* (podcast series), accessed November 10, 2022, <https://bf.uchicago.edu/podcast/pandemic-economics>.

³⁵ Susan DAVID, *Checking In with Susan David* (podcast series), TED, May 2020, <https://www.ted.com/podcasts/checking-in>.

³⁶ "The Distance: Coronavirus Dispatches" (podcast series), accessed November 10, 2022, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-distance-coronavirus-dispatches/id1503453999>.

³⁷ Miłka MALZAHN, *Dziennik Zmian (i pogodny raczej stan)* (podcast series), *Podkasty.info*, accessed November 10, 2022, http://www.podkasty.info/katalog/podkast/4911-Dziennik_Zmian_i_pogodny_raczej_stan_Mi%C5%82ka_Malzahn?page=6.

The reception of internet audio material changed during the pandemic. While podcasts were listened to mostly on the way to work, in the first half of 2020, when most of professional work was done online, we witnessed a growth in the popularity of audio materials accessed via computers, television sets, smart speakers and video game consoles.³⁸ We also witnessed a change in the thematic preference of the programmes. The most popular categories were: cooking, household chores, personal development, a healthy lifestyle, children's programmes, ambient music. One of the most popular audio streaming and media services providers, Spotify, boasted 300 million active users in the second quarter of 2020.³⁹ The recent increase in the number of podcasts slowed down in 2020 due to the pandemic restrictions,⁴⁰ however, it is still the most dynamically developing segment of the audio industry. In Poland, from January to June 2020, podcasts were accessed 300% times more often than in the corresponding period of 2019.⁴¹ They provide information and entertainment,⁴² but also, according to their listeners, offer a semblance of closeness and relationship with others. Such an affective influence on the listeners became particularly visible during the lockdown period.⁴³ The state of months' long social isolation boosted the dynamic development of audio market and attractiveness of sound productions.

2. EMOTIONALISATION OF AUDIO MESSAGES IN THEIR VERBAL DIMENSION

Radio broadcast understood as a stream of sounds includes four types of sounds: words, music, acoustic effects, silence. The dominant, semantically

³⁸ "How Social Distancing Has Shifted Spotify Streaming," *Spotify*, March 30, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://newsroom.spotify.com/2020-03-30/how-social-distancing-has-shifted-spotify-streaming/?fbclid=IwAR0BhWluM5hQREiUlboDq-ITiDIP3qYqocGEWc2pwtbtxb4KXtGFDDVA1>.

³⁹ "Spotify Technology S.A. Announces Financial Results for Second Quarter 2020," *Business Wire*, July 29, 2020, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200729005266/en>.

⁴⁰ Nic NEWMAN ET AL., *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2021*, accessed November 10, 2022, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2021-06/Digital_News_Report_2021_FINAL.pdf.

⁴¹ Stanisław JĘDRZEJEWSKI, "Kultura udomowiona a nowe technologie," *Roczniki Nauk Społecznych* 49, no. 1 (2021): 51–72.

⁴² Sylvia CHAN-OLMSTED and Rang WANG, "Understanding Podcast Users: Consumption Motives and Behaviors," *New Media & Society* 24, no. 3, 2020: 684–704.

⁴³ Molly ROBSON, "Intimacy in Isolation: Podcasting, Affect, and the Pandemic," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine* 64 (2021): 388–407.

independent component is the level of words. An important role is played by music, used as a tool for mood creation. Acoustic effects and silence are of a contextual character as their significance emerges in relation to other elements of the message. Each of the components of audio content has a potential to present, generate, and increase the emotional character of the message.

The use of the spoken word on the radio should be considered on two levels: content and sound value. They shape the message and its potential to produce a reaction in the addressees. The coronavirus threat resulted in the creation of a specific media-related lexis, dominated by expressions such as: virus, epidemic threat, sanitary discipline, disinfection, quarantine, social distancing, lockdown. The new lexis tried to match the new reality, and simultaneously created a linguistic view of functioning in the face of the coronavirus threat.⁴⁴ A source of the lexis was the official pandemic narrative promoted during the press conferences of the minister of health and the prime minister, and through experts' comments, usually from the health department, invited to the radio.

The evolution of language was so expansive that Olga Mickiewicz-Adamowicz produced an original broadcast, combining a report and a documentary, a collage of comments characteristic of the functioning during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁵ The broadcast started with a mix of short media statements involving the use of the "coronavirus" word. As a result, the author obtained a cluster of overlapping voices using the word, together with its declined forms: "koronawirusa", "koronawirusem", "o koronawirusie", produced with a background noise. The sequence ends up with a statement by Mateusz Morawiecki, the Prime Minister, produced during a press conference on March 20, 2020: "We are officially introducing an epidemic state." 'Epidemic' is repeated twice, which produces the echo effect, rarely used on the radio. The multiplication of the sound amplifies the importance of the word 'epidemic' and makes it a descriptive key to the new reality. The message, realised through specific technical radio solutions, is made complete by the Prime Minister's statement: "[epidemic state], which comes with new prerogatives but also imposes new restrictions". The narrative is enriched with the police message: "We have got an epidemic state. Those who break the rules will be punished" and the sounds of the police cars.

⁴⁴ Agnieszka PIELA, "W cieniu koronawirusa... Historycznie o zarazie i zarazkach," *Poradnik Językowy* 6 (2020): 97–105.

⁴⁵ Olga MICKIEWICZ-ADAMOWICZ, "Dźwięki pandemii" (audio), *Polskie Radio*, May 25, 2020, <https://trojka.polskieradio.pl/artukul/2514820,Reporta%C5%BC-D%C5%BAwi%C4%99ki-pandemii-czyli-pandemiczny-krajobraz-d%C5%BAwi%C4%99kowy>.

The described scene is made up of neutral, informative utterances which do not contain judgmental language or emotional elements. The broadcast excerpts just mentioned affect the audience's emotions. It is a result of the juxtaposition of certain lexical elements, condensed comments or compositional means of expression: segmentation, repetition, specific editing which enhances the dramatism of the content. An original, sound-based definition of 'threat' and 'fear' was created owing to the applied construction mechanisms. The use of authentic recordings, "quotes of reality", makes the message more credible and enhances its expressive power.

The sound of the voice and prosodic features, loudness, clarity, intonation, stress, pauses, are equally significant in the creation of the audio message based on words.⁴⁶ Non-linguistic elements are also important: sighing, crying, laughing, murmuring, fillers, fluency breakers typical of the spoken language.⁴⁷ A special role—in the context of a personal statement—is attributed to confessions referring to the speaker's experience. An example of an emotional narrative about the pandemic is the comment made in Joanna Sikora's broadcast titled *Posłuchaj ciszy* [Listen to silence]: "In Madrid the scale of the problem was such that a conference centre was turned into a kind of... field hospital. The IFEMA Conference Centre and Palacio de Hielo, the biggest ice rink in Madrid, was turned into a morgue [long pause]. It is the ice rink I visited only a few months ago, so when I... [pause] as I said, I try not to... not to think about it, simply. I try to cope with it every day, however, obviously, it haunts me, I feel stressed. I cannot help thinking about the future but I try to do my best to avoid it."⁴⁸

Apart from the dramatic events described in the broadcast, a change from objective narration to first-person narration, an important factor which determines the emotional value of a statement is the way of speaking itself: slow, reflective, as if words were coming with difficulty. The impression is intensified by long pauses between sentences and words, not always justified by the logic of prosody. Silence creates a tension and expects the addressees

⁴⁶ Magdalena MAJDAK, "Głos a emocje – wykładniki językowe (prolegomena)," *Prace Filologiczne* 64, no. 2 (2014): 217–32; Grażyna STACHYRA, "Komunikowanie emocji w nocnych rozmowach radiowych w świetle paradygmatu analizy konwersacyjnej," *Forum Lingwistyczne* 4 (2017): 55–66; STACHYRA, "Radio mówi, ale jak? O sztuce dynamizowania wypowiedzi antenowych. Tradycja i współczesność," *Zeszyty Prasoznawcze* 62, no. 1 (2019): 64–79; Mieczysław KOTLARCIK, *Sztuka żywego słowa: dykcja, ekspresja, magia* (Lublin: Gaudium, 2010).

⁴⁷ Anna MAJEWSKA-TWOREK, *Niepłynność wypowiedzi w oficjalnej odmianie polszczyzny. Propozycja typologii* (Wrocław: Quaestio, 2014).

⁴⁸ Joanna SIKORA, "Posłuchaj ciszy" (audio), *Polskie Radio Białystok*, April 14, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.radio.bialystok.pl/reportaz/index/id/181986>.

to be even more involved. The exposed sounds of breathing fit the broken narration, confirming the involvement of the speakers, their sincerity and a search for “inner truth”.⁴⁹ Anxiety caused by the nearness of a disease, death, real threat can be transferred onto the listener. That is how the rhetoric of fear is constructed.

We should also pay attention to a characteristic aspect of voice in the radio materials realised during the pandemic, i.e. the muffled sound and unclear enunciation. From a practical perspective, it is an effect of mask-wearing, which blocks the free flow of air. However, such a detail can remind the listener of everyday problems with communication and can manifest itself as a metaphor of distance.

3. MUSIC AND ACOUSTICS IN THE EMOTIONAL NARRATIVE OF THE PANDEMIC

Audio-based media are an important space for music distribution. According to some studies, an increase in the popularity of well-known songs, which could refer to the pandemic, was observed. The song titles such as *Toxic*, *Stayin' Alive*, *U Can't Touch This*, *Don't Stand So Close to Me* became allusions to a new way of functioning during the pandemic.⁵⁰ Sometimes they acted as a pretext for internet jokes and wordplay. New songs were released, both by professionals and amateurs, touching upon the subject of the coronavirus, encouraging to stay at home, to wash hands. The space for the promotion of music activity was the internet and the radio, e.g. a competition organised by Radio Łódź for the best “coronavirus song”.⁵¹ The introduction of such a theme into the media narrative of the pandemic became a chance to take a break, evoke positive emotions amidst a flood of information about an increasing number of infections. The broadcasts that allow listeners to play songs dedicated to their dearest and nearest, with whom

⁴⁹ Aneta WÓJCISZYN-WASIL, “Discovering ‘Inner Truth’. Personal Narrative in Radio Documentaries,” in *Artes Liberales. Teatr-Sztuka-Media. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Leszkowi Mądzikowi*, ed. Stanisław Fel et al. (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2018), 503–14.

⁵⁰ “Spotify Reveals the World’s Favourite Songs to Listen to in Lockdown!” *OnBuy*, April 30, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.onbuy.com/gb/movies-video-games-and-music/blog/spotify-reveals-the-worlds-favourite-songs-to-listen-to-in-lockdown~a211>.

⁵¹ “By podziękować, wesprzeć, a czasem rozbawić. Muzyczne pomysły w obliczu pandemii koronawirusa” (opinion poll), *Radio Łódź*, April 5, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.radiolodz.pl/posts/60231-zobacz-jakie-piosenki-powstaly-w-czasie-epidemii-koronawirusa>.

they cannot meet due to the pandemic restrictions, boosted the affective attitudes of listeners, relying on empathy and reciprocity.

References to the lockdown were found in the Polish music too, e.g. Wojciech Młynarski's *Jeszcze w zielone gramy*, with a consolatory refrain:

Jeszcze w zielone gramy, jeszcze nie umieramy,
 Jeszcze któregoś ranka odbijemy się od ściany....
 My możemy być w kłopotcie, ale na rozpaczny dzień
 Jeszcze nie, długo nie.

We're still playing children's games, we're not dying yet,
 One day we'll bounce off the wall....
 We might be in trouble but the depths of our despair
 Are not where we are—still, for a while.

The choice of the repertoire points towards the uniting function of music and the significant role of audio media. A musical repertoire is one of the key mechanisms of shaping the mood of radio listeners. In this light we should view the song *Andrà tutto bene* (Everything is going to be all right), which became popular on the internet and on the radio, released as a gesture of solidarity with Italy and a harbinger of hope.

Balcony concerts, often dedicated to healthcare workers, became a special formula of musical events organised during the pandemic. Their positive message generated an interest of the streaming platforms into particular songs and artists. Popular home concerts broadcast online and events of shared musical performance became an interesting topic for the radio, both as the news and an opportunity to present a well-developed story. That is the origin of Agnieszka Strzemińska's radio report on the online recording of *Boléro* by the eminent musicians of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice.⁵² The one-movement orchestral piece by the French composer Maurice Ravel, present in the recording, not only unites its parts but also, through its rhythm and consonance of instruments, affects the listener. Music can emphasise the sense of terror, e.g. in the radio drama "Droga Kwarantanno... (Dear Quarantine...)" by Cezary Galek.⁵³ The leit-

⁵² Agnieszka STRZEMIŃSKA, "Bolero czasu kwarantanny" (audio), *Polskie Radio Katowice*, May 4, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.radio.katowice.pl/zobacz,49104,Bolero-czasu-kwarantanny-Reportaz.html>.

⁵³ Cezary GALEK, "Droga Kwarantanno..." (audio), *Radio Zachód*, May 30, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.zachod.pl/audycja/droga-kwarantanno-sluchowisko-cezarego-galka-w-niedziele-po-9-00>.

motif of single, high tones appearing in the background of the story on isolation, loneliness, fears highlights the characters' anxiety, expectations and uncertainty.

Another context should be mentioned here, i.e. music functioning on the radio. Many radio stations, apart from producing programmes, undertake to organise concerts broadcast live on air and through internet channels. It is an opportunity to enrich the radio programme, to promote the radio station and to engage the listeners in the studio. Under the conditions of sanitary regime, with events cancelled, concerts given without audience were introduced to the music culture. That was the formula of concerts organised by Radio Poznań, Radio Katowice, Radio Lublin, Radio Rzeszów. The events were presented emotionally as a gesture of solidarity with the public, and a sign of returning to the pre-COVID state. The media narrative described it as a pretext to get rid of negative emotions and generate joy of a shared experience.

Radio BBC 2, unable to organise the annual Live in Hyde Park Festival, which attracted 50,000 fans in the centre of London, offered a new dimension of the festival, Live at Home, respecting social distancing regulations. Performances of artists, which were recorded in their apartments, gardens, or even more original places, e.g. Nile Rodgers performed in Central Park in New York, The Killers performed on the roof of Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. The aim of the event organisers was to recreate the atmosphere of the open air festival through an online formula. The media descriptions of such an unusual edition of the festival highlighted the spontaneous reactions of the artists, for whom it was the first performance in months.⁵⁴ It is quite telling that the organisers also underscored that the festival is a form of support and solidarity: "For many of the crew working on Radio 2's show, from the caterers to the stage hands, it was the first job they'd had all year."⁵⁵ Such an emotionally loaded message sent by BBC Radio 2 linked music and entertainment industry with a category of social responsibility.

The structure of audio productions offers acoustic sounds, e.g. sound background, phonic equivalents of objects and activities. They make a report more realistic, they make the message more dynamic and plastic. The sounds of a telephone ringing, internet communicators and the keyboard fill radio reports on remote work, distant learning, distance communication, becoming

⁵⁴ Mark SAVAGE, "Live at Home: How BBC Radio 2 Pulled Off a Festival During a Pandemic," *BBC News*, September 11, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-54093240>.

⁵⁵ SAVAGE, "Live at Home."

an audio-based photograph of the quarantine. The sounds of police cars, an ambulance, medical apparatus, emphasise the most important values being threatened, i.e. life and health. Even a little acoustic effect, such as breathing, white noise, echo, has a semantic potential and modifies the general meaning. In a report by Magdalena Świerczyńska-Dolot, comprised of comments on the experience of lockdown, we can hear a male voice:

Hi there, I'm in a forest. I guess it is a kind of place which can help us to endure it all. We may think it is the end, we break down, what will happen next? A forest gives you a sense of calm. A sense of lasting. That even after a storm there is calm. The world regenerates and comes right back on its tracks. So I believe it will be the same once the coronavirus is over.⁵⁶

The comment, transcribed and without the acoustic layer, sends out a positive message, encapsulated in “after a storm, there comes calm”, “the world regenerates and comes right back on its tracks”. In the sound layer, we can hear a distorted voice and air blowing through the microphone, both integral in the recording; they lead to an opposite interpretation of the comment. Such an effect is enhanced by loud, rapid breathing, which creates an effect of the speaker gasping for breath and having difficulty articulating words (which can be interpreted as if the speaker is being ventilated) and an increasingly dramatic music theme. In a suggestive, non-visual radio message, a sequence of sounds acquires a deeply emotional meaning, generating a convincing feeling of threat and danger.

The biggest challenge for a non-visual medium was to portray silence, which became commonly experienced due to the lockdown. Surprisingly, a decreased level of noise, experienced particularly in metropolises,⁵⁷ and documented by the authors of field recording, becomes “a global micro-archive of COVID-19 soundscapes.”⁵⁸ In a verbal message, silence, which used to be a pause,⁵⁹ became a sign of distance and a synonym of a void re-

⁵⁶ Magdalena ŚWIERCZYŃSKA-DOLOT, “W izolacji” (audio), *Radio Gdańsk*, April 20, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://radiogdansk.pl/audycje/manufaktura-reportazu/2020/04/20/jak-bedzie-wygladal-swiat-po-koronawirusie-czy-wroci-jeszcze-normalnosc-reportaz-w-izolacji>.

⁵⁷ Jerónimo VIDA MANZANO ET AL., “The ‘Sound of Silence’ in Granada during the COVID-19 Lockdown,” *Noise Mapping* 8, no. 1 (2021): 16–31.

⁵⁸ Milena DROUMEVA, “Remixing the Pandemic, One Sound at a Time Cities and Memory, #StayHomeSounds,” *Sound Studies* 7, no. 1 (2021): 147–50.

⁵⁹ Andrzej BRZOSKA, “Cisza i milczenie jako intrygujący gest foniczny,” in *Barwy ciszy*, ed. Tomira Rogala, 179–86 (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Muzycznego Fryderyka Chopina,

lated to everyday activity, movement, hectic lifestyle, meetings with friends. According to one of the participants of the sound project titled *Nie słyszę* (I can't hear), during the quarantine "we are waiting for the sounds we miss due to the restrictions, however, silence is the worst of all."⁶⁰ An ambivalent character of the muffled sound is established through the context: "Silence is not always connected with tranquillity. Sometimes it is a sign of a great tragedy, catastrophe. In sounds, in sounds we find ourselves." In an audio-based message, silence understood as an elimination of sound, is a sign of uniqueness. A low frequency of this phonic component, together with its expressive potential stemming from contrasting and metaphorization, constitutes its persuasive strength.

4. A CATALOGUE OF MECHANISMS BEHIND EMOTION GENERATION IN AUDIO-BASED MEDIA

Emotional methods of constructing an audio-based message can function within each of the abovementioned aspects: the one of spoken word, acoustics, music, and silence. On the basis of the described research material, we can pinpoint the major mechanisms of generating and modulating the perceptive experience of listeners.

1. Mechanism of narration: structuring the messages in line with oral narration practices⁶¹ and schemas of audio storytelling,⁶² evolving in the direction of transmedia projects.⁶³

2. Mechanism of personalisation: it is realised through referring to personal experience, both of the main character of a broadcast and its host. Statistical data, events and problems are narrated from an individual perspective of the characters appearing in a broadcast and their subjective feelings.

3. Mechanism of intimisation: it strives to maximally reduce the distance by not exposing the superior position of the sender. An arrangement of the

2019); Dorota KORWIN-PIOTROWSKA, *Białe znaki. Milczenie w strukturze i znaczeniu utworów narracyjnych* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2015).

⁶⁰ MICHALAK and ŚWIERCZYŃSKA-DOŁOT, "Nie słyszę."

⁶¹ Walter J. ONG, *Orality and Literacy: 30th Anniversary Edition* (3rd ed.) (London: Routledge, 2012), e-book.

⁶² David DOWLING and Kyle J. MILLER, "Immersive Audio Storytelling: Podcasting and Serial Documentary in the Digital Publishing Industry," *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 26, no. 1 (2019): 167–84.

⁶³ Maura EDMOND, "All Platforms Considered: Contemporary Radio and Transmedia Engagement," *New Media & Society* 17, no. 9 (2015): 1566–82.

communicative situation in a form of a close meeting is achieved through auto-narration, which frequently aims at protecting privacy, auto-reflexivity, choice of music, and specific use of the voice, i.e. it is lowered when the speaker gets closer to the microphone.

4. Mechanism of empathy: it is connected with a conversion of the role of a journalist, who rejects the role of an objective observer, thus becoming a participant of events. Such a construction is manifested by emphasising identification with listeners, resulting from shared experience and meta-narration related to the way a given broadcast is produced. Hence, the author becomes a participant of the broadcast.

5. Mechanism of multiplicity: it can be observed on the thematic level as an accumulation and repetitiveness of content (e.g. information on the infected), while in the acoustic level it is realised through “sound clusters”, “mixing”, looping and multiplying of acoustic effects, voices, speech fragments.

6. Mechanism of contrast: delivery of the message through exposed oppositions, e.g. noise–silence, life–death, conflict, fear–tranquillity, isolation–community.

7. Mechanism of authenticity: invoking the referential character of the message. Non-fictionality is confirmed by “sound quotes of the reality”, registered original acoustics and a natural way of speaking or expression. During the pandemic, a typical solution was to release acoustically imperfect broadcasts realised by amateurs, often participating in the material.

8. Mechanism of analogy: it describes the pandemic through references to other crises, e.g. the 1918 Spanish flue⁶⁴ and the smallpox of 1963.⁶⁵ Emotional associations may be triggered by acoustic effects, e.g. ambulance signal, or a loud, short breathing.

9. Mechanism of sympathy and reciprocity: declared appreciation of the needs and expectations of listeners, with a focus on interaction and responsiveness. It gives listeners an opportunity to participate in the broadcast, e.g. through a list of questions addressed to experts (e.g. *Coronacast*, ABC), sharing one’s story (e.g. *Covid Chronicles*, BBC), saying hello to the dearest and nearest (Radio Pogoda, Radio Żłote Przeboje).

⁶⁴ Neda ULABY, “‘We Haven’t Learned From History’: ‘Radio Influenza’ Is A Warning from 1918,” *NPR*, April 16, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2020/04/16/831053620/we-haven-t-learned-from-history-radio-influenza-is-a-warning-from-1918?t=1633192941347>; John OXFORD, *Pandemic 1918* (audio series), *BBC*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/series/m000j2tz>.

⁶⁵ “Wrocław w czasach zarazy,” *Polskie Radio*, May 5, 2020, accessed November 10, 2022, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/9/325/Artykul/2504083,Wroclaw-w-czasach-zarazy>.

10. Mechanism of metaphorisation: it can be realised both on the verbal and the acoustic level. The strongest expressive potential in audio-based media belongs to silence, which in the period of lockdown became a metaphor of isolation, restrictions, loneliness, void.⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the radio and audio-based media, despite limited production capabilities, reported the up-to-date situation, accompanying their listeners and satisfying their needs. Relevance and significance of the pandemic-related topics made the informative character of the news, usually regarded as objective one, more emotional. A content construction based on audio perception relies on specific mechanisms of projecting listeners' affective reactions. This text analyses them in the context of four audio elements: words, music, acoustic effects, silence.

An emotional message is produced through health-oriented lexis, rhetoric of threat/fear, segmentation and condensation of the content, as well as voice expressions. These means highlight the dramatic, authentic character of the message and the speaker's personal engagement. Emotions can be also evoked by music, perceived as a context for words, and on the level of the repertoire. During the pandemic we can observe its ever increasing role as a regulator of public mood. Through shared experience, promotion of solidarity and hope, music becomes a counterbalance to the media narration of fear and threat. An affective image of the pandemic presented in the media is made complete by sound effects and silence. They not only document the audio sphere of the pandemic but are a powerful means of persuasion.

The above-mentioned mechanisms of generating emotions enabled us to put forward a catalogue of 10 solutions rendering the content adequate to the specificity of audio-based media. The catalogue attests to the expressive power of the message based on voice and sounds. They underscore the importance of affect in the media representations of the crisis. Emotions make the message more credible and engage the listeners. During the months' long pandemic, they became a significant element of the management of the public attention.

⁶⁶ Aneta WÓJCISZYN-WASIL, "Metafory ciszy w przekazach mediów audialnych podczas pandemii Covid-19," *Roczniki Kulturoznawcze* 12, no. 3 (2021): 91–103.

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MECHANISMS OF GENERATING EMOTIONS IN AUDIO-BASED MEDIA

Summary

Audio-based content is considered to be extremely intimate and easily evoking emotions in listeners. The aim of this article is to determine the affective mechanisms used in audio productions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The analysis focuses on radio programmes of public and commercial radio stations and the broadly defined audio media segment: podcasts and streaming services from Europe, the USA, and Australia. The content created during the so-called first wave of the pandemic (March–June 2020) was considered. Sound recordings are analysed in terms of four aspects related to the structure of audio content: words, music, acoustic effects, and silence. This study aims to present the perspective of a broadcaster who designs the audience’s affective reactions and the unique nature of radio journalists’ work during the pandemic.

The study confirmed the use of mechanisms intended to intensify and regulate emotions in audio productions in all of the analysed areas. This is especially true for emotionally-charged lexis, voice expressions, selection of musical repertoire and solutions applied in sound editing. The importance of silence as an acoustic equivalent of distance, void and isolation is emphasised. We put forward a list of mechanisms behind generating and modulating emotions in audio-based media. The study shows how sound, as diverse as it is, conveys emotions in the media.

Keywords: radio; audio media; podcast; emotions; coronavirus pandemic.

MECHANIZMY GENEROWANIA EMOCJI W MEDIACH AUDIALNYCH

Streszczenie

Treści audialne uważane są za wyjątkowo intymne i łatwo generujące emocje słuchaczy. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest określenie mechanizmów afektywnych wykorzystywanych w produkcjach audio w okresie pandemii COVID-19.

Analizie poddano program radiowy polskich rozgłośni publicznych i komercyjnych oraz szeroko rozumiany segment mediów audio: podcasty oraz serwisy streamingowe z Europy, Stanów Zjednoczonych i Australii. Brano pod uwagę treści powstałe w okresie tzw. pierwszej fali pandemii (marzec–czerwiec 2020). Nagrania dźwiękowe analizowano w czterech aspektach odpowiadających podstawowym elementom struktury treści audialnych: słowo, muzyka, efekty akustyczne i cisza. W badaniach została uwzględniona perspektywa nadawcy projektującego reakcje afektywne publiczności oraz specyfika pracy dziennikarzy radiowych w okresie pandemii.

Badania potwierdziły funkcjonowanie w produkcjach audio mechanizmów wzmacniania i regulowania emocji we wszystkich analizowanych obszarach. Szczególnie dotyczy to nacechowanej emocjonalnie leksyki, ekspresji głosowej, doboru repertuaru muzycznego oraz rozwiązań w edycji dźwięku. Warte podkreślenia jest eksponowanie w analizowanym okresie znaczenia ciszy jako akustycznego ekwiwalentu dystansu, braku, izolacji. Zaproponowano katalog mechanizmów generowania i modulowania emocji w mediach audialnych.

Badanie pokazuje, w jaki sposób dźwięk jest przekąźnikiem emocji w mediach.

Słowa kluczowe: radio; audio media; podcast; emocje; pandemia koronawirusa.