

Metaphors and Pseudometaphors of Language as Controversial Messages in Public Discourse About Serbian

1. Introduction

The fact that language is regularly employed for identitarian and nationalistic purposes is not a novelty (Anderson 2006; Greenberg 2008; Van der Horst 2008). Although the role of metaphor in language ideology has not gone unexplored (e.g., Geeraerts 2003; Bermel 2007; Berthele 2008; Watts 2011; Underhill 2013; Radanović Felberg & Šarić 2013), there have been few systematic attempts at analyzing metaphorical language as an instrument of language-national(istic) ideologies in the present-day Serbian discourse (e.g., Vervaeet 2019; to a certain extent Ilić 2014), and there has been none that would explicitly take metaphors of WAR, VIOLENCE, and PHYSICAL STRUGGLE as a focus of an in-depth qualitative analysis.¹ A qualitative discursive study presented in this paper both addresses this gap and advances the theory of metaphor by proposing *pseudometaphor* as a theoretical concept capable of explaining key discursive strategies used in figurative representations of (socio)linguistic dynamics.

¹ Following the conventions in cognitive metaphor studies, small capital letters are used for designating concepts and conceptual content, as opposed to their specific linguistic realizations. At the same time, the use of small capitals for conceptual content or metaphorical groupings (e.g., ARGUMENT AS WAR) does not indicate adherence to conceptual metaphor theory as per George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003). Rather, they are used to refer to “systematic metaphors” (Cameron 2007: 201), that is, systematic metaphorical groupings regularly appearing in discourse.

The following quotation instantiates the power of WAR/VIOLENCE metaphors to create a nexus between linguistic and nationalistic concerns, illustrating how contentious such language may be against the immediate socio-historical context and how a political controversy can be concealed, i.e., rendered pseudometaphorical, by a seemingly typical (figurative) instance of language purism:

- (1) *Miloš Kovačević izjavio je da se danas vodi borba protiv srpskog jezika i da njegov položaj na prostorima bivše Jugoslavije i u regionu nikad nije bio gori, te da traje 'tiha okupacija' engleskim jezikom.* (IN4S portal 2013)²

Miloš Kovačević said that today *a battle is waged against Serbian*, that *its position in the territory of the former Yugoslavia and in the region* has never been worse, and that *there is a 'silent occupation' going on by the English language.* (IN4S portal 2013)³

Being a typical puristic concern, the so-called “occupation by the English language” might make it seem as if the quotation in (1) is yet another lamentation over the excessive use of foreignisms, as it is the case in many anti-English, or ‘anti-globalist’ traditions (e.g., see Čičin-Šain 2019 for Croatian). While implications afforded by “the occupation by English” do not necessarily have any real-life consequences for English speakers, the danger and threat constructed by the WAR and VIOLENCE metaphors in the context of the former Yugoslavia and the implications emerging out of such constructions make it a controversial language ideology that goes beyond typical language purism. The controversy stems from the fact that the WAR metaphors for LANGUAGE MATTERS are contemporaneously literalized by micro-contextual cues and extralinguistic knowledge that point to a physical, literal dimension (“its position in the territory,” “former Yugoslavia,” “in the region” for PHYSICAL SPACE, and the Yugoslav

² Miloš Kovačević is an influential Serbian linguist and a member of the dominant voices or the symbolic elite. He often appears in the media and takes part in language debates.

³ All translations mine, if not otherwise stated.

wars in the 1990s) outweighing the figurative meaning of the metaphor (LANGUAGE MATTERS). Moreover, since the concept of LANGUAGE is inextricably and metonymically related to LANGUAGE USERS (PEOPLE) (Polzenhagen & Dirven 2008), metaphors depicting “a battle waged against Serbian” construct danger implicitly suggesting an attack on LANGUAGE USERS (PEOPLE) whose language is “under attack.” In addition to implying the ‘attacked language users,’ the metaphor of a waged battle implies that there are ‘attackers’ involved. Even if the ‘attackers’ may be envisaged figuratively as some ‘other languages,’ the same metonymical link implies that their respective LANGUAGE USERS (PEOPLE) are behind the ‘attack.’ In the context of the territory of the former Yugoslavia, these are the neighboring nations and/or languages cohabiting the former Yugoslav territory. This makes the potential literal meaning of the metaphorical blend largely outweigh its figurative dimension.

It is argued in this paper that, in (1) and similar examples, LANGUAGE is conveniently used to obscure another topic (e.g., inter-ethnic relations, or physical conflict), making the figuration *pseudometaphorical* in the sense of ‘battles,’ ‘(battle) positions’ and other war figurations not being entirely metaphorical and treating language solely, but, crucially, intended to carry a message about their respective LANGUAGE USERS, too. A pseudometaphor is, therefore, a linguistic metaphor where, triggered by contextual and/or extralinguistic cues, a literal reading of the source domain expression is activated and prevails over its figurative reading, even though the ‘surface expression’ remains metaphorical. Function-wise, pseudometaphor may be used as a discursive strategy through which a literal construction is conveyed obscured by its seemingly exclusively figurative expression.

The discourse about a ‘violated’ or ‘attacked language’ that requires ‘defense’ and ‘protection’ has recently appeared in the debates about the state and status of Serbian in the influential Serbian daily newspaper, *Politika*, during the state-sponsored campaign ‘Let’s Safeguard the Serbian Language’ (Ser. *Sačuvajmo srpski jezik*, 2015-2016). It is also

recurrent in other cultural and political campaigns, most notably the one around the ‘Declaration on the Preservation of the Serbian Nation’ (Ser. *Deklaracija o očuvanju srpskog naroda*, 2017-2018), which contains references to “the protection of the language” and “protection of people.”⁴

The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, it shows that although metaphors of VIOLENCE/PHYSICAL STRUGGLE/WAR may be commonly employed in typical language puristic discourses in Serbia, depending on their micro and macro-context (KhosraviNik 2009), they have radically different implications and may have political ramifications that go beyond typical puristic concerns. Secondly, it is demonstrated that metaphors such as those constructing DANGER to language, representing an ‘attacked’ Serbian language, or calling for the ‘defense’ of the language, again, constrained by the contextual factors, may be read as pseudometaphorical and, by way of implications, send conflict-instigating messages towards other nations and/or ethnic groups cohabiting this geographical area--the speakers who identify as (the speakers of) Bosnian, Croatian, and Montenegrin. Furthermore, it is shown that the deconstruction and contestation of the dominant ideology relies precisely on the exposure of its often pseudometaphorical nature. To this end, a corpus of 140,800 words has been analyzed, covering both dominant, institutionalized language debates and discourses, as well as non-dominant voices (journalists, writers, anonymous commenters) in a span of eight years (2010-2018). The two-fold aim is achieved through an in-depth, qualitative, discursive metaphor analysis.

⁴Although the Declaration was “pompously announced” (Vijesti.ba 2018), it seems that it was clear already towards the end of 2018 that the entire project would not be seen through.

Vijesti.ba. (2018, October 19). *Nestala pompezno najavljivana Deklaracija o opstanku srpskog naroda* [The Pompously Announced Declaration on the Survival of the Serbian Nation Disappeared], *Vijesti.ba*. Retrieved from <http://www.infomediabalkan.com/nestala-deklaracija-o-opstanku-srpskog-naroda>

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 gives an outline of the theoretical background relevant for the analysis: the underlying conceptual mechanisms and folk models behind the LANGUAGE-LANGUAGE USERS-NATION nexus, as well as the role of metaphor in the representation of LANGUAGE. The specificities of the Serbian, post-Yugoslav sociolinguistic context are briefly given in Section 3. The analyzed corpus and method for metaphor identification are described in Section 4. Section 5, Analysis, is divided in three subsections: two dealing with various metaphors of VIOLENCE and one analyzing the deconstruction of dominant metaphorical models. Section 6 is the Discussion and Conclusion.

2. *Theoretical Background*

Theoretical Background addresses Romantic and Rationalist cultural models of language and their relevance for the language debates (2.1), as well as the role of metaphor in the construction and representation of language (2.2).

2.1 Language - Language Users - Nation: Romantic and Rationalist Models of Language Revisited

Instrumentalization of language and language matters for political purposes is no novel phenomenon, as language has always been inextricably related to various societal and identitarian dimensions (e.g., Joseph 2004; Van der Horst 2008; Greenberg 2008; Watts 2011). With the birth of nations, folk models and beliefs about language have been married with the ideas of nationhood and the ‘expression of a national spirit’ (e.g., Anderson 2006; Van der Horst 2008; Watts 2011). In a hardline Romanticist fashion, Joost Hiddes Halbertsma claims that “Language is the soul of the nation, language is the nation itself” (Van der Horst 2008: 46-47), seeing the conflation between LANGUAGE and NATION as natural. Beliefs about an inextricable link between language and nation have found their manifestation in the Serbian public institutionalized discourse, too, and are constructed by means of figurative

language: (2) “*A language keeps a nation together more firmly than land*” (Radisavljević 2012); (3) “*a pillar of the survival of all Serbs*” (Milinković 2017) (see also in Vervaet 2019). Cognitive sociolinguistic literature analyzes the abovementioned Romanticist ideas as an interchangeable metonymy: LANGUAGE FOR IDENTITY and IDENTITY FOR LANGUAGE (Polzenhagen & Dirven 2008: 243). This metonymy is the core of a Romantic cultural/folk/naïve model of language (e.g., Geeraerts 2003; Berthele 2008; Polzenhagen & Dirven 2008). On a conceptual level, the Romantic cultural model of language, as opposed to its idealized Rationalist counterpart model, imagines LANGUAGE to be in a kind of organic relationship with GROUP IDENTITY, and IDENTITY to be an indispensable property of LANGUAGE. On the other hand, the Rationalist view generally sees the relationship between LANGUAGE and LANGUAGE USERS as arbitrary, and not automatically having an influence on identity, but rather highlighting functional and communicative aspects of LANGUAGE; e.g., LANGUAGE AS A TOOL/KEY (Berthele 2008). Crucially, by dismissing the Romantic model where the language is linked to the category of NATION as its integral aspect, some scholars tend to advocate its antonymic, Rationalist model (e.g., Kordić 2010) as the most appropriate description of the (socio)linguistic reality. The insistence of such a functionalist view obscures the fact that the two models are complementary rather than exclusive, or “two poles on a continuum” as Frank Polzenhagen and René Dirven (2008:2) put it. Importantly, seeing LANGUAGE as a tool or instrument for communication solely, de-emphasizes and obfuscates the fact that LANGUAGE USERS, or SPEECH COMMUNITY, is still an inevitable dimension of thinking and talking about language, and that every language debate explicitly or implicitly involves some dimension of its users, be they foregrounded or backgrounded within a particular discourse.

Metaphor-based folk models are thus acknowledged to be integral parts of thinking and talking about LANGUAGE, in relation to both a generic SOCIETY/SPEECH COMMUNITY, as

well as a national dimension--NATION/PEOPLE. Whereas folk beliefs of language being an 'expression of nation' need not be criticized *per se*, the language-nation organic model can indeed become rather contentious depending on the narrative built upon it (e.g., see (1)).

Crucially, as will be shown in the analysis, not all language myths and metaphorical models are instrumentalized for the same purposes, nor do they all carry the same ramifications. The LANGUAGE USERS/SPEECH COMMUNITY dimension is particularly important for the discursive strategy of pseudometaphor proposed in this paper as it functions as an often-backgrounded dimension of puristic metaphors whose activation in a specific context may have repercussions that go far beyond 'regular' puristic concerns.

2.2 Metaphor and Metaphorical Representations of LANGUAGE

This paper considers metaphor primarily as a linguistic-discursive phenomenon (e.g., Cameron 2003, 2007; Charteris-Black 2004; Musolff 2016) and, importantly, one of the fundamental tools for cognition, ideation, and the construction of reality (e.g., Ricoeur 1978; Arbib & Hesse 1986; Reddy 1993, Lakoff & Johnson 2003).⁵ Metaphor guides the way people think about reality, which is most evident in case of complex and elusive phenomena such as emotions (Kövecses 2010) or language (Reddy 1993; Seargeant 2009). Metaphor not only constructs and expresses emotions, but also influences the way people feel about metaphorically defined and constructed phenomena, potentially guiding their action as a

⁵ The author remains skeptical of conceptual metaphor, as a theoretical concept initially proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003), and the suggestions of it being a stable mental and neural phenomenon. Furthermore, there being such an entity or not does not seem to have any bearing on the investigation of discursive functions and effects of metaphors. Metaphors (and figurations in general) are considered cognitive insofar they afford language-induced cognition and their function can well be accounted for without the need to either speculate about or resort to any fixed mental entities.

consequence (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson 2003; Šarić 2014). Generally, metaphor analysts agree that defining what is metaphorical, as opposed to what is literal, is not a straightforward task, and sometimes the metaphorical and literal dimensions may coexist activated by the same linguistic expression (e.g., Cameron 2003: 69). Furthermore, the meaning of a metaphor, or any other figuration, is an emergent property, so to say, constrained by micro and macro-discourse and is rarely determinable without considering the synergy between a figurative vehicle and its symbolic environment (e.g., Ricoeur 1978; KhosraviNik 2009). Precisely for this reason, the term ‘figurative blend’, inspired by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2003), is used throughout the analysis to refer to more bits of relevant linguistic-conceptual material co-creating the overall meaning of a figuration.

Literal dimensions of figurations have been under-investigated so far, although there is some research indicating the functional importance of literalization. For instance, Lynne Cameron (2007) suggests that ‘metaphoric blurring’ or indeterminacy between literal and figurative uses of certain words creates more comfortable atmosphere between the interlocutors in post-conflict talks, calling this phenomenon ‘symbolic literalization.’ Tatjana Đurović and Nadežda Silaški (2019) demonstrate how, in migrant discourses in Serbia, the talk about erecting physical walls and fences serves as an impulse for a discursive interplay between figurative and literal walls, leading to the discursive construction of the EU versus non-EU identities. The phenomenon of literalization of source domains represents a relevant dimension in the context of pseudometaphor, both in its understanding and deconstruction.

Figurative language and figurative representations have long been known to be crucial ingredients in the discursive (de)construction of language ideologies and cultural models of language (Reddy 1993; Geeraerts 2003; Bermel 2007; Seargeant 2009; Watts 2011; Underhill 2013). Figurative language and metaphors are both a means of representation of more ‘objective’ aspects of communication (e.g., Reddy 1993; Seargeant 2009; Bogetić 2018), as

well as tools for representing emotional and/or ideological dimensions (Bermel 2007; Berthele 2008; Watts 2011; Underhill 2013; Radanović Felberg & Šarić 2013; Čičin-Šain 2019; Vervaeet 2019). Importantly, in the context of national projects, the idea of a ‘national essence’ of a language goes hand in hand with some other metaphor-based language myths and models, most notably countability, historical uninterrupted continuity, and indivisibility of languages (see Van der Horst 2008; Watts 2011), all of which call for a contextualized analysis and do not carry unequivocal meanings irrespective of the context they are situated in. For instance, seemingly common objectifications of language attested in various languages--LANGUAGE AS A VALUABLE OBJECT (Bermel 2007), LANGUAGE AS A POSSESSION (Sergeant 2009)--may, depending on their discursive elaboration and socio-historical context, be turned into less-than-innocuous political statements. A case in point is Stijn Vervaeet’s (2019: 118-119) analysis of LANGUAGE IS A VALUABLE OBJECT/A TREASURE that manifests as a conflict-inciting message when instantiated through a figuration such as “the theft of Serbian [by Croats, Bosniaks, Montenegrins]” in Serbian sociolinguistic discourse. A figuration such as ‘language theft’ implies there being a ‘thief’ and promotes intolerance towards neighboring nations, simultaneously creating a sense of urgency to act in order to ‘rectify the injustice.’⁶ Equally important, a literal description of sociolinguistic dynamics is not possible, but always requires figuration for its representation. This is why metaphors of language, especially those constructing and expressing emotive qualities, should not be analyzed in terms of being “true or false,” but rather “appropriate or inappropriate,” as Michael Arbib & Mary Hesse put it (1986: 156). For instance, the metaphor-constructed

⁶ Similarly, Marija Ilić (2014), without going into a metaphor-focused analysis, criticizes narratives about the Croatian language that circulate in the discourses of the far-right political spectrum in Serbia, in particular their central idea that Croats ‘stole their language’ from the Serbs. She highlights the seriousness of such narratives by labeling them hate speech.

beliefs of the Serbian language being ‘the soul,’ or ‘a pillar of survival’ of the nation, as evaluative linguistic constructs and/or expressions of emotive appreciation, should not be expected to crumble in the face of counterfactual evidence, nor can they be adequately deconstructed simply by negation. Therefore, as essential epistemological and discursive tools, metaphors of LANGUAGE and their implications should be carefully analyzed for their (ethical) (in)appropriateness and socio-political ramifications within a micro and macro-context they are uttered and situated in.

3. Serbian, Post-Yugoslav Sociolinguistic Context

On the territory of the successor states of the former Yugoslavia, Serbian is currently the official language in the Republic of Serbia, one of the official languages of Bosnia and Herzegovina (along with Croatian and Bosnian), a minority language in Croatia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and North Macedonia. As such, its political status is, arguably, secured and without any current political issues. The violent break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s into its successor-states affected, and was partly affected by, language politics in the area. As Greenberg notices, language issues were of “paramount importance in creating some of Europe’s newest states,” and “(t)he joint Serbo-Croatian language, with its unstable foundation, did not survive the cataclysmic political events” (Greenberg 2008: 159). Four standard languages have gradually emerged in the territory of the former Serbo-Croatian area: Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian. All four standard languages (Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian) are based on the same dialect and are mutually intelligible. As some detailed sociolinguistic accounts show (e.g., Greenberg 2008; Langston & Peti-Stantić 2014), the disintegration of Serbo-Croatian was not an unexpected event, nor did names of the four standard languages appear only after the break-up. In his political-anthropological essays, Čolović (2008) identifies the laudation of language as one of the characteristics of the

countries emerging in the post-Yugoslav period. In this period, the question of language becomes the question of national and cultural individuality, as well as the argument for political sovereignty. Specific to the Serbian political context, along with more typical beliefs about language being “the final wall of defense” or a “national sanctity,” Čolović identifies the “theft of the language” as one of the language myths and recurring images used in the Serbian nationalistic agenda (2008: 29-41), showing therefore, without going specifically into metaphor analysis, how figurations played major role in sociolinguistic nationalist narratives. In recent years, Serbian public space has witnessed a resurgence of national-linguistic debates and discourses that in some aspects mirror those discourses circulating in the 1990s, when language was instrumentalized to nationalistic purposes, most notably to negate the possibility of sovereignty of other neighboring nations cohabiting the then-crumbling Yugoslav state (see Greenberg 2008: 68-69).

4. Corpus and Method for Metaphor Identification

The corpus for this study was purpose-built, focusing on the concepts of ‘language,’ ‘nation,’ and ‘identity.’ Two main types of searches were done in order to collect relevant material. First, a general Google search was performed with the following keywords in the Nominative case: *srpski jezik*, *srpski jezik i identitet*, *srpski jezik i nacionalni identitet* (Eng. the Serbian language, the Serbian language and identity, the Serbian language and national identity). The search returned material from various sources: online newspapers and portals (*Politika*, *Večernje novosti*, *b92*, *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, *Žurnal*, etc.), as well as other non-official sources (blogs, fora etc.). Second, an additional search through the internal online search engine of the newspaper *Politika* was performed with the following keywords in the Nominative case: *jezik*, *srpski jezik* (Eng. language, the Serbian language) because of its

influential position in the society as well as the amount of relevant material it returned.⁷ The material obtained from *Politika* mainly consists of language advice articles and opinions published as part of the state-funded campaign ‘Let’s Care for the Serbian Language’ (Ser. *Negujmo srpski jezik*) (2015-2016). Within this campaign, *Politika* published its own language-focused columns ‘Let’s Safeguard the Serbian Language’ (Ser. *Sačuvajmo srpski jezik*). The internal search also returned some relevant material published within an older column ‘How we (Don’t) Safeguard Serbian’ (Ser. *Kako (ne)čuvamo srpski jezik*) (2012). These texts were complemented by language-focused material from a more recent campaign revolving around the ‘Declaration on the Preservation of the Serbian Nation’ (2017-2018), as well as that revolving around the ‘Declaration on the Common Language’ (*Deklaracija o zajedničkom jeziku*) (2016). As a rule, comments sections that accompanied articles were included, too. The details about the collected material (e.g., publication period, number of items and words) are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Sources

Source Name	Period	Number of News Items	Words (Articles + Comments)
<i>Politika (Ser)</i>	2012-2018	48	≈ 79 430
<i>Večernje novosti (Ser)</i>	2016-2018	10	≈ 22 370
<i>Žurnal (BH)</i>	2016	2	≈ 4 690
<i>Other (Ser+BH)</i>	2010-2018	21	≈ 34 310
Total	2010-2018	81	≈ 140 800

*Ser = Serbia-based publication; BH = Bosnia and Herzegovina-based publication

⁷ According to a description on the webpages of *Politika*, it is “the oldest and most influential newspaper in these parts of Europe” and “a daily newspaper with a long and rich tradition that, due to its prestige and influence, is considered to be one of the national institutions in Serbia.” Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/stranica/4/O-nama>

The analysis covers a total number of 81 texts (at times with comments sections), which amounts to around 140 800 words. The time period covers almost a decade, from 2010 until 2018. The texts and columns published in *Politika* were written almost exclusively by linguists, philologists and members of the Serbian academia. These include, for instance, Sreto Tanasić, Gradimir Aničić, and other influential figures. The authoritativeness of the voices is rooted in their relationship with the highest public institutions in Serbia, as well as the fact that the dissemination of their ideas took place via an influential daily newspaper. Some expert and likewise influential voices promoting contrasting ideology from the one by the carriers of the campaigns, such as Ivan Čolović and Ranko Bugarski, received media space, too, and took part in some language debates. The comments sections were written by and large anonymously and, although falling into a ‘non-expert’ domain, their analysis was of no less interest since they have the potential of reaching a wide readership and shaping public opinion just as any other article.

Figurative language has been identified by means of close reading of the selected texts. Following an essentially constructivist approach to language where meaning is always “borne by the whole utterance” (Ricoeur 1978: 146), more than sum of its parts (Fauconnier & Turner 2003), and unavoidably dependent on subtleties of the micro and macro-context (e.g., Charteris-Black 2004; KhosraviNik 2009), linguistic units that were found to be semantically incongruent were selected. In that sense, the procedure for metaphor identification in discourse followed the Metaphor Identification through Vehicle Terms by Cameron (2003). This procedure yielded 233 longer stretches of discourse (one to several thematically related sentences) containing relevant figurations.

The stretches were then qualitatively analyzed for conceptual content in order to find which conceptualizations turn out to be relevant for language dynamics. More specifically, each metaphorical stretch was coded in two cycles in line with the procedure proposed by Johnny

Saldaña (2013). In the first cycle, a rough-and-ready source domain code was assigned to each metaphorical stretch. In the second cycle, the first-cycle codes were grouped and reorganized into larger thematic groups. In total, this corpus yielded 520 figurative conceptualizations (first-cycle codes) of language, language-nation-people relationship, language change (contact), figurations of language users and similar relevant constructions, which were grouped into 14 second-cycle themes (see Table 2 in the Analysis).⁸

5. Analysis

The analysis section consists of an in-depth qualitative analysis of figurative blends that are representative of both language purism and language myths that circulate in the institution-supported discourses and online comments. The analysis covers criticism of the dominant figurations, too. Importantly, the concept of pseudometaphoricity is elaborated throughout the analysis section. Out of all identified figurations (520 figurations of language), a special focus is given to VIOLENCE/PHYSICAL STRUGGLE/WAR metaphors of language because they crystallized as a somewhat relevant category within metaphorical representation of (socio)linguistic dynamics (12,11% of all figurations). The related PROTECTION (7,3%) and DEFENSE (3,0%) metaphors are focus of the analysis, too (see Table 2 for some common conceptual groupings). In addition to their overall relevance in the corpus, VIOLENCE/PHYSICAL STRUGGLE/WAR figurations deserve more extensive analysis due to their political ramifications.

⁸ Naturally, however, these numbers are estimates based on my own metaphor identification procedure and susceptible to fluctuation, depending on what one decides to count as a single occurrence of a potentially metaphorical/figurative word.

Table 2. Relevant Conceptualizations of LANGUAGE DYNAMICS

Relevant Conceptualizations ⁹	Number of Figurative Instances	Percentage
LANGUAGE CONTACT/CHANGE/USE AS VIOLENCE/PHYSICAL STRUGGLE/WAR (e.g., Ser. <i>vršiti nasilje</i> ('to commit violence'); <i>okupirati</i> ('to occupy'); <i>rušiti</i> ('to demolish'); <i>bitka</i> (battle); <i>boriti se</i> ('to fight'); <i>krasti, potkradati, otimati</i> ('to steal, stealing'))	63	12,11%
LANGUAGE-NATION-SPEECH COMMUNITY conceptualizations LANGUAGE AS ... (e.g., Ser. <i>lepak koji drži naciju na okupu</i> ('glue that keeps a nation together'); <i>vezivno tkivo</i> ('connective tissue'); <i>duhovna otadžbina</i> ('a spiritual homeland'); <i>suštinska nit koja nas povezuje</i> ('the essential thread that connects us all'); <i>čuvar narodnog identiteta</i> (a guardian of the national identity); <i>odraz kulture naroda, odraz lične svesti</i> ('the reflection of the culture of a nation/ of one's one consciousness'); <i>duša naroda</i> ('the spirit of a nation'); <i>riznica misli jednog naroda</i> ('the treasury of the thoughts of a nation'); <i>so i hleb</i> 'svake kulture (the 'salt and bread' of every culture); <i>duhovna vertikala srpskog naroda</i> ('the spiritual vertical of the Serbian nation'))	43	8,26 %
TO SAFEGUARD/PROTECT LANGUAGE/SCRIPT (e.g., Ser. <i>sačuvati, (o)čuvati, zaštititi</i> ('to protect'); <i>zaštitnici</i> ('protectors'))	38	7,3%
LANGUAGE AS AN OBJECT/A POSSESSION (e.g., <i>instrument civilizacije</i> (the instrument of civilization); <i>vlasništvo</i> ((<i>čitavog srpskog</i>) naroda) ('a possession of the (entire Serbian) nation'); <i>nekretnina</i> ('real estate'); <i>kućni namještaj</i> ('furniture'); <i>plazma televizor</i> ('a flat screen TV'); <i>komad zemlje</i> ('a piece of land'); <i>predati [jezik] potomstvu</i> ('to hand over [the language] to the posterity'); <i>čekić u rukama kovača</i> ('a hammer in the hands of a blacksmith [journalists]); <i>alatka, oruđe</i> ('tools'))	33	6,34%
WORD AS AN OBJECT/A POSSESSION (e.g., Ser. <i>preuzimati/preuzeto</i> ('to take over'); <i>pozajmiti</i> ('borrow'); <i>ubacivanje</i> ('putting in'); <i>import</i> ('an import'); <i>odbaciti</i> ('to cast away'); <i>uvoditi/uvoziti/ubacivati [reči u jezik]</i> ('to introduce/bring into/insert [words into language]); <i>[reči] provučene kroz srpski</i> ('words pulled through Serbian'); <i>[reči] se rasipaju</i> ('[words] are wasted'); <i>reči dolaze i odlaze</i> ('words come and go'); <i>proterati [reči]</i> ('expel [words]'))	28	5,38%
Appraisals/value judgments of some dimension of LANGUAGE/COMMUNICATION	23	4,42%

⁹ Some metaphorical instances may belong to more conceptual categories (e.g., *ubacivati reči u jezik*, 'insert words into language' is an instance of both WORD AS AN OBJECT as well as LANGUAGE AS A CONTAINER category). This is especially true for the LANGUAGE AS A CONTAINER/DEFINED ENTITY category which stands at the basis of the majority of conceptualizations. However, none of the instances were counted twice in the total sum of examples; rather they were assigned to categories according to what appeared to be semantically the most salient dimension of meaning (e.g., 'to steal' was assigned to the VIOLENCE category although it simultaneously belongs to the LANGUAGE AS AN OBJECT/POSSESSION category, too).

(e.g., Ser. <i>lepe</i> ; <i>bezobzirne</i> ; <i>niske</i> ; <i>zatrovane</i> , <i>otmene</i> ; <i>izopačne</i> ; <i>iskrivljene</i> [reči] ('beautiful; disrespectful; low; poisoned; posh; twisted; distorted [words]'); <i>rogobatno</i> ('ugly'); <i>unakažen jezik</i> ('disfigured language'); <i>jezički monstrum</i> ('a language monster'))		
TO NURTURE/TAKE CARE OF/CULTIVATE LANGUAGE (e.g., Ser. <i>negovati</i> , <i>brinuti se</i> , <i>voditi računa</i>)	23	4,42%
LANGUAGE CONTACT/CHANGE/USE AS CONTAMINATION (e.g., Ser. <i>zagađivati</i> ('to contaminate'), <i>čistunstvo</i> ('purism'))	21	4,03%
TO DEFEND LANGUAGE (e.g., Ser. <i>braniti</i> ('to defend'); <i>odbrana</i> ('defense'))	16	3,0%
LANGUAGE CONTACT/CHANGE/USE AS CORRUPTION (e.g., Ser. <i>kvarenje</i> ('corruption'); <i>kvariti</i> ('to corrupt'))	16	3,07%
LANGUAGE AS A CONTAINER/A DEFINED ENTITY (e.g., Ser. <i>jezik se popunjava i dopunjava svakoga časa</i> ('language is being filled in and increased every second'); <i>ubacivati</i> [reči] u jezik ('insert [words] into language'), <i>[neprimetno] se uvlače strancizmi</i> ('foreignisms creep into language'); <i>granice srpskog jezika</i> ('borders of the Serbian language'); <i>množenje/dijeljenje</i> [jezika] ('multiplication/division of [language]'))	15	2,88%
LANGUAGE AS A LIVING ENTITY (e.g., Ser. <i>živa struktura/stvar</i> (a living structure/thing))	15	2,88%
ENDANGERED LANGUAGE (e.g., Ser. <i>ugrožen</i> ('endangered'); <i>opasnost</i> ('danger'))	13	2,5%
Other language-related conceptualizations (miscellaneous) <i>'jezički sudija</i> ('a 'language judge'); <i>'lekari</i> za srpski jezik ('physicians' for the Serbian language); <i>zamrznut u vremenu</i> ('frozen in time'), <i>unižavati</i> [jezik] ('to reduce from the dignity of language'); <i>obogaljivanje</i> [jezika] ('cripling of language'), <i>razvodnjavanje</i> [jezika] ('dilution of language'); <i>standard u saobraćaju</i> ('a set of traffic rules'); <i>saobraćaj</i> ('traffic'); <i>[jezik je] svetlost razuma</i> ('[language is] the light of reason'); <i>obogatiti se/obogatiti</i> [jezik] ('to enrich [language]'))	173	33,26%
Total	520	≈100%

The rest of the Analysis is divided into three subsections. Subsections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 analyze metaphors of DEATH, and DIVISION and DISPOSSESSION, respectively, as more specific instantiations of VIOLENCE. Subsection 5.2 focuses on a variety of VIOLENCE metaphors and elaborates the concept of *pseudometaphor*. Finally, 5.3 analyzes a satirical text critical of the dominant ideology, demonstrating how the literalization of dominant metaphorical models exposes their pseudometaphoricity.

5.1.1 *VIOLENCE as DEATH*. VIOLENCE in relation to language matters is sometimes instantiated as an event, sometimes as an entity that performs violence on Serbian. For

instance, as shown in (1), language hybridity arising from the contact between English and Serbian is conceptualized as ‘silent occupation’. On the other hand, in an article dealing with medical terminology in *Politika*, English is personified as a “killer” (Ser. *jezik-ubica*) that causes Serbian technical language to die out:

(4) *Ono što možemo jeste da ne dozvolimo preteranu anglicizaciju, pa i odumiranje, srpskog medicinskog jezika u korist engleskog, kako ga, neki, s pravom, nazivaju killer language - jezik-ubica.* (Mičić Kandijaš 2015)

What we can do is not to allow an exaggerated Anglicization, even *dying out of the Serbian medical language* in favor of English, which some rightfully call *a killer language*.

This example of language violence creates a sense of danger, or injustice in progress.

However, with respect to the implications for the social actors in this figurative blend are known--the message is directed at all Serbian-speaking language users who presumably do not pay enough attention to their lexical choices and “allow exaggerated Anglicization” (Serbian speakers are presumably invited at the beginning by the use of an inclusive ‘we’-- “what *we* can do is not to allow”). Even though English is the cause of language change and is personified as a “killer-language,” the so-called ‘slow death’ of Serbian medical language seems to be something that Serbian language users are ultimately responsible for.

Specifically, in the process of English-Serbian language contact, there does not seem to be any particular intentionality on the part of the English-speaking communities to impose their language, wittingly or unwittingly, and neither does the responsibility lie on them. This almost self-propelling spread of English terminology is conceptualized by way of personification--“a killer language”--practically eliminating the underlying LANGUAGE-LANGUAGE USERS metonymy. So, the countermeasures to stop the ‘actions of the killer language,’ should come from the speakers of Serbian in the form of self-censure or self-monitoring of language use. Naturally, due to the physical distance of English-speaking

communities and their low relevance for the immediate geographical and political context, metaphors such as those of “language colonization,” “killer-language,” or “dying out” caused by English are, arguably, in line with typical puristic complaints.

5.1.2 *VIOLENCE as DIVISION and DISPOSSESSION*. A specific type of VIOLENCE to LANGUAGE, characteristic of Serbian discourse, is the concept of THEFT (based on POSSESSION), and the related idea of the DIVISION/INDIVISIBILITY of language. In the specific context of the former Serbo-Croatian area where standard Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin, and Serbian are based on Štokavian dialect and are mutually intelligible, the notion of LANGUAGE AS AN INDIVISIBLE WHOLE that underlies the Serbian myth of language theft is certainly one of more controversial, potentially conflict-instigating ideas. They are visible in a newspaper title such as “The Serbian *language is multiplied by division*,” and its contents (5) “(...) *division of one Serbian language has led to the loss of identity (...)*” (Ser. (...) *deljenje istog srpskog jezika dovelo je do gubljenja identitetskog prepoznavanja (...)*) (Radisavljević, 2015), where not only are neither Bosnian, nor Croatian, nor Montenegrin, recognized as languages in their own right, but the very existence of the Croatian, Bosnian, and Montenegrin nations is called into question on the basis of the “one (Serbian) language--one (Serbian) nation” logic (see Romantic models of language in 2.1). Speaking about a (6) “*shameless assault on the Serbian linguistic and cultural heritage*,” a linguist says that (7) “*Everything has been stolen and appropriated from us--writers and their work (...)*” (Ser. *Otima nam se i prisvaja sve--pisaci i njihova dela (...)*) (Remetić, in Sretenović 2018). Although perhaps limited to “a small circle of Serbian intellectuals” (Ilić 2014: 56), the language narrative of ‘one indivisible Serbian language,’ that is ‘stolen’ and/or ‘divided’ among other nations in the region, still occasionally circulates in the public discourse by the symbolic elite, and no less importantly, appears in the influential daily newspaper--*Politika*.

Conceptually, theft, stealing, and similar figurative representations of language dynamics, rest on two basic and widespread conceptualizations of language: LANGUAGE being reified and/or objectified as AN OBJECT, as well as POSSESSION. These are arguably some of the most basic conceptualizations of LANGUAGE (see Reddy 1993; Seargeant 2009). Philip Seargeant (2009) identifies POSSESSION as one of the most basic metaphorical conceptualizations of language (phenomena) (e.g., *to have a language, borrowings, loanwords*). However, understanding POSSESSION in relation to LANGUAGE in its extreme literal meaning, disregards not only a diachronic and synchronic dynamic nature of LANGUAGE and COMMUNICATION, but also the fact that LANGUAGE is a skill or a competence--a complex and ineffable human capacity, rather than an object existing externalized or independently of human bodies (LANGUAGE USERS). A Serbian anthropologist, Ivan Čolović, explicitly identifies INDIVISIBILITY and DISPOSSESSION as core ideas in nationalist-oriented folk models of language:

(8) *Sa stanovišta nacionalističkog mita o jeziku, on je prosto nedeljiv. Kada bi Hrvati Srbima ukrali jezik oni bi im uzeli sve. Jezik kojim se ljudi u Srbiji sporazumevaju bi nekom crnom magijom nestao.* (Čolović, in Tanjug 2016)

From the perspective of a nationalistic myth about language, *it is simply indivisible. If Croats stole the language from Serbs, they would take everything from them. The language with which people communicate in Serbia would disappear as if by some black magic.*

In his criticism of nationalistic mythology, Čolović uses INDIVISIBILITY/DIVISION and DISPOSSESSION as complementary and almost interchangeable concepts. He ridicules and counters this extreme reification and literal understanding of the objectification metaphors with the idea of stolen language disappearing by some supernatural force. That is, it would take an impossible event to be able to dispossess one of their language, or make a language disappear from a speech community. Similarly, a well-known Serbian linguist, Ranko Bugarski, criticizes the appropriateness of the theft metaphor by employing a typical image of

a petty theft--a stolen wallet--likewise stretching the objectification of language to the extremes:

(9) *Jeziik nije novčanik da vam ga neko ukrade, (...) jezici pripadaju govornicima ma koje oni nacionalnosti bili i ma gde oni žive.* (Bugarski, in Tanjug 2016)

A language is not a wallet that can be stolen, (...) languages belong to all those who speak them, regardless of their nationality or the place they live.

Although Bugarski does not negate a very schematic conceptualization of POSSESSION for language competence, he fragments, as it were, the locus of possession, ‘liberalizing’ the POSSESSION metaphor, and divorces it from the idea of any particular nation, or geographical location. Using the same underlying conceptualization of POSSESSION, Bugarski underscores the inappropriateness of a literal understanding of the metaphor (and its instantiation in the theft myth), simultaneously challenging the Romantic ideals that see the category of nation as the primary dimension along which speech communities are carved out.

The analysis of the metaphorical conceptualizations of DEATH (5.1.1) and (DIS)POSSESSION and DIVISION (5.1.2) shows that although these metaphorical sources may construct a general sense of DANGER and VIOLENCE to the Serbian language, they may have radically different implications, specifically for the immediate sociopolitical post-Yugoslav context. They are not equally politically sensitive precisely because implied or, at times, explicit social actors (LANGUAGE USERS) differ. In VIOLENCE metaphors representing dynamics between English and Serbian, those ultimately ‘responsible’ for the state of Serbian are Serbian language users themselves. On the other hand, based on a literal understanding of the objectification of LANGUAGE, the (DIS)POSSESSION and its cognate INDIVISIBILITY metaphors always imply human actors outside the speech community who performed an undesirable action on the ‘in-LANGUAGE.’ Finally, even though in its basic meaning the concepts of INDIVISIBILITY, or (DIS)POSSESSION may not be as ‘strong’ as the concept of

DEATH, their implications in the analyzed examples are far more controversial. This indicates that VIOLENCE metaphors have diverging effects depending on the micro and macro-context they are immersed in as the co(n)textual information ultimately defines the (in)appropriateness of their use.

5.2 *STRIKING, BATTLING, and READING as a type of LANGUAGE CARE*. In this subsection, the concept of pseudometaphor is introduced and its discourse functions shown in operation. The two language campaigns offered solutions to the many problems the Serbian language is presumably facing. A so-called deplorable state of language, regardless of whether it was brought about by speakers making grammatical ‘mistakes,’ due to language contact with English, or something else, requires action on the part of the Serbian speech community. Some advice was therefore formulated in the form of suggestions, or guidelines, for both desirable attitude and behavior of language speakers (e.g., one should/ought to protect, care for the language etc.). Some of the typical ‘guidelines’ are represented in the concept of “care” (Ser. *negaj*). This idea is visible already from the title of the campaign *Negujmo srpski jezik* (Eng. *Let’s Take Care of/Cultivate Serbian*), or article titles such as *Let’s Respect French, but Take Care of Serbian* (Ser. *Negujmo srpski, poštujmo francuski*) (Živančević 2018). Although within larger stretches of discourse ‘care’ is sometimes blended with other more militant metaphors, it is not conducive to violent imagery *per se*, and in general seems to appear as a metaphor suggesting that one should better one’s expressive skills. A case in point is the following comment from *Politika*, where no forceful action or behavior is implied:

(10) *Jezik se neguje, kao što vodimo računa o higijeni, izgledu, ishrani, tako bi trebalo i sa jezikom. (...) Nemaju svi lepe orator[s]ke ili komunikativne manire (...)* (An anonymous commenter, in Jovanović 2015)

Language should be taken care of just like we take care of our personal hygiene, appearance or diet; the same should be done with language. (...) Not everyone has fine oratorical or communicative manners (...)

In this metaphorical blend, the idea of ‘language care’ is explicitly compared to its literal meaning--the care of one’s body (hygiene, looks, diet)--which makes the entire suggestion uncontroversial. However, recommendations on how to deal with the allegedly negative language are sometimes formulated as calls for more forceful ‘response.’ For instance, in a comments section to the article *A Suggestion for Reflection about the Language and Us* (Ser. *Predlog za razmišljanje o jeziku i nama*) (in Tanjug 2018), a commenter uses the metaphor of *fighting* to refer to the process of rejecting Anglicisms by saying:

(11) *Tačno je da se treba boriti za dostojanstveniji jezik, (...). Kako smo duboko zakoračili u eru digitalne i globalne komunikacije sve je teže naći dostojnu zamenu za anglikalizme.* (An anonymous commenter, in Tanjug 2018)

It is true that we *should fight for a more dignified language*, (...) Having stepped deep into the era of digital and global communication, it is harder to find *a dignified substitute for Anglicisms*.

Blending “fighting” with the concept of “dignity” ascribed to language, the commenter implies that foreign input is reducing “the dignity of language.” However, the commenter later suggests that “fighting for a more dignified language” is achieved by being somehow more attentive in one’s selection of vocabulary. Although this suggestion promotes a form of language purism and puts strain on Serbian language users by asking them to closely monitor their linguistic choices, the use of a ‘fighting’ metaphor in this context does not seem to have the potential of being literalized and evoking a physical battle or violence.

In contrast, some WAR/VIOLENCE/PHYSICAL STRUGGLE metaphors ‘in the name of language,’ due to micro-contextual cues, may evoke ambiguous or literal readings. A case in

point is an article entitled *Assault on the Serbian language* (Ser. *Jurišanje na srpski jezik*) (Sretenović 2018) published in *Politika* and a comment that appeared in response to the article. First, the title of the article itself is more conducive to evoking a physical battle than a linguistic argumentation due to its unconventionality.¹⁰ The article quotes a Serbian linguist who expresses concerns about (12) “*assaults on the Serbian linguistic and cultural heritage*” by Bosniaks and Croats in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The alleged “cultural and linguistic theft” (see 5.1.2) is at one point called *a shameless assault* (Ser. *bezočno jurišanje*), constructing the intentionality of the ‘perpetrators’ and making the figuration even less conventional. Generally, not being highly conventional metaphor for argumentation or debate, “the shameless assault” in combination with “cultural theft” opens a space for a stronger, more literal reading of VIOLENCE--an assault evoking violent action against the LANGUAGE-LANGUAGE USERS--making the metaphor potentially pseudometaphorical. In the comments section, a commenter calls for counteraction as a response:

(13) *Jurišanje na srpski jezik...Ok ali nedaj, brani se, nedaj imaš odrešene ruke pa i ti udri, piši, bori se za svoju stvar i ne kukaj samo.*

Assault on the Serbian language...OK but don't allow that, defend yourself, don't allow it. Your hands are free so you strike, too, write, fight for your cause and don't just lament.

Considering the ‘defense’ metaphors in language debates, the use of PHYSICAL STRUGGLE/WAR domains is, naturally, motivated by the fact that any aspect of a language is always partially a collective (dis)agreement negotiated in discourse. Therefore, as any phenomenon negotiated and constructed in discourse, debates about LANGUAGE naturally draw upon the ARGUMENT IS STRUGGLE/WAR metaphorical conceptualization (see Lakoff &

¹⁰ A search through the online corpus of the Serbian language (srWaC) shows that the majority of constructions with the ‘*jurišanje*’ lemma are literal and refer to physical/military assaults (63,8%).

Johnson 2003: 4-5, 265; Musolff 2016: 9-23 for political conflict framed as WAR).¹¹ However, using fighting/defense metaphors as suggestions for argumentative action ‘in the name of language’ is precisely a dimension where metaphor may become ‘unstable’ in its figurative power and can latently act as a call for literal violence. According to the commenter, though, fervent *communication* seems to be at least one of the desired actions (“you strike, too, *write*, fight for your cause”), making this WAR-based figurative blend indubitably partly motivated by the conventional conceptualization ARGUMENT IS STRUGGLE/WAR. Therefore, the desired attitude and action represented figuratively in “striking” and “fighting” could be understood as nothing more than debating, “writing,” or linguistic-symbolic action solely. Nevertheless, “defense” and “striking” are at times ambiguous. Ambiguity is activated already at the beginning when the commenter, as a ‘remedy’ to the “assault on the language,” says “defend *yourself*,” conflating language with person. By suggesting that one should defend *oneself* instead of, more figuratively, one’s language, the commenter explicitly activates the underlying LANGUAGE-LANGUAGE USERS metonymy (see 2.1) and literalizes the figurative dimension of ‘language defense.’ Additionally, the commenter says “*your hands are free, so you strike, too.*” This particular wording of a usually conventional idiomatic expression (*imati odrešene ruke*; Eng. to have a free hand/rein) is partially literalized with the addition of the imperative “strike,” therefore potentially losing its conventional meaning of ‘freedom to act as one desires,’ in favor of the literal reading of ‘hands striking.’ Finally, “defending oneself,” “fighting instead of lamenting,” and ‘striking with one’s hands’ make the entire figurative blend conducive to, if not a straightforwardly literal, then at the very least, an ambiguous reading.

¹¹ Similarly, Radanović Felberg and Šarić (2013) analyze the discursive construction of the language identity of Croatian and Montenegrin in the media and identify the defensive war scenario as a metaphorical model through which language disputes are realized in discourse.

Yet another example of the institutional voices is conducive to a similar literal reading. In 2018, a declaration entitled ‘A Suggestion for Reflection about the Language and Us’ (Ser. *Predlog za razmišljanje o jeziku i nama*), was signed by the representatives of some of the highest Serbian cultural institutions (among whom the Minister of Culture of Serbia). In a newspaper article in *Politika*, reporting on the public presentation of the Declaration, one could read what the various undersigned social actors stated should be done as a form of ‘care’ (in Tanjug 2018). One of the suggestions was (14) “to go back to *the book and reading as the source of survival* of oneself and the others” (Ser. *Vratiti se knjizi i čitanju, kao nalogu opstanka, u sebi i među drugima*) (Tanjug 2018). Some suggestions were more controversial:

(15) *Suvajdžić je naglasio da srpski jezik i kulturni prostor moraju biti poprište najveće bitke i da je važno da imamo neku vrstu institucionalne i sistematske brige o jeziku i pismu, posebno naglasivši ulogu lektora (...)* (Tanjug 2018)

Suvajdžić pointed out that *the Serbian language and cultural space have to be the field of the greatest battle*, and that it is important that we have some sort of *institutional and systematic care for the language and script*, putting emphasis on the role of language editors (...)

According to some linguists, then, the desired attitude seems to be a kind of militant attitude and action (“*Serbian language and cultural space have to be the field of the greatest battle*”). Whereas “language” as “the field of the greatest battle” is a militant way of conceptualizing ‘language care’ and could be understood figuratively as a metaphor for literacy campaigns, the reference to “the Serbian cultural space” as the locus “of the greatest battle” is undoubtedly what makes the entire excerpt literal, too, and thus politically controversial. In a recent column in *Politika*, the current Serbian Minister of Culture and Information describes the “Serbian cultural space” as “the space in which the Serbian nation has undoubtedly left traces of its existence during history.” (Ser. “prostor na kome je srpski narod tokom istorije ostavio nesumnjive tragove svoga postojanja”) (Vukosavljević 2017),

thus making the point that the “cultural space” indeed refers to a geographical space rather than a figurative one.¹² So, even though the surface expression in (15) remains metaphorical--the “battle” is seemingly to be waged in a figurative “linguistic and cultural space” and with the symbolic means (i.e., writing/argumentation by “language editors”)--significant cultural references and cues activate a literal dimension that coexists and prevails over its metaphorical dimension. The reference to the “Serbian cultural space” therefore triggers a literal reading of the battle call making the entire figuration pseudometaphorical and, as such, politically controversial and conflict-instigating.

The analysis in 5.3 demonstrates that within recent Serbian language campaigns that promote some form of normativity and language purism without necessarily being tied to any ulterior, extra-national political cause, various politically controversial messages are interspersed throughout. The potentially conflict-instigating character of WAR/VIOLENCE

¹² More controversially, Vukosavljević maintains that “the cultural space of a nation often does not coincide with the space of its state, but it extends beyond its borders.” The reference to the ‘Serbian cultural space’ has at times been overtly used in reference to the infamous political concept of Greater Serbia – a territory that would encompass all territories of the former Yugoslavia where ethnic Serbs live, therefore going well beyond the borders of the Republic of Serbia proper. For instance, one of the candidates in the presidential campaign of 2017 refers to the notion of ‘the Serbian cultural space,’ claiming that he “will make efforts that both Banja Luka, and Belgrade, and Priština, and Podgorica, and Novi Sad be a part of one unique Serbian civilizational and cultural space,” adding “This means ‘Greater Serbia’ for me.” ((Tanjug 2017, March 16). Parović: For a unique Serbian cultural space. *Blic*. Retrieved from <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/parovic-za-jedinstven-srpski-kulturni-prostor/120yvn5>.)

An expression similar to ‘the Serbian cultural space’ is ‘the Serbian linguistic space’, where the latter coincides to a large degree with the former and refers to the whole Štokavian speaking territory, which goes well beyond the established borders of Serbia. In addition to the Republic of Serbia proper, this ‘linguistic/cultural space’ would presently cover the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, parts of Croatia, parts of Kosovo, Montenegro (see Vervaeke 2019: 119-120).

metaphors in relation to Serbian stems partly from the fact that, when immersed in contexts that afford a literal reading, they become pseudometaphorical rather than being plain metaphors constructing language dynamics. Pseudometaphoricity of VIOLENCE/WAR figurations stems partly from the fact that the VIOLENCE/WAR/STRUGGLE source domain is typically employed for ARGUMENT(ATION). These and similar figurative phenomena are precisely the points where the source domain concepts may become ambiguous leading to a literal reading of the figurative blend and where a controversial message can be communicated wrapped in a ‘plain,’ ‘innocuous’ metaphor. No wonder then that the criticisms of these and similar language campaigns have precisely consisted in exposing the ambiguities and pseudometaphoricity afforded by metaphors underpinning some of the institutionalized messages.

5.3 Exposing Pseudometaphoricity of the Dominant Ideology through Literalization.

Conceptually, the criticism of the dominant discourse primarily plays with the metonymic relationship LANGUAGE-LANGUAGE USERS (PEOPLE) which remains apparently hidden in institutionalized figurations. The criticism contests the apparent metaphoricity of some institutionalized figurative models by pointing to their literal dimension.

An exemplary piece of criticism of the language campaigns is given in a satirical text *The Defense and the Last Days of Cyrillic* published in an online journal *Žurnal*. Through hyperbolization and literalization of metaphors of *language endangerment*, *defense*, and *war* found in the dominant discourse, Tomislav Marković skillfully exposes their serious political ramifications.

(16) *Srpski jezik i pismo ugroženi su da ugroženiji ne mogu biti! (...) Takvo stanje postalo je potpuno nepodnošljivo, pa su rodoljubi ponovno krenuli u obrambenu akciju, baš kao i pre četvrt veka. Ovog puta, junački se boj bije nešto benignijim oružjem, mahom tekstovima i*

društvenim akcijama, ali ne treba zaboraviti ni da je poslednji rat započet – rečima.

(Marković 2016)

The Serbian language and script are as endangered as they can be! (...) This situation has become unbearable, so *the patriots started defensive actions* once again, just like a quarter century ago. This time, *the heroic battle is being fought with slightly more benign weaponry, mainly texts and social campaigns*, but one should not forget that *the last war also started with – words.*

The idea of language DEFENSE is disclosed as pernicious imagery and ideology in the context of Serbia and Serbian language by means of reference to the war of the 1990s. Referencing the “patriotic defensive actions” and “the heroic battle,” the author parallels the present language campaigns with the pre-war propaganda coming from the Serbian nationalist circles in the 1990s (“the patriots started defensive actions once again, just like a quarter century ago”), when Serbian language ideology was one of the ideological steppingstones for the negation of other nations and ethnic groups that cohabited the territory of Yugoslavia. The author points to the inappropriateness of such discourse by showing how the ideas of ‘defensive’ actions *for Serbian* ultimately led, and may again lead, to physical offensive action *against others*. By doing so, he discloses not only how the flip side of discussions about language is in essence a discussion about people, but also that in the case of the alleged endangerment and defense of Serbian, this may not simply be a form of typical language purism, but rather an excuse for a political agenda. As the author suggests, “the heroic battle” within language campaigns consists of “texts,” and “speech action,” so it is still partly metaphorical; however, it is not benign in this figurative form either since words are a *sine qua non* of any propaganda or ideology (“the last war also started with words”). As Ljiljana Šarić (2014: 170) points out, an armed conflict seems to be an action in its own right, but it is not irrelevant that the decisive impulse for its instigation can come from a particular discourse. Finally, Marković’s exposure of language ideology being an excuse for

expansionistic politics finds its pinnacle in blending the topic of “linguistics” (LANGUAGE MATTERS) with offensive military action Serbian military forces undertook during the Yugoslav wars:

(17) *To je bilo zlatno doba srpske lingvistike, kad su tuđice u ljudskom obliku streljane, snajperisane, granatirane i etnički čišćene bez zazoru.* (Marković 2016)

This was the golden age of *Serbian linguistics*, when *foreignisms in human form were shot, sniped at, bombarded and ethnically cleansed* without hesitation.

What makes this dark satire so unsettling and effective in exposing pseudometaphoricity of the dominant discourse is precisely the use of the same metonymical and metaphorical models: the LANGUAGE-LANGUAGE USERS metonymy, LANGUAGE MATTERS, WAR. In the satire, the author makes the LANGUAGE-LANGUAGE USERS metonymy overt (“*foreignisms in human form*”) to reverse and contest the pseudometaphorical logic of the dominant discourse where the LANGUAGE USERS end remains hidden and implied. This discursive move results in the literalization of language metaphors: a ‘linguistic war’ becomes a literal war (“*foreignisms in human form were shot, sniped at, bombarded*”), and “*language cleansing*” becomes “*ethnic cleansing.*” Blending linguistics, war, and language users, the author constructs somewhat disturbing figurative blends, skillfully exposing the attempted instrumentalization of language for the promotion of nationalistically oriented and warmongering ideas through the dominant discourse. The hyperbolization of metaphorical frames found in dominant ideology (e.g., DEFENSE, FIGHTING etc.), and exposure of their literal facets shows that (the author believes) they are employed pseudometaphorically: their ‘surface meanings’ are metaphorical and speak of language matters and language dynamics, whereas their implications are literal and speak about inter-national and inter-ethnic relations. The author lays bare the pseudometaphoricity of the dominant metaphors primarily by making

Published in *Cognitive Linguistic Studies*, Vol 10(1), 2023, pp. 117-145

the LANGUAGE-LANGUAGE USERS metonymy explicit, highlighting thereby their seriousness and inappropriateness.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The focus of the analysis in this article were VIOLENCE/PHYSICAL STRUGGLE/WAR metaphors of the Serbian language in public, dominant, and non-dominant discourses, as they exhibit diverging contextual implications and may have serious political ramifications. They construct figurations ranging from typical puristic concerns about language ‘corruption’ in the face of, for instance, a growing use of Anglicisms, to indubitably more pernicious figurations carrying implications for other nations in the surrounding geographical region. It is true that the majority of figurations presented in the analysis are, by and large, neither unique nor specific for the Serbian language discourses (e.g., *language death*, *safeguarding of language*, *fighting for/defending the dignity of language* etc.). However, metaphorical conceptualizations cannot be divorced from the medium of propagation, authors, social motivations, and context they are generated in, where they gain a unique dimension and attain context-specific aims. Consequently, it has been shown that metaphors of INDIVISIBILITY and DISPOSSESSION instantiated as, e.g., “theft” and “division/multiplication of Serbian,” as specific types of language ‘VIOLENCE’, construct a sense of DANGER and a ‘loss of identity’ just as metaphors of language DEATH may (e.g., *dying out of medical language*), but the implications stemming from the two have radically diverging ramifications for language users of both Serbian and speakers of other cognate languages. Whereas one is a typical instance of language purism that calls for self-monitoring of language choices, the other promotes pernicious nationalistic ideologies that may have effects on non-Serbian speakers in the geographical proximity.

Specific to the Yugoslav historical and contemporary cultural context, conceptual dancing between literal and figurative ‘fighting’, ‘battles’, ‘striking’, even if not intentional, is a controversial discursive move, potentially pseudometaphorical, and something that cannot

be afforded to be uncritically disseminated within the public arena. This is precisely why the satirical criticism relies on literalization of the metaphors of WAR and VIOLENCE circulating in *Politika*, exposing their lack of intended and ‘pure’ metaphoricity, that is, pseudometaphoricity. The analyzed criticism illustrates how the conceptual flipside of ‘language defense’ and similar metaphors may easily be ‘defense’ of oneself or the people, and, in the final consequence, a call for a literal offense against the other, which in specific contexts makes metaphors representing and constructing violence to language a ‘discursive liability.’

Furthermore, a special type of metaphorical and discursive construction has been introduced – pseudometaphor. A pseudometaphor is a linguistic metaphor where, triggered by contextual and/or extralinguistic cues, a literal reading of the source domain expression is activated and prevails over its figurative reading, even though the ‘surface expression’ remains metaphorical. This dual understanding of the source domain, as both figurative and literal, is usually underpinned by a ‘target’ expression that has the potential to activate more concepts (here, *the Serbian language*, or *culture*). LANGUAGE seems especially conducive to such instability of reference since, by way of metonymy, it may symbolically stand for LANGUAGE USERS/PEOPLE. This strong metonymical link between LANGUAGE and LANGUAGE USERS, therefore, affords activation and support of a literal understanding of the WAR/VIOLENCE source domains--“an assault on language” is easily understood as a literal assault on its speech community, too. Considering its function, pseudometaphor may be used as a discursive strategy by means of which a literal message is conveyed obscured by its seemingly exclusively figurative expression, thus the prefix ‘pseudo-’. Although metaphors of and about LANGUAGE seem to be particularly susceptible to pseudometaphorical uses due to the described underlying metonymical link, the concept of pseudometaphor itself is expected to have much broader application. Indeed, pseudometaphors are likely to be found in discourses other than

those treating language matters solely and particularly in those where ambiguity and evasion are readily employed as communicative strategies (e.g., political discourses).

Theory-wise, the concept of pseudometaphor proposed in this paper not only advances the existing body of research investigating the role of metaphor in language debates (Bermel 2007; Berthele 2008; Radanović Felberg & Šarić 2013; Vervaeet 2019; Čičin-Šain 2019), but it also contributes to the idea of seeing figurations as multilayered and complex phenomena where the figurative and literal dimensions intertwine and coexist (Fauconnier & Turner 2003; Cameron 2007; Đurović & Silaški 2019). Pseudometaphor supports and advances the existing ideas of the complexity and the lack of boundedness of metaphor as a category (see a discussion in Cameron 2003: 59-62). Specifically, pseudometaphor shows that, within a single seemingly typical figuration consisting of a source and a target concept, the oscillation between the literal and figurative dimensions of meaning may be observed due to polysemic or symbolic nature of the target domain. It has been demonstrated that, in some metaphors, reference to LANGUAGE may easily co-activate two contiguous concepts--LANGUAGE and LANGUAGE USERS. This situation affords a dual reading of the source domain concepts belonging to the WAR/VIOLENCE domains, thus making them both metaphorical and literal at the same time. Such cognitive phenomena not only illustrate the complexity of figurative meaning making, but also support the arguments against the possibility of observing 'purely' Rationalist or Romanticist models of language (in line with Berthele 2008; Polzenhagen & Dirven 2008; contrary to, e.g., Kordić 2010).

Beyond pseudometaphor, the analysis in this paper has demonstrated that the construction of the full scope of a metaphor's meaning and its functions inevitably draws on both what has been said and explicated within a discourse (immediate micro-discourse) as well as on what remains unsaid, or not referred to, within a discursive environment (aspects of macro-context, implications etc.). Although such a 'multisource' construction of meaning has

been advocated by various metaphor scholars (e.g., Ricoeur 1978; Charteris-Black 2004; KhosraviNik 2009), this analytical approach is demonstrated to be a *sine qua non* if one is to map out the full extent of the (intended) meaning of figurations within a discourse. Moreover, such a fully integrated view that deems the description of the symbolic environment essential to a metaphor's meaning is a reminder of an inherent inadequacy and lack of informativeness of purely conceptual analyses. For instance, it has been demonstrated that even though talking about LANGUAGE AS A POSSESSION is one of the most basic ways of conceptualizing this multidimensional distributed skill (e.g., Seargeant 2009; Reddy 1993; Bermel 2007), *per se*, (identifying) such a highly schematic conceptualization is unable to elucidate anything about the realization of its meaning potential within a specific text and socio-historical context. Specifically, the analysis in 5.1.2 illustrates how LANGUAGE AS A POSSESSION is employed in constructing two diametrically opposed evaluative and political messages within a single language debate.

Finally, metaphors and pseudometaphors have shown to be powerful discursive and political tools (see Charteris-Black 2004; Musolff 2016) for sending both overt and covert emotion-laden, even conflict-instigating, messages. The concept of pseudometaphor in particular warns that metaphors should not be dismissed as 'simple' figurations precisely because various dimensions of meaning may contemporaneously be at play within one figuration and 'contain' more than one 'superficial' message.

Primary sources

Aničić, G. (2015, September 1). *Hleba i jezika* [Bread and Language]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/337216/Хлеба-и-језика>

IN4S. (2013, October 29). *Odricanje od srpskog jezika i ćirilice za Srbe znači odricanje od samih sebe* [Giving up on the Serbian language and Cyrillic Script for Serbs Means Giving up on Themselves]. *IN4S*. Retrieved from <https://www.in4s.net/kovacevic-odricanje-od-srpskog-jezika-cirilice-za-srbe-znaci-odricanje-od-samih-sebe/?lang=lat>

Jovanović, J. R. (2015, September 17). *Da dakanje ne pređe u naviku* [Against making constructions with ‘da’ habitual]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/338447/Da-dakanje-ne-prede-u-naviku>,

Marković, T. (2016, November 4). *GOVORITE LI APSURDISTANSKI: Odbrana i poslednji dani ćirilice* [DO YOU SPEAK ABSURDISTAN: Defense and the Last Days of Cyrillic]. *Žurnal*. Retrieved from <http://www.zurnal.info/novost/20124/odbrana-i-poslednji-dani-cirilice>

Mičić Kandijaš, S. (2015, September 10). *Agensi nisu agenti* [Chemical Agents are not Secret Agents]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.co.rs/sr/clanak/337878/Kultura/Agensi-nisu-agenti>

Milinković, D. (2017, August 9). *Tri stuba za opstanak svih Srba* [Three Pillars for the Survival of all Serbs]. *Novosti*. Retrieved from [Tri stuba za opstanak svih Srba | Novosti.rs](http://www.novosti.rs/Tri-stuba-za-opstanak-svih-Srba)

Radisavljević, Z. (2012, December 8). *Neizdrživo nasilje nad jezičkom kulturom* [Unbearable Violence against Language Culture]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/242504/Tema-nedelje/Kako-ne-cuvamo-srpski-jezik/Neizdrzivo-nasilje-nad-jezickom-kulturom>

Published in *Cognitive Linguistic Studies*, Vol 10(1), 2023, pp. 117-145

Radisavljević, Z. (2015, April 23). *Srpski jezik se umnožava deljenjem* [The Serbian Language is Multiplied by Division]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/325567/Kultura/Srpski-jezik-se-umnozava-deljenjem>,

Radovanović, Z. (2015, September 4). *Tuđice nisu otmene reči* [Foreign words are not posh]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/337453/Tudice-nisu-otmene- reci>

Sretenović, M. (2018, February 21). *Jurišanje na srpski jezik* [Assault on the Serbian Language], *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/398781/Jurisanje-na-srpski-jezik>

Tanjug. (2016, October 5). *Konferencija “Jezici i nacionalizam” održana u Beogradu* [The “Languages and Nationalism” Conference held in Belgrade]. *b92*. Retrieved from https://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=272&yyyy=2016&mm=10&dd=05&nav_id=1184563

Tanjug. (2018, January 26). *Predlog za razmišljanje o jeziku i nama* [A Suggestion for Reflection about the Language and Us]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/397198/Predlog-za-razmisljanje-o-jeziku-i-nama>

Vukosavljević, V. (2017, April 22). *Definisati kulturno jezgro i prostor* [To Define the Cultural Core and Space]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/379004/Definisati-kulturno-jezgro-i-prostor>

Živančević, N. (2018, October 4). *Negujmo srpski, poštujmo francuski* [Let’s Respect French, but Take Care of Serbian]. *Politika*. Retrieved from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/412493/Negujmo-srpski-postujmo-francuski>

Secondary sources

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (revised edition). London: Verso.

Arbib, M. A., & Hesse, M. B. (1986). *The Construction of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bermel, N. (2007). *Linguistic Authority, Language Ideology, and Metaphor: The Czech Orthography Wars*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Berthele, R. (2008). A Nation is a Territory with One Culture and One Language: The Role of Metaphorical Folk Models in Language Policy Debates. In G. Kristiansen & R. Dirven (Eds.), *Cognitive Sociolinguistic: Language Variation, Cultural Models, Social Systems* (pp. 301-331). Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Bogetić, K. D. (2018). *Metaphors of English and Serbian language in British and Serbian newspaper discourse*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology, Belgrade). Retrieved from <https://uvidok.rcub.bg.ac.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/2749/Doktorat.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Cameron, L. (2003). *Metaphor in Educational Discourse*. London-New York: Continuum.

Cameron, L. J. (2007). Patterns of metaphor use in reconciliation talk. *Discourse & Society*, 18(2), 197-222.

Charteris-Black, J. (2004). *Corpus Approaches to Critical Metaphor Analysis*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Published in *Cognitive Linguistic Studies*, Vol 10(1), 2023, pp. 117-145

Čičin-Šain, V. (2019). Metaphors for language contact and change: Croatian language and national identity. In Lj. Šarić & M.-M. Stanojević (Eds.), *Metaphor, nation, discourse* (Series: *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture*). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Čolović, I. (2008). *Balkan – teror kulture: Ogledi o političkoj antropologiji, 2* [*The Balkans – The Terror of Culture: Essays on Political Anthropology, 2*]. Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek.

Đurović, T., & Silaški, N. (2019). Barbed wire around Serbia: Migrant metaphors as a means of constructing national identity. In Lj. Šarić & M.-M. Stanojević (Eds.), *Metaphor, nation and discourse* (Series: *Discourse Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture*) (pp. 59-74). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Fauconnier, G., & Turner, M. (2003). *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.

Geeraerts, D. (2003). Cultural models of linguistic standardization. In R. Dirven & M. Pütz (Eds.), *Cognitive Models in Language and Thought. Ideology, Metaphors and Meanings* (pp. 25-68). Berlin-New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Greenberg, R. D. (2008). *Language and Identity in the Balkans: Serbo-Croatian and its Disintegration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ilić, M. (2014). Collective Narrative: The Narrative on Croatian Language from Academic to Far-Right Discourses in Serbia. *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 1, 49-73.

Joseph, J. E. (2004). *Language and Identity: National, Ethnic, Religious*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Published in *Cognitive Linguistic Studies*, Vol 10(1), 2023, pp. 117-145

KhosraviNik, M. (2009). The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British newspapers during the Balkan conflict (1999) and the British general election (2005). *Discourse & Society* 20(4), 477–498.

Kordić, S. (2010). *Jezik i nacionalizam [Language and Nationalism]*. Zagreb: Durieux.

Kövecses, Z. (2010). *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by* (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Langston, K., & Peti-Stantić, A. (2014). *Language Planning and National Identity in Croatia (Palgrave Studies in Minority Languages and Communities)*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Musolff, A. (2016). *Political Metaphor Analysis: Discourse and Scenarios*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Polzenhagen, F., & Dirven, R. (2008). Rationalist or romantic model in globalisation?. In G. Kristiansen & R. Dirven (Eds.), *Cognitive Sociolinguistics: Language Variation, Cultural Models, Social Systems* (pp. 237-299). Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Radanović Felberg, T., & Šarić Lj. (2013). Discursive Construction of Language Identity through Disputes in Croatian and Montenegrin Media. *Scando-Slavica*, 59 (1),7-31.

Reddy, M. J. (1993). The conduit metaphor: A case of frame conflict in our language about language. In A. Ortony (Ed.), *Metaphor and Thought* (pp. 284-324). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Published in *Cognitive Linguistic Studies*, Vol 10(1), 2023, pp. 117-145

Ricoeur, P. (1978). The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling.

Critical Inquiry 5 (1), 143-159.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. 2nd ed. Los Angeles:

Sage.

Šarić, Lj. (2014). Metafora, diskurs i društvo [Metaphor, Discourse, and Society]. In M.–M.

Stanojević (Ed.), *Metafore koje istražujemo: Suvremeni uvidi u konceptualnu metaforu*

[*Investigating Metaphors: Current Insights into Conceptual Metaphor*] (pp. 169-202).

Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

Seargeant, P. (2009). Metaphors of possession in the conceptualisation of language. *Language*

& *Communication* 29(4), 383-393.

Underhill, J. W. (2013). *Creating Worldviews: Metaphor, Ideology, and Language*.

Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Van der Horst, J. (2008). *Het einde van de standaardtaal. Een wisseling van Europese*

taalcultuur. Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 2008. Translated by Radovan Lučić (2016)

as *Propast standardnoga jezika*. Zagreb: Srednja Europa

Vervaet, S. (2019). “Let’s Work on our Serbian!”: Standard Language Ideology, Metaphors
and Discourses about Serbian National Identity in the Newspaper *Politika* in 2015. In Lj.

Šarić & M.–M. Stanojević (Eds.), *Metaphor, nation, discourse (Series: Discourse*

Approaches to Politics, Society, and Culture) (pp. 101-126). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Watts, R. J. (2011). *Language Myths and the History of English (Oxford Studies in*

Sociolinguistics). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Address for correspondence

Višnja Čičin-Šain

University of Oslo

Postboks 1003

Blindern 0315 Oslo

Norway

vcicinsain@gmail.com