

Conflicting notions of language in metalinguistic discourses in Lithuania, Norway and Serbia

Vuk Vukotić

Institute of the Lithuanian Language

vuk@sociolingvistika.lt

Abstract

Standard language ideology is the dominant ideology in the environment where there is a standard language with a high status, with its main features being a prescriptive view on language, the notion that language is not in the ownership of its speakers and efforts are invested to preserve the language (Milroy 2001). Linguists, especially sociolinguists, have been engaged in language debates, promoting a different view of language, but are mostly either misinterpreted or misquoted by journalists, who share the ‘folk’ view of language (Johnson 2001; Jaspers 2014). Since journalists have had more influence than linguists over users when it comes to language issues, it is only natural to assume that the majority of non-linguists will share this view. However, the growing online communities provide a new sphere for public debate (the *virtual sphere*), which, unlike traditional media, includes two-way communication, lesser degree of regulation than in the traditional media and many communication outlets (user blogs, comment sections, photo sharing etc.). This article aims to explore different types of notions of language in comment sections of internet portals in Lithuania, Norway and Serbia. The metaphors of language analysed are categorized into eight different notions of language according to the way metaphors are used. The results show that four of eight notions are shared in two or more countries, while four are specific for one of them, though quantitative research and more comparison are needed to confirm how specific they are for exactly these countries.

Keywords: notions of language, online user comments, cognitive metaphors, cultural models, language ideologies, sociolinguistics

Raktažodžiai: kalbos sampratos, interneto vartotojų komentarai, metalingvistika, kalbos ideologijos, sociolingvistika

1. Introduction

Do linguists have a say in language matters at all? Even though prescriptivism has been a negative word in linguistics, a prescriptivist view of language is shared by most non-linguists, at least those living in standard language cultures: There is ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ language. One main reason for that is the very different ideological standpoint between the linguists and the non-linguists (Johnson 2001), but there is also the question of how much new (socio)linguistic ideas are understood by the media, which can function both as a proxy and as a filter (Jaspers 2014). This is most definitely true when it comes to traditional media (TV and newspapers), where communication is one-way and users are more prone to direct media effects, such as framing and priming.

During a very short period, since the beginning of the 21st century, the internet has been providing a rapidly growing number of outlets a linguist can use to introduce their research and their view of language. In the same environment, non-linguists too have gained a much greater space to discuss issues of all sorts. Language is an issue that creates fiery debates from blogs and social media, to virtual debate areas such as forums. This new, rapidly growing, virtual sphere has been seen as quite different from traditional media, and described as a powerful tool for democratisation, dialogue and emancipation (Papacharissi 2002), because of its nature (based on open access), the ease of creating, publishing content and engaging in two-way communication. The main aim of this paper is to explore the notions of language in this virtual space in Lithuania, Norway and Serbia. I will also discuss whether there are notions of language that challenge the standard language ideology and the prescriptivist notions of language.

For the purpose of this research, a qualitative content analysis of the metalinguistic comments was undertaken on a number of comments from online news portals in Lithuania, Norway and Serbia. The main goals are to find, then analyse and categorize different notions of language in these commentaries. The research questions are: What types of language notions are visible in the metalinguistic online discourses in Lithuania, Norway and Serbia? How or does that effect the way language is understood?

The comments are taken from the discussions under three online news (from each of these three countries), where language related issues are discussed (such as literacy, success of students in classes of their mother tongue, language-political news etc.). Due to the nature of the comment sections, the

subjects discussed in the comments are only loosely related to the subject of the article in the news itself, but are still mostly connected to language issues. I have, therefore, chosen those articles that generated most debate, where most sub-discussions about language emerge, most opinions are expressed and where most different notions of language are expressed.

The paper continues in three parts. Firstly, I will give an overview of the theoretical background for the analysis, on which the methodology and theoretical framework for this paper is developed. Then, I present the results of the research, categorize and exemplify different notions of language found in the comments. Finally, I discuss the findings of non-linguists' notions of languages in comparison with linguists' notions of language and public notions of language from other research.

2. Language ideology, notions of language and metalinguistics

2.1. Theoretical overview

Studying notions of language can give insight into ideologies that are at work. Researching language ideologies essentially means researching what is 'natural' about language – in other words, beliefs about its correctness, beauty, role in society, how it is connected to identities etc. (Johnstone 2008). The research is based on the 'neutral' view of language ideologies, which views ideology as a spontaneous interpretation and simplification of reality (a *worldview*), rather than as a distortion of truth (typical for the Marxist tradition of ideological analysis). Language ideology is "sets of beliefs about language articulated by the users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein 1979: 193). Metalinguistic comments are a valuable source of information in the studies of language ideologies, as they provide conscious utterances about language, coming from the language users themselves. Discourse analysis is one of the main means of analysing language ideologies (*ibid.*), while the other one is based on using experimental designs and surveys in order to gain insight into subconscious attitudes of language users towards languages, dialects or certain individual linguistic features (Niedzielski and Preston 2003).

Research so far has suggested that language ideologies are not much different amongst non-linguists in countries where there is a linguistic standard, which is usually considered the 'best' variety (summarized in articles such as: Niedzielski and Preston 2009; Milroy 2001). Niedzielski and Preston show how the standard is located highest on the hierarchy of all varieties, followed by colloquial

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speech, and “dialects” and “errors” are located at the bottom of the hierarchy. According to Milroy, it is often the case that ‘a language’ refers to ‘a standard language’ metalinguistic discourse. This is the consequence of the standard language culture (Milroy 2001). The key element of this culture is the existence of *usually unnamed linguistic authorities*, which Milroy compares to high priests, gatekeepers of arcane linguistic knowledge. Inevitably, linguists should be perceived as such an authority, side-by-side with teachers and grammar books, yet notions of language in public discourse usually differ from the ones that linguists hold.

While there is little language ideological research based on metalinguistic comments of lay language users (non-experts), there is an abundance of studies that analyse media discourses. They analyse different cultural models and metaphors of language in language-related debates. As noted, non-linguists mostly develop linguistic attitudes based on what media / journalists, rather than linguists, have to say. Research from different linguistic and socio-political environments has given various results. Geeraerts (2003) looked into the cultural models connected to the standardization of French and German, finding aspects of the conception of standard language which, on one of the ends, has a ‘rationalist’ model and a ‘romantic’ on the other. The rationalist one understands standardization of language as a means of emancipation, giving the citizens the tools necessary to read laws and participate in public debate, while the romantic model sets rationalization in the context of spiritual nation building, connecting all of the users of one language through the standards, as well as providing them with a tool to express their identity. These are models of standardization, not of language itself but in metalinguistic comments, these two are often equated (see Milroy 2001). Geeraerts (2003) has also shown the influence of these models on long-term processes of standardization of Dutch in two countries where it is an official language. The romantic model clearly contains principles of idealization Moschonas (2004) writes about and exemplifies on case of Greek language debates in newspapers. He describes a metalinguistic principle that he calls “linguistic relativism”. It gives language a ‘territory’ and a ‘spirit’ and is employed to give justification of the Neo-Herderian / Whorfian notions of language that understand language as being spiritually and territorially connected to the community that speaks it. Purism is also a method of a defence of the “imagined territory of language”, further investigated by Spitzmüller (2007) in German metalinguistic discourse, where he found metaphors such as *Language Is A Substance / Organism*, which are used to show that language can be ‘polluted’ or ‘die out / become ill’ etc.

Similar research has been carried out by Berthele (2008) for Switzerland, Milani (2007) for Sweden, Bermel (2007) for the Czech Republic, which has shown that the notions of language in language ideological debates are similar in many standard language cultures, as well as that they are influenced by a handful of ideas, which can be categorized into:

- 1) Neo-Herderian notions (Language is a *territory*, a *bond*, a *spirit*) or Whorfian notions (Language as *culture*, a *soul*, etc.)
- 2) Notions influenced by language preservation theory (Language as an *organism*, a *substance*, an *artefact*, something that need preservation and care)
- 3) Notions focusing on the communicative function of language (Language as a *tool*, language as a *neutral instrument* of debate)

Otherwise, comments have been mostly studies in order to discover attitudes about certain language policies. Reyes (2013) analysed online discussions about language reforms in Spain and noticed that language reforms received strong criticism by the general public because they were seen to cause language deterioration, as a failure of the authorities, as a reposition of the language from the people by the authorities, while positive reactions came in forms of trust for the language institutions. Similar to that, in Lithuanian online space, attitudes towards language politics have been so far analysed by Nevinskaitė (2008) and Miliūnaitė (2006). Although not based on ideologies, these articles show a few interesting attitudes, Miliūnaitė found arguments for both that communication is enough and no control is needed, and that control is needed due to factors such as too much slang, too many language mistakes in public space etc. Nevinskaitė found that what internet users are mostly not satisfied with are new rules, created for rule's sake, language politics creating fear of public language use, unlithuanized names in public space, as well as the linguist's role as the only one who control language. On the other hand, language purification efforts have mostly been positively evaluated. This gives some insight into what values we can expect in the comments – precision, purity, inclusion of the people into public (language) matters and self-confidence in language use.

Some research on notions of language in general has been done in Lithuania and Norway, though no such research from Serbia was found. Brunstad (2007: 39) points at an emerging notion of language among linguists as an individual's possession, proposing a 'democratic view of language' – language is

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formed by all social groups that speak it, even those who speak it as a second language (minority and immigrant groups) and they will eventually claim ownership over the language or its variety. Tamaševičius (2011) gave a historical overview of the metaphors used about Lithuanian language in the period starting from the Soviet times to today, and found such metaphors as ‘weapon’, ‘flag’ and ‘ideal’, noting that discourse on language stayed more or less the same throughout the period of both the Soviet Republic of Lithuania and the (independent) Republic of Lithuania – language and people are inseparable, the language is an unreachable ideal and a weapon one needs to use to fight off the influence of foreign linguistic elements.

Will the notions of language in the ‘virtual sphere’ be any different from the ones found in media? The virtual sphere, or the public sphere in an online environment (Papacharissi 2002), provides a platform for a fast and easy creation of user-generated content in massive amounts, growing by the second. Although the virtual sphere has been evaluated both positively (Papacharissi 2009) and critically in scholarly literature (problems may include access to the internet, economization, reproduction of power relations – see Goldberg (2011) and Beer (2009)), the undeniable fact is that internet commentaries and user-created content is expanding rapidly and provide a source of metalinguistic data that should not be ignored.

There is one paper which has a similar research object as the present paper, which is Manzak (forthcoming), namely online metalinguistic comments in Lithuania. Manzak looked into notions of language in comment sections of an online news portal. She categorizes the notions into sociolinguistic (user-oriented, against linguistic authority, language is owned by its users), prescriptive (language seen as a something in need of safeguarding, a set of rules that needs to be regulated by authorities) and philosophical (language is a way of thinking). My contribution to this is a comparative perspective, from which I hope to gain more metaphors and ideas that are used to conceptualize notions of language.

2.2. Present research, aims, goals and empirical data

Based on the research so far, described in the previous section, one can hypothesize that language ideologies, and notions of language with them, are similar in most metalinguistic discourse in standard

language cultures, in other words – there will be no notions of language specific to any of these countries.

To put such a hypothesis to the test, I have chosen to base the empirical data on three quite different linguistic environments. Norway is specific for two reasons: firstly, dialects have an unusually high status, even news anchors speak their own dialect on air – this is called a ‘pro-dialect ideology’ by some scholars (Røyneland 2009), and, secondly, the two written standards of Norwegian have undergone a long struggle in the first half and the middle of the 20th century, which split the society in Norway into distinctive groups. The system of language control in Lithuania presents a unique institutional mechanism of surveillance, where incorrect language use can be fined by the State Language Inspection (the usual targets are media houses and publishing companies). What makes this more interesting is that the current system was established after the fall of the Soviet rule in Lithuania and it gives state-employed linguists a great deal of power to influence public language, through the work of The State Commission of the Lithuanian Language and the Language Inspectorate (Vaičekauskienė 2012). The Serbian language situation is special because of the troublesome relationship between the previous standard called ‘Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian’ (official name), and today’s Serbian, while the language policies are regulated by a single body (Commission for the Standardization of Serbian Language) that has neither a website, publishes very rarely, nor is it active in public debates under that name (the head of the Commission occasionally mentions the work of the Commission in a weekly newspaper ‘NIN’). Even though quite specific, these environments have quite a ‘stable’ culture of language learning in schools. In order to exhaust the typological possibilities of the analysis, different / specific environments need to be taken into account. I do not aim to answer the question whether there in fact are any country/environment-specific ways of which language is conceptualised, but I do aim to provide a conceptual framework of different and diverging notions of language that could later be studied from an even more comparative or quantitative perspective.

2.3. Methodology

The research is exclusively qualitative, so the main goal of the analysis is to discover as many possible notions of language in online discourses in these three countries, no matter how infrequent or marginal those notions may be. The model of discourse analysis used here is based on a thorough investigation on conceptual metaphors used in connection with language and other matters of concern closely related

to language. This is an approach already in wide use by many scholars studying language ideologies in language debates (see Berthele (2008), Spitzmüller (2007) or Geeraerts (2003) for some examples), using both qualitative and quantitative approaches from different research traditions. In this case, the ‘notion of language’ is seen as an idealized cognitive model that helps us make sense of the “cognitively noisy” world. This simplification can also be called “ideologization”, for which there are arguments in cognitive linguistics that this is one of basic principle of thinking (Lakoff 1987). Each comment is analysed with this main idea too – I look for these idealized cognitive models (metaphors, cultural models) connected with language, in order to see how language is conceptualised by the commentator. After the identification, I attempt to classify the findings into groups according to similarity and look for conceptual closeness of those cognitive models in order to create a typology.

The comments were taken from the comment sections under three articles, all on online news portals (three from each country). The chosen articles had the most directly language-related comments. The main news in the article was usually about ‘bad language’ in schools, media, language death, discussions about influence of other languages etc. These provoke the most discussion and often even mini-discussions within the comment section, which yields more debate about language, in some cases forcing the same commentator to explain his position in more detail. In spite of this, many comments are either purely politically sponsored (promotion of a presidential/parliamentary candidate, which has little to do with the discussion) and many jokes, puns, insults etc. which show no connection to language or the subject of the discussion. Internet comment sections in Lithuania and Serbia are generally full of comments like these, that is why discussions with less comments tend to have a very few language-(or even subject-)related comments. A pilot research showed great variation for each country when it comes to the number of comments. In Lithuania, comments are concentrated on a web portal called “Delfi”, where other websites have a significantly smaller number of comments (the news portal connected to the main quality newspaper in Lithuania, “Lietuvos Rytas” showed almost no comments that include metaphors about language, whereas the same news on “Delfi” had 10 times more comments, some of which actually expressed notions of language, what I was looking for). In Serbia, the concentration of comments is quite varied. The main quality newspaper, “Politika”, sometimes receives a great number of comments, but it is clear that there is strict regulation (in terms of sticking to the subject). Other popular portals get a steadier number of comments, but include unrelated comments / politically sponsored commentators. In Norway, “VG” is the internet newspaper

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with most open arena for discussion in Norway, although others follow. Some comments were taken from “Aftenposten”, a quality newspaper, but the amount of comments was significantly smaller. Therefore, the number of comments was the best indicator of the possibility to find different notions of language.

Also, as many researches have shown, attitudes towards language, language ideologies and the like are adopted by users mostly from mainstream media over a long period of time (for example, Androutsopoulos 2010; Cameron 1995), so users do not necessarily answer to, or pick up the framing from the article that starts the debate (some commentators read only the title), but come into the discussion with pre-adopted cultural schemata. It should also be noted that there is evidence that linguists introduce new topics and new concepts from linguistics as an object of debate, over longer periods of time (Svendsen & Marzo 2015).

In this sense, the research here shows some of the schemata present in public discourse, although the sample is not representative and the research is strictly qualitative. I agree with researchers such as Spitzmüller (2007), who claim that discourse can only be understood on large samples of text, but following the need to review the previous taxonomies, I will try to go deeper into the *current* discourse of language, in order to try and capture the specific notions that emerge under particular circumstances of today.

In Norway, the analysed comments are from two news published on a news portal of a daily tabloid newspaper “VG”, the first one called *Det norske språkets forfall* [The decay of Norwegian language] 8 September 2014; the second one, a reaction to the same article was published on the same day (8 September 2014) with the title *Forferdelig språk, overtamp mot student* [Horrible language, violation against students]; the third, also a reaction to the first article, came from “Aftenposten”, entitiled *Et folk som ikke kan skrive?* [A people that cannot write?] published 14 September 2014. The initial article caused an enormous reaction, written by a Finnish college teacher, about the abundance of mistakes she finds in both media and students’ works, and the two later articles came as criticism. The initial had a great number of comments (758) during the course of eight days (the comments stopped coming on 16 September), but the other two received public notice in form of comments as well. The Serbian comments were taken from three news stories centred on the issue of common language errors

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in media, schools and other spheres of public life. The first was taken from the scandalous tabloid “Kurir”, entitled *BRUKA PROSVETE: Srednjoškolci ne znaju da reše test za osnovce!* [DISGRACE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: High schoolers cannot solve a test for elementary school pupils!], 7 August 2013, the second from an article in the online version of the main (partially state-owned) Serbian daily newspaper “Politika”, with the title *Neizdrživo nasilje nad ječkom kulturom* [Unbearable violence over language culture], published on the 9 December 2012, the third from a popular web-portal of a TV-station “B92”, entitled *Ne umeju da reše test za 6. razred* [They cannot solve a test for the 6th grade], published on 6 August 2013. The Lithuanian sources of comments are three news stories from a popular news portal “Delfi”, entitled *Po 20 metų pakartotas lituanisto eksperimentas patvirtino liūdną tiesą* [A Lithuanist’s experiment, repeated after 20 years, confirmed a sad truth] published on the 9 May 2014, ‘Kas rizikuoja gauti prastus lietuvių k. egzamino vertinimus’ [Who risks getting low marks in Lithuanian language] (published 4 June 2014) and *Ar išsaugosime lietuvių kalbą: kai kuriose srityse linkstama pasirinkti perspektyvesnę* [Will we save Lithuanian: In some domains, people tend to choose the more promising language], published on the 24 March 2014. The researcher has not tried to manipulate any of the discussions by commenting himself.

The total number of comments in these articles is about 1640, but the total number of comments that contained notions of language was about 257, which are included into the analysis – 122 in Norwegian, 61 in Lithuanian, 74 in Serbian. The larger number of Norwegian comments arose probably due the fact that Norwegian news portals generally require the use of real name and last name in order to discuss something publically even online, so the number of such comments is smaller, and discussions often refer not only to the subject, but also to point that other commentators made, which is rarely the case with Lithuanian and Serbian comments.

3. Results: Notions of language

Each of the communities share (as expected) a number of overlapping notions of language, based on same or similar metaphors. I will present results from each country in a separate section. In each of those, I always present those similar notions, later showing how they become more sophisticatedly negotiated and re-formulated during the course of the discussion, leading to country-specific notions¹.

¹ I have presented different arguments and notions of language that come up in discussions in a very successive manner in this article. They are, by no means, such in the comment sections, where there are many parallel sub-debates going on simultaneously. Thus the organization of the article should not be taken as a description of the flow of discussions, but

These ‘sophistications’ include use of more metaphors and cultural models, which indeed proved to have a local colour and tone. During most of the discussions, new, competing notions of language emerge, which are not great in number, but some are specific for each of the environments, which will be explicitly noted.

3.1. Lithuania

In the Lithuanian case, I will try to present the findings from the notions that are more known from previous research, towards those notions diverging from common notions of language. One group of notions of language is based on the idea that language has a distinctive territory or realm (this has been shown to be a very general principle of the conceptualisation of language by Moschonas (2004)), hence the commentators take this ‘realm’ as the basis for their conceptualization of language. This is based on keywords such as ‘people’, ‘nation’, ‘citizens’ or ‘state’. The patriotic ring of these words gives the argument its strength. First, discussions usually (though not always) start off with comments that clearly state a monolingual ideology – language is in direct connection to one nation and one people.

As an example:

- (1) *Lietuvių kalba yra tautos ir valstybės pagrindas, kad ir ką visoki iškrypėliai besakytų.*
 [The Lithuanian language is the basis of the nations and the state, no matter what various perverts might say]
 (01-U-LT)²
- (2) *si kalba reikalinga lietuviams tai matyt ju jau beveik nebera, kad taip nyksta kalba :) kitataučiai niekada nekalbes lietuviskai (kalbes tik tiek kad patenkinti valdžios nora), nes ji yra primesta, mokama per prievarta ir kaip sakoma - per prievarta mielas nebusi...*
 [This language is needed for Lithuanian, then, obviously, since they are almost extinct, that is how language disappears :) people of other nationality will never speak Lithuanian, (they will speak just enough to satisfy the desires of the state), because it is imposed, learning through coercion is, as we say – you won’t become nice by force...] (02-U-LT)

The first notion is that LANGUAGE IS A FOUNDATION, to be laid down on the grounds or a territory (a state), and the second is LANGUAGE IS POSSESSION OF A PEOPLE / NATION (where the ‘people’ are conceived as a realm in which this language exists), providing a determinative understanding of language and nationality, as well as the state, through those categories. Language in the individual is erased from this notion (individuals are ‘the people’, who possess the language). From example 1, we

rather as the most practical way of presenting the transnational differences in the notions of language that emerge in discussions.

² All translations in the article were made by me. I use set of codes to mark the commentator’s number-gender-country (numbers are used instead of names / usernames / nicknames; ‘M’ stands for male, ‘F’ for female and ‘U’ for unknown gender; ‘LT’ stands for Lithuania, ‘NO’ stands for Norway, ‘SR’ stands for Serbia). The parts of the text marked **bold** indicate that the orthography has been intentionally manipulated by the commentator to cause an effect. Some of the comment sections have been removed from portals due to various reasons, and in those cases where they were, the editor-in-chiefs of those online portals have allowed me to use the comments for research purposes.

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see that linguistic patriotism is considered the norm, while those who deny the determinative connection individual-language-state are pervert (one must not escape from his “linguistic roots”). The next group of notions tries to explain the issue of “bad language”, which is regarded as “unpatriotic behaviour” through the prism of the previous notion, which is when the explanatory mechanism based on ‘rules’ kicks in.:

- (3) *Kiekvienas save gerbiantis pilietis, juo labiau planuojantis studijuoti aukštojo mokykloje, pirmiausia turi mokėti taisyklingai lietuviškai ir rašyti, ir kalbėti, nebent studijuos Prancūzijoje, Anglijoje, Japonijoje ar kt.*
 [Every self-respecting citizen, not to mention those planning to study at a higher education institution, has first to learn to write and speak correct Lithuanian, unless he/she goes to study in France, England, Japan or other places.] (03-U-LT)

Linguistic patriotism is no longer fixed category like in example 1, nor erased from the big picture like in example 2, but is expressed by learning the rules of the mother tongue. The connection between the state, the speaker and language is still strong, but language has a different essence, based on rules. It is a system not necessarily inherent to the speaker. Understanding language in terms of rules in this case places the language on the state level (it is located in that above mentioned state/people realm and that every ‘citizen’ must learn that language – the national language), so the underlying metaphor here would be that LANGUAGE IS LAW. Rules are an important part of any schooling system (when it comes to language), and this is no exception in any country with a strong standard language (Milroy 2001). The ‘rules’ notion is further used to give stronger, very practical arguments that support the idea that the mother tongue needs to be learned. This argument is based on the idea that language must be proper / correct, in order to represent the speaker in good light:

- (4) *Daugelis nė nesusimąsto apie tai, kad padoriai išmokta lietuvių kalba gyvenime juos reprezentuos kur kas geriau, nei idijotiškos asmenukės snukiakygėje ar demonstruojama "išmintis" komentaruose. Jei, pavyzdžiui, koks nors "išminčius" žodį "pažįstamas" rašo su "y", ko apskritai gali būti vertas toks "išminčius"?*
 [Many do not even think about the fact that decently learned Lithuanian language will represent them better, than idiotic selfies on facebook or demonstrating “wisdom” in comments. If they, for example, some “clever-head” writes the word “pažįstamas” with an “y”³, what is it worth having such kind of a “clever-head”?] (04-U-LT)

Language is seen as *representation* or as *face* (in the sociological meaning of the word, *face* as the social attributes one shows to others), it is in one sense, an internal part of us (we cannot escape situations in which we will need to use language in society), which will show our social status, yet, it is also something external, namely rules that one needs to acquire, in order to present oneself better.

³ This is a typical example of a spelling error, the long /i:/ phoneme can be written graphically as “i” and “y”, which is one of the main orthographical challenges in schools.

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The ‘place’ of language in this understanding is quite complex, as its external part is ‘high’ and ‘correct’ or at least more correct than the internal one⁴ (the internal part is dismissed in this notion). With the rules being so important, certain users show a clear discontent and even frustration with the rules. This is where the ‘system / rule / law’ metaphor becomes really developed. Let us take into consideration the following examples:

- (5) *Kad ir kaip man patinka lietuvių kalba, bet ją reiktų supaprastinti, kad būtų lengvesnė rašyti, ir kablelius dėti.* [However, I like Lithuanian language, but it needs to be simplified, so that it would be easier to write and put commas.] (05-U-LT)
- (6) *Manau (...) kad rasyba ir skyryba reikia supaprastinti, ismetant visas tas taisykliu isimtis ir pasirenkamus skyrybos zenklus. Kalba turi tarnauti žmogui, o ne atvirkščiai.* [I think (...) that writing and separation of words need to be simplified by throwing out all those rule exceptions and optional separation signs. Language should serve mankind, not vice versa.] (06-U-LT)
- (7) (...) *Nematyti jokių pastangų kalbą patobulinti, tik kvailas noras išlaikyti ją tokią kokia yra. Nesąžininga, kad tavo bendravimo kokybė dažnai priklauso nuo to kiek taisyklių moka pašnekovas. Nereikia čia sukti apie tautos reprezentaciją. Seniai kalba nieko nereprezentuoja, jei ji tokia kokia yra nebereikalinga, lai nyksta. Tuščios vietos tikrai nebus, atsiras tokia kalba, kokia bus reikalinga. Kam naudinga ta sumaištis, kuomet ne vietoj padėtas kablelis keičia sąkinio prasmę?* [There are no efforts to improve the language, just a stupid desire to preserve the language the way it is. It is unfair that the quality of your communication depends on how many rules the conversation partner knows. No need to ransack our brains about national representation. A language doesn't represent anything for a long time now; if it is useless as it is, a language dies out. There will certainly be no empty space; a language that is needed will appear. Who needs all the confusion, when a comma not put in place changes the meaning of a sentence?] (07-U-LT)

In all of the examples, we see that the ‘language’ still primarily refers to the external part, the rules. A relativized understanding of those rules can be seen in example 6, where the ‘language’ can be ‘simplified’ in order to be more available for consumption. Here, language becomes more of a product (consisting of rules that need to be learned), ready for the consumer, rather than an unchangeable entity. In example 6, the keyword ‘simplified’ is used again, while the “high” status of language as a national / state treasure, now becomes a ‘servant’ to the user. The commentator in example 7 shows the most complex relation to the idea of language-as-rules, where he complains about the quality of speech being measured by the number of rules the individual knows (the interior as judged by the exterior becomes an issue). Therefore, language needs to be improved, so that users would not abandon it. Language is still very much conceived as a product, as something external to the human, but a product, that will lose the battle to other products (and become de-nationalised), if it is not improved.

⁴ For the purpose of this research only, I use the terms ‘external’ and ‘internal’ as two understandings of language. The ‘external’ means the commentator considers the ‘real’ place of language to be outside of the individual speaker / commentator, in a certain realm, while the ‘internal’ places the language within the individual speaker.

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While the past notions take a critical tone towards language rules and regulation, they still see the solution in more regulation. This is not the case in the following notion:

- (8) *Aš visada buvau už šitos kalbos naikinimą. Man ji nepatinka dėl savo atsiprašant fašist... polinkio. Man gaila, kad dingsta tarmės, o Lietuva tampa pilka dėme.*
 [I have always been for the destruction of this language. I don't like it because of its, beg your pardon, fascist... tendencies. I feel sorry for the dialects, which are disappearing, and Lithuania is becoming a grey blur.] (08-U-LT)

Here, a language is given a character, is treated as a language which is an active being, with an essence, operating under the conditions of its essence. Even as such, it is being called 'Lithuanian language'. The name is given because of the imagined territory this language has power over. Combining the human traits and the high-power position of this notion of language, we can clearly see that the underlying metaphor is that LANGUAGE IS A SOVEREIGN, which rules over its territory, treating dialects as subordinates.

Another set of notions bases its conceptualization of language on language-in-use by individuals (rather than as existing in an extra-human realm):

- (9) *Kalba yra komunikacijos instrumentas ir nieko daugiau. Kalba nyksta kai valdantieji pradeda jos atsisakyti, menkinti. Siaurėja kalbos komunikacijos funkcijos, siaurėja jos naudojimas.*
 [Language is an instrument of communication and nothing more. A language disappears when the ones who master it start abandoning and depreciating it. The communicative functions and the use of the language become narrowed down.] (09-U-LT)

Even though conceptualized through the use by single individuals, language is still a 'single' shared entity in a community. The metaphor of LANGUAGE IS AN INSTRUMENT is present in a number of comments in Lithuania, but more developed in the other two countries, see below.

3.2. Norway

Since there is no spoken standard in Norway, most discussions start around written language. The existence of two written standards used to cause big language debates in the middle of the 20th Century, while the focus of debate today is more on the writing competences of schoolchildren and media language (as well as the influence of English).

There are a number of notions that overlap with those in Lithuania and Serbia, firstly the prescriptivist and purist notions. They take language is 'one' system or entity (external) that consists of rules that need to be followed. This is expressed sometimes explicitly, but mostly implicitly, which one can see from notions such as 'mistakes' or 'faulty/ bad/ terrible language' (example 10).

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- (10) *Man kan høre politikere, finansmenn og andre i høye posisjoner som gjør den samme feilen og det er flaut.* [You often hear politicians, bankers and others in high positions that make the same mistake and it's embarrassing].
 (10-M-NO)

Language rules are viewed as an external entity, to which humans have some or no access (this notions require no further explanation, as they fall under LANGUAGE IS LAW metaphor, as shown in the Lithuanian context, example 3). On the other hand, language-as-rules can be conceived as something internal to humans, namely as a 'skill' (example 11). The commentator provides us with an explanation that language has 'levels', which are determined by society:

- (11) *Det er slik i Samfunnet at det er satt krav til lese og skriveferdigheter, fordi det forteller noe om hvilket nivå man er på. Jeg vil forvente at min advokat er skrive og talefør, men en burgerflipper hos McDonalds ikke trenger å være helt der oppe.*
 [There are demands for writing and reading skills set by Society, because it tells us something about which level one is at. I expect my lawyer to be able to speak and write, but a burger-flipper at McDonalds does not have to be that far up.] (11-M-NO)

The other aspect of language that this notion shows is that language automatically functions as a tool of measurement of social status. We see that through, like in example 3 (though much clearer in example 11), the use of the orientational metaphor: HIGH IS GOOD and LOW IS BAD that applies to language too. Good language is that of those with high social status (i.e. lawyer), and bad language is of those with low social status (i.e. burger flipper). LANGUAGE IS A SKILL in this understanding.

As mentioned in the introduction, the high status of dialects in Norway always brings them up in a discussion (in the three articles selected, dialects were not even mentioned, yet miniature sub-discussions about their place and status came up). There are negative attitudes (see (12) as well as positive ones, see (13):

- (12) *Jeg synes det å skrive på dialekt er noe stort tøys. Hvis man ønsker å kommunisere ideer klart og tydelig, er ett standardisert skriftspråk definitivt med mest hensiktsmessige.*
 [I think that writing in dialect is a bunch of nonsense. If one wants to communicate ideas sound and clear, then it is the standardized written language definitely the most appropriate] (12-M-NO)
- (13) *Æ skriv på dialekt.. den e unik og en berikelse tell det norske skriftspråk. Kultur e det åsså... så tell dokker som får nåyya kvær gang nåen skriv litt feil.. slapp av :-)*
 [I write in dialect.. It is unique and an enrichment of the Norwegian literary language. It's, like, culture... so, to all of you who are irritated every time someone makes a small mistake... relax :-)] (13-M-NO)

Effectivity comes as a concern in the metaphor LANGUAGE IS A TOOL / INSTRUMENT (OF COMMUNICATION) and 'transferring content' is then its main function. However, the notion of 'tool' also involves the understanding that one needs to know how to operate with that tool. This is a notion Geeraerts (2003) also documents as the 'rationalist model of standardization', namely, the learning of a

standardized, uniform language is necessary in order to emancipate the citizens of one state, so they can communicate effectively about issues that concern all of the citizens. The other notion (example 13), namely LANGUAGE IS CULTURE focuses on the spiritual / identity aspect of language (more to the ‘romantic model’ side of Geeraerts’ typology). The dialect is nonetheless placed within the wider context of a ‘single’ / ‘Norwegian’ literary language. This ‘one’ literary language now has a nature that includes a multitude of varieties, it is no longer based on a unitary set of rules (as we saw in example 3). What is also very interesting is the phrasing “det norske skriftspråk” [the Norwegian literary language] that is used to stress exactly what I described in the previous passages – the ‘oneness’ of the literary language. The form for “the Norwegian literary language” is written in a form with single definitiveness, a form more typical for standard language, which is rarely and/or almost never found in dialects (where one finds mostly double definitiveness). The use of this form is not extremely rare either, because it comes from more ‘conservative’ forms of *bokmål*, and is still often used in legal texts. They are also used in political discourse in which such big national (especially with the word ‘Norwegian’) topics is used, for example “det norske samfunn” or the older name for the Workers’ party “det norske arbeiderparti”. The use of the single definitiveness gives the comment a ‘nationally important’ ring.

This instrumentalist notion of standard language comes under criticism from those who point to the potential dangers of having such a ‘unified’ standard. In example 14, still concerned about communication and its effectivity, language is conceived as a CONTAINER OF MEANING, not as a standardized / unified instrument.

(14) *Flott, vann på mølla til mennesker som finner det mer relevant å rette på skrivefeil enn å forholde seg til argumentenes innhold i kommentarfelt.*

[Great, additional support for those that think it’s more relevant to correct writing errors than to deal with the content of the argument in the comment section.] (14-M-NO)

(15) *Jeg **kann** skrive så mange feil **jei vill**. Du **sjønner fotsatt va** det står, gjør du **ikKe**? Ærlig talt driter jeg i folks skriveferdigheter...*

[I **can** write as many fails as I **want**. You **still understand** what is written there, **don’t** you? I honestly don’t give a damn about other people’s writing skills...] (15-U-NO)

This metaphor suggests that language is not an entity built upon rules, but upon its communicative function. These two understandings of language are in constant negotiation throughout the discussion, and even some middle grounds in comments such as the following:

(16) *Rettskriving er viktig og mange, spesielt i kommentarfelt på Internett, skriver nesten uforståelig. Med det sagt(!) så har jeg lagt merke til at mange bruker rettskriving som en form for hersketeknikk. (...)Jeg er også av den oppfatning at, så lenge teksten velskrevet og uten for mange feil og mangler, blir det tullete å henge seg opp i*

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noen og/å-feil.

[Correct writing is important for most, especially in the comment sections on the internet, writing is almost unintelligible. But, having said that, I have also noticed that many use writing as a type of dominance strategy. (...) as long as the text is well-written and without too many mistakes and shortcomings, it becomes silly to go on about og/å⁵ mistakes.] (16-M-NO)

The aspects of language that have to do with power and dominance is recognized Language = meaning / communication, power.

A different set of notions is triggered by the notion of language change. Again, in the dialogue between positive and negative reactions, a different set of notions is crystalized. One shows a neutral attitude towards change:

- (17) *Det er jo sånn endringer skjer. Stort sett alle ordene du bruker var på et eller annet tidspunkt "feil".*
 [Well, that's how change happens. Most of the words you are using were, at some point, "incorrect"] (17-M-NO)
- (18) *Det er en del av problemet, at noen tror at språket er noe som kan endres etter eget forgodtbefinnende.*
 [This is a part of the problem; that someone thinks that language is something that can be changed to his own will.] (18-M-NO)
- (19) *De glemmer at språket er som en deig, en kronisk bevegelig masse som langsomt endrer form. Dette er for eksempel hovedgrunnen til at gammelnorsken er uleselig for nordmenn flest.*
 [They forget that language is like dough, a chronically movable mass that slowly changes form. This is, for example, the main reason Old Norwegian is unreadable for most Norwegians.] (19-M-NO)

This describes an essentialist view of language, which rests upon the idea of metaphors such as LANGUAGE IS DOUGH and LANGUAGE IS AN ORGANISM. Changes and inner regularities are beyond the control of its users or linguists.

Such attitudes cause reactions. The comment in example 20 shows one fo the answers to the comment from example 17:

- (20) *Det er slike med din holdning til feilene som gjør at endringene skjer. Resultatet blir språklig forflatning og utvisking av identitet.*
 [It is people with your attitude towards errors that make changes happen. The result is linguistic flattening and erasure of identity.] (20-M-NO)

Language is both a 'structure, a building, which becomes flat and invisible when it changes. Identity is conceived as something liquid, which is strong when homogenous (just as the language), and weak when full of foreign elements (example 17). These are well-documented purist notions, similar found by Spitzmüller (2007) in his exploration of purism in the media, with the same metaphor found here,

⁵ "Og" is a conjunction meaning "and", while "å" is an infinitive marker, both of which are pronounced identically in most Norwegian dialects (as /o:/). This is one of the most commonly mentioned language mistakes.

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namely that LANGUAGE IS SUBSTANCE that can be diluted, purified, polluted etc. (see example 21). For example:

(21) *At norske ord får ny betydning eller stavemåte, kan jeg fint godta er språkutvikling. Men når vanlige norske ord blir erstattet med engelske, kalle jeg det utvanning.*

[I can accept that Norwegian words get a new meaning or spellings as development of language. But when ordinary Norwegian words are replaced with English ones, that I call dilution.] (21-M-NO)

All the same, such patriotic feelings invoke not just purist and/or prescriptivist notions of language, but also a more localized feeling of pride, in the Norwegian case – dialects.

(22) (...) *dialekt e ein av tingo me må ta vare på om norge ska forbli norge.*

[(...) dialect is one of the things we must look after, if norway is going to remain norway.] (22-M-NO)

The commentator in example 18 writes in his own dialect, viewing dialectal multitude as a special Norwegian feature. Dialects are generally praised in Norway, often given higher social status than the standard. The commentator accents the feature as a point of national pride. This argument is quite strong in Norway and often requires no further justification, as we see in example 23 (note: made by the same person as in example 22), which is an answer to a provocation that dialect is not effective as the standard language. This caused the provocateur to apologise (example 24).

(23) *vell no har eg nå utdanning og er i fast jobb, og om du virkelig meine at dei som snakke/skrive dialekt kje har god not utdanning eller er idiota så tar du kraftigt feil.*

[well, I finished my education and am now employed, and if you really think that those that talk/write in dialect do not have good education or are idiots, you are extremely wrong.] (22-M-NO)

(24) *Harselerte litt. Sorry. (...) jeg synes det er flott at du skriver dialekt. Flere burde gjøre det. Vi er dessverre blitt en nasjon av knotere.*

[I was mocking you a bit. Sorry. (...) I think it's nice that you write in dialect. More should do so. We have unfortunately become a nation of knoters⁶]. (23-M-NO)

The word “konter” is a very ideologically-laden word, which points to the use of a ‘foreign’ language, instead of a ‘personal’ language. Here, we have the opposite of the ‘rules’ ideal: the best language is not located in the exterior, in a law-like set of linguistic rules, but the exact opposite: it is located in the interior, it is the form of language which is most natural and most comfortable for the language user. LANGUAGE IS A CONTAINER OF IDENTITY and / or personal traits here, which is valid for both the standard and the non-standard. The ones who chose to write the ‘non-native’ form of language are those who wish to hide their identity, while those who chose the dialect are stressing their origin and the pride they take in their heritage. In spite of this being a direct criticism of the people who adopt a ‘nice language’ in order to present themselves better, is not too ideologically different from the idea of

⁶ The term is used in Norway to mark people who mix or do not use their own dialect. The negative value of the term is contained in the idea that people who intentionally change their dialect are trying to come off as better than they are or to hide where they are from.

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language as a face / representation, because the ones who stress the dialect-users VS “konters” difference still set a normative frame for the ways one should present themselves. The main difference is the value orientation – towards the internal and spontaneous, rather than external and learned.

3.3. Serbia

Amongst the notions of language in the Serbian material, there were such notions that reflect the prescriptivist attitudes described in example 3, 4, 10 and 11, with similar metaphors used. What was interesting about certain commentators in Serbia is that their arguments show an interesting negotiated meaning between the language as an extra-human (external) entity and language as an internal entity:

- (25) *Maternji jezik ostaje uvek jezik koji najbolje govorite, tu niko nije izuzetak. Ako ni njega ne umete da govorite i ako vam je rečnik dovoljan tek toliko da umete samo da komunicirate onda ćete zauvek delovati neobrazovano.*
 [Your mother tongue will always remain the one language you speak the best, no one is an exception here. If you cannot even speak that language and if your vocabulary suffices only for communication, then you will forever appear uneducated.] (24-F-SR)

The external value of language is stressed, the language one shows in public. Yet, the internal (‘mother tongue’) is recognized as language too, but its importance is diminished, clearly because it does not possess the values of the external part – correctness, systematicity and rules. The notion is prescriptivist in the sense that we saw in Lithuanian examples, that LANGUAGE IS A FACE / SKILL, because ‘communicating’ (understood as a skill) carries with it a danger ‘appearing uneducated’ (showing a bad ‘face’). The mother tongue (the internal part) without the rules (the external part) is thus untamed, not fit for civilization. The commentator exemplifies this with language of Roma people and a Southern dialect (example 26), which has its imagined centre in the city of Leskovac – both of these ways of speaking are far away from the prestigious standard language.

- (26) *Nekada smo se smejali Romima zbog njihove kolektivne neobrazovanosti i što nema ni jednog koji ume da govori, važilo slično i za Leskovčane i okolinu, ko bi rekao da ćemo doživeti da naša deca padnu na isti nivo.*
 [Once, we used to laugh at Roma people, because of their collective lack of education and because there is none of them who is able to speak, the same goes for people from Leskovac and that area, who would have thought our kids would fall to that level.] (24-F-SR)

As it is often the case, prescriptivism is connected to territoriality and national feelings. A complex relationship between the ‘high culture’ of language, described in the last example, and the ‘realm of language’ is presented in the following comment:

- (27) *Ono cega se secam je, da sam oko sebe slusala dobar govor, da sam citala obaveznu lektiru (i mnogo vise od toga), da se u kuci citala "Politika" (...) Pozivam vas da pogledate naslove u danasnjoj "Politici". Sigurna sam da cete naci bar jednu gresku, ako ne pravopisnu, a ono pomocni glagol na kraju recenice. (...) To nisu obicne greske, to su greske koje narusavaju strukturu i logiku srpskog jezika (ocigledan uticaj engleskog). Cak i u knjigama pojedinih poznatih izdavaca ima gresaka. Da li, danas, neko uopste zaposljava lektore? (...) I ne zaboravite, jedina otadzbina koju covek ima, ma gde bio, je u njegovom maternjem jeziku.*
 [What I remember is that I was surrounded by good speech, I read the obligatory literature (and much more than

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that), that “Politika” was always read in our home, I invite you to look at the titles in today’s “Politika”. I am sure you will find at least one mistake, if not a orthographical, then for sure a particle verb at the end of the sentence. (...) These are not ordinary mistakes, these are mistakes that distort the structure and the inner logic of the Serbian language (an obvious influence from English). You find mistakes even in books of certain publishers. Does anyone even employ language-advisors nowadays? (...) And do not forget, there is only one homeland that one has, wherever he/she may be, and that homeland is in this mother tongue.] (25-F-SE)

The first part refers to an imaginary golden age of language (pre-war Yugoslavia, where language control was much stronger) and shows where good language comes from: both from the spirit of the time and from the authorities, namely parents, TV, newspapers, books. Language as a ‘realm’ is sustained by the ‘culture’ which has respect of the ‘authorities’. Without that culture, the realm of language is dying out (as exemplified by using the example of the language mistakes present in “Politika”, the largest state-owned newspaper). The use of a parallel notion of language as *Structure and System*, as well as giving it a realm and domain (LANGUAGE IS HOME, LANGUAGE IS A TERRITORY / REALM) show that the underlying metaphor is that LANGUAGE IS A BUILDING, which used to stand strong, but is now falling apart, because there is no expert to take care of it.

The concern about language endangerment and national identity is also shown through the metaphor of LANGUAGE IS AN INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNICATION. Even though such metaphors were used to express a functional notion of language, they can also be used to express national / identity concern (LANGUAGE IS A REALM), as shown in example 29.

(28) *Nije ovde reč o srpskom jeziku koga treba čuvati i sačuvati iz nekih nacionalnij interesa, već iz potrebe da se omogući normalna komunikacija među ljudima, koji govore srpski. Imam veoma neprijatno osećanje kada vidim nazive firmi ispisane na nekom stranom jeziku. Tu pojavu treba dodatno dobro oporezovati.*
 [This is not about Serbian language that needs to be protected and saved because of some national interests, but from the need to enable normal communication between people who speak Serbian. I get a very bad feeling when I see names of companies written on a foreign language. This phenomenon should be additionally taxed.]
 (27-M-SR)

Language is nominally called a system of communication, but that communication is encapsulated within the realm of ‘one language’ (Serbian). The community still needs a standard in order to communicate, so the nature of the language is external, connected to the users through the realm, but outside of the individual user. Here we can also see elements of both of the cultural models that Geeraerts (2003) presents. From the rationalist model, the notion of language being a ‘tool of communication within one society’ is taken, but the protectionist role of language in national interests of the language is more on the side of the romantic model.

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When it comes to other notions of language, there is a group of comments that see language as a maxim of communication:

(29) *šta iz srpskog ima da se uči? jel komuniciraju međusobno?? jel znaju da razgovaraju? da nešto napišu, pročitaju?? (...) neka uče engleski, nemački. to je obrazovanje.*
 [what is there to be learned in Serbian [class]? do they communicate with each other?? can they talk? can they write or read something? (...) let them learn English, German. that's education.] (28-M-SR)

The commentator stressed the idea of language being itself a maxim of communication (LANGUAGE IS COMMUNICATION) by employing graphical means of expression (no capital letters, diacritics etc.). Here we see a clear division between the language that does not need to be learned, which is the mother tongue (and even without learning it, it suffices as a means of communication and means of conveying meaning) and other, foreign languages, which need to be learned. This notion is very similar to the one presented in example 15, as they both present an anti-ideology, directly criticizing the standard language culture.

4. Discussion

Metaphors and folk models about language are used in many ways, some of which even can seem contradictory to each other. For example, language can both be the most individual / inborn entity of an individual, but that does not mean that the individual knows ‘the language’, before he or she has learned it (language also is an external entity, to be acquired by individuals).

In the analysis, I tried to note which concepts started debates between commentators and led to a reconceptualization of language in new comments. There are three important perceived traits of language which stir up the discussion. In my view, they represent aspects of language that are crucial to the language users (commentators), when discussing about language: *function and functionality of language, place of language in society* and *(perceived) language change*. *Change* is a subject that is bound to come up in any discussion about language, and it can be valued *negatively* or *neutrally* (in a few rare cases – *positively*), as *natural* and as *unnatural* (language ‘falling apart’, ‘developing’ etc.), as well as *inducible* (linguists / people can change language consciously ‘simple language’, ‘difficult language’, ‘archaic / modern language’ etc.) or as *inevitable* (changes happen beyond our will – language as ‘dough’, ‘mass’, ‘organism’ etc.). Language can be placed both in the *external* or *internal* or even in both. Language is either an individual property, or an external entity, which exists outside of humans. Language can have a place in both, in which case they can be valued positively or negatively (for example, the *internal* can be bad because it does not follow the social rules prescribed by the

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external, or the *internal* can be good because it is honest and personal, while the *external* is the language used to mask one's real identity). The *function* of language is also discussed broadly, where some focus on the more symbolic functions (expression of identity and face saving 'language as a tool of representation' as an 'identity marker'), others on the communicative functions (language as 'a tool communication', as 'instrument of debate' etc.) as well as the *functionality* of language in its communicative and bond-creating roles.

Grouping the notions of language is indeed an impossible task, because, as I hoped to show in some of the examples, a single metaphor can be used with many others, which produces a totally different view of language. In the paragraphs below, I discuss prototypical examples of linguistic notions, but they are by no means 'a notion', since the boundaries are more than fuzzy. Still, some elements of these notions are built up on very clearly stated ideals, that I will try to argue can be used as the main criteria to typologize these notions.

I group the metaphorical understandings of language in the light of previous findings. One great deal of metaphors were connected to the ethnolinguistic notions of language (which has also been called Neo-Herderian, Whorfian, nationalist), in which language is seen as an essential connecting force between members of the same nationality. In the empirical data from this study, the metaphors were also numerous: LANGUAGE IS GROUND, LANGUAGE IS PEOPLE / NATION, LANGUAGE IS A REALM, LANGUAGE IS A TERRITORY, LANGUAGE IS CULTURE, LANGUAGE IS SUBSTANCE. In this material, as well as in previous research, the ethnolinguistic notions invoked purist thinking about language (Spitzmüller (2007) noted the same for German language, namely that 'purism' is very much shaped by the discourse of the 'national' and the renewal of the reunified German nation-state). My material also shows that the nation-state issues call upon purists notions of language; it also suggests that the purist view of language treats a language as a nation state – it has borders, does not accept foreign elements without additional checking, its realm needs constant protection and care.

Most commentators have shown the understanding of language as 'a language', in singular, in the sense that language is one unified entity. This is mostly under metaphors such as LANGUAGE IS PEOPLE, LANGUAGE IS A NATION, etc. which stress the singleness of language and people. Additionally, some understandings exhibit a slightly more pluralistic notion of 'a language', where it is the sum of the

varieties. This is usually invoked when dialects come up as a subject: the proponents of the idea that dialects are equally good to the ‘national’ language place the dialect in the realm of the ‘national language’. The dialect is in the subordinate position in relation to ‘a language’, but nonetheless, this notion provides a more pluralist view of language as a single unit. This is especially present in the Norwegian context, where the national feelings about language are expressed by stressing the importance dialects (‘my dialect is an important part of Norwegian’, both the *external* place of language and the *internal* place are positively valued). There is a similar understanding of the relationship between dialects and the ‘language’ in one Lithuanian comment, but where the ‘language’ anthropomorphized into a ruler of a territory (which includes dialects). The underlying metaphor here is LANGUAGE IS LAW / SOVEREIGN. A similar picture of a language can be seen in Polzenhagen and Dirven (2008), who find ‘global language’ represented as a villain and the endangered minority language as an innocent princess in discourse about the effects of globalization on languages. The idea is the same – the language / form with more power is destroying the oppressed languages, or in this case the (standard) language is an “unjust ruler” of the dialects. One notion that challenges this position of a dialect in relation to the standard is the notion of LANGUAGE IS IDENTITY (CONTAINER OF IDENTITY). One commentator characterizes dialect as having more value than the standard, because it is ‘closer to the identity of the speaker’ and the standard is a language one uses in order to represent oneself as something he is not. The metaphor of LANGUAGE IS IDENTITY is not foreign from previous research, namely from the Geeraerts’ ‘romantic’ model of standardization. Geeraerts uses a historical example of the Herderian idea of language to explain the romantic model, which cannot be applied to this model, but can theoretically correspond to what Geeraerts calls “a romantic attitude in its purest form involves anti-establishment feelings” (2003: 38), in which all variation and expression of different identities is valued over uniformity and standardness. It can be called the “personal identity” notion of language.

Some notions erase this dichotomy from the picture, conceiving language through the metaphor LANGUAGE IS A CONTAINER OF MEANING. Rules and the nature of language are erased from the picture, because the focus of this understanding of language is that the existence of language suffices for communication. It can be called the *communicative* notion of language. Very much connected to that is a group of metaphors that show the same concern for ‘good’ communication, but take language as a problematic entity, namely a tool one should learn how to use. The metaphors used are LANGUAGE IS AN INSTRUMENT (OF COMMUNICATION), LANGUAGE IS STRUCTURE, LANGUAGE AS A SKILL, often

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(especially in the Serbian context) alongside with the notion that LANGUAGE IS A REALM in which that communication should happen (this realm is always a nation or a state). These notions are prescriptivist in the sense that communication is difficult and must follow rules in order for it to be successful. In a linguistic sense, these rules are prescribed (LANGUAGE IS AUTHORITY) and / or created (LANGUAGE IS A PRODUCT), but whatever the case may be, it is a structured instrument or tool, and this group of notions could be called the *instrumentalist* notions of language. This very much corresponds to Geeraerts' 'rationalist' model of standardization (here 'language' in general is understood in the same way).

The notions that language is an instrument can have a socially vertical perspective. One ideology that is embedded in a group of notions that use metaphors such as LANGUAGE IS LAW, LANGUAGE IS A SKILL AND LANGUAGE IS A FACE is that language is unbreakably connected to the person's position in a social hierarchy ('high' language is used by certain lawyers, TV anchors etc.; 'low' language by uneducated groups, minorities, dialect-users and / or people with low-paying jobs). This is best seen on the example of one user in Serbia, who shows 'high language skills' as being the ownership only the middle and higher social classes. While other groups of language focus on either the *exterior* (for example the *instrumentalist*), the nature of language in this case is twofold – just like with the "personal identity" notion of language, but inverted. The interior is valued negatively (as vulgar, untamed) and the exterior positively (as civilized, proper). I argue that this type of notion of language can be called *elitist*, not from the desire to criticize, but simply because the commentators holding such viewpoints always argue from a top-down position, by lowering the language-value of the lower social groups and simultaneously valuing the language of the educated groups and those with more power highly.

Lastly, a final dividing line that builds up the notions of language is the essentialist vs constructivist understanding of the nature of language. The essentialist notions are, interestingly enough, invoked by positive and/or neutral evaluations of language change. Language is given a conceptual shape of flexible objects, for example LANGUAGE IS DOUGH / MASS / MATTER, or human attributes, such as LANGUAGE IS AN ORGANISM, which necessarily changes because it must develop. These notions are present in all three of the countries. The other side of the dichotomy has shown that a much more interesting cultural model developed in some of the Lithuanian comments. A demand for the language to be 'simplified' and 'developed' is not rare amongst Lithuanian commentators, some of which call

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upon authorities and / or the whole community to put effort into simplifying the language, so that it would ‘serve’ them. The set of metaphors used, such as LANGUAGE IS A SERVANT / A SYSTEM THAT SERVES HUMANS / MACHINE / STRUCTURE and LANGUAGE IS A PRODUCT shows a very Neo-Foucaultian understanding of constructed nature of language. The main concern is that ‘rules’ are too difficult, and they need to be changes, so language is obviously ‘external’. This could be the product of the very strong institutionalization of language in Lithuania (Vaicekauskienė 2011). The normative institutions have for decades been trying to serve language as a produced and linguistically engineered mechanism, to the users (both young and grown-up) inventing neologisms to replace foreign words and constantly providing advice on the use of the norm. The notion also reminds one of Saussure’s “language is a product of social forces”, but with ideal causal conditions – society (or its institutions) has all the power to change the product, language is understood as a social contract.

In relation to what Moschonas (2004: 177) describes as the Herderian notion that language has once been captured as a “materialized spirituality” of a people (through standardization), and can be used as means of communication for all times, a question poses itself. How is it so that a “young nation”, such as Lithuania, with a highly idealized understanding of language (often seen as ancient and unique) and a very strong standard language culture, shows a demand for a construction and reconstruction of language by the users and authorities? Could this be a product of / reaction to the Soviet strongly materialist scientific tradition, or the “energy” of the people who regained freedom of speech and are fed up with language being connected exclusively with “difficulties” and “complexity”? These are assumptions based on the historical and social developments in Lithuania, which exist in similar places (the other Baltic and post-Soviet states), so comparative analysis would help answer these questions. Also, Moschonas shows how language has a horizontal dimension (which he calls the principle of ‘territoriality’), which is definitely present in all three of the countries examined here. Moreover, the results from all three countries show that the territoriality principle also invokes a notion of language as a phenomenon that measures social class or the ‘level’ of the speaker. Thus, the notion of ‘Lithuanian/Norwegian/Serbian language’ in user-generated comments covers both the horizontal space of language and the vertical social appropriateness. It is multidimensional in the sense that it encompasses both grammatical, social, spiritual/national and lexical (pure) correctness.

Reflecting upon what Johnson (2001) wrote about linguistic/sociolinguistic ideas not resonating with the users, it still seems to be mostly true. A few commentators used arguments based on linguistic notions of language as something that is in constant change, while most other comments reflect the standard language ideological notions of language ('correct', 'bad' etc.). Most types of notions comments also confirm what *folk theory of language* (Niedzielski and Preston 2009) drafted out – 'standard' and 'good' language are seen as closer to the idea of (real) language than 'dialects' and 'colloquial speech'. However, these notions are challenged by notions that turn the ideological loadings upside-down: (1) The notion of language as a container of meaning supposes that, as long as the message gets across, the variety of language used or its correctness are irrelevant; (2) the "personal identity" notion of language puts standard and dialects on the same level or even raises the value of dialects above the standards. Additionally, notions such as LANGUAGE AS DOUGH value linguistic change as inevitable and natural. More research would be needed to uncover the potency of these notions as arguments in social debates, as well as how frequent they are. Based on the present research, which was not quantitative, there are indications that the both notions of language will be marginal in all three countries – the only exception might be Norway.

On a final note, metalinguistic commentaries are interesting from other perspectives as well – the rest of the comments that did not express a certain notion of language were either political, short jokes and puns, but (most!) contained corrections of other users' language mistakes; an interesting field of inquiry into the way norms are perceived, for a discussion about one single grammatical rule can take up the space of over 50 comments. If sociolinguistic ideas are not resonating with the non-linguists, it would seem that grammatical rules are not doing any better.

5. Conclusions

I have looked at 257 comments in which users express certain views of language, taken news stories from Lithuania, Norway and Serbia (three news stories per each country). I have found that entities that mostly stir up discussion can be broadly categorized as *language change*, the *place of language in society* and the *function and functionality of language*. These do not necessarily occur in the articles mentioned, but necessarily come up in discussions, and they are used as argumentative basis to build up complex notions of language.

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The findings are categorized into eight notions of language, which are not in any way mutually exclusive (sometimes they exist parallel to each other). The ones that were present in all the material, are the 1) “ethnolinguistic”, with the main idea that one language is shared by one people /nation (*based on metaphors such as* LANGUAGE IS GROUND, LANGUAGE IS PEOPLE / NATION, LANGUAGE IS A REALM, LANGUAGE IS A TERRITORY, LANGUAGE IS CULTURE, LANGUAGE IS SUBSTANCE), 2) “essentialist” based on the idea that language is a being that develops, grow, changes and dies on its own (LANGUAGE IS DOUGH / ORGANISM, LANGUAGE IS A CONTAINER OF IDENTITY, LANGUAGE IS STRUCTURE), 3) “communicative” which sees language as a maxim of communication, and takes does not take “form” of language into account (LANGUAGE IS A CONTAINER OF MEANING), 4) “instrumental” which sees language as a tool that is based on principles, rules and that people need to learn to use (LANGUAGE IS AN INSTRUMENT, LANGUAGE IS COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE IS AN INSTRUMENT OF COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE IS STRUCTURE)..

Throughout the analysis, I have presented the fuzziness of the categorically outlined “notions” above. Some of the metaphors repeat themselves, but differ in the way they are used (for example, LANGUAGE IS STRUCTURE metaphor is used in essentialist, constructivist and instrumentalist notions of language). These notions are to be understood as idealised types, which very much negotiate with each other in discourse. For example, the ethnolinguistic notion of language pre-supposes that language has an essence that is unchangeable or it can view it as a system of prescribed rules or a system of society-constructed rules.

I have analysed, in greater detail, four very metaphorically sophisticated notions which were present in just one of these countries. These represent possible combinations of different notions of language, special for these countries, possibly shaped and stabilized by the general public discourse. In Lithuania, the “constructivist” notion pre-supposes that language is a conscious product of society, which can be changed at will by individuals and institutions (the metaphors used are SERVANT / A SYSTEM THAT SERVES HUMANS / MACHINE / STRUCTURE); the second notion found only in Lithuanian discourse is an “authoritarian / prescriptivist” view of language, based on such metaphors as *Language is a Sovereign*, and can be imaged as a powerful ruler of a territory; in Norway, there was a specific set of notions that raise the dialect as more valuable than the standard language, a notion I call “personal identity”, because it values more the spontaneous language in humans than the learned variety. Still, some

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commentators that value language dialects highly still note that it belongs to the “Norwegian language”, which shows that a pro-dialect ideology functions alongside a standard language ideology, in which language is equated with standard language. Additionally, this is the only place where a variation on the understanding of language in terms of “single unit” and “a sum of many units” is visible (only present in those notions that talk about dialects as a part of “a single language”). In Serbia, the specific notion is where a language is seen as the most natural ability of humans, as well as a set of law-like rules, whose disobedience results in public shame. This is a notion I call “elitist”, since the ‘natural language’ is seen as primitive and attributed to lower social classes, while the learned language is attributed to middle and higher social classes. These specific notions (with the exception of the notion that LANGUAGE IS A SOVEREIGN, which is found in discourse on globalisation) show conceptual similarity to some of the notions described above, but these four were specific for the country, included several people use the same metaphorical argument structure and it would be worth investigating whether they are a part of the general public discourse in each of these countries, or if they are present in other linguistic environments.

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Conflicting notions of language in metalinguistic discourses in Lithuania, Norway and Serbia

Vuk Vukotić

Summary

The article analyses the notions of language and their elements in metalinguistic comments taken from comment sections in online news portals from Lithuania, Norway and Serbia. The aim is to find and categorize different types of language notions. The goals were to analyse the elements of the notions of language and categorize them according to the metaphors found in the discourse. The empirical data was taken from comments under three news (three for each country), approximately 1640 comments were collected and the ones that contained metaphorical representations of language were analysed, 257 in total. The results show eight different notions of language, which are called: prescriptivist / authoritarian, instrumentalist, ethnolinguistic, communicative, essentialist, „personal identity“, elitist and constructivist. The last three notions are specific for only one of the environments and are discussed in greater detail. From the users' perspective, the difference between the notions is based on several elements, most importantly: *the place of language in society* (what is the relationship to standard and non-standard varieties) *perception of change* and *function and functionality of language*. The results also show that notions of 'pure language' are connected not only to the ethnolinguistic notion of language (language as a part of the identity, change is understood as decay), but also with other varieties of language are connected with different (even opposing) ideals and practical concerns (language as a neutral tool of communication, as a separate organism, substance etc.), and, finally, those notions of language, where the differentiation between the varieties of language is not important, is only connected with the communicative function (communicative notion of language – language is communication). Speaking about language ideologies in general, results show that there are of language in which standard language ideology (according to Milroy 2001) is negatively valued.

Prieštaringos kalbos sampratos metalingvistiniame diskurse Lietuvoje, Norvegijoje ir Serbijoje

Vuk Vukotić

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojama Lietuvos, Norvegijos ir Serbijos naujienų portaluose rašomų metalingvistinių komentarų kalbos samprata ir jos elementai. Šio tyrimo tikslas yra surasti ir kategorizuoti skirtingus kalbos sampratos tipus. Tyrimo uždaviniai yra analizuoti kalbos sampratų elementus ir juos kategorizuoti pagal metaforas iš metalingvistinio diskurso. Empirinė medžiaga yra sudaryta iš trijų naujienų komentarų kiekvienoje šalyje. Iš viso surinkta maždaug 1640 komentarų, iš kurių analizuojami tik tie, kuriuose randama metaforinių kalbos vaizdavimų, iš viso 257 komentarų. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidžia aštuonis skirtingus kalbos sampratų tipus: preskriptyvinė / autoritarinė, instrumentalinė, etnolingvistinė, komunikatyvinė, esencialistinė, „asmens tapatybės“, elitinė ir konstruktyvistinė. Paskutinės trys kalbos sampratos randamos tik vienoje iš trijų šalių, ir jos yra dėl to detaliau analizuojamos ir aptariamoms. Iš kalbos vartotojų perspektyvos, šių sampratų skirtumai remiasi skirtingais elementais, iš kurių svarbiausi šie: kalbos vieta visuomenėje, kalbos kaitos suvokimas ir kalbos funkcijų ir funkcionalumo suvokimas. Rezultatai taip pat rodo, kad „grynos kalbos“ samprata yra susijusi ne tik su etnolingvistinės kalbos samprata – kalba kaip identiteto dalis, kur kaita suvokiama kaip griovimas, bet taip pat gali būti susiję su kitais, net ir priešingais, idealais ir praktiniais poreikiais – kalba kaip neutralus komunikacijos instrumentas, kaip atskiras organizmas, kaip skystis ir t.t. Taip pat tyrimas parodo, kad kalbos sampratos, kuriose skirtumas tarp variantų nėra svarbus, yra susijusios išimtinai su kalbos komunikacijos funkcija – kalba suvokiama kaip bendravimas. Kalbant apie kalbos ideologijas apskritai, rezultatai rodo, kad yra atvejų, kai standartinės kalbos ideologijos samprata (pagal Milroy 2001) yra vertinama prieštarinai.

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