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УДК 811.111'42
811.163.41'42
DOI 10.46793/Uzdanica23.2.247M
Оригинални научни рад
Примљен: 14. април 2026.
Прихваћен: 8. јул 2026.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE *SOUL* IN ENGLISH AND SERBIAN MEDIA DISCOURSE¹

Abstrac: This paper examines the conceptualization of the target domain *SOUL* in the English and Serbian media discourse, drawing on the theoretical frameworks of cognitive linguistics and Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The aim of the study is to identify, classify, and interpret the source domains that participate in the metaphorical structuring of the *soul*, as well as to provide insight into the universal and culturally specific ways of conceptualizing this domain in the two languages under observation. The research is based on a qualitative analysis of a corpus consisting of online daily newspapers in English and Serbian, representing a form of media discourse that reflects dominant conceptual patterns within a particular linguistic culture. The results of the analysis indicate a significant overlap in the source domains through which the target domain of *SOUL* is conceptualized in both languages, while the observed differences primarily emerge in value-related and culturally specific nuances in the metaphorical framing of this concept within the analyzed discourse.²

Keywords: cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, *SOUL*, media discourse, source domain, target domain, English, Serbian.

1. INTRODUCTION

Within traditional linguistics, metaphor was often viewed as a stylistic device used for embellishing expressions in poetic and prose discourse, i.e., as something that belongs exclusively to language, as a matter of word choice rather than a matter of thinking or acting (Lakoff, Johnson 2003: 4). However, contemporary linguistic research attributes a considerably more complex role to metaphor, as it

¹ The research presented in this paper was funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (Contract on the transfer of funds for financing the research work of researchers at accredited higher education institutions in 2026, No. 451-03-33/2026-03/200198).

² This research was presented at the XVIII conference *Savremena proučavanja jezika i književnosti*, held on April 4th, 2026, at the Faculty of Philology and Arts, University of Kragujevac.

arrives at the understanding that the functioning of the human cognitive system, within which we think and act, is to a large extent based on metaphors (Lakoff, Johnson 2003: 4). According to this approach, metaphor is no longer limited to the literary or rhetorical level, but rather represents a fundamental way in which people conceptualize abstract experiences, and it permeates everyday life, not only language, but also the way we think and act (Kövecses 2002: viii). Therefore, this paper draws on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, as shaped by Lakoff and Johnson in their work *Metaphors We Live By* (1980/2003). They introduce conceptual metaphor as one of the basic cognitive mechanisms by which we understand abstract domains of our life experience, relying on more concrete, often more tangible domains. Furthermore, Rasulić and Mišković-Luković (2020: 19) argue that metaphor operates as a multilayered mechanism in the conceptualization of human experience, emerging through the interplay of cognitive processes, discourse practices, and communication. It refers to systematic mappings between a source and a target domain (Kövecses 2002: 4). Mappings are said to represent conceptual correspondences that connect elements, relationships, and attributes across two conceptual domains (Grujić 2020: 30). The domain from which we borrow a structure is called the source domain, while the domain interpreted through that structure is called the target domain (Langacker 2008: 50). The source domain, which is usually more concrete or partly grounded in bodily experience, provides the conceptual basis through which the target domain is perceived and understood (Langacker 2008: 58). The target domain, in contrast, generally represents a more abstract or complex experience that we attempt to comprehend through the source domain, typically realized in metaphorical expressions. As Gibbs (2005: 3) states, “human cognition is fundamentally shaped by embodied experience”. In other words, our experience with the physical world serves as a natural and logical foundation for understanding more abstract domains (Kövecses 2002: 4).

One such abstract concept is the soul. It represents one of the most complex and polysemous notions in the history of human thought, with its interpretation varying across different religious, philosophical, and cultural contexts. Its meaning has long been a subject of reflection, with early discussions evident in ancient philosophy, including the works of Plato and Aristotle. For example, Aristotle defines the soul as “the primary way by which we live and perceive and think” (Aristotle 2017: 23), or as the essence of “a certain sort of natural body, one having a source of motion and rest in itself” (Aristotle 2017: 26). In *Phaedo*, Plato describes the soul as an immortal, invisible, and divine entity that exists before birth and continues to live after the death of the body (Plato 2002). Even Lakoff and Johnson deal with the notion of the soul in their work *Philosophy in the Flesh* where they note that in spiritual traditions across the world the soul is understood as the center of consciousness and subjective experience, or as the bearer of moral reasoning, intellect, and will, but above all as the essence of human identity (Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 502). Similarly, in other lexicographic, psychological, and philosophical

sources, the soul is generally defined as the immaterial or inner aspect of a human being encompassing consciousness, cognition, emotion, moral and personal identity, and as the essential core of the self (RSJ 2011: 318; Psychology Lexicon n.d.³; APA n.d.⁴; Britannica n.d.⁵).

Since this concept does not have a single, precise definition, its analysis through conceptual metaphors could provide valuable insight into the ways in which it is conceptualized and understood in the media discourse.

Although research on the metaphorical conceptualization of the soul remains relatively limited, existing studies have provided valuable insights into the ways this domain is structured across different languages, cultures, and discourse types. At the theoretical level, Lakoff and Johnson (1999: 561), drawing on the principles of embodied cognition, argue that the soul, like the mind, cannot be separated from bodily experience and that spiritual experience is grounded in the body and the brain. While their discussion does not focus on specific conceptual metaphors of the soul, it establishes an important cognitive-linguistic framework for examining the concept as an embodied rather than purely abstract or transcendental phenomenon. They show that even highly abstract concepts such as the soul can be analyzed from a cognitive perspective, despite being understood in many religious traditions as immaterial and independent of the body. From this perspective, a number of studies have explored the metaphorical conceptualization of the soul in different languages and discourse types. One dominant line of research focuses on philosophical discourse. For instance, several recurrent source domains have been identified in the conceptualization of the soul, with a strong predominance of ontological metaphors (SOUL IS A HUMAN BEING, SOUL IS A DRUNK PERSON, SOUL IS A PRISONER, SOUL IS A CULPRIT, SOUL IS A TRAVELLER, SOUL IS A MASTER, SOUL IS A WEAVER), while structural (SOUL IS A PHYSICAL STRUCTURE/BUILDING, SOUL IS A ROOM, SOUL IS A CITY) and orientational metaphors (VICE OF THE SOUL IS DOWN, VIRTUE OF THE SOUL IS UP) appear less frequently (Gelovani 2025: 40). Ferella (2025: 152), through the analysis of Greek texts on metempsychosis (the idea of the soul's movement or transformation after death), shows that the concept is shaped through competing source domains, primarily JOURNEY and METAMORPHOSIS. While JOURNEY construes the soul as an active entity moving between bodies, METAMORPHOSIS emphasizes rebirth as a bodily transformation without focusing on the soul's agency. This demonstrates that even in philosophical discourse, the soul is not conceptualized uniformly, but through multiple, non-unified metaphorical structures. Further evidence comes from corpus-based studies of literary discourse. In an analysis of *The Brothers Karamazov* and its Polish, Croatian, and English translations, the researchers examined how metaphorical mappings of the soul are preserved or

³ <https://www.psychology-lexicon.com/cms/glossary/52-glossary-s/24044-soul.html>

⁴ <https://dictionary.apa.org/soul>

⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/soul>

modified across languages. The study identified a shared DISBODIED SOUL metaphor, but also revealed important differences, as Slavic languages tend to conceptualize the soul as the locus of emotions, whereas English more frequently maps emotionality onto HEART and reason onto MIND (Ostanina-Olszewska, Despot 2017: 12–13).

Although the target domain of the present study is SOUL, a brief overview of previous research on the metaphorical conceptualization of related domains such as HEART, MIND, and MORALITY can also provide an important point of reference, as all of these domains are concerned with the linguistic representation of inner experience, emotions, cognition, personal identity, and other non-physical aspects of human existence. For example, in Serbian, Prodanović-Stankić (2009) identifies several conceptualizations of the HEART, such as HEART IS A CONTAINER OF EMOTIONS, HEART IS A PERSON, and HEART IS THE CENTER OF A PLACE, demonstrating that the heart functions as a locus of emotions, traits, and personal identity. Similar findings have been reported in a number of contrastive studies involving different language pairs, which likewise show that the heart is commonly conceptualized as a center of emotions and inner experience, while also displaying culture-specific patterns (Gutiérrez Pérez 2008; Zhou, Jiang 2020; Almaghlouth, Alotaibi 2024; Adams Mathews 2017). The concept of MIND is likewise structured through ontological metaphors that conceptualize it as a physical entity, most notably THE MIND IS A MACHINE and THE MIND IS A BRITTLE OBJECT, which emphasize efficiency, functioning, and psychological vulnerability (Lakoff, Johnson 2003: 29). Barnden (1997: 325–328) further specifies that conceptual mappings of MIND include MIND AS PHYSICAL SPACE, IDEAS AS (INTERNAL/EXTERNAL) ENTITIES OR OBJECTS, and MIND PARTS AS PERSONS. Finally, MORALITY is also conceptualized through embodied metaphors grounded in experiences of physical well-being, strength, purity, uprightness, and wealth (Lakoff, Johnson 2003: 251). Taken together, these findings suggest that inner experience is commonly structured through source domains such as objects, containers, space, and control-based metaphors, which may likewise be expected to shape the metaphorical conceptualization of SOUL.

However, despite existing research on the metaphorical conceptualization of the soul and related domains, studies examining SOUL in media discourse of English and Serbian remain scarce. The present study aims to contribute to this area by examining the conceptual metaphors underlying this domain in the two languages.

2. METHODOLOGY AND CORPUS

Due to the scope of this research, the analysis is restricted exclusively to the noun *soul* (i.e., *duša*) as the primary carrier of conceptualization, in order to maintain a clear semantic and cognitive focus. All inflectional forms of the nouns *duša* and *soul* were included in the analysis and treated as occurrences of the same lexical item. Lexemes such as *duh* and *spirit* were not included because they represent

different lexical realizations associated with related, but not necessarily identical, semantic fields, and including them would have broadened the subject of research beyond the focus on the nouns *duša* and *soul* as the carriers of the analyzed conceptualization. Derivational forms (e.g., *duševni*, *duhovni*, *soulful*, *soulless*) were also not included in the analysis, as the subject and scope of the research cover exclusively the nominal realization of the *DUŠA/SOUL* concept.

The examples forming our corpus were taken from the online editions of the newspapers *NIN* and *Danas* in Serbian, and *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* in English. Unlike literary, academic, or religious texts, which are tied to specific genres and functions, media texts target a general audience and contribute to the formation of collective conceptual frameworks. These sources were selected for their thematic diversity, covering culture, society, politics, psychology, economics, and religion, and for their transparency, as they generally provide information about authorship and publication date. In addition, some of the newspapers include sections resembling surveys or opinion compilations, where contributions are not attributed to a single author but reflect a range of public responses to particular topics, providing insight into broader societal perspectives rather than individual viewpoints. Due to the scope of the research and the focus on contemporary media discourse, the corpus includes articles published from 2015 to the present. Some articles were republished from the archives, and although originally published earlier, they were included because their republication falls within the 2015 – present timeframe, making them relevant to contemporary language use.

The study has a qualitative character and focuses on the identification of metaphorical expressions, their classification according to the most prominent source domains identified in the corpus, and a description of the observed conceptual mappings. Only the most salient source domains identified in the corpus were included in the analysis. The examples were collected by searching for the target domain and its use in metaphorical expressions, both through the search functions on the newspapers' websites and via Google's advanced search for each selected newspaper within the defined timeframe. Metaphorical expressions were identified using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), which involves analyzing the lexical meaning in context and comparing this meaning with the basic meaning of the lexeme. If the meaning in context differs from the basic meaning but can be understood in relation to it, the expression is categorized as metaphorical (Pragglejaz Group 2007: 3). The total corpus comprises 102 unique examples (53 in Serbian and 49 in English), of which only representative samples are presented in this paper. Below, the most prominent conceptual metaphors of the target domain *SOUL* are presented in small caps, while metaphorical expressions are italicized.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The common metaphors identified in both Serbian and English through the analysis of our corpus are THE SOUL IS A CONTAINER, THE SOUL IS A (VALUABLE) OBJECT/PROPERTY, THE SOUL IS A LIVING BEING (with its subcategories), THE SOUL IS A BURDEN BEARER, and THE SOUL IS A SOURCE OF ENERGY/THE CORE OF IDENTITY. Culture-specific lexical realizations are discussed in the sections that follow.

3.1. Metaphor THE SOUL IS A CONTAINER

In both languages, the conceptual metaphor THE SOUL IS A CONTAINER exhibits a highly productive mapping, whereby the domain of SOUL is structured in terms of the spatial-physical domain of a CONTAINER:

1. „*Duša Evropljana postala je prazna*”, ustvrdiće Žilijen Fren. (Slezović, *Danas*, 28/10/2015)
2. *Duša mi je puna*, a savest čista. (*NIN*, 20/9/2023)
3. [...] *bol i praznina u duši* koje oseća kao veliki prijatelj preminulog nemaju utehu. (*Danas*, 17/2/2019)
4. Vinona Rajder *otvorila dušu* o životu nakon raskida sa Džonijem Depom. (Milosavljević, *Danas*, 29/6/2022)
5. Urbana trulež *se uvlači u dušu*. (Džodri, *NIN*, 17/1/2026)
6. Mislim da smo mi ljudi *u dubini duše*, u bilo kojoj kulturi i u bilo kom okruženju da živimo, svuda isti. (Matković, *Danas*, 23/10/2019)
7. Vernici Boga *i veru svoju nose u duši* i srcu [...] (Protić, *Danas*, 7/2/2026)

As the Serbian examples illustrate, the soul is conceptualized as a container that can be empty or filled with various contents. This conceptualization is reflected in expressions such as *prazna duša*, *duša mi je puna*, *bol i praznina u duši*, or *nositi veru u duši*. The expression *u dubini duše* can further suggest the depth of the container's interior. Furthermore, the soul may be construed as a container that can be opened (*otvoriti dušu o životu nakon raskida*). Notably, this latter realization appears to be culture-specific within the present corpus, as English tends to associate this action with the heart (e.g., *open one's heart*), which indicates a difference in metaphorical conceptualization between the two languages.

Apart from this exception, in the English examples, SOUL is likewise framed as a container with depth, which can be empty, full, or overflowing, and can hold various types of content (e.g., *it hurts deep in my soul*, *touch the depths of the soul*, *emptied his soul*, *fill an empty soul*):

8. It hurts *deep in my soul* that I am seeing my life pass me by and this talent I was given just going to waste. (Kelly, *The Guardian*, 16/7/2022)

9. Whether grievance is just a device to gain business and political advantage, or is something deeper used to *fill an empty soul* [...] (*The New York Times*, 10/4/2025)

10. Well, Carruthers and I talked for hours, and I think the man *emptied his soul* before me. (Comer, *The Atlantic*, 28/5/2022)

11. His fixed grin hides *a soul full of horrors*. (Summerscale, *The Guardian*, 2/10/2022)

12. Gospel, soul, blues, folk ... all show a complaint of *souls overflowing with the bitterest anguish*. (Raman, *The Guardian*, 3/9/2015)

13. If you get close to opera, you *touch the depths of the soul*. (Povoledo, *The New York Times*, 7/6/2024)

14. As he always knew, even as a child, the Cespedosa that *lives in his soul* is slipping away in the real world. (Nieves, *The New York Times*, 12/12/2018)

As can be observed from the examples above, emotions, moral values, and identity-related characteristics are predominantly conceptualized as entities contained within the soul across both languages, reinforcing its metaphorical representation as a container.

3.2. Metaphor THE SOUL IS A (VALUABLE) OBJECT/PROPERTY

The conceptual category THE SOUL IS A (VALUABLE) OBJECT/PROPERTY presents the soul as a valuable item that can be possessed, exchanged, or treated as a commodity. Both languages tend to conceptualize the SOUL as a transferable or manipulable entity. Namely, in Serbian examples, this is observable in expressions such as *prodati dušu*, *izgubiti dušu*, *uzeti dušu*, *povratiti dušu*, or *cena ljudskih duša*, where the soul is conceptualized as an object that can be sold, taken away, monetarily assessed, lost, or regained:

15. Istovremeno je proučavao alhemiju i tada je dobio ideju da piše o Faustu, glavnom liku svog najpoznatijeg romana, čoveku koji je *prodao dušu đavolu* zbog znanja. (Pavlović, *Danas*, 11/3/2023)

16. Remik, kao vampir, na neki način želi da ih sve pridruži svom vampirskom plemenu – u kom će svako od njih doneti nešto svoje, ali će *izgubiti dušu*. (*Danas*, 22/1/2026)

17. Kad-tad će doći i pred svačija vrata i *uzeti* Vam i posao i *dušu* i sve što imate. (*Danas*, 23/2/2026)

18. *Cena ljudskih duša*. (Ikonić, *NIN*, 20/9/2023)

19. *Prodana duša* u kopačkama i štucnama. (Tomić, *NIN*, 20/9/2023)

20. „Psihodelični rituali su bili način *da se povрати duša*”, kaže on. (Koks, *NIN*, 21/9/2024)

In English examples, a similar market logic appears in expressions such as *sell your soul*, *barter his soul*, and *own her soul*, where the soul is treated as a commodity in a transaction or as an object of ownership. Other expressions, including

lost his soul, steal your soul, keep the soul intact, and damaged soul, frame the soul as a precious object that can be lost, stolen, preserved, protected, or damaged:

21. I mean, when you *sell your soul* to television, that's just the way it is. That's college sports. *We've sold our soul* to television. (Scheiber, *The New York Times*, 17/10/2015)

22. [...] stories with heroines “in whom the need to *own her soul* is more imperative than the need to love”. (Biggs, *The Guardian*, 3/6/2023)

23. You know the folk legend: Down at a crossroads, Johnson *bartered his soul* to the devil for mastery of the blues guitar (Garner, *The New York Times*, 17/4/2023)

24. Suburbia doesn't have to *steal your soul* – just ask Barbara and Tom of *The Good Life*. (Sodha, *The Guardian*, 4/6/2023)

25. This labor becomes an origin story, testament to a superhuman ability to *keep the mind keen and the soul intact* after hours of dulling tasks. (Mishan, *The New York Times*, 21/4/2022)

26. *He lost his soul* when he was responsible for his son's death. (Cohen, *The New York Times*, 17/8/2022)

27. After falling for a con artist, I lost trust in the world – but I am anything but a *damaged soul*. (Wood, *The Guardian*, 17/7/2019)

The difference between the two languages lies in nuance. Namely, in the analyzed corpus, some Serbian examples additionally evoke religious or spiritual imagery (*prodao dušu đavolu, povratiti dušu*), whereas several English examples can be associated with economic or individualistic dimensions (e.g., *sell your soul, own her soul, barter his soul*). Nevertheless, in both languages, the soul is consistently represented as a valuable object or form of property whose loss, exchange, or damage implies moral or emotional consequences.

Notably, this conceptualization of the target domain as a valuable object or property can be linked to Lakoff and Johnson's observation that models of inner life frequently treat the self as an object that can be manipulated. It supports their broader metaphor SELF-CONTROL IS OBJECT POSSESSION, wherein aspects of personality or moral character can also be possessed, lost, or even controlled by another entity (Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 272). In a similar way, several examples (particularly 17, 21–24, and 26) in the present corpus conceptualize the soul as something that can be possessed, exchanged, lost, or controlled by another entity.

3.3. Metaphor THE SOUL IS A LIVING BEING

The analysis indicates that in some examples, the soul is construed as an autonomous entity capable of experiencing emotions and engaging in actions. Accordingly, we have broken down the broader conceptual metaphor THE SOUL IS A LIVING BEING into several subcategories. One prominent subcategory is THE SOUL IS A BEING THAT FEELS, in which this domain is presented as an entity possessing feelings

and states characteristic of living beings. In other words, it is frequently construed as an internal experiential and emotional locus. In Serbian examples, this is evident in expressions such as *napaćena duša*, *duša boli*, and *duša pati*, where the soul is attributed the capacity to suffer and experience pain. Similarly, expressions such as *duša žudi* assign the soul desires and longing, characteristic of human beings.

English examples display the same personification, with expressions like *my soul aches for him*, *his soul longs for freedom*, *my soul cries out for indulgence*, and *the soul yearns for meaning*. In some instances, this domain is conceptualized as a living being that can be endangered or harmed, as in *your soul was suffocating* or *the country's soul, wounded as it is*. Across both languages, these patterns of personification are quite similar, indicating a shared conceptual understanding without significant differences in metaphorical realization.

28. O njenom životu znam koliko je bila *napaćena duša*, koliko je bila eksploatisana i koliko su gej ljudi u njoj videli neku utehu. (Miletić, *Danas*, 16/9/2022)

29. Kada *duša pati*, telo boli. (Solujić, *Danas*, 20/4/2017)

30. Od takvog nasilja *duša boli*. (Mitrić, *NIN*, 20/9/2023)

31. I znaju za čim svesna *duša žudi*. (Nježić, *NIN*, 31/12/2024)

32. *My soul aches* for him. (McGreal, *The Guardian*, 29/4/2019)

33. [...] even though he's nearing his death, his heart is still beating and *his soul longs* for freedom. (Phillips, *The Guardian*, 9/7/2017)

34. But the rest of my pandemic-weary *soul cries out* for indulgence. (Clark, *The New York Times*, 11/2/2021)

35. As my Times colleague April Lawson puts it, "meaning" has become the stand-in concept for everything *the soul yearns* for and *seeks*. (Brooks, *The New York Times*, 5/1/2015)

36. That dissonance, that ache, was the signal that *your soul was suffocating* in a space too small for the deeper love you're meant to give and receive. (Uddo, *The New York Times*, 5/12/2025)

37. This is a litmus test for the country's soul, *wounded* as it is, though not yet dead. (McConnell, *The Guardian*, 31/7/2025)

A second subcategory, THE SOUL IS A TRAVELER/MOVING BEING, shows a conceptualization of the soul as a living entity that moves, travels, remains in a place, departs, or returns. In Serbian examples, this is reflected in expressions such as *duša mi se vratila u telo*, *duša je ostala u gornjem sokaku*, *povratiti dušu*, *duša je napustila telo*, and *duša ide gore*, where it is portrayed as an agent capable of leaving a location, remaining in another, or returning. English examples demonstrate a similar conceptualization, with expressions like *I feel my soul return*, *her soul departed*, *my soul left my body*, *you feel the soul go back into a place*, *the person's soul wanders homeless and hungry*, depicting the soul as a being that moves, departs, returns, or wanders:

38. „Kao da mi se *duša vratila* u telo”, kaže Ali, koji predaje nauku u školi. (*Danas*, 23/11/2023)

39. To je u neku ruku i razumljivo, jer njima je, kako sami kažu, *duša ostala* u gornjem sokaku. (Krečković, *Danas*, 30/11/2021)

40. „Psihodelični rituali su bili način da se *povrati duša*”, kaže on. (Koks, *NIN*, 21/9/2024)

41. [...] sledećeg trenutka *duša je*, skupivši poslednju snagu, *napustila telo*”. (Hlevnjuk, *Danas*, 27/3/2022)

42. Pored mnogih pogodnosti za organizam i mozak, Ekadaši postom se postiže da se stigne do Samsare, a u *seobi duša* čovek više ne mora da se rađa i umire na Zemlji. (Jovanović, *NIN*, 20/9/2023)

43. Ovako, kad te spale, *duša* odmah *ide gore*, u nebesa, i čeka *da uđe* u novo telo. (Jovanović, *NIN*, 20/9/2023)

44. “Then I felt *my soul return*,” she said. “I opened my eyes and saw nothing but orange dust.” (Kershner, *The New York Times*, 11/11/2023)

45. I picture her demolished house and feel I am suffocating, because even after *her soul departed* we could not recover her body for a proper burial. (Tantesh, *The Guardian*, 15/8/2024)

46. It’s extremely powerful. If you feel *the soul go back into a place*, you can’t really quantify it in money. (Slawson, *The Guardian*, 18/1/2017)

47. Still oblivious, I tucked into mine only to experience *my soul leave my body* and look down on a lot of people drinking as much fluid as possible. (Paul, *The Guardian*, 19/10/2025)

48. The country’s common practice of ancestor worship, with offerings left at graves and shrines, dictates that if the dead aren’t interred with other ancestors, *the person’s soul wanders* homeless and hungry. (Cave, *The New York Times*, 10/7/2025)

It is important to note that in some instances, these conceptualizations may intersect with broader religious and cultural understandings, so that such expressions could be interpreted metaphorically or, depending on the interpreter, may also be understood as reflecting literal or ontological beliefs.

Within this broader category, we identified further smaller subcategories, such as THE SOUL IS AN AGENT. Here, the SOUL domain is attributed agency and intention, as seen in expressions such as *duša traži da prigrli svoje ludilo*, *my soul refuses to journey*, *duša se suočava sa svojom pravom prirodom*, or *uselila se duša*, reflecting capacities unique to living beings:

49. [...] *duša traži od njega* da prigrli svoje ludilo. (Korbet, *NIN*, 20/9/2023)

50. I don’t know if the lorries bouncing over the speed bumps outside my window distracted my spirit guides but they prove laggardly and *my soul refuses to journey*. (Hill, *The Guardian*, 3/12/2022)

51. Inspirisan mostom Sirat koji u islamskoj tradiciji razdvaja pakao od raja gde se *duša suočava* sa svojom pravom prirodom [...]. (*Danas*, 28/1/2026)

52. Put čoveka u koga se *uselila duša* najvećeg brazilskog fudbalera svih vremena morao je da bude krivudav kao Garinčini driblinzi. (Lovrić, *NIN*, 20/9/2023)

Another less dominant subcategory, THE SOUL IS A VULNERABLE BEING/A BEING IN DANGER, construes the soul as susceptible to harm or moral threat, illustrated by expressions like *duša strada*, *otrov koji truje naše duše*, *odbraniti dušu*, or *save another lost soul*:

53. Što više se čovek prepušta svojim čulima, njegova *duša* sve više *strada* i upravo ta protivteža našla je svoje uprizorenje u liku Dorijana Greja. (*NIN*, 9/10/2025)

54. On je dodao da je toliko nesporazuma, toliko nasilja među nama i verbalnog i fizičkog i mislenog i da je sve to otrov koji *truje naše duše* i stvara pakao u našim dušama, gnev, bes. (*NIN*, 10/3/2025)

55. Radnja filma Saint Maud usredsređena je na duboko religioznu medicinsku sestru (Morfid Klark), čija se želja da *spasi dušu* svoje pacijentkinje pretvara u opasan oblik pobožnosti. (*Danas*, 21/8/2025)

56. „Je li pisanje *odbrana duše?*” pitao se, i mislim da je odgovor na to nalazio ispisujući svaki novi naslov. (Ćuk, *Danas*, 14/8/2019)

57. I am not someone who ever once *saved another lost soul*, at least not by any agreed-upon standard. (Pemberton, *The New York Times*, 20/1/2020)

3.4. Metaphor THE SOUL IS A BURDEN BEARER

In this category, although the conceptual metaphor GUILT IS A BURDEN is primarily recognized in the examples, it also allows for the indirect identification of the metaphor THE SOUL IS A BURDEN BEARER. Specifically, SOUL is framed as the entity that carries or contains this burden, as it is consistently presented as the place in which guilt, responsibility, or emotional weight resides, accumulates, or from which it may be relieved. Accordingly, the category THE SOUL IS A BURDEN BEARER conceptualizes it as an entity capable of carrying various forms of emotional, moral, or existential weight. In Serbian examples, this is evident in expressions such as *mnogo toga mi leži na duši*, *nositi na duši*, and *teško na duši*. Similarly, expressions such as *osloboditi dušu nagomilanog tereta*, *olakšati dušu*, or *duši je lakše kada se isplače*, frame this domain as a bearer of weight that can be removed or alleviated, typically through confession, acknowledgment, or emotional release.

58. Postoji mnogo problema i mnogo toga mi *leži na duši*. (*Danas*, 20/10/2023)

59. Antić je poručio inspiratorima političkog progona da će biti istrajan do kraja u borbi za pravdu i istinu i da će ga, ako mu se nešto desi, *nositi na duši*. (Jeremić, *NIN*, 5/3/2024)

60. Prema kineskoj medicini, telo i um tada zajedno saopštavaju da *duša treba da se oslobodi nagomilanog tereta*. (*Danas*, 1/3/2024)

61. *Duši je lakše kada se isplače*, državi i narodu je teško da preboli ratni poraz, pa bi spas trebalo tražiti u dostojanstvenom ćutanju. (Ljušić, *Danas*, 6/9/2024)

62. To je *greh koji nosimo na duši* i nema izgovora za to što je za ovo izvinjenje bilo potrebno 50 godina. (*Danas*, 26/10/2024)

63. [...] mogu svake nedelje da odu na ispovest, pa sve što im je *teško na duši*, što im je žao, što nisu sigurni ili što se boje, kažu jednoj manje-više pametnoj i blagoj osobi koja ih umiri, uteši, ohrabri i izgrdi. (NIN, 20/9/2023)

In English examples, a comparable metaphorical structure is observed. Expressions such as *this situation weighs on the soul*, *a soul heavy with the unbreakable curse*, and *a soul burdened with mystery and thought* similarly depict the soul as an entity weighed down by negative experiences. In these cases, the target domain in question is represented as a bearer of burdens that may be emotional, moral, or existential in nature.

64. The office, the factory floor, the lab, the corporate park: these are the new haunted houses, spaces where the slow grind of precarity erodes *the soul*, *heavy with the unbreakable curse of casualization*. (Silcox, *The Guardian*, 22/10/2025)

65. This situation *weighs on the soul*. (Harding, *The Guardian*, 22/11/2025)

66. There is a whole deep world of being in your *soul*, *burdened with mystery and thought*. (*The Guardian*, 21/2/2015)

3.5. Metaphor THE SOUL IS A SOURCE OF ENERGY/THE CORE OF IDENTITY

Finally, in this group of examples, we observe the conceptual metaphor THE SOUL IS A SOURCE OF ENERGY/THE CORE OF IDENTITY, in which SOUL is conceptualized both as an internal source of emotional, creative, and spiritual energy, and as the essential core of an individual's or a collective's identity. This conceptualization is reflected in expressions such as *pevati iz dubine duše*, *progovoriti iz duše*, *pomoliti se iz duše*, *raditi iz duše*, and *preneti poruku iz duše kroz ruke*, as well as in English examples such as *pour his entire soul into one painting*, *pour every last drop of their souls into heart-wrenching epics*, *put their soul into publishing*, and *singing from his soul*. In these cases, the soul is represented as a source of energy and authentic expression from which emotions, thoughts, and actions emerge:

67. Šest meseci mu je bilo potrebno da je savlada, a sada je *peva* sa ponosom i *iz dubine duše*. (Pavlović, *Danas*, 28/10/2022)

68. Želeo sam *da progovorim*, jasno, iz srca, *iz duše*, iz prkosa, ali i iz ljubavi. (Karović, NIN, 25/6/2025)

69. Veruje se da se na Arandelovdan nebo otvara za molitve, i da će vam se ispuniti i najveće, najvažnije želje, ako se *pomolite iz duše*, iskreno i sa zahvalnošću. (*Danas*, 21/11/2025)

70. Mi smo *sve radili iz duše*. (Tasić, *Danas*, 23/1/2022)

71. Despite all the despair and suffering he had gone through, he was able to *pour his entire soul into one painting* with no barrier. (Williams, *The New York Times*, 24/4/2017)

72. [...] or stay behind and *pour every last drop of their frustrated, choked-up souls into heart-wrenching, doom-punk epics*. (Dalton, *The Guardian*, 18/3/2015)

73. They really *put their soul into* the publishing of it: the way it's presented, the photographs. (Bromwich, *The Guardian*, 7/12/2019)

74. If you listen to the early albums, he is really *singing from his soul*. (Adams, *The Guardian*, 17/9/2023)

In addition, English examples extend this metaphor to broader collective and abstract entities such as nations, cities, or institutions, as seen in expressions like *the soul of the nation*, *the soul of the city*, *the heart and soul of the story*, or *the soul of the team*. In such cases, the domain is conceptualized as the central, defining essence of a community, institution, or cultural construct which determines its identity and character:

75. I wrote at the time that we're in the battle for *the soul of this nation*. (Cornfield, *The Guardian*, 8/8/2021)

76. They have disrupted livelihoods, displaced residents and damaged part of *the soul of the city*. (*The Guardian*, 4/4/2024)

77. Which books could help me to understand *the soul of the Irish people*? (Malley, *The Guardian*, 8/9/2018)

78. What is *the soul of the Western tradition*? (*The New York Times*, 16/9/2025)

79. After that, it's all about the words and the characters, the heart and *soul of the story*. (Hannah, *The New York Times*, 30/5/2016)

80. The hardest part of all is seeing the gradual loss of the heart and *soul of the community*, the black church. (*The New York Times*, 13/5/2016)

81. What makes college football so special is *the soul of the team*, the guys that have a buy-in to the university and a deep care level. (Taylor, *The New York Times*, 26/10/2022)

While both languages clearly conceptualize *SOUL* as a source of internal energy and authentic expression, the extension of this metaphor to collective entities appears only within the English data of our corpus, whereas Serbian examples in the present corpus remain predominantly centered on individual experience. However, this observation should be interpreted cautiously, as it may reflect corpus-specific distribution rather than a general cross-linguistic difference.

The conducted research also reveals that conceptual metaphors do not operate in isolation, but rather interact to form complex networks, with multiple source domains simultaneously contributing to the structuring of the target domain. For instance, expressions such as *a soul full of sorrow* reflect the overlapping of mappings such as *THE SOUL IS A CONTAINER*, *THE SOUL IS A BURDEN BEARER*, and *THE SOUL IS A VULNERABLE BEING/A BEING IN DANGER*, thereby demonstrating how embodied experience is integrated across several conceptual domains.

It is particularly noteworthy that the patterns identified in the conceptualization of the *soul* closely parallel those described by Lakoff and Johnson in their account of the *SELF*. As the examples in this study demonstrate, the *soul* is frequently conceptualized as a container, a being, or an object, echoing their *SUBJECT-SELF* metaphor, in which *SELF* is understood as a person, object, location, or container

(Lakoff, Johnson 1999: 267–290). This correspondence suggests that the concept of SOUL functions as a conceptual model of the inner self, assuming a role analogous to that of the SELF in Lakoff and Johnson's framework.

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of the analyzed corpus indicate that the metaphorical conceptualization of the target domain SOUL is systematic rather than random, reflecting deeply rooted cognitive patterns. Consistent with the assumptions of conceptual metaphor theory, metaphorical expressions are not merely stylistic ornaments, but reflect the ways in which speakers structure and organize abstract experience (Lakoff, Johnson 2003; Kövecses 2002).

The findings of the present study are also broadly consistent with previous research on the metaphorical conceptualization of both SOUL and related domains. In particular, the predominance of ontological metaphors, such as THE SOUL IS A CONTAINER, THE SOUL IS A LIVING BEING, and THE SOUL IS A (VALUABLE) OBJECT/PROPERTY, further supports the view that the soul is predominantly structured through embodied source domains, paralleling patterns observed in earlier studies of both the soul and related concepts such as HEART, MIND, and SELF.

At the same time, the observed patterns point to a somewhat atypical case within conceptual metaphor research. While conceptual metaphor theory generally assumes that abstract concepts are understood in terms of more concrete and experientially grounded domains, the analysis indicates that the soul is, in some cases, construed through domains that are themselves abstract, yet experientially more accessible, such as THE SOUL IS A BURDEN BEARER and THE SOUL IS A SOURCE OF ENERGY/THE CORE OF IDENTITY.

Finally, the specificities of contemporary media discourse should be taken into account, particularly in the Serbian context, where a considerable portion of newspaper texts consists of adaptations or translations of English-language sources. This makes it difficult to determine with certainty which metaphorical patterns reflect conceptualizations characteristic of Serbian speakers and which may be influenced by English. Such considerations point to promising directions for future research, especially in examining the interaction between potentially universal metaphorical patterns and the influence of media and translated discourse.

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КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЈА ДУШЕ У ЕНГЛЕСКОМ И СРПСКОМ МЕДИЈСКОМ ДИСКУРСУ

Резиме: Рад испитује концептуализацију циљног домена душе у медијском дискурсу енглеског и српског језика, ослањајући се на теоријске оквире когнитивне лингвистике и Теорије појмовних метафора. Полазећи од претпоставке да метафоре представљају основни механизам у концептуализацији апстрактних домена, циљ истраживања јесте идентификација, класификација и интерпретација изворних домена који учествују у метафоричком обликовању појма душе, као и испитивање односа између универзалних и културно специфичних аспеката његове концептуализације у два посматрана језика. Истраживање је засновано на квалитативној упоредној анализи корпуса који обухвата онлајн-издања дневних новина на енглеском и српском језику, као репрезентативан облик савременог медијског дискурса. Такав корпус омогућава увид у доминантне појмовне и вредносне обрасце који обликују језичку репрезентацију апстрактних појмова унутар одређене језичке и културне заједнице. Резултати анализе указују на значајну подударност у избору изворних домена путем којих се циљни домен душе концептуализује у оба језика, што упућује на постојање заједничких појмовних образаца. Истовремено, уочене разлике

испољавају се превасходно у вредносним и културно условљеним нијансама, које се огледају у различитим аспектима метафоричке интерпретације овог појма у анализираном дискурсу. Истраживање такође указује на могући утицај медијског и преводног дискурса на обликовање уочених образаца, што отвара простор за даља истраживања односа између универзалних когнитивних структура и културно посредованих језичких пракси.

Кључне речи: когнитивна лингвистика, појмовна метафора, душа, медијски дискурс, изворни домен, циљни домен, енглески језик, српски језик.