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## **UNIVERSAL METAPHORS AND CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF INFLATION IN ENGLISH AND SERBIAN\*\***

Set in the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this paper compares the conceptualization of inflation in English and Serbian, focusing on universality and cultural variations. The corpus consisted of 34 English and 34 Serbian expressions referring to inflation, excerpted from online articles. Both corpuses had lexical items motivated by the universal metaphors inflation is an animal, a person (with sub-metaphors, an enemy, and supernatural enemy), fire and a disease (with one new sub-metaphor - inflation is a covid virus). Culture-specific differences occurred in the lexical realizations of the inflation is an enemy, which in Serbian reveal a more fatalistic attitude to life than in English. In Serbian, inflation is likened to a supernatural human, vampire or death. The examples from the war domain foreground victimhood, sacrifice and losses, whereas English examples focus on fighting back and conquering inflation. These differences point to divergent values, attitudes and beliefs towards life and inflation inherent to these two speech groups.

*Key words:* conceptual metaphor, universal metaphors, cultural variation, inflation, economic discourse, English, Serbian

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Economics terminology is highly figurative, including concepts like ELASTICITY OF PRICE, LIQUIDITY OF MONEY. Our embodied experience of the physical world and principles from sciences are often projected into abstract economic phenomena to understand and deal with them. *Inflation* denotes ‘a puffing up, a blowing into’ but evolved to signify price increases.<sup>1</sup> Metaphors for

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/inflation>

inflation reflect how people perceive this global issue and how this perception impacts attitudes and actions.

Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003), this paper examines how INFLATION is conceptualized in English and Serbian and identifies similarities and differences in metaphoric expressions. The hypothesis is that the source domains in metaphoric mappings are shared in both languages due to the universality of bodily experience underlying the metaphors, whereas differences in lexical realizations reflect cultural influences. The analysis categorizes linguistic items, compares conceptual domains and explores culture-specific variations.

### *1.1. Corpus and research methodology*

The corpus comprises 34 English and 34 Serbian expressions, excerpted from *Nin*, *Vreme*, and *Politika* (Serbian) and *The Guardian*, *The Economist* and *The Financial Times* (English). Expressions containing the term *inflation* were identified and metaphorical ones extracted. Identical items were omitted as the paper focuses on conceptualization rather than frequency. The data were categorized and analyzed for cross-linguistic similarities and differences.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual metaphor is a key cognitive mechanism through which we understand the world, involving a mapping process where features, structure and logic from a source domain are transferred to a target domain (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Lakoff, 1993; Kövecses, 2002). Evans & Green (2006) note that metaphors highlight certain aspects of the target, while hiding others. In the metaphor ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY, participants are seen as travelers, the argument as the journey, and its development as the route taken. These mappings explain expressions like *cover a lot of ground* or *proceed step by step*. This metaphor emphasizes progression, downplaying confrontation, whereas the metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR foregrounds conflict (e.g., *attack an argument*, *defend a position*, *win a debate*).

Another key feature of metaphors is entailments - elements not explicitly mapped but inferable from the source domain (Filipović Kovačević, 2021). For example, if travelers can get lost or stray from a path, arguers may *get lost in the argument* or *digress* (Evans & Green, 2006).

Many metaphors appear universal across languages because they arise from shared bodily, emotional, and cognitive experience, though they are also shaped by culture (Grady, 1997; Gibbs, 1999; Kövecses, 2003, 2005). For instance, we often feel warmth when physically close to loved ones, giving rise to the metaphor AFFECTION IS WARMTH. Affection is unlikely to be associated with coldness in any culture (Kövecses, 2005).

However, universal does not mean identical. As Kövecses (2010) notes, metaphors develop under dual pressure of embodiment and context, producing both cross-linguistic patterns and culturally specific elaborations. He distinguishes between generic-level metaphors, which tend to be universal, and specific-level metaphors, shaped by culture. For example, while THE ANGRY PERSON IS A PRESSURIZED CONTAINER is a generic-level metaphor stemming from the universal feeling of the anger as a pressure and that of a physical containment, anger is metaphorically located in the belly (Japanese), heart (Zulu), or viewed as a gas (Chinese). Similarly, LOVE IS A JOURNEY involves active decision-making in English, but passivity in Hungarian (Kövecses, 2003).

While source domains like motion or containment are widespread, cultures differ in how they prioritize and lexicalize them (Bogdanović, 2021; Silaški & Đurović, 2010b, 2011). For instance, BULLFIGHTING metaphors are prevalent in Castilian Spanish and the HORSE-RACING metaphors dominate in English (Deignan, Lima, and Lòpez-Mora 1998, cited in Deignan 2003).

### 2.1. Conceptualization of INFLATION: Literature review

By personifying inflation, we can analyze its causes and effects, express emotions about it, which is evident in the examples *Inflation is lowering our standard of living* and *We need to combat inflation* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003: 27) where the underlying metaphor is INFLATION IS AN ENTITY. The INFLATION IS AN ADVERSARY metaphor further highlights its impact as in *Inflation has attacked the foundation of our economy*, whereas in the example *inflation has gone up*, there are two projections: INFLATION IS A SUBSTANCE (an ontological metaphor) and MORE IS UP (an orientational metaphor), reinforcing the concept of inflation as a measurable force (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 33). Vaghi & Venuti (2003) explore movement metaphors, classifying *inflation may dip* as MARKET MOVEMENTS ARE NAUTICAL, noting that INFLATION is conceptualized as a movement independent from human agency.

Fuertes-Olivera (1998) examines the translation of four English metaphors: INFLATION IS AN ORGANISM, A HORSE, A DISEASE, AN ENEMY

highlighting cultural differences in linguistic expression even when the metaphor is the same. For INFLATION IS A HORSE, the direct translation fails, as Spanish lacks the sequence *creep*, *trot*, *canter* and *gallop*, losing the idea of inflation accelerating uncontrollably.

The INFLATION IS A FEROCIOUS ANIMAL metaphor analysis in English yielded 6 subtypes: the ways animals move, look, sound, eat/be fed, attack and are controlled (Silaški and Đurović, 2010a). Silaški (2010) identifies conceptual, cultural and linguistic overlap between English and Serbian in the translation of the collocation *creeping inflation* into the corresponding metaphorical term *puzeća inflacija* (THE BEHAVIOUR OF INFLATION IS THE BEHAVIOUR OF A PERSON) and *galloping inflation* into *galopirajuća inflacija* (INFLATION IS A HORSE). Orčić & Gorčević (2017) similarly find that *creeping*, *galloping* and *spiraling inflation* share the underlying metaphors and syntactic structure.

Berber Sardinha (2012) examined the Brazilian economy metaphors over fifty years, analyzing speeches and media. Key metaphors include: INFLATION IS A BEAST (including DRAGON), LOWERING INFLATION IS A HUNT, and INFLATION IS A DISEASE (A POISON /AN INFECTION).

Hu&Chen (2015) categorized INFLATION metaphors into six domains: FIRE, DISEASE, FEROCIOUS ANIMAL, ENEMY, RACER, and MACHINE, noting some overlapping. The image schema MORE IS UP (*rise*, *increase*, *decline*, *fall*, *high*, *low*) is common but the MORE IS BETTER metaphor does not apply as higher inflation is negative. Hu & Liu (2016) identified mappings from the following domains: FIRE, LIQUIDS, PLANTS, ANIMALS, DISEASE, WARFARE, SPORTS, MECHANICAL or ORIENTATIONAL. Their findings align with Hu&Chen (2015), showing overlapping classifications.

Žanić (1986) analyzed Yugoslav newspaper articles, identifying the following metaphors: INFLATION IS WATER/SEA (JOURNEY BY SEA), A DISEASE (CANCER), A SEDUCTIVE WOMAN, AN UNTAMABLE ANIMAL, COSMIC EVIL (DRAGON) and AN ENEMY. He links these to myths from various cultures, showing that crisis language reflects ancient fears, making modern man feel as powerless as his ancestors.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The corpus analysis confirms the frequent use of the VERTICALITY SCHEMA, which is not analyzed as it is well documented in the literature (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980/2003; Hu & Chen, 2015; White, 2003). Universal metaphors found in both Serbian and English include INFLATION IS AN ANIMAL, A HUMAN BEING, A

DISEASE, FIRE, INFLATION MOVEMENTS ARE PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS, and INFLATION IS AN OBJECT. Subcategories and culture-specific lexical realizations are discussed in the following sections.

### 3.1. *Metaphor: INFLATION IS AN ANIMAL*

Both Serbian and English corpora include examples motivated by the INFLATION IS AN ANIMAL metaphor encompassing the submetaphors INFLATION IS A FEROCIOUS ANIMAL (THAT NEEDS TO BE CONTROLLED OR THAT ATTACKS), A MONSTER/MYTHOLOGICAL BEING, and A BIRD.

The adjective in *runaway inflation* maps the uncontrollable nature of animals onto INFLATION, which also *soars* as a bird, emphasizing speed and ease. The INFLATION IS A BIRD metaphor overlaps with the MORE IS UP and ECONOMIC MOVEMENTS ARE PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS IN THE AIR (Vaghi & Venuti, 2003). An alternative classification is under the INFLATION IS A FEROCIOUS ANIMAL submetaphor – the way animals move (Silaški & Đurović, 2010a), with verbs *to rein* (*obuzdati*, *zauzdati* in the examples 3 and 4<sup>2</sup>) and *calm down* (*smiriti* in 5), reflecting the mapping from the ANIMAL domain and signaling the idea to tame inflation.

*Control* also fits under INFLATION IS A FEROCIOUS ANIMAL THAT NEEDS TO BE CONTROLLED. It is assumed that the proximity of the word *control* (11) to the verb *to rein* (*zauzdati* in 4) will activate the ANIMAL source domain. Hu & Chen (2015) classify *control* under the INFLATION IS A MACHINE, but notice the overlap of the FIRE, DISEASE, ANIMAL or ENEMY domains. The examples (7), (9) and (10) focus on the authorities, their abilities and responsibilities. On the other hand, the examples: *inflation appeared under control* (8), and *it could get out of control* (11) emphasize inflation's unpredictable wild character. Inflation is conceptualized as an animal, whereas governments, presidents or banks are tamers. There are no significant differences between English and Serbian.

1. ... the Federal Reserve's remedies to combat runaway inflation ... (Mattei, The Guardian, 18.06.2022.)

2. As inflation soars even the cheap slice is under pressure... (The Guardian, Ruche et al. 10.02.2022.)

3. ...suočavali su se s nemogućim zadatkom – da obuzdaju inflaciju... (Slavković, S., Nin, 12.1.2022.)

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<sup>2</sup> The numbers refer to sentence numbers as enumerated in the corpus below.

4. ...da će centralne banke krenuti da zauzdavaju inflaciju...(Katić, Politika 26.02.2022)

5. Visoka inflacija nije specifičnost Srbije...da bi se smirila,...(Janjatović, Nin 20.04.2022.)

6. ... kako bi došlo do smirivanja inflacije... (Đaković, Nin, 13.10.2021.)

7. ...the president has “a lot” of control over inflation... (The Economist, 19.06.2022.).

8. ... inflation appeared under control (FT, Giles, 23.06.2022.)

9. Bank of England to keep inflation under control... (The Economist, 22.06.2022)

10. Nosioći monetarne vlasti...ako bi gledali samo šta je glavni zadatak, a to je držati inflaciju pod kontrolom... (Đaković, Nin, 13.10.2021.)

11. ... ona bi se...mogla oteti kontroli (Katić, Politika 26.02.2022)

Žanić (1986: 178, 179) discusses metaphors of devouring: inflation is *insatiable* and *a dragon devouring everything*. In this corpus, inflation is likened to a ravenous beast *eating away wage increases, income or pensions* (14), emphasizing its ruinous effects and the futility of government measures. This image taps into the mythological images of dragons and swallowing “the most ancient symbol of death and destruction” (Bakhtin, 1984: 325), underscoring inflation’s uncontrollable, fatal nature.

12. ... high inflation is eating into people’s income. (The Economist, 22.06.2022.)

13. Higher inflation is eating away at wage increases... (Mattei, The Guardian, 18.06.2022.)

14. ... da inflacija “jede” penzije... (Marković, Vreme, 24.06.2022.)

The sinister aspect of an animal hiding to attack is transferred to inflation in (15), where it *lurks in the shadows*. This fits the INFLATION IS A FEROCIOUS ANIMAL THAT ATTACKS sub-metaphor (Silaški & Đurović, 2010a) and the INFLATION IS A MONSTER metaphor. In Serbian, this monstrous aspect is emphasized with the word *bauk*, a culture-specific word similar to *ogre* and *goblin*.

15. After decades lurking in the shadows, inflation is back. (The Guardian, Ruche et al. 10.02. 2022.)

16. Bauk inflacije (Kostić S., Vreme, 17.03.2022.)

17. Bauk inflacije uzdrmao svet (Đaković P., Nin, 14.07.2021.)

### 3.2. Metaphor: INFLATION IS A HUMAN BEING

Several lexical items are motivated by the INFLATION IS HUMAN metaphors. In (18), STUBBORNNESS, a human trait, is mapped onto the INFLATION which is like a defiant child. The idiom *inflation is staring us in the face*, reflects this defiance. In Serbian, inflation *takes over* (19) or *does not care* (20) about solutions and *takes money out of pockets* (21), emphasizing helplessness and passivity of people and authorities.

18. ... real social distress, stubbornly high inflation and ... stare us in the face... (Hutton, The Guardian, 19.06.2022.)

19. Kada inflacija uzme stvari pod svoje, ... (Đukić, Nin, 02.02.2022. br 3710)

20. ... na pouzdanim modelima za koje inflacija baš ne haje. (Katić, Politika, 14.7.2021.)

21. ... inflacija je skriveni porez koji vam svaki dan uzima novac iz džepa. (Janjatović D., Nin, 20.04.2022.)

22. The US is wrestling with rates of inflation... (Ruche, The Guardian, 22.06.2022.)

The example (22), motivated by THE INFLATION IS AN ADVERSARY metaphor, draws from the SPORTS domain, personifying the US and INFLATION as wrestlers. The skill to beat inflation is likened to a wrestler's ability to anticipate the adversary's moves. Although SPORTS metaphors do not occur here, they are common in Serbian economic discourse (Bogdanović, 2021). Žanić (1986) connects wrestling with the myths of Heracles and the local hero Marko Kraljević suggesting that dramatic events often evoke poetic, epic, emotionally charged language. Therefore, even English examples could be connected with Biblical and mythical battles and not only sports.

#### 3.2.1. Metaphor: INFLATION IS AN ENEMY

Both languages draw on the WAR domain, for INFLATION IS AN ENEMY metaphor with the verbs to *conquer*, *fight*, *defeat* and *combat*. In (28), the whole country is defeated, at the mercy of the inflation-conqueror. An additional mapping comes from the NATURE domain as inflation is also *a wave*, an unstoppable force of nature. Furthermore, inflation is called *a shared public enemy* and *public enemy number one* in English. The adjectives *public* and *shared* imply

that although the president is the commander, everyone is expected to take action in this fight.

Serbian words *fight* (*borba*), *breaking* (*slamanje*) and *to charge* (*juriš*) come from the WAR domain. Serbian citizens are conceptualized as soldiers but also as casualties, victims and collateral damage as *some will not survive* (31), or could *perish* (33) and others *will charge at the inflation* (31). Serbian focuses more on sacrifice, death and annihilating effects of inflation, and English on taking action.

23. By portraying inflation as a shared public enemy whose defeat will... (Mattei, The Guardian, 18.06.2022.)

24. ... factor in conquering inflation before covid-19. (The Economist, 19.06.2022.)

25. Public enemy number one (The Economist, 19.06.2022.)

26. ... Joe Biden says that fighting inflation is his top economic priority... (The Economist, 19.06.2022.)

27. ... central banks are serious about defeating inflation. (FT, Giles, 23.06.2022.)

28. ...Federal Reserve's remedies to combat runaway inflation "will cause some pain". (Mattei, The Guardian, 18.06.2022)

29. The global wave of inflation has brought Pakistan to its knees. (The Guardian, Ruche et al. 10.06.2022.)

30. ... brzo i uspešno slamanje hiperinflacije... (Đukić P., Nin, 02.02.2022.)

31. ... deo neće preživeti a drugi - juriš na inflaciju. (Drakulić, Nin, 01.12. 2021.)

32. ...Federalne rezerve se spremaju za borbu sa visokom inflacijom... (Milošević, Vreme, 14.04.2022.)

33. Ko bi mogao nastradati ako centralne banke budu primorane da u borbi sa inflacijom povećaju kamatne stope. (Đaković, Nin, 13.10.2021.)

34. ... što bi njen osnovni alat u borbi sa inflacijom... (Marković, Vreme 19.05.2022.)

### 3.2.2. Metaphor: INFLATION IS A SUPERNATURAL ENEMY

Three examples in Serbian refer to supernatural or mythical beings. In (35), inflation *rushes at a granny like death*, the underlying metaphors are INFLATION IS AN ENEMY (*rushes* is from WAR domain), DEATH IS A PERSON, i.e.,



AN ENEMY, emphasizing the inevitable severe impact on retirees. In (36), inflation is portrayed as the ruler of a dark empire with the word *vilayet*<sup>3</sup>, evoking folk imagery of the Ottoman rule and accentuating the fatality of inflation. Inflation also *turned into a vampire*, triggering fear of supernatural evil. It becomes a mythical force from beyond this world threatening human existence. These examples may signal a passive cultural attitude toward inflation, echoing themes of victimhood and sacrifice in Serbian mentality (Đerić, 2002).

35. Navalila inflacija kao smrt na babu. (Jevtović N., Nin, 16.03.2022.)

36. ... u tamnom vilajetu bezizlazne hiperinflacije... (Đukić, Nin, 02.02.2022.)

37. Inflacija koja se već povampirila zbog ... (Petrović, B, Vreme, 17.03.2022.)

The INFLATION IS A HUMAN metaphor in both languages underscores the severity of inflation. INFLATION IS AN ENEMY/ADVERSARY metaphor “justifies political and economic actions on the part of our government: declaring war on inflation, setting targets, calling for sacrifices...” (Lakoff & Johnson 1980/2003:35).

### 3.3. *Metaphor: INFLATION IS A DISEASE (EPIDEMIC, VIRUS)*

The English corpus includes well-structured metaphors with multiple mappings from the HEALTH and MEDICINE domains: INFLATION→ DISEASE, PEOPLE and COUNTRIES→ PATIENTS, AUTHORITIES→ DOCTORS, SOLUTIONS→ REMEDIES. Americans and Japan are patients who *suffered from* inflation, policymakers - incompetent physicians who *misdiagnose inflation*. By likening themselves to the doctors who administer *remedies* causing pain to *ease* the symptom, Federal reserve seem to be trying to justify their decisions and prepare people for the financial pains, i.e., losses. Likening themselves to medical professionals makes the unpopular measures sound acceptable.

In Serbian, the focus is on the severity of the disease. Inflation is a *disorder* (43), a *plague* (44) and *Covid virus* (45). In (46), people own possessions that are *not resistant to inflation*. A possession is personified and becomes particularly susceptible to inflation.

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<sup>3</sup> *Vilayet* denoted an administrative region in the Ottoman empire.

38. The Federal Reserve says its remedies for inflation ‘will cause pain’... (Mattei, The Guardian, 18.06.2022.)

39. ... those who lived through the double-digit inflation suffered... (The Guardian, Ruche et al. 10.02.2022.)

40. Japan has long suffered from too-low inflation... (The Economist, 20.06.2022.)

41. Complacency led policymakers to misdiagnose inflation (FT, Giles, 23.06.2022.)

42. Easing inflation will disproportionately ... (Mattei, The Guardian, 18.06.2022.)

43. To je poremećaj koji vodi ka gubicima...(Đukić, Nin, 02.02.2022.)

44. ... opasnost od gladi, inflacije, rata, nuklearne kataklizme i ostalih pošasti...(Kesić i dr., Nin, 08.06.2022.)

45. ...spore oko toga da li će jednu pošast – kovid, zameniti druga – inflacija. (Đaković, Nin, 14.07.2021.)

46. ...posedujući imovinu koja nije otporna na inflaciju. (Marković, Vreme 19.05.2022.)

This analysis confirms that INFLATION IS A DISEASE is productive in both languages (Hu& Chen, 2015; Žanić, 1986), with no differences between English and Serbian in conceptualization and lexicalization. The findings align with Silaški and Đurović (2010b), who identified multiple mappings with no culture-specific differences for the ECONOMY IS A SICK PERSON metaphor.

A novel sub-metaphor, INFLATION IS A COVID VIRUS, reflects the virus’s rapid global spread and severity, mirroring the INFLATION IS CANCER (Žanić, 1986), which symbolized the 80s plague. The shift from cancer to Covid reinforces the universality of the INFLATION IS A DISEASE metaphor. Though this example is found only in the Serbian corpus, a Google search shows similar comparisons in English, indicating no significant differences between the two languages.

### 3.4. Metaphor: INFLATION IS FIRE

Economic problems are often likened to natural disasters in both languages (Negro, 2010; Hu&Chen, 2015; Silaški&Đurović, 2017). In Serbian corpus, the INFLATION IS FIRE metaphor is prevalent, while in English only *fuel inflation* appears. *Fuel* can be linked to the FIRE and the INFLATION IS A MACHINE metaphor (Hu & Chen, 2015; Hu & Liu, 2016), potentially triggering both domains depending on the reader's interpretation.

In Serbian, the government *extinguishes the inflationary fire with gasoline* (47) and *adds fuel to the fire of inflation from a helicopter* (49), worsening the situation. This example likely refers to *helicopter drop* or *helicopter money* – a concept attributed to Milton Friedman (Ganti, 2021) denoting monetary stimulus. While likening inflation to fire “underscores the unpredictable and uncontrollable character” (Silaški & Đurović, 2017: 140) of inflation, the expansion of this metaphor highlights the incompetence of authorities, who are recklessly *playing with fire* (48) and *risk flaring-up inflation* (50). Example (51), where *inflation is not quieting down*, is classified under the FIRE metaphor as in Serbian, where *quiet down* refers to fires, though it could also link to the WEATHER and the MUSIC domain.

47. Inflatorni požar vlast gasi benzinom (Đukić, Nin, 02.02.2022. br 3710)

48. Sadašnja dešavanja u vezi sa inflacijom, kao svojevrsna igra vatrom... (Đukić, Nin, 02.02.2022. br 3710)

49. Država iz „helikoptera“ doliva ulje na vatru inflacije (Petrović, Nin, 02.03.2022, br 3714)

50. ...nastavkom emisije novca rizikuju razbuktavanje inflacije. (Petrović, Vreme, 17.03.2022. broj 1628).

51. ...,inflacija se ni u svetu ni u Srbiji ne stišava ... (Marković, Vreme 17.03.2022. br. 1628)

52. ... fiscal stimulus that will fuel inflation... (Strauss, FT, 14.06.2022.)

### 3.5. Metaphor: INFLATION MOVEMENTS ARE PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS

INFLATION is often structured in terms of MOVEMENT, conceptualized as an object or person moving. INFLATION MOVEMENTS ARE PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS, as a submetaphor of the generic-level metaphor MARKET MOVEMENTS ARE PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS (Vaghi & Venuti, 2003), motivates the lexical items *fastest pace* and *pace was slowing, slow down, accelerated, trail and lag* and in Serbian

*ubrzava* (accelerate 62), *ubrzavanje* (acceleration 61). These examples provide an additional mapping of SPEED onto inflation's movement, where speeding up is negative and slowing down is positive. Hu & Chen (2015) classify *pace* and *lag* under the SPORTS domain and *accelerate* under the MECHANICAL domain, but Vaghi & Venuti (2003) classify *pace* as MARKET MOVEMENTS ARE WAYS OF MOVING ON THE GROUND. The word *pace* is here used neutrally, leaving inflation's conceptualization unclear—whether as a person, animal, or object.

The verb *climb* adds the upward schema and is classified as MARKET MOVEMENTS ARE WAYS OF MOVING ON THE GROUND (Vaghi & Venuti, 2003), but it is unclear whether inflation is a person or an animal. The expression *inflation was coming*, implies a threat but it is unclear whether INFLATION is a PERSON/ENEMY, a STORM/FIRE.

Finally, INFLATION is a ship *brought to calm waters* (63). The mapping comes from MOVEMENT and SAILING. INFLATION is now stable, somewhere in a port, protected from the winds of the economy. The entailment is that the captain i.e., authorities brought it there, which signals their competence.

53. US inflation hit its fastest pace since 1982... (The Guardian, Ruche et al. 10.02.2022.)

54. ... suggest the pace of inflation was slowing... (Ruche, The Guardian, 12.04.2022.)

55. ...to slow down inflation... (Strauss, FT, 14.06.2022.)

56. ...inflation accelerated at the end... (The Guardian, Ruche et al. 10.02.2022.)

57. ... large economies where inflation trails behind... (The Economist, 20.06.2022.)

58. ... wages are still lagging behind inflation. (Strauss, FT, 14.06.2022.)

59. US inflation climbed to 8.5% in March...(Ruche, The Guardian, 12.04.2022.)

60. You were one of the people to warn that inflation was coming. (Strauss, FT, 14.06.2022.)

61. Inflacija nije krenula ...njeno ubrzavanje je počelo... (Katić, Politika, 21.05.2022.)

62. ... inflacija nije zanemarljiva... i da ubrzava. (Jevtović N., Nin, 16.03.2022.)

63. Inflacija je ...davno uvodena u mirne vode ... (Đaković Nin, 13.10.2021.)

### 3.6. *Metaphor: INFLATION IS AN OBJECT*

The generic-level metaphor INFLATION IS AN OBJECT encompasses the domain of FOOD and IMPORTED PRODUCTS. In (64), INFLATION is conceptualized as a car or another metal surface—*denting* a living standard which is left damaged after the blow. This item is vague regarding the domain and could also be classified as the INFLATION IS A MACHINE metaphor (Hu & Chen, 2015), but what is highlighted is the damage made.

64. ...foreign correspondents report on how inflation is denting living standards (The Guardian, Ruche et al. 10.02.2022)

#### 3.6.1. *Metaphor: INFLATION IS FOOD*

The INFLATION IS FOOD metaphor appears only in the English corpus. This expression plays on the idiom *to take a bite out of something* (to reduce something) but here suggests inflation's global spread, downplaying U.S. responsibility. The journalist extends the metaphor (66) to challenge the president, as not all countries are "full" of inflation, possibly hinting at a tirade. This seems to be a novel, one-shot metaphor. (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, cited in Bogdanović 2021).

65. Every country in the world is getting a big bite and piece of this inflation... (The Economist, 20.06.2022.)

66. But not everywhere has its mouth full of inflation. (The Economist, 20.06.2022.)

#### 3.6.2. *Metaphor: INFLATION IS AN IMPORTED PRODUCT*

Inflation is conceived as IMPORTED GOODS, which are typically those a country does not have but needs. This metaphor hides this aspect, highlighting that inflation came from somewhere else, focusing on the global aspect of this phenomenon that spreads across borders.

67. Inflation was largely imported into the eurozone... (Strauss, FT, 14.06.2022.)

68. Visoka inflacija ... je najvećim delom uvezena...(Janjatović, Nin 20.04.2022.)

#### 4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis confirms the hypothesis, showing universal metaphors, culture-specific differences, and new INFLATION metaphors. The conceptual bases of INFLATION in Serbian and English overlap. Both languages use universal metaphors like INFLATION IS AN ANIMAL, A PERSON (with sub-metaphors, INFLATION IS AN ENEMY, and SUPERNATURAL ENEMY), A DISEASE, and FIRE. We also identified one new sub-metaphor, INFLATION IS A COVID VIRUS, and two new metaphors: INFLATION MOVEMENTS ARE PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS, classified under the generic-level ECONOMIC MOVEMENTS ARE PHYSICAL MOVEMENTS metaphor and a novel, possibly a one-shot metaphor - INFLATION IS FOOD. The shared metaphors suggest their universality, supporting the cognitive linguistics premise that they are embedded in our cognition and stem from the universal physical experience. People across cultures use familiar domains (e.g., animals and fire) to conceptualize abstract threats like inflation.

The analysis reveals an asymmetry in mappings or submetaphors. The SPORTS and FOOD domains appear only in English, while SUPERNATURAL, SAILING and PREVENTIVE CARE domains are specific to Serbian. The FIRE domain appears more frequently in Serbian. As the literature confirms the frequent use of SAILING metaphors in English, and the SPORTS metaphors in Serbian, these likely reflect the limited scope of the corpus rather than cultural differences.

This research confirms that cognition and culture are inseparable. While some lexical differences may be incidental, Serbian examples reflect a more fatalistic outlook both in universal metaphors like INFLATION IS AN ENEMY and in metaphors specific to Serbian corpus portraying inflation as SUPERNATURAL HUMAN, VAMPIRE or DEATH. These differences suggest distinct cultural attitudes and beliefs, reinforcing the link between culture, conceptualization, and lexicalization. Serbian examples foreground victimhood, sacrifice and losses and English fighting back and conquering inflation, pointing to divergent values, attitudes and beliefs towards life and INFLATION inherent to these two speech groups.

The results should be taken tentatively due to limited data and to the researcher subjectivity (Kövecses, 2011). Future studies might focus on vague domains or compound metaphors using Primary Metaphor Theory or conceptual blending. Experimental research where participants would say which image/domain is triggered and metaphor cluster analysis might also be insightful.

Tamara Verežan

UNIVERZALNE METAFORE I KULTURNE VARIJACIJE U KONCEPTUALIZACIJI INFLACIJE U  
ENGLESKOM I SRPSKOM JEZIKU

Rad se bavi konceptualizacijom inflacije u engleskom i srpskom kroz prizmu Teorije pojmovne metafore (Lakof i Džonson, 1980/2003). Cilj je identifikacija univerzalnih i kulturološki specifičnih metafora koje se koriste za opis inflacije i ispitivanje uticaja kulturnih vrednosti na njihovu upotrebu. Polazna hipoteza je da su izvorni domeni metafora isti u oba jezika zbog univerzalnog ljudskog iskustva, dok se razlike očekuju u jezičkoj realizaciji zbog kulturoloških specifičnosti. Korpus su činila 34 engleska i 34 srpska izraza iz novinskih članaka. Identifikovani su svi slučajevi reči *inflacija*, zatim su izolovani metaforički izrazi koji su klasifikovani prema izvornom domenu i utvrđene sličnosti i razlike između engleskog i srpskog korpusa. Oba jezika koriste slične osnovne pojmovne metafore za inflaciju (INFLACIJA JE NEPRIJATELJ, BOLEST, VATRA, ŽIVOTINJA). Inflacija je nešto što treba kontrolisati, pobediti ili izlečiti. Pojavljuje se i nova podmetafora INFLACIJA JE KOVID VIRUS kao varijanta metafore INFLACIJA JE BOLEST. Ipak leksička realizacija i implikacije metafora pokazuju značajne kulturološke razlike. Engleski diskurs češće uključuje izraze koji naglašavaju strategije rešavanja problema (npr. *defeating, controlling inflation*), dok srpski naginje pesimističnijem tonu i prikazuje inflaciju kao silu protiv koje je teško boriti se (npr. *neki neće preživeti*). Iako oba jezika koriste bolest kao metaforu, engleski jezik inflaciju vidi kao izlečivo stanje, dok srpski naglašava njen destruktivni efekat (npr. *kuga, širi se kao virus*). U engleskom su građani i vlast aktivni učesnici (npr. *remedies for inflation, treating inflation*), dok su u srpskom pasivni trpioci (npr. *inflacija odnosi plate, ljudi neće preživeti*), što odražava različite stavove prema ekonomskoj odgovornosti. Metafore na srpskom inflaciju prikazuju kao demonsko, mitsko biće (npr. *navalila kao smrt, povampirila se*), dok engleski ne koristi ovakve izraze, što može odražavati dublju kulturološku sklonost srpskog jezika ka mitologizaciji i doživljaju ekonomske krize kao nečeg natprirodnog i neizbežnog. Istraživanje potvrđuje univerzalnost pojmovnih metafora, ali i značaj kulture u oblikovanju jezika i percepcije ekonomskih fenomena. Srpski pokazuje tendenciju ka pesimističkim i fatalističkim metaforama, dok engleski preferira proaktivni pristup inflaciji.

Ključne reči: pojmovna metafora, univerzalne metafore, kulturološke varijacije, inflacija, ekonomski diskurs, engleski, srpska

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