

# The style of Serbian media (2010–2020) — the language of the crisis

*D. Stanojević, L. Mirkov*

University of Belgrade,  
165, Jove Ilica, Belgrade, 11000, Republic of Serbia

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The societal crisis' influence on the crisis of the language in contemporary Serbian journalism is prevailing. Words have been increasingly framed into inappropriate content. Homonyms are gradually becoming the only way to debate and give second opinions. Globalizing vocabulary with fashionable phraseology, manipulative rhetoric and the artificial realignment of language serve as the basis of rhetorical and stylistic research presented in this work. Casual populist political speeches and sensationalistic topics in Serbia are in the centre of events, even though they are easily forgotten. An apparent lack of creativity in language results in the glorification of a globalizing rhetorical model. This leads to a sort of recycling of language patterns and a pathetic usage of metaphors in everyday life, hence the apparent emergence of a new kind of sensationalism. Different linguistic matrices obsessively repeat themselves in the same rhetorical frame. Therefore, the language of journalists is increasingly reduced to the form and the form is reduced to the void. In this article, the analysis of the contemporary use of stylistic knowledge by media professionals will be conducted within a sample of one year of broadcasts during 2019–2020, prior to the pandemic. The authors explain the methodology of the research by describing the theoretical approach and the methods used to substantiate the hypothesis. The research aims to show the gradual change of media language during the current professional, economic and moral crises. A vast majority of media have a common inherited loss of truly free expression. Instead of free relations, a plethora of excessive self-censorship and hidden advocacies and connections is being extended. This appears to be a certain eternity or bad infinity of the shadows in the media.

*Keywords:* media, stylistics, media language, Serbia, sensationalism.

## Problem statement

The context of contemporary media in Serbia is, undoubtedly, one of crisis (both moral and professional). Media professionals often give excuses as to why there is deterioration in their style of expression. For them, there are many kinds of crises, both material and moral. However, the impact of the crisis in contemporary media language remains obvious. Words have been, increasingly, given inappropriate content [Radovanović 2003:166].

This work will provide insights into the language of the crisis as seen in content from broadcasting media in Serbia in 2019–2020, prior to the pandemic. The illusion of many choices and programs to enjoy on broadcasting media is not supported with the language used in the media. On the contrary, the language unveils that the crisis is rooted deeper in the media system itself.

The main hypothesis of this article is that the media content in broadcasting media is presented with poor language choices and with no creativity. Some of the reasons to support stating this hypothesis are the apparent cuts in investing, the moral crisis resulting from the economic crisis, and the fact that the media is an important part of everyday life in Serbia, which encourages the less educated and professional to become part of the media business.

Homonyms are gradually becoming the only way to debate and give second opinions. Globalizing vocabulary with fashionable phraseology, manipulative rhetoric and artificial realignment of language prevail. Globalizing vocabulary consists of wordings made from the English language and phrasing about global issues in a vague, sensationalistic fashion. Casual populist political speeches and blatant topics become the centre of events, even though (or maybe just because) they are easily forgotten. An apparent lack of creativity in language causes the glorification of a globalizing rhetorical model. This leads to a sort of recycling of the language patterns and pathetic metaphors in everyday life, hence the apparent emergence of a new kind of sensationalism in the media. Different linguistic matrices obsessively repeat themselves in the same rhetorical frame. Therefore, the language of journalists is increasingly reduced to the form and the form is reduced to the void.

The purpose of this research is to deconstruct the language of the media so that the style of media expression can be traced within the language of the crisis. The time frame for the analysis has been set as a marked period prior to the pandemic, which is a unique set of events that would probably disrupt the results of the research towards issues considering the virus. This research aims to show the language of everyday crises. The examination period of one year has been chosen as it provides a sufficient time frame to gather a representative sample of broadcasts in order to determine how the media use the style of expression when portraying the image of everyday life.

Simplified language and a lack of morals paralyzes and obstructs the media's free choice when it comes to selecting topics to present or broadcast. Alas, the choice always seems to be given from somewhere above. Therefore, the specter of potential or actual censorship hovers over contemporary Serbian journalism. Journalists gradually become villains who are trapped in the infinite maze of irreversible servitude and lack reliable, independent sources.

Broadcast media have been shown to be the best mirror of the media language due to several aspects. First, broadcast media are the most used media (based on independent research, the average Serbian citizen watches TV 4–8 hours every day). Second, broadcast media are more spontaneous, not only due to the nature of live broadcasts but also in talk-shows and other pre-recorded formats. Third, the influence of the spoken word is different from the influence of the written word. The media are therefore seen as fluid, flaky, or unset — in other words, not a safe pillar to stand on.

The scientific goal of this work is to determine if journalism is losing its role as the protector of public interest. Media language has become an eristic tool in the service of falsely defending some higher values. The abundance of online media also seems to cause a rapid decline of standards and values in regards to proper media coverage. Has broadcast media stopped trying?

Within this article, the answer to the question posed above is provided in several steps. First, the context of the media system and the media practice in Serbia is explained briefly so that the language analysis can be understood. Then, the authors explain the

methodology of the research by describing the theoretical approach and the methods used to prove the hypothesis, which is followed by a presentation of the research results. A debate regarding the results is given under several topics — the authors provide examples of the concepts of collective tautology, self-presentation in language, concepts of simulated authorship and contemporary rhapsody. The conclusion further substantiates the hypothesis, which is that the language of the media is the language of the crisis because it gives no motion, creativity, nor hope.

## Background of the matter

If we take into consideration the fact that journalism is ubiquitous (since everyone can enjoy media just by a click of the remote or of the computer mouse, or even just by a touch on the smartphone), the true influence of the media in contemporary life remains untouched. Therefore, the area of media stylistics becomes the most important area of media research. In theory, media stylistics gives rise to concepts of normativity and, in practice, it explores and investigates the reality of media language.

Language itself is a very stable carrier of the values within a society over time and the media are the chief transmitters of language. The influence of the media remains abstract because it relies on ideas (such as prosperity, unity, happiness, etc...). However, the media also portray themselves as a deity — they have a presence that is total, but unseen, as if it were divine. The ethical dimension of the media is directly influenced by the style used, so it is fairly easy to see how a regression in style may decline and, eventually, decay.

Serbian media have been going through the painful process of changing ownership — transition from the public sector to the private sector. Some media are still struggling as nationalized media, even though the legal tendency is to make any media free on the market. The public service is still not privatized on the national level; however, the TV station *Studio B* that used to be the public service of the capital has become privately owned and has served as a political stage for authorities ever since [Milivojević 2015]. The same practice is occurring in almost all local media that is transferred from public to private ownership. When it comes to printed media, the oldest daily newspaper *Politika* has not had a resolution of ownership yet and remains in the public domain. The rest of the print media is largely sold to foreign media chains and there is now an obvious lack of media quality (as evidenced by the shutting down of the documentary genre, the rise of a new kind of sensationalist headlines, and simplified language, e. g., the weekly *NIN* — [Mirkov 2015]). The paradox of the new ownership is that the privately owned media have less money to work with than when they were on a public budget [Kleut et al. 2018]. The media are left on their own and are expected to perform the difficult task of turning a profit. Click-bait headlines are to be expected even on the web sites of the more analytical/fact-based media, which are far from tabloids. The language of political journalism and tabloid language have been merged in the objective media. It has been easier for media professionals to dive into a political style of expression and everything that goes with it than to derive a new wave of professional language that would be more compatible with the new reality.

Defamiliarization (Russ. *остранение*) is a term coined by V. B. Shklovsky to define new perspectives in style. It means that new dimensions can be found in words, which can help expand one's understanding of the world, since people use language "beyond meaning" [Shklovski 2015]. The idea of defamiliarization is to make expressions unexpected

and unusual, so that the readers prolong their perception of the text. The author's task is to disturb the routine [Shklovski 1969]. In a similar tone, Roman Jakobson claimed that the word is "fundamental and self-sufficient" since the author chooses how to speak to the public: it means that content is not the most important, but rather the form in which it is said [Jacobson 1978]. Today's theorists acknowledge that both the grammar within the sentence and words chosen for it strongly influence the understanding of what is said; the words chosen to portray an event or a person may lead to a "biased description" [Van Dijk 1988: 4]. Style of expression in journalism is strictly defined just so there would be fewer opportunities for biased reporting. However, the practice is often varied, based on adjustment to many factors of the world the media functions in.

The recipients lose trust in the sensational media, but also tend to trust those media that stay within the language bubble of (expected) stereotypes. The expectation horizon [Jauss 1978] limits the possibility of the audience to comprehend the complexity of the real world unless the media provides an image of the world that is well put — simplified enough, but still explicable. Some of the broadcast programs still have that ability — observations of *Insider* by Brankica Stanković, *Utisak Nedelje* by Olja Bečković, works of columnists Teofil Pančić, Svetislav Basara, Draža Petrović, talk-shows of Gorislav Papić, and others, give more insight to the image of the world. However, they may be considered to be exceptions to the rule.

### Description of the research methodology — Vocabulary of crisis

In this work, the theoretical analysis of the use of stylistic knowledge by media professionals is conducted, but also shown with the examples resulting from researching one year of broadcast media in Serbia during 2019–2020, prior to the pandemic. The research aims to explain how gradually media language changes in times of professional, economic and moral crises. Also, it will show examples that were seen in the media, through stylistic analysis.

Contemporary journalism is in crisis because it is in a state of timeless levitation resulting from the postmodern feelings of being lost — of media, society and individuals due to the lack of an ethical balance. The vocabulary of the media gives many realistic metaphors (such as *debate, struggle, attack, defend, disease, renewal, change, reforms, progress, growth, extraordinary situations, conquest, the right to self-determination, agreements, bankruptcy*, the pleonastic phrase *threat of danger, damage, help, ready to assist, aid...*). These wordings become a rhetorical tool that indicate a certain process. Based on the words taken from political discourse, the media provides ideas of a possible advancement which never manifest. In fact, it is more probable to have a kind of contrast to *the highest good* [Aristotle 2003: 5] in the state. Rhetorical decline is often an ethical decline.

If true media dialogue is born in the presence of ethics, then the fact of the absence of the elite, and the rise of party authorities, speaks to the manipulative prevalence of contemporary journalism which refers to the *party authorities* as elite. The elite are, in fact, supposed to respect a series of intellectual and moral standards. Thus, paradoxically, society shows a lack of real monitoring vitality and a continuation of the ongoing professional, rhetorical and ethical crisis.

Journalism acts in particular moments of time and space. Recipients, by definition, have an abstract faith in the objectivity of reporting [Kleut et al. 2018]. The crisis today

is, indeed, a profound one since media objectivity is lacking, which is evident in the language. Media critics would rather show a certain disappointment rather than a belief in the power of reversal [Gordić Petković 2019]. A journalistic text in the traditional sense should place the emphasis on respecting facts as an undisputed property of reality and its communicability with the outer world. Now, the faith in overcoming the crisis in journalism is placed in the individual journalist who demonstrates an outstanding level of professional and civic courage [Kljajić and Nedeljković 2015]. Civil courage is justified by the existence of morality in the new limits, set by the tabloids. The metaphor of brave Serbian journalist being a Prometheus is not only because of the “fire” he/she brings, but also because of the possible suffering due to the job. In circumstances like this, it is not a surprise that journalists choose an easy way out and use a dull style of expression as a form of protection. However, what is good for an individual in that position is not necessarily good for the public.

Zdenko Shkreb is a theorist from Yugoslavia who, in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, noted that since style depends on the era that it is made in, a correlation can be traced and researched [Shkreb 1964]. He also claimed that all people were born with “style-making intelligence”, but the difference comes in the “style-making routine” [Shkreb 1956:33]. Similar to that stance, Tzvetan Todorov wrote that gifted individuals at the dawn of civilization made the evolution of communication possible by choosing the right allegories and stories that could be understood by others; so, the “big truths” of nature became public goods through the speakers’ language playfulness [Todorov 2010: 11]. The era we are currently living in will also leave its mark in the history of the style.

The situation of postmodern journalism becomes pathetic when one realizes that the ethical drama of the situation in the media may be rescued first by placing linguistic tools in the hands of journalistic columnists, making them semi-artists and semi-journalists. The largest part of modern journalism today is sensational and tabloid directed. It sometimes makes a journalist a true hero who has a precise style, the style of an intellectual who draws the rules of his own existence from social and intellectual foresight. However, “one of the main traits of new journalists is making the matter presentably interesting” [Todorovic 2002: 54].

A lot of plans can be seen here. The contemporary engaged journalist tends to free himself from the constraints of mere representation. For such journalists, language serves to show different moods, internal and external, personal and collective. Hence, such a journalist often uses a metaphor that is both sublime and disturbing. What defends and soothes him; what protects him and keeps him from possible confrontation with the censors is that the fear of the public is stronger than the fear of the censorship. The texts of some journalists are the rhetorical mask that covers reality with skilful stylistic embellishments and non-confrontation with real issues. Such texts, however pathetic and sometimes fiercely written, result in an impression of cold and distant talk. The characteristic attitude of contemporary journalism in Serbia is the constant restraint of relevant topics. The force of effective reality does not reveal itself from these texts. Their fullness is strictly controlled and orchestrated. Freedom of the language is limited with the discipline that obeys hidden funders. Such see-through and apparent journalism cannot be a carrier of any change. Even though one could derive the impression of a certain level dignity or tradition from such journalistic language, it is basically eerily disinterested by the hot topics of the day.

## The Analysis — Diagnosis of reality

Awareness of the importance of language for journalists essentially connects journalists and their intellect. Language protects journalists from various shocks of reality. Media language has a specific style, without which you cannot hold journalists away from the dangers of concrete existence. The style of journalists is their trademark. A journalist can protect himself from censorship and self-censorship with an untouchable attitude about his independence, and not with the *propaganda of state institutions* [Jovanović 2010]. Although it seems that in this manner a journalist reverts to himself and puts on armor of repulsion, in fact, they create the only possible aura for his authentic action. In this sense, a journalist must ask questions constantly and almost become an in-depth psychologist. His questions too, are a kind of diagnosis of reality. Journalistic work cannot wait for the effect of time and distance. Personal initiative allows journalists to provide a so-called intellectual distance. An awareness remains so that a journalist always defends himself through his professionalism and language. He makes a true professional clip of reality from total unpredictability, not neglecting ethics for a single moment.

The space of reality is often built with the language of journalists. Because, for journalists, language is the only stable landscape that they move through. Within it, the journalist manages the existence of everything and addresses reality. Life, however, is constantly evolving and moving in unpredictable directions. “Wherever there is something moving there are roots too, something is broadening there” according to Heidegger in his book *Being and Time*. The roots are found in the language substrate. If the language is in crisis because of constant homonymization, then there is not the necessary reality in reporting. In the increasingly rich world of manipulation, language is becoming increasingly poor.

The construction of language through media synonyms is becoming reduced. Homonyms are becoming more dominant. Different things are named the same, instead of similar things being named differently. In this way nothing is exactly determined. Everything is described so that it depends only on the circumstances. This leads to much arbitrariness in journalistic language (everything is in *duration*, everything is being clumsily improvised). Homonyms are used to stifle the last attempts for something to appear different. Because, different means that there are options, and options should be supervised and controlled. The responsibility to the audience by the media in question is being ignored. Thus, journalists do not come to endorse new topics and vocabulary, but rather to reduce what is being said. Journalists seem to constantly participate in a construction of reality rather than participating in following what is happening. Each text becomes an indicator of reporting that did not occur spontaneously but is calculated in advance and even computed. The point is that the journalistic profession is not seen as a structure but as a framework which, in its own way, enhances the reality of dealing with its essence. Finally, the journalist should be able to show with his own language the final possibilities of reporting on the public interest, to live, in fact, within the geometry of the actual and linguistic attributes. The certainty of linguistic attributes results from their constant and innovative development. Journalists need to be the creators of the language, not just the manipulating consumers of someone else's phrases, words and linguistic twists.

With their language usage, journalists should emphasize the dominant events of reality and this should lead them to the object of general thought. Instead, the media often

choose to report on banality and the “obviousness” of reality. Hence, a certain state of indignation is produced in society, which is a weak motivation to even act at all without diagnosing the reality.

### Collective tautology

Journalists turn to language to take on the role of authentic witnesses, and not outsiders. One who not only indicates the illusions of reality, but in a certain way creates reality as well. The media scene is becoming a place where we check our doubts and make up news about the never-ending activities of journalists. Contemporary journalists should provide evidence of their professional language in order to avoid punishment and maintain the privilege to remain in the position at which they can continue to act impartially.

Hence, the use of language platitudes like *situation with, as far as*, and *sign of* are an inauthentic reflection about objects that a journalist deals with. The excessive use of phrases indicates that the journalist somehow is reading an already-read book. The immediate reporting of reality and its broadcast using authentic language is an important feature of modern journalism. Only when a journalist clears his view of collective tautology will the authentic representation of reality be encouraged. It is hard for journalists not to face the horrors of existence that are happening around them on a daily basis. Language should represent a special dimension of such a shaped reality. Hence, it is pathetic and unethical to use collective tautology, prejudices and stereotypes. Although they refer to the so-called unity of collective consciousness, in fact, the use of collective tautology makes language unprofessional and views the phenomenon in a cross-eyed manner.

The frequent and numerous abuses of popular slogans *Serbia, a day after, Who is stealing, Catch the thief* — paint a grim picture of reality, and do not represent the actual scene of horror that is happening. Although everything has its place, it seems that the inappropriate use of language aligns the place, and the time is set too schematically to reach the required authenticity. Thus, priority is given to the language of the past in relation to the language of the present. The new is hushed in relation to the old, ineffable stops before half-truths. Recipients are not sufficiently respected.

Hence, certain linguistic mannerisms of modern journalists become an almost constant image. Finally, the language of crisis most easily leads to the crisis of language so that the geometrical style, in fact, somewhat negates what is claimed and what is claimed is denied. Tautology in the language reflects the fact that it constantly emphasizes a certain symmetry in otherwise unsymmetrical reality. It underlines the symmetry between the presence and absence (*lack of drinking water is present*). The immediacy of reporting is in the background, and authenticity is shrouded in silence. The alphabet of journalism modifies its schedule to describe the glamour of the world and its overall presence is reduced to a few collective tautological phrases (*currently engaged, my heart beats for Serbia, to raise enough money, get involved*).

### Language and self-presentation

Such a crisis of language leads journalists to deeper discontent. Contrary to the principle of conciseness, self-censored speech is introduced *ab ovo* when it comes to important things. Irrelevant occurrences are filled with sensationalism and often they are presented

according to the principle *in medias res*. Many abbreviations, deliberate reductions of language and shortenings lead to an anxiety about the official picture of the world. The facts are manipulated and the wishes of the political elite are pandered to.

With the language of journalists, a considerable self-presentation of the profession is taking place. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce a sufficient number of autonomous linguistic acts as an expression of spontaneity and journalistic freedom without the pathos of dedication and love. Freedom of the press is ideal, the responsibility for publicly uttering a word, and absolute freedom is utopia. A journalist, through language, cannot always get rid of what comes from the outside, but also cannot escape what is imposed on him and make a significant identifiable link with its unconditioned essence. Although in practice this linguistic act is hardly attainable, abjuring the realization leads to a journalistic farce. Compulsory thinking about this kind of language should help the journalist to complete and realize the harmonious relationship between language as it arises and language as it should be.

Journalists often change their style to try to show that they are objective and disloyal to the new authorities. In fact, their stylistic disguise resembles the blackness of the profession. This causes a crisis of access to the reporting. There are numerous manipulative loans (*Possible growth with reforms*), imitation of vocabulary from the bad propaganda political speeches (*Four phases of renewal*), imitation of popular phrases (*A drop of water worth of gold*, a title in "Politika"), the variation of bad originals (*Politician at war with reporters about the release of a secret*), and the infinite phrasing and paraphrasing of *agreements that are hard and we need to sacrifice*.

Reality is merely labeled, closed permanently in the crisis of the language, an essential foundation for journalistic manipulative superstructure which often has little to do with the base. The superficial culture and knowledge of young journalists predetermines an unavoidable communicative deadlock and introduces the dynamic of sensationalism.

Broad culture and knowledge of the language can save a journalist from his own dissatisfaction. In this way, the journalist ceases to be a mirror of the state from which it is not possible to rise. The originals are not reshaped in ways that suit the owners and funders of media, and a new aesthetic digests the perception of conceptualized political and other marketing. The originality of reality does not suit the desires of the audience, but rather the recipients with the trust related to the reporting of reality. The media narrative is less dynamic, but it leaves room for ambiguity.

The ethics of the profession painted in the language is the only tool of a professional journalist whose aim is to constantly face the pressures and ghosts around him and not banish them like a bad dream, but to show the audience at all times when the pressure is turned up. Such an example of self-presentation in the language is provided by Brankica Stanković in her book *Insider — my story*.

## Simulated authorship

Compromises in the language already give way to an unequal struggle and an inability to comply with professional demands. This creates a crisis and defeats ethics in advance. Original approaches and innovative language provide continuity and allow one to escape censorship and self-censorship. Even occasional interruptions and elements of censorship are aspects of tactical retreat before the onslaught of the new strategy of conferring "dignity of the trial and the status of senior state" [Bonito 1989:222].



Many newspaper articles have an unknown writer or, at least, an unknown real author. The simulation of authorship is also a sign of a special crisis. There is a frequent use of adynaton, special use of circumlocution or excessive hyperbole where things are exaggerated to the pathetic extent (*Fire explosion gave birth to heroes*) or to the impossible (*When hell freezes over*). So, journalism today is increasingly becoming a boring mannerist scene with feigned topics, predominantly political, being present which should be given legitimacy, with specific evidence about its value and importance. Lavish reports on pre-election visits to factory halls and homesteads are a norm in the media. The start of work on pipelines that is not resumed after the campaign is shown, politician blood donors are shown, politician lifeguards, and politician strategists. Politicians do not go anywhere without journalists. Just by being photographed and described they are confident in their own merits. They increasingly turn to journalists using a private tone, and sometimes they toss some of their file folders to them. Journalists represent a kind of pedestal on which politicians stand, convinced of their historical merit.

Only this separates them from others. Such a simulation of activities is followed by an undoubted crisis of journalistic language which manifests itself in various rhetorical techniques of discontinuity. Some journalists today serve to lift ordinary people and ordinary politicians to the surface, to strengthen their voice and physique and to assign them the necessary importance, which separates them from others.

The authorship separation and recognition that occurs in the language is, hence, very strong. Language celebrates political supremacy, but also the decline in professionalism. The height of the political power of a small circle of politicians is measured by the depth of the fall of journalistic professionalism. Politicians-heroes address the public as an actor speaks to an audience on the open stage. This procedure *ad spectatores* is a procedure that has hitherto been exclusively connected with the comedy. However, instead of crashing the dramatic illusion, as in the theatre, it allows politicians to play with the press and public and to heighten the farce of the situation in which there are journalists-victims. Statements by politicians are purified and modulated for certain purposes and for certain circles of people. As a result, politicians, indirectly, become the true writers of media texts on their own activities. Public authorship is just a simulation.

## Contemporary rhapsody

Journalists today sometimes become a kind of modern rhapsody that sing about heroes — politicians for specific groups of listeners. Their songs are already invented and designed. When it comes to tabloid media, they become itinerant singers who entertain readers with a morning coffee at local cafes. Some write praises of the heroic exploits of politicians and farces of undesirable characters forgetting their current position and what awaits them. They are very successfully engaged in the stories that are in the domain of the so-called rumor communication. Therefore, in writing they relay urban traditions of the modern heroes in a way that resembles propagating, which is later assumed by hired logographer-analysts. Modern rhapsody among journalists consists of writing their own or repeating other people's stories, often improvising and changing episodes and details, using, at the same time, existing rhetorical and stylistic formulae, e. g., the president of the Serbian Government was recently *welcomed as Josip Broz Tito* in Germany. The politician in certain media images becomes a sort of David who beats snowdrifts, floods or any other

kind of injustice with brute force. Goliath's force needs to be overtaken, be it Mišković, or some of the ministers or former politicians. A journalists' skill is to frame and entrust ambiguous interpretations to this picture.

The steadiest genre of such reporting is already apparent in the pathetic aphorism of the title without a critical edge (*Vučić greeted like Tito, How is Vučić greeted in Sarajevo, Aleksandar Vučić in Kosovo, Boris Tadić arm-wrestles with Godža...*). Meaningfully dense and thoughtfully blurred, it only simulates informativeness and profundity. These rhetorical formulae consist of generalized content, and the content affects the wider acceptance.

All this suggests that modern rhapsody observes events ostensibly from the outside. In fact, they are biased planned participants in the limited space of the political scene. The circular movement of the contemporary journalist's interest in rhapsody is connected with the parties in power and establishes a certain unity of rhetorical image that speaks of a crisis of language preserved since the time of the so-called soc-realistic vocabulary.

## Conclusion

The main hypothesis of this work was that the media content in broadcasting media is given with poor language choices and with no creativity. Action in the language of contemporary Serbian journalism explained in this article is in a certain stationary motion with no way out. Actually, there is not any movement at all. There are only fake dynamics- in fact, the millstone is hard to escape. Linguistic habits and rhetorical inertia are almost insurmountable. Some journalists rarely use their all powerful weaponry: truth, honesty and words. Instead, they are trying to keep contradictions in apparent equilibrium (in regard to the activities of the government), bringing them the same guests over and over again. Therefore, journalism takes on certain properties of amphibole uncertain reporting. It deprives the journalistic interpretive criteria of reality which provide at least a partial independent position. Contemporary media is, therefore, in a certain state of irreversible silence about what is of significance (so-called the active silence) and broad reporting about irrelevancies with little opportunities to step out into substantial independence since they are impoverished, repressed, financially devastated, and exposed to the pressures of advertisers and politicians, as well as the ongoing challenges of tabloid competition. Media language becomes an eristic tool in the service of falsely defending some higher values.

In the examples of Serbian media, it is as if reality goes beyond imagination. The display of reality is narrowed and bound (with less content about culture and related fields) to the politicization of everything that exists. The political action duplicates and spreads in all directions to real life. Journalists only seem to attend to it. As if it is their task is to present the place in which political actors operate. Everything becomes a scene of action in a political theatre. It is as if most of the media has become a huge screen on which the same actors act in different roles, armed with their eristic matrices.

Construction of the language through media synonyms is becoming reduced. Homonyms are becoming more dominant. Different things are named the same, instead of similar things being named differently. There is a kind of journalistic squint, today, that prevails in Serbia. The media image of the end dominates over the picture of reality. There are no open strict bans, but there is a *minus of procedures* (Yuri Lotman) when accessing various political figures. It seems as if some *non-sleeping eye* represented in political forums of the ruling parties, which protests about certain media approaches, constantly watches and

supervises public words, writing their own observations in the margins. Most of the events seem to be orchestrated from the inside. Media remains an illusion and allusion of certain centers with distinctive author programs (*Glass-hour* by Svetlana Lukić, *Impression of the Week* Olja Bečković, *Insider* by Brankica Stanković, *One on One* by Danica Vučinić...). The content of these programs seem to become certain cracks in the window of reality which makes an optical illusion possible.

A vast majority of the media has a common inherited loss of truly free expression. Instead of free relations, a plethora of excessive self-censorship and hidden advocacies and connections is being extended. This appears to be a certain eternity or bad infinity of the shadows in the media.

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### Authors' information:

Dobrivoje Ž. Stanojević — PhD, Professor; [dobrivoje.stanojevic@fpn.bg.ac.rs](mailto:dobrivoje.stanojevic@fpn.bg.ac.rs)

Lidija Ž. Mirkov — PhD, Associate Professor; [lidija.mirkov@fpn.bg.ac.rs](mailto:lidija.mirkov@fpn.bg.ac.rs)