



The Coverage and Reception of  
the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict



Finanțat de  
Uniunea Europeană  
NextGenerationEU



Planul Național  
de Redresare și Reziliență



UNIVERSITATEA  
LUCIAN BLAGA  
— DIN SIBIU —

# Conflict and consent.

A linguistic analysis of the Romanian and English-language media representation of sexual violence in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict

Crina Neacșu

Lucian Blaga University, Sibiu, Romania


***Discourse across cultures***

*Transilvania* University of Brașov, Brașov, Romania

21.03.2025-22.03.2025

# Objectives



- To identify the linguistic similarities and dissimilarities between how Romanian and English-language news outlets broach the subject of sexual violence, which, considering recent armed conflicts, has been categorized as a tactic and/or weapon of war;
  - To establish the frequency of coverage of sexual violence cases;
  - To notice and explain the approach to and the understanding of sexual violence in a conflict setting from external points of view (Western and non-Western);
  - To identify and analyze the patterns of language use in relation to sexual violence in both study cases and notice how the depictions of sexual violence in a conflict discourse resemble or differs from those in non-conflict contexts.
- 

# What is "sexual violence"?



"**Sexual violence** is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object." (World Health Organization)

# **Social context. Sexual violence in the Ukrainian-Russian conflict**

- recognition of sexual violence as a weapon of war (official statements by The United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and humanitarian organizations);
- statistics regarding the reports of sexual violence during the Russian-Ukrainian war: 376 REPORTED cases (262 cases for men, 104 for women, 10 cases concerning children: 8 girls, 2 boys), sourced by the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine in 2024:
  - a war of EMASCULATION (nation as a gendered construct and the deconstruction of nation through gender-based violence; switch from violence against women to violence against men);
- the issue of under-reporting.

# **Theoretical context. Sexual violence in non-conflict settings VS conflict settings**

- The issue of “rape myths” in non-conflict settings VS conflict as a premade construction of an actor/abuser/aggressor vs recipient/abusee/receiver of aggression and/or victim dichotomy and its reflection in the discourse regarding sexual violence (Holoshitz 2014)

# Corpus



- Two corpora constructed from the RO (1.993 entries) and EN (523 entries) corpora of CORECON, based on a terminological search of different lemmas related to sexual violence (*Sketch Engine*): sex (noun), sexual (adj.), rape (noun & verb)/viol/viola, genital (adj.), genitals, penis, testicle, anus, vulva, vagina (noun)/penis, testicul, anus, vulvă, vagin, castrate (verb)/castra, castrated (adj.)/castrat, castration (noun)/castrare;
- Resulting corpora: 20 entries for EN (3,82%), 38 entries for RO (1,90%).

# **Starting points. Results and discussion**

- Framing typology: episodic (mainly in the RO corpus) and thematic (predominantly in the EN corpus) due to the different approaches to certain linguistic operations: collectivization and individualization. In the EN corpus, both victims and aggressors are collectivized. In the RO corpus, the victims are individualized (therefore the predominance of the episodic framing), while aggressors are collectivized.
- Contexts in which sexual violence is broached: the battlefield (active war), occupied areas, displacement contexts (emigration). Therefore, there are several interactions amongst actors: in the EN corpus, solely the abuse imposed by Russian subjects on Ukrainian subjects in active (the battlefield, occupied areas); in the RO corpus, the abused imposed by Russian subjects on Ukrainian subjects (active war, occupied areas), Russian subjects on Russian subjects (amongst military ranks), Ukrainian subjects on Ukrainian subjects (displacement contexts), other subjects on Ukrainian subjects (displacement contexts), Ukrainian subjects on other subjects (displacement contexts).



# Starting points. Results and discussion

- Constant correlation between "sexual violence"/"sexual assault"/"rape" and "war crime", "tactic [of war]", "weapon [of war]", "torture"; modifiers/collocates such as "systematic", "open", "cheap", "silent", "effective", "brutal", "horrifying", "terrorizing", "deliberate", "harrowing" in the EN and RO corpora;
- Three single uses of "sexual act", "sexual favors" in reference to an instance of sexual violence (RO corpus);
- Several uses of "alleged", "allegations" in reference to instances of sexual violence against males (EN and RO corpus);
- Overlexicalization of victims of sexual violence; overuse of collocates that send to age and nationality;
- The issue of subject-object-agent. Passive voice.



# References



- Holoshitz, Tamar, & Deborah Cameron (2014). The linguistic representation of sexual violence in conflict settings. *Gender and Language*, 8(2), 169-184. <https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.v8i2.169>
- Ehrlich, S. (2001). *Representing Rape: Language and Sexual Consent*. Routledge. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203459034>
- Van Leeuwen, Teo (2008). *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Discourse Analysis*. Oxford University Press.
- Henley, N. M., M. Miller, & J. A. Beazley (1995). Syntax, semantics, and sexual violence: agency and the passive voice. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 14(1), 60-84. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0261927X95141004>

# Contact

 [grants.ulbsibiu.ro/corecon](https://grants.ulbsibiu.ro/corecon)

 [grant.corecon@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:grant.corecon@ulbsibiu.ro)

 [crina.neacsu@ulbsibiu.ro](mailto:crina.neacsu@ulbsibiu.ro)

Find us on our social media!

