

The Diversity of Love Journal

Conceptual and Linguistic Research on Love: Proceedings of the 2nd Conference on Love Studies

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The conference aimed to advance diversity in love research across disciplines and cultures, highlighting the importance of international collaboration and the integration of ideas from various academic disciplines and professional practices related to love research.

Participants underlined how valuable it is to comprehend cultural contexts in which people live and love in their societies when we research love and love-related phenomena.

In a [separate article in this journal](#), I have compiled the thematic sessions and the talks presented at the conference.

Other articles summarize the talks presented at the sessions on [Love in Popular Culture and Literary Explorations](#) and [Evolutionary and](#)

Cultural Perspectives on Love and Experiences and Expressions of Love.

The following are the summaries of the talks presented at the session on **Conceptual and Linguistic Research on Love**, chaired by *Zoltán Kövecses, from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary, and Iryna Pinich from Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine, and Södertörn University, Sweden.*

Abstracts of Presentations

There is *no* such thing as *love*... until we define what *love* is

by Victor Karandashev from Aquinas College and the International Institute of Love Studies, the USA

Research Background. Love is a word widely used, at least in modern English. However, the word “love” appeared in the lexicon of some languages quite late in history. The concept of ‘love’ became a result of the high abstraction of thinking that some individuals in some cultures reached in their cultural evolution. Until then, people had used other words to denote experiences, expressions, relationships, and types of love. They were sufficient for their daily life. Some cultures and individuals do not really need such an abstract word as love.

Love is a polysemic and multifaceted concept with a variety of meanings. There is no such thing as love. Due to polysemy, individuals and scholars utilize this concept in its diversity of kinds, constructs, and types. They use it in different contexts with different meanings and senses. So, what do we study when we study love?

The aims of the study and its method. The aim of this study was methodological: to identify the specific varieties of things that

researchers call love and how they study it. I employed a comprehensive conceptual analysis of multiple research publications on love to classify the meaning of the concepts they call “love.”

Summary of the results and conclusions. The results of this analysis have revealed a set of concepts denoting different phenomena, types, sorts, forms, and modes of existence that researchers use to describe and explain love and love-related things. Among those are (1) individual internal experiences, (2) interpersonal relationships, and (3) personal and cultural models. Individual experiences of love include emotional, cognitive, and behavioral processes. Among those are appraisals, feelings, emotions, attitudes, traits, and values. Among those are complex love constructs, such as passion, compassion, intimacy, and commitment. Among those are different kinds of love, such as individual experience of romantic love, friendship, familial love, etc. Love, as an interpersonal relationship, includes romantic, familial, and other kinds of relationships (Karandashev, 2022).

I conclude that the word, as well as the notion of love, is multifaceted, yet researchers rarely define the concept of love explicitly, leaving too wide room for implicit and subjective interpretations. Many scholarly debates and disagreements arise because researchers have in mind different things, although they think they discuss the same concept. These circumstances impede the possibility of reaching a common objective research-based understanding of what love is.

The analysis has also Identified the methods that researchers use to study love. Among those are (1) literary and philosophical introspections, (2) observations, (3) interviews, (4) self-report surveys, and (5) experimental methods, each with its benefits and pitfalls. I conclude that researchers must always provide a conceptual definition

of “love”—in terms of what the concept includes, as well as an operational definition of love—in terms of what its indicators are.

The embodiment of ‘heart’ in cross-linguistic studies of love metaphors

by *Mustapha Bala Tsakuwa from Yulin University, China*

Research Background. This research is a cross-cultural and linguistic study focusing on love metaphors in the heart presented in chapters contributed to *Embodiment in cross-linguistic studies: The ‘Heart,’* a volume edited by Judit Baranyiné Kóczy and Katalin Sipőcz (2023).

The aims of the study and its method. The research aims to review the volume and focus, specifically, on the rich romantic and non-romantic love metaphors in the heart across languages/cultures like Kazakh, Hungarian, Finnish, Buryat, Polish, Portuguese, Udmurt, Turkish, Kurdish, Serbian, Ainu, English, Yorùbá, Fulfulde, Mansi, and Chinese languages, among others. The study employs cognitive and cultural linguistic frameworks to explore how love is conceptualized and expressed through metaphors in the heart and how these concepts vary across cultures and linguistic contexts.

Summary of the results and conclusions. A preliminary analysis of the volume identifies similarities and variations in the use of romantic and non-romantic love metaphors, as well as the underlying cultural and societal values and beliefs that influence their portrayal in the languages. Across these languages, *love* is metaphorized as a fire/heat, force, liquid/non-liquid substance, container, action, and unity of parts. However, there are different patterns of expressing these conceptualizations in these languages.

Metaphors we love by, and how they represent the four loves

by *Róbert Bohát* from *Charles University, Prague, the Czech Republic*

Research Background. Wierzbicka (2019) found that “the very broad meaning of verbs like ‘love’ in English... reflects a shared conceptual heritage of many European languages” and has “its roots in the New Testament.” This resonates with *The Four Loves* by C.S. Lewis: *agapé*, *philia*, *storgé*, and *erós*. Hence, a deeper probe into the New Testament concepts of love can be useful to all European cultures and beyond.

The aims of the study and its method. The goal is to add the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) dimension to the analysis of the New Testament concepts of love, assisted by corpus linguistic tools. AntConc software was used to get a concordance of “love” in the Greek New Testament Corpus (GNTC). The concordance is analyzed in context for significant collocations and metaphors, metonymies, etc., through the lens of CMT. (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1998) Metaphors are identified using the MIPVU method. Results are compared with Lewis (1960) and Barclay (1974).

Summary of the results and conclusions. Preliminary analysis of 116 occurrences of *agapé* in GNTC shows that LOVE IS AN OBJECT that one can “hold”, “have”, “give” or “stretch out”. Also, LOVE IS SPACE (or A COUNTRY) – people consider its “width, length, height and depth”. Further, LOVE IS A CONTAINER – people “remain in love”, do things “out of love” or “through love”. LOVE IS GROWTH as “we grow in love”, “rooted” in love that is the “fruit” of the spirit, abounding in love, making it bigger (i.e. greater).

Additionally, LOVE IS CONSTRUCTION that “builds up” and humans are “built upon the foundation of love”. Next, LOVE IS A GARMENT

we “clothe ourselves with” – it “covers a multitude of sins”. LOVE IS A SHIELD worn for protection, but also A WEAPON since we can “fight together through love”.

LOVE IS AN ATTACHMENT – “the perfect bond of union”; hence, no creation can “separate us from the love of God”; only we “can leave the love we had at first”. LOVE IS A FORCE “operating within us”, “compelling us” to live a life of self-sacrifice. LOVE IS WARMTH – it can “cool off”. Significantly, LOVE IS A JOURNEY since we must “walk in/by love”.

Noun collocates of *agapé*: heart, mind, faith, truth, peace, tender compassions (literally: bowels), fellowship, joy, power, hope, knowledge, judgment and consolation, etc. Consolation (paramythion) is “from (para, ‘beside’) and (mythos, ‘speech’ or ‘story’)” (Strong 3888). Thus, “a consolation of love” (literally “the consoling story of love”) points to the metaphor: LOVE IS A STORY.

Love is also “poured out” and “fills up” (LOVE IS A LIQUID), “revealed” (LOVE IS A HIDDEN OBJECT) and “sharpened” (LOVE IS AN INSTRUMENT).

In the light of the above, a corpus-assisted CMT study of GNTC is productive; it shows that LOVE IS A COUNTRY and a STORY of consolation; LOVE IS CONSTRUCTION and GROWTH, a SHIELD as well as WARMTH and ATTACHMENT. The New Testament metaphors we love by provide a framework for comparative studies of love across European, American and all monotheistic cultures, as well as empowering metaphors and narratives in psychotherapy.

How love vocabulary is constructed in historical sources

by *Hannah Vanden Broucke from Ghent University, Belgium*

Research Background. On the eve and at the outset of the Second World War, two average heterosexual adults in their twenties from Ternat, a village in Belgium, meet each other and begin a romantic relationship. Over the first three years as lovers, during which they are also separated by the war, they write about five hundred love letters. Through the analysis of these love letters, I aim to uncover how these individuals wrote about love and how they expressed it toward each other. This is an example of a microscopic, cultural-historical study in search of answers to large questions in small places.

Nearly every healthy human being has the physical capacity to feel and express feelings of love, yet the way in which romantic feelings are elicited, felt, and expressed depends largely on cultural norms, shaped by time and place. Each person learns these norms within an “emotional community,” as Barbara Rosenwein calls it. In other words, a community in which norms about emotions are passed down. A person can belong to multiple communities simultaneously, such as, e.g., a family, a school, friends, a workplace, or a church. So, also, the religious community provided an emotional script, where individuals learned how love “ought to be expressed.”

The aims of the study and its method. Romantic love requires language in order to be expressed. In my research on these love letters, I employ several research methods. A “close reading” of the entire source corpus was ideal for a cultural-historical investigation of emotions. The letters were carefully transcribed to uncover patterns in expressions of love. In some cases, I delve even deeper and conduct a “sensitive discursive analysis” or “discourse analysis.” By paying close attention to traces of intertextuality (which is the relationship between texts) and tracing them back to their original source text, I am able to uncover how the letter writer thought about romantic love. In other words, which

words did the writer pick up from the emotional community to describe their romantic feelings? In this way, I read as a historian the collective culture in the individual expressions of love.

Summary of the results and conclusions. The turbulent socio-political context in which the love letters were written led, among other things, to a more explicit expression of emotions. Emotions became more intense due to increased unpredictability caused by the threat of war. The lovers drew upon existing emotional scripts from the emotional community to express their feelings. For instance, they often referenced Catholic-inspired poets like Alice Nahon and Léonce Reypens to express their romantic love. The language expressions of love in the letters are therefore imbued with a Catholic ideal of love. Romantic love was equated with the symbiosis of the lovers, unconditional, selfless, and forever. The romantic relationship was thus seen as a gift from God. In this way, this study demonstrates how the letter writers expressed their love for each other through religiously inspired language, which was evidently prevalent in their environment.

How the Ukrainian language conceptualizes the spirituality of LOVE

by Iryna Pinich from Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine, and Södertörn University, Sweden

Research Background. The concept of LOVE in Ukrainian reflects a complex and multidimensional nature, inviting interpretations that span several symbolic realms: religious, philosophical, and secular. This tripartite framework merges esoteric elements (e.g., touch the soul) with embodied metaphoric expressions (e.g., torments of love or sweet love). Uniquely, the Ukrainian language encompasses both a broad, general notion of love (LIUBOV) and a more specific, romantic understanding

(KOKHANNIA). These layers allow for a rich interplay between metaphors rooted in physically perceptible experiences (e.g., pain or sweetness) and those evoking the transcendental, magical, or unfathomable dimensions of love.

The aims of the study and its method. This study undertakes a qualitative analysis of the conceptual correspondences between the target thematic domain of LOVE and source domains of SOUL and SYMBOLIC HEART, which serve as key mediators in the imaginative processes that shape the meaning of LOVE in Ukrainian. Grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the Theory of Conceptual Blending, the research seeks to uncover the cultural and religious mechanisms underlying the emergence of LOVE metaphors. These metaphors are analyzed within the framework of multiple-scope conceptual integration, where the domains converge to construct a nuanced and multidimensional understanding of LOVE.

The cross-domain connections are analyzed through metaphorical linguistic expressions identified by using a systematic metaphor identification procedure. The procedure involves comparing more concrete and basic meanings of expressions with their broader, more abstract interpretations. These expressions, reflecting various aspects of LOVE, were systematically collected from Ukrainian thesauri and phraseological dictionaries through continuous sampling. A cross-tabulation analysis of thematic source domains and conceptual target domains further revealed consistent cognitive associations. These associations emphasize the interplay between the spiritual and physical dimensions of LOVE in its diverse manifestations.

Summary of the results and conclusions. Notably, SYMBOLIC HEART and SOUL, conceptualized as the internal source of feelings, the center of one's emotions, will, and spiritual life, are intricately

linked to broader, universal domains. This connection is evident in the literal translations of Ukrainian metaphors associated with love, which draw from a diverse range of source domains: BIRD (heart chirping), PLANT (heart withers), PATH (heart (soul) goes/lies to), SUBSTANCE (heart turned cold), MOVEMENT INSIDE/OUTSIDE A CONTAINER (get into the soul/heart; throw out (cross out) from one's heart), CLOSENESS (soul to soul; lean to the heart), and OPPONENT (to conquer the heart). Additionally, metaphors capture dimensions of INTENSITY, such as depth (at the very bottom of the heart) and width (wide heart/soul).

The findings of this research suggest a dynamic process of concept evolution in Ukrainian. The cognitive associations shaped by the predominant spiritual interpretation of LOVE as divine are rooted in the religious and philosophical traditions of Ukrainian culture. This perspective highlights the influence of spirituality in guiding the understanding of LOVE beyond the correlation of abstract and concrete dimensions. Consequently, the classic view of double-scope conceptual correspondences—linking abstract domains with more concrete ones—can be expanded to include alternative patterns of cognitive correlations that emphasize symbolic aspects of love's meaning.

How the Bulgarian language and culture conceptualize ОБИЧ and ЛЮБОВ

*by Nelly Tincheva from Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski",
Bulgaria*

Research Background. Unlike English (and most other languages), Bulgarian has two words for LOVE – ‘обич’ and ‘любов’. Both can be considered equally good translations of ‘love’.

The aims of the study and its method. My presentation will explore whether, in the case of ОБИЧ and ЛЮБОВ, we are dealing with two conceptual categories that overlap or we are dealing with one conceptual category and its varied instantiations.

The general framework against which I will discuss my results is cognitive linguistics, but it will also employ precepts from cultural linguistics (as in Sharifian, 2011) and research techniques from cognitive sociolinguistics (as in Kristiansen et al., 2022).

Summary of the results and conclusions. First, I discuss Bulgarian cultural conceptualizations of ОБИЧ and ЛЮБОВ as evident in media texts. Second, I present data obtained from actual language users as respondents in a questionnaire experiment. The results from both parts of my exploration point to the possibility for ОБИЧ and ЛЮБОВ to represent two overlapping conceptual categories.

See other articles on related topics in the rubrics of [language of Love](#), [literary studies of love](#), [Metaphors of Love](#), [modern love studies](#), [vocabulary and lexicon of love](#), [What is it?](#).