# Love in the time of the corpora.
# Preferential conceptualizations of love in world Englishes

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## 1    Introduction

According to Gibbs (2006) "there is still insufficient attention paid to the exact ways that cultural beliefs shape both people's understandings of their embodied experiences and the conceptual metaphors which arise from these experiences." For example, the conceptual metaphor EMOTIONS ARE FLUIDS WITHIN THE BODY seems to underlie a wide variety of metaphorical expressions used by speakers from different linguistic and cultural areas all around the world. The geographical distribution of these metaphorical expressions is so general that numerous researchers have proclaimed their universal character, in so far as they are based on our common, embodied experience (Kövecses, 2000). However, the apparent ubiquity of this metaphorical mapping in contemporary emotional expressions does not necessarily imply that speakers from different linguistic or dialectal areas understand (or, of course, experience) emotions in the same identical way (Díaz-Vera and Caballero, 2013).

In this paper, I deal with the analysis of conceptual variation in the metaphorical construction of love in a group of dialectal varieties of contemporary English. Differently to earlier studies of love metaphors in English (Quinn 1987; Baxter, 1992; Kövecses, 1998), my main aim here is to analyze the socio-cultural dynamics of conceptual metaphor through the reconstruction of the preferential conceptualizations of love by speakers of a series of dialectal varieties of the same language, as spoken in culturally diverse regions. Through the analysis of the socio-cultural dynamics of conceptual metaphor, I intend to contribute to the field of Cognitive Dialectology by addressing the question whether cultural and conceptual differences can be detected language-internally, not just across languages.

Based on textual data extracted from the *Corpus of Global Web-Based English* (GloWbE;

Davies, 2013), I will demonstrate here that the varieties of world English under scrutiny show significant differences in the conventional use of figurative expressions. Thereafter, these findings will be related to the cultural background of each speech community.

## 2    Research questions

Through the fine-grained analysis of the data described below, in this paper I will address the following research questions: (a) How do speakers from different parts of the English-speaking world conceptualize love? (b) What do these conceptual preferences tell us about these English varieties from a sociolinguistic perspective? (c) To what extent can social and cultural factors account for these processes of conceptual variation?

## 3    Methodology

As indicated above, the data used for this analysis has been collected using the GloWbE, which contains 1,9 billion words. This corpus is illustrative of the different ways English is used by speakers living in 20 different countries. The texts included in this corpus represent the genre 'personal blog' (Miller and Shepherd, 2009); these texts come from 1,8 million web-pages compiled in December 2012 using a highly automated production process.

The present study is limited to the analysis of data extracted from four different national sections within the GloWbE, illustrating two very different sociolinguistic contexts: the *inner circle* (i.e. countries where English is the primary language) and the *outer circle* (i.e. countries where English plays an important 'second language' role in a multilingual setting; Kachru, 1988). The four sub-corpora under scrutiny here are UK (inner circle), India, Pakistan and Nigeria (outer circle). In doing so, I will try to describe the different ways speakers from radically different cultural, social and religious regions conceptualize

love. I am especially interested in determining whether, and to what extent, these extra-linguistic factors can account for the conceptual differences illustrated in my quantitative analysis of love expressions.

In order to identify the metaphors for love used in the corpus, I have adopted the meta-phorical pattern analysis (MPA) as proposed by Stefanowitsch (2004, 2006). This method, which takes the target domains of the figurative expressions as the starting-point of the analysis, consists in choosing one or more lexical ítems referring to the target domain under scrutiny and extracting a significative sample of their occurrences in the corpus. To start with, I have located all the instances of the noun *love* in the four corpus sections (GB, IN, PK and NG). As can be seen in Table 1, the absolute and relative distributions of this noun are highly irregular. For example, whereas only the GB section of the corpus scores a *per mil* frequency for this noun below the general GloWbE corpus average (217.98 ‰), the IN and the NG sections show much higher frequency rates.

| SECTION | FREQ | PER MIL |
|---------|------|---------|
| GB | 69392 | 179.02 |
| IN | 26355 | 273.30 |
| PK | 13114 | 255.30 |
| NG | 12179 | 285.58 |
| GloWbE | 410815 | 217.98 |

Table 1: Absolute and relative frequencies of the noun 'love' in four corpus sections.

In order to be able to compare the four corpus sections with each other, I have selected and analyzed only a random sample of 1,000 love expressions in each sub-corpus (4,000 expressions in all). After collecting 1,000 instances incorporating the key term *love* in each corpus section, I extracted the expressions where the emotion was discussed in metaphoric terms, and sorted them according to the general source domains motivating the figurative expression (e.g., NUTRIENT, JOURNEY, UNITY OF PARTS, FIRE, etc.). These were then further tagged paying attention to the more specific source and target domains involved in the metaphors (e.g., LOVE IS MADNESS within the more general metaphor LOVE IS IN-SANITY scenario). Thereafter, the resulting conceptual metaphors were further classified into three broad classes on the basis of their source-domain orientation (Kövecses, 2000: 110):

- *Space*-related source domains: The first category includes very general spatial metaphors, such as LOVE IS A BOUNDED REGION and LOVE IS A CONTAINER.
- *Force*-related source domains: The second category includes most of the source domains typically used in the conceptualization of emotions in English, such as EMOTION IS A NATURAL FORCE, EMO-TIONS IS INSANITY or EMOTION IS FIRE.
- *Relationship*-related source domains: The third category includes a set of specific source domains for human relationships in English, such as HUMAN RELA-TIONSHIP IS A PLANT, HUMAN RELA-TIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY or HUMAN RE-LATIONSHIP IS ECONOMIC EXCHANGE.

Based on the above classification of specific source domains, I will assume here that speakers from different parts of the English-speaking world construe love via conceptual metaphor in different ways. Through the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the set of figurative love expressions collected in the GloWbE corpus, it is possible to determine the speakers' relative preferences to talk about love as a state, as an emotion or as a relationship. Through the comparative analysis of the figurative expressions used in the four corpus sections under scrutiny, I will try to illustrate how these conceptual preferences might be embedded in different cultural backgrounds. The results from each corpus section are discussed in turn in the following sections.

## 4 Findings and discussion

As indicated above, the data used for this analysis has been collected using the GloWbE. The texts included in this corpus illustrate the genre 'personal blog'; furthermore, as indicated above, these texts where compiled during a relatively short period of time (December 2012). Consequently, they are highly homogeneous not only in terms of their genre, but also in terms of their date of production.

As described above, in the first stage of this research I have located all the instances of the noun *love* in four corpus sections (GB, IN, PK and NG). Thereafter, I have classified these expressions into two large groups: literal and figurative expressions. According to this part of my analysis (see Table 2), the four corpus sections analyzed here show relatively similar rates of

literal and non-literal love expressions. Whereas the highest amount of figurative expressions is found in the GB section (43.6%), the lowest number of metaphors corresponds to the PK section (34.7%).

| SECTION | LITERAL | FIGURATIVE |
|---------|---------|------------|
| GB | 564 | 436 |
| IN | 568 | 432 |
| PK | 653 | 347 |
| NG | 596 | 404 |
| TOTAL | 2,381 | 1,619 |

Table 2: Distribution of literal and figurative 'love' expressions in four corpus sections.

However, as can be seen in Table 3, major differences arise if we compare the relative frequencies of the three broad categories of source domain described above (i.e. space, force and relationship). In spite of the very similar total number of instances of each category, the geographical distribution of these occurrences clearly points towards a preference for *force*-related source domains in the PK (42.0%) and in the IN (37.0%) sections, in clear contrast with the neat preference for *space*-related source domains in GB and NG (41.0%).

| SECTION | SPACE | FORCE | RELATION |
|---------|-------|-------|----------|
| GB | 177 | 129 | 130 |
| IN | 140 | 159 | 133 |
| PK | 108 | 146 | 93 |
| NG | 164 | 142 | 98 |
| TOTAL | 589 | 576 | 454 |

Table 3: Distribution of *space*-, *force*- and *relationship*-related source domains in four corpus sections.

Furthermore, according to the data presented above, whereas *relationship*-related source domains occupy a secondary position in the four corpus sections, their relative frequency is especially low in the PK (27.0%) and in the NG (24.0%) sections.

## 4.1    *Space*-related metaphorical patterns

*Space*-related metaphorical patterns represent the most general and neutral option as regards the expression of states and emotions. According to these EVENT STRUCTURE metaphors, states in general are conceptualized as physical locations or bounded regions in space. Speakers use sentences such as 'I am in love' to indicate, in a very neutral way, their emotional state. The adverb

*deeply* is frequently used in these examples in order to indicate intensity of the emotion. The notion of change is viewed as motion into (as in 'I am falling in love') or out of (as in 'I am falling out of love') this emotional state, conceptualized as a container. Within this group, I have found several expressions where love is conceptualized as a nest, and lovers are birds in the nest.

According to the GB data, there is a strong preference among British speakers to use the noun *love* in expressions conveying the metaphors LOVE IS A BOUNDED REGION (83 instances) and LOVE IS A CONTAINER (94 occurrences). The relative frequency of these metaphors is much lower in the other three corpus sections. As can be seen in Table 4, only in the NG section we find a similar relative frequency of the metaphor LOVE IS A CONTAINER.

| SECTION | REGION | CONTAINER | TOTAL |
|---------|--------|-----------|-------|
| GB | 83 | 94 | 177 |
| IN | 65 | 75 | 140 |
| PK | 42 | 66 | 108 |
| NG | 68 | 96 | 164 |
| TOTAL | 258 | 331 | 589 |

Table 4: Distribution of *space*-related source domains in four corpus sections.

## 4.2    *Force*-related metaphorical patterns

*Force*-related metaphors are frequently used by English speakers in order to express their emotions. According to this view, love can be conceptualized as a NATURAL/PHYSICAL FORCE, as an OPPONENT IN A STRUGGLE, or as FIRE/LIGHT, among others. Broadly speaking, these conceptual mappings indicate that the person in love is passively affected by a force (either external or, less frequently, internal), which produces either resistance or loss of control (or both). Preference for these metaphorical expressions points towards a stronger presence of the passionate ideal of love that characterizes the earliest stages of the relationship (Luhmann 1996; Schröder 2009: 105).

Within this group, I have analyzed the distribution of 17 love metaphors in the four corpus sections. The results of this part of the analysis can be seen in Table 5.

| SOURCE | GB | IN | PK | NG |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FLUID/CONTAINER | 32 | 8 | 45 | 11 |
| INSANITY | 25 | 18 | 21 | 8 |
| NATURAL FORCE | 15 | 15 | 14 | 16 |
| OPPONENT | 14 | 12 | 4 | 3 |
| WAR | 14 | 10 | 4 | 4 |
| FIRE/LIGHT | 10 | 12 | 20 | 12 |
| NUTRIENT | 7 | 18 | 8 | 15 |
| HIGH/RAPTURE | 7 | 9 | 4 | 6 |
| HEALING | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| SPORT/GAME | 2 | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| BOND | - | 8 | 5 | 5 |
| DEITY | - | 19 | 3 | 22 |
| ART/SKILL | - | 5 | 3 | 6 |
| CAPTIVE ANIMAL | - | 8 | 9 | 8 |
| WARMTH | - | - | - | 4 |
| MAGIC | - | - | - | 5 |
| AIR | - | - | - | 1 |
| TOTAL | 129 | 159 | 146 | 142 |

Table 5: Distribution of *force*-related source domains in four corpus sections.

According to the data described in Table 3 and in Table 5, the GB section yields the lowest number of instances in which love is portrayed as a force (129 instances in all). The largest number of examples in this corpus section portray love either as a SUBSTANCE INSIDE THE EXPERIENCER (32 instances) or as INSANITY (25 instances) and, hence, are compatible with views of other emotions (such as anger or happiness; Kövecses 2000). The other three sections yield not only a higher frequency rate of *force*-related metaphors (IN: 259; PK: 146; NG: 142), but also a more varied articulation in terms of source domains within this category. In fact, many of the expressions analysed here instantiate the metaphors LOVE IS A DEITY, LOVE IS WARMTH and LOVE IS MAGIC, all of which are completely absent from the part of the GB section analysed here.

### 4.3 *Relationship*-related metaphorical patterns

This category includes those metaphorical expressions where love is portrayed by speakers as a romantic relationship between two individuals, who cooperate with each other in order to reach a common goal. These metaphors are frequently found in reference to other types of human relationship (such as friendship), and are normally related either to the handling of complex physical objects (such as plants, buildings or ma-

chines) or to interactive cooperation (as in, for example, economic exchange, hidden object or journey). The overall distribution of the 7 conceptual mappings included within this category in each corpus section (Table 3 above) indicates that *relationship*-related source domains motivate a relative low number of metaphorical expressions in the four sections. This is especially true in the case of the PK (27.7%) and the NG (24.0%) sections, both of which yield a high number of examples of *force*-related mappings.

| SOURCE | GB | IN | PK | NG |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| VALUABLE OBJECT | 43 | 36 | 19 | 11 |
| LIVING ORGANISM | 25 | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| HIDDEN OBJECT | 24 | 26 | 13 | 27 |
| ECON. EXCHANGE | 20 | 36 | 34 | 32 |
| UNION OF PARTS | 9 | 8 | 4 | 5 |
| JOURNEY | 6 | 11 | 9 | 9 |
| BUILDING | 3 | 7 | 5 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 130 | 133 | 93 | 98 |

Table 6: Distribution of *relationship*-related source domains in four corpus sections.

## 5  Conclusion

The findings of my research of love expressions in a variety of world Englishes shows that there exist important differences in the conceptualization of love, from the more passional *force*-related expressions to the more rational *relationship*-related ones. Based on this distinction, I have analyzed the distribution of each set of metaphors in four GloWbE sections. Whereas overseas Englishes show a preference for *force*-based mappings, GB English is relatively neutral (as in the general LOVE IS A STATE metaphor). Further, whereas the idea of romantic love (emphasis on the collaborative relationship between two partners, typically Western love ideal; Novak 2013) is more frequent in the GB section, the other corpus sections show a greater tendency to talk about love as an emotion, accentuating the moment rather than the future.

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