

Conceptualisation of Romantic Relationships in English and Lithuanian Online Articles

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The present pilot study explores the conceptualisation of relationships in English and Lithuanian online newspaper articles. The research is motivated by the observation that, while the metaphoric representation of emotions has been given substantial scholarly attention, not much research has been done on the metaphoric encoding of romantic relationships, especially from a contrastive perspective. To accomplish this aim, two mini-corpora were compiled from articles published in the online versions of English and Lithuanian mainstream newspaper articles within the period 2020–2023. Developed within the framework of conceptual metaphor theory and discourse analysis, the analysis adopts a constructivist perspective on language, whereby the language used to describe phenomena is believed to reflect how they are perceived by the people of a given culture, rather than what they really are (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Our findings reveal a number of similarities and differences in the ways romantic relationships are conceptualized in English and Lithuanian. Following discourse analytical tradition, the metaphorical expressions of the conceptual metaphors identified are analyzed and interpreted, as we focus on the strategies of nominalization and predication. The study is hoped to have implications for the cultural and social dimensions, contributing to the understanding of cultural differences as well as to the improvement of the quality of relationships.

Conceptualisation of relationships; online newspaper articles; conceptual metaphor theory; nominalisation strategies; predication strategies.

Introduction

Since the end of the last century, critical metaphor analysis (CMA) has received a lot of attention among language scholars. The importance of figurative language, and metaphors in particular, in determining the perception of reality has been emphasized by many cognitive linguists (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 1999; Kövecses, 2002; Evans & Green, 2006; Croft & Cruse, 2004). The seminal work “Metaphors We Live By” (1980) by Lakoff and Johnson changed the understanding of metaphor, demonstrating that the human worldview is a richly encoded conceptual system, one way to access which is by

analyzing linguistic manifestations and deciphering in them the underlying conceptual metaphors. The role of conceptual metaphors as a tool for understanding a more abstract concept in terms of a more concrete one, as it turned out, may affect one's perception of reality and, consequently, may affect one's actions. CMA has contributed vastly to revealing the ideologies, attitudes and ulterior motives that sometimes lie behind seemingly innocent words and phrases. The cognitive perspective on metaphors as instruments that help to reason about abstract concepts, such as relationships, has placed an emphasis on distinguishing between the cognitive level and the verbal level. Consequently, while language serves as a tool of communication in creating relationships, it also shapes the perception of events that occur in a relationship.

As human relationships and gender roles constitute the core of social life, a number of researchers have addressed their encoding in language from a metaphorical perspective. In her study, López Maestre (2020) examines the conceptualisation of love, seduction and the search for a partner/husband through hunting metaphors and highlights the representation of romantic relationships as an act of hunting. Such metaphorical expressions as “a good catch”, “chasing a guy”, which are widely spread among speakers on the topic of relationships, reveal the dominating approach to the search for a partner in modern culture. A study conducted by Bogdanowska-Jakubowska (2013) reveals the effect of transformations in Polish culture on language.

One of many applications of exploring metaphorical expressions in a language is by comparing dominant beliefs about relationships in different cultures, which is a perspective the present pilot study undertakes. We focus on analyzing the conceptualization of relationships in English and Lithuanian in online newspaper articles. The aim is to analyze metaphorical expressions related to relationships, reconstructing the underlying conceptual metaphors. We seek to identify any regularities in the perception of romantic relations by the two cultures, as well as examine their potential differences, adopting a constructivist perspective, whereby people's experience stipulates how it is translated into the verbal form while the linguistic representation of phenomena has a subsequent formative effect on the ways public perception, and ultimately, culture's worldview, are shaped (Bock & Burkley, 2019; Lakoff, 1987; Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

This article consists of four parts. Section 1 provides an overview of the relevant theoretical literature on cognitive linguistics, metaphor theory, and discourse analysis. In section 2, *Methodology*, collected data, methods and the procedure of the empirical research are described. Section 3, *Results and Discussion*, presents the findings and develops an analysis, interpretation and comparison of the data collected. Section 4, *Conclusions*, summarises the findings.

Theoretical framework

According to the cognitive perspective, language and the brain are connected so that the human body responds to hearing a phrase by running simulations, which is

facilitative in understanding the concept heard (The University of British Columbia, 2011). For instance, *skydiving* evokes associations and mental images related to the activity; the phrase “*chew on the idea*”, where the word *chew* is a metaphorical linguistic expression, creates an image in our mind of what it is like to physically chew on the idea. According to Gibbs, “these simulation processes operate even when people encounter metaphoric language that is abstract, or refers to actions that are physically impossible to perform” (The University of British Columbia, 2011, 45:07). This perfectly illustrates that language is closely tied to the processes in our minds and cannot be treated as separate from our minds and bodies. Croft and Cruse (2004, p. 40) further maintain that every sentence said by the speaker is unconsciously structured by the experience that he/she has had and seeks to convey to the listener. This challenges the view that semantics is “purely truth-conditional”. (ibid.) Thus concepts are largely formulated depending on subjective perspectives on a given phenomenon and hence are *construed*, resulting in a number of possible *construals* (Verhagen, 2007). To understand a specific concept, the category of *judgment and comparison* is involved, which is also used to both construct and interpret metaphor – by categorizing concepts and by aligning them in the A is B formula (Carroll, 2007). Croft and Cruse (2004, p. 55) use the metaphorical expression “to waste time” as an example: it involves comparing TIME (the target domain) and MONEY (the source domain). Time is thus viewed as something valuable, an object that can be owned and therefore can be wasted. This was significant in that it demonstrates how metaphorical expressions in particular are not isolated from the cognitive processes, but rather, are an outcome of the construal processes, named by Croft and Cruse. The understanding of this comparison whereby an abstract notion is explained employing the features of a specific one is enabled through a set of *mappings*, defined as “Correspondences between entities inhering in regions of the conceptual system” (Evans, 2007, p.130; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövecses, 2002). Kövecses (2002) explains the concept of mappings with the help of the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY (p. 7). The narrative of love is explained through the narrative of a journey, and so the components of love, such as the lovers, their life together, the obstacles they face, and so on, have their respective correspondences, or mappings, in the narrative of the journey, viz., the travellers, the journey itself, the obstacles experienced during the journey. Consequently, this conceptual metaphor has a great variety of metaphorical linguistic expressions which are its linguistic manifestations, e.g., *We are at a crossroads*, *It’s been a bumpy road*, and which are used to define the properties of love. Consequently, to understand the meaning of a conceptual metaphor, it is important to understand the mappings drawn between its source and target domains.

As has been noted above, conceptual metaphors formed in our minds serve as a rhetorical tool as they get translated into linguistic manifestations, thereby stipulating people’s actions and reality (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, pp. 3-4, Chilton, 2004, Lindström

and Marais, 2012). The significance of language for social impact reflects a constructive perspective on language and is also sustained in discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1998).

Discourse analysis focuses on identifying, analyzing, and interpreting language data, defining the actors of the discourse as well as their motivation and adherences, which are encoded in the text, yet may not always be explicitly available on its surface. (Wodak, 2011, Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Examining the prevalent language patterns, primarily those of nomination, predication, and argumentation, critical discourse analysis allows one to motivate the discursive representation of phenomena of interest, and is also applicable in critical metaphor analysis, the methodologies unveiling hidden ideologies at both the literal and the figurative levels.

Research on metaphors of emotion has been one of the earliest, and has been developed into related dimensions, such as metaphor and gender, viewed from a variety of social perspectives. Stemming from the idea that specific source domains have a tendency for clustering around specific target domains and map on their various properties, seminal work on emotion metaphors was developed by Kövecses (2003). Part of this work was further confirmation on the hierarchical arrangement of conceptual metaphors and identification of a specific superordinate emotion metaphor, viz., EMOTION IS FORCE.

Within gender dimension, for instance, in two studies, Koller and Semino (2009ab) examine the use of metaphors in political speeches by German chancellors, Gerhard Schröder and Angela Merkel, and Italian politicians, Silvio Berlusconi and Emma Bonino. In addition to identifying specific gender-related differences, such as preferences for particular language constructions, keywords as well as metaphor use, which highlight the femininity of the female politicians analyzed, the authors also note *en passim* that, in comparison to the German corpus, the Italian corpus overall uses more “novel, extended and deliberate metaphors” (Koller and Semino, 2009b, p. 57).

Bogdanowska-Jakubowska (2013) investigates metaphors of femininity in Polish. The author investigates how transformations in culture are reflected in language and metaphors, in particular. She attributes the widespread Polish metaphors of “Sacrificed Self” and “Split Self”, manifested in conceptual metaphors such as WOMAN’S LIFE IS A SELF-SACRIFICE, SELF-SACRIFICE IS GOOD, or A WOMAN’S LIFE IS A LOST FIGHT FOR THE INNER BALANCE/HARMONY, which glorify the woman’s sacrifice for the sake of the family, to the cultural stereotype of *Matka Polka*, dating back to the 19th century.

Exploring the attitudes towards male and female roles at different stages of relationships, López Maestre (2020) focuses on the conceptual metaphors LOVE/ SEDUCTION/THE SEARCH FOR PARTNER OR HUSBAND IS HUNT. The findings of the research show that women are frequently represented as active hunters, who desperately need to find a partner. This fact is illustrated by metaphorical expressions like *capture the heart*, *a good catch*, which originate from the source domain of the hunt and are used to explain the nature of the search for a partner. As López Maestre notes, men are

consistently presented in a positive way, using adjectives like *right*, *perfect*, or *marvellous*. Another important point made by the author is that sometimes females are also presented as prey to the male hunter and they are invited to play *hard to get* yet without overdoing, for otherwise, the man may redirect his attention and find another, *easier prey*. López Maestre (2020) highlights the value of conventional metaphors, that is, metaphors which are widely used in a culture, as being essentially the carriers of cultural lore, together with its values and ideologies. It is this perspective that our study adopts.

Data and methods

Our pilot study investigates how relationships are conceptualized in English and in Lithuanian. To that aim, an internet search was first conducted using the keyword *relationship*. From all the articles that appeared, only those articles with the topic of romantic relationships were selected. As a result, two corpora were compiled: the English corpus consists of 16 online newspaper articles, totalling 13 957 words; The Lithuanian corpus comprises 15 online newspaper articles, comprising 14 124 words. The selection of articles was based on the keyword *relationships*. From all the articles that appeared, only those articles with the topic of romantic relationships were selected and included in the corpus.

For the English corpus, four mainstream online newspaper were chosen: the Independent (*Independent.co.uk*), the Telegraph (*Telegraph.co.uk*), Express (*Express.co.uk*) and Dailymail (*Dailymail.co.uk*). For the Lithuanian corpus, the following four mainstream online newspapers were chosen: Lrytas (*Lrytas*), LRT (*Lrt*), 15min (*15min*), Alfa (*Alfa*). These sources were chosen based on their popularity among the readers. The articles from the English corpus date from March 2022 to February 2023, and Lithuanian articles date from August 2020 to March 2023. As a result, 414 metaphorical expressions were collected in the English corpus and 454 metaphorical expressions in the Lithuanian corpus.

Metaphorical linguistic expressions in the English corpus were identified using the updated version of the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIPVU) (Steen et al., 2010). The procedure is based on examining every word in the text, assessing whether or not its use can be explained – directly or indirectly – as a cross-domain mapping. If it can, the word is marked as metaphorical. The same procedure with a minor coding variation is applied in the case of substitution of lexical or grammatical purposes, as well as when the function of the word is overtly that of cross-domain mapping (Steen et al., 2010, pp. 5-6).

For the identification of metaphorical linguistic expressions in the Lithuanian corpus, the MIPVU adapted for Lithuanian was used (Urbonaitė, et al., 2019). This procedure has been adjusted as Lithuanian is a flectional language, which necessitates taking into consideration grammatical cases and derivational morphology.

Following the established practice, in the process of analysis of the English corpus, the online *Macmillan English Dictionary* (Rundell, 2002) was used to determine its basic meaning and assess its metaphorical use (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). In order to determine

basic word meanings and metaphorical uses in Lithuanian, the online *Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos žodynas (Dictionary of Contemporary Lithuanian)* (DCL; Keinys 2012) was used.

The data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative method and the comparative approach were used to identify the most frequent groups of conceptual metaphors in online articles of both languages. AntConc software (Anthony, 2019) was used to assist analysis of the corpora, specifically, comparing frequencies of selected keywords pertaining to the semantic fields of the identified metaphors and examining the concordances in which they were used. The qualitative method and the descriptive and analytical approaches were employed in the analysis of the collected examples. The identified metaphors were grouped according to the particular conceptual metaphor or, in the case of several target domains identified with the same source domain, according to their source domains.

Findings and discussion

1. General overview of the findings

The English mini-corpus (EnC) consists of 16 articles totalling 13 957 words of actual text; the Lithuanian mini-corpus (LtC) comprises 15 articles with a total of 14 124 words. The number of metaphorical expressions found in English and Lithuanian is similar: 414 and 454 metaphorical expressions, respectively, so that metaphor frequency in the EnC is one metaphor every 33 words and in the LtC, one metaphor every 31 words.

Overall, it can be stated that metaphors collected in English and Lithuanian online articles share a number of similarities. The conceptual metaphors identified in English and Lithuanian media are presented with their raw frequencies in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. *Conceptual metaphors and their raw and relative frequencies in the English corpus*

EN: Conceptual metaphor/source domain of conceptual metaphor	Raw frequency of MEs (%)
Metaphors with SD CONTAINMENT	49 (12%)
LOVE IS UNITY	41 (10%)
Metaphors with SD OBJECT	40 (10%)
LOVE IS A GAME	31 (7.5%)

Table 2. *Conceptual metaphors and their raw and relative frequencies in the Lithuanian corpus*

LT: Conceptual metaphor/source domain of conceptual metaphor	Raw frequency of MEs (%)
Metaphors with the source domain CONTAINMENT	58 (12.7%)
Metaphors with the source domain OBJECT	50 (11%)

Metaphors with SD LIVING ORGANISM	28 (7.4%)
LOVE IS A JOURNEY	28 (6.7%)
LOVE IS PHYSICAL ATTACHMENT	21 (5%)
Metaphors with SD SENSORY EXPERIENCE	14 (3.4%)
Personification	14 (3.4%)
Metaphors with SD DISEASE/PHYSICAL INJURY	12 (3%)
LOVE IS WAR	9 (2%)
LOVE IS MECHANISM/MACHINE	9 (2%)
LOVE IS NATURAL ELEMENT/FORCE	8 (2%)
LOVE IS CONTRACT/FINANCIAL DEAL	7 (1.6%)
Metaphors with SD MOVEMENT	60 (14%)
Metaphors with SD CRIME	6 (1.4%)
LOVE IS EVENT	6 (1.4%)
LOVE IS BUILDING	6 (1.4%)
LOVE IS FIRE	5 (1.2%)
ARGUING IS ROWING	5 (1.4%)
LOVE IS HUNT	4 (1%)
LOVE IS POLITICS	3 (0.7%)
LOVE IS INSANITY	3 (0.7%)
Metaphors with SD FOOD	2 (0.4%)
Metaphors with SD LIGHT/DARKNESS	2 (0.4%)
LOVE IS PUZZLE	1 (0.2%)
LOVE IS PIECE OF CLOTHING	1 (0.2%)
LOVE IS CHEMICAL REACTION	1 (0.2%)

Metaphors with the source domain DISEASE/PHYSICAL INJURY	47 (10.3%)
Metaphors with the source domain SPACE	42 (9.2%)
Metaphors with the source domain SENSORY EXPERIENCE	34 (7.4%)
LOVE IS PHYSICAL ATTACHMENT	23 (5%)
Metaphors with the source domain LIVING ORGANISM	21 (4.6%)
LOVE IS UNITY	19 (4.1%)
Metaphors with the source domain MOVEMENT	122 (27%)
LOVE IS NATURAL ELEMENT/FORCE	11 (2.4%)
LOVE IS WAR	10 (2.2%)
Metaphors with the source domain BUILDING	9 (2%)
LOVE IS A JOURNEY	8 (1.8%)
Personification	8 (1.8%)
LOVE IS PHYSICAL FORCE	7 (1.5%)
LOVE IS CONTRACT/FINANCIAL DEAL	6 (1.3%)
LOVE IS A SACRIFICE	5 (1%)

LOVE IS A PLANT	4 (0.88%)
LOVE IS A GAME	3 (0.66%)
LOVE IS MECHANISM/ MACHINE	3 (0.66%)
DARK IS BAD/IRRATIONAL, BRIGHT IS GOOD/RATIONAL	2 (0.44%)
LOVE IS INSANITY	2 (0.44%)
LOVE IS MAGIC	1 (0.22%)
LOVE IS FIRE	1 (0.22%)
LOVE IS THEATRE	1 (0.22%)

Due to space constraints, only the most contrastive and commonly shared patterns will be discussed below, viz., metaphors with the SD CONTAINER, UNITY, OBJECT, GAME, LIVING ORGANISM, SENSORY EXPERIENCE, PHYSICAL DISEASE/INJURY, JOURNEY, NATURAL ELEMENT, PHYSICAL FORCE, MOVEMENT and SPACE.

2. Metaphors with the SD CONTAINER

The source domain of CONTAINER is one of the most prevalent ones in both corpora, constituting 12% (49 MEs) and 58 (12.7%) of all the expressions, respectively. Understandably, while all containment metaphors include CONTAINMENT as its SD, target domains differ. The most common CM in the containment metaphor category is RELATIONSHIP IS A CONTAINER (which we take here as a superordinate metaphor, within which related metaphors having minor variations in the target domain may be distinguished), whereby a romantic relationship / love is viewed as a container that the person is in when they have romance with someone. Consequently, having a relationship may be rendered as *inside the relationship*, while all events that do not directly belong to it take place *outside* it. If the relationship becomes burdensome, a partner may feel the need to *escape it in order to feel free*, while the separation may become *liberating*. In Lithuanian examples of encoding the CONTAINER metaphor, the target domain is commonly RELATIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP CRISIS, or A PERSON IN A RELATIONSHIP. Nominalization patterns rendering the state of being in a container have a dedicated grammatical means, viz., the locative case on the noun and dependent adjectives and pronouns. Examples below illustrate linguistic manifestations of the

metaphor RELATIONSHIP IS A CONTAINER (hereinafter, MEs are given in bold italics):

EnC:

- (1) *My big target is to help millions of people find their correct partner, who can support them and have synergy **inside the relationship**.* (Express.co.uk, 2023)
- (2) *Brittan also believes in growing independently **within your marriage** to prevent you from thinking you have to **escape it in order to feel free**.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (3) *My divorce may have been necessary and **liberating**, but I have no plans to **go there** again.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (4) *In a surprise trend the report found that nearly one in three (29 per cent) 30-year-olds believed that sex **outside of marriage** was wrong...* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)

LtC:

- (5) *Priešingu atveju vaikai atsiduria **keblioje situacijoje**, kai jiems gali atrodyti, kad jie turi rinktis tarp jūsų dviejų.* (15min, 2022)
*Otherwise, the children find themselves **in a difficult situation** where they may feel that they have to choose between the two of you.*
- (6) *Nelaikykite **savyje** partnerio žodžių.* (15min, 2023)
*Do not keep your partner's words **inside yourself**.*
- (7) *Kiek laiko praleisti kartu **poroje** yra normalu?* (LRT, 2022)
*How much time is it normal **for a couple** to spend together?*

In the discourse of relationships and marriage, metaphors of containment are often encoded in language by means of adjectival or verbal forms of the lexemes *opened/atviras*, as opposed to *closed/uždaras*. This illustrates how in our conceptual system, marriage is perceived as a container in which people find themselves when they commit to another person. The marriage/relationship is seen as an open container when the partners decide to have more than one romantic partner, and the romantic relationship is seen as closed when their relationship is monogamous. In the LtC, *atvirumas / openness* is additionally used to refer to speaking up about one's relationships. Thus being honest is often perceived as being physically open, being upset about another person's words is viewed as holding it inside themselves, e.g.:

EnC:

- (8) *My partner's **marriage opened** around two years ago, after they'd been together for 12 years, at his wife's suggestion.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)

- (9) *Like Gaiman and Palmer, the **marriage was then closed** during a period of necessity and ultimately broke down.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)

LtC:

- (10) *Ar gali būti darni vadinamoji **atvira santuoka**, kai partneriai leidžia sau papildomus santykius su kitais žmonėmis?* (LRT, 2022)
- (11) *Can a so-called **open marriage** be harmonious when the partners allow themselves additional relationships with other people?* (LRT, 2022)
- (12) *Tai ir **atvirumo** ir pasitikėjimo vienas kitu klausimas... (15min, 2023)*
*This is alsother question of **openness** and trust in each other...*

3. LOVE/RELATIONSHIP IS UNITY

Conceptualising relationships as unity, in which two entities are combined, plays a significant part in the EnC and constitutes 10% (41 MEs) of all metaphors. Surprisingly, the metaphor is employed significantly less often In the LtC, viz., 4.1% (19 MEs). In English examples, the metaphorically used words and phrases *merge*, *split*, *union*, *other half*, *grow apart*, emphasize the conceptualization of the couple as one whole, while ending one's relationship is conceptualized as the whole that is being divided. Partners complement each other, as signalled by phrases in both corpora, such as *other half / antroji pusė* (also *sielos pusė*, lit. "part of the soul"); partners entering a relationship become a union, they *merge* / *susilieja*. In the LtC, the latter verb may also be nominalised, to produce the noun *susiliejimas* / *a merge*. This creates a belief that the responsibility to make one happy is in the hands of the other person. However, as the figures of our findings suggest, this is not a very common narrative for Lithuanian partners. In English, separation is rendered via the overall frequently used verb *split*; by the verb *separate*, and the noun *divorce*. Some examples are given below:

EnC:

- (13) *Recently, former S Club 7 singer Rachel Stevens, 44, announced she was **splitting from her husband** of 12 years...* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (14) *... Can non-**monogamous unions** ever work?* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (15) *They might say their **other half** was controlling...* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (16) *"I think it's easy to both **grow apart** and then kind of wonder why you're still together without having those conversations and coming back together," explained Zoe.* (Express.co.uk, 2022)
- (17) *In that surrender, Hekster explains that **we merge with that person** in a way and become completely preoccupied with them to the point where they dominate our thoughts.* (Independent.co.uk, 2023)

LtC:

(18) ...iš viso neieškoti savo **antros pusės**, nes nepalankus laikas. (Lrytas, 2020)
...not to look for one's **other half**, for the time is unfavourable.

(19) Galų gale, jūsų mylimasis nebūtinai turi būti ideali **sielos puselė**, bet jis turi būti jūsų pusėje. (15min, 2023)

After all, your lover doesn't have to be your ideal **soul mate**, but he has to be on your side

(20) Visada vienas partneris labiau nori susilieti, o kitas labiau nori atsiskirti. (LRT, 2022)

One partner always prefers to merge and the other prefers to separate.

(21) Įsimylėję išgyvename **susilieјimo** fazę. (LRT, 2022)

When we fall in love, we go through a **fusion** phase.

4. METAPHORS WITH THE SOURCE DOMAIN OBJECT

Another common category of underlying CMs in both corpora (40 ME (10%) in the EnC, 50 ME (11%) in the LtC) has OBJECT as their source domain. Within this superordinate metaphor, two more CMs may be distinguished, viz., RELATIONSHIP IS A FRAGILE OBJECT and RELATIONSHIP IS A TREASURED POSSESSION. We will discuss these cases below.

Most of the MEs in this category are reconstructed into conceptual metaphor LOVE/RELATIONSHIP IS AN OBJECT, in which the source domain structurally is a noun phrase with the head noun *relationships* or a related word from the same semantic field, e.g., *affairs*, and a modifier, which may be an adjective, an article, or a pronoun. Partners or relationships may be *new*, e.g., *nauja draugystė* 'new friendship'; making decisions in relationships may be *lengvas* 'easy' and *sunkus* 'difficult', which illustrate the conceptualization of the decisions made in a relationship as objects, which can be physically heavy or not. Couples may be *created*, *made*, or even *reinvented*, according to the EnC.

The conceptual metaphor A PERSON IN A RELATIONSHIP IS A FRAGILE OBJECT is also frequently employed in both corpora. In the EnC, this is conveyed by the metaphorically used adjective *damaged*, the phrase *flaws you uncover* or the verb *break*. In the LtC, the idea of partners experiencing problems as a couple, putting their unity at risk, is conveyed by verbs, such as *klijuoti* 'glue', *sugadinti* 'spoil', '(at)kurti '(re)create', *ištaisyti* 'mend', *apsunkinti* 'burden'. Overall, having problems is uncontrollable and is felt as if stumbling upon an obstacle as the verb *susidurti* 'bump into' is used. In both corpora, for long-term relationships, partners are expected to *support*, *maintain*, *sustain*, or *handle* their relationships. In the LtC, the latter idea is predominantly rendered by the verb *palaikyti* and the deverbal noun formed from it, viz., *palaikymas* 'keep(ing) up'. Together, the verb and the noun appear on 20 occasions. Meanwhile, the idea of maintaining relationships in the EnC appears four times less: only five occasions were found: 3 with the verb *maintain*, while *support*, *sustain*, *handle* appear one time each.

In both corpora, the target domain of the metaphor X IS AN OBJECT also deals with attributes of relationships. Hence X in the metaphor formula above may stand for feelings, trust or experience; like objects, feelings may be hidden: the ME *hidden relationships* / užslėpti jausmai is found in both corpora.

Objectification discourse in the LtC rests on three semantic groups of lexemes: those pertaining to the field of *mending*, *the field of encountering* and the field of *keeping up and maintaining*. This implicates that, while problems in relationships often come as unexpected, people do make attempts to bring them back to functionality and recognize that the process is lengthy and is not attainable momentarily. Meanwhile in English, this is not a common discussion point, as focus is rather placed on strategy and decision-making, as manifested by the phrases *takes priority*, *'what's underneath the argument'*, *get the love one wanted*, *paying attention to the smaller things*.

EnC:

- (22) *To catch an unfaithful partner in the act or confirm suspicions, people turn to the experts; private investigators, who make it their life's work to **uncover hidden relationships and illicit affairs**.* (Independent.co.uk, 2023)
- (23) ***The flaws you uncover** may cause you to question the relationship and reconsider whether they are your perfect match.* (DailyMail.co.uk, 2023)
- (24) *...to the multiple years of uncertainty that can often **make or break a couple**, recognizing the five stages can help you and your significant other last.*

LtC:

- (25) *Gali jie savo pastangomis imti ir sukurti, kad tas **santykis klijuotųsi**?* (LRT, 2022)
*They can use their own efforts to take and create so that the **relationship would glue together**.*
- (26) *Pasakykite partneriui, jog jis gali būti su jumis visiškai sąžiningas ir kad padarysite, ką galite, kog **viską ištaisytumėte**.* (15min, 2023)
*Tell your partner that he can be completely honest with you and that you will do what you can **to make everything right**.*
- (27) *Todėl būtina sumažinti lūkesčius ir atsisakyti romantiškų idealų, kurie gali **apsunkinti bet kokius santykius**.* (LRT, 2022)
*Therefore, it is necessary to lower the expectations and abandon romantic ideals, which can **burden any relationship**.*
- (28) *Nė vienas žmogus **nenori susidurti su** išdavyste...* (15min, 2022)
*No one wants to **face (lit. bump into)** betrayal.*

In discussing relationships, the metaphor RELATIONSHIP IS A POSSESSION also becomes prominent. In English, it is primarily manifested by constructions with the verb *to*

have and also *to lose* and *to keep*. In these examples, the partner, oneself, interest in the other person, and love are all presented as objects, which can be owned and therefore can also be lost. Thus, people *have a happy relationship* and say *our own marriage*. In similar contexts in the LtC, the verbs used are *prarasti*, *netekti* ‘lose’, or *išsaugoti* ‘keep, preserve’. On one occasion, the verb *susigrąžinti* ‘to return to oneself’ is used.

EnC:

- (29) *As far as I know, they both only **have one extra-marital partner**.*
(Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (30) *I'm a professional dating coach - and these are 5 things your boyfriend **SHOULD** be doing as a bare minimum if he wants to **keep you**.*
(DailyMail.co.uk, 2023)
- (31) *It's a classic sign of infatuation: **losing yourself** in the eyes of the one you love.* (Independent.co.uk, 2023)

LtC:

- (32) *Kokia skirtinga yra meilė ir kiek yra skirtingų būdų jos **netekti** arba **išsaugoti**.*
(Lrytas, 2020)
*How different love is and how many different ways there are **to lose** or **save it**.*
- (33) *Aš greit įsimyliu, bet **prarandu susidomėjimą**, kai tik man atsako tuo pačiu.*
(Alfa.lt, 2020)
*I fall in love quickly, but I **lose interest** as soon as I am reciprocated.*
- (34) *Toliau rasite patarimų, kaip **susigrąžinti savo partnerio širdį** ir pasitikėjimą,*
jeigu jį įskaudinote. (15min, 2022)
*Below you will find tips on how to **win back** (lit., ‘to return to yourself’) your **partner's heart** and trust if you have hurt them.*

Interestingly, while in the LtC, 11 (2%) instances of *losing* a relationship were found, in the EnC, the idea of losing a relationship appears only on two occasions (0.5%). Another observation is that discussion of maintaining or restoring the relationships proceeds with the adjective *sunku/sunkus* ‘difficult’ – 22 occasions (5%) in Lithuanian and 8 occurrences (2%) of *hard/harder* and *difficult* in English. Put together, these facts suggest that Lithuanian couples suffer from unhappy relationships more than English ones and find it harder to restore themselves after breaking up. On the other hand, this also suggests that in English culture, people are more ready to begin a new relationship. Our next CM discussed provides further evidence for this perspective.

5. LOVE/RELATIONSHIP IS A GAME

Conceptualisation of a romantic relationship as a game was identified in 7% (31 ME) of metaphorical occurrences in the EnC, hence the metaphor LOVE IS GAME, and, quite surprisingly, has a tellingly low presence in the LtC, viz., 0.66% (3 ME).

Similarly to sports, in a love game, there are teams of players as well as certain rules, according to which the game should be played. Competing players keep trying to outwit their rivals by deceiving them. This arrangement is clearly replicated in the relationship sphere, as illustrated by examples below:

- (35) *As he explained, a condition of his being able to date other women means **playing by a surprisingly strict set of rules**.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (36) *Finding out a partner **has cheated** is never easy - but most people would rather know the truth than remain in the dark about their significant other's infidelities.* (Dailymail.co.uk, 2023)
- (37) *The most common and obvious signs, he told us, are the ones such as spending longer hours at work, business trips, less sex, or **defensiveness**.* (Dailymail.co.uk, 2023)
- (38) *I can tell when the heat goes up in our own household that my husband mentally reaches for that familiar **Get Out of Jail Free card** that is moving out and finding someone else who comes with fewer children, demands and maybe fewer years on the clock.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (39) *For some couples it is **high stakes** to talk about their relationship so start conversations about other things like work, the media, TV and just life in general.* (Dailymail.co.uk, 2022)
- (40) *As well as thinking as **a team**, the duo also emphasises how important it is to lead individual lives too.* (Express.co.uk, 2022)

In (35), the metaphorical expression *playing by a surprisingly strict set of rules* describes a situation when a person decides to have more than one partner. The reference to the game is clear: a love life is conceptualized as a game in which disobeying rules may lead to losing this game. As can be seen, many examples connote the idea of adventurousness and taking risks; such are the verb *to cheat* and the noun *defensiveness* in (36) and (37), or imprisonment in a Monopoly game in (38). The notion of *the game* straightforwardly suggests that, in modern times, romance is perceived as a strategic and contest-like endeavour, where at different times, partners have to assume now more resolute, now more defensive, positions. It is no surprise then that a relationship often has *high stakes* (39), meaning that one can risk and either win or lose everything. Meanwhile harmonious relationships are perceived as being *a team* in a game (40), which is sometimes even posited as a precondition for maintaining a good relationship.

Meanwhile in the LtC, there are as few as three occurrences of the game metaphor, and all three connote the idea of an imbalanced relationship, where partners are players in competing teams. Thus, partners are portrayed as *mano varžovas*, ‘my rival’, and in another instance, an attempt is made at ‘levelling the score’ - *išlyginti rezultatą*... The example below explain the rules of the game to be followed:

- (41) *Norėdami atsigauti po neištikimybės turite stengtis būti **toje pačioje, o ne priešingoje komandoje***. (15min, 2022)

*To recover from infidelity you must try to **be on the same team, not the opposite one**.*

- (42) *Tik po to, kai jie susituokė, iš draugų sužinojau, kad **mano varžovas** tuo metu buvo atsakingas už laikraščio horoskopus ir pats juos pakoreguodavo kaip reikia*. (Lrytas, 2020)

*It was only after they were married that I learned from friends that **my rival** was in charge of the horoscopes of the newspaper at that time and he himself adjusted them accordingly.*

- (43) *Destruktyvūs veiksmai, kuriais siekiama **išlyginti rezultatą**, nieko gero neduos*... (15min, 2022)

*Destructive actions aimed at **levelling the score** will not lead to anything good...*

The contrast between the EnC and LtC suggests that relationships are perceived quite differently by the two cultures. Whereas in English culture, the partners perceive themselves rather as competent players who can use their strategy, follow rules, and achieve the desired effect, in Lithuanian culture, the partners in a relationship are rather contestants and rivals, while the absence of the component of orderliness in the game (such as rules or a strategy,) suggests that the players might not know exactly how this game is to be played to be successful.

6. Metaphors with the source domain LIVING ORGANISM

Metaphors with the SD LIVING ORGANISM are another category where there is a noticeable difference between the EnC and the LtC, viz., 7.4% (28 MEs) and 4.6% (21 MEs), respectively. Metaphorical expressions belonging to this CM depict relationship as an organism which, once born, needs to be raised and cared for – this is rendered by the verbs *nurture* and *foster* / *puoselėti*. In favourable conditions, the relationships will *grow* and *evolve* to become *mature/brandesni*, that is, *long-lasting*. In Lithuanian, unfolding relationships are defined with the verbs *vystosi* ‘develop’, and *auga* ‘grow’; various stages *perauga* ‘grow into’ into new ones. In both corpora, focus is placed on *healthy/sveikas* relationships (16 and 18 occurrences of the adjective or its forms, respectively); but that relationship may be *unhealthy/nesveikas*, or *damaged / pažeistas* is also acknowledged. On one occasion in the EnC, the relationship is defined as *poisoned* and the question is

asked if it can *survive*. In the LtC, an imperfect relationship is once described through the physical property of gait: *santykiai šlubuoja* ‘relationship is faltering’.

- (44) *For Tyler, **nurturing the emotional intimacy** of a marriage should come before anything.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (45) *“This characterizes the more **mature versions of love**,” he adds, explaining that it can be a sign of deep, long-lasting love.* (Independent.co.uk, 2023)
- (46) *They explained the key in every stage was **healthy communication** as well as investing in yourself, while allowing your partner **space to grow**.* (DailyMail.co.uk, 2023)

LtC:

- (47) *Kad jūsų santykiai **būtų stiprūs ir sveiki**...* (15min, 2022)
*May your relationship **be strong and healthy**...*
- (48) *Dėl to sėkmingos poros partneriai stebina vienas kitą, **išsaugo meilės gyvumą**.* (Alfa.lt, 2023)
*As a result, the partners of a successful couple surprise each other and **keep their love alive**.*
- (49) *Dauguma **romantiškus santykius puoselėjančių** žmonių tikisi, kad jų santykiai bus išskirtiniai – jokių kitų partnerių.* (LRT, 2022)
*Most people **nurturing romantic relationships** expect their relationship to be exclusive—no other partners.*
- (50) *Gali būti ir atvirkščiai – galvoji, kad pavargai nuo darbo, o iš tiesų **šlubuoja santykiai**.* (LRT, 2022)
*It can also be the other way around - you think you are tired of work, but in reality your **relationship is faltering**.*

7. Metaphors with the source domain SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Sensory experience metaphors have twice as high a presence in the LtC than in the EnC, viz., 7.4% (34 ME) and 3.4% (14 ME) respectively.

Examples in this category perceive relationships through the senses, such as taste, feeling or seeing, and are reconstructed into conceptual metaphor EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE IS SENSORY EXPERIENCE, e.g.:

- (51) *When we are unaware of our childhood conditioning, we may find ourselves upset, resentful and **bitter with our partner**...* (DailyMail.co.uk, 2022)
- (52) *And while conflicts may begin to arise, it still **feels quite mild**.* (DailyMail.co.uk, 2023)

- (53) *You might be experiencing one of the obvious indicators — like not being able to think about anyone or anything else but that person — or the signs could be more **obfuscated**.* (Independent.co.uk, 2023)
- (54) *It felt unworkable and when I pushed the button I **never looked back**.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)

Unpleasant experience with a partner is rendered through the adjective *bitter*. In the EnC and through the verb form *apkartinti* ‘to make bitter’ In the LtC. The most frequent sensory experience employed In the EnC is that of *seeing* – as many as 8 MEs out of 14. To care about a relationship or to understand the partner is to *see* them; the phrase *you're not fully seeing your partner* is used to describe not being considerate about another person's feelings, and emotions. Six MEs deal with tactile experience, five of which have to do with *pain*, which is rendered through the respective noun, or the verb *hurt*. Another tactile rendering is through the adjective *mild*, which describes the atmosphere in the relationship.

In the LtC, the conceptual element of *seeing* is also used, so that the occurrences at the level of relationships, which are intangible, are *seen*: *nebematoma problemu...*, *pamatoma realybė* ‘problems aren’t seen, the reality is seen...’. Meanwhile, the number of tactile sensory experiences as *pain* is overwhelming – 27 occurrences out of 31 MEs. The noun *skausmas*, the verb *įskaudinti* ‘to cause pain to’ and its forms, as well as the deverbial noun *įskausminimas* ‘pain-causing’, or the adjective *skausmingas* ‘painful’ appear in these MEs. Emotional pain is also localised in the body: *širdgėla* ‘heartburn’, *širdies skausmas* ‘heartache’. Consequently, the metaphor NEGATIVE EMOTION IS PHYSICAL PAIN may be distinguished. There are also two occurrences of tactile sensory experience as *prisiliesti* ‘touch’, *susiliesti* ‘touch each other’; while a euphoric atmosphere may *svaiginti* ‘make feel dizzy, intoxicate’.

LtC:

- (55) *Iškilę nesutarimai ir ginčai gali kaip reikiant **apkartinti poros gyvenimą**...* (15min, 2023)
*Disagreements and arguments can **make a couple's life bitter** as it should be...*
- (56) *Jausmų pliūpsnis santykių pradžioje gali **svaiginti**.* (LRT, 2022)
*The burst of feelings at the beginning of a relationship **can be dizzying**.* (LRT, 2022)
- (57) *Anksti pastebėję ir suvaldę raudonas vėliavas santykiuose, galime apsisaugoti nuo **širdgėlos**.* (LRT, 2022)
*By spotting and raising red flags in the relationship, we can protect ourselves from **heartache**.*

8. Metaphors with the source domain PHYSICAL DISEASE/INJURY

A related dimension is metaphors with the source domain PHYSICAL DISEASE/INJURY, with 12 MEs (3%) in the EnC and 47 MEs (10.3%) in the LtC.

This is how the number of MEs in this and the preceding categories can explain the low number of occurrences of Lithuanian MEs in the metaphorical narrative of Game. Given that the number of instances relating to physical harm is three times higher in the LtC, romance is perceived as something not to be played with, because in the case of being unsuccessful, people have a hard time recovering from it. Consequently, in addition to just feeling pain, it is common to use words that are related to physical diseases to describe the relationship or the end of the relationship.

In both corpora, the adjective *toxic/toksiškas* – albeit with a different frequency: one occurrence in the EnC and 21 in the LtC – defines unhealthy relationships:

- (58) *“Your children are getting older, seeing the arguments and asking questions, and it can feel quite shameful and **toxic**,” says Bose. (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)*
- (59) ***Toksiškais santykiais tampa** tada, kai santykiai būna paremti vieno partnerio ar partnerės noru kontroliuoti ir naudoti galią kito atžvilgiu. (LRT, 2023)*
***A relationship becomes toxic** when it is based on the desire of one partner to control and exercise power over the other.*

In the English language, unhappy relationships are conceptualized as diseases needing treatment.

- (60) ***Divorce can be catching**, and if those around you are separating it makes me feel that I should be on my guard. (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)*
- (61) *“If there’s contempt or too much trust broken or **too much of an injury in a relationship to make it work** then you’re often better on your own,” says Bose. (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)*
- (62) *Chung explained that you should begin to look out for ‘unhealthy’ relationship patterns that form during this phase, such as your partner **giving you the silent treatment** after an argument. (Dailymail.co.uk, 2023)*

In the LtC, the target domains are RELATIONSHIP, BREAKUP, INJURY, INFIDELITY, AND FEELINGS. Some examples of metaphorical expressions include:

- (63) *Atvirumas, kalbėjimasis apie tai suteikia santykiams sklandumo, žmonės mokosi, bet **randai** visada yra. (LRT, 2022)*
*Being open, talking about it makes the relationship smooth, people learn, but **the scars** are always there.*

- (64) *Skaudulys ima pūliuoti ir kada nors ateityje gali sprogti.* (15min, 2023)
An abscess can fester and burst at some point.

Negative experiences are commonly described as diseases, traumas, or wounds that need to be healed. The explanation for this could be quite simple – the human body, mind and soul are connected to each other, thus the experiences that affect one psychologically or emotionally – even though they do not affect the body directly – are conceptualized as physical experiences.

9. LOVE/RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY

The metaphor LOVE/RELATIONSHIP IS A JOURNEY, again, has different presence in the two corpora: 6.7% (28 ME) in English vs 1.8% (8 ME) in Lithuanian. The two lovers who create their relationship are conceptualized as two travellers travelling together who start their journey as they make *the first step / pirmas žingsnis*; on their way/path/kelias, they *hit obstacles, follow someone's footsteps*, they may *pasukti skirtingais keliais* 'turn different ways' and so on. Below are a few examples of such conceptualisation:

EnC:

- (65) *Of course, divorce is often the only – and **right – way forward** for many couples, especially if there are issues such as domestic abuse or coercive control.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (66) *Luckily, two dating experts have offered up **a kind of romantic road map, laying bare the five different 'stages' of a relationship**...* (Dailymail.co.uk, 2023)

LtC:

- (67) *Galbūt norėsite parašyti ką nors negražaus apie partnerį socialiniuose tinkluose, o gal – užmegzti romaną, tačiau iš tikrųjų tai **nėra geras pirmas žingsnis**.* (15min, 2022)
*You might want to write something nasty about your partner on social media, or maybe have an affair, but **that's not really a good first step**.*
- (68) ***Kelias į tikrą ir gilų artimumą** visada eina per krizes.* (Alfa.lt, 2020)
***The path to true and deep intimacy** always goes through crises.*

While most of the examples are clear references to various stages of a journey of two lovers, each corpus contains one instance where past experiences, which the person gains in a relationship, are seen as physical *baggage/bagažas* in the journey. Hence, regardless of whether the past relationship was positive or negative, *baggage* as such may

occasionally become burdensome. Yet, while physical baggage may be left at any point, it is impossible to abandon the experience previously gained in one's life.

(69) *And she added that while everyone carries baggage from past relationships or childhood...* (Express.co.uk, 2023)

(70) *...naujai draugystei be kelių ar keliolikos metų bagažo dažnai būna neįtikėtinai sunku atsisirti.* (LRT, 2023)
...a new friendship without the baggage of a few or a dozen years is often incredibly difficult to resist.

Balanced relationships are likened to moving forward; splitting couples *hit a romantic cul-de-sac* and may raise the question whether it is at all possible *to get through* or *grįžti normalias vėžes* 'to get back on track', or whether they would rather *decide to* turn different paths 'pasukti skirtingais keliais'.

Overall, however, the perception of the relationships as a journey in Lithuanian, relative to EnC, is presented in a rather pessimistic light. Travelling is connoted by the verbs and verb phrases *slystelėti* 'slip'; *priveisti net iki fizinio smurto* 'lead one to violence', *pabėgti nuo skyrybų sukkelto skausmo* 'to run away from the pain caused by the divorce'. In English, the couple may *slide into marriage*, *surmounted the hard baby years of sleepless nights*, and *have new adventures*. Overall, in English, the destination of the journey is portrayed in calm tones and obstacles may be placed in the present, but not in the future. The destination of the journey is the place where the partners will feel good, and consequently, the initial stage of the journey is portrayed with hope:

(71) After *getting through a number of obstacles together...* (Dailymail.co.uk, 2023)

(72) *She wanted to explore a relationship with an old university acquaintance and my partner was willing to give it a go.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)

10. Metaphors with the source domain MOVEMENT

Metaphors with the source domain MOVEMENT constitute the largest groups in both corpora, yet their presence in the LtC is twice as high: 27% (122ME) as opposed to 14% (60ME) in the EnC. Within this group, the larger group of metaphors with SD MOVEMENT may be further subdivided into CMs conceptualizing the various aspects of movement, in particular, DIRECTIONALITY and SPACE. Frequently these are mixed metaphors, also employing the CONTAINMENT metaphor, where a verb of motion is accompanied by a directional or locative adverbial complement, as in, e.g., *falling in love*, *to jump to conclusions*, *turn toward one's partner*; or a noun complement, e.g., *reach a deeper emotional level*. In Lithuanian, the respective examples are 'straighten from the divorce experienced' – *atsitiesti sau po patirtų skyrybų*; *pabėgdavo pas jaunesnę* 'would

run away to a younger one', *atsispirti neištikimybės* 'resist to infidelity' (literally 'push off'), *suversti kaltę dėl savo veiksmų kitam žmogui* 'put the blame on another person for one's actions', or *pulti į savigraužą* 'fall into self-loathing'.

A brief mention should be made about metaphors with the source domain SPACE.

11. Metaphors with the source domain SPACE

In Lithuanian, being in a relationship is quite often associated with being physically close to the partner 42 MEs (9% out of all metaphorical expressions). The idea of proximity as a prerequisite of balanced relationships is a recurrent motif of this type of metaphor. Thus, the adjective *artimas* 'close, located nearby' (and its forms) appears on 20 occasions, the respective noun, *artumas* 'proximity' on three occasions, and the verb and participle formed from *suartėti* 'to get close' on one occasion each in the LtC. Interestingly, while these Lithuanian word forms literally mean proximity, *nearness*, in English, the adjective *close* is used to render the short distance between partners and appears on 10 occasions, while semantically, its meaning also implicates a closure in which two people are contained; and there is one occurrence of *near* in a similar sense.

An interesting example is motion downwards, In the LtC suggesting a partner suppressing their opinion in order to avoid potential conflict:

(73) ...aš visada **nusileidžiu**, kad išvengčiau konflikty. (Alfa.lt, 2020)

*I always **compromise** (lit. 'go down') to avoid conflict.*

The idea of downward motion is expressed in the English example below:

(74) **Deep down** it means you don't value your partner's opinion or you might not even care. (Dailymail.co.uk, 2022).

In these examples, the person is perceived as a measurable *deep* container. We can notice that *downward direction* implies insincerity in Lithuanian, but honesty in English. This can be explained by distinguishing the CONTAINER metaphor in the English example, in addition to DIRECTIONALITY: going to the deeper levels of one's soul unveils the person's true thoughts. Meanwhile, in the Lithuanian example, the act of compromising takes place *outside* the person's inner self component (and arguably, the rational one), hence outside his/her soul. Hence, as such, there is no person's openness as to their own opinions and beliefs, other than conflict avoidance.

12. Source domains of A NATURAL ELEMENT and PHYSICAL FORCE

The metaphors of romantic relations being a NATURAL ELEMENT and FORCE have a relatively small number of occurrences In the EnC, viz. 8 (2%) and 1, respectively (0.66%). In the LtC, while the number of occurrences of the former metaphor is similar to that in English (11 ME, 2.4%), the presence of metaphors of Physical Force makes the

total number of these two kinds of metaphors nearly double In the LtC. All eight metaphorical expressions in the latter category have either the verb *traukti* ‘draw, pull’, or the deverbal noun *trauka* ‘pull’, *potraukis* ‘attraction’, both connoting that liking – or disliking – is an uncontrolled feeling, which the person cannot control themselves.

Thus, the metaphorical expressions referring to the discourse on relationships in the two corpora denote:

- liquid substances, viz., *in the flow, spate*; in the LtC, *pliūpsnis* ‘pour/drop’, *dry out?*‘, *liejasi*, ‘(words) flow freely’ *šaltinis* ‘source’;
 - temperature variation, *heat goes up*; In the LtC, *šaltas* ‘cold’, *atšalti* ‘to grow cold’;
 - wind, e.g., *audringi santykiai* ‘tempestuous relationships’;
 - destructive force, which in English is rendered through the phenomena which may affect affect larger-than-a-person entities, viz., *explosion, disaster, devastated*. Meanwhile in the LtC, force is conceptualised in its effect on the psycho-physical awareness of the person, viz., *svaiginti* ‘make feel dizzy’, *priblokštas* ‘stunned’;
- force of attraction denoted by the verb forms *attract, be drawn*; *traukia* ‘pull, attract’, the nouns *trauka* ‘pull, attraction’, *potraukis* ‘attraction’.

-

EnC:

- (75) *Recently we have witnessed a spate of close friends separating – apparently for no good reason.* (Telegraph.co.uk, 2022)
- (76) *The explosion in dating sites for specific age groups was testimony to this.* (Express.co.uk, 2023)
- (77) *And opposites truly do attract as Ms Bezdu explained you'll likely be drawn to an individual who has traits you don't possess - which isn't a bad thing.* (Dailymail.co.uk, 2022)

The palpable presence of the metaphor of a PHYSICAL FORCE In the LtC suggests that people tend to regard their relations as being beyond people’s capacity to control them. At the temperature level, there is evidence that loss of attraction has a greater presence in relationships than a passionate romance.

Conclusions

The study explored the contemporary conceptualisation of romantic relationships in English and Lithuanian on the basis of online newspaper articles, aiming to understand how the two cultures perceive romance. To fulfill the aim of the study, previous studies on conceptual metaphor theory as well as research in metaphor analysis of gender-related dimensions have been overviewed. For the practical part, two mini-corpora were compiled from articles on relationships published in four mainstream online newspapers

of the respective cultures: the English corpus comprising 16 online articles (13 957 words), and the Lithuanian corpus comprising 15 online articles (14 124 words).

Our findings suggest a greater pessimism in Lithuanian culture with regard to relationships. This is manifested by the low occurrence of GAME metaphor and relatively high occurrences of metaphors of PHYSICAL INJURY/DISEASE and SENSORY EXPERIENCE, the prevalent dimension of which is *pain*. Metaphors of NATURAL ELEMENT and FORCE suggest that relationships tend to be out of control. Albeit undiscussed in the article, one other distinct category not found in English are metaphors of SACRIFICE, which further confirm a rather self-restrained perspective on relationships in Lithuanian culture. Meanwhile English culture, from the metaphorical perspective, is presented as more readily embracing the intricacies of building and handling relationships and overall having a more optimistic outlook. This is evidenced by noticeably higher occurrences of metaphors of GAME, JOURNEY, and UNITY. Analysis of a larger corpus of data may provide further insights into the attitudes towards relationships in the two cultures. The results of this study may have implications for raising awareness of the ways the discourse on relationships is constructed and of consciously using the language, including metaphorical manifestations, as a tool to implement remedial measures aimed at enhancing the quality of relationships.

Abbreviations

CM – conceptual metaphor, EnC – English corpus, lit. – literally, LtC – Lithuanian corpus, ME – metaphorical expression, n – noun, TD – target domain, SC – source domain, v – verb.

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