

LOVE AS A SYSTEM -> RELATIONAL GRAMMAR OF LOVE

From the internal composition of love to a shared grammar between two people

1. Starting Point: Love Is Not a Single Fixed Emotion

Research on long-term intense romantic love and unconditional love suggests that love can be understood not as one universal, fixed emotion, but as a complex state composed of relational elements such as passion, attachment, closeness, desire, friendship, care and compassion, and reward and motivation. Long-term romantic love may preserve reward, motivation, and passion while also incorporating attachment, bonding, and companionship. Different forms of love may also share some neural systems while differing in their overall composition.

Core question: If we all use the same word, LOVE, are we actually referring to the same emotional and relational structure?

2. From Individual LOVE to Relational LOVE

Even when two people both say "I love you," they may not mean exactly the same thing. For one person, love may be centered on attachment and friendship; for another, it may be shaped more strongly by passion and desire, or by care and compassion. The difference, therefore, may begin not only in how love is expressed, but in how love itself is internally composed and understood.

3. How a Shared Grammar Emerges

Research Concept	What It Explains	Interpretation in This Project
Personal Idioms	Relationship-specific words, jokes, gestures, and signals	Shared Vocabulary
Relational Culture	A relationship-specific system of meaning formed through repeated interactions and experience	Shared Systematic Meaning
Shared Reality	Meaning co-constructed through interaction and mutual recognition	Co-construction & Mutual Recognition

Together, these concepts suggest that although two people may enter a relationship with different internal compositions of love, they gradually create shared meanings for particular words, actions, gestures, and forms of intimacy. I therefore want to expand the idea of a Love Language beyond an individual's preferred way of giving or receiving love and toward a **Relational Grammar of Love**: a system of meaning co-created and mutually recognized by two people.

4. Core Proposition

Each loving relationship may develop its own relational grammar. This grammar is not limited to private words or expressions. It is the shared system through which two people determine what particular behaviors, intimacy, presence, exclusivity, and even love itself mean within their relationship.

5. Development of the Research Question

What is your love made of?

What elements compose an individual's understanding of love?

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What is our love made of?

How do two people transform different understandings of love into a shared relational meaning?



What happens when "our" no longer means the same thing to both of us?

What happens when the shared grammar of love no longer carries the same meaning for both participants?

6. The Question Emerging from Her

In *Her*, Theodore and Samantha gradually develop their own ways of communicating, expressing intimacy, and understanding love. As Samantha changes, however, intimacy, presence, exclusivity, and even the meaning of "I love you" no longer seem to function in the same way for both of them. Rather than simply asking whether Samantha still loves Theodore, the film led me to a different question:

If the grammar of love is co-created and mutually recognized by two people, can one person unilaterally change that grammar while remaining in the same relationship?

Research Structure

LOVE as composition -> Different internal meanings of LOVE -> Shared vocabulary -> Shared system of meaning
-> Co-construction & mutual recognition -> **Relational Grammar of Love** -> What happens when the grammar changes?

Key References

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