

Does love need to be expressed to be understood?

KEY THEORY

Paul Grice - speaker meaning

Meaning is not simply contained in the words themselves, but is formed through the process in which a speaker conveys an intention and the listener recognizes that intention.

EXAMPLE

The Coat. A partner wordlessly offers a coat on a cold day. No words are exchanged, but the intention behind the gesture is still recognized, and so the meaning is understood as love.

Can an action become a language of love even when it was not intended to communicate love?

CASE STUDY

The coffee example - unintentional meaning

A makes coffee every morning without meaning to say “I love you.” B still experiences it as love.
Meaning may not require a sender's intention at all.

DIALOGUE

A: “I was just doing what I always do.”

B: “I feel loved by that.”

Who creates the meaning of love?

KEY FRAMEWORK

Three loci of meaning

The sender's intention, the receiver's interpretation, or the shared meaning built between two people through repetition. A personal idiom can form even where no original intention existed.

POSITIONS

01 A's Intention — no intent to communicate love existed

02 B's Interpretation — the act is read as love regardless

03 Shared Relational Meaning — repetition turns it into a private idiom

How does culture shape the way we understand and express love?

KEY THEORY

Niklas Luhmann - love as a symbolic code

Love is not a raw feeling but a symbolically generalized medium, a code that makes intensely personal passion communicable, alongside money, power, and truth.

MEDIA

Economy — Money Politics — Power Science — Truth Intimacy — Love

Has the code of love always been the same?

KEY CONCEPT

The historical semantics of intimacy

From courtly love to amour passion, Romanticism, and modern individualized love, each era rewrote the grammar of what counts as a loving act.

TIMELINE

Courtly Love → Amour Passion (17th c.) → Romanticism → Modern Individualized Love

Where do intention and culture meet?

SYNTHESIS

Grice and Luhmann - micro and macro

Grice explains how intention is recognized within a single exchange. Luhmann explains how the cultural code that makes that recognition possible was built up over history.

BREAKDOWN

Micro — intention recognized within a single exchange, between two people

Macro — the cultural code that makes that recognition possible, built across history