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MIGRATION AND CONCEPTUALIZATION: LOVE AND FAMILY AMONG TURKISH RESIDENTS IN HUNGARY AND TÜRKIYE

Abstract: This study examines the conceptual categories of love and family among Turkish residents in Türkiye and Turkish migrants in Hungary in order to explore how migration shapes core cultural concepts. Using a free-listing task with 219 participants, the research identifies both shared cultural foundations and context-specific variations. Contrary to earlier literature that often emphasizes negative or conflictual aspects in Turkish conceptualizations, both groups primarily described love and family in positive terms. Nevertheless, notable differences emerged in the salience of traditional and collectivist elements. These findings indicate that conceptual categories are flexible and responsive to new social and cultural environments, supporting the view of culture as dynamic rather than fixed. The study concludes that migration functions not only as a social and political phenomenon but also as a cognitive process that reorganizes central human concepts.

Keywords: love, family, migration, conceptual categories, cognition, free-listing

1. Introduction

Culture, language, and cognition evolve through individual and collective experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Consequently, meaning is not a fixed or universal concept but is constructed by how people and cultures interpret their lives (Lemmens, 2015). Words serve as pointers to concepts and reflect the underlying cultural and cognitive frameworks through which those concepts are built (Palmer, 1996). Concepts such as love and family are fundamental human experiences, stemming from universal needs for attachment, care, and belonging (Fehr & Russell, 1991; Gottschall & Nordlund, 2006). However, the specific meaning and conceptualization of these terms are far from static or universal (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992; Weigel, 2008). Therefore, understanding the cultural variation in these core concepts is essential for a comprehensive view of human cognition and language.

Cognitive linguistics provides a robust theoretical framework for understanding this conceptual diversity, positing that language is a critical window into cognition and culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Concepts such as love and family are particularly well-suited for comparative cognitive research as they combine a universal foundation with rich cultural particularity. However, a significant gap exists in the empirical research on these domains, as studies have historically relied on a narrow participant base, primarily drawn from Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) societies (Henrich et al., 2010; Kim & Tjuka, 2024). This overreliance risks presenting culturally specific tendencies as universal human traits, leaving vast areas of human conceptual experience underexamined. Moreover, these studies often treat culture as a monolithic entity, thereby overlooking the complex experiences of migrants who actively co-construct their conceptualizations through continuous intercultural interaction (Lu, 2017; Wang, 2024). To achieve a comprehensive understanding of human cognition, it is therefore essential to move beyond WEIRD samples and incorporate the experiences of diverse populations.

This study seeks to address this critical gap by examining how the concepts of love and family are understood in a dynamic context. The focus is on Türkiye, a country where rapid globalization and urbanization have contributed to significant shifts in values (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2005). Concurrently, persistent political and economic crises have fuelled a continuous wave of migration, particularly among skilled young people, making “brain drain” a subject of national concern (Giannoccolo, 2009; Taşçı, 2024). As these highly educated individuals build lives abroad, questions arise about the evolution of their cultural values and whether their conceptual frameworks remain aligned with those in their country of origin. This context of rapid social change and international mobility makes Türkiye an ideal case study for investigating the flexibility and resilience of cultural concepts. This research, therefore, has two primary aims: (1) to investigate the flexibility of conceptualizations and cultural categories in a non-WEIRD context, and (2) to examine the extent to which migration alters these categories. Using a free-listing task, this study analyzes how Turkish residents in Türkiye and Turkish migrants in Hungary categorize the concepts of love and family. By examining their associations, the research explores how the experience of migration influences these conceptual categories and how such changes are reflected in language. Ultimately, this study offers critical, empirically grounded insights into the relationship between life-changing experiences, cognition, and conceptual categorization, thereby contributing to a more inclusive cognitive linguistic framework.

2. Meaning through a Cultural Lens

Meaning emerges from conceptual structures that organize perception and knowledge (Riemer, 2015). Two concepts are at the core of this process: cognitive schemas and categories. Schemas provide interpretive templates for experience, while

categories link individual instances to broader classes of understanding (Langacker, 2014; Rosch, 1975). Conceptual structures are constantly renegotiated in response to new experiences (Sharifian, 2011, 2017). Far from being static, they are shaped dynamically by social interaction and cultural practices, which explains the variation in meaning across different contexts (Piaget, 1971; Shore, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978).

This cognitive framework views culture as a system of shared meanings and practices that guides social interaction (Hofstede et al., 2010; Shore, 1998). Such a system gains its coherence and continuity from the recurrent, collective experiences that stabilize cognitive schemas within a community (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). However, this stability is not absolute; the system must remain flexible to accommodate new information and circumstances (Palmer, 1996; Sharifian, 2011). Migration is a powerful catalyst for this cognitive flexibility, forcing individuals to reorganize their conceptual categories through the active negotiation of their heritage and host cultures (Lu, 2017; Wang, 2024). Consequently, intercultural encounters often reshape basic concepts and produce hybrid categories (Sharifian, 2017).

3. Love and Family as Cultural Concepts

While love and family are universal experiences grounded in fundamental human needs for attachment and belonging (Gottschall & Nordlund, 2006), the forms they take are culturally mediated practices (Jankowiak & Fischer, 1992; Palmer, 1996). Although the capacity for love is universal, the value placed upon it and its expressions vary widely across cultures and even among individuals (Gottschall & Nordlund, 2006; Heshmati et al., 2019). This inherent variability has led to long-standing difficulties in establishing a singular, cross-cultural definition of the concept (Fehr & Russell, 1991). The concept of family is similarly resistant to a single definition. While its core often revolves around emotional bonds such as trust and care, structural features, such as co-residence or blood relations, are frequently considered secondary (Weigel, 2008). Culture provides the primary framework for defining who counts as family, what love entails, and how these crucial relationships should be maintained (Sharifian, 2011).

The culturally grounded nature of these concepts also makes them inherently fluid. This conceptual dynamism is not only present across different societies but also within them, where the meanings of love and family can vary by generation, social position, or identity (Kuchynskyi, 2022). Migration is a powerful force that increases this variability, as it compels individuals to balance the cultural norms of their home country with those of their new country (Lu, 2017). This process can trigger a range of cognitive and affective responses, including nostalgia (Ward et al., 2001), the extension of existing conceptual categories (Kharkhurin, 2010), the reorganization of core schemas (Lu, 2017), and the blending of distinct cultural models (Shore, 1998).

4. Free-Listing

Cultural Domain Analysis (CDA) is a methodological approach used to investigate the structure of cultural knowledge by examining how people group related items into shared conceptual domains (Stausberg, 2021). A key technique within CDA is the free-listing task, which provides insight into shared cultural schemas by revealing how individuals organize items within a given concept (Bernard, 2006). In this task, participants are asked to list all items that come to mind for a specific domain. These responses are then analyzed to identify salient features and underlying cognitive structures that reflect cultural understandings (Bernard, 2006; Sharifian, 2011). The frequency of listed items helps identify culturally central elements, while idiosyncratic responses can illuminate individual or context-specific variations (Bernard, 2006).

While this method is powerful, abstract domains such as love and family are known to yield highly diverse responses, which can present analytical challenges (Manoharan & de Munck, 2017; Sabloff et al., 2017). Despite this limitation, the method's ability to capture both universal elements and cultural experiences in conceptualization makes it an effective tool for exploring cross-cultural (Taşdemir & Naji, 2024) and intra-cultural (Kuchynskyi, 2022) variations, thereby making it ideal for this study.

5. Methodology

This study employed a free-listing task to examine the conceptual categories of love and family among Turkish residents in Türkiye and Hungary. The research was guided by two primary questions: (1) What similarities and differences exist in how Turkish residents in Türkiye and Hungary categorize love and family? and (2) How does the experience of migration shape these conceptual categories among Turkish residents in Hungary? In line with previous cross-cultural research, it was hypothesized that both groups would share a common cultural foundation regarding the central features of love and family. The primary hypothesis was that the Türkiye-based participants would emphasize more collectivist values, whereas the Hungary-based participants would incorporate more individualist and context-specific elements reflecting their migration experience and exposure to the host culture.

Data were collected over three months via Qualtrics, an online survey platform. All instruments were administered in Turkish. The primary instrument was a free-listing task, which prompted participants with two open-ended questions: "What words or phrases do you associate with love?" and "What words or phrases do you associate with family?" Participants could provide as many responses as they wished without a time limit. In addition to the main task, a demographic survey collected data on age, gender, cultural background, and language use. This survey

also included a single-item measure for religiosity, asking participants to rate the importance of religion in their lives on a 6-point scale (1 = not at all important, 6 = very important). As summarized in Table 1, these demographic variables were collected to aid in interpreting how social and cultural factors might shape the conceptualization of love and family.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

	n	Gender Distribution (%)	Age (Min–Max)	Age (M, SD)	Religion & Spirituality (M, SD, Var)
TR-HU	101	Male 41% Female 57%	18–50	36.20, 13.58	2.79, 1.34, 1.79
TR-TR	118	Male 44% Female 50%	18–48	33.52, 8.56	3.75, 1.31, 1.73

Note. TR-HU = Turkish residents living in Hungary; TR-TR = Turkish residents living in Türkiye. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Var = Variance. Religion & Spirituality were measured with a single item on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 6 (very important).

The study involved two distinct participant groups. The first group (TR-TR) comprised 118 residents of Türkiye (ages 18–48) who were born and raised in Türkiye to Turkish parents and had not lived abroad for more than 2 months. This group was primarily recruited from teachers in Ankara and İstanbul using snowball sampling via personal networks and Facebook. The second group (TR-HU) consisted of 101 individuals (ages 18–50) who shared the same background but had been living in Hungary for at least two years for work or study. They were recruited in Budapest through posters in Turkish supermarkets and via Turkish-language Facebook and WhatsApp groups.

While the gender distribution was similar across both groups, the TR-HU participants were, on average, slightly older and rated religion and spirituality as less important compared to their TR-TR counterparts. Additionally, the TR-HU group answered questions specific to their migration experience, reporting moderate engagement with Turkish culture, stronger engagement with Hungarian culture, and moderate use of the Hungarian language in daily life. They also indicated infrequent thoughts of returning to Türkiye. These findings were consistent with previous research on Turkish communities in Hungary (Kars & Çakmaklı, 2023; Vatanserver, 2024).

Table 2: TR-HU Group: Experience in Hungary

Variable	M	SD
Experience of Turkish Culture	2.79	0.87
Experience of Hungarian Culture	3.44	0.93
Frequency of Thinking about Returning to Türkiye	2.01	1.16
Frequency of Using Hungarian in Daily Life	2.92	1.25

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation; Range: 1.00-5.00; N = 101

The analysis of the free-list data began with a systematic cleaning and standardization process, following the methodologies established by Bernard (2006) and Fehr & Russell (1991). Initially, all responses were compiled and alphabetized in a spreadsheet to facilitate the identification of patterns, repetitions, misspellings, and morphological variations. The subsequent standardization involved several steps: suffixes were removed to reduce redundancy, and synonyms or closely related terms were merged into single, coherent conceptual categories.

To ensure the reliability of this categorization, two independent coders reviewed the standardized data. Any disagreements between the coders were resolved through discussion until a consensus was reached. This process resulted in a more consistent and analytically viable dataset. A summary of the initial and cleaned data, including the total words collected, mean words per participant, and the final number of distinct items for each concept and group, is presented in Table 3. An initial observation was that participants in both groups listed more items for the concept of love than for family.

Table 3: Number of different words listed by participants.

	Concept	Total Words	Mean Words per Participant	Words After Standardization	Distinct Words
TR-TR	Family	822	7.32	675	82
	Love	864	6.97	655	71
TR-HU	Family	571	7.88	444	69
	Love	796	5.65	315	60

After standardization, the data was analyzed based on item frequency. Items mentioned more frequently were considered central to the conceptual domain (Bernard, 2006; Fehr & Russell, 1991). The standardized items were then organized into broader themes that emerged inductively from the data. Unlike Fehr & Russell (1991), idiosyncratic items (i.e., items mentioned by only one participant) were not removed. Instead, they were retained and grouped within the emergent themes, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of both shared and peripheral aspects of the concepts (Bernard, 2006).

6. Findings on Love

For the concept of love, participants in Türkiye listed 71 distinct words, while Turkish participants in Hungary listed 60. An analysis of the most frequent items (Table 4) revealed a shared emotional foundation between the two groups, alongside differences potentially shaped by migration experiences. In both groups, love was predominantly described in affirmative terms. This contrasts with some cultural studies that have highlighted persistent pain and negativity in the Turkish conceptualization of love (Aksan & Aksan, 2012; Gündoğdu, 2019). “Affection,”

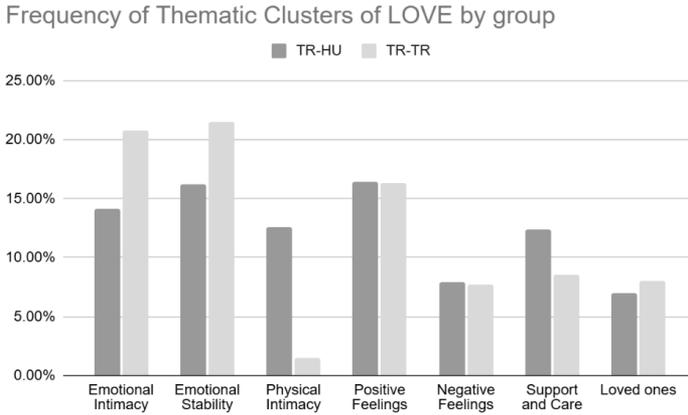
“happiness,” and “loyalty” were the most frequent items in both groups, which have been widely recognized as universal elements of love (Fehr & Russell, 1991; Gottschall & Nordlund, 2006). Similarly, items such as “togetherness/unity,” “respect,” and “sharing” appeared in both lists, reflecting values in Turkish culture that emphasize collectivist ties (Gelfand et al., 2011; Ozeren et al., 2013; Yoldaş & Becerik-Yoldaş, 2015). Consistent with Fehr’s (1991) work, participants often linked love with “trust,” “caring,” “friendship,” and “compassion.” In addition, as in previous studies, these elements were further combined with “passion” and “sexuality” (Fehr & Russell, 1991; Manoharan & de Munck, 2017).

Table 4: Top 10 love-related words listed by the participants.

	TR-HU Association	Freq.	(%)	TR-TR Association	Freq.	(%)
1	Affection	38	8.5%	Affection	64	9.4%
2	Happiness	34	7.6%	Loyalty	55	8.1%
3	Loyalty	27	6%	Happiness	55	8.1%
4	Passion	25	5.6%	Trust	33	4.8%
5	Trust	19	4.2%	Respect	32	4.7%
6	Sex/Sexuality	18	4.0%	Passion	31	4.5%
7	Excitement	18	4.0%	Excitement	19	2.8%
8	Togetherness/Unity	16	3.6%	Sharing	19	2.8%
9	Sharing	15	3.3%	Togetherness/Unity	17	2.5%
10	Respect	14	3.1%	Marriage	16	2.3%

The results suggest that conceptual categories are flexible and context-dependent (Kuchynskyi, 2022). Despite a shared emotional foundation, the migration experience appears to have fostered a more liberal approach to love among the Turkish participants. A notable example of this difference is the diverse views on marriage and sexuality. While “marriage” was a common item in the TR–TR group, it was mentioned by only three participants in the TR–HU group. Conversely, “sex/sexuality” ranked sixth in the TR–HU group but was almost absent from the TR–TR responses. The theme of migration was also prominent for the Turkish group in Hungary, who listed idiosyncratic items tied to their daily lives, such as “nostalgia,” “longing,” and “missing home”. Their conception of love was linked with specific cultural references, including Turkish foods such as “muhallebi” (a dessert associated with new lovers) and romantic literary figures like “Leyla and Mecnun”. Participants also cited renowned poets such as Turgut Uyar, Nâzım Hikmet, and Cemal Süreya. For the TR–HU group, the daily use of English in Hungary may have made switching to their native Turkish during the task feel like a marked, culturally evocative moment. This suggests that language choice during free-listing tasks can significantly shape the conceptual content (Palmer, 1996). To account for both frequent and idiosyncratic items, further analysis revealed differences within broader themes, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Love Clusters



Within the emotional stability theme, both groups emphasized “loyalty” and “trust”. However, the content differed: in TR-TR, moral qualities such as “honesty,” “patience,” “courage,” and “sincerity” appeared more often, while TR-HU participants stressed “harmony,” “tolerance,” and “effort”. This suggested that love in Türkiye was framed more through moral ideals. Emotional intimacy was also central, with “affection” and “passion” common in both groups. In Türkiye, “belonging” and “dependency” were frequent, while in Hungary, “romance,” “closeness,” and “attachment” were more prominent. The most substantial difference appeared in physical intimacy. In Hungary, “sexuality,” “kissing,” “hugging,” and “touching” together made up 12.6% of responses, while in Türkiye they represented only 1.4%.

Within the cluster of support and care, TR-HU stressed “togetherness,” “solidarity,” and “unity” pointing to the role of social networks for migrants who relied heavily on emotional support (Ward et al., 2001). In Türkiye, “sacrifice” and “selflessness” were more common, echoing collectivist traditions (Hofstede et al., 2010; Saylık, 2019). Negative emotions added another interpretive layer. Both groups listed “longing” and “sadness,” but TR-HU continued with “nostalgia” and “loneliness,” reflecting their lives as migrants. In Türkiye, “sadness” and “longing” were followed by “chaos/fight,” “madness,” and “pain”.

Finally, the words for loved ones highlighted cultural contrasts. TR-HU often mentioned “pets” alongside “family,” “spouse,” “child,” and “lover,” while in Türkiye the most frequent were “lover,” “spouse,” “family,” and “soulmate”. The frequent mention of “pets” in TR-HU responses suggested that pets were seen as meaningful figures of attachment, expanding the category of love to include non-human companions. “Pets” did not appear in TR-TR data but was noted as a universal category in Fehr’s empirical research (1991). In Fehr’s study, participants were entirely Western, and the inclusion of pets reflected the individualistic cultural setting in which non-human companions could be central to emotional life. In the present

study, both groups were Turkish, but only those living in Hungary included pets in their categorization of love. Following Shore’s (1998) cultural mapping, this can be identified as an accommodation in which intercultural experiences reshape existing cultural frames or create new ones. Participants living in Hungary were exposed to a society where pet ownership is common and socially valued, and over time, their categories of love expanded to include pets. In this case, TR-TR participants reflected the stronger human-centered and collectivist framing of love in Türkiye.

7. Findings on Family

For the concept of family, participants in Türkiye listed 82 distinct words, while participants in Hungary listed 69. A strong cultural consensus emerged in terms of emotional, structural, and moral elements (Koşaner & Çimen, 2024). Core concepts such as «love,» «parents,» «trust,» and «support» were frequently listed by both groups (see Table 5). However, the TR-TR participants placed stronger emphasis on moral values, with «respect» and «loyalty» as prominent elements. Conversely, these values were less pronounced in the TR-HU data. Instead, the TR-HU list featured «food and beverages» and «longing» in its top ten, suggesting that the migrant experience evokes nostalgia and an awareness of the absence of familiar cultural elements. The findings for the TR-TR group align with Weigel’s (2008) central features of family and are consistent with previous research on Turkish culture, which has outlined collectivist values, strong kinship ties, and gendered roles (Çelik-Abay, 2023; Gelfand et al., 2011; Hofstede et al., 2010).

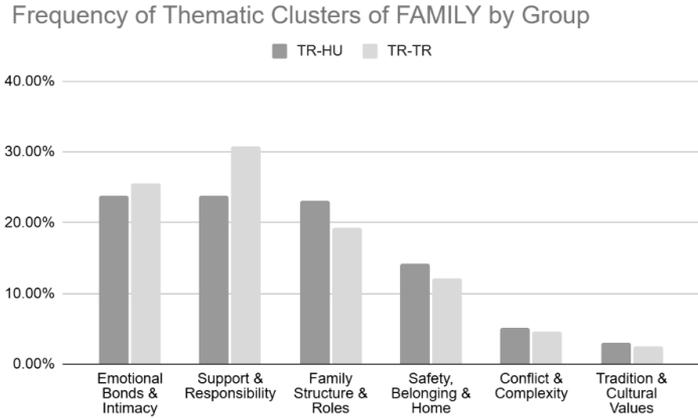
Table 5. Top 10 family-related words listed by the participants

TR-HU Association		Freq.	(%)	TR-TR Association		Freq.	(%)
1	Parents	44	8.7%	Love	48	7.3%	
2	Love	32	6.3%	Parents	45	6.8%	
3	Happiness	31	6.1%	Trust	41	6.2%	
4	Trust	31	6.1%	Support/Solidarity	31	4.7%	
5	Support/Solidarity	29	5.7%	Happiness	31	4.7%	
6	Home	23	4.5%	Togetherness/Unity	29	4.4%	
7	Peace/Serenity	23	4.5%	Child	28	4.2%	
8	Child	18	3.5%	Home	28	4.2%	
9	Food/Beverage	17	3.3%	Peace/Serenity	28	4.2%	
10	Longing	15	2.9%	Loyalty			
				Respect	25	3.8%	

When grouped into clusters, three broad categories emerged: Emotional Bonds & Intimacy, Support & Responsibility, and Family Structure & Roles (Figure 2). In the TR-HU group, the three clusters were nearly equal in size, whereas in the

TR-TR group, Support & Responsibility was dominant (30.7%). For the TR-TR group, this category showed a strong emphasis on obligation and duty, consistent with Koşaner & Çimen's (2024) findings. Within Emotional Bonds & Intimacy, both groups emphasized «affection,» «compassion,» and «comfort».

Figure 2. Family Clusters



The most evident difference emerged in the Support & Responsibility cluster. Both groups viewed family as a source of support. However, TR-TR participants expressed this through moral and value-related terms such as “solidarity,” “unity,” “forgiveness,” “loyalty,” “respect,” “responsibility,” “effort,” and “sacrifice”. TR-HU participants also emphasized “support/solidarity” and “unity”, but their cluster was less varied and carried a weaker moral framing compared to the TR-TR group.

Finally, the Family Structure & Roles cluster showed broad similarities. Both groups emphasized “parents” and “child” as central figures, followed by “siblings” and “spouse”. Mentions of “grandparents” and “marriage” appeared in both groups but were less frequent in Hungary. Furthermore, TR-HU participants more often included extended kinship terms such as “biology” and “blood relation”, while TR-TR participants frequently referenced items related to raising children. Overall, both groups shared a cultural consensus on family; however, participants in Türkiye placed greater emphasis on moral responsibility, whereas those in Hungary reflected their migrant context through themes of longing and cultural absence.

8. Discussion

The results confirmed the study’s expectations and addressed its central questions. Turkish residents in Türkiye (TR-TR) and in Hungary (TR-HU) showed strong agreement in their associations with love and family, reflecting

both universal aspects of these concepts (Fehr & Russell, 1991; Weigel, 2008) and a shared cultural base (Sharifian, 2011, 2017). At the same time, the differences highlighted the flexible nature of meaning and how categories adapt to social settings and personal experiences (Lemmens, 2015; Palmer, 1996). Both groups described love and family in positive, supportive terms, a finding that contrasts with earlier research highlighting conflict, pain, and burden in Turkish conceptualization of love (Aksan & Aksan, 2012; Gündoğdu, 2019) and family (Koşaner & Çimen, 2024). Furthermore, the migration from a collectivist to a more individualist context appears to have facilitated a shift from obligation-centered to more flexible, emotion-centered understandings.

Individual and unique associations offered further insight into how migration reshapes conceptual categories. Participants from the group TR-HU mentioned cultural items such as food, literary figures, poets, and frequently expressed feelings of nostalgia as well as longing. They were more likely than their counterparts in Türkiye to associate love with physical intimacy and to extend the concept to include pets. These patterns, which were absent in the Türkiye data, align more closely with Western conceptualizations of love (Fehr & Russell, 1991). These findings can be contextualized within the political and social dynamics of Turkish migration. Many TR-HU participants expressed little desire to return to Türkiye, a sentiment consistent with previous research on Turkish communities in Hungary (Kars & Çakmaklı, 2023; Vatansever, 2024). This community often reflects the ongoing “brain drain” from Türkiye, where educated individuals migrate in response to political and economic dissatisfaction (Giannoccolo, 2009; Taşçı, 2024). Consequently, the more liberal and individual-centered responses of the TR-HU participants may reflect both the influence of their host society and the pre-existing values that motivated their decision to migrate. However, this is where the free-listing method introduces a significant methodological challenge. The method is effective at capturing what people associate with a concept, but it cannot explain why they make those associations. Therefore, interpreting the underlying reasons for these conceptual shifts is inherently complex and requires more direct methods, such as in-depth interviews. Despite limitations, the free-listing method remains a valuable tool for revealing meaningful differences within and across cultural contexts (Sabloff et al., 2017; Stausberg, 2021).

Overall, this study demonstrates how cognition, language, culture, and the environment interact to shape the way concepts are understood (Langacker, 2014; Lemmens, 2015; Palmer, 1996). Furthermore, it reinforces the idea that categories are not fixed but flexible, varying across individuals and contexts (Rosch, 1975, 1978). Methodologically, the findings affirm the value of free-listing for capturing both shared understandings and intra-cultural diversity (Bernard, 2006; Kuchynskyi, 2022; Manoharan & de Munck, 2017; Stausberg, 2021). Theoretically, the results support the Cognitive Linguistics view that cultural categories are dynamic and context-dependent, shifting through processes such

as migration and intercultural contact (Kharkhurin, 2010; Sharifian, 2017; Shore, 1998). Furthermore, the observed shift in conceptual categories underscores the need for caution in cognitive studies, since culture is often treated as a monolithic entity despite evident variability within it.

9. Conclusion

The findings raise a critical question: are the differences between the TR-TR and TR-HU participants the result of migration itself, or do they reflect pre-existing values among those who chose to migrate? The study suggests that both processes are involved. Intercultural contact in Hungary appears to have expanded the participants' conceptual categories. The TR-HU group reorganized existing categories by incorporating elements of the host culture, which helps explain why themes such as sexuality and pet companionship appeared more frequently in their responses. These topics are more openly discussed and socially accepted in Hungary. On the other hand, methodological factors must be considered. The TR-TR group was partly recruited through snowball sampling within conservative networks, which may have created social pressure to avoid sensitive topics related to physical intimacy. In contrast, the TR-HU participants were recruited more randomly and anonymously, which may have encouraged openness. While free-listing is a powerful tool for capturing spontaneous associations, particular care is needed when studying domains tied to sensitive cultural values in conservative contexts.

This study shows that even within a single ethnic group, core concepts such as love and family can vary widely across social environments. Such conceptual flexibility challenges earlier cross-cultural approaches that treat cultural identity as relatively fixed. Beyond its theoretical contributions, the research has practical value. Understanding how migrants conceptualize love and family provides insight into broader processes of identity, belonging, and adaptation. These results are relevant not only to cognitive linguistics and cross-cultural psychology but also to migration studies and policies. Embassies, cultural centers, and NGOs could use such insights to understand better how migrants navigate between the cultural models of their home and host societies. Future research could compare different host societies, examine intergenerational differences among migrants, and consider the effects of varying lengths of stay within the same generation. Additionally, demographic factors such as the region of origin, political views, and religiosity could be explored to understand how they shape conceptual categories. Such work would deepen our understanding of how migration reorganizes cultural models across contexts and over time. Ultimately, this study highlights the cultural flexibility of the human mind and demonstrates that migration is not only a political or social process but also a cognitive one.

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