

## True meanings of words of emotion get lost in translation, study finds

The true meaning of words may be lost in translation, according to research suggesting the way people understand terms such as “anger” or “love” differs between languages. For example, while the concept of “love” is closely linked to “like” and “want” in Indo-European languages, it is strongly linked to “pity” in Austronesian languages.

Writing in the journal *Science*, Joshua Conrad Jackson and his colleagues from University of North Carolina Chapel Hill report how they carried out an analysis of 24 emotional concepts, such as anger, love and pride, across 2,474 languages.

The team found emotion concepts across all language families tend to be grouped together based on whether they were positive or negative. Moreover, certain emotions such as ***grief*** and regret were commonly found to be linked in several different language families, with language families geographically closer showing greater similarities in meanings.

grief 悲伤

Nonetheless, there were variations. For example, the link between “fear” and “surprise” in Austronesian languages like Hawaiian is not ***evident*** in Tai-Kadai languages, spoken in South-East Asia and beyond, where “surprise” sits more closely with “want” and “hope”.

evident 明显的

Jackson said the research suggested there may be no universal concepts of emotions. “People may universally have the experience of having their heart beat faster when threatened. However, there is variability in the way that we make meaning of that experience,” he said, adding that such responses appear to be shaped by culture.