

LINGUO-PRAGMATIC FEATURES OF THE CONCEPTS OF 'SORROW' AND 'SUFFERING' IN THE POETRY OF LUIZA GLÜK

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Abstract: This article explores the linguo-pragmatic characteristics of the concepts of sorrow and suffering in the poetry of Luiza Glük, a renowned American poet and Nobel laureate. Drawing upon the frameworks of conceptual metaphor theory and linguo-pragmatic analysis, the study examines how these emotional concepts are linguistically and pragmatically realized in her poems. Through a close reading of selected works, the research identifies the metaphorical, cultural, and syntactic features used to express sorrow and suffering. The paper argues that Glük's poetic discourse reflects a deeply personalized and culturally nuanced understanding of emotional pain, positioning sorrow and suffering as central themes that shape both the narrative voice and reader interpretation. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of how language, culture, and emotion interact in literary texts.

Keywords: Luiza Glük, sorrow, suffering, linguo-pragmatics, conceptual metaphor, poetic discourse, emotional language

1. Introduction

In contemporary literary linguistics, the analysis of emotional concepts has gained increasing scholarly attention, particularly in relation to poetic discourse. Among the most profound and recurrent emotional states explored in literature are sorrow and suffering—universal human experiences that carry rich cultural, psychological, and linguistic implications. In the poetic works of Luiza Glük, these two concepts emerge as central themes, shaping the tone, structure, and philosophical depth of her writing.

Luiza Glük, an American poet and recipient of the 2020 Nobel Prize in Literature, is widely celebrated for her stark, introspective style and her ability to convey complex emotional realities with linguistic precision. Her poems often dwell in themes of loss, grief, and existential reflection, making them a fertile ground for exploring the linguistic and pragmatic mechanisms through which sorrow and suffering are conceptualized and communicated.

The present study investigates the linguo-pragmatic features of the concepts of sorrow and suffering in Glück's poetry. By applying theoretical insights from conceptual metaphor theory and the field of linguo-pragmatics, the paper aims to uncover how these emotions are encoded in language, and what pragmatic functions they serve in the context of poetic expression.

The primary objectives of the study are as follows:

To identify and analyze the key lexical, metaphorical, and syntactic patterns used to express sorrow and suffering in Glück's poems;

To explore the pragmatic strategies employed by the poet to evoke emotional responses in the reader;

To examine the cultural and personal dimensions of these concepts within the poetic discourse.

This research contributes to the broader field of linguo-pragmatic literary analysis by offering a nuanced understanding of how emotional concepts function within poetic texts, enriching our comprehension of the interplay between language, emotion, and literature.

2.1 Linguo-Pragmatics: Scope and Relevance

Linguo-pragmatics stands at the interface of linguistic form, intended meaning, and sociocultural context, asking how speakers (or writers) exploit language to achieve specific communicative effects (Kecskes, 2014). In literary discourse, pragmatics sheds light on how authors guide readers toward particular emotional or conceptual readings through lexical choices, deixis, implicature, and intertextual presuppositions (Verschueren, 1999). Applying a linguo-pragmatic lens to Luiza Glück's poems allows us to see sorrow and suffering not merely as semantic tokens but as pragmatic performances—strategic deployments of language that position the poetic voice, shape reader alignment, and invoke culturally shared scripts of grief and endurance.

Key constructs used in this study include:

Construct	Brief Definition	Illustrative Pragmatic Questions
Illocutionary force	The communicative intention behind an utterance beyond its propositional content.	How does Glück "do things" with words of grief (e.g., accuse, lament, resign)?
Implicature & presupposition	Meaning inferred or taken for granted rather than stated.	What emotional background truths about loss does the poet assume her reader shares?

Indexicality Linguistic items that “point” to situational, social, or emotional contexts. How do temporal adverbs (“still,” “already”) or pronouns situate sorrow in time and perspective?

These constructs anchor the subsequent textual analysis, revealing how surface-level lexis indexes deeper layers of cultural knowledge and affective stance.

2.2 Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT)

Since Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) seminal work, metaphor has been understood as a cognitive mechanism that maps experience from a more concrete source domain onto a more abstract target domain. Emotions, being abstract and often ineffable, “invite” metaphorical elaboration (Kövecses, 2010). In Glück’s oeuvre, sorrow and suffering frequently appear through metaphors of weight (“a grief heavier than childhood”), journey (“the long road of pain”), and container (“I live inside the wound”), each structuring the poet’s emotional reality and, by extension, the reader’s (Gibbs, 2017).

CMT is especially useful here for three reasons:

1. Systematicity – Recurrent metaphor clusters reveal a conceptual system, not random ornamentation.
2. Embodiment – Metaphors ground sorrow and suffering in bodily experience, aligning with Glück’s visceral diction.
3. Cultural Variation – While SORROW IS A WEIGHT may appear universal, its pragmatic resonance varies across Anglophone and Uzbek cultures; tracing these resonances enriches cross-cultural pragmatics (Sharifian, 2017).

2.3 Cultural Conceptology and Emotion

Cultural linguistics extends the study of metaphor by emphasizing how collectively shared cultural conceptualizations shape meaning making (Sharifian, 2017). Sorrow and suffering, for instance, are laden with Judeo-Christian connotations of fallenness and redemption in U.S. literary culture, yet may evoke different scriptural or communal associations in Uzbek readerships (Wierzbicka, 1999). By foregrounding these cultural scripts, the article positions Glück’s English-language poems within a broader intercultural dialogue, which is essential for readers in Central Asia who may interpret sorrow through distinct folk and religious lenses.

2.4 Previous Studies on Emotions in Poetry

While research on Louise Glück’s (better known Anglicized form of Luiza Glück) thematic preoccupations is extensive (Burt, 2021; Danaher, 2019), fewer studies disaggregate

her emotional lexicon using linguo-pragmatic methods. Parallel scholarship on Sylvia Plath (Mifsud, 2018) and Seamus Heaney (O'Neill, 2020) shows how pragmatic analysis can illuminate affective stance-taking in confessional poetry. In Uzbek literary studies, Akhmedova (2023) demonstrates that cultural metaphors of dard ("pain/sorrow") hinge on collectivist values of endurance. Synthesizing these strands, the present article bridges a gap by:

applying a joint linguo-pragmatic + CMT framework to an Anglophone Nobel laureate;
foregrounding cross-cultural interpretability for Uzbek scholars and readers;
offering a micro-level examination (lexis, syntax, metaphor) alongside macro-level cultural interpretation.

2.5 Working Definitions

To avoid terminological slippage, the study adopts the following operational definitions:

Sorrow – a sustained emotional state of loss or mourning, distinct from transient sadness (Ekman, 1992);

Suffering – an extended experience of physical, psychological, or existential pain, often implying endurance (Scarry, 1985).

Both are treated as concepts (in the cognitive-linguistic sense) realized through linguistic form and shaped by pragmatic context.

With these theoretical pillars in place, the next step will detail the Methodology—corpus delimitation, coding procedures, and analytic criteria—ensuring replicability and scholarly rigor befitting a full-length academic article.

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