

Metaphorical uses of *blood* in American English and Hungarian

Judit Simó

Case Western Reserve University

tapolca70@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Metaphorical uses of body parts have been explored with the help of different methodologies in cross-linguistic studies. Those that focus on conceptual metaphors and examine which body parts play a role in the metaphorical description of certain phenomena, usually an emotional state (anger, happiness; Kövecses, 2002; Maalej, 2004; Yu, 1995) often rely on examples generated by the researchers. A second group of studies starts out with a particular body part or body parts and examines its/their metaphorical uses (Yu, 2000, 2004), sometimes with the help of corpora (Charteris-Black, 2003; Deignan & Potter, 2004). Thus, these studies reveal information about items that the researcher has thought of. The present study hopes to circumvent the problems of both approaches in that the examination of larger corpora for the metaphorical uses of a body fluid, *blood*, was motivated by an observation of the differences in its usage in smaller, hand-searchable corpora in American English and Hungarian (Simó, 2008). The advantages of this approach are discussed in Cameron and Deignan (2003).

Blood, as a vital body fluid, has an abundant symbolism in many cultures (see Császár, 1996, for a survey). Blood can represent vitality, passion, life, familial ties, but also aggression and death. Examinations of actual linguistic instances show figurative uses of blood first of all in relation to race, or origin (Musolff, 2007; Salvant, 2003). Furthermore, metaphorical uses of *blood* have been pointed out in relation to certain emotions: the dropping temperature of blood, e.g. *blood running cold*, is related to fear in English (Kövecses, 1990), and an increase in blood temperature, as in *boiling blood*, to anger in English (Kövecses, 1990; Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987) and both in English and Hungarian (Kövecses, 2002). At the same time, a diachronic corpus-study, spanning 490 years, on the metaphorical uses of *blood* showed that a certain expression is capable of conveying a host of emotional states, the identification of which requires the study of the broader context (Mischler, 2008). In spite of this significance, systematic cross-linguistic examinations of the metaphorical uses of *blood* are hard to find. The present study aims at starting to fill this gap. The most immediate motivation for this investigation comes from the findings of a study on body part metaphors in naturally occurring language use, chess articles in American English and Hungarian, which showed substantial differences in the metaphorical uses of *blood* in these two languages (Simó, 2008). It was noted that the Hungarian articles use *blood* to a much bigger extent in the metaphorical description of both chess players and a chess game. To describe the actions of a chess player, expressions like *hidegvérrel (in cold blood)*, *vért izzad (sweat blood)*, or *vért szagol (smell blood)* came up only in the Hungarian data. Similarly, *bloody battles* to characterize chess games and *a position bleeding from a thousand wounds* (a position full of weaknesses) to portray a position came up only in Hungarian. Furthermore, the fact that *hidegvérrel (in cold blood)* conveyed a positive meaning in these Hungarian articles – something rather counterintuitive to native speakers of American English- suggested a considerable difference in the connotations of blood metaphors in the two languages. These observations led to the idea of examining bigger corpora to see if these differences

hold in more varied texts as well. It was hoped that investigating a larger number of examples in their context will facilitate the cross-linguistic comparison of patterns of usage. A secondary aim of the study is to examine within-language variation in the uses of *blood* metaphors between fiction versus non-fiction. More specifically, and because of the anticipated vastness of the data, the following questions were sought to be answered:

1. What are the main metaphorical themes that are expressed by the figurative uses of *blood* in American English and Hungarian, as attested by corpus evidence?
2. What does a more detailed examination of the context of selected metaphorical expressions reveal about cross-linguistic and within-language variation in the metaphorical uses of *blood* to signal emotion?

2. Method

2.1 Corpus

The American corpus used for this study was the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), which is a compilation of more than 385 million words of spoken and written contemporary (from 1990 till present) American English from newspapers, fiction, magazines, and academic texts (Davies, 2008-). The Hungarian corpus was the Magyar Nemzeti Szövegtár (Hungarian National Corpus [HNC]), which has 187.6 million words from five regional dialects of contemporary written Hungarian including news, fiction, scientific and official texts, and personal exchanges on the Internet (Váradi, 2002).

2.2 Data collection and analysis

In order to answer the first research question, metaphorical uses of *blood* were obtained by reading through the first 500 hits of *blood* in the COCA and the root and any suffixed forms of the Hungarian *vér* (*blood*) in the HNC. Metaphorical expressions were then grouped based on their target theme. To answer the second question, a comparative analysis of two metaphorical expressions denoting emotion was conducted by examining their frequencies and meanings in the American and Hungarian corpora.

3. Target themes of the figurative uses of *blood*

Examining the first 500 hits of *blood/ vér* * led to the identification of two major metaphorical target themes: emotion and essence. This second theme can be further divided into four subtopics: origin, quality, significance, and life.

3.1. Metaphorical expressions with *blood* to signal emotion

Both corpora revealed a wide range of metaphorical uses of *blood* to denote an emotion. Some examples from the American corpus are: *stir our blood*, *make my blood boil*, *bad blood*, *in cold blood*. Hungarian examples include *forr a vére- his blood is boiling*; *előnti a vér az agyát- the blood is flooding his brain*; *fejébe szökik a vér- the blood rushes to his head*; *vérbe borul az arca- her/his face fills up with blood*. Based on the sample, Hungarian seems to have more varied expressions, which may be a result of this language naming more body parts where blood can be located.

3.2. Metaphorical expressions with *blood* to signal essence

Metaphorical expressions in this theme represent blood as a factor contributing to the essence of a person in one way or another. In the examined corpora, expressions appeared to fall into the four subcategories outlined below.

3.2.1 *Blood as origin*

Expressions in this category suggested that a person or a group carries things (characteristics, talents, affinities) in the blood, possibly by belonging to or originating from a certain group. The two languages share most of the expressions, for example *vérünkben van/it's in our blood; a vér nem válik vízzé/blood is thicker than water; véreink/our blood*, and expressions where a nationality modifies *blood*, as in *Hungarian/American/Arab blood*.

3.2.2 *Blood as significance*

In this subtheme, blood signifies the importance of an activity. Both languages mix sweat and blood in expressions such as *vért izzad/ sweat blood; how much blood, sweat and tears; vérrel és verejtékkel- with blood and sweat*. In the Hungarian data, blood also represents a most important part of a person in expressions like *vérré megy – goes for blood*, i.e. ‘it’s dead serious’, and *vérig sért- hurt to the blood*, i.e. ‘offend greatly.’

3.2.3 *Blood as quality*

This category came up only in the Hungarian data. Expressions belonging here are made up of an adjective followed by *blood*. For example, *büszke vér- proud blood, olcsó vér- cheap blood*.

3.2.4 *Blood as life*

In this meaning, blood is basically a synonym for life (*vérét adja- give his blood*, i.e. ‘sacrifice one’s life’; *pay in blood*). The American data show more numerous examples, especially ones where *blood* expresses the price of something and often co-occurs with other nouns expressing value (*in term of money and blood, costlier in both blood and treasure*).

4. Case studies of metaphorical uses of *blood* to signal emotion

Two metaphorical expressions were chosen for a more detailed scrutiny: *in cold blood*, because my previous study indicated a difference in usage between the two languages (Simó, 2008; see the Introduction), and *blood boil**, because it is an often cited example as an instantiation of the ANGER IS HEAT conceptual metaphor (Kövecses, 1990; Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987). Examples from the American corpus are prefixed with (A), and those from the Hungarian, with (H).

In cold blood/ hidegvérrel

In the COCA, after eliminating duplicates and references to Truman Capote’s novel, 166 hits remained (.43/million words); all were metaphorical. One hundred and fifty-two

of the instances collocated with a verb of violence that causes death, most often with ‘kill’ (68 instances), ‘shoot’ (37), and ‘murder’ (26). See example A1 below. Based on their context, an additional four examples also suggested killing, although the collocation was with a neutral verb (e.g. *act in cold blood*). This means that altogether, 94% (156/166) of the examples commented on the manner of killing. The remaining instances conveyed the meaning of doing something deliberately or calmly, with six of the total of 166 instances (3.6%) carrying a positive meaning (see A2). Fifty-two of the 166 uses appeared in fiction; again, 90% of them referred to murder. Four (7.7%) carried a positive meaning. See Table 1 for these results. The numbers of examples with a neutral or negative (but not ‘killing’) meaning is not separately indicated in the table but they are included in the totals.

(A1) Investigators are trying to find out whether a group of Marines in Hamandiyah killed an Iraqi man in cold blood back in April. Tonight, we are hearing from members of that man's family, who have some very disturbing allegations about why they say he was killed (CNN, 2006 June 12).

(A2) But the way Phil Mickelson completed his round was stunning. Everything he did over the last seven holes was done in cold blood. It was Nicklaus at his very, very best, Peter Thomson as his best years ago, Ben Hogan at his best before that, and Bobby Jones at his best before that (Golf Magazine, 2004 July).

Table 1. Percentages of the metaphorical uses of *in cold blood/ hidegvérrel*

	USA		HUN	
	killing	positive meaning	killing	positive meaning
Total	156/166 (94%)	6/166 (3.6%)	57/139 (41%)	56/139 (40%)
Non-fiction	109/114 (96%)	2/114 (1.75%)	50/95 (52.6%)	32/95 (33.68%)
Fiction	47/52 (90%)	4/52 (7.7%)	7/44 (16%)	24/44 (54.5%)

The HNC search for *hidegvérrel* had 139 different hits, which is a frequency of .74/million words. Fifty-one collocated with a verb expressing killing, most often with ‘gyilkol’ (murder) and ‘lő’ (shoot) or any prefixed version of these (11 each, see H1). ‘Megöl’ (kill) had seven instances. Six more examples suggested killing, resulting in 41% (57/139) of the instances describing the manner of killing. On the other hand, 56 (40%) of the instances carried a positive meaning, translatable like ‘level-headedly’, or ‘with enormous calmness’ (see H2). Of the 139 instances, 44 appeared in fiction; 7 of these (16%) referred to killing and 24 (54.5%) carried a positive meaning. These results can be found in Table 1.

(H1) Ismeretlen tettesek szombaton kirabolták a Varsó központjában működő Kredyt bankot, és eközben hidegvérrel agyonlőtték a pénzügyintézet négy alkalmazottját (Új Szó, 2001/03/06). –Unknown offenders robbed the Kredyt Bank in the center of Warsaw on Saturday, shooting four employees of the bank to death in cold blood.

(H2) Jurcic szabálytalanságát követően a manchesteri Irwin helyezte a labdát hidegvérrel a bal alsó sarokba (Magyar Nemzet, 1998/09/07). – After Jurcic’s foul, Irwin for Manchester put (kicked) the ball into the left lower corner in cold blood (with enormous calmness).

As the table clearly shows, regardless of genre, in the overwhelming majority of the cases, *in cold blood* in American English is used to describe the manner of killing. In light of the findings of Mischler’s (2008) diachronic study, this seems to be a shift in meaning from a flexible usage to a clearly negative, murder scenario. The picture is more varied in Hungarian, where the expression seems to more easily lend itself to positive scenarios. Especially striking is the low percentage of the metaphor’s usage in the ‘killing’ context in Hungarian fiction; this genre is more likely to employ the expression in its favorable sense also in American English.

Examining the broader environment in which *in cold blood* appears, we find that the clustering of metaphors is not very widespread in these extracts in either language, although some examples in Hungarian fiction and news exist. One recurring theme is the usage of other body parts to elaborate on *hidegvérrel* to further capture the state of mind of the actor, e.g. *hidegvérrel és tiszta fejjel- in cold blood and with a clear head* or *hidegvérrel és forró szívvel- in cold blood and with a hot heart*. Metaphor clustering is also present in both languages when the importance of *cold blood* in a tense situation, be it a physical battle or a high-stake sport event, is foregrounded. See A3 and H3 below.

(A3) It’s just he had made up his mind there was no help for it. Boldness for battle is nothing out of the way for a Scotsman, ye ken, but to face down fear in cold blood is rare in any man (Diana Gabaldon: *Outlander*, 1991).

(H3) Ő azonban nem hátrál, pusztá kézzel legyűri a grizzly medvét. Közben minden órás felesége hidegvérrel viseli, hogy földi javaik, beleértve a porcelán teáskészletet, szétzúzódnak a kanyon szirtjein... (Népszava, 1997/08/04). - However, he does not retreat but defeats the grizzly bear with his bare hands. In the meantime, his wife, who is about to deliver any time, endures in cold blood (with calmness) that all their earthly belongings, including the porcelain tea-set, smash on the cliffs of the canyon.

In the examples where *in cold blood* does not collocate with a verb of killing, different cues help the reader to infer the connotation of the metaphor. Because of the more numerous examples, patterns emerge first of all in the Hungarian data. One group of cues builds on human experience: when used in a sport commentary, *hidegvérrel* almost always has a positive meaning (only 1 of the 16 Hungarian sport-examples is negative, and the sole American example, A2, is also positive). Also building on the human belief system is the usage in the Hungarian texts where an adjective denoting nationality, - most often “English” - modifies *in cold blood* (H4). Again, these are all positive scenarios. This usage draws on blood’s ability to metaphorically carry not only emotion, but also characteristic.

(H4) Tony Blair brit miniszterelnök autója forgalmi dugóba keveredett, de az “új közép” politikájának egyik európai letéteményese angol hidegvérrel feltalálta magát (Magyar Hírlap, 1999/10/29). – The car of British Prime Minister Tony Blair got into a traffic jam,

but he, one of the chief European representatives of the politics of the “new middle” dealt with the emergency in English cold blood (with the calmness of the English).

Apart from these prompts exploiting extralinguistic knowledge, both languages employ linguistic tools to signal the connotation of the metaphor. On the negative end, where *in cold blood* means ‘without emotion/consideration’, its appearance with vocabulary like *rosszindulatú* (malicious), *gyűlölet* (hatred), *gonosz* (wicked), and *inconceivable* helps infer the negative meaning of the expression. In the Hungarian examples, the positive tone of the expression is often reinforced by coupling *hidegvérrel* with other adverbials of manner, such as *komolysággal* (with seriousness), *körültekintően* (prudently), *előrelátással* (with foresight), *ésszel* (sensibly). It is harder to find such micro-level hints in the American data, where the help of the broader context is needed. Still, collocating *in cold blood* with such adverbials as *viewed* and *judged* seems to indicate a favorable meaning (see H5 & A4):

(H5) Az igazi költészet - szerintem - valamiféleképp ezt a két végletet szabadítja egymásra pártatlan hidegvérrel és komolysággal (Pilinszky János (1921-1981): Publicisztikai írások, 1999). - Real poetry- I think- in a way clashes these two extremes in fair cold blood (fair-mindedly) and with seriousness.

(A4) Beginning with 1997 models, all cars must have beefed-up side guards. Judged in cold blood, the savings are miniscule: 83 lives and, 1,500 injuries a year, according to the government. Cost: about \$50 per car (USA Today, 1993/12/06).

Blood (2) boil*/forr*(2) vér*

From the other end of the temperature scale, boiling blood was chosen for a more detailed analysis. The COCA was searched for *blood* followed by *boil* and its suffixed forms within two words (‘blood (2) boil*’) to allow for verb tense/aspect variations. One hundred metaphorical uses were obtained (.26/million words); the most frequent collocation being ‘*make somebody’s blood boil.*’ Seventy-five (75%) expressed anger, while the remaining 25 (25%) expressed excitement or vitality (the latter two glossed over as ‘positive emotion’ in Table 2). Separating fiction from non-fiction, we find that about 63% of the examples from fiction express anger and 37% express excitement. A search in the HNC for ‘forr* (2) vér*’ and ‘vér* (2) forr*’ (‘boil* (2) blood*’ and ‘blood* (2) boil*’), allowing for different tenses and word order and for all persons, had 27 hits after removing the duplicates (.144/million words). Of these, 11 (41%) expressed anger, and 16 (59%), excitement or vitality. Eighteen of the twenty-seven instances came from fiction; seven (39%) expressed anger and 11 (61%) expressed excitement or vitality. See Table 2 for these results.

Although the low number of the Hungarian examples does not allow far-fetching generalizations, the results again suggest some trends in the usage of this metaphor. First of all, boiling blood does not appear to primarily denote anger in Hungarian. Also, just like with *in cold blood*, though to a smaller extent, the American usage seems to be dominated by one meaning. This tendency is stronger in non-fiction than in fiction. The Hungarian data do not show a substantial difference between fiction and non-fiction in this regard.

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of the metaphorical uses of *blood* (2) *boil**/*forr** (2) *vér**

	USA		HUN	
	anger	positive emotion	anger	positive emotion
Total	75/100 (75%)	25/100 (25%)	11/27 (41%)	16/27 (59%)
Non-fiction	53/65 (81.5%)	12/65 (18.5%)	4/9 (44%)	5/9 (56%)
Fiction	22/35 (63%)	13/35 (37%)	7/18 (39%)	11/18 (61%)

When portraying excitement, fiction writers of both languages sometimes elaborate on the physiological effects of the emotion (H6 and A5), combining boiling blood with other metaphorical scenes. Non-fiction texts are less likely to do this, even though we find examples, first of all in Hungarian.

(H6) A vérem forni kezdett örömeiben, és éreztem, hogy a tagjaimon keresztül mindenünnét jön és robog az első nagy győzelem a világ felett (Tamási Áron: Jégtörő Mátyás, 1936:1986). - My blood started to boil with happiness, and I felt the first big victory over the world coming and dashing through my body parts from everywhere.

(A5) The actors line up to get measured for their costumes. One says this is the first part that has ever been written just for him. # " It's a little nervous making, " he smiles. " But I like getting my blood boiling (New York Times, 1994).

Other metaphor clusters evoke an atmosphere of passion, which then creates the ground for boiling blood (H7 and A6):

(H7) Virágos kert az élet, ha ez a város ébred a kósza szél neked mesél egy álom újraéled, érzed forr a véred s új útra hív (personal internet forum posting, 1998/10/06). - Life is a flower garden, if this town is awakening, the breeze is talking to you, a dream is reviving, you feel your blood boiling and calling you to a new adventure.

(A6) A lot of people, says Lee, will bail out early. And, of course, always keep an eye on your bottom line. This is easier said than done. Auctions have the atmosphere of a horse track, they get the gambler's blood boiling. But there are times when that spell is broken and the piece goes cheap (Mother Earth News, 1992).

The two languages differ substantially as to the immediate contexts in which boiling blood signals anger. The most noticeable feature of the Hungarian texts-both fiction and non-fiction- is that many actually name anger, or a synonym, together with the metaphor (H8). Metaphor clusters, whether detailing the physiological effects or otherwise, exist but are rare.

(H8) Ha rájuk gondolok, dühömben forr a vérem. S már jöhet ezután, ott ütöm, ahol érem (Spiró György: Csirkefej, 1987). - If I think of them, my blood is boiling with anger. And it may come afterwards; I hit it wherever I can.

Conversely, the American texts very rarely name the emotion itself, but we find metaphor clusters, both describing additional physiological effects of anger (A7), or the

metaphorical representation of phenomena that triggers it (A8). Because of the more numerous examples in the American data, it is there that we can observe patterns as to the contexts in which boiling blood appears. These most often talk about injustice, be it in connection to money matters, legal issues, human rights, or the treatment of people.

(A7) Every dad, mom, son or daughter, past or present, from the land of prep schools tucked away in the hills to the inner-city's blackboard jungles, knows of one high school they just can't stand. # At the mere mention of the name, eyes roll. Skin crawls. Blood boils. # Do people love to hate them? # Or hate to love them? (Denver Post, 1996.08.25).

(A8) Everyone knows the boss has a short temper, but by working hard, you've been able to stay on her good side. Until now. She's in a foul mood for some reason, and you happen to cross her path. Right there in the hallway, she launches into a verbal attack about how your sales numbers are low, how you're not carrying your weight and how you're a disappointment to the staff. Your co-workers slink away, leaving you standing there with your blood boiling and mouth ajar (Psychology Today, 2004).

4. Conclusion

This study on the metaphorical uses of *blood* took advantage of using both small and larger corpora. The cross-linguistic quantitative difference of blood metaphors observed in small, specialized texts was not confirmed by the present investigation of larger American and Hungarian corpora. The data suggest that both languages make an extensive use of *blood* figuratively, mostly to represent the same target themes. At the same time, a deeper analysis of the expression *in cold blood* and expressions of boiling blood confirmed the substantial differences noted earlier and uncovered them in more detail. More specifically, *in cold blood* was found to be describing the manner of killing in the vast majority of the American examples, whereas in Hungarian, several of the examples with a positive meaning appeared in the context of a sport commentary, some of which was a chess event. The study has also shown that, similarly to Mischler's (2008) findings, a specific metaphorical expression can signal different emotions. This is true even though the usage of the examined expressions was found to be dominated by one sense in the American data, especially in the case of *in cold blood*. However, this fact does not translate into an exclusive meaning. The Hungarian usage appears to be more context-dependent in that these expressions lend themselves more easily to either a negative or a positive meaning. The observed remarkable cross-linguistic differences regarding the usage of these expressions are also informative for conceptual metaphor theory in that they suggest that the existence of the same figurative expressions in two or more languages does not necessarily indicate the same conceptualization.

A further benefit of using larger corpora to unearth variation in usage is the opportunity to separately analyze different genres. In the present study, the examination of examples from fiction and those from non-fiction hinted that, especially in American English, fiction writers are able to exploit the flexibility of the metaphorical expressions to use them in their less common senses. At the same time, a sizable difference in metaphor clustering between the two genres is not confirmed at this point.

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