

## **The Portrayal of Love Languages in Kristy Boyce's Novel *Hot British Boyfriend* (2021): A Study of Young Adult Literature Using Gary Chapman's Theory**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to examine the portrayal of love languages in Kristy Boyce's novel *Hot British Boyfriend* (2021) by applying Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages framework, which consists of words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on narrative excerpts, dialogues, and character actions that reflect the expressions of love between the protagonist, Ellie, and two male characters, Will and Dev. The findings reveal that Dev demonstrates stronger consistency in using supportive and meaningful love expressions, particularly through quality time and acts of service, which highlight his emotional investment and stability in the relationship. In contrast, Will is portrayed as more focused on physical touch and surface-level affirmations, suggesting a less emotionally grounded approach to love. These results show that the use of Chapman's theory provides valuable insights into how adolescent romance is represented in young adult literature. Furthermore, the study highlights how different love language preferences can reveal character depth, relational quality, and the dynamics of emotional intimacy in literary works.

**Keywords:** Romanticism, Novel, Love Languages

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### **1. Introduction**

Literature is a literary work with aesthetic value and significance. Poetry, prose, theater, and other genres of literature exist. Literature is usually written with beautiful and meaningful language and aims to convey messages, ideas, or emotions to the reader. Novels are long fictional stories that explore character, setting, and plot in depth. Novels allow writers to delve into complex storylines and develop multifaceted characters, giving readers a rich and immersive experience (Danial, 2025). Science fiction, fantasy, romance, mystery, historical fiction, and more are all possible genres for novels.

According to Safitri & Dewi (2021), the romantic genre is popular because it offers entertaining, hopeful love stories and depicts various human emotions, such as love, sadness, and joy. Besides, as the gateway of reality in real life, it opens a chance to identify, analyze, criticize, or appreciate with the characters, connecting the relationships by enjoying a humorous light of the story. Romance in this genre

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is realized through meaningful dialogues, beautiful descriptions, romantic actions, and storylines that focus on the journey of love (Goris, 2015). Overall, the romantic genre creates a strong emotional experience, stirs the imagination, and fosters hope for happiness and lasting love.

Furthermore, the theme of love in literature is important because it is universal, reflecting the human experience and the complexity of deep emotions (Alallah, 2022). Through stories that depict relationships, desires, and conflicts, literature helps us understand and express human feelings. In addition, the theme of love also serves as a social reflection, illustrating how cultural values and norms affect relationships (Prayuana et al., 2023). From a narrative perspective, love creates tension, conflict, and resolution that enrich the story, give it meaning, and entertain readers with an emotional connection to characters and events.

According to Abidin *et al.* (2024), the literary approach of Romanticism emphasizes emotion, imagination, and natural beauty to analyze Romanticism in a literary work. A romantic literary work describes an emotionally charged love story embodied in the dialogues, characters, and storyline. In addition, although not explicitly mentioned, the concept of adolescent developmental psychology is also relevant in explaining how adolescents understand and express love in a literary work (Middeke et al., 2021). Adolescent literature or young adult fiction plays a role in examining the dynamics of romantic relationships experienced by adolescents. This helps to understand how romance, emotions, and adolescent love experiences are displayed in a work of romantic literature.

Similarly, based on Middeke et al. (2021), in the late 18th century, a literary and artistic movement known as Romanticism arose in Europe. Romanticism continued to develop in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a form of resistance to Enlightenment rationalism, emphasizing feeling, imagination, individuality, and natural beauty as sources of inspiration. The movement is also often associated with nationalism and an interest in history and legend. “Victor Hugo, Mary Shelley, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are among the significant members of this movement,” who created works that are still valued today (Syaharani & Saptomo, 2024).

Next, adolescent romance represents a phase of emotional exploration, characterized by intense and idealistic experiences that help adolescents grasp a deeper meaning of love (Trihartanti et al., 2023). Adolescents benefit from romance in many ways, including identity formation, healthy relationship building, and emotional growth. Literature, music, and art foster creativity and self-expression, enabling people to express their emotions in a variety of ways.

Furthermore, differences in expressing love cannot be separated from psychological and social backgrounds. Adolescents, as Erikson dalam JP et al. (2021) states, are in the stage of “identity versus role confusion,” where they construct identity partly through romantic relationships. Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988; Ainsworth, 1989) also explains that secure and insecure attachment styles affect how affection is communicated. Similarly, Social Exchange Theory Thibaut & Kelley highlights that individuals engage in relationships based on perceived rewards and costs, shaping how they express and interpret love. These perspectives provide a deeper understanding of why Will and Dev demonstrate contrasting love expressions in the novel (Umaroh & Maulida, 2025).

Additionally, romance is associated with aspirations for the future; adolescents frequently imagine the kind of relationship and contentment they wish to attain (Rahayu & Thoyibi, 2020). According to Kusumaningroem & Dewi (2024), romance in adolescent lives is a phase of intense and idealistic exploration of feelings and experiences of love. This process helps them understand the meaning of love, build connections, and understand interpersonal relationships. Romance provides first date experiences and lessons about social interaction. Adolescents' imaginations of ideal love can inspire dreams. Romance also encourages important social skills (Fauzi & Yuwita, 2022). However, teens also

face challenges such as rejection and heartbreak, so guidance in dealing with them is essential.

Meanwhile, an adolescent novel has a role in psychological development, searching for self and identity for adolescents (Safira, 2020). These novels have various models of love and relationships that are constructed by social and cultural values. In addition, this kind of novel offers moral values that reflect the social values, as well as strengthen literary appreciation and give space for discussion and reflection on love and life. Thus, analyzing the novels develops understanding and deepens the dynamic of value in adolescent stories.

In addition, literary psychology explores the relationship between literature and the human psyche. Psychological approaches are important for understanding the characters' psychological motivations and behaviors through a comprehensive psychological approach (Laras & Rahmasari, 2023). This approach contributes to revealing the character's motivations and behaviors, such as in Kristy Boyce's *Hot British Boyfriend*, where Ellie's psychology explains her decision to choose Dev. Plus, literary psychology opens up understanding the framework, which influences the teenage experience of empathy (Pramesti, 2017). Literary interpretations can be enriched by examining the style of language, the techniques of writing, like metaphor or stream of consciousness. Literature can be reflected using human emotions by connecting the gap between the author and the reader, understanding the comprehensive psychological approach. This technique uncovers hidden meanings in literature, such as Dev's initial display of love for Ellie and Will's reciprocation, highlighting the complicated nature of teenage love relationships. Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages theory serves as the primary theoretical framework for analyzing romanticism (Chapman, 2024).

For example, the representation of adolescent romance is explored in Sahwa Laily's research on the novel *Dilan: Dia Adalah Dilanku Tahun 1991* by Pidi Baiq, in which the relationship between Dilan and Milea, along with expressions of love, sadness, disappointment, anxiety, and regret, is analyzed. The motivation for this research is derived from the popularity of the novel and its influence on Indonesian teenagers, with a focus placed on the cultural and social context of the 1990s. "Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages approach, Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, and Physical Touch" is employed as the approach (Laily, 2025). However, adolescent relationship dynamics are strongly represented in this research, along with the evolution of the romantic ideal in Indonesian society being highlighted in the previous research, leaving room for this research into themes, characters, and their impact on readers in societies outside of Indonesia in 21<sup>st</sup>.

Next, the author of the novel *Hot British Boyfriend* is Kristy Boyce, a writer from Columbus, Ohio, who is also a senior lecturer in psychology at The Ohio State University. Her academic background significantly influences her work, especially in portraying emotional dynamics and character relationships. In her debut novel, *Hot British Boyfriend*, she combines her expertise with a light yet meaningful adolescent fiction narrative inspired by her teaching experiences on the concept of "the self." Boyce's personal life is enriched by creative activities like making fairy gardens and enjoying entertaining reality shows, reflecting a positive spirit that resonates in her writing. She coordinates social media for the "Central and Southern Ohio SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators)", demonstrating her active participation in the literary community (Bergren, 2019).

Furthermore. The novel is about Ellie, a high school student who has just moved to Waterford Valley, Virginia, and falls in love with Andy, a popular basketball player, but her heart is broken when she finds out that Andy is dating her best friend, Crystal. Feeling sad and disappointed, Ellie decides to join a student exchange program in England, where she meets Will, an attractive and mysterious young Englishman. Her relationship with Will blossoms, and they spend time together in London and Venice, enjoying a togetherness full of surprises. Meanwhile, back in Waterford Valley, Dev, a classmate,

secretly harbors feelings for Ellie, always supporting her in academics and friendship, though often criticizing Will. Ellie's relationship with Will and Dev becomes increasingly complex, as on the one hand she is attracted to Will's charm, but on the other hand she feels a strong emotional bond with Dev. Now, Ellie must face the biggest dilemma of her life-deciding who she truly loves and who she wants to fight for.

At the same time, the review of *Hot British Boyfriend* by Kristy Boyce explores its themes of self-discovery and finding true love, with the reviewers drawn to the book's setting at Harlaxton College, where they had studied abroad. The reviewers found Ellie, the protagonist, relatable, as her journey mirrored teenage experiences of seeking validation and fitting in. Her relationships with Will, a charming British boy, and Dev, a supportive friend who encourages her to be herself, are central to the story. However, the reviewer notes Ellie's tendency to mask her identity in the presence of Will, viewing it as a limitation in character development. Despite this, the reviewers describe the book as a cute and lighthearted read with a positive message about embracing one's identity and surrounding oneself with people who accept them. The reviewer appreciates the novel's engaging characters, vivid English setting, and uplifting themes, ultimately recommending it to readers who enjoy travel-infused romance stories, especially those familiar with studying abroad.

Several studies have examined the portrayal of love in young adult fiction. Laily (2025) analyzed *Dilan: Dia Adalah Dilanku* Tahun 1991 by Pidi Baiq using Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages, but the study was limited to the context of Indonesian cultural settings. Similarly, Safira (2020) explored romantic experiences in *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* by Jenny Han, but did not employ any psychological frameworks such as Chapman's theory. Alallah (2022) examined the healing process in *Finding Audrey* by Sophie Kinsella, focusing on trauma recovery rather than expressions of love. These previous studies, while insightful, either lacked a structured psychological framework or focused solely on localized or emotional aspects of romance.

Consequently, a gap remains in examining how adolescent romantic expressions are communicated through love languages in cross-cultural contexts, particularly in Western young adult literature. Kristy Boyce's *Hot British Boyfriend*, set in England and narrated by an American teen girl, presents a rich ground for such an exploration (Collinson et al., 2018). This study addresses that gap by applying Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages as the primary framework to analyze the contrasting love expressions of two male characters, Will and Dev. The novel's setting and characters allow for a nuanced analysis of how adolescents navigate emotional intimacy, cultural adjustment, and self-understanding through love language preferences (Kirtley & Kirtley, 2021).

The Five Love Languages approach by Gary Chapman remains relevant as it helps individuals understand and express love in a more meaningful way. The Five Love Languages are 1) Words of Affirmation, 2) Acts of Service, 3) Receiving Gifts, 4) Quality Time, and 5) Physical Touch, explaining how every person has a preference in giving and receiving affection. This approach can be applied to any relationship, whether romance, family, or friendship, thereby facilitating effective communication and fostering stronger relational bonds (Khasanah, 2019). By understanding the love language of a partner or significant other, one can express and receive love more satisfyingly, strengthening emotional bonds and creating more harmonious relationships. To support the analysis of adolescent romanticism, relevant theoretical foundations are discussed in the following section.

First, Words of Affirmation: "People who have the 'Words of Affirmation' love language feel most loved when their partner expresses affection through words" (Chapman, 2024). They appreciate compliments, support, and genuine expressions of affection. Constructive words, such as "You look beautiful today", "I'm proud of you", or "Thank you for your help", are very meaningful love languages

to them. They feel appreciated and loved when their partner expresses their feelings with positive words.

Second, Acts of Service: “For those with the 'Acts of Service' love language, the most meaningful expression of love is through concrete actions” (Chapman, 2024). They feel loved when their partner shows care and concern by helping with housework, cooking, or doing useful tasks. Actions such as washing dishes, taking out the trash, or helping with childcare are very meaningful love languages to them. They feel appreciated and loved when their partner shows a willingness to help and lighten their load.

Third, Receiving Gifts: “People who have the 'Receiving Gifts' love language feel most loved when their partner gives gifts, both big and small” (Chapman, 2024). These presents do not have to be costly, but they should demonstrate care and consideration. They feel appreciated and loved when their partner shows a willingness to go out of their way to find and give something special, which shows that their partner is thinking of them. Gifts can be flowers, chocolates, books, or something meaningful to them.

Fourth, Quality Time: “People who have a 'Quality Time' love language feel most loved when their partner gives them their undivided attention and quality time together” (Chapman, 2024). They appreciate the moments where their partner is completely focused on them, without distractions such as television or phones. Going for a walk together, having dinner while talking, or simply sitting together and telling stories are very meaningful ways to show love for them. They feel valued and loved when their partner shows a willingness to spend time and attention completely on them.

Lastly, “Physical Touch: For those with the 'Physical Touch' love language, physical touch is the primary way to express and receive love” (Chapman, 2024). Hugs, kisses, hand-holding, or sexual intimacy are very meaningful love languages for them. They feel loved and appreciated when their partner shows physical closeness and intimacy emotionally connected to their partner. Physical touch makes them feel loved, appreciated, and emotionally connected to their partner.

To strengthen the framework, this study also applies Erikson’s Psychosocial Development Theory, which explains that adolescent romance contributes to identity formation. Attachment Theory by Bowlby and Ainsworth provides insight into how secure and insecure bonds shape patterns of love expression. In addition, Social Exchange Theory Thibaut & Kelley dalam Prasetyo (2023) argues that relationship behavior is influenced by exchanges of rewards and expectations. These perspectives complement Chapman’s model by situating Love Languages within broader social and psychological contexts.

## 2. Methodology

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), aiming to explore how adolescent romantic expressions are portrayed in the novel *Hot British Boyfriend* by Kristy Boyce using Gary Chapman’s Five Love Languages as a theoretical framework. Qualitative research is suitable for this study because it focuses on subjective interpretation, emotional nuance, and the exploration of meaning within literary texts.

Beyond categorizing the forms of Love Languages, this study also analyzes the psychological and social backgrounds of the characters. Particular attention is given to how Will’s and Dev’s different attachment styles, personality traits, and social contexts shape their expressions of love. This dual focus ensures that the analysis captures not only the forms of affection but also the underlying factors that motivate them.

## 2.1 Sampling Technique

The study applies purposive sampling, selecting narrative excerpts, dialogues, and character actions involving romantic interactions between Ellie and the two male characters, Dev and Will. These samples are chosen based on their relevance to one or more of the Five Love Languages: (1) Words of Affirmation, (2) Acts of Service, (3) Receiving Gifts, (4) Quality Time, and (5) Physical Touch.

## 2.2 Data Collection

The primary data are taken from the novel *Hot British Boyfriend* (Boyce, 2021), specifically focusing on scenes that illustrate romantic interaction. Data collection was done through close reading and manual coding. Excerpts that reflect each of the five love languages were marked, categorized, and recorded into a data sheet. This approach directly addresses the research question: How are the Five Love Languages portrayed through Ellie's romantic interactions with Will and Dev in the novel? Every coded excerpt was aligned with one love language category to ensure accurate mapping between theory and narrative data.

## 2.3 Role of the Researcher

The researcher acted as the primary instrument of analysis in this study. An interpretive reading of the text was conducted to identify relevant excerpts, which were then categorized according to the theoretical constructs of Gary Chapman's *Five Love Languages*. The researcher's academic background in English literature and a specific interest in adolescent fiction contributed to the interpretive process, while potential bias was mitigated through careful reflection and adherence to theoretical principles. Since the research was entirely text-based, no direct interaction with human participants occurred. Reflexivity and transparency were maintained by cross-checking the interpretations against Chapman's original definitions and insights from previous scholarly literature.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic coding based on the Five Love Languages. After the data were collected, each excerpt was classified into one of the five categories, followed by detailed interpretation. This process involved identifying patterns of romantic expression across different scenes and comparing how Dev and Will expressed affection differently. The analysis was guided by the research question and focused on explaining how and why certain behaviors represented specific love languages.

## 2.5 Validation of Data

To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing data interpretations with theoretical concepts from Chapman (2024) and supporting scholarly references. Peer debriefing was conducted with academic advisors to reduce bias. Additionally, thick description was used to provide context for each excerpt, allowing readers to understand and assess the interpretations made. The coding scheme was revisited during the analysis to ensure consistency and clarity in categorization.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Result

**Table 1. Distribution of Love Language Categories in *Hot British Boyfriend***

	Ellie X Dev	Ellie X Will
<b>Words of Affirmation</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Physical Touch</b>	29	<b>36</b>
<b>Acts of Service</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Quality Time</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Receiving Gifts</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>179</b>	<b>113</b>

Table 1. Distribution of Love Language Categories in *Hot British Boyfriend* shows the frequency of love language expressions between the protagonist, Ellie, and the two male characters, Dev and Will. Based on the data, Ellie and Dev share 179 instances of love language expressions, while Ellie and Will share 113 instances. This indicates a significantly deeper and more emotionally consistent relationship between Ellie and Dev compared to Will.

Among the five love languages, Quality Time (59 instances) and Words of Affirmation (53 instances) dominate Ellie and Dev's interactions. This implies that Dev invests in emotional bonding, verbal support, and shared experiences, suggesting a meaningful and stable affection rooted in friendship and understanding. Dev also demonstrates a notably higher level of Acts of Service (29) and Receiving Gifts (9) compared to Will, further emphasizing his thoughtful and action-oriented love.

On the other hand, Will shows a stronger tendency toward Physical Touch (36) and moderately uses Words of Affirmation (29) and Quality Time (36). This pattern reflects a more surface-level or physically expressive approach to romance, aligning with Will's portrayal as a charming but less emotionally grounded character. His low numbers in Acts of Service (9) and Receiving Gifts (3) suggest less emotional investment compared to Dev.

Overall, the quantitative results support the idea that Dev's love expressions align more consistently with Chapman's emotionally affirming love languages, indicating his role as the healthier and more emotionally compatible partner for Ellie. These findings validate the studies that love languages can reveal not only character depth but also relational quality and compatibility in young adult romantic fiction.

#### 3.2. Discussion

##### 3.2.1 The instances of Ellie and Will's representation of romanticism based on Chapman's Five Love Languages method (Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, and Physical Touch).

###### 1. Words of Affirmation

Example: "He cocks his head at me. "I know you. You're the girl who likes her... tea hot, isn't it?" said

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Will (40,8). (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman's approach of the five love languages suggests that people express and receive love in different ways, with Words of Affirmation being one of the primary languages. This love language revolves around verbal expressions of appreciation, encouragement, and affection, making individuals feel valued and understood :

- Recognition as a Form of Affirmation: Chapman's approach highlights that Words of Affirmation can include statements that make someone feel seen and understood. Will's remark, "I know you," is not just about her taste in tea; it signaled attentiveness to Ellie as a person, reinforcing her individuality.
- Personalized Expression: Instead of a generic statement, Will recalls a specific detail about Ellie. Chapman explains that meaningful affirmations reflect personal knowledge, showing that the speaker values and remembers even small aspects of the person they care about.
- Emotional Impact: For people who resonate with Words of Affirmation, verbal recognition strengthens bonds. Even though Will's statement is not traditionally sentimental, it still functions as a verbal signal of familiarity and connection, making Ellie feel acknowledged.

## 2. Acts of Service

Example: "Good! And I'd be more than happy to help you enjoy it." He reaches over and gives my hand a light squeeze. "You can worry about working when you're back in America." (61,10) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman's Acts of Service love language is all about showing love through helpful actions rather than words. People who resonate with this love language feel most appreciated when others take the initiative to ease their burdens or support them in practical ways.

- Action Beyond Words: Chapman's approach emphasizes that Acts of Service go beyond verbal encouragement; they involve actively taking steps to ease someone's stress or improve their experience. Will's phrase "I'd be more than happy to help you enjoy it" is not just a statement; it is a commitment to action.
- Physical Reassurance: The hand squeeze is a subtle yet significant gesture; it is not just comforting but also an act of intentional care, reinforcing his willingness to support them tangibly. Those who resonate with Acts of Service often appreciate when others physically demonstrate their care, rather than simply speaking about it.
- Guiding Focus Away From Stress: Chapman notes that Acts of Service can involve helping someone shift their mindset or lighten their emotional burden. Will's words, "You can worry about working when you're back in America," do exactly that by nudging the other person to embrace relaxation and trust that he is facilitating the moment.

## 3. Receiving Gifts

Example: "For you." He closes the distance between us. "I wanted to surprise you. I thought you deserved them since you found that daisy fairy for me. I hope you like them." (47,8) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman's approach of the five love languages suggests that individuals express and receive love in different ways. One of these love languages is Receiving Gifts, which is not about materialism; it is about the thoughtfulness and emotional significance behind a gift.

In the context provided, the act of giving is deeply rooted in this love language. The phrase "For you," accompanied by the action of closing the distance, emphasizes an intentional moment of connection. The person is not just handing over an object; the character is expressing appreciation, gratitude, and affection through the gift :

- Personalized Reciprocity: The giver explicitly connects the gift to a past moment of kindness, "since you found that daisy fairy for me," which deepens the meaning. Chapman notes that individuals who resonate with Receiving Gifts cherish thoughtful gestures that reflect an understanding of their contributions or experiences, making this exchange more than just about the object itself.
- Physical and Emotional Closeness: The act of closing the distance alongside the phrase "For you" emphasizes that this is not simply about giving something; it is about establishing intimacy and reinforcing connection. Chapman describes how gifts strengthen relationships by tangibly affirming appreciation, which is demonstrated here through both verbal and physical cues.
- The Giver's Vulnerability: "I hope you like them" signals not just a desire for validation, but an emotional exposure which shows that the giver is invested in making the recipient happy, aligning with Chapman's assertion that gifts often carry a deep emotional weight for both the giver and receiver.

#### 4. Quality Time

Example: "Right. To get closer to Will, which is happening since he wants to spend the day with me in London. That was the whole point, in case you've forgotten." (63,20) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman's Quality Time love language centers on undivided attention and meaningful shared experiences. For individuals who value Quality Time, moments spent together, fully present and engaged, are the most powerful expressions of love :

- Time as a Commitment: Chapman's approach emphasizes that Quality Time is about prioritizing someone through focused and meaningful interaction. The phrase "he wants to spend the day with me" signals that Will is not merely engaging in casual conversation; he is actively committing to dedicated, uninterrupted time together, which is a core principle of this love language.
- Experience Over Words: Unlike Words of Affirmation, which rely on verbal appreciation, Quality Time is about shared engagement. The setting of London suggests that their bond is being strengthened through immersive experiences, reinforcing Chapman's idea that meaningful time together builds a deeper connection.
- Intent & Expectation: The phrase "That was the whole point" explicitly reinforces that the act of spending meaningful time itself is an expression of care was always the goal. Chapman emphasizes that for those who resonate with this love language, the act of spending time itself is an expression of care, not just a means to an end.

## 5. Physical Touch

Example: “He lifts my hand to his lips and I have to clench my jaw so I don’t squeal. The heat from his kiss spreads up my arm and through my chest.” (63,12) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman's Physical Touch love language highlights how nonverbal gestures like a simple touch, a comforting embrace, or even a fleeting brush of fingertips can carry immense emotional weight. For those who resonate with Physical Touch, love is often expressed and received through physical connection, which fosters intimacy, reassurance, and warmth. :

- Touch as a Primary Form of Communication: Chapman’s approach highlights that Physical Touch is not just about affection; it is a direct, nonverbal way of expressing emotions. The act of lifting Ellie’s hand to his lips is not incidental; it is an intentional gesture that conveys closeness, admiration, and possibly reassurance, making it a clear expression of this love language.
- Physiological & Emotional Feedback: The "heat from his kiss spreads up my arm and through my chest," elicits a physical and emotional response, validating Chapman's theory that contact provides a powerful sensory experience that strengthens Will and Ellie's emotional connection.
- Intensity & Restraint: Ellie's inclination to "clench [her] jaw so [she] doesn't squeal" demonstrates that contact is more than merely kind; it is electrifying, generating an automatic reaction. Chapman observes that for those whose love language is Physical Touch, these encounters have a greater emotional weight, underlining their importance beyond attraction.

### 3.2.2 The instances of Ellie and Dev's representation of romanticism based on Chapman's Five Love Languages method (Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, and Physical Touch).

#### 1. Words of Affirmation

Example: “It doesn’t have to.” I glare at Dev, and he shakes his head. “I’m not saying you shouldn’t be upset. But remember, we’ve got five days off from school. No classes, no homework, no obligations.” He knows he has me now and leans closer. “Authentic food. Canals. Shopping ” (208,29) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman's Words of Affirmation love language emphasizes verbal displays of gratitude, encouragement, and emotional support. People who regard this love language feel most loved when they hear encouraging remarks about their feelings, efforts, or personal characteristics.

- Acknowledgment: “I’m not saying you shouldn’t be upset.” Dev supports Ellie's sentiments rather than dismissing them, which is consistent with Words of Affirmation's primary principle of affirming emotions before presenting perspective.
- Encouragement: The list of delightful things "Authentic food. Canals. Shopping." is more than a distraction; it is a purposeful reframe of the circumstance, supporting Ellie's right to pleasure and joy.
- Persuasive Language: Dev's language is not neutral; it gently steers Ellie toward a more optimistic viewpoint, making his comments a purposeful act of affirmation rather than casual chat.

## 2. Acts of Service

Example: Dev pulls me down a narrow alley and stops, triumphant, in front of a small shop. One look and my hands are over my heart. It's a miniature fantasy world in glass. Tiny trees and flowering bushes. Herds of unicorns in white, pink, and blue. Tiny fairies with wings so thin you can see through them. Each figure is so small, I can't imagine how anyone could make such a thing. (217,31) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman's Acts of Service love language is all about expressing love through helpful actions rather than words. People who resonate with this love language feel most appreciated when others take the initiative to ease their burdens or create meaningful experiences for them :

- **Intentionality:** Dev does not stumble upon the shop by accident; he actively leads Ellie there, demonstrating effort and foresight. Acts of Service, as Chapman describes, involve going out of one's way to make someone's life easier or more enjoyable.
- **Emotional Impact:** Ellie's reaction, placing her hands over her heart, signals that Dev's action resonates deeply with her emotions. The moment is not just a kind gesture, but an act of care tailored to her joy, reinforcing the emotional weight of service-oriented love.
- **Contrary to Words of Affirmation:** Dev might have just informed Ellie about the shop and described its beauty, but he takes the effort to ensure she sees it firsthand. This distinction is important since Acts of Service rely on doing rather than speaking, setting Dev's method apart from conventional verbal support.

## 3. Receiving Gifts

Example: "But . . .," I falter. "You didn't have to spend your money on something for me. I didn't know we were doing this. I didn't think to get you all something." "Don't worry about it. I wasn't going to get you something with my money. But since it was other people's money, I didn't mind so much. Plus, you were the one pushing me to perform in public, so . . . I figured it made sense." (164,24) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman's Receiving Gifts love language is about showing love with meaningful gifts that have an emotional impact. For those who understand this love language, presents are more than simply tangible goods; they represent gratitude, caring, and understanding.

- **Symbolic Gestures (Gift):** Chapman's approach emphasizes that gifts have meaning beyond their material value. Dev's gift, while linked to an external factor (performance money), still carries emotional weight because it stems from a shared experience with Ellie. The exchange is not just about the object, but also about recognizing her role in his success.
- **Overcoming Hesitation:** Ellie's hesitation reflects her concern about the imbalance of exchange, as she had not prepared gifts for others. According to Chapman, people who value receiving presents typically struggle to receive presents freely. Dev's reassurance alleviates shame and emphasizes appreciation, maintaining the impression that giving is an act of thoughtfulness rather than obligation.
- **Personalization & Thoughtfulness:** Personalization. Chapman describes how the most impactful gifts reflect an understanding of the recipient, and Dev's rationale shows that the gift is not random; it is not a direct acknowledgment of Ellie's support.

#### 4. Quality Time

Example: “I burst out laughing, and he does the same. He pulls a gym sock out of his bag and starts swinging it around his head. I wipe tears from my eyes and wave him away. I can’t breathe. We laugh until my stomach hurts, and Dev is sucking in air”. (92,13) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman’s Quality Time love language emphasizes the importance of deep, meaningful interactions where both individuals are fully present and engaged with one another. For those who resonate with this love language, moments of shared laughter, uninterrupted attention, and genuine connection create the strongest bonds.

- **Presence & Engagement:** Chapman’s concept of Quality Time hinges on undivided attention. The laughter Dev and Ellie share is not passive enjoyment; it is immersive and mutual. Neither is distracted nor disengaged; they are completely in sync, locked into the moment together. This aligns with Chapman’s idea that time well spent is about focused connection, not just existing in the same space.
- **Emotional Bonding Through Playfulness:** The gym sock scene is not just a joke; it is a display of spontaneity and shared experience, reinforcing closeness. Chapman emphasizes that Quality Time can come in different forms, including playful interaction, which builds intimacy through shared amusement.
- **Physical & Emotional Impact:** The line “We laugh until my stomach hurts” reinforces the depth of their connection. It is not a simple chuckle but a full-body, transformative moment, which Chapman notes is a sign of truly meaningful interactions. The exhaustion from laughing signals a release, a deepening of their emotional bond through shared happiness.

#### 5. Physical Touch

Example: “I look over my shoulder at him, and his mouth clamps shut. We’re only millimeters apart now. His eyes are fever bright, and for a moment, his grasp tightens against my waist. My heart does a stutter step. How did I never notice how beautiful Dev’s eyes are up close?” (142,21) (Boyce, 2021).

Explanation: Gary Chapman’s Physical Touch love language emphasizes the significance of physical connection as an expression of love, comfort, and intimacy. For those who value this love language, touch is not just about affection; it is a way to communicate emotions without words.

- **Physical Touch as Emotional Expression:** Chapman’s approach emphasizes that touch is a direct, unspoken way of communicating love, comfort, and emotional connection. In this scene, Dev’s tightening grasp is not just incidental contact; it is a deliberate act that conveys intensity, closeness, and possibly reassurance, making it a meaningful expression of the Physical Touch love language.
- **Heightened Sensory Awareness:** Ellie’s realization, “How did I never notice how beautiful Dev’s eyes are up close?” suggests that proximity shifts her perception of him, intensifying emotional and physical awareness, which is a key aspect of this love language. According to Chapman, persons who value Physical Touch frequently equate intimacy with increased emotional significance; hence, Ellie’s physical reaction is crucial to the scene’s impact.
- **Nonverbal Communication & Tension:** The encounter has an evident emotional charge. Ellie’s tightening grip, fever-bright eyes, and stuttering heartbeat substitute words with physical sensations, revealing how Physical Touch functions as a sort of silent but strong confirmation. Chapman outlines

how touch may convey security, affection, or passionate intensity, and this moment captures it without using a single word.

From a psychosocial perspective, Will's reliance on Physical Touch and surface-level Words of Affirmation reflects an identity that seeks external validation, consistent with characteristics of insecure attachment. His expressions suggest a performative dimension influenced by social expectations. In contrast, Dev's emphasis on Quality Time and Acts of Service indicates secure attachment and emotional maturity, highlighting stability and depth in his relational approach. These differences confirm that love expression is not only a matter of preference but also shaped by psychological development and social interaction.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study explored the portrayal of romantic expressions in *Hot British Boyfriend* by Kristy Boyce through the lens of Gary Chapman's *Five Love Languages* framework. By categorizing romantic interactions between Ellie and two male characters, Dev and Will, into five distinct categories (Words of Affirmation, Acts of Service, Receiving Gifts, Quality Time, and Physical Touch), the research revealed contrasting love styles that reflect emotional maturity, relational depth, and compatibility. The findings show that Dev consistently demonstrates emotionally affirming love languages, especially Quality Time and Words of Affirmation, suggesting his deeper emotional investment and compatibility with Ellie. Meanwhile, Will relies more heavily on Physical Touch and surface-level affirmations, implying a more performative and less emotionally grounded connection.

These results reinforce the relevance of Chapman's theory as a tool for interpreting emotional dynamics in young adult literature. They also highlight how the frequency and type of love expressions can reflect underlying character traits and relational development. Beyond theoretical contribution, this study offers a practical implication: by understanding how love is communicated in fictional works, young readers may become more aware of their relational values and expectations. The study's findings affirm both hypotheses: individuals possess distinct preferences in expressing love, and these differences are influenced by psychosocial and cultural backgrounds. By combining Chapman's Five Love Languages with theories of identity development, attachment, and social exchange, this research contributes a more comprehensive perspective on adolescent romance in literature. Future studies are encouraged to apply this model to multicultural narratives or compare male and female characters' expressions of love to deepen the understanding of emotional literacy and relational psychology in adolescent fiction.

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