

Marta Zampa

## “Che paura avete voi?”

Collocations of *it. paura* in Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*

**Abstract:** This paper presents an analysis of the collocations of *it. paura* (fear) in Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. The main goal of the research was to find out how this emotion is conceptualized in Boccaccio’s masterpiece, which is considered a milestone of Italian literature. Following the theory of conceptual metaphors and linguistic research on emotions, as well as a qualitative approach to collocation, it is shown that *paura* in the *Decameron* is depicted as an independent and powerful entity that rules the subject experiencing it.

**Keywords:** collocations; diachronic study of Italian; conceptual metaphors; paura; *Decameron*.

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## 1 Introduction

Presently the folk opened the tomb, and propped up the lid, and then fell to disputing as to who should go in. None was willing, and the contention was protracted; but at length one – ‘twas a priest – said: “**Of what are ye afeared?** Think ye to be eaten by him? Nay, the dead eat not the living. I will go in myself.” So saying he propped his breast upon the edge of the lid, threw his head back, and thrust his legs within, that he might go down feet foremost. (*Decameron*, II. 5.82)<sup>1</sup>

The present paper aims at showing how the emotion *fear* (*paura*) is conceptualized in Giovanni Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, through analysis of its collocations.

According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003 [1980]), linguistic structures both reflect and result from a specific concept of reality. Language provides the tools that allow us to understand the general principles of reality, and “such principles are often metaphoric in nature and involve understanding one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience” (Lakoff and Johnson 2003 [1980]: 116). Especially abstract entities – like emotions – need

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<sup>1</sup> Translation from the *Decameron Web* by *Virtual Humanities Lab* – The Italian Studies Department – Brown University.

to be understood and expressed through metaphors. This means they have to be verbalized by ascribing them concrete characteristics – i.e. they have to be *objectified*. The same happens with fear, the negative emotion par excellence (see Kailuweit 2005).

The study of collocations serves the purpose of analysing how emotions are metaphorically expressed because collocations are semi-idiomatic structures that become part of the lexicon through actual usage, and consequently change diachronically. Such combinations come into being as a consequence of a conceptual affinity between the components and a specific concept of the reality to be verbalized (see Blumenthal and Hausmann 2006: 12; Hausmann 1984: 398–399). Moreover, emotion lexemes are very interesting objects of study for phraseology – as Mel’čuk and Wanner (1994: 90) state: “they are frequent, semantically complex, highly idiomatic, and, as a rule, exhibit a rich restricted lexical co-occurrence”.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 Theoretical framework

The present study is based on two different lines of research: the phraseological perspective in studies on collocations and the theory of conceptual metaphors, as well as the linguistic research on emotions.

### 2.1 Studies on collocations

A lively debate on collocations has been going on in the last decades. In fact there is still no unanimous definition of this phenomenon, that remains “one of the most controversial notions in linguistics” (Evert 2008: 1212). There are mainly three notions of collocation: the phraseological notion (or *qualitative* notion, see Blumenthal and Hausmann 2006: 3), the empirical notion (or *quantitative* notion, again Blumenthal and Hausmann 2006: 3) and the computational notion. In this work, my focus lies on the qualitative notion. Therefore I only introduce the quantitative notion, and leave aside the computational notion, that defines collocation as a “lexicalised word combination that has idiosyncratic semantic or syntactic properties” (Evert 2008: 1213).

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<sup>2</sup> “restricted lexical co-occurrence” is a synonym of “collocation”, see Mel’čuk and Wanner (1994: 88).

Collocations in the quantitative sense have been first defined by Firth (1957, Firth in Palmer 1968) as a relation of “mutual expectancy” between words at the syntagmatic level. According to this perspective (adopted by the *British Contextualism* school, which includes Firth’s disciples Halliday and Sinclair), statistical frequency of occurrence of two items in a given span is what makes a collocation significant, independent from the semantic value of its components (Sinclair 1966: 417–418). Sinclair (1991) also points out that language is run by two principles: the *open choice* and the *idiom principle*. Sentences can be formulated by freely choosing words (*open choice principle*), but at the same time these choices are restricted by rules and by the existence of ready-built phrases (for example collocations, which illustrate the *idiom principle*) (see Williams 2003: 40). This is why collocations are at the core of studies on language learning and on compiling dictionaries (for ex. *BBI Combinatory Dictionary of English* – Benson, Benson and Ilson 1986; Hausmann 1984, 1985, 1990; Mel’čuk 2003; Giacomini 2011 on modelling an electronic dictionary of Italian collocations). In fact, collocations cannot be made up freely by a speaker, but have to be learned as whole, given expressions (Gross 1982: 182). Other trends based on quantitative methods take into account the semantic features of co-occurrent words (Mel’čuk and Wanner 1994), and choose as a corpus for quantitative analysis collocations in the qualitative sense, “because it is quite obvious that the results of a quantitative analysis will be much more clear-cut and meaningful when they are based on linguistic understanding rather than just mindless computation” (Evert 2005: 19).<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the theoretical framework of the present analysis, a mainly qualitative and consistently broad approach to collocation was chosen (see below for word combinations included), which serves the scope of a philological analysis of collocations in the *Decameron*. The approach I mainly follow is that of Franz Josef Hausmann, according to whom a collocation consists of an autosemantic *basis* and a synsemantic *collocate*, whose meaning can be defined only in the specific collocation (Hausmann 2007: 101–102; Hausmann 1997). Collocations are “lexical solidarities” (*lexikalische Solidaritäten* – Coseriu 1967), i.e. semi-idiomatic expressions located in the middle of a continuum between free combinations (deriving from free association of words that are semantically and syntactically combinable) and idioms (set phrases with opaque, non-compositional meaning) (François and Mejri 2006: 9).

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<sup>3</sup> Evert (2009: 19) calls collocations “relational co-occurrences”, that are “based on a linguistic interpretation of the observable corpus data. Each cooccurrence corresponds to an instance of a specific structural relation.”

As far as the meaning of collocations is concerned, they can be classified into three categories according to the degree of idiomaticity of the collocate (Grossmann and Tutin 2003: 8; Lamiroy 2008: 10). In *opaque* collocations the meaning of the collocate cannot be semantically reconstructed (e.g. fr. *peur bleue* [\*blue fear]). In *transparent* collocations, on the other hand, the collocate has a transparent meaning but behaves in a non-predictable way from a lexical and syntactical viewpoint (fr. *prendre peur* ‘to get scared’), where the absence of the article represents a syntactical irregularity). Finally, the meaning of *regular* collocations can be deduced from the meaning of the components, even though the reasons for the collocation’s existence are complex. Regarding syntactical properties and the use of modifiers, there is high variability of use among collocations: fr. *une peur bleue* ‘\*a blue fear’, but not *\*une peur très bleue* ‘\*a very blue fear’ or *\*la peur est bleue* ‘\*fear is blue’, whereas in Italian *grande paura* ‘big fear’) as well as *grandissima paura* ‘huge fear’) are correct. The meaning of collocations can be explained also as the realization of various *lexical functions* (FL),<sup>4</sup> as exemplified in Mel’čuk et al. (1995: 150).<sup>5</sup>

As shown, the basis of a collocation is used in its basic meaning, while the collocate takes a (more or less) idiomatic meaning and may have restricted morphosyntactic variability (see Konecny 2010: 101–102; 113). Therefore, collocations are semi-idiomatic, and can be distinguished from idioms, whose meaning is completely conventional. Thus, collocations usually cannot be translated into another language with a collocation whose collocate is identical to a standard equivalent of the collocate lemma as used outside the collocation. For example, the already mentioned opaque French collocation *peur bleue* cannot be translated literally into Italian (*\*paura blu*), but has a similar equivalent, *fifa blu* (*fifa* being a colloquial and ironical synonym of *paura*). Furthermore, the

4 Polguère 2008: 160: „Une **fonction lexicale** *f* décrit une relation existant entre une lexie *L* – appelée l’*argument* de *f* – et un ensemble de lexies ou de syntagmes figés appelé la *valeur* de l’application de *f* à la lexie *L*.” ; ibid. 165 : “une collocation est un syntagme *AB* (ou *BA*), formé des lexies  $L_A$  et  $L_B$ , qui est tel que, pour le construire, le locuteur sélectionne  $L_A$  librement d’après son sens ‘ $L_A$ ’, alors qu’il sélectionne  $L_B$  pour exprimer auprès de  $L_A$  un sens très général ‘*s*’ en fonction de la combinatoire restreinte de  $L_A$ . Les collocations sont donc des syntagmes semi-phraséologisés.”

5 If one wants to order a coffee not containing milk products in French, one asks for a *café noir*: even though the adjective *noir* doesn’t mean *not containing milk products* (in fact, *\*thé noir* would not work), it bears this meaning in co-occurrence with the noun *café*, and cannot be exchanged with other adjectives (like, say, *marron*). This relation is a non-standard lexical function, a highly specific and not predictable lexical function, applicable to few expressions. Nevertheless, collocations can also realize a standard lexical function: it. *ubriaco fradicio* is the realization of the Magn function applied to *ubriaco*, with no relation to the actual meaning of *fradicio*.

meaning deviation undergone by the collocate is what distinguishes collocations from free combinations. This distinction can sometimes be difficult to make when there is no clear difference between literal and idiomatic meaning of the collocate, like for example in *grande paura* ‘big fear’ (Konecny 2010: 130). The basic meaning of the adjective *grande* is restricted to concrete objects, but its attribution to abstract nouns is so common that such a usage cannot be considered figurative. Nonetheless, I consider this word combination a collocation (like Stein 1998: 68–69) – as well as others where the collocate undergoes minimal or no meaning alteration – because of the preference for the collocate (“lexikalische Bevorzugung des Kollokators” Konecny 2010: 130).<sup>6</sup> I also include the *grammatical collocations* (see Benson 1986), composed of a dominant lexeme – a verb, a noun, an adjective – and of a grammatically dependent element (for ex. *per paura*), and word combinations occurring only once in the *Decameron*.<sup>7</sup> Finally, I also consider *light-verb constructions* as collocations (*Funktionsverbgefüge*, *costruzioni a verbo supporto*), i.e. compound predicates, composed by a noun bringing semantic and lexical information and a verb conveying grammatical information (for ex. *avere paura* [\*to have fear]).

## 2.2 Conceptual metaphors and linguistic research on emotions

Another theoretical vein plays a central role in this research: the theory of conceptual metaphors and the linguistic research on emotions. A conceptual metaphor implies understanding an idea or a set of ideas in terms of another (Lakoff and Johnson 2003 [1980]). In order to study the conceptualization of an emotion from a linguistic viewpoint, it is necessary to presuppose that linguistic structures mirror a concept of reality, while at the same time deriving from it. Abstract nouns can be depicted in language by using metaphoric expressions, which describe them as concrete. As Lakoff and Johnson said, “We view language as providing data that can lead to general principles of understanding. [...] We have found that such principles are often metaphoric in nature and involve understanding one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience.” (2003 [1980]: 116) and “emotional concepts [...] are not clearly

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<sup>6</sup> Konecny (2010) has quantitative evidence of the lexical preference of *grande* in collocation with *paura* in Modern Italian, deriving from an analysis of collocations in Google.

<sup>7</sup> “Viele Kollokationen sind nicht frequent, aber dennoch verfügbar” (Hausmann in Bergenholtz and Mugdan 1985: 124).

delineated in our experience in any direct fashion and therefore must be comprehended primarily indirectly, via metaphor” (2003 [1980]: 85). This process also takes place for *paura*, which is therefore objectified to an entity with precise characteristics. As the examples’ analysis will show, this objectification takes place in terms of an *ontological metaphor*, i.e. a kind of conceptual metaphor that allows apprehending experiences and emotions as concrete entities. Central to this approach is the study *Emotion concepts* (1990) by Zoltan Kövecses. Kövecses observes that in English fear is dealt with using metaphors and metonymies. While metonymies come into being as a consequence of identifying fear with its effects on the subject, metaphors characterize it as an enemy, which causes these effects and dominates the person. Among the metaphors described by Kövecses, the following are relevant for this research: *fear is a supernatural being*, *fear is a natural force*, *fear is a superior*, *fear is a fluid in a container*, *fear goes into a person from outside* (Kövecses 1990: 76–81). A further link between the research on collocations and on conceptual metaphors is found in the fact that the existence of collocations can be also explained by taking into consideration metaphorical, metonymical and catachrestical processes (Grossmann and Tutin 2003, Lakoff and Johnson 2003 [1980]). In fact the selection of a collocate by a basis can be often explained only by bringing to light the metaphor underlying this relation by means of semantic analysis (Grossen and Tutin 2003: 14, 16).

Finally, Rolf Kailuweit’s work on verbs of emotion (2005) has to be taken into consideration. He considers fear a basic emotion (“elementare[n] Modi”, Kailuweit 2005: 63) together with *happiness*, *sadness*, *anger* and *disgust*, which are prime modes of human emotionality, connected to the ancient theory of humours. According to Kailuweit, emotions develop in a scenario (*Szene*), where a feeling relates to an experiencer (*Empfindungsträger*) following the scheme “x feels the emotion y” (see Kailuweit 2005: 68). A further element of the scenario is the *Korrelat*, the object of the emotion on which the experiencer expresses a judgment – usually some concrete circumstances, not necessarily equal to the cause of the feeling and often implicit.<sup>8</sup> Even if the experiencer is conscious of his emotional life, he cannot voluntarily experience an emotion, and often he is subject to it without knowing what provokes it. This occurs especially with basic emotions, as can be seen in the *Decameron*. An explanation of this phenomenon is that “bei Gefühlen wie ‘Angst’ oder ‘Trauer’, die mit Körperempfindungen verbunden sind, können diese Körperempfindungen selbst

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**8** Kailuweit 2005: 76: “an einer Gefühlsszene sind notwendig zwei Entitäten beteiligt, von denen eine das intentionale Subjekt ist, die andere ein Sachverhalt, auf den sich als ihr KORRELAT die Intentionalität des Subjekts bezieht.“

thematisiert und mit dem Gefühl der ‘Angst’ oder ‘Trauer’ in Verbindung gesetzt werden” [in case of emotions like ‘fear’ or ‘sadness’ that are connected to physical sensations, these sensations can be picked out as a central theme and related with the emotion ‘fear’ or ‘sadness’ itself] (Kailuweit 2005: 75).<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Kailuweit believes that emotions themselves cannot be controlled, but only their externalizations can be governed (Kailuweit 2005: 81). They are also dependent on the individual judgement on a situation/event (the *Korrelat*). Fear is described as an episodic emotion, taking place in a limited time span, nevertheless some people happen to be more susceptible to it than others, and can therefore be described as fearful (Kailuweit 2005: 162–163).

### 3 *Paura* and its scenario

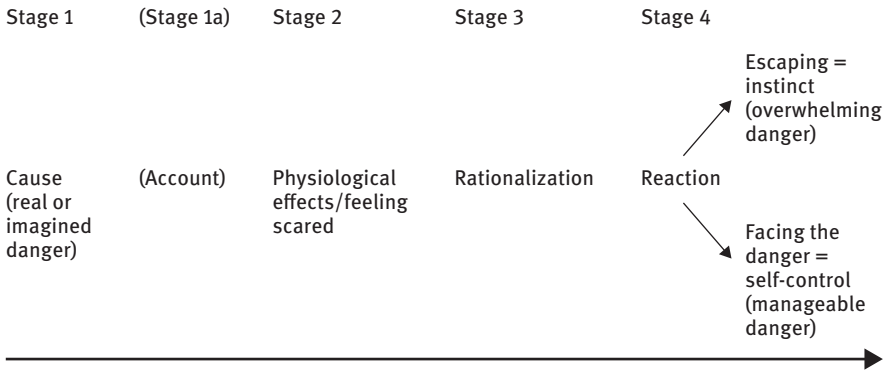
An appropriate and synthetic definition of *paura* can be found in the etymological *Barbera* dictionary by Carlo Battisti (1954). In his view *paura* is a “moto affettivo per un presunto pericolo” [emotional impulse due to a presumed danger]. As more extensively explained in the *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (Battaglia 1984: XII), this emotion originates from the personal understanding of a situation as dangerous, with the connection to the actual risk not being necessarily apparent.

The first edition of the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (1612), on the other hand, offers only one definition: “immaginazione di male soprastante, sbigottimento d’animo, per aspettazion di male” [imagination of a threatening evil, agitation caused by the expectation of an evil]. This last definition is particularly significant for the present research, because it describes fear as the process of picturing something terrifying, which dominates and threatens. Not only the role of the subject’s imagination and evaluation and his psychological reactions are underlined, but also this evil, which causes fear, is connoted as menacing and overhanging (“soprastante”). This attribute refers to the conceptualization of fear as a force dominating the individual. Therefore, this conceptualization corresponds to the metaphors *fear is a supernatural being*, *fear is a natural force* and *fear is a superior* as formulated in Kövecses (1990: 78).

The following scenario of *fear* is proposed for the present study, based on Kövecses’ (1990: 79) description of the prototypical scenario of

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<sup>9</sup> If not otherwise specified all translations were made by the author for the purposes of this publication.



**Figure 1:** *Fear scenario*

*fear's* origin and manifestation<sup>10</sup> and on the related model by Kailuweit (2005: 162).

The participants to this scenario are the experiencer, the situation perceived as dangerous and the source of actual danger. The stages composing the scenario can be explained as follows:

1. an event, a living being or an object are perceived as dangerous;
- 1a. this danger can also be experienced indirectly by the subject, in the sense that it is reported to the subject by someone else;
2. the subject experiences fear: the physical sensation precedes the mental processing;
3. the subject evaluates rationally the actual risk;
4. the subject reacts: according to the kind of danger and to his character, this reaction can be instinctive – i.e. fleeing – or self-controlled – i.e. facing the threat.

With regard to Kövecses's reconstruction (1990: 79), I include Kailuweit's optional *stage 1a*, accepting therefore that a reported event can cause fear. I also agree with him that different stages of the scenario can take place simultaneously (for example the physical sensations of fear can persist throughout the process). Furthermore, in opposition to Kövecses, I presuppose that after rationalization (*stage 3*) the individual is not necessarily inclined to flee, but can also decide to face the threat.

**10** Shaped on *The Cognitive Model of Anger Inherent in American English* by Lakoff and Kövecses (1983).



## 4 Corpus choice, creation and description

As John Sinclair explains in *Corpus, Concordance, Collocation* (1991: 13), “the beginning of any corpus study is the creation of the corpus itself. The decisions that are taken about what is to be in the corpus, and how the selection is to be organized, control almost everything that happens subsequently. The results are only as good as the corpus.” The *Decameron* represents a unique field of investigation for the collocations in Late-Medieval Tuscan (i.e. Italian of the beginnings) and for the associated conceptualization of fear. In fact, the collection aims at portraying Boccaccio’s contemporary society, and therefore reproduces the actual linguistic practice of his time.

Pietro Bembo was the first to recognize the value of the *Decameron* from a linguistic viewpoint. In his *Prose della volgar lingua* [Writings on the vulgar tongue] (1525) he presented the *Decameron* as a paradigm for a literary variety of Italian, equal to Latin and superior to all other Italian dialects. In the sixteenth century Boccaccio’s language was not in use anymore and already belonged to the literary tradition, for this reason it could become an example for writers to follow. Furthermore, the *Decameron* contains manifold writing styles and registers: from mimetic passages, written “con le voci con le quali il volgo parlava” [with the voices of the common people] to language of such poetic delicacy that it is still remembered to the present day: “così di belle figure, di vaghi modi [...] ripieno, che meraviglia non è se egli ancora vive, e lunghissimi secoli viverà.” [so full of beautiful figures, of fine modes [...], that it is no wonder if he still lives on, and for long centuries still will live] (Marti 1967: 39).

Boccaccio himself was fully aware of his style and of the linguistic tools he used in writing his novellas, as can be read in the *Introduction to the fourth day* (*Decameron* IV, intr.: 459–460): “non solo in fiorentin volgare e in prosa scritte [...] ma ancora in istilo umilissimo e rimesso quanto il più si possono” [not only written in vulgar Florentine and in prose [...], but even in a style as humble and modest as possible]. Furthermore the *Decameron* marks a phase of transformation in the language, as both archaic and innovative forms in lexicon and syntax coexist in the same text. Latin-based structures and figures occur not only with low and spoken-language expressions (see Stussi 2005: 106), but also with terms from dialects and foreign languages.

In the present paper I refer to the Einaudi *Decameron* edition by Vittore Branca (1992). In order to build up the corpus, the collocations were catalogued using the electronic corpus *Letteratura Italiana Zanichelli* (LIZ 4.0 2001). All novellas in which *paura* appears were read in order to understand the context of occurrence. All collocations with *paura* as a basis were organized into four categories, according to the part of speech the collocates belong to (hence

*noun + verb, noun + adjective, noun + noun, (verb/adjective +) prepositional phrase*). Each category was then further divided into sub-categories based, for example, on the role of subject or object held by the basis or on the preposition taking the basis *paura*. In the case of *verb + noun* collocations, from a syntactic viewpoint the verb is head of the phrase, whereas from a collocational viewpoint the main element (the basis) is the noun. The two perspectives are complementary, as syntactical properties belong to each lexical combination and therefore apply also for phraseologisms.<sup>11</sup>

The *Decameron*'s collocations were compared with those found in other works by Boccaccio with the help of the online corpus *Opera del Vocabolario Italiano* (OVI). Other essential tools for understanding the semantics of *paura* and its collocates were the *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* by Salvatore Battaglia (1961–2002) and the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (1612).

## 5 Corpus analysis

In the following section, I expand on the analysis of some collocations of *paura*, which are of particular significance for the conceptualization of this emotion in the *Decameron*.

### 5.1 *Paura entra qualcuno*

The collocation *paura entra + person* [\*fear enters + person] (Table 1) belongs to the category *noun + verb*, where *paura* is the subject of this verb.

The examples in Table 1 depict fear as an active entity, which can be the subject of a movement verb like *entrare* [to enter]. This verb was often used for emotions in Old Italian, as explained in Salvatore Battaglia's *Grande Dizionario della lingua italiana* (1968: 162, that quotes also *Dec.* IV, 6) and exemplified in Boccaccio's *Esposizioni sulla Commedia*.<sup>12</sup> In modern Italian it is used

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. Hausmann 2007: 126: “nous avons affaire à deux contraintes, la contrainte phraséologique dans le moule syntaxique de la valence. Il n'y a par conséquent aucune contradiction entre le fait, d'une part, que dans la collocation le verbe soit sélectionné après le substantif et en fonction du substantif et le fait, d'autre part, qu'une foi sélectionné, ce soit le verbe qui impose les modalités syntaxiques qui le reliant au substantif.”

<sup>12</sup> *Esposizioni*, 1373–74 [c. VIII (i), par. 93 | pag. 468]: “Non sbigottir, cioè non te ne entri alcuna paura, per ciò ch' io vincerò la pruova, dello entrar dentro alla città”; *Esposizioni*, 1373–74 [c. IX (i), par. 11 | pag. 473]: “E di questo entrò paura, per quelle parole, all'autore, il quale credette Virgilio per ciò aver lasciato l' orazion moza, per non dargli materia di più impaurire”.



Table 2: *Pieno di paura*

Number of occurrences	Collocation	Quotation	Day, novella
1	<b>pieno di paura</b>	“il gentile uomo montato sù trovò la donna sua in capo della scala tutta sgomentata e <u>piena di paura</u> ; alla quale egli disse ‘Che cosa è questa? Cui va messer Lambertuccio così adirato minacciando?’”	VII, 6.12

### 5.3 Collocations with *grande*

These final examples are collocations containing the adjective *grande* [big] in the positive degree as well as in the superlative and comparative degree.

The first two belong to the most frequent typology: *avere + paura* as a direct object. *Avere paura* is a light-verb construction (see par.2). Despite its original concrete meaning, *grande* in Italian is often attributed to abstract nouns. In this context it intensifies *paura* and undergoes a very narrow shift in meaning, which cannot even be called idiomatic. Nevertheless, this adjective modifies the basis it is attributed to, as it connotes *paura* as a quantifiable entity.

*La maggior paura che [mai] + avere* [the biggest fear that was ever felt] is unique in Boccaccio’s work and in the whole OVI – it can thus even be called an *hapax legomenon*. The comparative *maggiore* is formed according to a Latin template and used for abstract nouns as a synthetic alternative to *più grande*. Using a comparative to refer to fear presupposes – and proves – that it is considered a measurable and comparable entity. In this case, the comparison is made between the current experience by the character of the novella and the entirety of fearful experiences that can be made. An analogous example is *con la maggior paura del mondo* [with the biggest fear in the world], a collocation where the basis is included in a *prepositional phrase*. Another collocation of this kind containing *grande* in the superlative form is *con grandissima paura* [with huge fear].

## 6 Results

The analysis of a few key examples from the corpus presented in this paper has drawn a precise image of *paura* in the *Decameron* – i.e. *paura* has been

Table 3: Collocations with *grande*

Number of occurrences	Collocation	Quotation	Day, novella
5	<b>avere gran/ grandissima paura</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “[Alatiel] non sentendosi rispondere a alcuno né alcuno veggendone, si maravigliò molto e cominciò a <u>avere grandissima paura</u>”</li> <li>• [Tingoccio]: “Amico mio, io <u>ho gran paura</u> del giudizio che io aspetto d’un gran peccato che io feci già”</li> <li>• “Alessandro sentendola aprire [“la sepoltura”], ancora che <u>gran paura avesse</u>, stette pur cheto”</li> <li>• “[il sagrestano] Non solamente si maravigliò ma <u>avuta grandissima paura</u> indietro fuggendo si tornò”</li> <li>• [Gualtieri]: “il che, quando venni a prender moglie, <u>gran paura ebbi</u> che non m’intervenisse, e per ciò, per prova pigliarne, in quanti modi tu sai ti punsi e trafissi”</li> </ul>	<p>II, 7.7</p> <p>VII, 10.16</p> <p>IX, 1.10</p> <p>X, 9.51</p> <p>X, 10.31</p>
2	<b>con grandissima paura</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “[Landolfo Rufolo] guardandosi egli da torno, niuna cosa altro che nuvoli e mare vedea e una cassa la quale sopra l’onde del mare notando talvolta con grandissima paura di lui gli s’appressava, temendo non quella cassa forse il percotesse per modo che gli noiasse”</li> <li>• “[la moglie dello Zeppa] con grandissima paura dopo molte novelle quello avendogli confessato che acconciamente della sua dimestichezza con Ispinellocchio negar non potea, piagnendo gl’incominciò a chieder perdono”</li> </ul>	<p>II, 4.8</p> <p>VIII, 8.8</p>
2	<b>la maggior paura che mai</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [Monna Tessa]: “Egli è la fantasima, della quale io ho avuta a queste notti <u>la maggior paura che mai s’avesse</u>, tale che, come io sentita l’ho, ho messo il capo sotto né mai ho avuto ardir di trarlo fuori sì è stato chiaro”</li> <li>• “Anichino, il quale <u>la maggior paura che avesse mai avuta</u> avea e che quanto potuto avea s’era sforzato d’uscire delle mani della donna e centomila volte lei e il suo amore e sé, che fidato se n’era, avea maladetto”</li> </ul>	<p>VII, 1.9</p> <p>VII, 7.21</p>

(Continued)

**Table 3:** Collocations with *grande* (Continued)

Number of occurrences	Collocation	Quotation	Day, novella
2	<b>con la maggior paura del mondo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “il giovinetto gli disse ogni cosa; il quale Pietro, non men lieto d’averlo trovato che la sua donna dolente, presolo per mano con seco nel menò nella camera nella quale la donna con la maggior paura del mondo l’aspettava”</li> <li>• “Chichibio, veggendo che ancora durava l’ira di Currado e che far gli conveniva pruova della sua bugia, non sapendo come poterlasi fare cavalcava appresso a Currado con la maggior paura del mondo, e volentieri, se potuto avesse, si sarebbe fuggito”</li> </ul>	V, 10.18  VI, 4.12

objectified to an entity. As suggested before (see par.1), this objectification can be interpreted in terms of an ontological metaphor (see par. 2). As Lakoff and Johnson wrote, “once we can identify our experiences as entities or substances, we can refer to them, categorize them, group them, and quantify them – and, by this means, reason about them.” (2003: 25). Moreover, “we typically conceptualize the nonphysical in terms of the physical – that is, we conceptualize the less clearly delineated in terms of the more clearly delineated.” (2003: 59).

Metaphors are created by attribution of concrete characteristics to abstract nouns. In virtue of the linguistic rapprochement to the physical reality, these abstract concepts become more understandable. Emotions like fear can be observed only in their concrete counterpart: the effects on the experienter. In order to gain a mental representation of an emotion, the perceptible elements need to be abstracted. This process also occurs with *paura* in the *Decameron*, as can be seen in the following adaptation of a model by Danesi (2001: 50).

In the real world we detect qualities of concrete objects, like *being big*, *being a lot*, *growing*, *adding* etc. Through an abstraction process we create the concepts of dimension, quantity, intensity. For example, the concept of dimension derives from the fact that actual objects are big. This quality can be attributed to abstract nouns as well – in this case, to *paura*. Conceptual metaphors are derived from such mental connections (see Danesi 2001: 51).

Furthermore, by means of the already mentioned metaphors from Kövecses (1990), a personality is ascribed to *paura*. Fear is identified with its

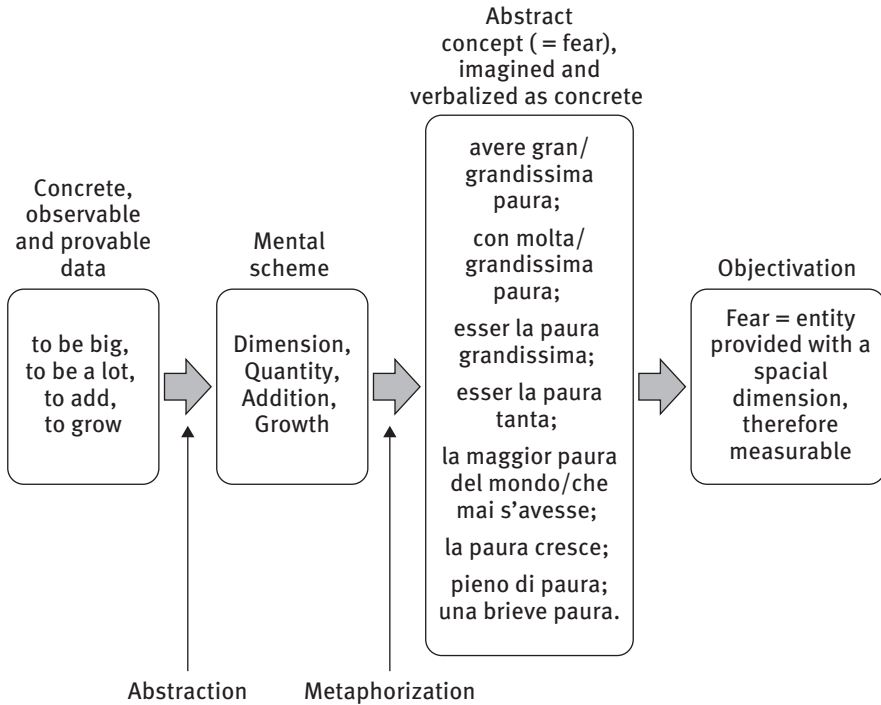
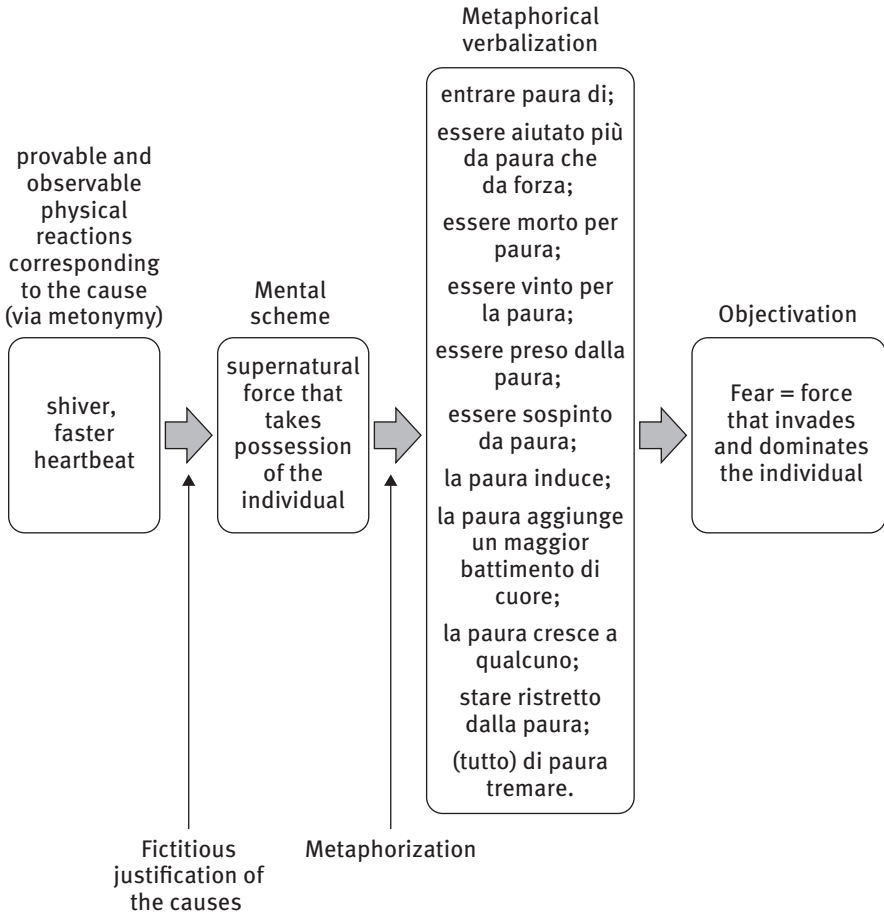


Figure 2: Objectivation of *paura* (1)

physiological effects and gains the shape of a supernatural, powerful and threatening entity. In order to talk about it, we use metaphors that underline its dominating force over the human being. One is defeated, overwhelmed, forced by fear; fear enters the individual, grows inside him, makes him shiver and causes his heart to beat furiously. Death, pain and defeat are immanent causes of fear, but at the same time this emotion is conceived of as an enemy that can bring about the same pernicious consequences. This can be seen in other collocations of *paura* in the *Decameron*, as for example *dalla paura ristretto stare* (IV, 7.7) [to be trapped by fear], *la paura cresce a + persona* (II, 5.54) [fear grows in + person], *(tutto) di paura tremare* (V, 10.16; VII, 10.16; VIII, 9.45; X, conclusion 5) [(all) shivering with fear], *fuggire per paura* (II, 8.31) [to run away because of fear], *essere sospinto da paura* (V, 7.6) [to be urged on by fear], *per la paura essere vinto* (II, 7.6; V, 3.9) [to be defeated by fear], *per paura essersi morto* (II, 7.7) [to be dead because of fear].

The following scheme is a concluding summary of the conceptualization process described above (following Danesi 2001: 50).



**Figure 3:** Objectivation of *paura* (2)

- the subject experiences particular physical reactions in dangerous situations;
- by applying a metonymical process, he identifies these effects with their cause – fear;
- fear is conceived of as a dominating superior force, which overcomes the subject and brings him to losing his self-control;
- in order to talk about fear – i.e. to understand it – metaphors are used that describe it as a concrete entity that is able to cause the effects listed above.



## 7 Conclusions

In this paper it has been shown how the emotion *paura* (fear) is conceptualized in the Late-Medieval Italian masterpiece *Decameron*. An analysis of the collocations of *paura* was undertaken in order to understand the conceptualization process. First of all, the theoretical framework was delineated, which included an overview of the debate on collocation from different theoretical perspectives, the studies on conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 2003 [1980], Danesi 2001) and the linguistic research on emotions (Kailuweit 2005, Kövecses 1990, Kövecses and Lakoff 1983). Afterwards, *paura* was defined according to various dictionaries (Battisti 1954, Battaglia 1984, Crusca 1612) and the scenario of fear's development was explained according to Kailuweit (2005) and Kövecses (1990). The analysis of some significant examples from the corpus followed, i.e. the collocations *paura entra + persona*, *pieno di paura* and those including the adjective *grande* in the positive, comparative and superlative degree. Finally, the outcomes of the undertaken investigation were displayed and illustrated by means of schemes that visualize the metaphorical objectification and conceptualization of *paura* as a powerful and threatening enemy.

The linguistic approach to literary works proposed can be further applied to investigate the language of Boccaccio in more depth. On the one hand, the collocations of *paura* in the *Decameron* and in other works by Boccaccio could be compared with those found in the rest of the OVI corpus (which includes all works in Old Italian from the origins to the end of the XIV century). This comparison would allow understanding which collocations were coined by Boccaccio and which others were already in use before him. In addition, confronting Boccaccio's texts with later works would enable reconstructing how these collocations have developed over time. Moreover, the linguistic research on emotions could profit from an analysis of the collocations of other keywords in the *Decameron*, like *amore* [love]. On the other hand the relation between frame semantics and collocations could be investigated (cf. Fontenelle 2003). To this purpose, the scope could be widened to concepts related to *paura* like *timore* [concern, worry, fear] in order to compare the verbalization of these two related frames.

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