



That's Amore!

The Language of Love
for LOVERS of Language

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stati na ludi kamen (Serbo-Croat)

[STAH-tee nah LOO-dee KAH-men]

English speakers use the metaphor of “falling in love” without any reference to what caused their emotional stumble. The Croats make the cause explicit: the phrase *stati na ludi kamen* literally means ‘to step on a crazy stone.’



me traes de nalgas

(Mexican Spanish)

[may TRAH-ess day

NAHL-gahss]

Literally ‘you bring me on my buttocks,’ this informal phrase shows the position you land in when you fall in love, or when someone knocks you off your feet.

hodestups forelsket

(Norwegian)

[HOH-de-stoops for-ELL-sket]

The Norwegians say *hodestups forelsket*, or a “head dive into love,” to describe the initial phases of a romance. It conveys a sense of wholehearted commitment to the relationship, as opposed to a more cautious “dipping a toe” in. The main risk of diving in headfirst, of course, is that you will find the water too shallow!

sich Hals über Kopf verlieben (German)

[zikh HALSS oober KOPF fer-LEE-buhrn]

You can say that you are “head over heels” in love in English, and the reversal of the normal arrangement is evocative of the dislocation strong emotion can bring. In German, though, you fall “neck over head” in love, which must be even more uncomfortable, as well as being disturbing to visualize.

retkahitaa (Finnish)

[REHT-kahkh-tah]

In English, we talk about being drunk with love; the Finnish use the word *retkahitaa* to mean both falling in love and falling off the wagon. Literally meaning to ‘fall down forcefully and unintentionally,’ it also conveys the suddenness and shock that falling in love can be to some.

mabuk cinta (Indonesian)

[MAH-buk TCHIN-tah]

The love lorn in Indonesia are literally ‘drunk on love.’ We have the same expression in English—or rather, we had; it’s obsolete. A citation for *lovedrunke* in the *OED* from 1390 reads “Lovedrunke is the meschief Above alle othre the most chief.”

mero-mero (Japanese)

[MAIR-oh-mair-oh]

Japanese has an interesting set of onomatopoeic words that reflect physical states (*gitaigo*) and, less commonly, psychological states (*gijougo*). They are written in katakana, the syllabic script. *Mero-mero* can be translated as “completely in love” or “letting oneself be limp,” so could be an example of both. These kinds of terms (as you might imagine) are common in manga, and there is a manga character named Meroko. Meroko is not a traditional