



Conceptual Metaphor Theory in the Beatles Lyrics. Metaphors as Cognitive Phenomena

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Seminar paper from the year 2015 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Linguistics, grade: 1,7, University of Augsburg, language: English, abstract: Most people consider metaphors to be merely linguistic devices that are used for poetic purposes. A standard dictionary definition of metaphor is quite similar. The Oxford Dictionary defines metaphor as “a word or phrase used to describe sb/sth else[...]”.

This definition falls in line with a layman’s notion of metaphors being purely linguistic with the sole purpose of functioning as decorative features. However, metaphors go much deeper than that. Metaphors are in fact fundamental components of human cognition that are not just linguistic but conceptual in nature. Through metaphors, patterns of thought in a society are encoded and shared.

So in order to show that metaphors share patterns of thought in a society, songs of the Beatles shall be examined, seeing as the Beatles are one of the most popular and successful bands of our time with fans from all around the world. The metaphors used in the Beatles’ songs are not merely figures of speech or stylistic devices, but cognitive phenomena that share patterns of thought in a society. The Beatles songs are a great medium to help prove that conceptual systems play a paramount role in establishing our everyday realities because of they are so widely popular. This paper seeks to show that Lakoff’s and Johnson’s notion of metaphors representing a way of thinking, as made popular in their Conceptual Metaphor Theory, also holds true for metaphors in the Beatles’ songs.

Drawing upon Lakoff’s and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this paper also attempts to illuminate how the Beatles success is, at least partly, due to the systematicity of metaphorical concepts. Even though most people are not normally aware of conceptual systems present in our society, most of these conceptual systems are indeed metaphorical in nature and determine to a large extent our perception of the world. The metaphorical concepts present in the Beatles lyrics are very much coherent with the metaphorical structuring of certain experiences in our society, which is why so many people can relate to the Beatles’ songs because the concepts expressed therein are compatible with their conceptualisation of how they perceive the world.

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