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Mixed feelings – between mental representation and social practice

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Although in languages like English German or Polish there exist lexemes enabling one to talk about emotions – love, hate or sadness etc. – *expressis verbis*, people commonly employ conceptual metaphors (e.g. LOVE IS WAR, HATE IS A BOILING LIQUID IN A CONTAINER) and resort to evoking images in the minds of the hearer(s) to express what they feel. Such way of conveying emotions is employed all the more when a person experiences mixed feelings. The objective of this presentation is to analyse the process of creation of (novel) mental representations aimed at conveyance of a mixture of positive and negative emotions, taking the role of discursive mechanisms into consideration. To this end selected literary texts in English, German and Polish are to be analysed: song lyrics, poems and possibly fragments of prose. For the purposes of our research we propose that the above-mentioned process under analysis is called ‘conceptual proximization’. The term is analogous to Cap’s ‘temporal proximization’ (cf. 2008, 2010), which refers to the manoeuvre – used e.g. in political discourse – of ‘drawing’ chosen past events nearer to the hearer to legitimize one’s (present or future) actions. In our opinion, when a mixture of emotions is being described, two (or possibly more) emotions are conceptually drawn nearer to one another, i.e. they are ‘proximized’, so that a conceptual blend can be created. In order for this to happen, certain discursive mechanisms, as elements of social practice, are employed. It seems that, in literary texts in particular, some habits or unwritten rules of text construction are bent or broken.

The method of analysis used for our research is the multi-layered linguistic model of discourse analysis DIMEAN formulated by Warnke / Spitzmüller (2008). We shall also refer to the mode of literary text analysis as proposed by M. H. Freeman (2000) or E. Semino (1997).

References

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