

Title: Exoticisms, romanticisms and ordinary exaggerations. Patterns and metaphors in Swedish drug slang.

Language: Swedish

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the vocabulary of Swedish drug slang. The purpose of the study is to show how the patterns of conceptualisation in drug slang shape the linguistic forms, which express the semantic distinctions necessary for the drug using sub-groups. In this respect drug slang is overlexicalised compared to scientific and ordinary language. In other respects, drug slang resembles the pharmacological classification, with its focus on the effects of the drugs. The Swedish drug slang is organised into five groups, each representing the vocabularies of substances, activities, persons, emotions and experiences related to different drugs. The slang also constitutes an anti-language, which is a consequence of the drug culture being in opposition to the majority culture. Swedish drug slang is heavily influenced by English but is also, to some extent, an inheritance from the old thieves' language. Drug slang is considered emotive, metaphoric and symbolic. I investigate the linguistic code in relation to the conceptual system and a frame of reality using a cognitive semantic method in which metaphors serve as a classification principle for collective ideas. A system of symbol domains in the drug slang is also discernible. They contain words and concepts which are particularly important to the sub-group symbolically, but these domains are also normative in the sense of creating patterns for further linguistic coding. Swedish drug slang also shows distinctions in vocabulary according to social hierarchies as well as different kinds of metaphors.

Key words: Drug slang, sub-group, cognitive semantics, metaphor, metaphorical function, symbol domains.

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