

The Metaphor of Cricket in Shehan Karunatilaka's Chinaman: Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan National Consciousness

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Abstract

Chinaman – The legend of Pradeep Mathew is the debut novel of the Sri Lankan English writer Shehan Karunatilaka. The novel, which is often labeled as a "cricket novel," uses actual as well as fictional cricket events to comment on the status of Sri Lankan cricket, and by extension on socio-cultural realities of Sri Lanka. As a result, cricket, in Chinaman is often read as a metaphor for the nation. The present study takes as its point of departure the argument that cricket in Chinaman can be read as a metaphor for English as much as the nation, which opens up a critically significant discussion about the ideological links between the discourses of World Englishness and Nationalism through the domain of cricket. In turn, the discussion of this metaphor leads to merge the issues in the linguistic ecology of Sri Lanka with those in the country's political climate. In order to identify these links, the study conducts a qualitative content analysis of the primary text Chinaman using the "Conceptual Metaphor Theory" proposed by the cognitive linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003). Conceptual Metaphor Theory argues that establishing a metaphorical mapping involves mapping of properties, knowledge and logic in the source domain onto properties, knowledge and logic in the target domain. The study's attempt at mapping of such ideological links between cricket, English and the nation in the Sri Lankan context indicates that while (anti)imperialist, class and ethnic tensions inform the discourses of both Sri Lankan English and Sri Lankan national identity, the tensions in each domain condition and are conditioned by each other.

Keywords: Chinaman, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Cricket, Sri Lankan English, Sri Lankan national consciousness.

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