

Linguocultural Features of Similes

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Abstract: In this article are discussed linguocultural and literal peculiarities of similes and their use of literal texts.

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Introduction. Since Aristotle, scholars have regarded similes and metaphors as equivalent figures of speech sharing very similar comprehension, interpretation and usage pattern. Similes are rhetorical device that makes the text more impressive and bright. It is a comparison between completely two different objects. The compared is called the tenor while the compared to is called the vehicle. The tenor and the vehicle are connected by the following links: like, as...as, as though, as if, as like, such as, as...as, etc. Most common among them are the link words “like and as”. Some similes have their equivalents in Uzbek and Russian. The translation of similes sometimes becomes difficult and very tricky, posing many different troubles if the translator is not aware of the cultural differences. In order to get rid of such problems, the translator has to avoid the literal translation that imposes the meaning.

Literature review. Many similes which are now in general use would be known as having been current in the Garden of Eden. Undoubtedly, on many occasions, Father Adam when addressing Mother Eve, made use of “Cold as ice”, “Busy as a bee”, “Proud as a peacock”, “Weak as water”, “Angry as a wasp”, and “Bitter as gall”. With reliable data, many a simile which is now marked Anonymous would be credited to Adam.[3]

However, we have other authorities who testify that Father Adam and Mother Eve made frequent use of similes in their Garden conversations.

Some of the most familiar similes in general use are to be found in the Old Testament. Among them are: “Multiply as the stars of heaven”, “Unstable as water”, “Still as a stone”, “White as snow”, “Swifter than a weaver’s shuttle”, “Boil like a pot”, “Firm as a stone”, “Melted like wax”, “Sharp as a two-edged sword”, and “Bitter as wormwood”. The Songs of Solomon are rich mine of similes, including, “Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet”, “Thy neck is like her tower of David builded for an armoury”, “They teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing”, and “Cruel as the grave”.

Simile is a trope that describes one thing by comparing it with another, suggesting similarities between them, although they are clearly different.

Simile is composed of two propositions and it has four parts which are:

Topic-the topic of the first proposition(nonfigurative),i.e. the thing really being talked about.

Image-The topic of the first proposition(figurative),i.e. the thing really being compared with

Point of similarity-found in the comments of both the propositioned involved or the comment of the Event proposition which has the image as a topic.

Nonfigurative equivalent-when the proposition containing the topic is an EVENT proposition, the Comment is the nonfigurative equivalent. Larsen confirms that the correct understanding of any simile depends on the correct identification of the topic, image, and point of similarity. For example:

The King is as brave as a lion.

The King-topic

As brave as-point of similarity

A lion-Image

The distinction between simile and metaphor is among the oldest and most widely recognized in rhetorical theory. It is also one of the most tenuous. For many analysts it is, in fact, a distinction almost without a difference-as Aristotle puts it, "the simile also is a metaphor...the difference is but slight. Traditionally, what difference there is has been seen as a matter of form: a simile, so the story goes, simply makes explicit what a metaphor merely implies. Since the difference between the two is apparently so superficial, theorists have tended to define one figure in terms of the another. One venerable tradition is many scholars see metaphor as a sort of elliptical simile. Another tradition, uniting theorists has diverse as Aristotle, G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, S. Glucksberg, B. Keysar takes metaphor as the more basic of the two figures in their works, and views simile as the explicit expression of a metaphorical mapping. The theorists on each side of this divide could be more diverse, and yet they are united in their view of simile and metaphor as twin manifestations of a single basic phenomenon. Over the centuries, the relation between the two has consistently been seen as a matter of ontological priority.

Discussion. The relation between metaphor and simile is not simple. Both figures are essentially analogical, involving processes of conceptual blending whereby one structure, the target, is somehow understood in terms of a second structure, the source. But analogical figures come in many shapes and sizes: in fact, both simile and metaphor should be distinguished not just from each other, but also from a third analogical figure-literal comparison. Many basic metaphors-for example, HAPPINESS is UP and DIFFICULTY is HEAVINESS-do not reflect objective similarities between source and target domains. While comparison involves an actual assessment of what two entities share, metaphors selectively project conceptual structure directly from one domain onto another. Metaphors, in other words, create similarities rather than reflecting them.

Similes, on the other hand, really are a kind of comparison. Unlike metaphors, they require individuation both source and target concepts, and an evaluation of what they have in common, but unlike literal comparisons, they are figurative-comparing things normally felt to be incomparable, typically using vivid or startling images to suggest unexpected connections between source and target.

Metaphors and similes are figurative claims of similarity, the comparison theory notes. Interestingly, the two tropes have the surface forms of quite distinct literal claims. "Jim is a shark", for example, is a metaphoric claim modeled on a literal claim about a category that fits Jim, much like "that is banana" tells us the category of a particular object. "Jim is like a shark" is modeled on a literal claim about likeness, such as, "that is like a banana". The literal claim "that is a banana" tells us the object has all features needed to be a member of the category "banana". In contrast, the literal claim "that is like a banana" tells us that the object only has some of those properties of a banana. Hence, the literal category claim is "stronger" in terms of number of properties than the corresponding literal similarity claim. The general principle is that in literal language category claims entail more properties than similar claims.

Speakers using correction conventions with tropes could be echoing this principle of literal language. Thus, they could be drawing attention to the differences in form of metaphors and similes. As a result, we may be influenced by metaphors being in the form of literal categorization claims, which are stronger than claims about similarity. The analogy with two kinds of literal claims indicates that the comparison between the tenor and the vehicle ought to be strengthened if the metaphor is doing the correction, or weakened if the simile is doing the correction.

All in all, their theory of conceptual, or cognitive, metaphors rests on the following arguments:

- 1) metaphors are a part of everyday life, thought and experience;
- 2) metaphors are an inevitable and unconscious part of the process of human thinking;
- 3) metaphors provide a foundation for our conceptual system, it is a property of concepts rather than words;
- 4) metaphors are widely used in the life of ordinary people, most of the time without them even noticing it;
- 5) abstract concepts, such as love, argument, idea etc., are incomplete without metaphor even though they have a literal core.

In their work Lakoff and Johnson categorize conceptual metaphors (which are, following their approach, represented by capital letters in the present work) as structural, orientational and ontological. They speak of structural metaphors when —one concept is metaphorically structured in terms of another. For example, we can comprehend an aspect of arguing in terms of battle: Your claims are indefensible; He attacked every weak point in my argument; His criticisms were right on target etc.

The simile that describes the resemblance between two dissimilar things, usually flagging up the comparison with “as” or “like,” has been a literary device to lend color to the English language since time immemorial. Musical theater legend Oscar Hammerstein was a master “similist,” often piling on his vivid comparisons for added effect. “A Wonderful Guy,” from the classic South Pacific, expanded on the famous “I’m corny as Kansas in August / I’m as normal as blueberry pie” with “I’m as trite and as gay as a daisy in May” and “I’m bromidic and bright / As a moon-happy night / Pourin’ light on the dew!”

Conclusion. Its effectiveness for expressing thoughts more clearly and vividly makes the simile one of most widely used figures of speech in written and spoken English. Similes crop up in newspaper and magazine articles, fiction and nonfiction, dramas as well as daily conversations. The ones with the most zip tend to metamorphose into common expressions that are used unchanged or refreshed. In the age of sound bites and tweets they are more than ever timely and, to borrow an ever-popular simile, useful as a Swiss army knife for drawing pithy word sketches that are more robust than a single word and more spontaneous than a formal quote.

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