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STYLISTIC FEATURES OF FIXED SIMILES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract. Fixed similes constitute an important part of English phraseology and stylistics. They are conventional comparative expressions characterized by structural stability, reproducibility, figurative meaning, and cultural associations. Unlike freely created comparisons, fixed similes are regularly reproduced in communication and are recognized by speakers as established linguistic units. This article examines the major stylistic features of fixed similes in English, including imagery, expressiveness, emotional colouring, evaluation, characterization, intensification, cultural significance, and pragmatic function. Particular attention is paid to the structures *as...as* and *like*, which frequently serve as formal markers of comparison. The study demonstrates that fixed similes make speech and writing more vivid and expressive while allowing speakers to communicate complex evaluations and emotional attitudes economically. The analysis also shows that many fixed similes reflect culturally established associations between particular objects, animals, and human qualities. Consequently, their interpretation requires not only linguistic competence but also familiarity with the cultural background of English-speaking communities.

Keywords: fixed similes, stylistics, phraseology, comparison, imagery, expressiveness, evaluation, cultural meaning.

Introduction. Figurative language represents one of the most productive and expressive areas of linguistic communication. Speakers frequently use comparisons to describe people, objects, actions, and situations in a more vivid and comprehensible manner. Among various figurative devices, similes occupy a particularly important position because they establish an explicit relationship of similarity between two entities. A simile can be defined as a stylistic device based on an explicit comparison between two objects or phenomena that share a particular characteristic.[1] In English, comparison is commonly introduced by such markers as *like*, *as*, *as...as*, and occasionally other comparative structures. Examples include *as busy as a bee*, *as brave as a lion*, *as white as snow*, and *like a fish out of water*. Fixed similes differ from freely constructed comparisons because their structure and usage have become conventionalized. They are reproduced by speakers as relatively stable combinations rather than being created independently each time they are used. This feature brings fixed similes close to phraseological units and idiomatic expressions. According to A. V. Kunin, phraseological units are characterized by reproducibility and a certain degree of semantic and structural stability.[2] The relevance of studying fixed similes is determined by their considerable role in English communication. They occur in literary works, journalism, informal conversations, public discourse, advertising, and other communicative contexts. Their stylistic value is associated with their ability to create vivid images, express emotional attitudes, intensify meanings, and transmit culturally established associations. The aim of this article is to investigate the principal stylistic features and functions of fixed similes in the English language.

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Literature Review. The study of similes has traditionally been associated with rhetoric, stylistics, phraseology, and semantics. Classical stylistic approaches regard comparison as an important expressive device because it allows a speaker or writer to represent one phenomenon through another familiar phenomenon. I. R. Galperin emphasizes that stylistic devices acquire their expressive potential through the interaction of linguistic form and contextual meaning.[3] From a phraseological perspective, fixed similes can be examined as conventional combinations with varying degrees of semantic cohesion. R. Moon argues that fixed expressions should be studied not only according to their formal structure but also according to their conventionality and communicative function.[4] This approach is particularly relevant to fixed similes because their meanings are often supported by shared cultural knowledge. Cognitive linguistics has also contributed significantly to the understanding of figurative language. Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate that figurative structures are closely related to conceptualization and human experience.[5] From this perspective, comparisons are not simply decorative elements but mechanisms through which people organize and communicate knowledge about the world. R. W. Gibbs further emphasizes the importance of figurative language in everyday cognition and communication.[6] His research demonstrates that speakers frequently interpret figurative expressions through conventional conceptual associations rather than through a purely literal reading. Thus, previous research indicates that fixed similes should be considered simultaneously from structural, semantic, stylistic, pragmatic, and cultural perspectives.

Materials and Methods. The study employs a qualitative descriptive methodology. A selection of commonly used English fixed similes was analyzed with regard to their structural organization, semantic content, stylistic effect, emotional colouring, and pragmatic function.

The following methodological approaches were applied:

- descriptive analysis to identify structural characteristics;
- semantic analysis to investigate figurative meanings;
- stylistic analysis to determine expressive and evaluative functions;
- phraseological analysis to examine stability and reproducibility;
- contextual analysis to determine how fixed similes function in different communicative situations.

The examples analyzed include such conventional expressions as *as busy as a bee*, *as brave as a lion*, *as white as snow*, *as quiet as a mouse*, *as stubborn as a mule*, *as light as a feather*, and *like a fish out of water*.

Results and Discussion. The analysis of fixed similes in the English language demonstrates that these phraseological units possess a complex combination of structural, semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic characteristics. The research indicates that fixed similes should not be regarded merely as decorative elements of literary language. They constitute an important expressive resource that enables speakers and writers to communicate information, evaluation, emotion, and cultural meaning simultaneously.

One of the principal findings of the study is the high degree of structural stability characteristic of fixed similes. The pattern *as + adjective + as + noun* represents one of the most productive models, as illustrated by expressions such as *as busy as a bee*, *as brave as a lion*, *as white as snow*, and *as quiet as a mouse*. The stability of these structures facilitates their recognition and reproduction in communication. This observation corresponds to the phraseological principle of reproducibility, according to which stable expressions are retrieved from the linguistic repertoire of speakers as

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conventional units rather than being freely constructed on every occasion. The research further reveals that imagery is one of the most significant stylistic characteristics of fixed similes. A comparison enables an abstract or general quality to be represented through a concrete and familiar image. For example, the expression *as busy as a bee* does not simply indicate that a person is busy; it evokes an image of continuous activity and industriousness. Similarly, *as white as snow* intensifies the concept of whiteness by associating it with a culturally familiar natural phenomenon. Such comparisons increase the perceptual vividness of discourse and facilitate the reader's or listener's understanding of the quality being described. Another important result concerns the evaluative function of fixed similes. The analysis demonstrates that many English similes contain positive, negative, or ambivalent evaluations. Expressions such as *as brave as a lion*, *as gentle as a lamb*, and *as good as gold* generally communicate positive evaluation, whereas *as stubborn as a mule*, *as sly as a fox*, and *as greedy as a pig* may convey criticism or negative assessment. Consequently, the comparison functions not only as a descriptive device but also as a means of expressing the speaker's attitude toward the referent. The evaluative potential of fixed similes is closely connected with cultural associations. The meanings of many comparisons depend on socially established ideas concerning animals, objects, and natural phenomena. The lion, for example, is conventionally associated with courage and strength, while the fox is frequently associated with cunning. These associations enable speakers to communicate complex evaluations without explicitly stating them. From a cognitive perspective, such conventional associations demonstrate the relationship between figurative language and culturally shared conceptual knowledge. The study also identifies characterization as an important function of fixed similes. In literary and narrative discourse, conventional comparisons can efficiently characterize individuals according to their physical appearance, personality, behaviour, or emotional condition. For instance, *as quiet as a mouse* may characterize a person's behaviour, while *as strong as an ox* emphasizes physical strength. The compact structure of the simile allows authors to provide a relatively detailed characterization without using lengthy descriptive constructions.

The analysis further demonstrates the intensifying function of fixed similes. Comparative structures frequently increase the semantic intensity of adjectives. The difference between *The water was cold* and *The water was as cold as ice* illustrates this function. In the latter example, the comparison establishes an extreme standard and therefore strengthens the adjective *cold*. Similar intensification can be observed in expressions such as *as black as coal*, *as fast as lightning*, and *as light as a feather*. The use of a recognizable comparative standard makes the degree of the characteristic more perceptible. A significant finding is that the stylistic effect of fixed similes depends on their degree of semantic transparency. Some expressions have relatively transparent meanings, while others are more strongly conventionalized. In *as white as snow*, the relationship between the compared entities is immediately understandable. In contrast, expressions such as *like a fish out of water* require knowledge of the conventional figurative meaning because the expression normally describes a person who feels uncomfortable or unfamiliar in a particular environment. This difference demonstrates that fixed similes can occupy different positions on the continuum between literal comparison and idiomaticity. The research also reveals that context plays an important role in determining the pragmatic function of fixed similes. The same expression can communicate different interpersonal meanings depending on the situation, speaker intention, and relationship between participants. For example, the statement *You are as stubborn as a mule* can function as direct criticism,

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humorous teasing, or friendly characterization. Consequently, the pragmatic interpretation of fixed similes cannot always be derived from their lexical meaning alone.

Another significant observation concerns the distribution of fixed similes across different discourse types. Although they are traditionally associated with literary language, the analysis demonstrates their frequent occurrence in everyday conversation, journalism, advertising, informal writing, and public communication. Their popularity in these contexts can be explained by their communicative economy: a conventional simile can express a complex idea or evaluation in a short and recognizable form. This supports the view that figurative language is an integral part of ordinary communication rather than a phenomenon restricted to literary texts. The results also have implications for translation and foreign-language teaching. Because fixed similes frequently contain culturally specific associations, literal translation does not always reproduce their stylistic and pragmatic effect. A translator must therefore consider not only the lexical meaning of the expression but also its conventionality, emotional colouring, and cultural function. In language teaching, the acquisition of fixed similes can improve learners' communicative competence because knowledge of such expressions allows learners to understand authentic English discourse more naturally. Overall, the findings demonstrate that fixed similes perform several functions simultaneously: they create imagery, intensify meaning, characterize people and situations, express evaluation, communicate emotions, and transmit culturally established knowledge. Their stylistic effectiveness results from the interaction between conventional linguistic form and figurative conceptual content. As Moon points out, fixed expressions should be considered in relation to both their formal stability and their actual communicative use. Thus, the research confirms that fixed similes constitute a productive and multifunctional component of English stylistics. Their study provides valuable information about the relationship between phraseology, figurative meaning, cultural conceptualization, and pragmatic communication. The findings further suggest that a comprehensive analysis of fixed similes should integrate structural, semantic, stylistic, cognitive, and cultural perspectives rather than treating comparison exclusively as a rhetorical device.

The obtained results are generally consistent with previous linguistic and stylistic research. The structural stability identified in the analysis supports phraseological approaches that emphasize reproducibility and conventionality as fundamental properties of fixed expressions. At the same time, the strong imagery and evaluative potential of fixed similes confirms their importance as stylistic resources. The findings also support the cognitive interpretation of figurative language. The fact that expressions such as *as brave as a lion* and *as busy as a bee* can be immediately understood by English speakers indicates that their meanings are supported by shared conceptual associations. These associations are reinforced through repeated linguistic and cultural use. However, the analysis suggests that fixed similes should not be considered completely immutable. Speakers may occasionally modify conventional expressions for humorous, creative, or contextual purposes. Such modifications demonstrate the interaction between phraseological stability and linguistic creativity. A fixed simile provides a recognizable structural model, while contextual modification can generate additional stylistic effects. From a stylistic perspective, the most important characteristic of fixed similes is therefore their dual nature: they are conventional enough to be immediately recognizable, yet expressive enough to produce vivid images and emotional responses. This combination explains their continuing productivity in both literary and non-literary forms of English discourse. In conclusion, the results indicate that fixed similes constitute an important interface between language

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structure, figurative cognition, cultural knowledge, and communicative intention. Their stylistic analysis contributes to a broader understanding of how English speakers use conventional figurative expressions to describe reality, express attitudes, and construct meaning.

Conclusion. Fixed similes represent a significant stylistic and phraseological resource of the English language. Their principal characteristics include structural stability, reproducibility, imagery, emotional expressiveness, evaluation, intensification, characterization, cultural conventionality, and pragmatic flexibility. The study demonstrates that fixed similes make communication more vivid and economical. They enable speakers and writers to describe qualities and situations through familiar images and culturally established associations. Their stylistic value is particularly evident in literary discourse, although they are equally productive in everyday communication. The analysis further demonstrates that fixed similes cannot be interpreted exclusively through their individual lexical components. Their meaning is often connected with conventional cultural knowledge and pragmatic context. This characteristic makes them particularly significant for foreign-language learners, translators, linguists, and researchers of intercultural communication. Therefore, the study of fixed similes provides valuable insight into the relationship between language, culture, cognition, and stylistic expression. Their analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how English speakers conceptualize and communicate human qualities, emotions, experiences, and evaluations.

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