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КОГНИТИВНЫЕ ФАКТОРЫ ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКИХ СЛУЖЕБНЫХ СЛОВ LIKE И AS КАК ПОКАЗАТЕЛЕЙ СРАВНЕНИЯ В СОНЕТАХ У. ШЕКСПИРА*Аннотация*

В статье исследуется дифференцированное употребление предлога 'like' и союза 'as' в функции структурных составляющих образных сравнений. Как показывает предлагаемый анализ языковых данных, извлеченных из текстов сонетов У. Шекспира, служебные слова 'like' и 'as' дифференцируются как элементы дискурсивно обусловленной оппозиции, в основе которой лежит контрастивное осмысление двух когнитивных операций. В то время как предлог 'like' указывает на то, что образное сравнение основано на осмыслении абстрактного и перцептуально недоступного в терминах перцептивных характеристик, союз 'as' актуализирует когнитивную категоризацию индивидуальных сущностей и явлений как принадлежащих к обобщенным категориям вещей, событий и ситуаций.

Ключевые слова: служебное слово, сравнительная конструкция, образное сравнение, когнитивная операция.

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THE COGNITIVE FACTORS FOR USING THE ENGLISH FUNCTION WORDS 'LIKE' AND 'AS' AS MARKERS OF COMPARISON IN THE SONNETS OF W. SHAKESPEARE*Abstract*

The paper studies the differentiated uses of the preposition 'like' and the conjunction 'as' in their function of constituents of poetic similes. As evidenced by the suggested analysis of linguistic data from the texts of W. Shakespeare's sonnets, the function words 'like' and 'as' are distinguished as elements of a discursively rooted opposition that is based on the contrastive construal of two cognitive operations. Whereas the preposition 'like' indicates that a simile construes abstract and perceptually inaccessible things in terms of perceptual characteristics, the conjunction 'as' evokes the cognitive categorization of particular entities and phenomena as belonging to general categories of things, events and situations.

Keywords: function word, comparative construction, simile, cognitive operation.

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Introduction

It has been established in linguistic tradition that function words form a special class of linguistic units that are used mainly as structural elements of phrases and clauses. Thus, as stated in "Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics" [11, P. 438], function words represent "linguistic elements which carry primarily grammatical, rather than lexical, meaning and which fulfill mainly syntactic and structural functions". English function words are treated as mostly structural linguistic units in such grammars of contemporary English as R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum *et al.* [10, P. 39 – 40], R. Huddleston [4, P. 23-24], D. Biber, S. Johansson *et al.* [2, P. 69-94].

From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, there is no clear-cut division between lexicon and grammar in terms of meaning expressed by respective linguistic items. In particular, it has been shown in R. Langacker's studies that English function words, such as prepositions [7], conjunctions [6, P. 341-375], auxiliaries [6, P. 219-257], convey conceptual content of their own by invoking such perceptual and mental entities as viewing arrangement, figure-ground organization, trajector-landmark pairings. However, most of the cognitive studies of English function words focus on the latter's semantic properties at the level of separate clauses rather than on their meanings conveyed in either written or oral discourse. At the same time, in many cases function words are employed in the structuring of semantically correlative phrases and clauses and their differentiated uses signal discourse motivated cognitive distinctions [1, P. 11-12].

The above mentioned correlations can be found in uses of comparative constructions that are frequently structured in English with the help of the preposition *like* and the conjunction *as*. Both function words serve as markers of

comparison in stylistically neutral comparative constructions and in similes as figures of speech in different kinds of texts. In the latter case *like* and *as* contribute to a more explicit representation of a poetic image than it could be achieved by using metaphors that are based on implied comparison [5].

Though alternations of similes with *like* and *as* have received some attention in linguistic research, the suggested analyses focus mainly on the functional properties and rhetorical effects of comparative phrases and clauses taken as a whole (see, for instance [3], [9]. However, as shown in [13], a comparative construction has a compositional structure, which presupposes a special semantic contribution of each element of the construction, including function words.

The aim of the present paper is to reveal the factors that motivate the use of similes with *like* and *as* in a poetic text. The subsequent analysis of linguistic material is based on examples of similes used in the sonnets of William Shakespeare [12]. Generally, similes rank high in Shakespeare's poetic texts, with the total number amounting to sixty in 154 sonnets. The overall number of uses of the markers of comparison involves 34 cases of the constructions with the conjunction *as* and 26 uses of those with the preposition *like*. It will be shown below that each particular type of a comparative construction has both structural and semantic characteristics that are related to the functions of the chosen marker of comparison.

Method

Since the analyzed markers of comparison belong to the class of grammatical, or structural words, their semantic values become explicit at the level of syntax. This presupposes that both *as* and *like* contribute to the expression of generalized meanings of clausal elements, on the one hand, and – on the other hand – to the establishment of sense

relationships between the elements of the comparative construction. This motivates the use of two main methods of linguistic analysis. First, the analysis involves the use of a distributional method, which leads to the establishment of semantico-syntactic characteristics of the constructions that both precede and follow the markers of comparison. Second, the study also employs the contrastive analysis of semantically similar constructions that differ only structurally owing to the use of different markers of comparison. In characterizing the structural elements of the analyzed similes the study follows the terminological tradition of identifying the compared entity as “the object of comparison” and the entity which is compared to as “the image of comparison”.

Discussion

The uses of similes with *like* and *as* in Shakespeare's sonnets show that each marker of comparison tends to introduce a particular type of a comparative construction. Thus, the conjunction *as* introduces a comparative clause in many cases (nineteen cases out of thirty-four), whereas the preposition *like* is mostly used (in sixteen cases out of twenty-six) in introducing adverbial phrases rather than clauses. For example, in sonnet 75 the simile that makes up a separate clause headed by the subject *sweet showers* is introduced by *as*: *So are you to my thoughts as food to life, / Or as sweet seasoned showers are to the ground*. By contrast, the preposition *like*, as used in sonnet 93, introduces the adverbial phrase *Eve's apple*: *How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow*.

It might seem that adverbial clauses and adverbial phrases that are introduced by *as* and *like*, respectively, do not differ significantly in terms of their generalized meanings expressed in utterances as a whole. However, it is not only the degree of structural complexity that differentiates the comparative constructions with *as* and *like*. Thus, the clauses introduced by *as* contain predicates that are either identical with or similar to predicates of the respective main clauses. Illustrative in this respect is the example from sonnet 145 where one and the same predicate *follow* is used both with the subject that indicates the object of comparison (*an end / that*) and the one referring to its image (*day*): *'I hate' she altered with an end, / That follow'd it as gentle day / Doth follow night*. Another illustrative example is in the lines of sonnet 37 where the object (*I*) and the image (*decrepit father*) of comparison are characterized through synonymous predicates *take comfort* and *take delight*: *As a decrepit father takes delight / To see his active child do deeds of youth, / So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite, / Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth*.

The examples of using identical or synonymous predicates with subjects that refer to different entities in the situation of comparison suggest that both entities – the object and the image of comparison – are treated as belonging to the same general category. The conjunction *as* which introduces a comparative construction can therefore be interpreted as a linguistic marker of this poetic categorization.

Unlike *as*, the preposition *like* marks a different kind of cognitive operation in introducing a comparative phrase. Clauses with this preposition usually contain metaphorically used predicates which refer to the image rather than to the object of comparison. Thus in sonnet 95 the predicate *spot* characterizes the image *canker*, not the object of comparison *shame*: *How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame / Which like a canker in the fragrant rose, / Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name*. Similarly, in sonnet 7, the predicate *reel* characterizes the image *feeble age* (or - by metonymic transfer – an elderly person) not the light or the

sun (*he*) as the object of comparison: *But when from highmost pitch, with weary car, / Like feeble age he reeleth from the day, / The eyes (fore duteous) now converted are*. Though the predicates in both examples cannot be attributed to the objects of comparison in their direct meanings, they can still characterize the latter metaphorically thus making those objects more visually accessible and vivid. The preposition *like* which introduces the comparative phrases in both cases signals a poetic transformation of the object of comparison by bringing it into direct contact with the image of comparison that receives in turn an expressive and vivid characterization.

The above discussion gives grounds to suggest that the function words *as* and *like* can be distinguished by the nature of semantic contribution to the general meanings of comparative constructions that they introduce. Whereas *as* signals the integration of the object and image of comparison into one category of entities, the preposition *like* indicates the poetic transformation of the object of comparison into a perceptually accessible entity. It will be shown below that the identified functional properties of *as* and *like* are responsible for the image-making potential of similes in which they are used.

Results

The most obvious cases of distinctions between similes with the analyzed function words are those that involve drawing a comparison between identical or similar pairs of entities. Interesting in this respect are sonnets in which the central character, or the narrative “I”, is compared to a human that represents a particular social role. For example, in sonnet 57 the lyrical character is comparing himself to “a sad slave”: *Nor dare I question with my jealous thought / Where you may be, or your affairs suppose, / But like a sad slave stay and think of nought / Save where you are how happy you make those*. The comparative construction introduced by *like* in the given lines helps to visualize the character. The state of waiting and total immersion in thoughts described by the expression *stay and think of nought* can hardly appeal to visual imagination. However, the preposition *like* which introduces the image of a sad slave experiencing that state helps to create a perceptually distinct image. The implications of perceptual accessibility conveyed by *like* agree with the connotation of perceptual givenness evoked by the adjective “sad”. This connotation is referred to in the dictionary definition of “sad” given in [8, P. 1029]: “1a: affected with or expressive of grief or unhappiness”. In other words, the comparative construction introduced by *like* signals a transition from the description of a visually inaccessible inner state of the lyrical character to a vivid picture of a sad slave.

Sonnet 37 in which the lyrical character (*I*) is described through the use of a comparative construction with *as* may be interpreted as presenting a very similar case of drawing a poetic comparison: *As a decrepit father takes delight / To see his active child do deeds of youth, / So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite, / Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth*. However, whereas the simile with *like* from sonnet 37 describes the image of a slave at a particular moment in time, the image of a *decrepit father* receives characterization through reference to habitual behavior associated with that image (*takes delight to see his active child do deeds of youth*). Put otherwise, the distinction between *like* and *as* that are used to introduce comparative constructions in the above two examples arises from the distinction between two cognitive operations that accompanies the process of comparison: the construal of a perceptually inaccessible phenomenon in terms of a visual scene (with the preposition

like) and the qualification of an individual state or emotion as a habitual phenomenon generalized in human experience (with the conjunction *as*).

The function words *like* and *as* are distinguished in a similar way when the images of comparison are represented by natural objects or phenomena. Thus, the image of the simile in sonnet 56 is an ocean: *Let this sad int'rim like the ocean be / Which parts the shore, where the contracted new / Come daily to the banks [...]*. The simile with *like* in the given example establishes a poetic parallel between a *sad int'rim*, or a period of time which as such cannot be perceptually accessible, and natural objects, such as ocean, shore, banks, that can be visualized. The ability to “part the shore” which is attributed to the ocean in this context does not make the essential feature of the ocean, but rather, draws a visual picture of it that may appeal to the reader’s imagination.

The ocean as an image of comparison is represented differently in sonnet 80 where the respective comparative construction is introduced by the conjunction *as*: [...] *your worth (wide as the ocean is) / The humble as the proudest sail doth bear*. In this case the use of *as* is not limited to marking the comparison of the addressee’s merits (*your worth*) to the great expanse of the ocean (*wide as the ocean is*). The spatial unboundedness of the ocean does not belong

to its peripheral characteristics, but rather, constitutes one of its essential features. In the dictionary definition suggested in [8, P. 804] the word “ocean” is described as “any of the large bodies of water into which the great ocean is divided; a very large or unlimited space or quantity”. Therefore, the function of *as* used here to introduce the subsequent comparative construction consists in referring what is known from the lyrical character’s individual knowledge (here: the knowledge of the addressee’s numerous merits) to a wider segment of reality that is known from generalized experience (here: the image of an ocean as a big water expanse). Put otherwise, the conjunction *as* marks a cognitive operation of qualifying a particular instance as belonging to a category of similar instances.

Conclusion

As evidenced by the suggested analysis of linguistic data, the function words *like* and *as* are distinguished as elements of a discursively rooted opposition that is based on the contrastive construal of two cognitive operations. Whereas the preposition *like* indicates that a simile construes abstract and perceptually inaccessible things in terms of perceptual characteristics, the conjunction *as* evokes the cognitive categorization of particular entities and phenomena as belonging to general categories of things, events and situations.

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