

## The Role and Usage of Similes in a Language

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article is discussed about the role and usage of similes in a language which ancient periods of similes and the first collecton of similes and figures who used and worked on similes.

**KEYWORD:** similes, Old Testament, metaphor, comparison, aspects, language, similarities, speech, conversation.

### Introduction

The word simile is derived from the Latin word “simile”, meaning ‘resemblance and likenesses’, technically it means the comparison of two objects with some similarities. Shamisa has said simile is the claim of likeness of two things in one or two attributes "Simile is fundamentally a figure of speech requiring overt reference to source and target entities, and an explicit construction connecting them".

In English, for this comparison some similarity markers such as, "like", "as". Mr. Smith is as changeable as a weathercock. He eats like a hoarse. In literary texts, simile is used with metaphors to enhance the effect and beauty of the text. As metaphor is a covert comparison, simile is an overt one which explicitly and precisely explains the object and it is the first and simplest method for conveying the beauty of message which is used in poetry, prose and also usual conversations. Even children talking about their desires, use simile as a means of comparison. A figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by like or as (as in cheeks like roses)

Even though simile is a much less investigated means of figurative language than metaphor, the two go hand in hand in that by studying one we are in a way studying the other one at the same time. Both metaphor and simile are forms of comparison, which means that both have a third element with which something is compared. The most basic difference between them lies in how the comparison is carried out; simile usually operates with such specific markers as —"like a", —"as...a", —"as...as a" etc., while metaphor can be created both with such markers and without them. Generally speaking, a simile is a metaphor, but not all metaphors are similes.

Metaphor is a broader term. In a literal sense metaphor is —an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else which is the same in a particular way. For example, if you want to say that someone is very shy and frightened of things, you might say that they are a mouse. From a philosophical point of view, metaphor is the way of perceiving and shaping the world around us.

The opposition between metaphor and simile was first established by Aristotle. He suggested that the two patterns differ rather insignificantly, though he himself preferred the former one:

The simile, as has been said before, is a metaphor, differing from it only in the way it is put; and just because it is longer it is less attractive.

The understanding of metaphor as an elliptical or compressed simile is common even in our day and age. As David Cooper says, similes are metaphors with the only difference that they use words such as —"like" and —"as"

The associations that arise when we compare one object to another are rather individual, they are developed and reinforced under the influence of one's background knowledge, specific worldview and intentions. This idea was convincingly proved by Edmund Husserl, a famous philosopher, in his Logical investigations, where he says that —"perception is an act that determines, but does not embody meaning"

As a rule, we cannot identify all the aspects of metaphorical meaning that become prominent in each particular case, which does not allow us to oppose metaphor to simile.

Although Donald Davidson polemicizes with the idea that metaphor is an elliptic simile, he agrees that metaphor and its corresponding simile convey the same meaning:

We can learn much about what metaphors mean by comparing them with similes, for a simile tells us, in part, what a metaphor merely nudges us into noting. Suppose Coneril had said, thinking of Lear, —Old fools are like babes again; then she would have used the words to assert a similarity between old fools and babes. What she did say, of course, was —Old fools are babes again, thus using the words to intimate what the simile declared. Thinking along these lines may inspire another theory of the figurative or special meaning of metaphors: the figurative meaning of a metaphor is the literal meaning of the corresponding simile.

Simile is much less investigated than metaphor, although it occurs as frequently in discourse. "Like metaphor, it is a semantic figure, a mental process playing a central role in the way we think and talk about the world, which often associates different spheres".It can have an affirmative or a negative form: the affirmative form asserts likeness between the entities compared, as 'the sun is like an orange' and the negative one denies likeness, as 'the sun is not like an orange'.

**Discussion.** According to Fromilhague, similes has various functions: First, they serve to communicate concisely and efficiently: They are one of a set of linguistic devices which extend the linguistic resources available. Secondly, they can function as cognitive tools for thought in that they enable us to think of the world in novel, alternative ways. In discourse, they can also fulfill more specific functions depending on the textual genre in which they occur. In scientific texts, comparison and analogical reasoning play an important role.

Simile also differs from analogy, intended in its narrower sense, as former involves two entities, while the latter involves four. Unlike metaphors, similes require individuation of 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.

Similes have different types and classifications, too. Bredin remarked about a scale going from the most stereotyped to the most creative similes. At one extreme are situated the conventionalized and fixed similes, and at the other extreme are the creative similes. Between the two extremes, standard (ordinary) and original (fresh, but not totally unexpected) similes can be settled.

Another classification by Fromilhague has offered a distinction between objective similes, originating from concrete physical experience, and subjective similes, stemming from individual association mechanisms. He also explains explicit and implicit similes which are the basis of this article. In explicit simile, sense or point of similarity is stated directly. Most of the sentences with 'as...as' structures are of this kind: 'as light as feather', 'as hot as fire'. Implicit simile, however, is the one whose sense is not stated directly and leave the onus of interpretation to the reader. Most words with 'like' are of this types: 'eat like a bird: Eat very little', 'live like a pig: Live very untidily', 'swim like a fish: Swim very well'.

In English, for this comparison some similarity markers such as, "like", "as". E.g: Mr. Smith is as changeable as a weathercock. He eats like a hoarse. In literary texts, simile is used with metaphors to enhance the effect and beauty of the text. As metaphor is a covert comparison, simile is an overt one which explicitly and precisely explains the object and it is the first and simplest method for conveying the beauty of message which is used in poetry, prose and also usual conversations. Even children talking about their desires, use simile as a means of comparison.

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.

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

**Literature review.** 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".

From many other sources the antiquity of the simile is proved. In the time of Rameses II of Egypt, 1292-1225 B.C., according to Breasted's "History of Egypt", the poem of Pentaur was written. The Heroic Theban poet's work was so highly prized that it was carved on the temple walls in hard stone. Pentaur was not ignorant of the simile. Thus he speaks of Pharaoh:

"His heart is firm, his courage is like that of the god of the war"

"His courage is firm, like that of a bull"

"The King is dreadful as the grim lion in the valley"

"He appeared like the sun-god at his rising in the early morn"

There was one collection of similes made in the sixteenth century, and three during the seventeenth. These books are:

1. "Certain very proper and most profitable similes, also many very notable virtues"
2. "A treasure or store-house of similes: both pleasant, delightful, and profitable, for all estates of men in general." Newly collected into heads and commonplaces.
3. "A century of similes"

#### 4. "Things new and old; or a store-house of Similes"

The first to make a collection of similes was John Ray, botanist and miscellaneous writer. His "A Collection of English proverbs" was published in 1670, and there have been many subsequent editions. It was not Ray's purpose to group together the proverbs and incidentally the similes to be found in English literature, but rather those in colloquial use by the people of England. The "Proverbial Similes" which he collected comprise but eight and a half pages of the two hundred and eighty, of the fifth edition of his book. Many of those gathered by Ray are of a character too gross for modern taste, while others are of a distinctly local character. Other collectors added many which came into general use after Ray's time; but all avoided making use of similes to be found in the works of the writers of preceding ages. The first to overcome this reluctance was Vincent Stuckey Lean, whose great work, "Lean's Collectanea" in five volumes, was published at Bristol, England, 1903. A part of the second volume of this erudite compilation is given over to, "A New Treasury of Similes". Lean not only embodied in his work all of the similes to be found in the various books of proverbs, but added very many from the old English writers. It is evident that he had a very considerable Elizabethan library to delve in; but, oddly enough, he made use of but three modern similes, - one each from Dickens, Tennyson, and George Eliot. Of the four simile books mentioned, Lean knew of but one, and that by Robert Cawdry.

**Conclusion.** As we can see, there are many views on the nature of metaphors and similes, and there is apparently no uniform definition of either. I myself tend to believe that similes are part of metaphorical constructions and that they have some structural and semantic peculiarities in conveying metaphorical meaning. It is not metaphor that should be comprehended as some type of elliptical simile, but simile should be counted among various metaphorical constructions.

The most obvious difference between the two lies in the parallel —implicity – explicitly, while metaphor is an implied comparison between two unlike things, a simile is an explicit one. In conclusion, similes are one of the ancient forms of speech, one of the important parts of literature.

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