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## THE PECULIARITIES OF PHRASEOLOGICAL SIMILES IN ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN LANGUAGES

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**Анотація.** Стаття присвячена вивченню фразеологічних одиниць із компонентом порівняння в англійській та українській мовах. Фразеологічні порівняння широко застосовуються в усному й писемному мовленні, хоч їхні структурно-семантичні особливості залишаються недостатньо вивченими. Дослідження компаративних зворотів було в колі зацікавлень багатьох дослідників. Проблема виділення стійких порівнянь із загального складу фразеологічного фонду вперше була розглянута у працях таких лінгвістів, як В.В. Виноградов, А.В. Кунін, А.Г. Назярян, І.І. Чернишова та ін., які у своїх концепціях відводять порівняльним фразеологізмам окреме місце.

Багато невирішених питань залишається в теорії та практиці перекладу цих одиниць із англійської українською мовою. У вітчизняній фразеології ще не досягнуто остаточного вирішення багатьох проблем, що й зумовило актуальність роботи, тому необхідне подальше вивчення особливостей всіх типів фразеологічних одиниць.

Метою роботи є детальний аналіз компаративних фразеологічних одиниць і порівняння особливостей їх використання в англійській та українській мовах.

Досягнення поставленої мети передбачає виконання таких завдань: дати визначення фразеологічним одиницям; розглянути різні класифікації фразеологізмів; з'ясувати мету використання фразеологізмів у різних мовах; відібрати певну кількість компаративних ідіом англійською мовою та проаналізувати їх; порівняти значення компаративних ідіом в англійській та українській мовах.

Об'єктом дослідження є фразеологічні одиниці з компонентом порівняння в англійській та українській мовах.

Предметом роботи є особливості перекладу фразеологізмів із компонентом порівняння англійської та української мов.

Теоретична цінність дослідження полягає в тому, що результати, отримані в ході дослідження, можуть бути використані в теоретичному курсі лексикології, теорії та практики перекладу, на практичних заняттях із англійської мови на різних рівнях навчання. Результати дослідження спрямовані на покращення якості перекладів і запобігання непорозумінням.

**Ключові слова:** фразеологія, фразеологізм, фразеологічні одиниці з компонентом порівняння, еквівалентність, трансформація.

**Setting the problem.** People use different fixed expressions when they are communicating with one another. In communication there is a considerable confusion about the terminology associated with different word-groups.

**The analysis of the studies.** Phrasemes have intrigued a number of linguists in many countries. V. V. Vinogradov initiated a semantic classification of phraseological units (phraseological fusions, unities, combinations), O. I. Smyrnitskii suggested a structural classification of phraseological units (traditional phrases, phraseological combinations, idioms), K. I. Mizin researched cultural peculiarities of phraseological units and others [see: 1; 2].

**The aim of the paper.** Idioms come to be a very numerous part of English. A number of linguistic studies of idioms have been made, but there are still important gaps that need to be filled. The aim of the paper is to provide a detailed analysis of some aspects of similes and to compare their usage and meanings in the English and Ukrainian languages.

**The account of the basic material.** Phraseology is the study of set or fixed expressions, such as idioms, phrasal verbs, and other types of multi-word lexical units, in which the component parts of the expression take on a meaning, which is more specific than predictable from the sum of their meanings when used independ-

ently. For example, *Dutch auction* is composed of the words *Dutch* 'pertaining to the Netherlands' and *auction* 'a public sale in which goods are sold to the highest bidder', but its meaning is not 'a sale in the Netherlands where goods are sold to the highest bidder'. Instead, the phrase has a conventionalized meaning referring to any auction where, instead of rising, the prices fall [6, p. 39].

The basic unit of analysis in phraseology is often referred to as a phraseme or phraseological unit, which can be defined as a non-motivated word-group that cannot be freely made up in speech, but is reproduced as a ready-made unit. It is a group of words whose meaning cannot be deduced by examining the meaning of the constituent lexemes: *a dark horse* is a person about whom no one knows anything definite; *a bull in a china shop* is a clumsy person; *to let the cat out of the bag* is to let some secret become known; *to bark up the wrong tree* means to follow a false scent; to look for somebody or something in a wrong place; to expect from somebody what he is unlikely to be done [7].

A. Koonin pointed out primary and secondary ways of forming phraseological units.

Primary ways of forming phraseological units are those when a unit is formed on the basis of a free word-group:

a) most productive in Modern English is the for-

mation of phraseological units by means of transferring the meaning of terminological word-groups, e.g. to *link up* in its transformed meaning *to meet*;

b) a large group of phraseological units was formed from free word groups by transforming their meaning, e.g. *granny farm is home for the elderly*;

c) phraseological units can be formed by means of alliteration, e.g., *a sad sack is an accident*;

d) they can be formed by using archaisms, e.g. *in brown study* means *in gloomy meditation* where both components preserve their archaic meanings;

e) they can be formed by using expressions of writers or politicians in everyday life, e.g. *corridors of power* (Snow), *American dream* (Alby), *the winds of change* (Mc Millan).

Secondary ways of forming phraseological units are those when a phraseological unit is formed on the basis of another phraseological unit:

a) changing the grammar form, e.g. *Make hay while the sun shines* is transferred into a verbal phrase *to make hay while the sun shines*;

b) analogy, e.g. *Curiosity killed the cat* was transferred into *Care killed the cat*;

c) contrast, e.g. *cold surgery* was formed by contrasting it with *acute surgery*, *thin cat* was formed by contrasting it with *fat cat*;

d) shortening of proverbs or sayings e.g. from the proverb *You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear* by means of clipping the middle of it the phraseological unit *to make a sow's ear* was formed with the meaning *to make a mistake* [4; 10].

The English language has some idiomatic expressions that emphasize a particular quality of a person or thing by comparing it to something else. This type of idiomatic expressions are called similes. They describe something by comparing it with something else, using the words *as* or *like*. For example, imagine a new laptop which is extremely thin and light and perfect for travelling, because it doesn't weigh down a backpack. When describing the laptop, we can emphasize how light it is by saying that it is *as light as a feather*.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, simile is '(the use of) a word or phrase that compares something to something else, using the words like or as' [11].

Generally, simile involves a clear comparison between two entities. The resemblance is usually indicated by the use of *like* or *as*, for example: *as white as snow*; *as cold as ice*; *to cry like a baby*; *life is like a journey* [9].

A simile may seem to be nearly similar to a metaphor, yet they are different in some ways. Though both of them compare one object with another, while a metaphor only makes implicit comparison (*He is a lion*), a simile can especially make it explicit and open (*He is as brave as a lion*).

In English and Ukrainian idioms of comparison have been considered to be a very engrossing topic which has intrigued lots of linguists. The number of this kind of idioms are comparatively large in both English and Ukrainian. In estimation, there are approximately 600 of them in each language.

Comparative idioms are utilized very often in daily life, both in spoken and written language. Generally, they have structural stability. With figurative and symbolic meanings, they add vividness, emotions, emphasis and "life" to the language, making every conversation more exciting and engaging. Moreover, through idioms of comparison, a considerable amount of "culture" of each country is graciously and truthfully revealed, helping us understand a lot more about the lifestyle and viewpoints of those people who live far away from us [2, p. 39].

Culture has an especially strong influence on language which on its part, faithfully and remarkably acts as a mirror reflecting culture [5, p. 11]. There are lots of similarities and dissimilarities between English and Ukrainian comparative idioms which mainly result from cultural differences. The same comparative images can sometimes lead to different meanings and vice versa, the same meanings can be expressed by various images. To achieve an adequate translation of similes it's necessary to preserve their stylistic and pragmatic qualities in the target language [3].

The English language has two widely used phrases: *quake/shake like an aspen leaf* and *quiver like a jelly*. The objects used in these similes are *leaf* and *jelly*. Both of them make sense due to their physical qualities: a leaf is very fragile and shakes in the wind and a jelly has a particular texture that makes it quite shivery. In the Ukrainian language we also compare a fearful person to a leaf *трястись як осиковий листок*. But the other simile – *quiver like a jelly* – has no equivalent. Marine creatures are not widely used in stock similes as well as in other phraseological units in general in Ukrainian.

Regardless of the lack of marine life presence in Ukrainian folklore, there is an abundance of all types of stock similes that very often refer to nature, animals and plants. For instance, a fearful person can also be compared to a hare: *боязкий, як заєць*.

A distinctive nature of the Ukrainian language is the presence of humorous, derisive expressions, that have the opposite meaning to what the main verb says. Many of these humorous stock similes also use elements of nature as their objects: *Боюсь тебе, як торішнього снігу/як вовк кози/як заць бубна/як собака мухи*. The meaning of the above mentioned similes is opposite – to not be afraid: *Боюсь тебе, як торішнього снігу – I'm (obviously) not afraid of you*.

To refer to a large group of people squashed in a closed space English people use the following similes: *packed like sardines* or *packed like rabbits in a warren*. Ukrainians say: *багато, як трави, багацько, хоч греблю гати*. English people use sardines or rabbits as the object of their simile (*like sardines, like rabbits in a warren*) and Ukrainian see big amount of someone or something in the grass (*як траву*) or a full-flowing river (*хоч греблю гати*) [9].

However, not all stock similes in one language have equivalents in others. In such cases we talk about the so called *lacunae*.

There is a similar type of stock simile in English. Based on a cultural information it doesn't have

equivalent in other languages. This simile – *to cry like a banshie* – means to cry bloodcurdlingly, desperately. The background information reveals the story behind its subject. *Banshie* is a ghost that cries. The name has its origins in Scottish and Irish folklore: according to a legend, *banshie* is a ghost that used to be a guardian of a family, but when it started to cry and howl, it foretold the death of one of the family members. Although the simile has no equivalent in other languages, the theory of translation postulates that there's nothing untranslatable. The possible way of its reconstruction in target language could be literal translation. In this case it depends on the type of the recipient, his background knowledge of the folklore of the country to ensure that he is capable of interpreting the simile in the correct way. Frankly speaking, this translation technique seems to have little use in this case as regular representatives of another culture will rarely know the meaning. The other option would be in such a case to give a footnote with the explanation. This is not a perfect solution either, as a reader will have to digress from the essence of the story and depend on the text that the simile is used in.

Therefore, the context it's used in should be taken into consideration as it may have both a positive and a negative effect on the translated text. The other option of translation of this simile would use the substitution of the original simile in the source language by an adjective or verbal adverb in the target language *несамовито плакати (to cry like a banshie)*.

This type of translation techniques has clear disadvantages as it's hard to avoid stylistic losses in the target text. At the same time, depending on the situation that the simile is used it could be logical and appropriate to replace it by its incomplete equivalent in the translation. By an incomplete equivalent we understand a simile that is semantically similar but is lexically different: *To cry like a banshie – Плаче наче скрипка грає/ Плаче старий мов дитина / Реве як корова*.

It's necessary to remember though that the replacement of the object of a stock simile might not be the best option, as it can lead to partial interference into the connotation of the simile.

Especially tricky might be the similes that have similar or even identical lexical structure, but have different meanings in different languages: *to work as a donkey* means *to work hard*, but it doesn't have the connotation of stubbornness that is characteristic of the similar stock simile in Ukrainian. That's why an adequate translation in Ukrainian would be *працювати як віл (to work as a donkey)*. A literal translation, though it could be clear, would add at the same time unnecessary expression and/or different meaning.

In everyday life, Ukrainian people usually have to deal with different animals that effectively serve their farming. Consequently, and easy to understand, when making and using comparative idioms, they often take those familiar things into comparison.

For instance, the image of *ox* was especially familiar to Ukrainians in the past. As a strong, laborious, amenable domesticated animal, oxen are considered

to be good companions of farmers and sometimes an indication of personal wealth.

On the other hand, when talking about strength, English people, with nomadic culture, usually say *as strong as a horse*. In the English culture, horses are such versatile and special animals. Being very strong, loyal and vigorous, they are used in wars, fighting, in transportation and entertainment and even in farming work. If a person is really sturdy and energetic, he should be likened to a horse.

Certainly, that English people use horses in comparative idioms does not mean that oxen are not strong in their mind. It's just because of differences in culture that often lead to dissimilarities in a certain language.

Similarly, take *as grey as a badger* and *сивий, як золуб* into consideration. As a matter of fact, a badger is far more familiar to English people than it's to Ukrainian people.

In addition, the image of *dog* is sometimes negative in Ukrainian people's imagination. The comparison *злий, як собака* is utilized to indicate someone who is very angry. On the other hand, English people, when talking about fury, they would like to mention the bear, as in *as cross as a bear*.

There are many other cases in which English and Ukrainian idioms, despite having a similar meaning, use different images of comparison:

1) *as stubborn as a mule* – ‘впертий, як баран’;

He is *as stubborn as a mule* and never takes others' advice [12].

2) *as like as two peas in a pod* – ‘схожі, як дві краплі води’;

They're very much alike, they're *as like as two peas in a pod* [12].

3) *as live as a bird* – ‘веселий, як весна’;

She was *as live as a bird* because it was her birthday [12].

4) *to eat like a bird* – ‘їсти, як муха’;

She was very thin because she *ate like a bird* [12].

5) *as fast as a hare* – ‘швидкий, як стріла’;

The winner of the race was *as fast as a hare* [12].

Those dissimilarities are the inevitable result of different cultures, living condition as well as ways of thinking, observing and interpreting the world. As we can see, some concepts are obviously distinct in a certain region or culture, which makes it easier to explain the unlikeness in language and particularly, in idioms. This should be paid attention when it comes to translation and teaching.

People of various cultures can sometimes share the same ways of thinking and viewing in some matters. That may result in the shared biological and cultural features which are usually referred to as *biological and cultural universals*. That's to say, although Ukrainian culture and English culture are remarkably different from each other, there still exists some cases in which the ways of observing the world of the two people are so similar. Ukrainian and English people can at times express concepts and ideas in the same way. That is reflected in language and also in idioms of comparison. In fact, many comparative idioms in English have the

exact equivalents in Ukrainian. Below are some examples illustrating those interesting coincidences:

1) *as bold (brave) as a lion* – ‘хоробрий, як лев’;

We are *as brave as lions* and the best in the world [12].

2) *as cunning (sly) as a fox* – ‘хитрий, як лисиця’;

I thought you were simple and honest, but you’re *as cunning as a fox* [12].

3) *like cat and dog* – ‘(сваритися), як кішка з собакою’;

They’re *like cat and dog* in court [12].

4) *as dumb as a fish* – ‘німий, як риба’;

What is it, man? Have you committed a murder, that you stand there *dumb as a fish*? [12].

To make better translations, especially when it comes to idioms of comparison, there are some points that should be taken into consideration. Firstly, since each country has its own culture, differences in language are usually caused by unlike cultures, a translator need to keep in mind that a good understanding of culture is a must if he/she wants to make a proper translation. Mastering other cultures is indisputably strenuous and time-consuming. In fact, the most important thing is that we should foster a general and keen awareness of cultural differences, which will in some ways help us to avoid such unnatural and maladroit translating works and improve ourselves in translation. Additionally, encountering some unfamiliar concepts, exceptionally different viewpoints or some idioms as well as expressions that appear hard to understand is something we can’t help shunning in translation. It’s of paramount significance to have an open-minded view to accept the thought and belief of oversea people, to feel what they feel and to say what they say. It’s also necessary to “think twice” and base on the context, the circumstances or the situations in order to deduce, render the exact meanings. Never should we firmly cling to word-by-word translation, especially when it comes to idioms since they are separate semantic units whose meanings generally cannot be elucidated by translating all of the component words. Moreover, we need to be flexible when translating. In many cases, a translator has to carefully make a decision on whether he/she should keep the literal denotation or change it if necessary to make better and the most satisfactory translations. Last but not least, idioms as well as idioms of comparison can be seen as a hugely intriguing and challenging part in language. In fact, they are utilized very frequently and effectively not only in spoken but also in written forms. Thus, to develop or advance translation ability, one should spend time investigating and enhancing his/her knowledge of idioms, especially paying close attention to those remarkably noteworthy dissimilarities resulting from different languages and cultures. The more properly one can translate idiomatic expressions and structures, the better he/she is as a skillful and competent translator.

**Conclusions.** In this paper we have found out the proper definitions of phraseology, phraseological units and similes. We have studied some aspects of similes.

We have grouped the selected English

phraseological units of comparison by their meanings:

1) Mammals:

a) Equivalent translation: *as hungry as a wolf* – ‘голодний, як вовк’; *as quiet (still) as a mouse* – ‘тихий, як миша’; *as timid as a hare* – ‘полохливий, як заєць’; *fight like a lion* – ‘боротися, як лев’; *roar like a bull* – ‘ревіти, як бугай’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as blind as a bat* – ‘сліпий, як кріт’; *as clever as a cartload of monkeys* – ‘кмітливий’; *as grey as a badger* – ‘сивий, як голуб’; *as to swallow a camel* – ‘не зупинятися перед труднощами’; *have a memory like an elephant* – ‘мати хорошу пам’ять’.

2) Birds:

a) Equivalent translation: *as gay (happy) as a lark* – ‘веселий, як жайворонок’; *as graceful as a swan* – ‘витончений, як лебідь’; *as vain as a peacock* – ‘пихатий, як індик’; *chatter like a magpie* – ‘балакучий, як сорока’; *to sing like a nightingale* – ‘співати, як соловей’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as alert as a bird* – ‘спритний, кмітливий’; *as plump as a partridge* – ‘товстенький’; *as proud as a peacock* – ‘гордовитий’; *to live together like a couple of pigeons* – ‘жити в гармонії’; *to walk like a stork* – ‘гідно поводитися’.

3) Pets:

a) Equivalent translation: *as meek as a lamb* – ‘покірний, як ягня’; *as strong as a bull* – ‘сильний, як бик’; *have nine lives like a cat* – ‘живучий, як кішка’; *like a red rag to a bull* – ‘як червона хустка для бика’; *like cat and dog* – ‘сваритися, як кішка з собакою’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as a hen with one chick* – ‘метушливий’; *as agile as a cat* – ‘гнучкий, жвавий’; *as clumsy as a puppy* – ‘незграбний’; *as weak as a kitten* – ‘слабкий, кволий, безхарактерний’; *like a cat that ate the canary* – ‘мати винуватий вигляд’.

4) Fish:

a) Equivalent translation: *as dumb as a fish* – ‘німий, як риба’; *as mute as a fish* – ‘німий, як риба’; *like a fish out of water* – ‘як риба без води, незручно почуватися’; *swim like a fish* – ‘добре плавати, як риба’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as flat as a flounder* – ‘плоский’; *drink like a fish* – ‘багато пити’.

5) Insects:

a) Transformation: *as afraid as a grasshopper* – ‘наляканий’; *as angry as a wasp* – ‘злий, сердитий’; *as busy as a bee* – ‘метушливий, зайнятий’; *as merry as a grig* – ‘веселий’; *as snug as bug in a rug* – ‘затишно’.

6) Religion:

a) Equivalent translation: *as poor as Job* – ‘бідний, як Іов’; *as wise as Solomon* – ‘мудрий, як Соломон’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as guilty as sin* – ‘винний’; *as good as a Lord* – ‘добрий’; *as hot as hell* – ‘душно’; *as old as Adam* – ‘(дуже) старий’; *as patient as Job* – ‘дуже терплячий’; *like a bat out of a hell* – ‘швидкий’.

7) Natural phenomena:

a) Equivalent translation: *as clear as day* – ‘ясний, як день’; *as cold as ice* – ‘холодний, як крига’; *as free as the wind* – ‘вільний, як вітер’; *as*

*quick as lightning* – ‘з швидкістю блискавки’; *like a streak of lightning* – ‘блискавично’; *to run like (the) wind* – ‘летіти, як вітер’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as ageless as the sun* – ‘вічний, нестаріючий’; *as changeable as the weather* – ‘мінливий’; *as fluid as a cloud (or air)* – ‘такий, що тече’; *as high as the sky* – ‘високий’; *as plain as the sun* – ‘ясний’.

8) Colors:

a) Equivalent translation: *as black as soot* – ‘чорний, як сажа’; *as black as a thundercloud* – ‘чорний, як грозова хмара’; *as grey as lead* – ‘сірий, як свинець’; *as red as a poppy* – ‘червоний, як маків цвіт’; *as white as snow* – ‘білий, як сніг’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as black as coal* – ‘чорний’; *as green as grass* – ‘зелений’; *as red as a rose* – ‘рум’яний’; *as white as salt* – ‘білий’; *as white as a sheet* – ‘білосніжний’;

9) Everyday life:

a) Equivalent translation: *as brittle as glass* – ‘крихкий, як скло’; *as flat as a board* – ‘плоский, як дошка’; *as pretty as a picture* – ‘красивий, як картинка’; *like to look for a needle in a haystack* – ‘шукати голку в стіжку сіна’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as bright as a new pin* – ‘чистий, блискучий’; *as sharp as a needle* – ‘дотепний, спостережливий’; *as useful as a chocolate teapot* – ‘некорисний, непридатний’; *like pouring water into a sieve* – ‘переливати воду з пустого в порожнє (марна справа)’; *to look like a million dollars* – ‘мати чудовий вигляд’; *to smoke like a chimney* – ‘багато палити’; *to talk like a book* – ‘говорити ученою мовою, точно

висловлювати свої думки’.

10) Food:

a) Equivalent translation: *as sour as vinegar* – ‘кислий, як оцет (незадоволений)’ [9].

b) Transformation: *as busy as popcorn on a skillet* – ‘активний’; *cool as a cucumber* – ‘спокійний’; *as flat as a pancake* – ‘плоский’; *as hot as pepper* – ‘запальний’; *like two peas in a pod* – ‘дуже схожі’; *packed in like sardines* – ‘переповнений’.

We have picked up Ukrainian equivalents to all of the similes, or if they did not exist, then we have used the transformations. Recent dominated and that proved that culture has a great influence on language. We have analyzed cases of usage and problems of translation. On this basis, the dictionary was created.

Having analysed stock similes in English and Ukrainian languages it seems reasonable to state that the question of the adequate representation of stock similes requires a detailed study. Inaccurate understanding of the similes semantics in the original language can lead to regrettable mistakes in the translation. Especially tricky might be the similes that have similar or even identical lexical structure, but have different meanings in different languages.

Thus, investigating idioms of comparison in two languages actually help to “harvest” a lot of useful things, some of which are the increase in knowledge of idioms, the more understanding of culture and the improvement of researching as well as language contrasting skills. Moreover, after the study, there also emerge many good points that can be feasibly applied in language teaching and translation.

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### THE PECULIARITIES OF PHRASEOLOGICAL SIMILES IN ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN LANGUAGES

**Abstract.** The paper deals with English and Ukrainian phraseological similes. Idioms of comparison come to be a very numerous part of English.

Idioms are frequently neglected in general dictionaries and in classroom teaching, because they are considered to be marginal items which are quaint but not significant. Yet the idiomatic researches show that they are important in spoken language and in writing, in particular in conveying evaluations and in developing or maintaining interactions

A number of linguistic studies of idioms have been made, but there are still important gaps that need to be filled which account for the topicality of our research.

The aim of the paper is to provide a detailed analysis of some aspects of similes and to compare their peculiarities of usage in the English and Ukrainian languages.

To achieve the set aim we determine the following tasks: to find out the definitions of phraseology, phraseological units, idioms and similes; to analyze different classifications of phraseological units; to distinguish different kinds of phraseological units; to understand the aim of the modern usage of idioms; to study the problem of the translation of similes; to investigate solutions; to classify similes.

The object of the work is similes in the English and Ukrainian languages.

The results of the investigation are aimed at raising the quality of translations and preventing mistakes in comprehension.

We have grouped the selected English phraseological units of comparison by their meanings. We have picked up Ukrainian equivalents to all of the similes, or if they did not exist, then we have used the transformations. Recent studies have proved that culture has a great influence on language.

**Keywords:** phraseology, phraseologism, phraseological units with a simile component, equivalence, transformation.

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