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THE THEMATIC- SEMANTIC CLASSIFICATION OF SIMILES RELATED TO HUMAN IMAGE IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE LANGUAGES

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Abstract. Comparative linguistic research is essential for uncovering both universal traits and culture—specific features within the phraseological systems of unrelated languages. Within this framework, similes—a category of phraseological units with intricate and layered semantic structures—require thorough linguistic and cultural examination. This study explores similes associated with human imagery in English and Chinese, emphasizing their symbolic and descriptive dimensions. These expressions capture diverse facets of a person's physical traits, personality, emotions, and social behavior. For instance, the English simile "*as quick as lightning*" figuratively denotes exceptional speed, whereas the Chinese expression 浑身是胆 (*hún shēn shì dǎn*) – portrays someone as "filled with courage and boldness."

Using comparative, descriptive, and contrastive approaches, the study identifies and categorizes thematic- semantic types of human related similes in both languages. Drawing on analyses from both domestic and international scholars, similes are classified into six primary groups: (1) personality and intellect, (2) physical state, (3) appearance, (4) life and activity, (5) emotional condition, and (6) social interactions.

The results reveal key similarities and differences in how English and Chinese similes depict human characteristics. Theoretically, this research advances contrastive linguistics, cognitive semantics, and cultural linguistics by proposing a structured thematic- semantic classification of similes.

Practically, this study can aid language learners, translators, and educators by enhancing their understanding of culturally appropriate simile usage in English and Chinese communication.

Keywords: Comparative phraseology, thematic- semantic classification, phrases, set expressions, similes in English and Chinese, idioms in Chinese, linguacultural features, similes related to human image

Introduction

One of the critical areas of linguistics is the study of similes – expressions that, while not directly highlighting the distinctive features of an object or phenomenon, convey meaning by comparing them to other objects or phenomena.

Similes related to human appearance are widely used in spoken language and literary works. These similes are characterized by complex structures and rich semantic nuances. The relevance of this study lies in developing a thematic-semantic classification of similes related to human appearance in English and Chinese. By conducting a comparative analysis, the study aims to explore the similarities and differences in the linguocultural features of phrases related to human appearance in these two languages.

This article aims to study comprehensively phrases in English and Chinese, identify the key similes common to both cultures that describe various aspects of human appearance, and propose their thematic- semantic classification of similes.

To achieve this aim the following objectives have been set: presenting the theoretical aspects of general, comparative, and cognitive phraseology, examining the principles of classifying similes in English and Chinese, defining the concept of human appearance and analyze the classification of similes related to human appearance in both languages.

The scientific novelty of this work lies in offering a thematic-semantic classification of similes related to human appearance in English and Chinese. The study highlights the relevance of phraseological tools from various languages within the field of domestic phraseology from a comparative perspective.

Materials and methods

The theoretical part of this paper are from A.V. Kunin's classification, Maslov's Linguoculturology, and used similes in this paper are taken from dictionaries such as the Cambridge international dictionary of English idioms and the 中华成语词典- zhōnghuá chéngyǔ cídiǎn – Chinese Idiom Dictionary.

This research will apply methods of collection, comparison, and analysis, and the types of similes in English and Chinese will be described comparatively. To substantiate the theoretical conclusions, phrasal verbs related to human image in both English and Chinese will serve as the foundation. The methods and techniques outlined will be applied in the structural framework of the study to achieve the intended goal. By comparing unrelated languages such as English and Chinese, a study can reveal the national characteristics and unique features of each language.

Results and discussion

The study of figurative language tools, including similes, is one of the relevant issues in modern linguistics. Similes hold a special place in the phraseological domain of each language. It is well known that the phraseological feature of similes lies in their nature as stable and recurring word combinations with complex semantics, based on traditional comparisons. These units stand out in a comparative context, where phrases are composed of two or more components. For example: *aqqu moiyn* the literary meaning is used to describe “swallow- necked”, and figurative meaning is “used to describe someone who

is exceptionally beautiful, delicate, charming, or flawless in appearance”; *talşybyqtai būralğan* – literary meaning “twisted like a willow, means slim”, and the figurative meaning is used to describe “a person (usually a young woman or girl) who is slender, graceful, and moves with elegant, flexible, flowing motions-like a tender, swaying branch.”; *ürip auyzğa salğandai* – literary meaning “as if it were blown and put into the mouth.” And the figurative meaning is used to describe “a person (often a young woman, girl, or child) who is exceptionally beautiful, neat, flawless, and delicate in appearance– so perfect and tender that it seems as though they were carefully, lovingly made, like something precious you’d gently place in your mouth.”

A.V. Kunin discusses the issue of modeling phrases in the field of phraseology and categorizes fixed metaphors in English into the following groups:

Grammar model: *by and by* – gradually, over time; *by the by* – by the way; *out and out* – 1) absolutely, undeniably, completely, 2) flawless, perfect, refined, renowned, etc.

Semantic model: *cut one’s coat according to one’s cloth* – literally it means “cutting clothes according to the fabric,” while figuratively it means “know the measure” (i.e., living within your means), *keep one’s head above water* – literally it means “keeping one’s head above water”, but figuratively it means “struggling to survive, avoiding falling into debt.” Structural Semantic Modeling: In the process of structurally and semantically modeling phraseological units, a pattern of correspondence between the semantic information they convey and their grammatical structure is observed. This is further divided into two types: the comparative degree model of adjectives and verbal comparative models.

Comparative Degree Model of Adjectives: *(as) busy as a bee*, literally it means “busy like a bee” while in its figurative meaning it means “very hardworking”, *(as) cunning as a fox* – literally it means “sly as a fox,” while in its figurative meaning, it refers to “very cunning, clever, or sly people”.

Verbal Comparative Modeling: *smoke like a chimney* – in its figurative meaning, it means “to burn like fire, to spread like lightning.” *swear like a trooper* – in its figurative meaning it implies “being steadfast in keeping one’s promise” [3, 45- 46 pp.]. In this article, we will examine English similes based on A.V. Kunin’s classification, using examples corresponding to the Comparative Degree Model of Adjectives and Verbal Comparative Modeling.

In linguistics phraseology classifies phrases into several groups, including idioms, proverbs, sayings, and collocations. Similes hold a special place in language. Such phrases in language vividly and expressively represent natural phenomena, everyday life, as well as the external appearance and inner world of a person.

In scientific literature about humans, various opinions are expressed. The main idea is that a human is a structurally complex, developing dynamic system. On one hand, humans are living beings with material needs, and on the other hand, they are conscious beings with developed intellectual capabilities. In other

words, understanding humans as a dual phenomenon closely connects them with their surrounding environment. Specifically, humans, as part of society, are conscious animals with a physical existence and biological structure. Thus, it is clear that a person, as an individual, can interact with other people around them. The concept of the individual is indeed related to the inner world, mental, and social aspects of a person. Therefore, human existence, based on its physical, psychological, and social characteristics, inevitably involves interactions with others. As M.P. Odintsova states, "...концентрированное воплощение сути тех представлений человека о человеке, которые объективированы всей системой семантических единиц, структур и правил того или иного языка" [4], based on this assertion, the fundamental principles of this scientific work can be highlighted.

According to V.A. Maslova, the modern style of thinking in the technogenic civilization has led to the emergence of a new language. Recently, there has been a shift in philosophy, cultural studies, linguistics, and linguoculturology towards a comprehensive study of the human being: their existence, external appearance, inner world, mentality, etc. Furthermore, there is a growing belief that the way to understand the phenomenon of the human being is not through natural sciences, but through natural languages.

Specifically, the image of a person is defined through the structure of phrases and similes related to their physical, psychological, and social conditions. These similes are compared and studied in relation to the inner world of a person, their qualities, behavioral characteristics, and spiritual attributes. The aim of the research is to determine how much the kinship and spiritual harmony between languages have been preserved by focusing on the role and scope of similes in both languages. The study and comparison of the use and semantic nuances of lexical- semantic units is the core principle of this research [5].

Agreeing with N.S. Fedoseeva's statement that "comparative phraseology has not been comprehensively explored in linguistics" [6], it can be noted that there is a lack of dedicated studies on phenomena such as similes, as well as insufficient research on the general phenomenon of similes. Addressing the issue of similes in contemporary Kazakh, T. Konurov, in his work "Kazakh Similes" (1978), was the first in Kazakh linguistics to comprehensively study the nature of similes, including their grammatical, lexical- semantic, and stylistic features. The author examines similes as an object of comparative phraseology and identifies several of their characteristics. Through this analysis, he highlights the general and distinctive features of similes. The scholar concludes that emotional- expressive similes, which arise from the semantic nature of Kazakh similes, represent their most powerful semantic and stylistic categories [7].

In B.N. Agabekova's work "The National Cultural Character of Phraseological Similes in English and Kazakh", the author conducts a comparative analysis of phraseological similes in Kazakh and English, identifying their national cultural features, uncovering common stylistic elements, and highlighting the shared

motivations underlying the formation of these similes. In this study, she classifies phraseological similes related to the macro concept “Human” into oppositional micro concepts such as “positive” and “negative”, identifying the unique features in the formation of their meanings. The researcher further categorizes similes associated with the “Human” concept into specific semantic— thematic groups, as shown in Table 1 [8].

Table 1. Types of Similes Related to the “Human” concept

Types of Similes Related to the “Human” concept	Examples	
	In Kazakh	In English
Describing human character and intellectual abilities	dala бүркітіндеi қyraғы	a memory like an elephant
Describing human condition and state	Señ soqqan balyqtai	as miserable as a bandicoot
Describing human appearance	aq maraldai ädemі	as fair as a lily
Describing human life and activity	it pen mysyqtai ömir süru	as thick as thieves
Describing human emotional state	naıza üstinde otyrғandai	to sit on a powder keg
Describing a person’s relationship with another person or thing	iylandai jek köru	hate smb like poison
Describing the quality of phenomena and objects	jaman tüienñ jabuyndai	fresh as a daisy
Describing color	aq bökenniñ tañyндаi	as white as driven snow
Describing the size of objects and phenomena	qoidyñ qūmalaғындаi	as light as a drum
Describing distance	esik pen tördei	—
Describing time	qas qaqqandai	—

Chinese linguist Wang Xiaoqin, by comparing and studying similes in both English and Chinese, reveals the similarities and differences between the two languages’ similes and identifies the main ways in which language users express ideas. In Chinese 明喻 – *míngyù* and 直喻 – *zhíyù* it is translated as “direct comparison” or “explicit comparison” in English. In Chinese 好像 – *Hǎoxiàng*, 比如 – *bǐrú*, 仿佛 – *fǎngfú*, 像. . . 一样 – *xiàng. . . yīyàng* – means “similar to” or “comparison” for a certain object or phenomenon. It uses phrases to compare and illustrate one object or phenomenon by likening it to another object or phenomenon [9]. For example: 人生如梦 – *rén shēng rú mèng* – *life is like a dream*. [10]

Due to the existence of national cultural differences, we undoubtedly encounter many interesting situations. While some elements in idiomatic expressions may have similarities in both English and Chinese, in others, the differences are very prominent and stand out.

In the field of phraseology, phrases occupy a special place. In L.A. Mirsaetova’s work “The Image of a Person in the Phraseological Picture of the World in Tatar and Russian Languages”, the image of a person is classified into six groups based on the following aspects: general characteristics of a person,

description of physiological condition, description of qualities and behavioral characteristics, signs of the spiritual world of a person, description of human activity and characteristics of various aspects of existence [11].

About comparative analysis of phraseological expressions between Kazakh and English languages, F. T. Yerekhanova have discussed phraseology's contributions to linguistic studies, and cross- cultural communication, drawing on the work of both domestic and international scholars. She highlights Ch. Bally as the first to define phraseological units as stable combinations whose meanings differ from their individual components. I. Kenesbayev and M. Balakayev emphasize the role of phraseology in enriching the Kazakh language and classifying idiomatic expressions as essential parts of the vocabulary [12, 308p.].

In conclusion, this research not only highlights the rich theoretical foundations laid by both Kazakh and international scholars but also underlines the essential role of phraseological units in understanding language structure, cultural identity, and effective cross- cultural communication. By building on these established ideas, the study contributes valuable insights to the ongoing development of phraseology as a vital branch of linguistics.

Although the similes in both languages are semantically similar, they differ in structurally. The research framework of this study consists of four stages. It is widely known that phraseology, alongside linguistics, also explores literary language by studying phrases such as idioms, proverbs, and aphorisms. In this context, it is obvious that phraseological units possess unique characteristics, including a complex yet consistent structure, indivisibility in meaning, and grammatical stability. According to A.V. Kunin, when structurally and semantically modeling phraseological units, there is a noticeable correspondence between their semantic content and grammatical structure. These units can be divided into two groups: the adjectival comparative model and the verbal comparative model. This approach provides an opportunity to comparatively analyze similes related to human appearance in English and Chinese and to compare their thematic-semantic structures. For example: simile related to human appearance in English: *as cool as a cucumber* – figuratively it means “calm, not easily upset”.

In Chinese: 冷静如水 – *lěng jìng rú shuǐ* – literally it means “calm like water”, while in its figurative meaning it refers to “emotionally stable” [13, 463p.].

Phraseology is a systematic concept like a language. The units that make up phraseology are divided into various groups. Accordingly, the similes explored in the article are classified into several groups based on their thematic- semantic structure. The hypothesis of this study is that similes related to human imagery form a distinct group within the system of phraseology.

A comparative study allows for the understanding of the national peculiarities and characteristics of languages. Since English and Chinese are not related languages, we will examine similes related to human image in these

languages based on thematic- semantic classification rather than structural-semantic analysis.

Based on the theoretical foundations presented earlier, we will categorize the similes related to human image into six thematic- semantic groups: describing human character and intellectual abilities (55 in English and 50 in Chinese), describing human condition and state (25 in English and 22 in Chinese), describing human appearance (40 in English and 34 in Chinese), describing human life and activity (33 in English and 36 in Chinese), describing human emotional state (27 in English and 30 in Chinese), and describing a person's relationship with another person or thing (42 in English and 51 in Chinese). Similes related to human image were selected from dictionaries such as the Cambridge international dictionary of English idioms and the 中华成语词典— zhōnghuá chéngyǔ cídiǎn – Chinese Idiom Dictionary. In this article, 217 phrases in English and 236 in Chinese were analyzed according to the thematic-semantic categories mentioned above.

The first sub type of the similes which describing human character and intellectual abilities. There are 55 similes in English and 50 in Chinese language. We analyzed some of them in table 2.

Table 2. English and Chinese similes describing human character and intellectual abilities

English (50)		Chinese (55)		
similes	figurative meaning	similes	literary meaning	figurative meaning
as sharp as a tack	extremely intelligent	心灵手巧	clever heart and skillful hands	smart and skillful
as stubborn as a goat	persistently resistant	冷静如水	calm like water	emotionally stable
as wise as Solomon	possessing legendary wisdom	勇猛如虎	brave like a tiger	fiercely courageous
as weak as a kitten	lacking strength or conviction	刻苦耐劳	diligent and hard—working	enduring and diligent
as smart as a whip	extremely intelligent			

The similes in this thematic group focus on describing a person's character traits and intellectual abilities. In English, these similes often rely on comparisons to sharp objects, animals, or historical and biblical figures, reflecting values such as quick thinking, stubbornness, wisdom, and strength. In contrast, Chinese similes frequently emphasize inner qualities like calmness, bravery, diligence, and a balance between mental and practical skills, using elements of nature, animals, and philosophical ideals as metaphoric images. For example: *as sharp as a tack* – the figurative meaning is used to describe “someone highly intelligent, quick-witted and perceptive.” The comparison to a tack suggests a mind that can swiftly “pierce” or understand ideas. English-speaking cultures associate sharpness with intelligence (e.g., “sharp mind”), reflects an appreciation for mental agility. In Chinese 勇猛如虎 – *yǒng měng rú hǔ* – the literary meaning is “As brave and fierce as a tiger.” while it's figurative meaning is used to describe “a person of great courage and strength.” The tiger metaphor conveys fearlessness and vigor. Tigers

symbolize power and authority in Chinese tradition. English and Chinese similes in this category highlight cultural values through metaphorical language. English similes often compare traits to objects or animals, emphasizing quick thinking and individuality. In contrast, Chinese similes focus on harmony between mind and action, resilience, and moral virtues, reflecting deeper philosophical ideals.

The second type of similes which describing human condition and state. There are 25 phrases in English and 22 in Chinese language. These types of similes always describe human’s psychological conditions and personal state. The table 3 is the examples for this type of similes in English and Chinese.

Table 3. English and Chinese similes describing human condition and state

English (25)		Chinese (25)		
similes	figurative meaning	similes	figurative meaning	literary meaning
as cool as a cucumber	calm and composed, even in stressful situations	心花怒放	heart bursting into bloom like flowers in full, exuberant blossom	immense joy, elation, or delight
as white as a sheet	extremely pale due to fear, illness, or shock.	静得像水	quiet like still water	peaceful or emotionally calm
as hungry as a wolf	extremely hungry, with a ravenous appetite.	心如刀绞	heart feels like being twisted by knives	extreme emotional pain.
as helpless as a baby	entirely dependent, weak, or lacking control.	饿得像狼	hungry like a wolf	ravenously hungry.
as fragile as a butterfly’s wing	emotionally delicate or easily broken.	醉得像烂泥	drunk like mush	completely drunk and incoherent.

These similes illustrate various physical and emotional conditions people may go through. The structure of this type of similes is *as + adjective + as + noun* in English. They convey emotions such as serenity *as cool as a cucumber* – used to describe someone who remains calm, untroubled, and unshaken under pressure. In English culture, cucumbers are known for their cool, refreshing quality, even in hot weather. The simile reflects the cultural appreciation for emotional composure and self— control. Describe terror or astonishment with such simile: *as white as sheet* – the figurative meaning is used to describe someone who turns extremely pale due to fear, shock, illness, or stress. In Western culture, whiteness of the face signifies shock, fear, or weakness. The image of a white sheet evokes both a colorless appearance and a possible association with death shrouds, subtly enhancing its cultural impact. One more example like, *as hungry as a wolf* – its figurative meaning describes an intense, ravenous hunger. The wolf represents unrestrained, primal desire, projecting animalistic instincts onto

human condition. Wolves symbolize wild, insatiable appetite in Western folklore and literature. The simile reflects the perception of hunger as animalistic and uncontrollable.

In Chinese, the structure “adjective + 得 + 像 + noun” is a frequently used pattern for creating similes. It effectively conveys the extent or intensity of someone’s state, appearance, or condition by drawing a vivid comparison to a tangible object or image. For example: 静得像水 – *jìng dé xiàng shuǐ* – as calm as water in its literary meaning, and its figurative meaning is used to describes deep emotional calmness, comparing it to the stillness of water. 醉得像烂泥 — *zuì de xiàng làn ní* – as drunk as rotten mud in its literary meaning, and it is used to describes someone completely drunk and helpless, likening them to shapeless, lifeless mud. In essence, these vivid comparisons draw from nature, animals, and everyday objects to paint relatable pictures of human experiences and feelings.

This analysis of similes portraying human states and emotions in English and Chinese uncovers both common aspects of human experience and culturally unique expressions. While both languages draw on animal traits, natural phenomena, and sensory descriptions to depict emotional and physical states, their emphases differ. English similes tend to highlight observable physical characteristics (such as pallor or delicacy), whereas Chinese similes often depict inner emotional landscapes through nature – based metaphors, bodily symbolism, and philosophical concepts.

Parallels, like comparing hunger to a wolf’s fierceness – underscore universal human instincts, while contrasts reveal distinct cultural perspectives and artistic inclinations. Ultimately, these similes showcase how language encapsulates and transmits cultural values through figurative expression.

The following group of similes pertains to human facial expressions and features, describing a person’s appearance and beauty. Within this category, we identified 40 similes in English and 23 in Chinese. The table 4 below presents some of these similes along with their literal and figurative meanings. Let us analyze several of them in terms of its structure, literal and figurative interpretations, as well as its linguocultural features.

Table 4. English and Chinese similes describing human appearance

English (40)		Chinese (23)		
similes	figurative meaning	similes	figurative meaning	literary meaning
as beautiful as a rose	exceptionally beautiful, delicate, and appealing	花容月貌	flower face, moon appearance	exquisite, poetic beauty

The thematic- semantic classification of similes related to ...

as dazzling as a diamond	extremely impressive, brilliant, or eye— catching	美若天仙	as beautiful as a fairy	otherworldly, goddess— like beauty
as charming as a garden in bloom	a person’s personality, appearance, or environment as irresistibly pleasant, lively, and delightful	眉如远山	Eyebrows like distant mountains; elegantly shaped brows	racefully arched, beautiful eyebrows, a classical feature of female beauty.
as slender as a reed	slim and elegant in figure	婀娜多姿	Graceful and full of elegant postures.	slender, elegant, and charming figure and movements.
as shining as a star	remarkable appearance that attracts attention	鹤发童颜	white hair, youthful face	old yet youthful— looking

This section analyzes English and Chinese similes related to human appearance, particularly beauty and physical traits, revealing each culture’s unique aesthetic ideals.

English similes typically conform to the formula as + adjective + as + noun, such as “as beautiful as a rose” or “as shining as a star.” This standardized pattern simplifies the comparative process and maintains a clear, consistent structure.

Chinese similes, by contrast, often utilize classical literary expressions or the pattern noun/adjective + 如 (rú) + noun. Some similes appear as fixed idiomatic phrases or set poetic expressions, like 花容月貌 or 鹤发童颜, which lack explicit comparative particles but imply metaphorical comparison through imagery.

In English, phrases like “*as beautiful as a rose*” associate feminine beauty with the delicate, romantic symbolism of roses, while “*as dazzling as a diamond*” conveys radiant, captivating allure tied to Western ideals of glamour and rarity. Similarly, “*as charming as a garden in bloom*” links attractiveness to natural vibrancy, and “*as slender as a reed*” reflects admiration for a graceful, slim physique. The simile “*as shining as a star*” elevates beauty to celestial brilliance, symbolizing fame and perfection.

In Chinese, expressions such as 花容月貌 – *huā róng yuè mào* – *flower – like face, moon – like appearance* and 美若天仙 – *měi ruò tiān xiān* – *as beautiful as a celestial fair* draw from nature and mythology to depict transcendent beauty. 眉如远山 – *méi rú yuǎn shān* – *eyebrows like distant mountains* highlights classical facial aesthetics, while 婀娜多姿 – *ē nuó duō zī* – *graceful with many charming postures* emphasizes elegance in movement. The phrase 鹤发童颜 – *hè fā tóng yán* – *white crane hair, youthful face* celebrates graceful aging, aligning with cultural reverence for longevity and vitality [14, 459p.].

These similes illustrate how beauty is framed through culturally distinct lenses – English similes often emphasize natural and material splendor, while

Chinese similes blend natural imagery with philosophical and mythological ideals.

English similes frequently employ imagery from nature and the cosmos—such as roses, stars, gardens, and diamonds to represent beauty, embodying ideals of romance, flawlessness, and refined elegance. These metaphors also carry associations of luxury, prestige, and admiration, revealing Western culture’s emphasis on both visual allure and social distinction.

Conversely, Chinese similes are deeply rooted in natural elements, classical texts, mythology, and philosophical traditions. Recurrent motifs like flowers, the moon, heavenly maidens, mountains, and cranes evoke grace, otherworldly beauty, and virtuous purity. This reflects the traditional Chinese worldview, which sees human beauty as an extension of nature’s harmony and cosmic order.

Table 5. English and Chinese similes describing human life and activity

English (33)		Chinese (35)		
Similes	figurative meaning	similes	literary meaning	figurative meaning
as busy as a bee	extremely hardworking and active	忍得像乌龟	enduring like a turtle	extremely patient, enduring pain
as free as a bird	unrestricted, carefree	人生如梦	life is like a dream	life is transient or illusory
as happy as a clam	very content or joyful	人生如戏	life is like a play	life is full of drama, performance
as regular as clockwork	very punctual or consistent	心静如水	heart calm like water	peaceful, composed
as tough as nails	strong, emotionally or physically	坚强如钢	strong as steel	mentally and emotionally strong

The given similes in this chart are related to the human life and activity. There are 33 English and 35 Chinese similes, here we will analyze some of them.

Structurally, English similes generally follow a formulaic pattern of as + adjective + as + noun, for example, “as busy as a bee” or “as free as a bird.” This fixed structure provides clarity and predictability, making such expressions easily recognizable and widely used in colloquial and literary English.

In contrast, Chinese similes typically employ the structure adjective/verb + 如 (rú) + noun or 得像 (de xiàng) + noun, as seen in examples like 人生如梦 or 忍得像乌龟. The use of the particle 如 (rú), meaning “like” or “as,” is a distinctive syntactic feature in classical and modern Chinese similes, enabling direct comparisons between abstract concepts and concrete images.

For example, the English simile “as busy as a bee” falls under the theme of human behavior and activity. Figuratively, it describes “someone who is always engaged in tasks”, reflecting the cultural admiration for hard work and productivity in English – speaking communities, where bees represent teamwork and efficiency.

Similarly, “*as free as a bird*” depicts an emotional state, referring to someone who feels completely unburdened, much like a bird flying freely. In Western symbolism, birds often stand for liberty and autonomy, and this simile highlights the cultural emphasis on personal freedom.

Another example, “*as happy as a clam*” relates to emotional well-being, signifying deep contentment. Literally, it compares happiness to a clam’s perceived safety during high tide in American folklore. Figuratively, it conveys a sense of security and satisfaction, illustrating the cultural preference for a peaceful and stable life.

The phrase “*as regular as clockwork*” belongs to the category of habits and routine. It describes “someone with unwavering consistency”, mirroring the cultural importance of punctuality and order in industrialized societies.

Lastly, “*as tough as nails*” characterizes personality traits, portraying someone as physically or emotionally resilient. It emphasizes endurance and strength. In English—speaking cultures, this phrase is often linked to courage and perseverance.

In contrast, the Chinese similes in this study highlight different cultural values. For instance, 忍得像乌龟 – *rěn de xiàng wūguī*, meaning “to endure like a turtle,” falls under personality traits. Literally, it “compares patience to a turtle’s nature”, while figuratively, it describes someone who bears hardships silently. In Chinese tradition, the turtle symbolizes longevity and perseverance.

Two other similes, 人生如梦 – *rén shēng rú mèng* – *life is like a dream* and 人生如戏 – *rén shēng rú xì* – *life is like a play*, belong to philosophical reflections on life. The first suggests life’s fleeting and illusory nature, rooted in Taoist and Buddhist thought. The second implies that life consists of roles and performances, reflecting traditional Chinese views influenced by theater and literature.

The simile 心静如水 – *xīn jìng rú shuǐ* – the heart is as calm as water, describes emotional tranquility. Figuratively, it represents inner peace, undisturbed by external chaos. In Chinese culture, water symbolizes serenity and harmony, aligning with Confucian and Taoist ideals.

Finally, 坚强如钢 – *jiān qiáng rú gāng* – strong as steel denotes unyielding resilience. Literally, it compares strength to steel, while figuratively, it praises unwavering determination. In Chinese symbolism, steel embodies durability, making this simile a tribute to perseverance in adversity.

Cultural analysis of these similes highlights distinct conceptual metaphors in each language: English similes often employ nature and industrial imagery to convey values like freedom, punctuality, and resilience (e.g., bees, birds, clockwork, and nails), while Chinese similes draw from philosophical and natural traditions, reflecting Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist ideals such as life’s impermanence, emotional calmness, and endurance (e.g., turtles, water, and steel), underscoring deeper cultural priorities like patience, harmony, and inner strength.

Table 6. English and Chinese similes describing human emotional state

English (27)		Chinese (30)		
similes	figurative meaning	similes	figurative meaning	literary meaning
as proud as a peacock	very self—satisfied or boastful	忐忑不安	uneasy and restless	Extremely nervous or uncertain
as lonely as a cloud	deeply isolated or reflective (from Wordsworth)	心惊肉跳	heart startled, flesh jumps	Great fear or panic
as frightened as a rabbit	terrified and timid	欣喜若狂	happy as if mad	Wild with joy
as grateful as a child with a gift	deeply appreciative	满面春风	face full of spring breeze	Joyful and proud
as bitter as gall	deeply resentful or angry	垂头丧气	head down, spirit low	Discouraged, depressed

This section explores culturally expressive similes in English and Chinese that depict human emotions, mental states, and feelings. By drawing comparisons to nature, animals, and symbolic objects, these similes offer vivid insights into each culture's emotional vocabulary. In English, similes typically follow the formula as + adjective + as + noun, maintaining a predictable comparative structure, as seen in “as proud as a peacock” or “as bitter as gall.” This fixed pattern simplifies recognition and contributes to their oral and literary popularity.

Chinese similes, by contrast, appear in idiomatic phrases or fixed four-character structures, often originating from classical literature. Phrases like 忐忑不安 or 满面春风 carry metaphorical meaning without explicit comparative markers like “如” or “像.” Their compact and idiomatic nature allows for concise yet vivid expression of complex emotions. “*as proud as a peacock*” compares excessive pride to the peacock's flamboyant display, reflecting Western associations of vanity and ostentation. “*as lonely as a cloud*” evokes poetic solitude, immortalized in Wordsworth's verse, linking loneliness to contemplative detachment. “*as frightened as a rabbit*” captures instinctive fear through the rabbit's skittishness, symbolizing vulnerability in English folklore. “*as grateful as a child with a gift*” embodies pure, unguarded joy, mirroring Western ideals of innocence in emotional expression. “*as bitter as gall*” uses bodily imagery to convey deep resentment, rooted in historical metaphors for emotional anguish. In Chinese, 忐忑不安 – *tǎn tè bù ān* – *uneasy and restless*, portrays anxiety as physical agitation, highlighting cultural attention to inner equilibrium. 心惊肉跳 – *xīn jīng ròu tiào* – *heart alarmed, flesh trembling*, merges bodily and emotional fear, reflecting traditional somatic – emotional connections. 欣喜若狂 – *xīn xǐ ruò kuáng* – *delighted as if mad*, depicts unbridled joy as a rare departure from Confucian emotional restraint. 满面春风 – *mǎn miàn chūn fēng* – *face full of*

spring breeze, ties happiness to natural renewal, embodying culturally prized serenity. 垂头丧气 – *chuí tóu sàng qì* – *drooping head, dispirited*, visualizes dejection through posture, aligning with nonverbal emotional cues in Chinese society.

Cultural analysis highlights contrasting metaphorical preferences: English similes often anthropomorphize animals (e.g., peacock, rabbit) or natural elements (e.g., cloud, gall) to externalize emotions, reflecting a Western inclination to project inner states onto tangible phenomena. In contrast, Chinese similes favor nature-inspired imagery (e.g., spring breeze) and four-character idioms that fuse physical and emotional experiences (e.g., “flesh trembling”), embodying a traditional worldview that prioritizes harmony between mind, body, and nature, while drawing deeply from literary, medical, and philosophical traditions.

Table 7. English and Chinese similes describing human relationships

English (42)		Chinese (51)		
similes	figurative meaning	similes	figurative meaning	literary meaning
like oil and water	cannot mix; incompatible people or ideas	形影不离	body and shadow never part	always together, inseparable companionship
like a moth to a flame	attracted to something dangerous or unhealthy	志同道合	same ambition, same path	like— minded individuals
like ships that pass in the night	brief encounter, then separation	默契十足	perfect tacit understanding	complete mutual understanding
like a shadow	always present; inseparable follower	举案齐眉	lift tray to eyebrow level	mutual respect in a couple
as irritating as sand in your shoe	constantly annoying companion or presence	情深似海	love deep as the sea	deep affection or romantic bond

This section investigates similes in English and Chinese that describe interpersonal relationships, degrees of closeness, compatibility, or conflict. Such expressions reflect culturally specific values surrounding human connection and social harmony. In English, similes often follow the structure like + noun phrase or as + adjective + as + noun, such as “like oil and water” or “as irritating as sand in your shoe.” These clear, formulaic structures contribute to the accessibility and vividness of the expressions.

Chinese similes frequently appear as fixed idiomatic phrases or four – character expressions, such as 志同道合 and 情深似海. These idioms often encapsulate complex relational dynamics within compact, culturally charged imagery, reflecting the Chinese literary tradition of concise and meaningful expression.

The English simile “*like oil and water*” represents incompatible relationships, using the physical separation of these substances to symbolize

irreconcilable differences between people or ideas. Similarly, “*like a moth to a flame*” illustrates dangerous attraction through the insect’s fatal attraction to fire, while “*like ships that pass in the night*” poetically captures fleeting connections. The comparison “like a shadow” denotes constant presence, which can imply either devotion or intrusion, and “as irritating as sand in your shoe” expresses persistent annoyance through everyday discomfort [15, 490p.].

Chinese expressions employ distinct imagery to convey relationship dynamics. The idiom 形影不离 – *xíng yǐng bù lí* – compares inseparable bonds to an object and its shadow, emphasizing steadfast companionship. 志同道合 – *zhì tóng dào hé* – describes ideal partnerships through shared goals and values, reflecting Confucian ideals. 默契十足 – *mò qì shí zú* – captures intuitive understanding between individuals, highlighting the cultural value placed on unspoken connection. The historical phrase 举案齐眉 – *jǔ àn qí méi* – symbolizes marital harmony through ceremonial respect, and 情深似海 – *qíng shēn sì hǎi* – uses the ocean’s depth to represent boundless emotional attachment.

These linguistic comparisons reveal cultural differences in conceptualizing relationships: English similes often draw from observable natural phenomena to express conflict or transience, while Chinese idioms typically emphasize harmony, mutual understanding, and enduring bonds through philosophical and nature-based metaphors. Both traditions employ concrete imagery to articulate abstract relationship concepts, but with distinct cultural priorities – Western expressions frequently highlight individual experiences, whereas Chinese phrases often stress interpersonal unity and shared virtue.

Conclusion

While analyzing the works of Kazakhstani and foreign scholars who have studied similes in English and Chinese, defining the concept of the human image, and providing a structural-semantic classification of similes related to the human image and by analyzing and examining them through examples, we have noticed that the results show that despite the phonetic differences between words and sentences in these languages, there are common patterns in how emotions and thoughts are represented. Both English and Chinese serve as mirrors for distinct cultures, and while the similes in these two languages describe different cultures and reflect the worldview of their speakers, the shared structure of human thinking becomes clearly visible. This demonstrates that the roots of humanity are not distant from one another, even if they come from different parts of the world.

This research systematically categorizes human image similes in English and Chinese into six thematic-semantic groups. For each category, we developed comparative tables detailing both literal interpretations and figurative meanings. Our comprehensive analysis examined these similes through multiple lenses: their thematic classification, structural composition, semantic layers, and cultural-linguistic significance.

The findings reveal that while English and Chinese similes often share similar

structural frameworks, they frequently diverge in semantic content and cultural associations. These differences highlight language's role as a cultural prism, with each language's similes embodying distinct value systems, philosophical perspectives, and aesthetic sensibilities. English expressions typically feature concrete imagery from nature, fauna, and material objects, whereas Chinese counterparts predominantly utilize established idioms, historical references, and culturally specific symbolism.

This study's outcomes provide meaningful resources for language educators, cross cultural researchers, and students of comparative linguistics. Additionally, it enhances our comprehension of how figurative language serves as a medium for expressing cultural identity and human cognition across diverse linguistic landscapes.

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АҒЫЛШЫН ЖӘНЕ ҚЫТАЙ ТІЛІНДЕГІ АДАМ БЕЙНЕСІНЕ БАЙЛАНЫСТЫ ТЕҢЕУЛЕРДІҢ ТАҚЫРЫПТЫҚ— СЕМАНТИКАЛЫҚ КЛАССИФИКАЦИЯСЫ

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Аңдатпа. Салыстырмалы лингвистикалық зерттеу туыстық қатынасы жоқ тілдердегі фразеологиялық жүйелердің әмбебап және мәдени спецификалық белгілерін анықтауда маңызды рөл атқарады. Осы тұрғыда мағынасы күрделі әрі көпқабатты болып келетін фразеологиялық бірліктердің бір түрі- теңеулер лингвистикалық әрі мәдени тұрғыдан терең талдауды қажет етеді. Бұл зерттеу ағылшын және қытай тілдеріндегі адам бейнесіне қатысты теңеулерді олардың рәміздік және сипаттамалық қырларына мән бере отырып қарастырады. Мұндай теңеулер адамның сыртқы белгілерін, мінез- құлқын, эмоциялық жағдайын және әлеуметтік әрекетін бейнелейді. Мысалы, ағылшын тіліндегі «*as quick as lightning*» теңеуі өте жылдамдықты білдірсе, қытай тіліндегі 浑身是胆 (*hún shēn shì dǎn*)— батылдық пен ержүректілікті сипаттайды.

Зерттеуде салыстырмалы, сипаттамалы және қарама- қарсы талдау әдістері қолданылып, адам бейнесіне қатысты теңеулердің тақырыптық-мағыналық түрлері анықталып жіктеледі. Отандық және шетелдік зерттеушілердің еңбектеріне сүйене отырып, теңеулер алты негізгі топқа бөлінді: (1) мінез- құлық және ақыл- ой қабілеттері, (2) дене жағдайы, (3)

сырт келбет, (4) өмір сүру және әрекет, (5) эмоциялық күй, (6) әлеуметтік қарым- қатынас.

Зерттеу нәтижелері ағылшын және қытай тілдеріндегі адам бейнесін сипаттайтын теңеулердің ұқсастықтары мен айырмашылықтарын көрсетеді. Теориялық тұрғыдан алғанда, бұл жұмыс салыстырмалы лингвистика, когнитивтік семантика және мәдениеттанулық лингвистика салаларына үлес қосып, теңеулердің құрылымдық тақырыптық- мағыналық жіктемесін ұсынады.

Практикалық тұрғыдан, бұл зерттеу тіл үйренушілерге, аудармашыларға және оқытушыларға ағылшын және қытай тілдерінде теңеулерді мәдениетке сай, дұрыс қолдануға көмектеседі.

Тірек сөздер: салыстырмалы-салғастырмалы фразеология, фразалар, тақырыптық-семантикалық классификация, тұрақты тіркестер, ағылшын және қытай тілдеріндегі теңеулер, қытай тіліндегі идиомалар, лингвомәдени ерекшеліктер, адам бейнесіне байланысты теңеулер

ТЕМАТИКО- СЕМАНТИЧЕСКАЯ КЛАССИФИКАЦИЯ УСТОЙЧИВЫХ СРАВНЕНИЙ, СВЯЗАННЫХ С ОБРАЗОМ ЧЕЛОВЕКА (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО И КИТАЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКОВ)

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Абстракт. Сравнительные лингвистические исследования играют важную роль в выявлении как универсальных, так и культурно специфических черт фразеологических систем неродственных языков. В этом контексте сравнения разнообразность фразеологических единиц со сложной и многослойной семантической структурой требуют глубокого лингвистического и культурного анализа. Настоящее исследование посвящено сравнительному анализу сравнений, связанных с образом человека в английском и китайском языках, с акцентом на их символическое и описательное значение. Эти выражения передают различные аспекты внешности, характера, эмоций и социального поведения человека. Например, английское сравнение «*as quick as lightning*» метафорически обозначает высокую скорость, тогда как китайское выражение 浑身是胆 (*hún shēn shì dǎn*) описывает человека как «полного отваги и храбрости».

В исследовании применяются сравнительный, описательный и контрастивный методы для выявления и классификации тематико-семантических типов сравнений, связанных с образом человека. На основе анализа работ отечественных и зарубежных учёных сравнения классифицируются на шесть основных групп: (1) характер и интеллект,

(2) физическое состояние, (3) внешность, (4) жизнедеятельность, (5) эмоциональное состояние, (6) социальные взаимоотношения.

Результаты исследования выявляют ключевые сходства и различия в способах выражения человеческих характеристик в английских и китайских сравнениях. Теоретическая значимость работы заключается во вкладе в развитие контрастивной лингвистики, когнитивной семантики и лингвокультурологии посредством системной тематико— семантической классификации сравнений.

Практическая ценность исследования заключается в том, что оно может быть полезно для изучающих английский и китайский языки, переводчиков и преподавателей, помогая им лучше понять и корректно использовать сравнения в межкультурной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: с сравнительно-сопоставительная фразеология, фразы, тематико-семиотическая классификация, устойчивые сравнение, идиомы китайского языка, сравнения в английском и китайском языках, лингвокультурные особенности, фразеологизмы, связанные с образом человек

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