

## ANTIPHRAISIS-BASED FOLK SIMILES IN THE ENGLISH AND UKRAINIAN LANGUAGES

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**Abstract.** *The research aims at comparing the structure, semantics and pragmatics of antiphrasis-based folk similes in the English and Ukrainian languages. To achieve the purpose of the study, we have applied the methodology integrating the methods of pragmatic analysis and general scientific methods. The method of contrastive analysis is used to reveal the unique and similar features of the contrasted languages. Antiphrasis-based folk similes have been sampled from a wide variety of sources, including dictionaries of proverbs, idioms, proverbial similes and comparisons, internet sites, electronic databases of idioms. The isomorphic feature of these folk similes is the fact that all of them are antiphrasis-based. They are the means of creating implicatures, which we define as antiphrastic.*

**Key words:** *antiphrasis; antiphrasis-based folk similes; ironic simile, antiphrastic implicature, The Cooperative Principle.*

**Introduction.** Irony is an effective but challenging mode of communication that allows a speaker to express sentiment-rich viewpoints with concision, sharpness and humour [12, p. 765]. Ever since antiquity irony has been viewed as a trope and understood as a reversal of the meaning of a lexical unit. Later, irony was understood as a type of antiphrasis – a trope that is formed when a person uses a linguistic unit with an opposite meaning or connotation on purpose. Thus, irony within antiphrasis means a subtle mockery used to show negative attitude by means of positive characterization.

Antiphrasis-based folk similes are actively functioning in English and Ukrainian. The structure of their image and their meaning make them different from other traditional similes and numerous phraseological units.

Antiphrasis-based folk similes show a special type of component reinterpretation as the comparative part contains the image that is absurd relative to the basis of comparison. Hence, the first part of a simile acquires the meaning of its antonym, which constitutes the basis of comparison in general, e. g.: *fast as a turtle on a slippery road; швидкий як віл у плузі; швидкий як ведмідь за перепелицями; добра як з курки молока, а з верби петрушки.*

**Analysis of the latest studies and publications.** Folk similes have been the object of numerous linguistic investigations. The term 'folk simile' was first coined by George D. Hendricks [5], but other academic terms have been applied to this concept, of which the most common are: 'proverbial comparison' [11]; 'stock simile' [10], 'idiomatic similes' [1], 'familiar similes' [3] and 'stereotyped

simile' [9]. These categorisations are largely discipline-dependent and relate to terminological conventions rather than to any type of functional distinction. For example, the term 'simile' features heavily in the field of phraseology, whilst 'proverbial comparison' is much more common in paremiology [2]. Mizin I. K. studied English, German, Ukrainian and Russian similes from the perspective of comparative linguocultural studies [8]. Tony Veale, Yanfen Hao conducted a very large corpus analysis of web-harvested similes to identify the most interesting characteristics of ironic comparisons, and provided an empirical evaluation of a new algorithm for separating ironic from non-ironic similes [12]. Eleni Kapogianni analysed degrees of strength for different types of ironic implicatures [7].

**The purpose** of this research is to compare the structure, semantics and pragmatics of antiphrasis-based folk similes in the English and Ukrainian languages.

**Data and methods.** The material of the study comprises more than 800 antiphrasis-based comparative idioms in the English and Ukrainian languages.

Illustrations for the study of ironical English similes were taken from *A Dictionary of Similes* by F. Wiltach, G. Hendricks's *Texas Folk Similes*; A. Taylor's *Proverbial Comparisons and Similes from California*; *Similes Dictionary* by E. Sommer and M. Sommer; *Thesaurus of Traditional English Metaphors* by P. R. Wilkinson; Internet sources and electronic databases of idioms.

The Ukrainian similes were sampled from the simile dictionaries "*Словник стійких народних порівнянь*" (*Folk Simile Dictionary* by J. S. Yurchenko, A. O. Ivchenko); "*Красне слово — як золотий ключ: Постійні народні порівняння в говірках Середнього*

*Полісся та суміжних територій*" (*A Good Word is Like a Gold Key: Folk Similes in the Dialects of Middle Polissya and Adjacent Territories* by H. M. Dobrolyozha). Also, we used K. I. Mizin's bilingual "*Англо-український словник компаративної фразеології*" (*English-Ukrainian Dictionary of Comparative Phraseology*).

The methodology underlying the present research is based on pragmatic analysis and general scientific methods (induction, deduction, introspection, analysis). The method of contrastive analysis is applied to reveal the unique and similar features of the contrasted languages.

**Presentation of the basic research material.** A separate group of idiomatic English and Ukrainian antiphrasis-based similes consists of ironical ones, which relies on the fact that the meaning of the word does not comply with the context of its use. Antiphrasis always has a certain pragmatic function and serves as a means of creating contrastive implicatures which we define as the antiphrasis ones.

Antiphrasis (derived from the Greek word *antiphrasis*, which literally means "against the phrase") is a figure of poetic syntax based on the use of a word or a phrase with the opposite meaning, often combined with a specific intonation pattern understood from the context, e. g.: *things are as all right as soot is white; something suits somebody as a saddle suits a cow; as welcome as finding out your mother-in-law has a twin sister; життя вольне як собаці на прив'язі; замкнули вовка межі вівці: нехай тюрму знає; родич, як вовк кози дядько; правда як на вербі груші.*

Ukrainian linguists V. S. Kalashnyk and Zh. V. Koloyid [6, p. 4] refer to ironic similes as a phenomenon of internal antonymy of a phraseological unit that implies the "phraseological unit – word"

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opposition, where the semantics of the proverbial comparison contrasts the semantics of the constituent word that is technically the basis of the phrase [6, p. 5]. Internal antonymy is conditioned by the fact that the sign chosen for comparison does not correspond to the image that appears on the basis of the simile, e. g.: *as subtle as a sledgehammer; as modern as a top-hatted chimneysweep; as private as a park-bench; неспівний як цап у капусті; радій як свиня порожньому мішкові; білий як циганська лутка*. Thus, the opposition of explicit and implicit meanings is obvious in the English and Ukrainian antiphrasis-based folk similes.

In this research, we determine **antiphrasis-based folk similes** as traditionally reproducible word combinations with a special type of component reinterpretation as the comparative part containing the image that is absurd relative to the basis of comparison. Hence, the first member of comparison acquires the meaning of its antonym, which makes the basis of the simile meaning in general. For instance, the meaning of the similes *as useful as whistling psalms to a dead horse; as useful as windshield wipers on a submarine; as useful as the fifth wheel of a coach* is based on the fact that something is completely useless or unnecessary.

Antiphrasis-based folk similes are the means of creating antiphrastic implicatures. They are characterised by the propositional implication  $P \rightarrow \sim P$ ,  $\sim P \rightarrow P$ , i. e. ironic reinterpretation and subjective assessment.

We define **antiphrastic implicatures** as non-literal aspects of meaning that are not determined directly by the conventional structure of language expressions (language code), but, on the contrary, are perceived with the opposite

meaning.

Antiphrastic implicature is created as a result of intentional violation of the three maxims of the Cooperative Principle. For example, in the antiphrasis-based folk similes *fast as a turtle on a slippery road; швидкий як ведмідь за перепелицями* we can see the violation of the Quality Maxim, the Quantity Maxim and the Manner Maxim.

The Quality Maxim ("Do not say what you believe to be false") [4, p. 27] is violated in these antiphrasis-based folk similes, because they contain false information: in fact a turtle on a slippery road and a bear hunting for quails are rather slow.

The Quantity Maxim ("Make your contribution as informative as is required") [4, p. 26] is violated due to the fact that polycomponent units ('*fast as a turtle on a slippery road; швидкий як ведмідь за перепелицями*') are used instead of the monocomponent one ('slow').

At the same time, these antiphrasis-based folk similes ignore the Manner Maxim ("Be perspicuous") [4, p. 27], which is reflected in redundant wording and figurative detailing that obscures the meaning instead of explaining it.

### **Structural and morphological classification of English and Ukrainian antiphrasis-based folk similes**

The structure of the linguistic model of simile consists of four components: (1) the subject of comparison; (2) the object of comparison; (3) the basis of comparison; (4) the indicator of comparative relations.

The subject of comparison, or comparant, is an object or a thing with signs that are understood through another object/thing. The object of comparison, or the comparator, is the thing that the subject is compared with, i. e. the object or phenomenon with pronounced signs, which are well-known to the speaker and therefore are used by him to characterize

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the perceived. The basis of comparison is the sign used to perform the act of comparison.

The indicator of comparative relations is the means of linguistic representation of comparative semantics, which is crucial for the implementation of comparative content in the four-element model of the comparative construction, since it provides its integrity. Similes are explicitly expressed by connectors: these are represented by the comparative conjunctions **as**, **like** in the English language (*clear as mud*; *to love somebody like a horse loves the whip*) and by the three conjunctions **як**, **наче**; **мов** in Ukrainian (*чистий як свиня в дощ*; *накрився, мов лисиця хвостом*; *кріпиться наче диня на морозі*).

According to the structural and morphological classification of the basis, English and Ukrainian antiphrasis-based folk similes can be expressed with words from different lexical semantic classes.

The basis of the English antiphrasis-based folk similes is mostly expressed with an adjective: as **fierce** as a lion with a white face; as **subtle** as a sledgehammer; as **accurate** as a blind archer; as **welcome** as a mother-in-law's tongue in a son-in-law's business; as necessary as an umbrella to a fish etc.

In the English language, there are antiphrasis-based folk similes with a verb basis, but they are greatly outnumbered by the Ukrainian ones: **to need** something like a dog needs a fifth paw; **to love** somebody as the devil loves holy water; **to blush** like a black dog etc.

Much less frequently the basis of antiphrasis-based folk similes is expressed with a sentence, e. g.: *That is as true as that the cat crew and the cock rocked the cradle*; *Things are as all right as soot is white*; *Something suits somebody as a saddle suits a cow*.

In Ukrainian, the basis of antiphrasis-based folk similes can be

expressed with an adjective, a verb, an adverb, a noun, a word combination or a sentence. The basis of some antiphrasis-based folk similes is not explicitly expressed.

Unlike the English language, the most numerous group of Ukrainian antiphrasis-based folk similes consists of verb-based units, e. g.: **скупає** як стара кобила за своєю матір'ю; **боїться** як гора вітру; **пече** як місячний промінь; **добувся** як швед під Полтавою; **квапиться** як багач помирати; **допоможе** як мертвому припарка; **працює** як кіт на печі; у руках гроші **тримає**, як ятір воду; **кохаю** як цибулю після чаю etc.

The second largest group includes adjective-based stable similes: **красива** як свиня сива; **стрункий** як міх; **приємний** як сіль в оці; **сильний** як комар; **вірна** як зозуля; **несміливий** як цап у капусті; **чорнобрива** як руде теля etc.

The third largest group includes antiphrasis-based folk similes with the noun basis: **користь** як із цапа вовни; **добра** як з курки молока, а з верби петрушки; **пара** як миша з волон; **приятель** як свиня мішкові, **честь** як собаці в ярмарок; **правда** як на вербі груші; **рідня** як через дорогу навприсядки etc.

The number of antiphrasis-based folk similes with the adverb basis is smaller: **видно** як глибокій ночі; **добре** як собаці на прив'язі; **весело** як собаці після ціпа; **далеко** як від нині до завтра; **затишно** як циганові за драбиною; **гарно** як свині в намисті; **тепло** як у мачухи на серці etc.

Antiphrasis-based folk similes with the basis expressed with a word combination or a sentence are fewer in number: **стільки має**, як голодний за зубами; **життя вольне**, як собаці на прив'язі; **має повагу**, як кіт під лавою; **хочеться робити**, як старому псові

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в завірюху брехати etc.

Five antiphrasis-based folk similes have an implicit basis that is not expressed lexically, but figured out from the context of the sentence, in which the simile will be used, e. g.: *як на бані гудок* (something is unwanted), *як від бика молока* (lacking something), *як із москаля козак* (worthless, useless); *як кием по болоті* (without any result).

The object of comparison (comparator) of a folk simile contains a specific image with which it is compared. It can be expressed with one word, e. g.: *as graceful as a cow*; *as soft as concrete*; *as clear as mud*; *сильний як комар*; *відважний як заєць*; *добрий як полин*. However, in most cases the object of a comparative idiom is represented with a couple of words, which creates a specific bright image of enhanced expressivity: *as welcome as water into one's shoes*; *fine as a frog hair split four ways*; *graceful as a pregnant elephant on ice*; *honest as the day is long, if the day is in December*; *красива як відьма з Лисої гори*; *хочеться як грішникові до гарячої сковороди*; *вподобалися як вовкові весільні пісні* etc.

#### Semantic classification of antiphrasis-based folk similes

From the semantic perspective English and Ukrainian antiphrasis-based folk similes are classified into **universal**, **specific** and **unique** groups.

**Universal** antiphrasis-based folk similes suggest complete equivalence of the form and content in ironic stable similes in both languages, e. g.: *as useful as the fifth wheel of a coach* – *потрібний як п'яте колесо до воза*; *something suits somebody as a saddle suits a cow* – *личить як корові сідло*; *to need something like a dog needs a fifth paw* – *потрібний як собаці п'ята нога*.

**Specific** antiphrasis-based folk similes have similar semantics, however

their figurative motivation basis is represented by different language-specific reference images: *as true as the sea burns* – *правда як рак свиснує і море зайнялося*; *to love somebody / something like a horse loves a whip* – *любити як собака палицю*; *somebody knows about something as a pig about pineapples* – *розбиратися як свиня в апельсинах*.

**Unique** antiphrasis-based folk similes have similar semantics, which is formally represented by iso- or allomorphic similes, whose figurative motivation basis is conveyed by different unique English and Ukrainian reference images: *as appropriate as a streaker at Queen Victoria's funeral*; *as violent as an Essex lion*; *as fierce as a lion of Cotswold*; *as throng (busy) as a cobbler's Monday*; *to need something like Colonel Custer needed more Indians*; *хороший як Микитина свита навиворіт*; *страшний як на кілку глек*; *попівсь як дід пампушкою*; *схожий як макогін на ночви*; *поможе як мертвому припарка*; *взяв як на шило борщу*.

It ought to be noted that antiphrasis appears not only in comparative idioms, but also in different types of phraseological units, as can be seen in the following proverbs in the English and Ukrainian languages: *The wolf was sorry for the mare and ate her up with love and care*; *The crow bewails the sheep, and then eats it*; *Take добре, що і жаби не їли б*; *Лякали щуку, що в озері її топтати будуть*.

#### Conclusion

Thus, antiphrasis-based folk similes that are actively functioning in the English and Ukrainian languages are the means of creating antiphrasis implicatures. Antiphrastic implicature is the meaning derived on the basis of transfer by means of contrast and conveys the mockingly ironic attitude of the addresser to the object.

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The implicitness and expressivity of antiphrasis-based folk similes are based on the original image that is logically incompatible with the basis of comparison. Paradoxicality of antiphrasis-based folk similes lies in the fact that they do not give information on the comparison between objects, but instead serve basically as a means of intensifying the denotative meaning of words and not establishing a real comparison.

The analysis of the structural morphological peculiarities of the English and Ukrainian antiphrasis-based folk similes has shown that the most frequent type of ironic proverbial comparison in English is adjective-based, whereas in the Ukrainian language verb-based ironic folk similes are the most numerous. In the

English language antiphrasis-based folk similes are represented by single verb-based and sentence-based units. A unique gap in the English language in contrast to the Ukrainian one is the absence of noun- and adverb-based ironic similes.

Among the three groups of antiphrasis-based folk similes the unique units are the most numerous. This is conditioned by the fact that the image underlying the similes is nationally specific and reflects the unique nature of folk mentality. It contains objective signs of the environment and embodies the notions and features inherent in the consciousness of native speakers of different languages.

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**АНТИФРАЗИСНІ НАРОДНІ ПОРІВНЯННЯ  
В АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ ТА УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ МОВАХ  
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**Анотація.** Дослідження спрямоване на розкриття структури, семантики та прагматики усталених народних порівнянь англійської та української мов, що базуються на стилістичній фігурі антифразису. Для досягнення цієї мети було застосовано комплексну методику, що базується на загально наукових методах та методі прагматичного аналізу. Контрастивний аналіз дав змогу виявити спільне та відмінне у семантиці та структурі антифразисних народних порівнянь англійської та української мов. Матеріалом дослідження слугують стійкі народні порівняння, що добиралися методом суцільної вибірки із словників прислів'їв, ідіом, усталених порівнянь, інтернет джерел. Антифразисні народні порівняння є засобами творення імплікатур, які виникають при порушенні трьох максимумів Принципу Кооперації Г.П. Грайса. Антифразисну імплікатуру визначаємо як смисл, що виводиться на основі перенесення за контрастом і виражає глузливо-критичне ставлення адресанта до предмета зображення.

**Ключові слова:** антифразис, антифразисне народне порівняння, іронічне порівняння, антифразисна імплікатура, Принцип Кооперації.