

GRAMMATICAL TYPES OF COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE POETRY OF B. PASTERNAK

Sidorkova Luiza Ravshanovna

Candidate of Philological Sciences

Associate Professor of the Department of Russian Linguistics

Bukhara State University

Nigmatova Shahnoza Maksud kizi

Master's Student of the Philology Faculty

Bukhara State University

Abstract

The article analyzes the specifics of grammatical structures of various types of constructions with comparative semantics in the poetry of B. Pasternak as a characteristic feature of his idiosyncrasy and individual-authorial linguistic worldview. Comparison is considered as a special method of artistic interpretation of reality and one of the most significant means of artistic expressiveness in the poet's creative work.

Keywords: comparative construction, poetics, comparison, comparative phrase, trope, functional-stylistic, cognitive, linguo-structural, subject of comparison, object of comparison, comparison module, syndetic and asyndetic connection.

Introduction

The study of comparative units in B. Pasternak's poetry is relevant both for investigating the peculiarities of the poet's idiosyncrasy and his individual-authorial linguistic worldview, and for deepening the theoretical and methodological foundations of contemporary linguistic poetics, whose central ideas include the conception of text as the primary given of humanistic and philosophical thinking, as well as the idea of language as a constitutive property of humanity. Multifaceted approaches to comparison allow the fullest possible representation of the specifics of this linguistic phenomenon.

A simple designation of an attribute in any literary text does not always satisfy the demands of expressiveness. To directly impact emotions, a specific representation of an attribute is required, making the described marker visually perceptible and tangible. Comparisons animate poetic speech, providing concise, clear characteristics of objects, characters, and actions. Comparison is one of the most widespread tropes in figurative speech and represents one of the oldest forms of thinking – thinking through concrete images rather than abstract concepts.

The study of linguistic means expressing associations of similarity, including comparisons, belongs to the significant and relevant problems of contemporary linguistics. While traditionally comparisons were examined predominantly in their ornamental function as a rhetorical device embellishing speech, currently the cognitive approach to their study is established, due to which comparison is characterized as a linguistic, cognitive, and cultural phenomenon.

Literature Review

The multifaceted nature of the phenomenon of comparison and its significant role in human verbal and cognitive activities determine its study from the perspective of various disciplines: psychology, philosophy, logic, literary studies, and linguistics.

In psychology, philosophy, and logic, comparison is interpreted as a form of cognition of reality fixed in language. According to many psychologists (A.A.Gostev, I.M.Rumyantseva, E.S.Samoylenko, and others), comparison is one of the cognitive operations based on analytical observations and noted similarities between objects of reality; comparisons initially serve to designate attributes, states, and additional conditions of performing actions for which no abstract definitions exist. In philosophy, the study of comparison as a method dates back to Aristotle, who asserted that matter cannot be known in itself; rather, our understanding arises through comparing various material things. Contemporary philosophy and logic (V.I.Barton, N.I.Laufer, L.F.Ilyichev, and others) postulate that “through comparison, the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of objects, as well as attributes defining their possible relationships, are identified” [6, p. 623].

The literary approach to studying comparisons originates from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, each of whom considered comparison as one of the poetic and rhetorical figures. In modern literary studies, amidst debates about whether comparison is a trope (A.P.Veselovsky, M.M.Girshman, V.M.Zhirmunsky, B.A.Larin, M.Y.Lotman, B.V.Tomashevsky, and others), it is recognized as an important category of poetics: “In the system of various poetic expressive means, comparison serves as the initial stage, from which nearly all other tropes —parallelism, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, litotes — branch out and develop in a gradational manner” [3, p. 280].

The linguistic study of comparative constructions is grounded in the works of A.A.Potebnya, F.I.Buslaev, A.Wierzbicka, D.S.Likhachev, and V.V.Vinogradov. In contemporary Russian linguistics, numerous approaches to studying comparisons exist, including linguo-structural, functional-stylistic, cognitive, and linguoculturological.

In linguo-structural studies of comparisons (A.P.Veselovsky, A.D.Grigorieva, A.I.Efimov, V.M.Ogoltsev, M.I.Chерemisina, and others), elements of comparative constructions are named differently; however, the most commonly used terms are: the subject of comparison (what is being compared), the object of comparison (what it is compared to), and the module of comparison (the attribute through which the comparison is made) [4, p. 25].

The functional-stylistic approach (O.A.Berelekhis, A.F.Efremov, P.A.Morozov, O.A.Semenyuk, E.A.Zhelunovich, O.V.Kravets, V.V.Obraztsova, D.M.Potsepnya, and others) proposes viewing comparative constructions as “elements of verbal form characterizing the individual-authorial style” [2, p. 8].

From the viewpoint of the anthropocentric paradigm, the necessity of identifying the specifics of the relationship between mental and linguistic aspects of comparison studies becomes increasingly evident. Consequently, currently the most relevant research occurs within cognitive linguistics and linguoculturology frameworks, examining comparative constructions in connection with thought processes (A.F.Ashimova, L.O.Butakova, T.A.Golikova, N.M.Devyatova, I.G.Parshina, E.V.Pashkova, I.A.Tarasova, and others) and national culture (L.G.Boyko, A.Y.Kuznetsova, N.N.Makarenko, O.V.Orlova, L.V.Razuvaeva, S.G.Ter-Minasova, A.E.Shevchenko, and others).

This article suggests combining linguo-structural and cognitive approaches in studying comparisons in the poetry of B.Pasternak.

Discussion. From the formal-grammatical perspective, comparisons can be divided into two groups: syndetic (conjunction-based) and asyndetic (conjunctionless). The poetic heritage of B.Pasternak encompasses the richness and diversity of forms inherent to the studied phenomenon. Comparative constructions with conjunctions are particularly representative in his lyrical texts.

1. The most common method of forming figurative comparisons in Pasternak’s poetry is through comparative phrases. Among these, expressions with nouns in the nominative case, integrated into a simple sentence with a comparative conjunction, prevail. Two groups can be distinguished: one in which the comparison module is represented by a verb or a word of the category of state functioning as a predicate, and another where the module is represented by an adjective or participle; the subject of comparison, in this case, is the sentence’s grammatical subject, semantically and grammatically related to the object of comparison. For example:

Но люди в брелоках высоко брюзгливы

И вежливо жалят, как змеи в овсе. («Сестра моя – жизнь»)

In this context, the comparative phrase follows the predicate and is introduced by the conjunction как; the comparison module is a connected syntaxeme expressing the subject of action with a transitive verb denoting physical activity. Here, the comparative phrase functions as a secondary sentence element – an adverbial modifier of manner – which serves to expand the meaning of the predicate, characterizing the way the action is performed. The lexical-thematic content of the object of comparison allows associating human actions with animal movements.

A distinctive feature of Pasternak’s idiostyle, differentiating him from other poets, is that the subject of comparison is frequently not a human being but nature, with humans serving as the object of comparison:

Мздой облагает зима, как баскак,

Окна и печи, но стужа в их книгах... («Двор»)

Pasternak's semantic principle of attributing "animate" qualities to "inanimate" objects is not limited to isolated instances of comparison as a trope but constitutes a defining characteristic of his artistic system.

If two objects are compared by an inherent qualitative attribute, the module of comparison can be expressed by an adjective:

И осень, ясная, как знаменье,
К себе приковывает взоры. («Август»)

The simplest form of comparison usually involves conjunctions or auxiliary words conveying the notion of similarity: как, что, точно, будто, словно, подобно, как бы, как будто, похож на. Examples from Pasternak's poetry:

И сон, как отзвук колокола, смолк;
Ночам соловьем обладать,
Что ведром полнодонным колодцам;
Все дымкой сказочной подернется,
Подобно завиткам по стенам;
Не играет по канавам -
Словно в яблоках рысак;
И в это небо, точно в сети,
Толпа купальщиков плывет;
И наподобие ужей
Ползут и вьются кольца пряжи;
Ты создана как бы вчерне;
Над шумом, похожим
На ложный прибой прожитого и т.п.

2. The selected materials demonstrate the poet's usage of complex sentences with complete comparative subordinate clauses:

Льет дождь. На даче спят два сына,
Как только в раннем детстве спят. («Вторая баллада»)

Comparisons in such sentences rely on associating the compared object with something universally known or typical — something serving as a standard for comparison. Some poems even contain two comparative clauses, each characterizing the same quality from different perspectives:

Перегородок тонкоробкость
Пройду насквозь, пройду, как свет.
Пройду, как образ входит в образ
И как предмет сечет предмет. («Волны»)

3. Pasternak's poetry also features incomplete comparative subordinate clauses within complex sentences, distinguished from comparative phrases by the inclusion of word forms that do not define the main word. For example:

Им ветер был роздан, как звездам – свет. («Мельницы»)

Солнце грустно сегодня, как ты... («Все наденут сегодня пальто»)

Such comparative constructions with potential predicativity are entirely focused on the predicate of the main clause, the repetition of which in the subordinate clause is impossible due to the need for its temporal and modal specification. The conjunction как here indicates a tendency toward expressing the credibility of the comparison, though distinguishing credibility or non-credibility depends heavily on context.

Pasternak actively uses asyndetic comparative constructions as well.

1. In our selection, sentences in which comparative meaning is conveyed without conjunctions through compound nominal predicates are present. This is vividly demonstrated in the poem «Баллада»:

Я - черная точка дурного

В валящихся хлопьях хорошего...

Я - пар отстучавшего града... Я -

Плодовая падаль...

Я - мяч полногласья и яблоко лада...

This method helps the author better highlight the characteristics of his lyrical persona.

2. Among asyndetic comparative constructions, the instrumental case of nouns is prevalent:

Проникло солнце утром рано

Косою полосой шафрановою

От занавеси до дивана;

Бывает, курьером на борзom

Расскачется сердце;

Окно обнимало квадратом

Часть сада и неба клочок;

Размокшей каменной баранкой

В воде Венеция плыла и т.п.

The instrumental case creates greater proximity between the compared objects, suggesting transformation rather than mere similarity. Researchers note its expressive power, producing an effect akin to describing a "manner of action."

3. Pasternak's idiosyncrasy features genitive constructions for comparisons, based on reinterpreting the object differently from its standard interpretation, by associating it with the same predicate as the subject. Types of genitive comparisons include:

a) Comparison by property: Pasternak frequently employs traditional color images, such as снег жасмина, пожар заката, but is more distinctive when combining multiple attributes (color, consistency): щебень метели, стальной гладиатор органа, ртуть очумелых дождей.

b) Comparison by function: Early Pasternak frequently used images associated with traditional functions of barriers and coverings: напев мой опечатан пломбой

неизбываемых дождей, из-за ширмы лени. Later, the functional range expands greatly, supported by context: телегою проекта нас переехал новый человек, заводи машину половодья, взят под уздцы битюг небосвода.

c) Comparison by form and structure: Pasternak enriches conventional formative words that denote singular units or collections: слюдинки льдин, стружья снега, веток кудрявый девичник. Particularly expressive are images based on body parts: в гортанях запруд, костлявой мельницы крестец, шеи укреплений, as well as unconventional forms: в ковшах оттаявших галош, булки фонарей, пышки крыш.

4. Less frequent are comparative constructions with adjectives in comparative degree:

Синее оперенья селезня

Сверкал за Камою рассвет. («На пароходе»)

О мой лист, ты пугливей щегла! («Определение души»)

Typically, comparative adjectives reflect a greater or lesser degree of an attribute in one subject relative to another. However, Pasternak sometimes employs them to denote different intensities of an attribute within the same subject at different times:

Был день, безвредный день, безвредней

Десятка прежних дней твоих... («Смерть поэта»)

Pasternak also occasionally uses unconventional comparative forms, enhancing expressiveness and highlighting features grotesquely:

И лед голов синел бездонней

Тепла нагретых пропастей. («Кавказ был весь как на ладони»)

5. Pasternak's poetry contains a number of negative comparisons, typically grouped within brief textual contexts to characterize a single subject:

Это не розы, не рты, не ропот

Толп, это здесь, пред театром – прибор

Заколебавшейся ночи Европы... («Весенний дождь»)

Such comparisons are constructed through opposition rather than similarity, allowing the poet to highlight the most significant attributes of the compared subject.

6. Comparisons in question form are rare in Pasternak's work:

Может быть, за годом год

Следуют, как снег идет,

Или как слова в поэме? («Снег идет»)

However, this type of comparison is generally infrequent in Russian poetry and thus not distinctive of Pasternak's idiosyncrasy.

7. Pasternak occasionally uses indefinite comparisons:

Он стал образчиком, оформясь

Во что-то прочное, как соль («Вот чем лесные дебри брали»)

Due to their sporadic nature, such comparisons also cannot be considered characteristic of his creative personality.

8. Fixed (phraseological) comparisons appear frequently in Pasternak's lyrics, demonstrating semantic and structural diversity:

Кавказ был весь как на ладони;

Где теперь светло, как днем;

Как воды набрала в рот;

Как вкопанный будешь стоять и т.п.

These comparisons significantly reflect Pasternak's deep interest in Russian phraseology and, consequently, in Russian language and culture overall, representing a notable feature of his idiosyncrasy.

Conclusion

Pasternak characteristically integrates the subject, object, and module of comparison into a common circle of semantic correspondences within his poetic texts, enabling the identification of major thematic groups for subjects and objects of comparison: nature, everyday life, art, physical and emotional states of humans, and abstract concepts.

Semantic analysis of comparative constructions in Pasternak's poetic language demonstrates the presence of both comparisons whose subjects and objects belong to a single semantic field, and more complex associative combinations linking different semantic fields.

Thus, the range of grammatical means employed by the poet is quite extensive. Pasternak predominantly uses expanded and unexpanded comparative phrases introduced by conjunctions such as как, точно, будто, словно, как бы, подобно, как будто, похож на. Additionally, full and incomplete comparative subordinate clauses, comparisons expressed through predicate structures, the instrumental case of nouns, and genitive constructions are common in his poetry. Less frequent are asyndetic forms such as adjectives in the comparative degree, the adjective похож with the preposition на, and fixed (phraseological) comparisons. Negative comparisons, comparative questions, and indefinite comparisons occur only rarely.

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