

COMPARATIVE PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN ENGLISH

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Abstract: This article explores the structural and semantic nuances of comparative idioms in English, focusing on various types of comparisons between two entities. By analyzing their construction and meaning, this study aims to deepen our understanding of how language encapsulates and expresses comparative concepts through idiomatic expressions. Through a systematic examination of these idiomatic comparisons, this research contributes to the broader field of linguistic studies by shedding light on the intricate ways in which language reflects and shapes comparative thought.

Key words: idiom, structure, semantics, symbol, concept, comparison

In today's world, where globalization is becoming more pronounced, understanding the cultural characteristics of language is becoming a key aspect of successful communication. One of the most fascinating aspects of a language is phraseological units, which reflect not only the specifics of grammar and vocabulary, but also the cultural nuances and mentalities of different peoples. In this article we will focus on comparative phraseological units in English, examining their structure, semantics and use. We will look at how comparative constructions are used to express similarities and differences between objects, situations, or phenomena. Such phraseological expressions not only enrich the speaker's linguistic repertoire, but also help him better understand the mentality and cultural characteristics of English-speaking countries.

Our analysis will include general comparative phraseological constructions studying of which can allow us to dive deeper into the world of the English language, expand our knowledge of its phraseology and bring us closer to understanding how a language reflects the thinking and culture of the people speaking it.

Comparative phraseological units in English have a variety of structures reflecting similarities or differences between objects or situations, but the main structure usually uses words such as "as... as".. Comparative idioms involve comparing two objects, situations or phenomena creating the language with colorful imagery and metaphorical language. Now, let us see concrete examples:

"as... as" patterns with nouns **as busy as a bee; as light as a feather; as cool as a cucumber; as clear as mud;**

"as... as" with adverbs **as quick as lightning; as slow as molasses in January; as silent as the grave; as sharp as a tack;**

"as... as" with adjectives: **as white as snow; as black as coal; as red as a beet; as cold as ice;**

"as... as" with verbs **as busy as a beave; as mad as a hatter; as blind as a bat; as drunk as a skunk;**

Comparative idioms in English are not only expressive means of the language, but also reflect the richness of its semantics. Analyzing the semantic aspects of these idioms allows us to better understand their meanings and usage in different contexts. The study of the semantic aspect of individual comparative idioms has revealed that any attribute or characteristic of an

object or of a human can serve as the focal point for naming in comparative idioms. This can be proved by the contextual use of some idioms:

As swift as a coursing river - Her wit was **as swift as a coursing river**, cutting through the conversation effortlessly. This expression describes the high speed or acuity of the mind, comparing it to a fast-flowing river that easily overcomes obstacles in its path; **As sly as a fox in the night** - He plotted his revenge, **as sly as a fox in the night**, waiting for the perfect moment to strike. This expression describes being cunning, comparing the object to a fox, known for its cunning, especially at night when it can hide in the darkness.; **As brave as a lion in battle** - She faced her fears head-on, as brave as a lion in battle, never backing down from a challenge. This expression describes a high level of courage and determination, comparing the subject to a lion, a symbol of strength and courage, especially in situations of battle or struggle; **As free as a bird in flight** - After quitting his job, he felt **as free as a bird in flight**, unburdened by responsibilities. This expression describes a feeling of freedom and ease, comparing the object to a bird in flight, which carries an association with carefreeness and the absence of obstacles. **As wise as an owl in the forest** - The elder shared his wisdom, **as wise as an owl in the forest**, guiding the younger generation. This expression describes a level of wisdom or intelligence by comparing an object to an owl, a symbol of wisdom and knowledge, especially in the context of the natural environment of the forest, where owls are considered wise and observant creatures. So, by initially studying individual comparative units based on their meaning, we, in the subsequent stage, set the aim to unite those units that share common semantic features, thereby organizing them into larger groups with similar characteristics. Such systematic approach to the study of the targeted set of idioms has enabled us to categorize them into 4 major groups. Among the latter, there are those denoting:

1. Physical characteristics:

As thin as a rail. This idiom describes the extreme thinness of an object, comparing it to a thin and long railroad track; **as round as a hoop**. This idiom describes the full and spherical shape of an object, like a hoop for a game. Other examples denoting the named semantic feature are: **as heavy as lead; as light as a feather**.

2. Emotional assessments: **as pleased as Punch**. This expression describes a high level of satisfaction and joy, similar to the character Punch from popular puppet shows; **as sour as vinegar**. This idiom describes the overly unfriendly and sour behavior of the target. Among other examples denoting the given semantic feature are: **as happy as a clam; as mad as a hornet**

3. Activity and diligence: **as lively as a cricket**. This idiom expresses a high level of liveliness and energy in the subject, comparing it to a living and active cricket; **as diligent as an ant**. This expression describes the high level of hard work and diligence of the subject, comparing him to an ant, always busy with work.

Other examples are: as busy as a bee; as active as a squirrel, etc.

4. Conditions and characteristics: **as slippery as an eel**. This idiom describes an object or situation that is difficult to grasp or understand, like a slippery and elusive eel; **as stubborn as a barnacle**. This expression describes the subject's high level of stubbornness and perseverance, comparing it to tenacious and durable caterpillars. Some more examples of this kind are: **as cool as a cucumber; as stubborn as a mule**.

As is seen from the above examples, English comparative idioms often employ the comparison of two distinct entities, whether animals, objects, or concepts, to illustrate a



particular quality or characteristic. This approach serves to create vivid imagery and convey meaning effectively. The utilization of two symbols or concepts in each comparative idiom is a fundamental feature, contributing to the richness and versatility of the English language. The choice of symbols or concepts in these idioms is purposeful, as it allows for the encapsulation of complex ideas into concise phrases. For example, the idiom **as sly as a fox** compares someone's cunningness to the intelligence and cunning nature commonly attributed to foxes. Similarly, **as strong as an ox** contrasts someone's physical strength with the perceived strength of an ox, or the idiom **as cool as a cucumber** not only suggests a person's calmness but also implies their composure and lack of emotional agitation, drawing from the cucumber's association with coolness and freshness.

The use of two symbols or concepts in comparative idioms enables a nuanced and layered comparison. It allows for the exploration of different facets of a quality or characteristic being described. This can be observed in the following examples:

1. Comparison with animals or objects symbolizing diligence: **as busy as a bee;**
as industrious as an ant;
2. Using an analogy with physical characteristics that indicate a high level of activity: **as fit as a fiddle;** **as energetic as a squirrel;**
3. Comparison with items that require effort and labor to maintain in good condition: **as well-tended as a garden;**
4. Comparison with professions or activities requiring a high degree of diligence: **as dedicated as a teacher;** **as committed as a marathon runner;**
5. Comparison with processes or phenomena that require constant effort and attention: **as persistent as a dripping faucet;** **as diligent as a watchmaker;**
6. Comparison with natural phenomena that require regular care and attention: **as meticulous as a gardener pruning roses;** **as attentive as a mother bird feeding her chicks;**
7. Comparison with weather events or natural processes that require diligent care: **as relentless as the rain eroding the mountains;** **as tireless as the wind shaping the dunes.**

In conclusion, comparative phraseological units provide a compelling exploration of how language creatively expresses comparisons within a single linguistic framework. Their varied structures showcase the flexibility and inventiveness of language use, while their semantic nuances reveal intricate layers of meaning embedded in everyday expressions. By focusing on the interaction between two entities within these units, we gain profound insights into the subtle ways in which speakers perceive relationships and convey complex ideas concisely. This examination not only enriches our understanding of language dynamics but also underscores the cultural and cognitive dimensions inherent in linguistic expression. Thus, comparative phraseological units serve as a vibrant testament to the richness and depth of human communication.

Literature

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