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SIMILE AS A WAY TO INTRODUCE THE MAIN PROBLEMS IN 'WHITE TEETH' BY ZADIE SMITH: PRAGMATIC ASPECTS

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Abstract
The article aims to describe simile as a figure of speech represented in the most famous novel 'White Teeth' by Zadie Smith. Similes have been chosen as a base for the study due to their pragmatic potential to depict reality in post-colonial Britain. The idea of the study is to prove that simile in the novel is a rather complicated semantically and syntactically phenomenon used to introduce the key problems of the international community. The material of the study was the sentences through the novel selected on the approach that they contain the indicator *like* or *as* with the following reference. The research design outlines simile as a figure of speech with a broad range of characteristics to depict problems of the multicultural community in the modern world. The pragmatic and semantic analysis are used to describe simile representation in the text. The results of the research show the roles of the simile in presenting the key problems of the novel. These findings help to enhance the theory of simile as a potential figure of speech and make it possible to perceive Zadie Smith's style as an influential writer in the modern world.

Keywords: multiculturalism, pragmatic potential, simile, White Teeth, Zadie Smith

Introduction
Literary works are rich in figurative speech. "Literary text is the interaction of various systems that organize text on semantic and pragmatic levels (internally), and at the level of its formal structure (external field) generated by the functioning of multi-level linguistic units combined on a limited text space" (Tashpulatova, 2021, p. 381). Each author depicts reality, solves problems, and creates characters with the help of language figures. Figures of speech are means of language used to describe an object or event figuratively. They enhance or develop the meaning of a written word or phrase.

The variety of stylistic means in the English language serves to demonstrate social problems in the novels. It is vital to stress that literary works of modern English literature are remarkable by its process of comparison. The process of metaphoriation has proved to be one of the most productive methods of creating expressivity in the text.

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The metaphor and the simile are likely to be the most widely recognized figures of speech, being commonly used in many everyday varieties of language as well as in rhetorical and literary contexts (Al-Heeh, 2021). They are considered the basic ones and the other figurative samples are often described with reference to them (Ruiz de Mendoza, 2020). For decades, linguists have focused on structural and cognitive features of the metaphor in various discourses since less attention has been given to the simile in a particular literary work

The main idea of the study is that through simile in the novel any object or character has a symbolic connection to a problem stated. Thus, the analysis of the simile used provides a better understanding of the novel's problems and characters.

'White Teeth' is a famous book by an English author Zadie Smith. The plot is focused on the Bangladeshi Samad Iqbal, the Englishman Archie Jones, and the Chalfens. The novel describes the life of typical families in a rural area of London: Archie Jones and his Jamaican wife Clara who ran from his mother addicted to Witness of Jehovah and their daughter Irie, who tries to find her place in this world; Samad Icqal, a middle –aged Muslim form Bengali and his young wife who came to England for a better life, their children twins born in Britain –Millat and Magid – and Chalfen family, intellectuals who devoted their life to science and their son Joshua who joins radical group FATE.

Despite the fact that the novel appeared in 2000, many linguists devoted their works to the study of this book. There are some works devoted to the literary analysis of postmodern features of the novel (Kannadhasan, 2024; Kowalik, 2022; Thompson, 2024). Some linguists investigated peculiarities of female characters, described the relations between male and female characters (Yang, 2020), delved into multicultural problems of society (Ismail, 2024; Kuçuk, 2021), examined the theme of racial discrimination (Manikandan, 2024; Lone, 2023; Prabha, 2024). There were attempts to study the problems of multiculturalism in the novel (Iqbal et al., 2023; Neupane 2024). Lone (2023) and Afshan et al. (2023) provide a comparative analysis of the themes of cultural clashes and identity in the novel, Khan (2020) focuses especially on verbal inflections in the variety of dialects appropriated in the novel but little has been done to investigate the expressive features of the text. Chaturvedi and Dhand (2024) explore personal and social identities in the context of contemporary Anglo-American post-colonial literature. Medical studies argue that this novel aims to "critically engage this new biomedical discourse of global and interpersonal relations" (Hammann-Rose, 2021, p. 167).

The abundance of studies proves the fact that this novel touches very many urgent problems of the international community. Due to the fact that language reflects the true meaning as it already exists in the world (Fahma et al., 2021) each novel is worth a detailed analysis of the text that identifies the main linguistic means used in the work in order the underscore the influences on society. The research questions addressed are:

1. How is simile represented in the novel *White Teeth*?
2. What roles does simile play in the novel?

Simile as a figure of speech

The Oxford Dictionary states that the term "Figure of speech" is "an expression that departs from the accepted literary sense of from the normal order of

words in which an emphasis is produced by patterns of sound" (Baldick, 2001, p.108).

Figurative language is a popular tool for authors to present the plot. There are many figures widely spread and rarely used. The simile is presented as the most important figure being the second only to the metaphor. A metaphor as a figure has been under review for many years. Many linguists devoted their works and thesis to the role of metaphor in different discourses. Types of metaphors, functions of metaphors, kinds of metaphors, and the role of metaphors are widely studied and analyzed every day. As for simile, this figure is mainly presented in comparison with metaphor, as an example of one distinctive feature of the metaphor. Thus, the role of a simile in the literary text is often underestimated.

In terms of literary theory, a simile has been defined as follows: "An explicit comparison between two different things, actions, or feelings, using the words 'as' or 'like'" (Baldick, 2001, p.248).

Metaphors are precisely the most powerful means of expression, but similes are rather interesting to analyze, at least the simile is easy to recognize in the text. "The figures of speech: metaphor and simile have the use of two diversely distinctive objects or vechicles. The meaning of a text comes out through the comparison between them" (Regmi, 2015, p.80). Comparing different objects and concepts helps readers understand and interpret the main idea of the plot. Literary comparison is a vital tool to understand the world. We use comparison to stress the similar features of the objects, underline the striking features of the characters, and emphasize the significant events in the literary works. The figures the authors use to influence the reader can be thoroughly defined and analysed from pragmatic aspects.

Pragmatic aspects

We agree that "pragmatics are considered as one aspect of the text along with semantics since the clear boundaries between semantics and pragmatics are not yet defined in modern science" (Tashpulatova, 2021, p.382). Pragmatics aims at interpreting the sentences\statements in order to underscore the impact on the reader. "Pragmatics is considered a study of meaning that focuses on what humans suggest in a certain context and shows the context that affects what is said" (Rashad & Jameel, 2021, p.67). However, pragmatic analysis of the phrases is interrelated and interconnected with semantic description. Thus, we need to describe the meaning of the words and then understand the goal of these words. "The pragmatic nature of texts implements the idea of the author and encourages the reader to consider different approaches to solving important life problems" (Srailova et al., 2021, p.215).

Method

As the material for the study, we take text fragments from the novel 'White Teeth' by Zadie Smith. The sentences were filtered with the special markers *like* and *as*. Five hundred sentences have been taken from the novel and put under analysis. The sentences were studied with the help of detention methods that include two steps – the first is to identify and extract the sentence with the marker *like/as* and the second is to distribute and analyze the role of similes.

The following principles were chosen as the important ones:

- the sentences should have the definite structure tenor +indicator +reference,
- the similes can be transformed into metaphors in order to avoid the perplexity with the literary comparisons.

The semantic analysis is defined as the most suitable and sufficient one for the reason that this type of analysis reveals the meaning of the expression within the context. The semantic analysis consists of establishing the relationship between its three major components: Tenor, Indicator, and Reference. Then the pragmatic analysis focuses on principles of language use, the intentions of producers (writer) and receivers (reader), and mainly on contexts. We define the meaning of the references (what they mean for the readers), study and classify them into groups with similar features, and interpret the intention of the producer of the text.

Thus, the interaction of these methods helps to achieve the main objective of the study which is to show the connection between the character of the object stated in the text with the author's thoughts through simile.

Findings and Discussion

This research provides the simile representation in the novel *White Teeth*. Our findings are based on a pragmatic analysis of simile representation, including its structure, references, and components.

Simile structure

Here we speak about the special marker *as/like* used to identify similes in the text. Comparison is the most frequently used device in the novel. "Comparison generally has three determinants: subject (or tenor), reference (or vehicle) and indicator of resemblance (such as 'like', 'as', 'as if", etc.)" (Zhichao, 2021, p.143). For our study, we are going to use this three-component criterion to analyze the peculiarities of similes. To have more precise and accurate data, we are choosing sentences from the text with the indicator *like/as*. For example, we find a sentence "The gatherings were like last-ditch summits." (Smith, 2000, p.219). Table 1 presents the structure of the simile, which is important in selecting the material for the research.

Table 1. Simile structure

These gatherings	were	like	last-ditch	political summits
tenor		indicator		reference

Here the word 'gatherings' is a tenor, an object that everybody knows and can clearly imagine in the mind. 'Like' is an indicator being a signal to our mind to be ready to picture a vivid concept connected with the previous one. 'Last-ditch summits' is an expression reflecting the concept that is drawn in the mind after the process of comparison is finished. Thus, we do not need to find similarities between two objects, and trace how or why they are alike; we need to imagine and admit that 'these gatherings' are similar or have a resemblance with 'last-ditch political summits'. The process of interpreting and understanding is shorter as with the metaphor. In addition, here we can stipulate a share of distrust because the author just supposes, she does not assume that the gatherings are summits. Thus, we can note one distinctive feature of simile contradicting metaphor is the author's liberty

to compare things she wants and likes in the way she prefers yet they are clear for the wide range of the readers because she just expresses her view and suggests the reader to look at it together.

A great deal of the similes are phrases that mainly consist of a noun plus an adjective but we come across long complex sentences. Thus, this syntactical diversity underlines the scope of problems in the novel. The scale of the problems can be different from one word up to the sentence but still, they all need thoughtful consideration. The following Figure 1 shows the statistical data of using a word, a phrase, an expression, and a sentence. As we can see the most numerous group includes references presented as a whole sentence or even a text fragment.

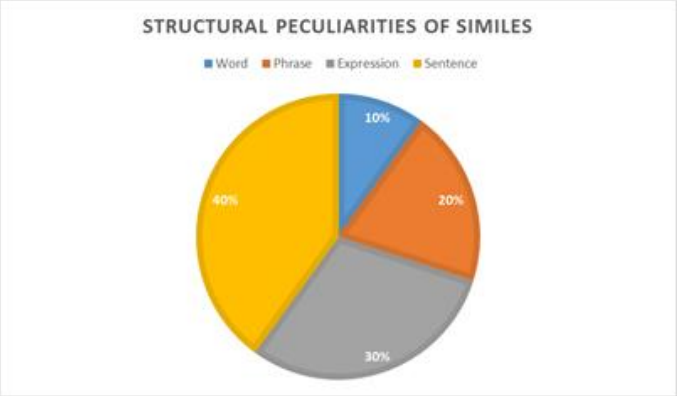


Figure 1. Structural peculiarities of similes

The similes can be quickly recognized and syntactically complicated. To draw a comparison the author must be sure the reader grasps the idea therefore complicated similes are used to enhance the picture.

Graphical and syntactical ways of simile representation in the novel

Nevertheless, every novel has its own style of figure representation. The similes in the novel have their own structure and way of introduction. There are mainly two ways to recognize similes in the text, graphical and syntactical. Front italics could be considered as graphical identifiers. However, it comes to be optional in the text. Let us observe the example with the italics.

> "His God was not like that charming white-bearded bundler of the Anglican, Methodist, or Catholic churches." (Smith, 2000, p.140).

The syntactical way can be characterized: the reference is introduced with the help of a word, phrase, or sentence.

> "Archie's marriage felt like buying a pair of shoes, taking them home, and finding they don't fit." (Smith, 2000, p.8).
> "They walked into it blinkered as horses." (Smith, 2000, p.8).

Sentences with similes can have an affirmative or negative form: the affirmative form shows likeness between the entities compared, as "like a breath of fresh air" and the negative one denies likeness, as "like the others, not like Merlin, like Clive, like Leo, Petronia, Wan-Si and the others" (Smith, 2000, p.10).

It should be clearly distinguished between literary comparison as a way to show the likeness and similes as a figure of speech. To report perceptions, the author uses the popular verbs to feel, to smell, to be, to look, to stand, to sound, and a variety of verbs to show resemblance.

"Brothers Millat, Hifan, Tyrone, Mo Hussein-Ishmael, Shiva, Abdul-Jimmy stood stock-still like maypoles in the middle of the station while the dance of the New Year went on around them." (Smith, 2000, p.498). Such sentences are not put under consideration.

Every author has the aim to find particular tools for creating the key issues of the plot. The linguistic diversity of different accents and styles helps to capture the view of modern London with its problems and conflicts. Smith's use of such language tools provides the reader with the notion of multiculturalism and national identity. Thus, we assume that similes are used in the novel to state the problems of contemporary Britain. The further classification of the similes presents the main problems in the novel. This classification is composed of distributing references of the similes into groups having the same characteristics.

Discussion

Similes with names of countries, people, and religion

The pragmatic features of the similes are unprecedented. The simile can be classified according to the references. The mention of the countries, cultures, and traditions touches on the problems of national identity, religion, motherland, and home. It is necessary to stress that the novel depicts the problems of interrelation between countries and cultures. Multiculturalism goes through the novel in order to emphasize the difficulties and obstacles in assimilation for migrants. The reference to other cultures provokes interest in this sphere as in Table 2 shows that the number of references to the church, culture, and other countries prevails in the novel. In addition, this group stands abide the others because of its numerous examples.

Table 2. References inducing problems of multiculturalism in the novel

Country\Sight	Famous people	Religion
a Swiss clock	Freud's grandson	Thespis
Russian dolls	Michael Jackson	Shiva
a Mexican bean	Garibaldi biscuits	Cain
German pickelhaube	Columbus	a Christian
China	Einstein	Anglican, Methodist or Catholic churches
Indian tigers	Hitchcock	Mashar, Judgement Day
Hindus	Fred and Ginger	Anointed right now
Jamaican	Roosevelt	a company Christmas present
Italian matriarchs	Fuhrer-gee	any Sikh
Queens Park (Victoria's)	Uriah Heep	Eden
Whitechapel	Pinocchio	Zen –like sobriety
Arcadia	Ancient Mariner	
	Bogart or a chauffeur or Bogart's chauffeur	
	David Niven	
	Mowgli	
	an Elvis ballad	

	Omar Sharif and the Prince of Wales
	Scorsese's cameras
	Jeeves
	Mr Gandhi

From Table 2, we can conclude that multiculturalism is the key problem of the novel. The comparison with the popular persons and reference to famous easily recognizable characters reflects the idea that everything should be clear to everyone. The comparison includes inbuilt information transferred with the help of using this reference. This group includes characters from famous novels by Dickens, Coleridge, Kipling, and Wodehouse and famous people, and celebrities. Traditions, festivals, and religion are the main components of the national identity. These features help to expand the main traits of the characters.

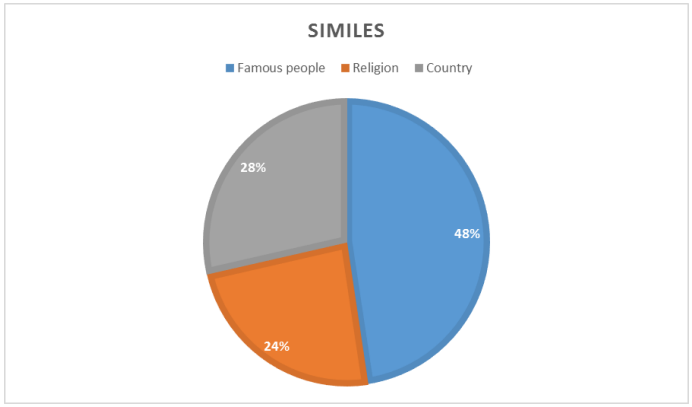


Figure 2. Similes representing the problems of multiculturalism

According to Figure 2, the most numerous group represents the references to the characters and celebrities. "The most urgent subject in the postcolonial era and literature is the identity problem." (Baqer & Taher, 2021, p.147). Thus, the representation of the character is a very important subject. As mentioned above there are three families in the plot but the main characters are Archi and Sammad. The readers can see the full portrait of the characters and the way they are living in London. They are striving to find a place, a sense of home.

The mention of the countries shows the diversity of nationalities and the native countries of immigrants. London is the place where people from all over the world come and they bring their culture to Britain. The references to religion as a constituent part of the culture constitute the third group of the similes. This group describes the most sensitive issue of our society.

Similes containing comparison with animals

The comparison with the animals postulates the portrait of the main characters of the novel precisely immigrants who are trying to find themselves in a new country with unfamiliar traditions and situations. Similes reflect cultural interpretations of different animal features. We may say that the most used similes are built on the principle of similarity with the animals, culture-influenced. The animals are from different classes, wild and domestic, from insects to birds. The

references to the animals can be described according to their position in the sentences – alone, with additional description, and with post predicative description as we may see in Figure 3. We may say that the group with additional description (mostly presented with the structure adjective + noun) is the numerous one. In the novel, this group represents all particular traits of these animals. Additional descriptions and vivid adjectives give the comparison another coloring that helps the reader to imagine the concept properly.

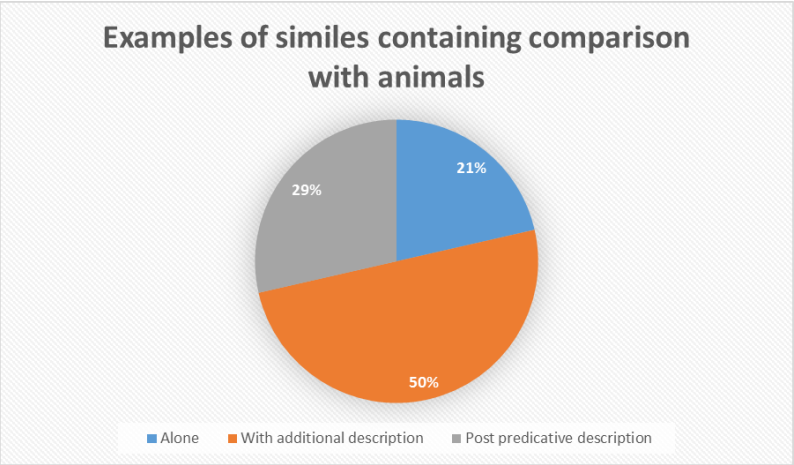


Figure 3. Similes containing comparison with animals

Similes as a part of phraseological units

The part of phraseological units taken as a unit or paraphrased/modified shows the new form of the immortal. The modified use of idioms as characteristics of their understanding of the culture and language they speak.

Fixed word units can be modified morphologically, syntactically, semantically, and pragmatically. The author uses instead of overused phrases that help to depict vividly the actions and add emotional coloring to the process of comparison. The problems of the novel are not new ones. National identity, diversity, and religions are very important to consider, but the world is constantly changing, new generations, new ideas, new views, globalization, economic progress, and technological progress influence people's minds, and thus it is crucial to compose new ways of introducing the old problems. The modifications of phraseological units remind the problems; we understand the set expression (problem) and take a fresh view of this problem. Otherwise, the modified use of phraseological units proves the fact that immigrants sometimes are confused to use properly the idioms.

"Plain as a pie on your face." (Smith, 2000, p. 251) – the original phrase is "Plain as a nose on your face", the substitute of the noun 'nose' with 'pie' makes the reader look at this comparison in the other way broadening the outlook and perceive the sense of the author's idea. The verb 'die' in the sentence "…she was getting tired and her peers were dying off like flies." (Smith, 2000, p.33) is slightly modified by adding the adverb "off". The addition of a new word symbolizes the original vision of the problem and adds emotional coloring to the phrase.

> "Getting anything out of my husband is like trying to squeeze water out when you're stoned." (Smith, 2000, p.78).

This example presents a humorous way of modification. Aslana wants to show off before her cousin and Clara. In spite of her early age, she wants to look older and wiser; she heard the idiom (to squeeze water from a stone) but did not use it correctly.

Elements of humor in simile

A great deal of similes is used with humorous effect. The author tries to show that among the global serious problems presented in the novel, there still exists a portion of humour. The author reminds us that besides the fact that she illustrates devious problems not only for the immigrants but also for the whole community the small portion of humour in the text helps the reader to take these problems as being able to solve.

The rhyme in the sentence "…like a crab in a trap…" (Smith, 2000, p.463) gives a slight presupposition that it is not as complicated as it can be. The light grin on the political situation that is the most important subject of conversation for immigrants.

"Like East Pakistan needed West Pakistan."(Smith, 2000, p. 434). The ability to mock specific features of the culture is shown in the sentences: "Like a climax of a bad Hindu musical" (Smith, 2000, p.532).

To sum up, the classification of the problems through similes can be clearly presented in Figure 4. This picture presents the data made on the account of sentences conveying similes. It is clearly seen that the central idea of the novel is the problem of national identity. A great deal of sentences is devoted to the representation of this problem. The animal comparison also states the second most numerous part because the image of the character is obviously presented in comparison with the animal's features. Two groups presenting linguistic difficulties and dilemmas between cultures are almost equal because these groups are connected and interrelated. Humor is the obligatory component of the modern novels.

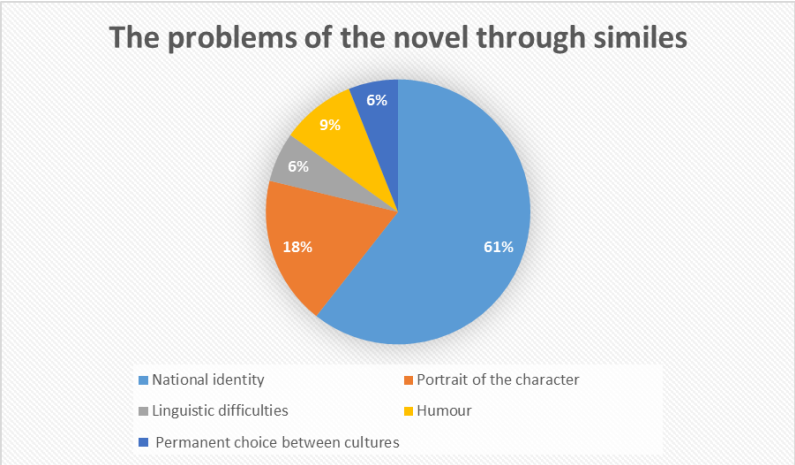


Figure 4. The problems of the novel through similes

It is necessary to comment that Zadie Smith in her novel did not use stock comparisons. She tries to maneuver between old ones and easily thinks up new fresh comparisons to attract the audience. To compare with the objects or abstract notions and to use short situations with characters or plots is a feature of a simile that helps Zadie Smith to set a 'story' in the story. We understand the problems in the process of comparing. Simile is proved to be a perfect way of implementing the plot.

Conclusions

Our main objective was to show that the author expresses her own views and opinions on the problems through similes. The results of the study help to enlarge our knowledge of similes as an expressive means of depicting problems and looking at these problems the different angles.

We can distinguish two principles of creating similes in the novel. The first is the comparison based on general concepts clear to every reader. In addition, the second one is an unusual comparison based on an imaginary situation.

The functions and types of similes clearly characterize the main issues. 'White Teeth' is not a guidebook for immigrants on how to assimilate in Britain and avoid problems; it is more than a book about people who are lost in the country that stands for multiculturalism, but in reality, left them alone without any chances to adopt to the severe reality. Searching for self-identity is significant and difficult work for people. Problems of ethnic diversity, and cultural differentiation are always urgent. Everyone must have a choice as to what part of the culture he/she wants to belong. The findings of the study prove that similes as figurative means help to understand the plain truth – humans are able to grapple with a problem when they understand this problem and can compare it with something they have already experienced. On the one hand, similes help readers to understand reality, as we are able to speak about unfamiliar concepts, and problems through already known subjects, or introduce familiar things by describing them in new ways with references to the famous or general entities. On the other hand, authors may use similes as a productive way to convey their ideas and impact on the readers.

This research suggests a valuable insight into the theory of simile representation in literary texts and underlines the main feature of similes to use situations or even short stories to outline the moment. However, this research has its limitations. Firstly, the contextual meaning of simile is based on our personal interpretation of the literary text. Some may argue. Secondly, we based this research on our personal supposition that similes apart from the other figures of speech make this book precisely the masterpiece in the modern world. Finally, the list of similes is by no means complete, we took only one novel. It would be worthwhile to continue this research and expand the corpus of similes by adding examples from the other texts of Zadie Smith's *On Beauty*, *Swing Time*, and *The Fraud* in order to explore the expressive potential of this figure of speech.

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