Discourse Creating Feature of the Comparative Construction

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Anthropocentrism plays an increasingly significant part in modern linguistic research. Language study is conducted inseparably from the human mind, as it has become impossible to study language in its static dimension. Worldview, and language worldview, in particular, exists in our minds in the form of concepts, which are expressed with the help of functional and semantic categories. Among key functional and semantic categories is the category of comparison, which conveys the concept of comparison inherent to the cognition of a person. Thus, this category is inherent to any language of any period and represents the static state of an object, which, prima facie, contradicts the statement about the constant evolution of language. However, we consider the category of comparison as a dynamic category since $D=S^1+ S^2+ S^3+ ... + S^n$, where D is the study of the evolution of a comparative construction in the historical development, and S with a superscript is a certain synchronic space (following V. V. Mykhaylenko (2001: 21).

The versatility of comparison has attracted the attention of scholars not only as a category of philosophy and logic (A. Sen-Simon, 1923; V. I. Barton, 1978; and others), but also as a language category (S. M. Mezenin, 1969; M. I. Cheremisina, 1971; N. K. Razmakhnina, 1973; L. I. Baisara, 1975; A. A. Potebnya, 1976; L. V. Holoyukh, 1996; N. P. Shapovalova, 1998a; and others); however, it has become impossible to consider comparison as well as any other language category only from one side, let us say, linguistic. So, it should be studied in close relation with philosophy and logic, especially, if we take into account that linguistics was born in the lap of philosophy. It should be mentioned that the functioning of language must be studied not only from a synchronic perspective, but also from a diachronic one, because knowledge of historic changes lets us understand the language not only as an integral part of society, but also as a cognitive process. One interesting example of this interplay between a cognitive category and its expression over time is found in the comparative; thence, the purpose of this article is to discuss the discourse creating feature of the comparative constructions by examining Old English comparative constructions.

Comparison is one of the factors of the process of reality reflection in the mind of a person and its (reality) reproducing in language activity. It is one of the means of world perception. While cognizing a new object, we compare it with objects already known to us, trying to find similarities or dissimilarities between them in order to perceive the essence of the given object. As A.A.Potebnya (1976: 37) observed, "Cognition is the establishment of the connection between cognizable (B) and cognized (A), the comparison of B with A with the help of the feature common to the former and the latter, and which is taken from A… ."

Let us, first, ponder the formation of comparison in our cognition. For instance, consider the following sentences:

1. *Jane has a million dollars.*
2. *Tom has a million dollars.*
3. *A person with a million dollars is rich.*

All three sentences are semantically similar, namely, the attribution of the subjects as the possession of *a million dollars*, or in other words – *rich*. Hence, these sentences transform in our mind into one sentence, which expresses the category of comparison with the help of the complementizer *as…as*:

*Jane is **as** rich **as** Tom.*

We can consider other comparative constructions the same way. For example, the kernel sentences

1. *Tom is tall.*
2. *Tom has a mother.*
3. *His mother is short.*

transform into

*Tom is tall**er than** his mother.*

In the view of philosophy, comparison is the act of thinking with the help of which the sense of being and cognition is classified, arranged, and evaluated.

In *Philosophical Dictionary* (1991: 432) we find the following definition: "comparison is the juxtaposition of objects in order to define similarities or dissimilarities between them (or the first and the second taken together)."

Philosophers themselves pointed out an important role of comparison as a means of cognition. Thus, A. Sen-Simon stated (1923: 132), "in the end, all work of the human mind leads to comparison: to say, for example, that some thing is good or bad means that it is better or worse than the other one with which it is compared."

In his turn, V. I. Barton (1978: 3) pointed out that comparison "can be seen in all domains of human activity: in scientific experience, literary and artistic work, teaching and educational activity, industrial and everyday life practice. Thus, comparison is the key generally valid factor of the process of reflecting objective reality.

In the gnoseological aspect, any act of reflection lies in equating and differentiating the elements of the reflected thing with/from the reflecting one, which is the essence of comparison understood in the broad sense of this word."

After all, new ideas, meanings appear on the basis of likeness or unlikeness with already existent ones. A person can grasp only those notions about which s/he has some knowledge. But as knowledge is gained only through experience, it can modify and, thus, new knowledge arises. So, new knowledge is not random, it is predetermined by prior knowledge.

Similarly, R. Langacker explains the ability of a person to apply a structure to their inner experience. He states that a person feels an inclination to interpret something new referring to prior experience (Langacker, 1987: 105-106). Langacker (1987: 101) also points out that new experience should function as a target in the process of comparison and it should be adjusted to known standards. That is why we determine the peculiarities of developed original concepts and use them while developing new concepts (Smith and Medin, 1981: 18). Hence, new categorizations actually depend on the already available categorical system (Rosch 1978: 29; 42).

Correspondingly, comparison is inherent to any culture, but the means of expression of this category in the language are different.

Following N. P. Shapovalova (1998b: 30), "linguistic definition of comparison is derived from gnoseological. To put it differently, language comparison is the construction the content basis of which is comparative semantics."

In linguistics the category of comparison is treated differently. In the wide sense, the basis of the category of comparison is comparative semantics; since while comparing something, we equate it with or differentiate it from some other thing. But, such an explanation of the category of comparison is too simple, as in Prokopchuk's (2000: 14) words "its complexity lies, first of all, in language means of expression, in which philosophical, logic, and grammatical contents cross."

The original approach was suggested by M. I. Cheremisina (1971: 24), who pointed out that "the construction which conveys comparative meaning irrespective of lexical loading should be called comparison. Replacing the words in some initial phrase, we may get "unsuccessful" phrases, foolish, meaningless, but all of them should be considered comparative." Then, she provides the following examples: "I was running like an appendicitis", "We were running like seven hanged men", which she also regards as comparisons, though meaningless, because their structure is that of comparison, which makes us catch the comparative meaning, "the idea of comparison," notwithstanding the illogicality of word combination. However, we cannot agree that the mentioned constructions are comparison, though they contain the discourse marker of comparison "like", because we may compare only those things, features of which are peculiar to comparandum and comparatum. As an appendicitis or a hanged man cannot run, the mentioned above comparisons cannot come about, except in an author's occasional neologisms – oxymoron stylistic devices in order to achieve an ironic effect.

As L. V. Holoyukh appropriately stated (1996: 3), "comparison in language is, on the one hand, a means of world perception, and on the other hand, the result of this perception shaped into the text components."

According to N.K.Razmakhnina (1974: 5), "comparative constructions in every language are the system, and the existence of this or that system is defined by the connection of its elements, which differ in certain features." However, there are different views on the structure of a comparative construction.

The binomial character of a comparative construction was noted by L. I. Baysara (1975), who pointed out the subject and object of comparison, whereas S. M. Mezenin, N. K. Razmakhnina, M. I. Cheremisina, A. I. Varshavs'ka, L. V. Holoyukh argued that a comparative construction is trinomial.

S. M. Mezenin (1969), studying figurative comparisons, generates the structure of comparison from three components: "1) Agent of figurative expression – a word or word combination used for the description, explanation of a different object or phenomenon; 2) Referent of figurative expression – a word or word combination which denotes an object or phenomenon and should be described, explained with the help of agent; 3) Module of figurative expression – a word or word combination which denotes some feature, characteristic on basis of which referent and agent are compared." Most likely, following the mentioned linguist, N. K. Razmakhnina (1973) determined such components of comparative constructions: 1) agent of comparison, 2) referent of comparison, and 3) comparative index. M. I. Cheremisina et al. (1974) introduced the notion of the object of comparison (i.e. what is compared with something else), the image of comparison, and the comparative index. S. Ya. Aleksandrova pointed out the object of comparison, the comparison standard, and the basis of comparison (1981: 4). A. I. Varshavs'ka et al. (1991) stated that "comparison always involves three elements: a) the notion, which should be explained (comparandum), b) the notion, which serves for explanation (comparatum), c) the binding element, which serves as a "bridge" between two notions."

In her turn, L. V. Holoyukh (1996: 13) pointed out 1) that which is compared; 2) that on the basis of which comparison is drawn; 3) that with which comparison is made, and at the same time, she notes that the formal and grammatical expression of these components and their position in the comparative construction are taken into account, but she does not call them a separate component of the comparative construction. L. V. Prokopchuk (2000: 7) shared a similar point of view and points out the subject of comparison, the image of comparison, and the basis of comparison, and she also mentions that "an important role in the formation of the comparative construction, and consequently in the expression of comparative semantics is assigned to the comparative index, which in the comparative construction conveys the comparative relations between compared objects." But she did not consider the comparative index a separate component of the comparative construction either, thinking that the comparative construction is trinomial.

As we can see, the essence of the trinomial comparative construction does not change notwithstanding different terms. That is why, from now on we will use the following notions: the subjects of comparison, i.e. an object or phenomenon the features of which we understand with the help of the other one; the object of comparison – that with which the subject is compared, i.e. an object or phenomenon the features of which are well known to a speaker; the basis of comparison – a feature (or a number of features) with the help of which the act of comparison is performed.

The carried out analysis let us determine a trinomial comparative construction, which consists of the subject of comparison, the object of comparison, and the basis of comparison.

However, it should be mentioned that the trinomial character of a comparative construction is inherent to a logical model of comparison, but not to a linguistic model of comparison, as the language implementation of comparative semantics is not taken into consideration.

We distinguish four constituents of the linguistic model of comparison: 1) subject of comparison; 2) object of comparison; 3) basis of comparison; and 4) the index of comparative relations (complementizer) – a language means of the implementation of comparative semantics, which in the opinion of N. P. Shapovalova (1998b: 9) "plays a key role in the realization of comparative meaning in the tetranomial model of the comparative construction ('subject' – 'object' – 'basis' – 'index'), as it secures its integrity."

For example, in the sentence *My cousin looks like an angel* the subject of comparison is *cousin*; the object of comparison – *angel*; the basis of comparison – an exterior similarity between a cousin and an angel, i.e. beauty, spirituality; and the index of comparative relations – *like*.

Thus, comparison is a philosophic as well as a linguistic category. But the logical model of comparison differs from the linguistic one in the number of components, as the unity of language and thought does not mean their absolute coincidence. As it was mentioned above, the linguistic model of comparison consists of four constituents. It should be mentioned that this is the structure of a complete comparative construction, but one of the constituents can be absent. For instance, in the sentence *Jane is **as** pretty **as** her mother* all four constituents are present, whereas in the sentence *Jane is **like** her mother*, only from the context can we guess the specific feature on the basis of which

comparison is made. At the same time, the index of comparison is always present, because a comparison construction cannot exist without it. The rest of this paper is devoted to the analysis of the index of comparative relations or the discourse marker of comparison.

In Modern English the index of comparative relations is expressed by the following visual morphosyntactic explicators – *like, as, as ... as, as if, as though*. The implicitness of comparative costructions is expressed with the help of the word *to resemble*, construction *the ... the*, and the degrees of comparison.

In order to determine the explicitness and implicitness of the complementizers of Old English, we studied "The Psalms" written in Old English. The text analysis helped us determine the following markers of comparison:

- explicit

    swa
    Him byð <u>swa</u> þam treowe þe byð aplantod neah wætera rynum,
    Þæt sylð his wæstmas to rihtre tide, and his leaf and his blæda ne fealwiað, ne ne seariað,
    <u>swa</u> byð þam men þe we ær ymbspræcon; eall him cymð to gode þæt þæt he deð (Psalm 1).

    swa swa
    Þæt næfre mine fynd ne gripen mine sawle <u>swa swa</u> leo, forþam ic nat ealles hwa me ahredde and gehæle butan þu wylle (Psalm 7).

    swa ... swa (swa ... swa swa / swa swa ... swa)
    Heora mod and heora wilnuncg ys <u>swa</u> deop <u>swa</u> grundleas pytt, and heora tungan sprecað symle facn (Psalm 5).

    swylce
    And heora wæter <u>swylce</u> wende to blode,
    on ðam heora fisceas frecne forwurdan (Psalm 104).

    ægðer ge ... ge
    God alysde, <u>ægðer ge</u> æt his mettrumnesse <u>ge</u> æt his feondum, swa he þa dyde (Psalm 27).

    gelic/gelice
    Hi synt byrgenum <u>gelice</u>, seo byð utan fæger and innan ful (Psalm 13).

    anlic/anlice (onlic)
    þara bearn swylce bogum æþelum
    settum beamum samed <u>anlice</u>,
    standað on staðule stiðe wið geoguðe (Psalm 143).

    eac swa ilce (swa ylce)
    Mine eagan wæron gedrefede and afærde for þinum yrre, and <u>eac swa ilce</u> min mod and min maga, Forþam full neah on þam sare geteorode and geendode min lif, and min gear wæron on sicetunga and on gestæne
    (Psalm 30).

- implicit

    degrees of comparison
    Drihten, gedo þæt heora menigo sy <u>læsse þonne</u> ure feawena nu is, and tostencte hi geond eorþan libbende of þis lande (Psalm 16).
    Drihten is soðfæst, and gedeð sniome,
    þæt he firenfullra fæcne geðancas
    wis toweorpeð; weorðað gescende
    and hiora scamiað swiþust ealles,
    þa to Sione hete <u>swiðost</u> hæfdon (Psalm 128).

    genealæcan
    Nu <u>genealæceð</u> neode minum
    gebedum bealde, þæt ic bidde nu
    on þinre gesihðe symble, drihten;
    æfter þinre spræce syle me spedlice,
    þæt þu me generige niða gehwylces (Psalm 118).

The present study reflects a corpus of 378 examples, 343 of which contained explicit markers and 35 – implicit ones. The text analysis justified that the number of explicit markers prevail in Old English texts, which is the same in Modern English.

It is considered that the most productive index of comparative constructions in Modern English is the complementizer *like*, and the complementizer *as* is used less often (Cf.: Razmakhnina, 1973: 22).

In order to check the use frequency of the given complementizers in Old English, we again studied "The Psalms" written in Old English.

The entire selection of the comparative constructions with the complementizers *gelice* and *swa* made up 238 examples. We took into account the following variants of the given complementizers:

- **swa**

  þonne ic mine handa to þe holde þenede
  and mine sawle sette mid mode,
  ***swa** eorðan bið ansyn wæteres;*
  gehyr me hrædlice, hæl me syþþan (Psalm 143:6).
  > I stretch out my hands to You;
  > My soul longs for You, as a parched land. Selah.

- **swa swa**

  *Forþæm min unriht me hlypð nu ofer heafod, and **swa swa** hefig byrðen*
  hy synt gehefegode ofer me (Psalm 38:4).
  > For my iniquities are gone over my head;
  > As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.

- **swa ... swa**

  *And he gedeð þine rihtwisnesse mannum **swa** sweotole **swa** sunnan, and þinne dom he gedeð*
  ***swa** sweotolne **swa** sunne byð to middes dæges* (Psalm 37:6).
  > He will bring forth your righteousness as the light
  > And your judgment as the noonday.

- **gelice**

  *Ac heo wæron þam wyrcendum wel **gelice***
  and æghwylcum, þe him on treowað (Psalm 115:8).
  > Those who make them will become like them,
  > Everyone who trusts in them.

- **anlice**

  Sweotule þa forweorðað and ðu sylf wunast;
  *eall forwisnað wædum **anlice**,*
  and ðu hi onwendest, swa man wrigels deð,
  and hi beoð to worulde wended syþþan (Psalm 102:26).
  > Even they will perish, but You endure;
  > And all of them will wear out like a garment;
  > Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

- **onlic**

  þonne forð cumað fyrenfulra ðreat,
  *heap synnigra hige **onlic**;*
  ealle þær ætywað, þa ðe unrihtes
  on weoruldlife worhtan geornast,
  þæt hi forwordene weorðen syþþan
  on worulda woruld and to widan feore (Psalm 92:7).
  > That when the wicked sprouted up like grass
  > And all who did iniquity flourished,
  > It was only that they might be destroyed forevermore.

What is interesting and significant is that out of 238 examples 56 comparative constructions are used with *gelice*, and 182 – with *swa*, which means that the use frequency of these complementizers in Old English is diametrically opposed to Modern English. Having achieved such a result, we decided to confirm the statement about the use frequency of *like* and *as* in Modern English analyzing the comparative constructions of "The Psalms" in New American Standard Bible. The entire corpus consists of 227 examples, among them 142 comparative constructions were used with

like and 85 – with *as*, which confirmed once again that *like* is the most productive index of comparative constructions in Modern English.

Comparing the comparative construction of "The Psalms" in Old English with those in Modern English, we paid attention to the variance between the comparative constructions of these two translations of one of the most readable books of the Bible. Only 158 comparative constructions completely coincided.

For example, the following comparative construction was not found in "The Psalms" written in Old English:

For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD,
You surround him **with favor as with a shield** (Psalm 5:12)

Forþam þu eart se Drihten þe gebletsast and geblissast rihtwise. Þu us gecoronadest and geweorðadest, and us gescyldst mid þam scylde þinre welwilnesse.

Or on the contrary, in the Old English version there is a comparative construction, but it is not to be found in the modern one:

Hi me on digle deorce stowe
settan sarlice samed **anlice,**
swa *þu worulddeade wrige mid foldan;*
is me ænge gast innan hreðres,
and me is heorte on hearde gedrefed.

Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me;
My heart is appalled within me (Psalm 143:4)

The analysis of the use frequency of the complementizers in comparative constructions in Old and Modern English let us draw the conclusion: together with the graphic expression of the complementizers *gelice* and *swa* changed their semantic loading. If in Old English the first and foremost meaning of the complementizer *swa (as)* was the meaning of comparison, then with time this priority was taken over by the complementizer *gelice (like)*, which again confirmed the statement about the constant evolution of the language.

In Modern English one more dominant means of expression of the functional and semantic category of comparison is the comparative construction with the complementizer *as...as*, which in the language system receives a broad meaning (i.e. to indicate the feature or similarity of two things) that later finds its variations in discourse. Such comparative constructions are used

- to compare the like feature of the object and subject of comparison:
  sometimes, I feel sure he is **as** *mad* **as** *a hatter*
- to compare clauses:
  since she is now **as** *anxious to destroy the will,* **as** *she was before to make it*
- to express relative or demonstrative meaning:
  as *long* **as** *I might be thought to be pursuing him, the criminal would be off his guard*

Analyzing the category of comparison in Old English, expressed by a comparative construction introduced by the index of comparative relations *swa ... swa*, we found out that this comparative construction was used

- to compare the like feature of the object and subject of comparison:
  swá ealde swá híe þá wǽron híe gefuhton – **as** old **as** they then were, they fought
- to introduce the comparative degree:
  swá norðor swá smælre – **the** furth**er** north one goes, **the** narrow**er** the land becomes
- to compare clauses:
  swá hé þurh féondscipe tó cwale manige démde, swá þéah him Dryhten eft miltse gefremede – **although** he sentenced many to death through hostility, **nevertheless** the Lord again did him mercy
- to express relative or demonstrative meaning:
  swá forþ swá uncre wordgecwidu fyrmest wǽron – **as** far **as** ever our agreements went

Let us see, with time, only the graphic expression of the index of comparative relations has changed, but the semantic loading remained the same, with the exception of introducing the comparative degree, which was inherent to the Old English index.

In conclusion, comparison is a philosophic as well as linguistic category. But the logical model of comparison differs from the linguistic one in the number of components, as the unity of language and thought does not mean their absolute coincidence. We distinguish four constituents of the linguistic model of comparison: 1) subject of comparison; 2) object of comparison; 3) basis of comparison; and 4) the index of comparative relations. This is the structure of a complete comparative construction, but one of the constituents can be absent. At the same time, the index of comparison is always present, because a comparison construction cannot exist without it. We determined the following markers of comparison in Old English: a) explicit – *swa, swa swa, swa ... swa (swa ... swa swa / swa swa ... swa), swylce, ægðer ge ... ge, gelic/gelice, anlic/anlice (onlic), eac swa ilce (swa ylce)*; b) implicit – *degrees of comparison*, the word "*genealæcan*". With time, only the graphic expression of the index of comparative relations has changed, but the semantic loading has remained largely unchanged.

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