

Figurative Comparisons as Manifestations of Linguistic Creativity in Contemporary German Women's Fiction

Образні порівняння як прояви лінгвістичної творчості в сучасній німецькій жіночій художній літературі

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Анотація

This article examines figurative comparisons as manifestations of linguistic creativity in contemporary German women's fiction. The study analyzes the semantic classification and lexical composition of figurative comparisons in novels by L. Beck, H. Lind, and S. Fröhlich. Using continuous sampling methodology, the corpus of figurative comparisons was analyzed. A classification of figurative comparisons is provided based on the affiliation of the comparison image (standard) to specific semantic spheres, and their lexical content was determined. The analysis revealed that comparison images are represented by 7 groups, in whose lexical content the noun dominates. The most representative are the semantic groups "Nature" and "Food", which allows us to draw conclusions about their importance for realizing the linguocreative potential of figurative comparisons in German. The study found that the most frequent are figurative comparisons with the similarity indicator "wie" (like) of the type 'Adj. wie NP', in which the basis of comparison (tertium comparationis) is explicitly represented by the adjective. As a result of the analysis, it was revealed that by structure most of the author's comparisons are extended, containing a descriptive part that enhances their figurative character. The study found that authorial figurative comparisons are characterized by hyperbole, humor, irony, emotionality and expressiveness, which is due to the semantic incompatibility of comparison components when heterogeneous objects and phenomena from different semantic spheres are compared, to which the authors consciously resort. Most indicative in this respect are authorial comparisons where a person is associated with natural phenomena. The analysis shows that too great a distance between the object and the image of comparison determines the opacity of comparison semantics and can cause difficulties in interpretation. It was established that the most compact comparative constructions are represented by compound nouns and adjectives. The functions of figurative comparisons are determined, with the main ones being characterizing and evaluative. The results of the analysis have been generalized and prospects for further research have been outlined.


У статті досліджуються образні порівняння як результат лінгвістичної та творчої діяльності авторок сучасної німецькомовної жіночої прози. Представлено огляд існуючих визначень поняття творчості та похідного від нього поняття лінгвокреативності.


This article is a translated and updated version of the article published in [18].

Основна увага зосереджена на ролі лінгвокреативності в контексті образних порівняльних конструкцій як прояву лінгвокреативної природи індивідуального авторського стилю. Розглянуто фактори, що визначають лінгвокреативну природу та потенціал образних порівняльних конструкцій у літературному тексті. З'ясовано сутність поняття порівняння як стилістичного тропу та прийому. Визначено процедуру відбору та аналізу таких порівнянь, яка полягає у виявленні об'єкта, образу, основи для порівняння та показника подібності порівняння. Проаналізовано корпус образних порівнянь, відібраних методом суцільної вибірки з літературних текстів. Наведено класифікацію образних порівнянь на основі приналежності образу порівняння (стандарту) до певної семантичної сфери, визначено їх лексичне наповнення. Виявлено, що образи порівнянь представлені 7 групами, в лексичному змісті яких домінує іменник. Найрепрезентативнішими є семантичні групи «Природа» та «Їжа», що дозволяє зробити висновок про їх важливість для реалізації лінгвокреативного потенціалу образних порівнянь у німецькій мові. Встановлено, що найчастотнішими є образні порівняння з показником подібності «wie» типу «Прикм. wie ІГ», в яких основа порівняння (*tertium comparationis*) експліцитно представлена прикметником. У результаті аналізу образних порівнянь виявлено, що за структурою більшість авторських порівнянь є поширеними, тобто містять описову частину, яка підсилює їх образний характер. Встановлено, що авторські образні порівняння характеризуються гіперболічністю, гумором, іронією, емоційністю та експресивністю, що зумовлено семантичною несумісністю компонентів порівняння, коли порівнюються різноманітні об'єкти та явища з різних семантичних сфер, до чого свідомо вдаються авторки. Найпоказовішими в цьому плані є авторські порівняння, де людина асоціюється з природними явищами. З аналізу авторських порівнянь випливає, що занадто велика відстань між об'єктом та образом порівняння визначає непрозорість семантики порівнянь і може спричинити труднощі в їх інтерпретації. Встановлено, що найкомпактніші порівняльні конструкції представлені складними іменниками та прикметниками. Визначено функції образних порівнянь, основними з яких є характеризуюча та оцінна. Результати аналізу авторських образних порівнянь узагальнено та окреслено перспективи подальших досліджень.

1. Introduction

The concept of “linguistic creativity” is relatively new in linguistic studies. It essentially derives from the concept of “creativity”. In the 1950s, creativity became a central theme and

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subject of philosophical, psychological, as well as linguistic and pedagogical research, and the term “creativity” was coined in 1950 by American psychologist and intelligence researcher J.P. Guilford. “Creativity” is understood as a new model of intelligence in which creative thinking plays a central role [5].

Recent linguistic studies mark a growing interest in the phenomenon of linguistic creativity (K. Brodbeck, D. Haidanka, Zh. Horina, N. Mykhaylychenko, H. Monastyretska, J. Munat, R. Pope, C. Pusch, B. Serebryannykov), whose conceptual expression originates from B. Serebryannykov, who introduced the term “linguistic creativity” into scientific discourse in 1970. According to B. Serebryannykov, linguistic creativity is understood as the connection between linguistically creative thinking and word formation [26]. The analysis of existing studies on this topic makes it possible to summarize the aspects of linguistic creativity presented in these works.

Scholars agree that the creative function of language, based on linguistically creative thinking, encourages speakers to discover new semantic connections in the familiar and to utilize the potential of linguistic units in new ways [21, 10]. For most linguists, the following aspects of linguistic creativity or linguocreativity are significant: productive word formation processes and other aspects of dynamic lexicology such as metaphor, metonymy, and borrowing [20]; creating a multitude of figurative products from a limited number of linguistic resources to achieve a communication goal [23, 24]; creativity as originality and eccentricity, as a creative act of creating something new and extraordinary [11, 19]; the ability to reshape linguistic material according to communicative needs [9].

From the approaches to the concept of linguistic creativity cited above, it emerges that linguistic creativity can occur at all language levels in the tension between the familiar old and the unknown new, whereby figurative products characterized by originality, inventiveness, and expressivity can be created from linguistic resources.

These approaches are utilized here, as the present contribution sets itself the task of examining figurative comparisons in the context of linguistic creativity by authors of

modern German women's literature. Figurative comparisons originating from the authors are classified and subjected to lexical-semantic analysis. It shows how they are created and how they are handled.

2. Figurative Comparisons: Semantic Classification and Lexical Content

Before we proceed to the actual analysis of the linguistic material, let us briefly address the concept of "comparison", its definition and its essence.

In modern linguistics, comparison is not a new topic, yet interest in it does not diminish over time. The question of the linguistic status of comparison remains particularly controversial.

Most researchers assume that comparison occupies a position between means of figurativeness and imagery [22]. Some scholars distinguish between comparisons and tropes, while others see comparison as the simplest trope [1, 8, 29, 28]. According to B. Sowinski, comparisons are the simplest and possibly even the oldest forms of linguistic clarification through images [29, 28]. R. Behrens also holds this view: "No other stylistic tool condenses figurative language like comparison, which makes one image tangible through another image, explains it, or transposes it into another image" [3].

Regarding the concept of "comparison", it is objectively defined in scholarly literature and is considered a stylistic device that juxtaposes two facts from different conceptual areas and thereby evokes a wealth of figurative associations [25]; as a means of figurativeness that connects two words from different conceptual areas and economically evokes a wealth of figurative, sometimes pictorial associations through mere juxtaposition [22]; as bringing together and examining different facts or expressions based on certain commonalities [29, 28]; as illustrating a concept through explicit analogy to another based on certain commonalities (*tertium comparationis*) [27]; as a rhetorical figure consisting of the assimilation of one object to another, whereby both objects share common features [1]. I. Galperin describes

comparison as a trope and points out that the mandatory prerequisite for a comparison is the similarity of one feature with complete divergence of the others [8].

Comparison is based on the similarity of two different facts of objective reality and serves for figurative expression based on direct word meaning. The basis for comparison is formed by the so-called *tertium comparationis* (the third, the common element of comparison), which establishes the similarity relationship between the designated fact and the figurative expression [27, 29, 28].

In summary, the concept of “comparison” is understood as a form of juxtaposition of two or more objects that have commonalities. The common element, indicated by *tertium comparationis*, can be named or thought by the recipient. Two ways are highlighted through which comparisons can be made: An object can be compared with another that is similar to it based on its features, as it belongs to the same type or comes from a similar environment, or objects are compared that belong to different areas. Linguists point to the figurative function of comparison, its expressiveness, the ability to describe the object being compared and thus express the author’s intention [27, 29, 28]. The effect of comparison, according to N. Naer, depends primarily on the clarity and persuasiveness of the comparison basis. The compared concepts can be far apart from each other, fundamentally different from each other. In this case, they have a figurative effect [22]. Comparison is called a lexical-grammatical trope because it represents a variety of attribute or adverbial [22].

Figurative comparisons originating from German female authors, representatives of women’s literature, L. Beck, H. Lind, and S. Fröhlich, were chosen as the object of analysis. The language of their novels is witty, self-ironic, humorous, and emotionally expressive. And a large number of individual occasional word formations in their texts testifies to the linguistic creativity and word-forming imagination of these authors [17].

The material consists of prose texts by L. Beck (“Get Rich by Marrying! or How I Threw My Hippie Ideals Overboard at 58”), H. Lind (“The Magic Woman”, “The Super

Woman”, “The Women’s Nest”, “Men Are Like Shoes”), and S. Fröhlich (“Family Pack”, “Loyalty Points”).

All comparisons we found and listed from the novels by L. Beck, H. Lind, and S. Fröhlich were subjected to analysis. An attempt was made to classify the units under investigation according to the affiliation of comparative images in comparative structures to thematic areas. Seven thematic areas with corresponding sub-areas were identified: “Human”, “Kitchen and Food”, “Technology”, “Nature” (with subgroups “Landscape and Weather”, “Fauna”, “Flora”), “Culture” (with subgroups “Media World”, “Games, Toys, Hobbies”), “Fairy Tale World and Religion”, “Artifacts”.

2.1. The “Human” Thematic Area

The first thematic area “Human” includes 25 comparisons and is represented by lexemes denoting people, appearance, body parts, professions, age. This group also includes proper names (first and last names) of prominent politicians and actors: Kind (child), Engel (angel), Schlüsselkind (latchkey child), Dreijährige (three-year-old), Sechzehnjährige (sixteen-year-old), Oberprimaner (senior high school student), Haare (hair), Haupthaar (head hair), Hitlerfrisur (Hitler haircut), General, Gefreiter (private), Kosmetikerin (beautician), Ringrichter (referee), Delinquentin (female delinquent), Primaballerina, Beinumfang (leg circumference), matronig (matronly), engelgleich (angel-like), pferdehaarig (horse-haired).

In comparative structures, they serve to describe and characterize behaviors, actions, feelings, mental and emotional states, appearance and character of novel characters. Shy and insecure figures are associated with children: “It’s me, Elfe”, Sabine comes out from behind me and looks timid like a three-year-old on her first day of kindergarten [7]. The impression of a very cunning, shrewd man is evoked by the following comparative image: This crook has at least as many tricks up his sleeve as I have hairs on my head [2]. The dogmatic behavior, a threatening posture of a woman is compared with the behavior of a strict, fearsome general towards his subordinate: Ursula Kobalik put her hands on her

massive hips and looked at me like a general at a little private who hadn't saluted properly [15].

Comparing a novel character with a prominent actress triggers an idea of a very attractive woman with beautiful long hair and a perfect figure: I haven't seen her yet, but when I once asked what Michels looks like, my husband said: "Like that Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt's wife" [7]. To describe the appearance of an older, plump, unattractive woman, H. Lind uses the image of a matron: Lore was not fluent in beautiful German, which is why she cultivated the Rhenish dialect. It was precisely this handicap of hers, paired with her fabulously matronly appearance, that had earned her the role of Head Nurse Ällsbett [14].

2.2. The "Kitchen and Food" Thematic Area

The next thematic area "Kitchen and Food" and its lexical content are of particular interest to us because the treatment of linguistic aspects of the culinary in today's linguistics is current [16, 30]. Everything that belongs to human life is linguified, finds its reflection in language. It is not surprising that food as an important and necessary part of life and everything that belongs to it moves into the area of interest of linguistic research. The description of vocabulary from this sphere is primarily oriented towards the metaphorical realm. A. Wierlacher deals with German food metaphors [30], N. Ljubimova treats culinary phraseologisms [16].

The present analysis has revealed that lexical units from the culinary domain also appear as components in the comparative structure of figurative comparisons. The images from the "Food" domain in comparisons are visible, perceptible, perceivable and recognizable. They are connected with emotional and physiological feelings of humans and are firmly associated with them. With these images and the vocabulary that presents them, the authors create original figurative comparisons.

The thematic area "Kitchen and Food" includes 26 comparisons and is represented by lexemes used to describe and evaluatively characterize people, activities, objects

and substances: Brezel (pretzel), Brötchen (bread roll), Eier (eggs), Honigkuchenpferd (gingerbread horse), Joghurt (yogurt), Kokosnuss (coconut), Mahlzeit (meal), Magermilch (skim milk), Mandelkeks (almond cookie), Milchkaffeeschaum (milk coffee foam), Nudel (noodle), Pellkartoffel (boiled potato in skin), Pfannkuchen (pancake), Pudding, Puderzucker (powdered sugar), Vanilleeis (vanilla ice cream), Vanillepudding (vanilla pudding), Schokoladensauce (chocolate sauce), Soufflé, Spaghetti, Spinat (spinach), Streuselkuchen (crumb cake), Trennkost (food combining), Zitrone (lemon); buttrig (buttery), teigig (doughy), trennkostgeschädigt (damaged by food combining).

The authors associate the appearance of their novel characters with dough and baked goods. S. Fröhlich uses the image of a yeast cake with crumbles to describe the appearance of a small boy: I'm slowly starting to think I should take my son to safety. Who, if this continues, will soon look like a living crumb cake [6]. A pale, spongy face is compared with dough: I mean, I'm not a pancake. Although my skin, in poor lighting, can certainly look similarly doughy [6]. A sweet smile is related to vanilla pudding: I gave him an incomparably soft-washed vanilla pudding smile from Ulrike's repertoire [14].

H. Lind uses a comparative image from this area to describe weather phenomena. Snow that lies in its white splendor is associated with white fine powdered sugar: Snow fell silently on the tin roof of the savings bank opposite and lay there like powdered sugar [15]. Hair and hairstyle are compared with an airy soufflé that doesn't last long: The hairspray seems to have only limited effect. The stiff mass collapses. Like a soufflé that was taken out of the oven too early. Now my hairstyle resembles that of the innkeeper [7].

To describe positive as well as negative feelings and emotions, comparative images like yogurt, gingerbread horse, vanilla ice cream, chocolate sauce are used: My heart made a nervous hop, and I beamed like a gingerbread horse [15]; I can't say exactly how I imagined a marriage proposal [...] Nevertheless, I melt like vanilla ice cream under hot chocolate sauce [2]; Why are these great feelings subject to such fluctuations? Is it like with yogurt? Does everything just have a certain shelf life – and this is just limited? [7].

To describe character traits and behaviors, L. Beck uses the comparative image “coconut”: Half of this money actually belongs to Uwe. I can give it back to him sometime. In another life perhaps. ... Yes, I can be hard as a coconut [2]. The comparative image “warm bread rolls” is related to well-selling books: Everything’s great! The books sold like hotcakes [13].

2.3. The “Nature” Thematic Area

The thematic area “Nature” is strikingly large in number and amounts to 45 comparisons. It is divided into 3 further sub-areas: “Landscape and Weather”, “Fauna”, and “Flora”.

2.3.1. Landscape and Weather

The first sub-area “Landscape and Weather” comprises 9 comparisons and is represented by the lexemes Kraterlandschaft (crater landscape), Lava, Regenbogen (rainbow), Regenpfütze (rain puddle), Luft (air), Stadt (city), Wetter (weather), Atlantik (Atlantic), Wolkengebilde (cloud formation). As components of comparisons, they serve to describe and evaluatively characterize people and their qualities, feelings, activities, objects and substances.

S. Fröhlich relates the comparative image of lava to the feeling of boredom: And where there is no surprise, the great paralyzing boredom comes crawling very quickly, unstoppable like lava [7]. To describe positive feelings of joy, beautiful expectations, trust in the future, H. Lind creates a beautiful comparison in which she associates a rainbow with a glimmer of hope: “Look, Mom, a rainbow!” God, it was beautiful! Against a black-blue sea of clouds. So colorful and so huge! It waved to me from heaven like a new glimmer of hope [14].

2.3.2. Fauna

The second sub-area “Fauna” comprises 33 comparisons and is represented by nouns denoting representatives of the animal world: Äffchen (little monkey), Bergtapir (mountain tapir), Hamster, Katze (cat), Kater (tomcat), Lamm (lamb), Pfau (peacock), Schwein (pig), Fliege (fly), Kakerlake (cockroach), Kriebelmücke (black fly), Mücke (mosquito), Frosch (frog), Tausendfüßler (millipede), Adler (eagle), Geier (vulture), Dohle (jackdaw), Nachtigall (nightingale), Spatz (sparrow), Tier (animal), Vogel (bird). This group also includes

adjective compounds whose components come from the animal realm: *breitmaulfroschig* (wide-mouthed frog-like), *hühnerpopoig* (chicken-bottom-like), *pferdehaarig* (horse-haired), *walfischgleich* (whale-like).

To characterize the behaviors of her novel characters, L. Beck creates comparisons with the comparative images “tomcat” and “mountain tapir”. “I can see you don’t believe me”. – “Does that surprise you?” Bob shakes his head guiltily and takes a sip of beer. Somehow he seems to me like a stray cat looking for a diversionary maneuver for his misdeeds [2]. H. Lind also uses comparative images like birds and animals to describe her novel characters’ feelings, human qualities, behaviors and attitudes: Outside, lots of press people lurked, like vultures [13].

The authors use comparisons with the comparative image “insects” to describe the human qualities and behaviors of their novel characters. H. Lind compares photographers and journalists with mosquitoes and cockroaches: “There was another photographer, I just sent him away... I thought he was a completely normal person, but he kept watching you, and then he took photos of you..”. I was seized with powerless rage. They were like mosquitoes! Like cockroaches!! What had I done to them? Why wouldn’t they leave me alone? [12].

The authors also use compound and composite adjectives as comparisons. Most of these comparisons serve to describe the appearance and actions of their novel characters. In H. Lind, for example, we find the following comparison: When I swim, I plow through the floods whale-like and not at all lady-like [14].

2.3.3. Flora

The sub-area “Flora” as a provider of comparative images is numerically weakly represented and includes only 4 lexemes: *Johanniskraut* (St. John’s wort), *Topfrose* (potted rose), *Orchidee* (orchid), *Pilze* (mushrooms).

L. Beck chooses these comparative images to build comparisons for describing the physical-psychological condition of her novel characters: Back then I thirsted for attention

like a dried-out potted rose for water [2]. Poor well-being is presented through a vivid comparison with the effect of poisonous mushrooms: My mouth is so dry, as if I had taken highly poisonous mushrooms whose effect won't subside [2].

2.4. The "Technology" Thematic Area

The thematic area "Technology" as a provider of comparative images is also numerically weakly represented and is presented with 9 lexemes: Barometer, Kombi (station wagon), Leuchtrakete (flare), Leuchtturm (lighthouse), Raumschiff (spaceship), Sirene (siren), Tankstelle (gas station), Zement (cement), Winterreifen (winter tires).

H. Lind compares the sparkle in her novel character's eyes with a flare: Friedlinde [...] began to dab my eyelids and meticulously celebrate fine lines on the upper lid. "That makes a completely different eye", she said. "Then it shines like a flare" [12].

Creative, original comparisons with these comparative images are found in L. Beck's novel "Get Rich by Marrying! or How I Threw My Hippie Ideals Overboard at 58" and in S. Fröhlich's novel "Loyalty Points". L. Beck uses these comparisons to describe both objects and mental processes in her novel characters: My thoughts usually race through the past as fast as Norman's station wagon through the kitschy-beautiful landscape [2]. S. Fröhlich uses these images to express the emotional state and feelings of expectation of the main character of her novel: I feel a bit like at the countdown of a rocket launch. Now it will be decided how everything continues [7]. S. Fröhlich uses comparative images from the "Technology" area to describe a child's behavior more closely: The spinach splashes on my top and at the same time he starts screaming. Shrill as a siren [6].

2.5. The "Culture" Thematic Area

The thematic area "Culture" is numerically strikingly extensive and amounts to 54 comparisons. It is divided into sub-areas "Media World", "Games, Toys, Hobbies", "Fairy Tale World and Religion".

2.5.1. Media World

The sub-area “Media World” as a provider of comparative images includes 38 comparisons and is represented by words and word combinations, including proper names. They denote films and film titles: Film, “Alien”, “Harry and Sally”, Lindenstraße, “High Noon”; TV shows, shows, advertising: Super RTL, Sesamstraße (Sesame Street), Mascara-Reclame (mascara commercial), Shampoowerbung (shampoo commercial); TV and movie stars: Promi (celebrity), Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Brigitte Bardot, Jane Fonda, Meg Ryan, Jean Reno, Stephen Hawking, Reich-Ranicki; film characters: Helga Beimer, Sister Stefanie, Tangotänzer (tango dancer), Tootsie, old little Joe’s Father Cartwright, Bugs Bunny, Garfield, Kermit; book titles and characters: Momo and the gray men. This group also includes proper names of media personalities: Boris Becker, Doris Schröder-Köpf, Reich-Ranicki, Ursula von der Leyen.

Most comparisons with these comparative images serve to describe the appearance, feelings and emotions of novel characters, and the authors like to create and use them frequently. Comparisons can relate to the description of overall appearance, as for example with L. Beck: A gray wolf with a 1930s pencil mustache on his upper lip grins at me cheekily. With his straw hat and natural-colored linen suit, he looks like an Argentine tango dancer from old black-and-white films [2]; “So Jakob really has a wife?” – “Yes, and a disgustingly young one!” I complain... “And she looks like Brigitte Bardot – and of course has a perfect figure” [2].

In S. Fröhlich’s novels, we also find comparisons with this function: But having to discuss something once more in the evening with a colleague (who just happens to look exactly like Brad Pitt!!) sounds quite appealing [7]; Sister Lisa is on her name tag and she looks like Sister Stefanie from that stupid series on Sat 1. Exactly the same do-gooder type [6].

The authors use figurative comparisons to describe the appearance of characters in more detail, e.g., noses, hair, eyelashes: Wordlessly I take his hand and examine him. He is a head taller than me. His large nose reminds me of Jean Reno [2]; Christian Meran had full dark

hair that fell into his forehead when playing like in a shampoo commercial [15]; The child has hair like others have on their sixth birthday. Unbelievable. ... Dark, thick hair and eyelashes like from a mascara commercial [6].

S. Fröhlich uses the comparative image of the comic character from one of the most successful TV series for children to describe the manner of certain activities: The children [...] screamed that they had seen me on TV last night, [...] and the man with the white scarf had sung just like Kermit in Sesame Street. Really shrill and totally cool! [14].

2.5.2. Games, Toys, Hobbies

The thematic sub-area “Games, Toys, Hobbies” as a provider of comparative images is presented by the lexemes Barbie, Duplostein (Duplo block), Puzzlespiel (jigsaw puzzle), Suchbild (hidden object picture), Schaufensterbummel (window shopping). Comparisons whose comparative images come from this group are related by S. Fröhlich to body parts: Not because my children play so charmingly with each other, but because I’ve parked them. In front of the TV. And that after Claudia threw Mark’s favorite Barbie at his temple and he tested in revenge whether Claudia’s head is harder than a Duplo block [6].

H. Lind as well as S. Fröhlich use them to describe and characterize sensations and mental processes: And a whole beam had fallen from my eye. At first it was just a suspicion. ... And now I was suddenly sure. One thing fit with another. Like a big, colorful jigsaw puzzle [12]; In Banff there is ... just everything that the Canada tourist heart desires. And in the middle of these tourist shops there is a Louis Vuitton store. At first glance, it looks like an error in a hidden object picture. With the motto: What doesn’t belong here? A Louis Vuitton store in the wilderness [6].

2.5.3. Fairy Tale World and Religion

The thematic sub-area “Fairy Tale World” includes 10 comparisons whose comparative images are presented with the following lexemes: Buddha, Engel (angel), Eisschollenfee (ice floe fairy), Geist (ghost), Göttin (goddess), Kobold (goblin), Märchenfee (fairy tale

fairy), Weltwunder (world wonder), engelgleich (angel-like), märchenhaft (fairy tale-like), paradiesisch (paradisiacal).

Figurative comparisons from this area serve to describe appearance: “Hello”, I said. “What are you doing here?” – “Oh”, he said happily. “The ice floe fairy in a summer dress” [13]; behaviors and body language: His round rascal face beams. Quick as a little goblin he then measures the room while Pat writes down the measurements [2]; The small, chubby seamstress smiles like a fairy tale fairy [6]; physical and mental state: Before me stands an emaciated, bald-headed wretch whose jeans and shirt have become too big. Uwe looks like his own ghost [2].

2.6. The “Artifacts” Thematic Area

The thematic area “Artifacts” comprises 15 comparisons. Lexemes that name the comparative images in the structure of figurative comparisons denote household appliances and household items, clothing: Bettwäsche (bedding), Blumentopf (flowerpot), Dollar, Frischhaltefolie (cling film), Jackentasche (jacket pocket), Korkenzieher (corkscrew), Rasierklinge (razor blade), Riesenzinken (giant prongs), Schmiermittel (lubricant), Schuhe (shoes), Spiegel (mirror), Steckdose (socket), Stecker (plug), Tasse (cup), Wischmopp (mop).

Comparisons from this area are used to describe and characterize objects, people, feelings, appearance, qualities, and customs.

To describe the appearance of their novel characters, the authors use figurative, fresh, often unexpected comparisons. L. Beck compares a wet dress with cling film: Soaking wet and completely out of breath, I then stand at Jakob’s door. Even without a mirror, I know that my chic Armani dress is clinging to me like cling film [2]. S. Fröhlich associates a head covering with a flowerpot: And there are also strange head coverings there. For example, this model that looks like an inverted flowerpot made of felt with a cord and pompom on it [7].

S. Fröhlich finds witty comparisons for noses. She compares noses with sockets and plugs: I love these noses, especially because mine is more in the direction of a socket nose. A large slender nose looks noble. You look so aristocratic [6]; Why the short cut then? So that my plug nose comes out better or because there are simply no other options with my hair? [7]. She compares hair with a corkscrew: She looks sympathetic. Wild dark hair with gigantic corkscrew curls. Like the woman from the L'Oréal commercial [6], and L. Beck associates hair with a mop: Besides, I only have my oldest T-shirt on, and on my head I certainly look like a mop [2]. H. Lind relates a woman's charisma to a razor blade: Dr. Kaltwasser is of course not my type of woman at all. She has the charm of a razor blade [12].

The authors use figurative comparisons to present their novel characters' ideas about life, love, and human virtues and vices. L. Beck associates security with a jacket pocket: At the latest now I recognize that I will always be able to rely on Jakob. With him, I will be as sheltered even in the greatest poverty as if I were living in his jacket pocket [2].

3. Component Analysis of Figurative Comparisons

Regarding the structure of comparison, researchers agree on this point. Terminologically, however, the components of the comparison structure are defined differently. In the comparison structure, H. Bergerová distinguishes three components: the comparison object, the comparison measure, and the comparison basis. By comparison object she understands “the phenomenon to be characterized through comparison”, fact X. The comparison measure is “the phenomenon” to which X “is related when comparing”: Y. The comparison basis is “the feature or criterion underlying the comparison”, i.e., the property E [4]. According to N. Naer, every comparison has a comparison basis, a comparison feature, which is the third element of comparison, the common element between the two components of comparison, although this comparison feature can be named or omitted [22]. R. Behrens uses the terms “image recipient”, “tertium comparationis”, and “image provider” [3]. B. Sowinski interprets the comparison structure as a four-part structure and designates the components as “image

– tertium comparationis – comparison particle/comparison verb – comparison image” [29]. According to L. Shipitsina, the full structure of comparison contains four components: transfer concept, tertium comparationis, linking element, basic concept [27].

In analyzing the structural components of figurative comparisons, we use the terms comparison object – comparison basis – linking element – comparison image.

The linking element relates the comparison image to the comparison object through the comparison basis. The analysis shows that figurative comparisons with the linking element *als* (as), *anders als* (different from) comparisons, are rarely found in the analyzed material: We often had more parasites in the house than cups in the cupboard [2]; “Your character”, said Gustav. “It has fallen deeper than the dollar on the New York Stock Exchange” [14].

Most figurative comparisons are comparisons with the linking element *wie* (like), or *wie-* comparisons with simple and complex structure. Simple comparisons are assigned structures whose comparison images are expressed with one word or phrase and contain no further specification as a descriptive part: My consciousness is now as strong as my leg circumference [14]; Like a clumsy millipede, the team now meandered across the meadow in a zigzag [13]. Complex comparisons contain a descriptive part and can be of varying length: Somehow he seems to me like a stray cat looking for a diversionary maneuver for his misdeeds [2].

The most important component of the comparison structure is the comparison basis, which can be expressed both explicitly and implicitly. This is shown through examples from the novels by L. Beck, S. Fröhlich, and H. Lind.

L. Beck creates original, often unexpected, fresh comparisons. In the first example, a comparison is used in which a person is associated with a rain puddle. This comparison evokes a negative idea of a petty, predictable man. This similarity is based on features that are clear: “not profound”, “transparent”: “Bob is easy to see through”, she says calmly. “He’s as profound as a rain puddle. I bet you it won’t take four weeks before he shows his true face” [2]. Here the contradictory fact is used, which serves to negate the property announced by “so profound”. In the following witty, self-ironic comparison by L. Beck, the

similarity relationship with a toy classic, the Barbie doll, which is very slim and wears many pink things, is semantically transparent: Unfortunately, every single model I squeeze into is a pastel-colored nightmare. And contrary to Pat's and the saleswoman's benevolent assessment, I feel in these cake dresses like a retiree Barbie with excess weight [2]. The humorous effect of the comparison is reinforced by the further specifications "retiree" and "excess weight". The "delicious" comparison: because obviously my daughter is swimming in happiness like an almond cookie in milk coffee foam [2] relates to the mental state, to the feeling of being happy. The comparison basis is explicitly given by the phrase "swimming in happiness".

In three further comparisons, facts from different areas of the abstract and concrete are related: Age is cruel as a creeping poison. ... After this frustrating doctor's visit, my mood hangs as low as the skin folds of a centenarian [2]; How should a woman be happy and keep her love fresh when she becomes gray and wrinkled from all the worries? Love dies faster than the bedding needs to be changed [2]. The comparison basis is explicitly given in all comparisons. Although the comparison objects come from distant areas, the interpretation of the similarity relationships between them presents no difficulties. The last two comparisons have a clear hyperbolic character. In the next comparison, the similarity relationship is established on the explicit comparison basis "flexible": Well, that Pat is still flexible as a freshly cooked noodle, I could see during yoga [2].

S. Fröhlich, in creating her creative comparisons, uses various comparative images. In the first comparison, she chooses a comparative image from the insect realm and relates it to her novel character, to the manner of her behavior. The similarity associations are based on the common comparison basis, on the explicitly given features "harassing" and "biting": ... when Sabine is on the prowl, nothing and no one stops her. "I'll look around", she just says and purposefully heads for her victim. She's a kind of human black fly – scouts the situation, then circles her victim and before it knows it, she has snapped. Black flies don't sting, they bite little pieces out and are very, very clingy little animals [7]. This comparison has a

humorous and ironic effect, and this impression is given by the descriptive part that follows the comparative image. The ironic effect of the comparison is reinforced by the adjective “clingy” used in the figurative sense and the diminutive form “little animals”.

The author finds original, witty comparisons for describing noses and hair: her face is without makeup and her nose looks like imported directly from Greece. Such a classic, narrow giant prong. I love these noses, especially because mine is more in the direction of a socket nose. A large slender nose looks noble [6]; Why the short cut then? So that my plug nose comes out better or...? [7]. The comparison basis in all cited comparisons is clear and is explicitly expressed, even through the most concise comparison compounds. The author likes to relate hair to spaghetti: My hair hangs ... down like overcooked spaghetti. They’re really not al dente. So limp [7]. The comparison basis is explicitly given.

The following two “philosophical” comparisons, however, leave the reader to think around the corner: Meanwhile, even spinach can disappoint me. But it still works on top. Just don’t stir. “Like my life”, I think and become melancholic. It works on top, but when you stir vigorously, black spots do appear [6]; A marriage is a bit like a gas station. At first you’re overwhelmed by the grandiose offer and the permanent opening hours. But the more often you go and the better you know your way around, the more disillusioned you become. A lot is not everything [7]. In the examples cited, facts are compared that come from areas too far apart. The comparison basis is opaque, which makes their interpretation difficult. Without contextual support, these comparisons are difficult to interpret. On the other hand, the conscious linking of incompatible facts causes a certain unexpected effect and originality of the comparisons.

H. Lind: Men are like shoes [15]. H. Lind has already initiated this comparison in the title of her novel and related two distant facts. The structure of the comparison is concise, the comparative image has no further specifications. This conditions the opacity of the comparison basis, although both facts are familiar, and leaves the reader much freedom of interpretation. In the next example, however, the comparison basis is explicitly given by

the verb “squealed”: I squealed like a pig that won the lottery [14]. The descriptive part following the comparative image “pig” with an unrealistic idea of a pig gives the comparison a humorous effect.

The following comparison relates two very distant facts. Here a woman, her body parts, are compared with natural phenomena: Her bosom heaved like a thunderous cloud formation brand Spitsbergen at sunset under her rust-colored hair tower, her gaze was cold and piercing as the cutting air at two thousand meters altitude just before dawn [14]. H. Lind associates the woman’s bosom with a thunderous cloud formation. This idea is based on the features “very large”, “towering high”, “pointed” and “swelling”. In the second comparison, the woman’s gaze is quite unexpectedly related to air. The features “piercing”, “instilling ice-cold fear” appear here as the comparison basis. In both examples, the comparison components are too far apart. From these examples it is evident that extended comparisons bring even more vividness into the sentence than simple comparisons. They are very clearly characterized by their hyperbolic character.

4. Conclusion

Figurative comparisons as a result of the linguistic creativity of German women novelists and as a distinctive feature of their writing style form the object of the present contribution. The material consists of novels by L. Beck, H. Lind, and S. Fröhlich. The linguistic analysis of figurative comparisons is focused on lexical and semantic aspects. The classification of comparisons was carried out based on the affiliation of comparative images to respective semantic areas. It emerged that most comparative images come from 7 semantic areas. Thus all comparative images were divided into 7 thematic areas with specific lexical content. Nouns dominate in the lexical content, adjectives occur much less frequently. Regarding the scope of the identified areas, they are represented in different numbers. The numerically strongest providers of comparative images are the following thematic areas: “Nature” (with 45 comparisons), “Culture” (with 54 comparisons), “Kitchen and Food” (with 26 comparisons),

“Human” (with 25 comparisons). This suggests their relevance for realizing the linguocreative potential of figurative comparisons in German.

The analysis of the comparison structure of figurative comparisons showed that it represents a four-part structure with the components comparison object – comparison basis – linking element – comparison image. Most figurative comparisons are comparisons with the linking element *wie* or *wie*-comparisons of the type ‘Adj. *wie* NP’ and ‘V *wie* NP’, in which the comparison basis is mostly explicitly given. In terms of scope, most *wie*-comparisons are complex. They are expanded by further specifications, a descriptive part, which reinforces their figurative character. From the analysis of the comparison basis, it emerges that figurative comparisons originating from the authors are original, witty, humorous, ironic, and hyperbolic in their effect. The reason for this lies in the conscious linking of incompatible components in their structure. The role of contextual support for the perception and interpretation of figurative comparisons was shown in cases of semantically opaque comparison basis in their structure.

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