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SIMILE AS A STYLISTIC DEVICE IN THE POETRY OF OSHIQ ERKIN

Sultanova Dildarakhan Azamat kizi
Teacher, Urgench State University

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the linguistic and poetic functions of similes in the works of Oshiq Erkin, a prominent contemporary Uzbek poet. Drawing upon both classical traditions and regional idiomatic expressions, the study analyzes a variety of similes in his poetry – from traditional comparisons to original and author-specific constructions. The paper categorizes similes formed by lexical and grammatical means, including idiomatic and culturally bound expressions. By closely examining poetic examples, the research highlights the aesthetic power of similes in conveying emotional states, national identity, and artistic imagery. The poet's creative approach in using comparative structures reflects his deep linguistic intuition and rich poetic taste.

KEYWORDS: *Oshiq Erkin, Simile, Uzbek Poetry, Linguistic Creativity, Lexical Comparison, Grammatical Comparison, Idiomatic Similes, Khorezm Region, Linguopoetic Analysis, National Imagery, Poetic Expression, Tashbeh, Metaphorical Language, Traditional Similes, Author-Specific Similes.*

In conducting a linguopoetic analysis of any literary text, we often encounter comparisons or analogies, whereby one object or idea is depicted by likening it to another based on shared characteristics. In philological studies, similes consist of four elements: the subject of comparison, the benchmark, the basis of comparison, and formal markers of comparison. The method of comparison involves juxtaposing one thing, event, or phenomenon with another object, event, or phenomenon that shares similar qualities. In classical literature, this is known as "tashbeh" (simile) [1]. Simile is one of the actively employed devices in literature, holding a unique place and distinct characteristics in both prose and poetry. Uzbek linguistics distinguishes two main types of similes: traditional (conventional) and author-specific [2]. Oshiq Erkin's works contain numerous examples of both conventional and unique similes. Due to his familiarity with classical literary traditions, the poet has successfully integrated these traditions into his poetry, employing distinctive comparisons enriched by classical influences.

One of the crucial linguopoetic tools in poetic texts is the use of similes. In the following poem from Oshiq Erkin's collection *"O'lguncha sizni derman"* ("I will call you until my last breath"), the poet compares himself to a hair thrown into the fire:
Hajringizda o'rtanaman, yonaman,
Erkam, mehringizga qachon qonaman,
O'tga tushgan **qil kabi** ("like a hair") to'lg'onaman,
Kelsa deb xushxabar, siz taraflardan [3]. *(Burning in your separation, I suffer and agonize, My beloved, when will your kindness satisfy me, Like a hair thrown into fire, I twist and burn, Waiting eagerly for good news from you.)*

In this poem, the poet vividly illustrates his torment in separation from his beloved, expressing his anguish as twisting and burning **qil kabi** ("like a hair") in fire. We know that a strand of hair burns by twisting and curling up. Oshiq Erkin effectively depicts his painful longing and expectation of news from his beloved using this simile. This vivid imagery strongly engages the reader, prompting deeper reflection on its artistic implications.

Qil kabi ("like a hair») to'lg'onurman, **qilcha** ("as little as a hair") ham parvoying yo'q, Tutsa hamki falakni ko'nglimning o'tlug' ohi [4]. *(I twist like a hair, yet you show not even the slightest concern, Though my burning sighs could shake the heavens.)*

This couplet from Oshiq Erkin's poem *«Mehring tushdi yurakka»* ("Your love touched my heart") also features similes constructed with the lexemes **qil kabi** ("like a hair") and **qilcha** ("as little as a hair"). Previously, we have analyzed the condition of agonizing depicted by **qil kabi** ("like a hair"). In the «Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek Similes, the simile **qil kabi** ("like a hair") is explained with meanings like «thin, extremely delicate, subtle, yet it does not address the idea of agonizing or twisting in fire. Additionally, the adverb-forming suffix **-cha** is another grammatical means for creating similes, illustrated here by the lexeme **qilcha** ("as little as a hair"). The poet experiences such deep agony from love that his fiery sighs shake the heavens, yet the beloved remains indifferent—expressed metaphorically as **qilcha** ("not even a tiny bit") concern. The poet purposefully contrasts this hyperbolic depiction against his emotional experiences.

Similarly, Mutrib Khonakharabi, one of the prominent representatives of Khorezm poetry, also employed the simile **qil kabi** ("like a hair") in his works. For instance:
O'rtanurman furqat ichra o'tga tushgan **qil kabi**,
Otashi ishqingni kim so'zonasi derlar meni [6]. *(Burning in separation, I am like a hair thrown into fire, They say it is your love's flame that consumes me.)*

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Mutrib Khonakharabi vividly depicts the state of the lover tormented by separation through this simile of a hair thrown into fire, further enhancing the poem's artistic value and emotional intensity.

«Indeed, this widely used and significant device in our language emerged as a result of the historical and cultural experiences of our people and their artistic imagination. In literary works, it appears as a product of the poet's sharp observational skills and deep aesthetic taste [7].

In Oshiq Erkin's poetry, it is common to observe that both lexical and grammatical devices used for forming similes serve clear poetic functions. Among the grammatical tools, the suffix **-dek** is used to create beautiful examples of comparison. This productive suffix is considered one of the primary means of comparing qualities or states of one object to another. The poet warns that if his beloved is disloyal or does not appreciate his love, that love may fall like autumn leaves and he may bend like an old man (**choldek** – *like an old man*), using a variety of similes to emphasize his loyalty in every stanza:
Xazon bo'lib to'kilsin ishqim,
Chok-chokidan so'kilsin ishqim,
Choldek ikki bukulsin ishqim,
Qadringni bilmasam men seni. (*Let my love fall like withered leaves, Let it be torn apart seam by seam, Let it bend like an old man, If I fail to value you.*)

In Oshiq Erkin's works, the lyrical hero likens his beloved to living beings in nature, particularly animals and birds:
Ta'zimdadir yo'lingda son mingta parivashlar,
Yursalar ham tovusdek, erkam, sollonib har yon. (*Thousands of beauties bow in your path, Even if they walk **tovusdek** – like peacocks – with grace in every direction.*)
In the poet's work, the image **tovusdek** (*like a peacock*) is frequently used. Since the peacock is considered one of the most beautiful birds, it is often employed as a basis for simile in both classical and contemporary literature.
Marg'iloncha shohi to'nda yonadur,
Kapalakday yengil uchib-qo'nodur,
Oshiq Erkin yurakdan quvonadur,
Tovus kabi yonib, o'zbek raqsiga
Xirom etganida Emikoxonim. (*In her Margilan silk dress, She flutters **kapalakday** – like a butterfly – Oshiq Erkin rejoices from the heart When Emikokhan dances with the grace Of **tovus kabi** – like a peacock – to Uzbek rhythms.*)

In these verses, the suffix **-day** serves the same function as **-dek**, acting as phonetic variants. Through the simile **kapalakday** (*like a butterfly*), the poet illustrates the dancer's delicate and graceful movements. The colorful Margilan silk dress complements this image with its bright butterfly-like hues. While the above lines focus on beauty and grace, the following example provides a comparison based on character traits:
Qumri kabi beozor, ko'ksin bezar ikki nor,
Go'yo chaman ichinda yetilgan gulira'no. (*As gentle as a **qumri kabi** – like a turtle dove – with a bosom adorned by two pearls, As if a graceful flower blossomed in the garden.*)

The turtle dove (**qumri**) is a bird known for its gentle nature. The simile **qumri kabi** (*like a dove*) serves to poetically highlight the beloved's gentle character and positive qualities.

It is known that in both classical and modern Uzbek literature, birds such as the nightingale, peacock, Simurgh, and Humo are considered traditional poetic symbols. Oshiq Erkin also compares the beloved's walk to that of a duck using the simile **o'rdak misol** (*like a duck*). According to the *Explanatory Dictionary of Uzbek Similes* [5], **o'rdak misol** (also **day**, **kabi**, **singari**, **-ga o'xshab**) means «to waddle unsteadily, swaying left and right.» The poet skillfully employs this form, reinforcing it with the repetition of the syntactic structure **yurishni ko'r, kelishni ko'r** ("look at her walk, look at her arrival»), emphasizing the imagery of the duck:
O'rdak misol tashlab har yon, oshiqlarin qilib hayron,
Aylab chamanzorda sayron, yurishni ko'r, yurishni ko'r,
Kelishni ko'r, kelishni ko'r. (*Moving **o'rdak misol** – like a duck – tossing side to side,*
Making all her admirers amazed in the garden promenade, Just look at her walk, look at her walk, Look at her approach, look at her approach.)

In another poem, the poet harmoniously employs the similes **misli qushdek** (*like a bird*) and **ohu kabi** (*like a gazelle*):
Silkitib yelkalarni, **misli qushdek** ucharsan,
Ohu kabi dirillab, ufqlarni qucharsan,
Og'ushlarimga yayrab, jonim, qachon tusharsan,
Ey olma-anor yuzli, shakar so'zli dildora,
Bo'lmas qiyomat qoyim bersang bo'sa bir bora. (*You shake your shoulders and fly **misli qushdek** – like a bird – Trembling **ohu kabi** – like a gazelle – you embrace the horizons...*)

"The writer creates various original similes to suit his artistic goal. These unexpected and elegant similes captivate the reader and vividly portray psychological or physical states before the reader's eyes [8]."

In Oshiq Erkin's works, many such similes with untarnished beauty serve as rich material for linguopoetic analysis. In his poem *"Qo'sha zulfing"* ("*Your double tresses"*), the beloved's twin locks are likened to snakes (**mor** – *snakes*). With each of her steps, her hair swings like the twisting of serpents. In the following lines, the poet compares her double tresses to the Jayhun (Amu Darya) and Sayhun (Syr Darya) rivers. Though not marked with formal simile indicators, the side-by-side mention of these rivers, with contrasting conjunctions, gives special emphasis. Her hair is also compared to silk. Despite the difference in nature of these objects, the poet successfully incorporates them into the lines, showing the depth of his imagination and artistic thought.

(*The beloved's movement through the garden is portrayed as enchanting and graceful. Her braids, compared to golden silk and symbolized by the Jayhun and Sayhun rivers, enhance the poetic image of feminine beauty and allure.*)

In the following stanza of this poem, the beloved's hair braiding process is metaphorically compared to a whirlwind through a lexical device. As known, "whirlwind" refers to a strong spiral

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wind. The next line describes her hair as black as the Yaldo night. The Yaldo night, occurring on the night of December 21 to 22, is the longest and darkest night of the year. Through this metaphor, the poet vividly emphasizes the length and darkness of the beloved's hair. The phrase "even more graceful than the whirlwind" adds an exaggerated beauty to the image. Furthermore, it is stated that her hair is longer than *arshun* (an ancient measure of length), giving additional emphasis to the grandeur of her appearance.

O'rsang agar shonalar bamisoli quyundir,
Yaldo tuniday qora quyundan ham fuzundir,
Qirq kokiling qirq quloch, arshundan ham uzundir
Oliy bu jilvagarlik xush olguvchi fusundir,
Oshiq Erkinni Majnun aylagan shu husndir,
Biri Jayhun, biri Sayhun yor seni qo'sha zulfing [4]. (*The poet likens the beloved's locks to a whirlwind and the Yaldo night, stressing the richness, darkness, and the captivating quality of her hair. Her forty braids—each a fathom long—are described as being even longer than arshun, which conveys an epic, almost mythical beauty.*)

In the poem "Mashhur jahonsan, Vatan" dedicated to praising the homeland, the poet uses various metaphors. Oshiq Erkin compares Uzbek girls to the moon (*moh*), the sky to turquoise or cream, and most notably, the snowy peaks of the mountains to the traditional Uzbek headdress *salla*. Through this poetic imagery, he effectively conveys the beauty of the homeland to the reader.

Ayollaring mehri daryo, qizlaringni moh deyinmu,
Osmonlaring feruzarang yo qaymoqday oq deyinmu,
Javlon urgan jilg'alaring, buloqlaringni madh etib,
Cho'qqilari oq sallali tog'laringni maqtayinmu [4]?! (*In these lines, the poet personifies the natural beauty of Uzbekistan through comparisons: the love of women to a river, girls to the moon, the sky to turquoise or cream, and snow-covered mountains to a white turban. Each metaphor enriches the poetic image of the homeland.*)

In the following lines taken from Oshiq Erkin's poetry collection *"Ko'ngil gavhari" (The Pearl of the Heart)*, the poet likens his heart to a wild river. The comparison is made through the lexical device *"kabi" (like)*. The poet questions his once-passionate heart, which now remains silent in the face of life's heavy blows. This adds a special emphasis to the metaphor, and can be considered one of the poet's individual-authorial similes.

Asov daryo kabi jo'shqin eding sen,
Nechun erta tolding, yuragim, nechun [12]? (*In this couplet, the lover addresses his heart, once compared to a raging river, asking why it has lost its strength so early.*)

"The Uzbek language is one of the richest languages on Earth, in which a vivid image is often created by expressing one concept through comparison with another. In our language, there exists a vast and weighty reservoir of what are called traditional similes [11]." There are various types of similes in Oshiq Erkin's work. Some are formed through lexical means:

Sadoqatdan gar uzoq ersa, unday,
Oshiqning saroyi misli qafas [4]. (*The poet compares the heart of a lover without loyalty to a cage.*)
Chamandagi alafdur bevafolar,
Sevgi gulshanida go'yoki bir xas [4]. (*The unfaithful are likened to grass or a useless weed in the garden of love.*)
La'li zanahdoni olar hushimni,
G'o'yo ichgan kabi qirmizi boda [4]. (*The poet describes his beloved's lips as so alluring they intoxicate like red wine.*)
Cho'g' tushdi-yu ko'ksima, chaqnab ketdi ko'zlarim,
Jannatga mengzab bag'ri, ko'ksida nor yetishgach [4]. (*The lover describes the moment of seeing a pomegranate ripen on the beloved's chest, likening her bosom to paradise and his emotions to sparks from burning embers.*)
Shovqin-suron, qiy-chuvidan boshlar osmon, Bolalik uy bo'lsa hamki, misli bozor [4]. (*Even though it's a childhood home, the noise makes it seem like a busy marketplace—creating a metaphor for chaos.*)
Chechaklarning rangi o'zga tovlanib ko'rinar ko'zga,
O'xshatdim husni jamoling jonim, mushtariy yulduzga,
Siynasi to'lishgan norim, bu bahor mening bahorim [4]. (*The poet compares the beloved's beauty to the planet Jupiter and describes her full bosom as a ripe pomegranate—symbolizing fertility and spring.*)
Osmonlarning hilolasi, bo'stonlarning gul, lolasi,
Sadoqatda misli buloq, misli hayot shalolasi,
Jahonda bor ahli bashar shu zoti pokning bolasi,
Aziz tutgil onajoning, umri-guning hamrozi qil,
Jon-u jahoning baxsh etib, avval onangni rozi qil [4]. (*This stanza is a poetic appeal to value one's mother, likening her to the moon in the sky and to the flowers in the garden, while equating her devotion to a life-giving spring.*)

There are also similes formed through grammatical means such as the suffixes *-day* and *-dek*:

Farzandig birla ko'rmasang yayrab baham,
Tog'day baland mol-u dunyo kimga darkor [4]? (*Without joy shared with one's child, even great wealth becomes meaningless, like a tall but lonely mountain.*)
Lablari bor o'ymoqdek, husni oli qaymoqdek,
Qirmiz dudoqlariga jonim meni sadog'o [4]. (*The beloved's lips are compared to a sweet, delicate dessert like cream—evoking purity and allure.*)
Yayrar jon-u jahonim siz birla muloqotdan,
Sindirmish asal narxini bolday shirin so'zingiz [12]. (*The beloved's sweet words are compared to honey, suggesting their irresistible charm.*)
Shaydo ko'nglim, qamar yuz, husni olingga muhtoj,
Yanoqdagi kumushdek nuqra holingga muhtoj [12]. (*The moon-faced beloved is so beautiful that the silver mole on her cheek seems like a precious jewel.*)

In classical literature, it is common to compare girls to flowers. However, Oshiq Erkin likens girls not to flowers, but to flower petals—an original poetic image. As we know, flowers wither when picked or with the passage of time, but petals are always fresh and flourishing, which is why the poet likens young girls to petals.

Qo'shiq aytib jonon qizlarga,
Gul bargidek xandon qizlarga,
Ishqsizlardan hayron qizlarga
Ishq navosin cholmog'ing kerak.

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Shaydo yurak, yonmog‘ing kerak [4]. (*Girls who smile like flower petals deserve to experience love, the poet says, suggesting love as a force that gives life and meaning.*)

In many of Oshiq Erkin’s poems, we also find idiomatic similes:

Ko‘pdan xayolimda yaxshi gap yashar,
Jamoling eslasam yuragim jo‘shar.
Balkim, ikkimizning taqdirimizni
Aytayin deganim o‘sha gap qo‘shar.
Asal shu so‘zimni galsang aytaman,
Galmasang uzaver mendan ta’mani,
Sendan daryo qaytgan kabi qaytaman,
Yaxshi bir gapim bor, galsang aytaman [4]. (*The poet uses the idiom “like a river that turned back” to imply finality and steadfastness. Just as a river never returns, he says if the beloved doesn’t come, he will completely give up on her.*)

In Oshiq Erkin’s poetry, we also encounter the idiom “like a slave who found gold,” used as a simile. A *slave*—a person deprived of all possessions and rights in ancient exploitative societies—would naturally be overjoyed to find treasure. The poet uses this metaphor to express the intense happiness he would feel if his beloved were to step upon his eyes. The idiom “like a slave who found gold” is widely used in the Khorezm region.

Zavq olarman o‘zda yo‘q tillo topgan qul kabi,
Diydalarim ustiga gar qo‘ysang qadamingni [4]. (*The poet’s joy would be so immense that he compares it to the delight of a poor, hopeless man unexpectedly finding treasure.*)

As we see, Oshiq Erkin’s poetry features original similes such as *like a hair*, *like a dove*, *like a flower petal*, *like a whirlwind*, *like the Yaldo night*, *like a raging river*, *Jayhun and Sayhun* braids, and *like an embroidery*. These are complemented by traditional similes such as *like silver*, *like honey*, *like a mountain*, *like silk*, and others. The poet demonstrates his linguistic creativity through such original constructions. He skillfully combines words and idioms as tools of simile formation—revealing his unique poetic talent.

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