

The Use of Simile in Charles Dickens' *HARD TIMES*

Halima Benzoukh

Kasdi Merbah University of Ouargla (ALGERIA)

Abstract

As a literary work, Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* is full of different themes expressed by various linguistic devices. The novel embraces several facts related to the author's Victorian society. In *Hard Times*, the writer varies his style using different linguistic features.

The most frequently used linguistic device in *Hard Times* is simile. The author has an objective behind the overuse of this figure of speech: Dickens wants to transmit his impressions and views towards the Victorians. This paper comes to examine two main issues. First, it attempts to clarify the status of *simile* in the novel. Second, it tries to elucidate the concept of simile by formulating an operational definition and assessing different theories on this figure of speech.

Our study attempts to cast light on the author's motives behind the use of such a figure of speech (simile). This investigation aims at laying a finger on Dickens' overuse of simile in the novel, focussing on its structure and meaning. The adopted simile model is descriptive and it consists of particular structural and semantic components such as the tenor (T), the vehicle (V), the ground (G), the marker (SM) and the topic (Tp). All in all, this inquiry reveals that this linguistic device operates in an active manner and that the decoration's view needs more reconsideration. Finally, some suggestions are presented for further research on the subject.

Keywords: Simile, tenor, vehicle, ground, simile marker.

Introduction

In the present study, the structural analysis of simile will be based on those theories of Leech (1969) and Fishelov (1993). The terms 'tenor', 'vehicle', 'ground', 'marker' and 'topic' are applied to refer to the component elements of simile. For instance, in the simile form, 'Jane runs as a deer', 'Jane' is the tenor (T), 'a deer' is the vehicle (V), 'as' is the simile marker (SM) and 'running' the ground (G). Besides, the topic (Tp) is 'a description of Jane'. The marker is the determining factor in

simile: the latter will be a metaphor if its marker is omitted (Leech, 1969). If the two compared items (the tenor and the vehicle) belong to the same category, the simile will degenerate into a literal comparison (Miller, 1979).

The Selected Simile Markers in the Study

Aiming at investigating simile in *Hard Times* (HT), different simile markers are examined to know how they operate. These markers are often considered to make an open set, making it a difficult task to confine simile. There are, however, two structures, 'like' and 'as', which become apparent and clear by virtue of their frequency of occurrence in the novel. The simile marker, 'as', combines with other words to produce various structures. The following five simile markers form the basis of this investigation: 'like', 'as', 'as...as', 'as if' and 'as though'. In order to facilitate the search for similes in the novel, the choice of these markers is one of convenience and of exhaustiveness. Intuitively, it can be said that these markers are at the core of simile.

Specifying the linguistic context of the five simile markers in the novel can help to exclude some citations. 'As' may not signal simile if it is immediately followed by conjuncts such as 'to', 'yet' and 'for':

“As to a stocking, I didn't know such a thing by name. I passed the day in a ditch, and the night in a pigsty.” (HT: 13)

Also, 'As...as' does not indicate the occurrence of simile if it is presented with words like 'soon', 'well', 'often', 'much' and 'near':

“Almost as soon as they could run alone, they had been made to run to the lecture-room.” (HT: 8)

Investigation of Simile in *Hard Times*

In this section, each simile marker in the novel is examined in order to see how it works. Different similes are studied, focussing on their syntactic structures.

a. Like

'Like' is often regarded as the prototypical simile marker. It is used in different structures in *Hard Times* to represent various topics. Dickens makes use of 'like' to talk about animate and inanimate topics, describing his characters and places. In the opening chapter of the novel, Dickens has recourse to simile, portraying Mr Gradgrind when he introduces his model philosophy to his pupils:

“The emphasis was helped by the speaker’s hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie [...]” (HT: 1)

Through this passage, the author portrays the character of Thomas Gradgrind, focussing on his head. He makes the comparison between two items, 'the hair' and 'the crust of a plum pie'. Both items share the same quality that of 'covering'. The (T) is 'the speaker's hair', the (V) is 'the crust of a plum pie', the (G) is 'covering' and the (SM) is 'like'. In addition, the (Tp) is 'a portrayal of Mr Gradgrind'. The way Gradgrind's hair covers his bald head is similar to the one the crust covers the plum pie. Dickens attempts to give every detail about his characters. In this simile, he provides the reader with a full account of Gradgrind's baldness. This kind of portrayal helps to emphasize the nature of such a character as a practical man who only worships facts. Gradgrind's description shows that the author is "in full enjoyment of his own inventiveness" (Hyland, 1981: 65).

Dickens makes use of caricature to describe his characters' physical appearance (Forster, 1990). For this purpose, he introduces similes to draw more details about the people he describes in the novel. His portrayal of Bitzer's appearance defining the horse is another illustration of the use of simile in *Hard Times*:

“Bitzer, after rapidly blinking at Thomas Gradgrind with both eyes at once, and so catching the light upon his quivering ends of lashes that they looked like the antennae of busy insects, put

his knuckles to his freckled forehead, and sat down again.” (HT: 4)

Bitzer is not a usual human being; he is the product of his mechanical society. He gives a definition of a horse in the classroom in a robot-like manner (Hyland, 1981). In the above passage, Dickens describes Bitzer’s lashes as the antennae of an insect. Thus, the (T) is ‘Bitzer’s lashes’, the (V) is ‘the antennae of busy insects’ and the (SM) is ‘like’. The (G) is ‘quivering’: Bitzer’s lashes quiver as the antennae of the insects act. Besides, the (Tp) is ‘a portrayal of Bitzer’.

Throughout *Hard Times*, Dickens continues to portray his characters’ appearance and actions. He describes Thomas Gradgrind (Tom) as follows:

“But, Louisa looked at her father with more boldness than Thomas did. Indeed, Thomas did not look at him, but gave himself up to be taken home like a machine.” (HT: 10-11)

In this case of simile, Tom is compared to a machine controlled by his father. Syntactically speaking, the (T) is ‘Tom’, the (V) is ‘a machine’ and ‘like’ is the (SM). The (G) of this comparison is ‘acting automatically’. Moreover, the (Tp) is ‘a depiction of Tom’. Tom follows the direction of his father without thinking or showing any feeling. Through this case of simile, the author illustrates the theme of harsh education in the Victorian society. Mr Gradgrind deprives his son of feelings and emotions. The use of the indefinite article, ‘a’, generalizes such a portrayal. In the instance above, the psychological impression is one of generalization combined with the mental imagery involved.

Dickens is often known for his wit to create special characters in his novels (Grant, 1984). The author uses simile as a means to give more details about his characters. His description of Josiah Bounderby’s appearance stands as another instance of the use of such a linguistic device in *Hard Times*:

“A man with a great puffed head and forehead, swelled veins in his temples, and such a strained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes

open, and lift his eyebrows up. A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a balloon, and ready to start.” (HT: 12)

Referring back to the syntactic structure of simile, one will have the following elements:

- The (T) is ‘a man’ who is Mr Bounderby.
- The (V) is ‘a balloon’.
- The (SM) is ‘like’.
- The (G) on which the comparison between the two items is done is ‘inflating’. Bounderby is as round as a balloon.
- The (Tp) is ‘portraying Mr Bounderby’.

This portrayal of Mr Bounderby’s appearance enables the reader to have a full picture of his personal nature. This picture which is only associated with the Victorian environment can be regarded as a representative figure of those Victorian manufacturers. The author focuses on the roundness of Bounderby. It can be said that this character is typical of the caricatures of which he is known. Such a portrayal of Bounderby is Dickens’ picture of the self-made man of industry. Throughout the novel, Bounderby cannot stop his hypocritical accounts of his lowly origins. He proclaims his old poverty.

Dickens does introduce simile in order to add depth to certain issues in the story. These issues refer to the unpleasant reality of the Victorians during the Industrial Revolution. The author also uses simile to depict the bitter reality of the industrial town, Coketown:

“It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage.”
(HT: 19)

In this case, Dickens compares two items, ‘Coketown’ and ‘the painted face of a savage’. Both items have the same colour. Thus, the (T) is ‘Coketown’, the (V) is ‘the painted face of a savage’, the (G) is ‘darkness’ and the (SM) is ‘like’. The (Tp) of this simile is ‘a depiction of Coketown’. The writer tries to present to the reader a complete picture of this industrial town

with all its horror. Dickens criticizes the soulless architecture of this place.

The description of Mrs Sparsit's appearance after losing Louisa at the station is another example of the use of simile in *Hard Times*:

“Wet through and through: with her feet squelching and squashing in her shoes whenever she moved; with a rash of rain upon her classical visage: with a bonnet like an over-ripe fig [...].”
(HT: 192)

Syntactically speaking, the (T) is ‘a bonnet’, the (V) is ‘an over-ripe fig’ and the (SM) is ‘like’. In addition, the (G) on which the comparison is made between the (T) and (V) is ‘wet’: the bonnet is as wet as the over-ripe fig. The (Tp) is ‘a description of Mrs Sparsit’. Dickens appears to be enjoying poking fun at her in the scene in which she spies on Louisa and Harthouse (Hyland, 1981). This fun becomes immensely powerful when it is extended over hundreds of pages of the novel; it turns out to be a complete panorama of chaos and of people ridiculously pursuing selfish interests (Price, 1967). Through the portrayal of such a character, Dickens attempts to transmit his impressions and views to such members of the Victorian society.

The study of the syntax of ‘like’ is not an easy task, for one cannot clearly distinguish between its use as a conjunction and as a preposition. In the novel, it generally seems to behave as a preposition. Using some ‘like’ similes, the author tries to form mental connections, pushing the narration to an imaginary side by recreating it in the reader's mind. The following instance, in which ‘like’ is used as a preposition, illustrates this motive of Dickens' use of ‘like’ similes:

“Thus saying, Mrs. Sparsit, with her Roman features like a medal struck to commemorate her scorn of Mr. Bounderby, surveyed him fixedly from head to foot, swept disdainfully past him, and ascended the staircase.” (HT: 265)

In the above example of simile, the (T) is ‘Sparsit’s Roman features’, the (V) is ‘a medal struck to commemorate her scorn of Mr Bounderby’ and the (SM) is ‘like’. Moreover, the (G) is ‘distinctiveness’: Mrs Sparsit’s Roman features are as distinctive and unique as a medal. The (Tp) is ‘a portrayal of Mrs Sparsit when Bounderby discharges her without any ceremony’. Although she falls from her exalted position as Bounderby’s housekeeper, Mrs Sparsit is still proud of her respectable family that has fallen down in these hard times. Through tackling this character, Dickens attacks the class-consciousness of England during the Victorian period (Hyland, 1981).

In brief, the simile marker, ‘like’, is used to describe characters, their actions and some places in the novel. Therefore, one may say that ‘like’ helps the writer to develop his plot and enhances narration of his story.

b. As

‘As’ is often considered to be one of the most important simile markers because it can combine with other words to form different structures. The author makes use of the marker ‘as’ in *Hard Times* to tackle different topics.

Throughout the novel, ‘as’ is used either as a preposition or as a subordinator, introducing a clause of similarity. In the following instance of simile, ‘as’ functions as a preposition.

Coming back home, Stephen meets Mrs Pegler, a mysterious old woman who asks him many questions about Bounderby’s health and appearance. Stephen satisfies her curiosity, giving her information about the so-called self-made man:

‘As she straightened her own figure, and held up her head in adapting her action to her words, [...].

“And how did he look, Sir? Was he portly, bold, outspoken, and hearty?”

“And healthy,” said the old woman, “as the fresh wind?”

“Yes,” returned Stephen.’ (HT: 69)

In Mrs Pegler's speech, the comparison is between Bounderby and the fresh wind. In this case of simile, the (T) is 'Bounderby', the (V) is 'the fresh wind' and the (SM) is 'as'. Besides, the (G) is 'healthfulness'. Bounderby is totally free from any illness and full of energy. The (Tp) is 'a description of Bounderby'.

Another example of Dickens' use of the 'as' simile can be detected in the following extract that records Thomas Gradgrind's interview with Louisa about Bounderby's proposal of marriage:

““Why, my dear Louisa,” said Mr. Gradgrind, completely recovered by this time, “I would advise you [...]. Then, the question arises, Is this one disparity sufficient to operate as a bar to such a marriage? [...].” (HT: 87)

Mr Gradgrind tells Louisa that the difference in age is not a reason not to marry Bounderby. He asks her to consider the proposal of marriage in terms of tangible facts. In his speech, Gradgrind makes a comparison between this disparity and a bar, using the (SM), 'as'. Thus, 'disparity' is the (T) and 'a bar' is the (V). The (G) on which the comparison is set is 'stopping'. The bar is usually designed to stop people getting through a window or a door (Crowther, 1995). Moreover, the disparity of ages between man and woman can stop the project of any marriage. The (Tp) is 'a depiction of disparity in age'. Through this interview between the father and his daughter, Dickens exposes the abuses of the Victorian system of education that is based on facts, suppressing any kind of affection or imagination. Dickens also makes use of 'as' similes in order to complete the make-up of his characters. He describes Mrs Sparsit as follows:

“All the journey, immovable in the air though never left behind; plain to the dark eyes of her mind as the electric wires which ruled a colossal strip of music-paper out of the evening sky, were plain to the dark eyes of her body; [...].” (HT: 188)

At this time, Mrs Sparsit's insane jealousy of Louisa reaches dramatic proportions (Hyland, 1981). Mrs Sparsit tries to spy on James Harthouse and Louisa. Portraying Bounderby's housekeeper, Dickens makes a comparison between the dark eyes of her mind and the electric wires. In this simile, the (T) is 'the dark eyes of her mind', the (V) is 'the electric wires' and the (SM) is 'as'. One notices that 'as' introduces a clause of similarity functioning as a subordinator. The (G) of this simile is 'immovability'. Besides, the (Tp) is 'a description of Mrs Sparsit'. Through such a portrayal, the author presents the vision of such an evil-minded woman who is pleased to witness secretly the private life of others. He gives her a fuller role than usually offered to his eccentric female characters (ibid.).

Moreover, Dickens portrays Tom Gradgrind in the final scenes of the novel in the following way:

“In a preposterous coat, like a beadle's, with cuffs and flaps exaggerated to an unspeakable extent; in an immense waist-coat, knee-breeches, buckled shoes, and a mad cocked hat; [...]; anything so grimly, detestably, ridiculously shameful as the whelp in his comic livery, Mr. Gradgrind never could by any other means have believed in, weighable and measurable fact though it was. And one of his model children had come to this!” (HT: 254)

Realising Tom's responsibility for robbing Bounderby's bank, the Gradgrind family help their son to escape, urging him to join Sleary's circus. Tom is disguised as a black servant. In depicting this act, the author uses simile, comparing Tom with the whelp in his comic livery. Thus, the (T) is 'Tom', the (V) is 'the whelp' and the (SM) is 'as'. The (G) can be 'worthlessness' or 'underhandedness'. Moreover, the (Tp) is 'a description of Tom Gradgrind'. Tom does not represent a good example of the educational system of his father. He is a victim of his world that he is not able to understand. His great humiliation is to be found at the end of the novel, where he is shown as a black servant in contrast with his father's ambitions. The word 'whelp' usually

has unattractive connotations if it is used to portray a human being (Hyland, 1981).

In short, the (SM), 'as', functions either as a preposition or as a subordinator in *Hard Times*. Dickens uses this marker in order to portray his characters and their actions.

c. As...As

One of the main simile markers used in *Hard Times* is 'as...as'. This marker is thought to be introduced to intensify meaning, being possibly more effective than the other simile markers in this respect. Dickens does have recourse to 'as...as' to talk about different topics. He describes people, their actions and feelings, their mental states and verbal acts. He also depicts inanimate objects such as places in the novel. The author uses 'as...as' in a scene in which Bounderby, standing in front of the fire at Stone Lodge, talks to Mrs Gradgrind about the poverty he experienced in his childhood and the way he overcame all the obstacles to become a successful self-made man:

“[...] I passed the day in a ditch, and the night in a pigsty. [...] Not that a ditch was new to me, for I was born in a ditch.”

Mrs. Gradgrind, a little, thin, white, pink-eyed bundle of shawls, [...]; Mrs. Gradgrind hoped it was a dry ditch?

“No! As wet as a sop. A foot of water in it,” said Mr. Bounderby.’ (HT: 13)

In his speech, Bounderby makes a comparison between two items, 'the ditch' and 'a sop'. The ditch where Bounderby was born and the sop have the same characteristics. Thus, the (T) is 'the ditch', the (V) is 'a sop', the (SM) is 'as...as' and the (G) is 'wet'. The (Tp) is 'a depiction of the ditch'. To maintain the idea of being self-made, Bounderby does exaggerate everything about his childhood. He proclaims that the ditch was the place where he was born, considering it as a sop. Bounderby tries to show Mrs Gradgrind how miserable the life he lived was.

Dickens continues to make use of 'as...as' in order to describe his characters' feelings and emotions. One of these

characters is Mr Signor Jupe. In the Pegasus' Arms, where the circus' people live, Childers (a character) informs the two men, Bounderby and Gradgrind, that Sissy's father (Signor Jupe) has left the circus and his daughter. Childers argues that Signor did so because of a given reason:

‘ “When Sissy got into the school here,” he pursued, “her father was as pleased as Punch. I couldn't altogether make out why, myself, as we were not stationary here, being but comers and goers anywhere. I suppose, however, he had this move in his mind – [...]” ’ (HT: 30)

In his speech, Childers regards Signor Jupe as Punch. The latter is a comic figure in a traditional puppet show; he is the husband of Judy, another puppet (Davis, 1999). In this case of simile, the comparison is between ‘Sissy's father’ and ‘Punch’. Thus, the (T) is ‘Sissy's father’, the (V) is ‘Punch’ and the (SM) is ‘as...as’. The (G), which is clearly stated, is ‘pleasure’. In addition, the (Tp) is ‘a description of Signor Jupe’. According to Childers, Signor left his daughter for her benefit. Sissy's father was very happy and concerned that she ought to attend school.

The use of Victorian words such as ‘Punch’ is the way adopted by the author in *Hard Times* to introduce the Victorian culture to his readers. On these premises, Dickens is considered as one of the most important writers who represent the literary tradition of British realism during the nineteenth century. Throughout *Hard Times*, Dickens goes further in using similes for different purposes. In his conversation with Louisa, Tom says about Sissy Jupe:

‘ “She must just hate and detest the whole set- out of us. They'll bother her head off, I think, before they have done with her. Already she's getting as pale as wax, and as heavy as- I am.” ’ (HT: 45)

Within these words of Tom, there is a comparison made between Sissy and wax. ‘Sissy’ is the (T), ‘wax’ is the (V) and the (SM) is ‘as...as’. The explicit ground (G) on which the comparison is made is ‘paleness’. The (Tp) is ‘a portrayal of

Sissy'. Tom sees that Sissy does not become bright as usual as a result of Mr Gradgrind's treatment and education. Through such a comparison, Dickens attempts to facilitate access to the narrative of the novel, forming mental connections.

The use of 'as...as' is clearly observed in the speech of Stephen when he meets an old woman called Mrs Pegler, Bounderby's mother:

““Yes,” returned Stephen. “He were ett'n and drinking- as large and as loud as a Hummobee.””
(HT: 69)

Talking to Mrs Pegler, Stephen makes a comparison between two items, Bounderby and a humming bee. Following the syntactic structure of simile, the (T) is 'Bounderby' (he), the (V) is 'a Hummobee' and the (SM) is 'as...as'. The ground (G) which is explicitly stated is composed of two qualities that are 'largeness' and 'loudness'. The (Tp) is 'a description of Bounderby'. Bounderby considers himself as a self-made man worthy of respect and esteem. His constant claim that he has achieved success without the help of anyone forces people to notice his place in their society.

The use of simile in the novel enables the reader to have a complete portrayal of each character, including his/her different characteristics. One of these characters is Tom Gradgrind. In Chapter Three of the Second Book, the reader is given the following account of Tom's meeting with James Harthouse:

““He did, though,” said Tom, shaking his head. ‘I mean to say, Mr. Harthouse, that when I first left home and went to old Bounderby's, I was as flat as a warming-pan, and knew no more about life, than any oyster does.’” (HT: 121-122)

In the above passage, Tom denies the usefulness of his father's system of education. Tom confesses that neither him nor Louisa benefit from the philosophy of facts. To maintain this fact, 'as...as' simile is used in the above account. The comparison is made between 'Tom' and 'a warming-pan'. The

(T) is ‘Tom’, the (V) is ‘a warming-pan’ and the (SM) is ‘as...as’. The (G) is clearly stated; it is ‘flatness’. Tom does not know anything about life when he leaves Gradgrind’s home. The (Tp) is ‘a portrayal of Tom’.

Finally, one may conclude that the simile marker, ‘as...as’, is used for different purposes in *Hard Times*. Dickens has recourse to it in order to handle various topics. In ‘as...as’ similes, the ground is explicitly cited. This marker is often regarded as another form of ‘as’.

d. As If

It can be said that the use of ‘as if’ in the novel is due to certain motives of the writer. This marker usually introduces a hypotactic clause; it functions as a subordinating conjunction (Quirk et al, 1972). Dickens makes use of such a marker in portraying human beings, in depicting their actions and emotions, and in describing inanimate objects. Describing Sissy’s reaction after losing her father, the author uses simile to emphasize the nature of her make-up:

“It was so pathetic to hear her saying many things of this kind, with her face turned upward, and her arms stretched out as if she were trying to stop his departing shadow and embrace it [...]” (HT: 33)

In the above passage, the comparison is made between two actions. The first is ‘stretching out arms’ and the second is ‘trying to stop her father’s shadow’. Following the syntactic structure of simile, the (T) is the act of ‘stretching out her arms’, the (V) is the act of ‘trying to stop her father’s shadow’ and the (SM) is ‘as if’. The vehicle is an expanded clause that is of an action-oriented nature. Besides, the (G) of this simile is ‘extending’. The (Tp) is ‘a description of Sissy’. After a long search for her father, Sissy comes back home, running into his room. At that moment, she cannot understand his disappearance. Sissy, who represents the world of wonder, begins to call her father, being sure of his coming back. The subjunctive, ‘were trying’, denotes a hypothetical state.

Through the use of ‘as if’ simile, Dickens portrays Mr Bounderby after talking to one of his employees, Stephen Blackpool:

“So he left Mr. Bounderby swelling at his own portrait on the wall, as if he were going to explode himself into it [...].” (HT: 68)

In this instance of simile, the (T) is ‘Mr Bounderby’, the (V) is the state of ‘exploding himself into his portrait’ and the (SM) is ‘as if’. In addition, the (G) is ‘swelling’. The (Tp) is ‘a portrayal of Mr Bounderby’. The heart of Bounderby swells with pride at his power and achievement. He always claims that he makes success without the help of anyone. Bounderby considers himself as a benefactor of his employees. As a Victorian manufacturer, he is concerned with nothing but self-assertion and material success; he is a “Victorian ‘rugged individualism’ in its grossest and most intransigent form” (Leavis and Leavis, 1972: 253).

Mrs Sparsit, Bounderby’s housekeeper, is often treated with inordinate respect by her employer. However, her humiliation is to be found at the close of the novel, where she is blamed by Bounderby for hunting down his mother, Mrs Pegler. Dickens describes Mrs Sparsit’s reaction to this blame, using ‘as if’:

“This allusion to her favourite feature overpowered Mrs. Sparsit. She sat down stiffly in a chair, as if she were frozen; and with a fixed stare at Mr. Bounderby, slowly grated her mittens against one another, as if they were frozen too.” (HT: 233)

In this example of simile, the comparison is made between Mrs Sparsit and a frozen item like ice. Therefore, the (T) is ‘Mrs Sparsit’ (She), the (V) is ‘a frozen item’ (ice) and the (SM) is ‘as if’. The (G) of simile is ‘coldness’. The (Tp) is ‘a portrayal of Bounderby’s housekeeper’. Such a description destroys any sense of dignity this old woman wants to convey (Hyland, 1981).

Another place which is frequently depicted throughout the novel is the industrial town, Coketown. Using ‘as if’ simile, the author describes this town at the daybreak as follows:

“The town was as entirely deserted as if the inhabitants had abandoned it, rather than hold communication with him. Everything looked wan at that hour. Even the coming sun made but a pale waste in the sky, like a sad sea.” (HT: 147)

In the above description, Dickens compares Coketown to a place left by its people such as a desert. Hence, the (T) is ‘Coketown’, the (V) is ‘a place that is abandoned by its inhabitants’ (a desert) and the (SM) is ‘as if’. The (G) is ‘desertion’. In addition, the (Tp) is ‘a depiction of Coketown’. The author’s actual portrayal of Coketown comes in contrast with its previously mentioned description in the first chapters of the novel. He attempts to introduce to the reader another real scene of this town at the end of the working hours. Coketown is grimly depicted as a desert where there could be no one to talk to. Dickens presents a frightening picture of this town. Such a description reveals a hostile atmosphere: Coketown seems not to be a city for human beings. Readers can get the impression that Dickens’ main concern is of a particular sort of a social novelist who is anxious to show the evils of his society (Miller, 1965).

By using ‘as if’ similes, Dickens tackles different topics. The (SM), ‘as if’, usually functions as a subordinating conjunction, introducing a hypotactic clause (Quirk et al, 1972). In the latter, the author uses the subjunctive mood which refers to a hypothetical state (Leech and Svartvik, 1975). In this respect, one deduces that the subjunctive parallels the indefinite article as a means for generalization.

e. As Though

‘As though’ is considered as an old form of ‘as if’. As a subordinating conjunction, it also expands into a hypotactic clause. In *Hard Times*, this simile marker is used to talk about characters, their actions, their feelings and inanimate items.

In the second opening chapter of the novel, Dickens emphasizes the physical appearance of Bitzer, Gradgrind's pupil, making use of 'as though':

"His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white." (HT: 4)

First, the author describes Bitzer's skin as an unnatural one. Then, he uses simile, comparing Bitzer with something that can be cut. Hence, the (T) is 'Bitzer', the (V) is 'something that can be cut into parts' and the (SM) is 'as though'. The (G) is 'being colourless'. Besides, the (Tp) is 'a portrayal of Bitzer'. Bitzer is described as an anaemic and colourless child. He is a product of Gradgrind's system of education to which he has been subjected. Dickens gives Bitzer lifeless features. He appears to be intent on depicting Bitzer in uniformly repulsive terms. Bitzer is not a usual human being; he is a machine and a product of the Victorian mechanical age.

Further, Dickens has recourse to 'as though' simile to depict some places in the novel. Among these places are the little Gradgrinds' cabinets which are described as follows:

"The little Gradgrinds had cabinets in various departments of science too. [...], and the bits of stone and ore looked as though they might have been broken from the parent substances by those tremendously hard instruments their own names [...]." (HT: 9)

In the above example of simile, the comparison is made between the bits of stone and ore and their parent substances. Thus, the (T) is 'the bits of stone and ore', the (V) is 'their parent substances' and 'as though' is the (SM). Moreover, the (G) is 'hardness'. The (Tp) is 'a depiction of the bits of stone and ore'. Dickens presents another fact of the grim architecture of Coketown's buildings. Such a depiction emphasizes the unpleasant nature of the Victorian industrial environment. Throughout the novel, the writer never tires of depicting the threatening environment of the industrial towns of England. Using simile, Dickens also introduces Louisa, Gradgrind's

daughter, discussing with her father Bounderby's proposal of marriage:

“As she said it, she unconsciously closed her hand, as if upon a solid object, and slowly opened it as though she were releasing dust or ash.” (HT: 90)

In the above extract, the comparison is between Louisa's action of opening her hand slowly and her action of releasing dust or ash. Thus, the (T) is the act of 'opening hand slowly', the (V) is the act of 'releasing dust or ash' and the (SM) is 'as though'. Moreover, the (G) is 'the slow motion'. Louisa's act of opening her hand is so slow as the motion of dust or ash. The (Tp) is 'a portrayal of Louisa'. The author attempts to describe how confused Louisa is; she confronts her father with questions concerning the neglect of the development of imagination in her person. Louisa is an exceptional character among Dickens' heroines because “she has some inkling of the more passionate side of marriage and is even prepared to talk about it” (Carey, 1973: 161). She is “something of a breakthrough” for the author, escaping the two categories of pure maid and frump (ibid: 162).

Further, the author makes use of 'as though' simile to depict the scene in which Mr Gradgrind begs his old pupil not to arrest his son. Gradgrind tries to appeal to Bitzer's good nature that is lacking:

“Bitzer,” said Mr. Gradgrind, stretching out his hands as though he would have said, “See how miserable I am!” (HT: 258)

In the above account, Dickens compares Gradgrind's action of stretching out his hands to the act of saying “See how miserable I am!”. Hence, the (T) is the act of 'stretching out his hands' and the (V) is the act of saying, “See how miserable I am!”. Moreover, the (SM) is 'as though' and the (G) is 'appealing'. Mr Gradgrind stretches out his hands to appeal to Bitzer not to arrest Tom. The (Tp) is 'a depiction of Mr Gradgrind'. Although Mr Gradgrind begs Bitzer not to do anything against Tom, Bitzer thinks that he would be able to take over a good position at Bounderby's bank only if he

apprehends Gradgrind's son. The author tends to be suggesting the importance of feelings and wonder to be set against an inhumane society, where there is no recognition of individual needs and fancy.

In short, the (SM), 'as though', is used to deal with various topics, describing different people and places. This marker operates in a similar way as 'as if', even though the latter is the unmarked choice (Leech and Svartvik, 1975).

Reconsideration of The Concept of Simile

Different definitions of simile are provided by various linguists in several dictionaries. These definitions are usually regarded to be brief and to come in a form of comparison. It is also thought that they are vague and ambiguous at times. Cuddon (1992) defines simile as:

“A figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another, in such a way as to clarify and enhance an image. It is an explicit comparison [...] recognizable by the use of the words 'like' and 'as'. It is equally common in prose and verse [...].” (Cuddon, 1992: 880)

Most instances of simile that are taken from *Hard Times* reflect the facts that the above definition refers to. Nevertheless, the ambiguity is evident in the case that sentences like 'She is like her father' which is not a simile, but a literal comparison, will satisfy Cuddon's definition. Drabble (1985: 905) states that simile is a linguistic device in which “an object, scene, or action, introduced by way of comparison for explanatory, illustrative, or merely ornamental purpose, e.g. 'as strong as an ox'”. Further, Crowther (1995: 1102) defines simile as “a comparison of one thing with another,” giving instances with 'as...as' and 'like', e.g. “a face like a mask”.

All the above definitions maintain the nature of simile as a comparison. However, they still require more details to convey the precise concept of this linguistic device. One can restate these definitions, avoiding their brevity and ambiguity. Thus, simile is thought to be a comparison between two unlike items,

aiming at describing and intensifying the meaning of the first item. This kind of comparison is recognised by the use of words, such as 'like', 'as', 'as...as', 'as if' and 'as though'. 'Like' and 'as' are frequently used in similes to depict places and people's actions. 'As...as' is often introduced to describe people. 'As if' and 'as though' are usually used to explain people's actions. In the simile form, indefinite articles and subjunctives are used to generalize the comparison.

The use of simile leads the reader/listener to a mental frame of reference (Hatch and Brown, 1995). Similes intensify the meaning of words and can create new meanings without the use of new words (Hawkes, 1972). Overall, simile is considered as the most tangible form of metaphor, the latter being the blanket term which includes different figures of speech.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to investigate the use simile in Dickens' *Hard Times*, laying a finger on the author's motives behind the use of such a linguistic device. Different simile markers were dealt with to identify the syntactic structure of simile and its meaning. The apparent ones in the novel are 'like', 'as', 'as...as', 'as if' and 'as though'. The author has various objectives behind the use of such a device. He uses simile in a number of ways to facilitate access to the narrative of *Hard Times*. It appears that Dickens' motive behind the use of simile originates in the fact that he feels restricted by language. To a large degree, he uses the selected markers in material processes through the characters to develop the plot. He creates living characters that they go on living outside the book (Leavis and Leavis, 1972). Thus, the author may be attempting to move the reader to a parallel, mental world in his/her mind. The use of indefinite articles and subjunctives lends support to this view and can be as another indication of Dickens' attempt to generalize the issues tackled in his novel. The author may also have a psychological motive in using this device, aiming at involving the reader in a cognitive mode with a view to enhance narration. Thus, the semantic creativity in similes is both linguistic and psychological. The ultimate objective seems to be the recreation of the story in the reader's mind by means of

meaning intensification. Similes may be thus more functional than decorative as they were previously thought. The present study raises some questions; the more answers are obtained, the more questions arise. The syntactic arrangement of the simile markers exhibited few irregularities in the form of variant structures and unusual similes. Thus, the distinction between poetic and non-poetic forms of simile deserves closer investigation because it is an interesting issue to tackle. Finally, we hope that this study has helped to throw some light on the use of simile in literature.

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