Comparative phraseological units will be always interesting to the scholars because their number in the language is constantly raising.

In verbal comparative phrasemes, which is the subject of our analysis, the first components are used in literal meanings, and other components serve as differentiators and are used to intensify and specify the first components. Verbal comparative set expressions are not used in the passive voice and as results they cannot be transformed into the sentence that is why they are called, as A.V. Kunin puts it, phrasemes. The set expressions of this type always have a subordinating structure.

The characteristic feature of the verbal comparative set expressions with different types of dependence of components is the use of one monosyllabic Anglo-Saxon verbs: sell, shake, sleep, talk, work and others. There are also few assimilated borrowed verbs in this structural PU position, for example agree, die, fit, spend, take, treat, tremble.
Many comparative phraseological units are set expressions with expensive evaluation. From the semantic point of view verbs under study are divided in three groups:

1) negative;
2) positive;
3) neutral.

I want to draw the readers’ attention to the fact that in phraseological units with verbs of negative or positive evaluation the first component only intensify the evaluation: *hate smb (or smth) like poison, smile like a Cheshire cat, etc.*

In phrasemes with verbs of neutral evaluation the second component specify but meaning of whole unit can be evaluation: *drink like fish.*

One and the same verbs may enter different comparative set expressions: *eat like a dog, eat like a pig.* Differentiating role of the second component is especially evident here: *feel like a boiled rag.*

As the second component, the names of insects, birds, fishes can be used: *blow like a grampus.*

There are some comparative phraseological units than can never be used in relation to human-beings: *sell like hot cakes.*

There are few comparatives in English that can be applied to humans and to things, for example *fit smb like glove and fit smth like glove.*

For the first time this comparative PU was used by T. Smollet in his book “The Expedition of Humphry Clinker” (1771). Originally that PU was applied to the boots. But eventually it began to be used in reference to other things and to humans.

The character of meaning of the phraseological unit may change depending on the fact whether it refers to one object or many objects.
In adjectival comparatives evaluation depends on the first component. In verbal comparatives the second component is more important.

There are few verbal comparative set expressions in which the second component is a combination of lexemes: *agree like cats and dogs*.

Sometimes the meaning of phraseological unit may be antonymous to the first component of the PU.

Relations between the first component and the combination of lexemes may have no motivation, because the meaning of this combination of lexemes have no motivation in the modern language system, for example *fight like Kilkenny cats*.

It has been observed that hyperbole is characteristic of verbal as well as adjectival comparative phraseological units

References