

**THE CULTURAL CODE OF RIDDLES: LINGUO-COGNITIVE AND
ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES**

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Annotatsiya: Jumboqlar og'zaki folklorning eng qadimiy va universal shakllaridan biri bo'lib, nafaqat o'yin-kulgi, balki kognitiv, lingvistik va madaniy ifoda vositasi sifatida ham ishlaydi. Ushbu tadqiqotda ingliz va o'zbek an'analariga alohida e'tibor qaratgan holda jumboqlarning madaniy kodeksi linguokognitiv va etnografik nuqtai nazardan o'rganiladi. Tadqiqotning maqsadi jumboqlar va talqin tarkibida til, bilim va madaniyat o'rtasidagi munosabatlarni aniqlashdir. Qiyosiy lingvistik tahlil yordamida jumboqlarning umumiy kognitiv asosi – metaforizatsiya, o'xshashlik va assotsiativ fikrlash mavjudligi, ammo etnografik mazmun va madaniy ramzda farq qilishi aniq bo'ladi. Ingliz jumboqlari ko'pincha vaqt, texnologiya va inson xulq-atvoriga e'tibor qaratib, mantiqiy va pragmatik fikrlash shakllarini namoyish etadi, o'zbek jumboqlari esa ijtimoiy hayot va an'anaviy qadriyatlarga asoslangan agrar, oilaviy va tabiatga yo'naltirilgan tasvirlarni ifodalaydi. Maqolada jumboqlarning ramziy tuzilmalari va metaforik ma'nolarini ochish orqali lingvistik ifoda madaniy o'ziga xoslikni qanday kodlashi va dunyoqarashni avloddan avlodga saqlab qolishi ochib beradi. Olingan ma'lumotlar shuni ko'rsatadiki, jumboqlar odamlarning mentaliteti, axloqiy kodeksi va dunyoqarashini qisqacha lingvistik shaklda o'zida mujassamlashtiradigan madaniy miniatyuralar bo'lib xizmat qiladi. Shunday qilib, jumboqlarni linguokognitiv va etnografik o'rganish tilning madaniy tajriba va kollektiv aqlning jonli ombori sifatida qanday ishlashini tushunishga imkon beradi.

Аннотация: Загадки являются одной из самых древних и универсальных форм вербального фольклора, функционирующей не только как развлечение, но и как инструмент когнитивного, лингвистического и культурного выражения. Цель исследования – выявить взаимосвязь языка, познания и культуры в составлении загадок и интерпретации. С помощью сравнительного лингвистического анализа становится очевидным, что загадки имеют общую когнитивную основу — метафоризацию, аналогию и ассоциативное мышление, но различаются по этнографическому содержанию и культурной символике. Английские загадки часто демонстрируют логические и прагматичные модели мышления, фокусируясь на времени, технологиях и человеческом поведении, в то время как узбекские загадки, как правило, выражают аграрные, семейные и ориентированные на природу образы, уходящие корнями в общественную жизнь и традиционные ценности. Полученные данные показывают, что загадки служат культурными миниатюрами, заключающими в себе менталитет, моральный кодекс и мировоззрение народа в сжатой языковой форме. Таким образом, лингвокогнитивное и этнографическое изучение загадок позволяет понять, как язык функционирует как живое хранилище культурного опыта и коллективного интеллекта.

Annotation: Riddles are among the most ancient and universal forms of verbal folklore, functioning not only as entertainment but also as tools for cognitive, linguistic, and cultural expression. The research aims to reveal the relationship between language, cognition, and culture in riddle-making and interpretation.

Through comparative linguistic analysis, it becomes evident that riddles share a common

cognitive foundation—metaphorization, analogy, and associative thinking—while differing in their ethnographic content and cultural symbolism. English riddles often display logical and pragmatic thinking patterns, focusing on time, technology, and human behavior, whereas Uzbek riddles tend to express agrarian, familial, and nature-oriented imagery rooted in communal life and traditional values. The findings highlight that riddles serve as cultural miniatures, encapsulating a people’s mentality, moral code, and worldview in concise linguistic form. Thus, the linguo-cognitive and ethnographic study of riddles offers insight into how language functions as a living repository of cultural experience and collective intelligence.

Kalit so‘zlar: jumboq, madaniy kod, linguokognitiv tahlil, etnografiya, ramziy ma'no, folklor, ingliz, o'zbek.

Ключевые слова: загадки, культурный код, лингвокогнитивный анализ, этнография, символическое значение, фольклор, английский язык, узбекский язык.

Keywords: riddle, cultural code, linguo-cognitive analysis, ethnography, symbolism, folklore, English, Uzbek.

Introduction

Riddles are among the earliest verbal art forms that reveal the interconnection between language, cognition, and culture. They are concise, metaphorical, and often encoded with cultural meanings that reflect the worldview of a people. In many societies, riddles serve as educational and entertaining tools, transmitting cultural norms, beliefs, and linguistic patterns from generation to generation.

From an ethnolinguistic viewpoint, riddles function as “miniature models” of cultural cognition. Each linguistic choice within a riddle — metaphor, comparison, or syntactic form — carries an imprint of national experience and mentality. Therefore, analyzing riddles through linguo-cognitive and ethnographic frameworks helps decode how different cultures perceive and categorize the world around them.

Materials and methods

The study of riddles has long attracted linguists, folklorists, and cognitive scientists. Researchers such as Archer Taylor (1951) and Roger Abrahams (1972) emphasized riddles as a form of verbal folklore reflecting social interaction and cultural symbolism. From a cognitive perspective, riddles involve problem-solving and metaphor interpretation, as discussed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their theory of conceptual metaphors.

In Uzbek linguistics, scholars like Rahmonov (1999) and Qodirova (2012) explored riddles (topishmoqlar) as reflections of national identity and collective wisdom. Uzbek riddles often emphasize nature, family, and daily life — topics deeply tied to agrarian and communal traditions.

Cross-cultural comparisons demonstrate that while the riddle’s structure is nearly universal — containing an obscured description and a hidden answer — its cultural content is highly specific. This dual nature makes riddles an ideal subject for linguo-cognitive and ethnographic analysis.

Results and discussion

• *Linguo-Cognitive Features of Riddles*

From a cognitive linguistic perspective, riddles engage mechanisms such as metaphorization, analogy, and categorization. For instance, the English riddle “What has hands but cannot clap?”

(answer: a clock) relies on the metaphor TIME IS A HUMAN BODY, reflecting the anthropomorphic tendency in English cognition.

Similarly, the Uzbek riddle “To‘rt burchakda to‘rt do‘st, biri oq, biri qora” (In four corners live four friends: one white, one black — chessboard) employs contrast and personification, which are central to Uzbek poetic and cognitive tradition.

Such examples illustrate how riddles act as cognitive exercises, prompting mental mapping between conceptual domains — a linguistic reflection of how people think and categorize experience.

- ***Ethnographic Symbolism and Cultural Meaning***

Riddles often reveal the cultural values and worldviews of their speakers. In English folklore, common riddle themes include domestic life, time, and natural phenomena, reflecting the pragmatic and analytical tendencies of English-speaking societies. In contrast, Uzbek riddles emphasize kinship, agriculture, and moral imagery. For example:

“O‘zi suv, usti muz, ichida baliq yurmas” (“It is water, it is ice, but no fish swim inside” — well water in winter) conveys the symbolic link between nature and human livelihood. These riddles not only describe the physical environment but also encode social values such as unity, wisdom, and respect for nature — essential components of Uzbek traditional culture.

- ***The Cultural Code in Comparative Perspective***

The “cultural code” of a riddle is the system of meanings through which a culture expresses its worldview. English riddles often encode logic and humor, while Uzbek riddles reveal communal consciousness and metaphorical richness. Despite such differences, both traditions use riddles as tools for cognitive development and cultural continuity.

Comparatively, English riddles prioritize individual reasoning, whereas Uzbek riddles emphasize collective identity. This distinction corresponds with broader cultural patterns: analytical versus holistic worldviews, and individualism versus collectivism.

Conclusion

Riddles represent an enduring intersection of language, thought, and culture — a microcosm where linguistic form and cultural meaning unite. As the analysis of English and Uzbek examples has shown, riddles serve not only as a source of amusement but also as an invaluable medium for transmitting collective experience, national worldview, and moral principles. Their figurative structure and symbolic depth encode the specific ways in which a culture perceives and categorizes the world. From a linguo-cognitive perspective, riddles stimulate mental activity by inviting listeners to identify hidden meanings through metaphor and analogy. This process mirrors human cognition itself — the search for correspondences between familiar and unfamiliar concepts. Meanwhile, the ethnographic dimension of riddles reflects the unique circumstances of a people’s daily life, values, and traditions. Uzbek riddles, for instance, draw heavily on agrarian imagery and kinship relations, revealing a worldview centered on unity and nature. English riddles, in contrast, often express individual reasoning and logical playfulness, illustrating a cognitive style rooted in analytical thought and linguistic creativity.

Despite these cultural differences, the comparative study demonstrates that riddles function universally as vessels of cultural memory and tools of intellectual development. They preserve national identity, transmit ethical norms, and foster linguistic imagination across generations. Thus, riddles should not be viewed merely as folklore relics, but as dynamic cognitive texts that continue to reflect the evolving cultural consciousness of humanity.

In conclusion, the linguo-cognitive and ethnographic exploration of riddles offers profound insights into how language encodes cultural experience. Through the act of solving riddles, individuals not only engage in mental challenge but also symbolically participate in the

collective wisdom of their culture — keeping alive the subtle dialogue between tradition and cognition, past and present.

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