

RIDDLES AS A GENRE OF FOLKLORE

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Abstract: *The present thesis explores riddles as a genre of folklore from linguistic, cultural and cognitive perspectives in English and Uzbek traditions. Riddles are examined as multifunctional units of metaphorical expression, structural economy and cultural symbolism. The typological features, thematic classification and reflection of the linguistic picture of the world in the study are considered. Particular attention is paid to the semantic space of riddles, their metaphorical encoding and their function in communication, education and cognitive development. The research reveals that riddles are not only a source of entertainment but also crucial tools for the preservation of cultural knowledge and the formation of national identity.*

Keywords: *Riddles, folklore, linguistic worldview, metaphor, semantic space, Uzbek riddles, English riddles, cognitive linguistics, discourse, cultural studies.*

Introduction: Riddles are one of the oldest and most universal genres of folklore. They are small linguistic units that carry cultural knowledge, cognitive processes, and symbolic representations of reality. In the English and Uzbek tradition the riddles are a form of entertainment, a way of developing logical thinking, transmitting cultural values and shaping the linguistic world picture. The relevance of this research is conditioned by the growing interest in the study of folklore as a reflection of national identity and cognitive structures. Because of their metaphorical character and semantic density, riddles offer good material for linguistic and cultural analysis. The aim of this thesis is to study riddles as a folklore genre, their structural, semantic and functional features in English and Uzbek languages.

I. Riddles as a Genre of Folklore

Riddles, traditionally, are metaphorical questions or descriptive statements that must be interpreted. They are made of two parts: the riddle text and the answer. The history of riddles is long, going back to ancient societies such as Sumer, where they were used as a kind of intellectual challenge and amusement. One of the most important characteristics of riddles is their brevity, which makes them easy to memorize and to transmit orally. Another major feature is metaphorical encoding. The meaning is concealed behind the figurative language. This presents a cognitive challenge for the listener, demanding abstract thought and interpretation. Riddles are also based on the principle of concealment and revelation, where the object is hidden, but described through indirect clues. It is this double structure which makes riddles fun and mentally challenging.

II. Typological and semantic features.

Riddles can be classified typologically by their structure, by their meaning, by their function and by their cognitive complexity. Structurally, these forms may be interrogative or descriptive. Riddles semantically are based on metaphors, symbolism and indirect nomination. The concept of semantic space is important for the analysis of riddles. Riddles do not name concepts, but activate some conceptual domains such as nature, everyday life and human activity. For example, natural things such as the sun, wind or moon are often named for what they do, not their name. When performing

analyze, similarities and differences of English and Uzbek problems can be revealed. Both traditions use metaphor and indirect description, though Uzbek riddles tend to reflect the life of the agricultural community and the cultural practices, while English riddles may include domestic and natural imagery.

III. The Functions of Riddles.

Riddles serve several important functions in society: Cognitive development: They learn to think logically, to use their imagination and to solve problems. Educational Function Riddles are good for learning vocabulary, cultural knowledge and moral values. Social function: They aid communication, interaction and group cohesion. Cultural function: Riddles are a means of preserving traditions, beliefs and national identity. Furthermore, riddles aid the formation of the linguistic worldview, as they reflect how people view and conceptualize reality through language.

Conclusion. Riddles are a special and complex form of folklore that involves language, cognition and culture. Their structure is short, metaphorical and multifunctional, thus making them useful tools for communication and education. The analysis shows that the riddles in English and Uzbek have universal features such as metaphor and cognitive challenge and culture-specific features. This makes riddles a kind of condensed models of the linguistic world view, revealing both universal and national features of human thinking.

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