



## SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF RIDDLES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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**Abstract.** This study explores the semantic features and thematic classification of riddles in Uzbek and English folklore traditions. Riddles are examined as distinct paremiological units that function through figurative nomination, metaphorical transfer, semantic compression, and indirect reference. The research highlights the dual semantic structure of riddles, consisting of a descriptive component and a concealed referent, and analyzes the cognitive mechanisms involved in decoding meaning.

**Keywords:** Riddle, Paremiology, Metaphor, Linguoculturology, Cognitive linguistics, Thematic classification.

Among the invaluable treasures of our people, the samples of folklore reflecting the centuries-old way of life passed down from ancestors to future generations hold a special place. In particular, riddles and puzzles occupy a distinctive position within oral folk literature. Riddles embody the people's hopes and aspirations, their attitudes toward objects, phenomena, and reality, as well as their imaginative world. Most importantly, they contain reflections and contemplations devoted to the analysis of reality.

Riddles undoubtedly represent a spiritual heritage that demonstrates the historical culture and moral values of a nation. In folklore, various riddles and puzzles are created through figurative expressions in which the name of the object is deliberately concealed. Solving and identifying the answer to a riddle encourages a person to think more broadly and engage in intellectual effort.

Through diverse sources and information, individuals expand their knowledge and thinking, thereby enriching their intellectual potential. Intellectual capacity



develops gradually as a complex accumulation of acquired knowledge. Knowledge itself is the product of the cognitive process, which is one of the manifestations of human activity. Cognition refers to the reflection of reality in the human mind and, on this basis, the formation of concepts and ideas that express the properties, characteristics, and essence of objects.

In the enrichment of intellectual potential, the role of riddles and puzzles—recognized as the key to the figurative construction of language—is invaluable. In the process of creating a riddle scenario, an object is first selected; then, through metaphorical comparisons corresponding to that object, the riddle is composed and formed. The riddle challenges the solver to identify and name the metaphorically encoded object, natural phenomenon, or reality concealed within the figurative description.

Riddles constitute one of the most ancient and intellectually significant genres of oral folklore. As a distinct paremiological unit, the riddle represents a complex interaction between language, cognition, and culture. It encodes knowledge about the surrounding world through figurative nomination, metaphorical transfer, semantic compression, and indirect reference. In both Uzbek and English linguistic traditions, riddles function not merely as entertainment but as cognitive tools that stimulate analytical thinking, preserve collective experience, and reflect national worldview[1].

The semantic nature of riddles lies in their dual structure: an explicitly presented descriptive part and an implicitly concealed referent. The meaning of a riddle emerges from the semantic tension between these two components. Through metaphorization, metonymy, polysemy, symbolic substitution, and functional description, riddles create a semantic puzzle that requires interpretative reasoning for resolution. Thus, riddles serve as a productive field for examining mechanisms of semantic transformation and indirect nomination.



From a linguocultural perspective, riddles reveal culturally specific models of conceptualization. Uzbek riddles often reflect agrarian life, close interaction with nature, and traditional domestic environments, whereas English riddles frequently emphasize logical paradox, lexical ambiguity, and wordplay. Despite these cultural distinctions, both traditions demonstrate universal cognitive strategies in encoding and decoding meaning, particularly through metaphor and associative thinking.

The semantic analysis of riddles allows researchers to investigate how language represents reality in encoded form, how salient features of objects are foregrounded while categorical identity is backgrounded, and how cultural experience influences the selection of descriptive attributes. Furthermore, riddles contribute to the development of intellectual competence by encouraging abstract thinking, comparative reasoning, and interpretative skills.

Therefore, the comparative semantic study of Uzbek and English riddles is significant not only for paremiology but also for cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology, and cross-cultural studies. It provides insight into universal patterns of meaning construction as well as culturally specific semantic priorities embedded in folklore discourse. From a cognitive-linguistic perspective, riddles illustrate how meaning is constructed through indirect nomination and semantic compression. The solver must decode implicit clues, activate associative thinking, and reconstruct the hidden referent. This process highlights the interaction between language structure and conceptual reasoning.

Thus, the classification of riddles is not merely a formal categorization but a theoretical framework that enables deeper semantic, structural, and linguocultural analysis. It provides insight into universal cognitive patterns as well as culturally specific models of conceptualization embedded in folklore traditions. *Household objects, Agriculture, Animals, Food, Tools, Professions, Natural phenomena, Abstract notions* and so on.



Riddles describing household objects constitute one of the most productive and widespread thematic groups in both English and Uzbek folklore traditions. Everyday domestic items—such as a piano, clock, needle, or teapot—are transformed into figurative and metaphorical constructs through semantic compression and indirect nomination. In this process, ordinary objects acquire symbolic and anthropomorphic features, making them suitable for cognitive challenge and interpretative reasoning. From a semantic perspective, household-object riddles operate through selective highlighting of salient attributes. Instead of directly naming the object, the riddle foregrounds specific characteristics—shape, function, sound, movement, or structural components—while concealing categorical identity. For example, in the English riddle “*What has keys but can’t open locks?*” the polysemous word *keys* triggers lexical ambiguity, guiding the solver toward reinterpretation. Similarly, “*I have a face and two hands but no arms or legs*” relies on anthropomorphic metaphor to describe a clock. In Uzbek riddles, descriptive imagery is often more concrete and feature-based. The riddle “*O‘zi kichkina, usti tikka*” (needle) highlights size and shape, while “*Og‘zi bor, lekin gapirmaydi*” (teapot) employs functional and metaphorical transfer. Such riddles demonstrate how language encodes everyday experience through figurative thinking. The semantic analysis of household-object riddles reveals universal cognitive mechanisms — such as metaphORIZATION, anthropomorphism, and functional description — while also reflecting culturally specific modes of expression. These riddles illustrate how ordinary domestic objects become linguistic models for conceptual reasoning and imaginative interpretation within folklore discourse.

Agricultural imagery occupies a significant place in the riddle traditions of many cultures, particularly in societies historically connected with farming and rural life. Riddles related to agriculture reflect not only material reality but also the cultural memory, economic foundations, and symbolic worldview of a people. In both English and Uzbek folklore, agricultural objects such as wheat, fields, carrots,



and pomegranates are transformed into metaphorical constructs through figurative description and semantic concealment.

From a semantic perspective, agricultural riddles are typically built on visual characteristics, growth processes, spatial orientation, and harvest-related functions. In the English riddle *“Tall I grow, golden in the sun, / Ground to flour when harvest’s done”* (wheat), the object is described through its physical appearance and functional transformation. Similarly, *“I have rows but no hands to sow”* (field) relies on structural features and metaphorical contrast[5].

In Uzbek riddles, agricultural imagery is often richer in symbolic and color-based metaphors. The riddle *“Yer ostida oltin qoziq”* (carrot) highlights spatial position and color symbolism, while *“Qora sandiq ichida oq marvarid”* (pomegranate) employs metaphorical comparison, presenting the fruit as a treasure chest containing pearls. Such imagery demonstrates strong associative thinking and aesthetic perception rooted in agrarian culture.

The semantic analysis of agricultural riddles reveals how everyday farming objects are conceptualized through metaphor, symbolic color contrasts, and functional description. These riddles not only reflect rural experience but also encode cultural values related to labor, fertility, abundance, and sustenance. Thus, agricultural riddles serve as linguocultural models preserving historical lifestyle and worldview within folklore discourse.

Riddles representing professions form an important thematic category within both English and Uzbek folklore traditions. Unlike object- or nature-based riddles, profession-related riddles focus primarily on social roles, responsibilities, and functional characteristics rather than physical attributes. Through indirect nomination and figurative description, these riddles reflect the social structure of a community and its system of values.

Semantically, profession riddles are predominantly built upon functional description. The identity of the professional is revealed through actions, duties, and



social contribution. For instance, the English riddle “*I wear a white coat and help you heal[3]*” encodes the doctor’s identity through symbolic attire and healing function. Similarly, “*I build houses but live in none[2]*” (builder) relies on logical contrast and occupational activity.

In Uzbek riddles, professional identity is also defined through socially meaningful functions. The riddle “*Oq xalat kiygan, davo qilgan*” (doctor) emphasizes both visual symbolism (white coat) and the act of curing. Likewise, “*Bolalarga ilm berar*” (teacher) highlights the educational mission and intellectual responsibility of the profession. Such representations demonstrate the cultural respect attributed to socially significant occupations.

From a linguocultural perspective, profession riddles reveal how societies conceptualize authority, responsibility, service, and knowledge. They reflect collective attitudes toward labor, social hierarchy, and moral duty. The semantic core of these riddles typically includes elements such as care, construction, instruction, and protection—functions essential to community life.

Thus, the analysis of profession-related riddles provides insight into how language encodes social identity and professional roles through metaphor, functional semantics, and symbolic markers. These riddles not only stimulate cognitive reasoning but also preserve cultural perceptions of socially valuable occupations within folklore discourse. The semantic analysis of riddles in Uzbek and English demonstrates that riddles are complex linguistic and cognitive structures built upon indirect nomination, metaphorical representation, and selective feature highlighting. Their dual structure explicit description and hidden referent creates semantic tension that stimulates interpretative reasoning and intellectual engagement. Thematic classification reveals that riddles reflect both universal and culture-specific conceptual patterns. Household-object riddles highlight anthropomorphism and functional semantics; agricultural riddles encode agrarian worldview and symbolic imagery; profession-related riddles reflect social roles, moral responsibility, and



community values. While Uzbek riddles tend to emphasize concrete imagery, natural symbolism, and color-based metaphors rooted in traditional lifestyle, English riddles frequently rely on lexical ambiguity, logical paradox, and structural wit.

Thus, riddles function as linguocultural models that encode collective experience, cultural memory, and cognitive strategies of meaning construction. Their study contributes not only to paremiology but also to cognitive linguistics and cross-cultural analysis, offering insight into how language structures conceptual knowledge and reflects national worldview. The classification of riddles, therefore, serves as a theoretical framework for understanding their semantic organization and cultural significance.

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