

ETHNO-COGNITIVE MAPPING: THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL MENTALITY AND LIFESTYLE ON GLOBAL RIDDLING TRADITIONS

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Abstract: *This article examines riddles as ethno-cognitive phenomena that reflect national mentality, lifestyle, and cultural experience. Drawing on cognitive linguistics and folklore studies, the research demonstrates that riddles function as linguistic artifacts encoding culturally specific conceptual schemas, scripts, and frames. Through comparative analysis of English, Uzbek, and Russian riddling traditions, the study reveals how metaphorical imagery, personification, and associative thinking are shaped by historical conditions, environmental factors, and socio-economic practices. The findings confirm that riddle comprehension relies not only on logical reasoning but also on culturally grounded inferential processes, reinforcing riddles as tools for preserving national identity and collective memory.*

Keywords: *riddles national mentality, cognitive linguistics, cultural schema, conceptual metaphor, cognitive scripts, folklore, ethnocognition*

Annotatsiya: *Mazkur maqolada topishmoqlar milliy tafakkur, turmush tarzi va madaniy tajribani aks ettiruvchi etno-kognitiv hodisa sifatida tahlil qilinadi. Kognitiv tilshunoslik va folklorshunoslik yondashuvlariga tayangan holda, topishmoqlar madaniyatga xos konseptual sxema, skript va freymlarni kodlovchi til birliklari sifatida talqin etiladi. Ingliz, o'zbek va rus topishmoqlari qiyosiy tahlili orqali metafora, personifikatsiya va assotsiativ tafakkurning milliy-tarixiy, ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy hamda ekologik omillar bilan bog'liqligi ochib beriladi. Tadqiqot natijalari topishmoqni anglash jarayoni faqat mantiqiy xulosa emas, balki madaniy bilim va inferensiyaga asoslangan kognitiv faoliyat ekanini tasdiqlaydi.*

Kalit so'zlar: *topishmoq, milliylik, kognitiv tilshunoslik, madaniy sxema, konseptual metafora, kognitiv skript, folklore, etnokognitsiya*

Аннотация: *В статье рассматриваются загадки как этнокогнитивные образования, отражающие национальный менталитет, образ жизни и культурно-исторический опыт народа. На основе когнитивной лингвистики и фольклористики доказывается, что загадки функционируют как языковые артефакты, кодирующие культурно обусловленные концептуальные схемы, фреймы и когнитивные скрипты. Сопоставительный анализ английских, узбекских и русских загадок*

выявляет зависимость метафорических образов и ассоциативного мышления от среды обитания, социальной структуры и исторических условий. Делается вывод о том, что понимание загадки представляет собой культурно опосредованный когнитивный процесс, способствующий сохранению национальной идентичности.

Ключевые слова: Загадка, национальный менталитет, когнитивная лингвистика, культурная схема, концептуальная метафора, когнитивный скрипт, фольклор, этнокогниция

The cognitive architecture of a riddle is inseparable from the ethnocultural reality of its creators, functioning as a sophisticated repository for a nation's collective identity and socio-historical experience. Far from being universal puzzles with interchangeable parts, riddles are deeply situated within the specific "cultural schemata" of a people, reflecting their unique lifestyle, environment, and social values. Every riddle acts as a linguistic artifact that encapsulates how a particular nation perceives and categorizes reality. As I.R. Galperin [2; 158] observes, the stylistic arrangement of folk genres is designed to produce a profound intellectual impact by utilizing the most recognizable archetypes of a particular society. Therefore, the act of decoding a riddle is not merely a logical exercise but a journey through the "national conceptual sphere." The manner in which a society describes a common object reveals its collective mentality, as our understanding and memory are active reconstructions influenced by cultural frameworks, or as F.C. Bartlett [1; 213] emphasized, the "schemata" that organize our knowledge of the world based on our daily interactions.

The manifestation of national mentality is most strikingly evident in how different nations describe the same natural phenomena through the lens of their specific lifestyles. In the English folklore tradition, particularly within the Anglo-Saxon heritage of the Exeter Book, inanimate objects are often personified through a "warrior mentality." For example, a shield is described not as a mere tool of defense, but as a weary soldier: "I am a lonely warrior, scarred by iron, weary of battle-slash, sated with swords" [7; 105]. This reflects the heroic code of the early Germanic tribes, where life was defined by the sword and shield. In contrast, Uzbek riddles regarding nature draw from a pastoral, nomadic, and agrarian heritage, where the sun is not a warrior but a piece of survival equipment essential for the steppe. A classic Uzbek riddle describes the sun as: "Shov tegirmonning toshi, oltin egarning qoshi" [3; 45]. Here, the sun is equated to a "millstone" and a "golden saddle-bow." This analysis reveals a mentality tied to the horse and the millstone—objects central to the movement and sustenance of Central Asian people for millennia. For an Uzbek solver, the "saddle" is a cultural concept representing dignity and nomadic life, confirming that while "the essence of metaphor is

understanding one kind of thing in terms of another" [4; 5], it is the national lifestyle that dictates which "things" are chosen for that comparison.

Russian folklore provides another compelling dimension to this ethno-cognitive mapping, where the lifestyle of the Slavic peasant, centered around the home (izba) and the hearth, dictates the metaphorical landscape. A classic Russian riddle about the traditional stove (pech) describes it as: "Чего из избы не вынесешь?" (What can you not carry out of the hut?). The answer, the stove, represents the heart of the Russian home, a symbol of survival in the harsh northern winters. In the Russian mentality, the stove was not just an appliance; it was a bed, a kitchen, and a provider of health, often personified as a benevolent, warm-hearted giant. This reflects a "domestic-survivalist" mentality where the boundary between the person and the home is blurred. Furthermore, Russian riddles about nature often utilize the imagery of the forest and agrarian labor, such as describing frost as a "craftsman without hands or a brush who paints on the window." This demonstrates how a nation's specific geographic environment and daily labor scripts provide the raw material for its associative thinking. As Mednick [5; 221] suggested, the creative process involves the forming of associative elements into new combinations, but in riddles, these elements are retrieved directly from the nation's cultural and environmental archives.

The role of cognitive scripts is also vital in understanding how riddles differ across cultures. According to Schank and Abelson [6; 41], a script is a predetermined sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation. In Eastern cultures, the "Literacy and Wisdom Script" is highly revered, leading to riddles that personify the book as a "bloodless soul" or a "silent teacher": "Tirik desang — joni yo'q, o'lik desang — qoni yo'q" [3; 58]. This reflects a mentality that views knowledge as an animate force, a script deeply rooted in the Islamic Golden Age and the high value placed on the written word in the East. Conversely, English folk riddles from a more mercantile or feudal background often utilize "security and treasure" scripts. The riddle about the egg—"A box without hinges, key, or lid, yet golden treasure inside is hid" [7; 102]—evokes a world of iron-bound chests and hidden wealth. The solver's mind is directed toward the domain of "feudal security," a script that was primary in medieval European society. These cultural scripts act as a filter through which the physical world is processed, ensuring that even a simple biological object like an egg or a fruit is framed within the nation's socio-economic history.

Ultimately, the diversity of riddling traditions across the globe proves that human thought is not a universal constant but is profoundly situated within a cultural context. Whether it is an Anglo-Saxon warrior describing a shield, a Russian peasant contemplating his stove, or an Uzbek nomad admiring the sun as a golden saddle-bow, each riddle is an intellectual artifact that preserves the

"scripts" of a nation's ancestors. The importance of associative thinking in these contexts lies in the solver's ability to navigate their own cultural schemata to find the hidden truth. If we attempt to solve a riddle from a culture that is not our own, we often experience a cognitive disconnect, for the associative links—the millstones, the warrior codes, or the Slavic hearths—are absent from our mental database. Thus, riddles serve as essential tools for the preservation of national identity, sharpening the intellect while simultaneously reinforcing the cultural bonds that define a people. They remain a testament to the diversity of human perception, proving that the mind reconstructs the universe according to the unique dictates of its own lifestyle and cultural heritage.

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