

## SEMANTIC PECULIARITIES OF ENGLISH RIDDLES AND THEIR REFLECTION IN THE LINGUISTIC PICTURE OF THE WORLD

Khaidari N. I.

National Aviation University

*The article determines riddles as short works the basis of which is a witty, metaphorical question that involves an answer. It is determined that the specificity of riddles is that in their concealed allegorical form an object or phenomenon is encrypted and one should find its original meaning. The theme of English folk riddles covers the phenomena of nature, flora and fauna, which constantly surrounds a human (his spiritual life, work, household items, tools, etc.). It has been researched that the poetics of the genre of English folk riddles is mainly characterized by general folklore features. Most often, they are based on metaphor, metonymy and detailed parallelism. It has been proved that epithets, comparisons, hyperbolas and tautological expressions are used in the language of riddles, which enriches the "language" of riddles, gives it expressiveness and variety. The rhythm of riddles is often emphasized by alliteration and assonance, which helps to make their structure clear and enhance the effect of the recipient's perception. On the basis of the research the following types of logical riddles are distinguished a) riddles based on incomplete direct description of asked object; b) description asked object is given by its comparison (direct or negative) with the other objects; c) metaphorical (based on replacing of asked object with another); d) riddles, in which asked and "puzzling" objects have a general characteristic, moreover the asked object is expressed more intensive; e) graphic (is asked not by the word, but by the letter); f) homonymous (based on the play of homonyms meaning); g) pun or wordplay (based on the change of word framework); h) riddles-jokes (aimed at the inertia of interlocutor perception); i) cumulative (based on the principle of cumulative tales); j) riddles-tasks (arithmetic, counting). It has been found that English folk riddle is widely used as a textbook material and is the subject of some theoretical research, since it has a complex semantic structure, is grouped on different topics and reflects the heritage of previous generations.*

**Key words:** riddles, classification of riddles, semantic peculiarities, linguistic picture of the world, folklore, linguistic phenomenon.

*Хайдарі Н. І. Семантичні особливості англійських загадок та їх відображення в лінгвістичній картині світу. У статті окреслено семантичні особливості англійських загадок. Зокрема, з'ясовано, що загадки – це короткі твори, в основі яких лежить дотепне метафоричне запитання з передбачуваною на нього відповіддю. Визначено специфіку загадок, яка полягає в тому, що в них у завуальованій алегоричній формі зашифровано якийсь предмет чи явище і потрібно відшукати його первісне значення. Тематика англійських народних загадок охоплює явища природи, рослинний і тваринний світ, які постійно оточують людину (її духовне життя, трудову діяльність, предмети побуту, знаряддя праці тощо). Досліджено, що поетика жанру англійських народних загадок в основному характеризується загальнофольклорними рисами. Найчастіше вони побудовані на основі метафори, метонімії та розгорнутого паралелізму. Доведено, що в мові загадок вживаються епітети, порівняння, гіперболи та тавтологічні вислови, які збагачують «мову» загадок, додають їй експресивності та різноманітності. Ритміку загадок нерідко підкреслюють алітерацією та асонансом, що допомагає структурувати їх будову та посилити ефект сприйняття реципієнтом.*

*На основі здійсненого дослідження виокремлено такі типи логічних загадок: а) загадки на основі неповного прямого опису запитуваного об'єкта; б) опис запитуваного об'єкта подано через його порівняння (пряме чи негати́вне) з іншими об'єктами; в) метафоричні (оперті на заміну запитуваного об'єкта іншим); г) загадки, у яких запитувані та «спантеличені» об'єкти мають загальну характеристику, до того ж запитуваний об'єкт виражається більш інтенсивно; д) графічний (задається не словом, а буквою); е) омонімічний (базований на значенні гри омонімії); є) каламбур (заснований на зміні словесних рам); ж) загадки-жарти (спрямовані на інерційність сприйняття співрозмовника); з) кумулятивний (заснований на принципі кумулятивних казок); і) загадки-завдання (арифметичні, лічильні). З'ясовано, що англійська народна загадка широко використовується як хрестоматійний матеріал та є предметом багатьох теоретичних досліджень, оскільки має складну семантичну будову, групується за різною тематикою, відображає надбання попередніх поколінь.*

**Ключові слова:** загадки, класифікація загадок, семантичні особливості, лінгвістична картина світу, фольклор, лінгвістичний феномен.

**Defining the problem and argumentation of the topicality of its consideration.** Riddles are short pieces the basis of which is witty metaphorical question that provides the answer. To find the answer – solution of a riddle, one should know how to compare life

phenomena on the base of their affinity or similarity due to signs, traits, or characteristics.

Specificity of riddles is that in their concealed allegorical form an object or phenomenon is encrypted and one should find its original meaning. Therefore, some

scientists analysing the literary form of riddles assert that "every riddle is composite and monomial parallelism, the second member of which is solution of a riddle".

Riddle is a genre of folk art, which remains to be one of the least developed. Studying English folk riddles allows us to consider the interaction of the language system and ethnos in dynamics and comprehend a speech phenomenon of folk culture and its influence on modern creative work and development of youth creative thinking. All these determine the topicality of the researched theme.

**Analysis of recent research and publications on the problem.** Despite the constant interest of scientists to the problem of semantic peculiarities of English riddles (I. Berezovskyi [1], T. Grin [4], A. Teylor [5], W. Peppicello [6], etc.), the problem of structural and semantic typology of riddles remains unsolved.

**The purpose of the research** is to reveal the specificity of various aspects of linguistic picture of the world, displaying them in riddles and identifying genre development tendencies on their basis.

**The objectives of the research are the following:** to explore specific reflection of the world in the English folk riddle; to find out the place of a riddle in English folklore; to determine the classification categories of the English folk riddle; to explore the genre specificity of the English folk riddle.

**Methods of the research:** processing of scientific sources dedicated to the problems of the English folk riddles studying, scientific observation of the English folk riddles history.

**The outline of the main research material.** In consciousness of many generations a riddle is associated with the concepts of "wisdom", "knowledge", "speech" and "probation".

Riddles became an important element of art expression development, the formation part of observation, quick-wittedness and systemic views on the world. Riddles are irreplaceable in the development of thinking.

A riddle is a conditional dialogue in which one of the participants has to guess and name the word or the sentence asked by other participant but named not directly but as a hint or as an allegory [6, 81].

The implementation of the principle of historicity in the process of folk riddles studying allows the formation of the general presentation of the genre evolution especially their existence in various stages of society development.

An idea of thematic riddles comprehensiveness can be formed in the process of particular riddles setting system, which is used by ethno pedagogics from ancient times. Set of riddles by widen thematic ranges, which allows to quickly orient in the material and to find the answer to a riddle within the thematic range.

An efficient solving of riddles promotes understanding of their linguistic and semantic structure. Researchers mention that "any riddle is a kind of logical task because it contains evident or hidden form, a question that you need to answer" [5, 98].

On the basis of each type there is a certain logical method (method of riddles asking), its understanding leads to riddles guessing. The following types of logical riddles can be distinguished: a) riddles based on incomplete direct description of asked object;

b) description of asked object is given by its comparison (direct or negative) with the other objects; c) metaphorical (based on replacing of asked object with another); d) riddles, in which asked and "puzzling" objects have a general characteristic, moreover the asked object is expressed more intensive; e) graphic (is asked not by the word, but by the letter); f) homonymous (based on the play of homonyms meaning); g) pun or wordplay (based on the change of word framework); h) riddles-jokes (aimed at the inertia of interlocutor perception); i) cumulative (based on the principle of cumulative tales); j) riddles-tasks (arithmetic, counting).

It is important to understand the national peculiarities of the countries of the world. Riddles are formed by the following elements: peculiarities of existence, favourite asking objects, poetic images and peculiarities of linguistic and logical structure.

A special role in the creation of national colouring of riddles is played by its lexical structure: anthroponyms; untranslatable names, which indicate social belonging of a human; names of typical life items, clothing, dwelling, food, etc.; toponyms; names of common natural phenomena and representatives of flora and fauna; traditions, customs, beliefs, mentality, people history, etc. These elements make national and cultural composite of riddles which can be put both in a question and in answer [1, 39].

The origin of riddles is very ancient; their background goes back to the mythological age, when the basis of animistic ideas and totemic views was formed. At that time a certain system of prohibitions (taboo) was formed, among them there were also verbal taboos, connected with believing in magical significance of statements. For example, under certain conditions, the names of Gods or spiritual beings were used (lest they appear when one say their name) instead of their names descriptive formula.

The original allegory had utilitarian value – to have an influence on the environment and the world, to prevent natural calamities, to cajole spirits or deceive them.

Taboo changed into other genres. On the basis of original magic and charms arose beliefs but magic formula became the basis of riddles, the base of which was the original folk poetic symbolism. That is why this genre is very stable in its form. It is difficult to transform, put into it a layer of ancient mythological consciousness (now moved into the subconscious and manifested in archetypic national thinking).

It should be noted that most scientists (V. P. Anikin, I. P. Berezovskyi, Yu. G. Kruglov) do not bind the origin of riddles with the "conditional speech" a secret one, when a human lives with certain concepts and ideas or has no opportunity to name things directly.

The "mysteriousness" of speech goes back to antiquity: in military and diplomatic relations; during matchmaking, when young people tried to hide and keep from hostile forces what was happening; during hunting, lest future spoil should be scared; in life – in order to conceal the information. Such speech was used by everyone who wanted to conceal something, outwit someone or something and so secret speech was necessary for this [5, 38].

According to I. P. Berezovskyi, a riddle constantly evolves and actively functions in everyone's life as a means of development of attentiveness, docility, testing of mental abilities [1]. At the present stage

the process of riddles guessing turned into fun, game and rest. For example:

*Clean, but not water,  
White, but not snow,  
Sweet, but not ice-cream,  
What is it? (Sugar)*

Folklore by its roots goes back to primitive times of the language creation period and dominance of mythological world, such as:

*The Moon is my father;  
the Sea is my mother;  
I have a million brothers,  
I die when I reach land (A wave on the ocean)*

The experience of people, their labour is reflected in riddles, which is a prevailing theme of this folk genre.

A. Mamedova emphasizes that though riddles reflect only peculiarities of social and everyday life of people, they have much in common with the literal coincidences with riddles of other nations. The researcher suggests that, to some extent borrowings take place here but the main reason of riddles' similarity in different nations is in another [3, 6]. M. Rybnikova argues that for people it is enough to have the same level of consciousness and similar cultural conditions that quite independently form similar riddles. Such natural phenomena, objects, tools, etc. make similar associations.

A. Mamedova gives examples of almost similar riddles' sounding at the same topic ("The eyes") in the folklore of various nations: *Two brothers live across the street and never see each other* [3, 8].

As a universal system, at the same time riddles have a great national supply. Without its understanding the perception of achievements of other cultures is impossible.

An important problem, which apart from its practical sense, is also scientifically interesting because it is in the closest connection with the origin and development of folk riddles. It is the problem of classification of literary models.

The most convenient and logically exonerated is such arrangement of literary material that allows us to follow the historical development of the genre.

Classification of riddles according to the alphabet solutions is artificial, unjustified and scientifically unable to present the history of genre in its formation and development.

Classifications of riddles in its majority are based on thematic principle. I. Berezovskyi distinguished the following thematic groups: nature (sky, the Earth, phenomena of nature, flora, fauna); human (physical nature of a human: body constitution, life and death); material life (food, clothing, footwear, household goods); human working activity (education, music, traditions and rituals); abstract, common, conditional and collected concepts (puzzles, charades and various questions) [1].

Riddles of traditional topics, such as *natural phenomena*, make an imprint at the further understanding of process of general concepts previously unknown or not and easily accessible to a wide range of people, often of a scientific nature. First of all, it concerns riddles about the globe, the horizon, a mirage, etc., as well as some abstract concepts.

*At night they come without being fetched,  
And by day they are lost without being stolen (Stars)  
What has roots as nobody sees,  
Is taller than trees,  
Up, up it goes  
And yet never grows? (A mountain)*

*Voiceless it cries,  
Wingless flutters,  
Toothless bites,  
Mouthless mutters (The wind)*

*An eye in a blue face  
Saw an eye in a green face,  
"That eye is like to this eye"*

*Said the first eye,  
"But in low place,  
Not in high place" (Sun on a field of daisies)*

Theme group "human" unites riddles about the body constitution, life and death. This group includes riddles about the blood ties of people (brother, sister, niece, father, son, grandson, mother and daughter): *When is your uncle's sister not your aunt? (When she is my mother)*

*A father and his son were in a car accident. The father died.*

*The son was taken to the hospital.*

*The doctor came in and said:*

*I can't do surgery on him, because he's my son. Who was the doctor?*

*(The doctor was his mother)*

*How many legs does an ant have?*

*(Two, the same as an uncle. HINT: ant = aunt)*

*What relatives are dependent on "you"?*

*(Aunt, uncle, cousin. They all need "U")*

*What part of the body has the most rhythm? (Eardrums)*

Riddles about *life items* make a great group of riddles: *What lives on its own substance and dies when it devours itself? (A Candle)*

*What has no head, no arms, no legs and still has a tongue? (Shoes)*

*What gets wetter as it dries? (A towel)*

*What is white when it is dirty and black when it is clean? (A blackboard)*

*I am not inside a house. But no house is complete without me. What am I? (A window)*

*What are two things people never eat before breakfast? (Lunch and supper).*

*What goes over the fields all day, and sits in the cupboard all night? (Our clothes)*

*What walks around all day and lies under the bed at night with its tongue hanging out? (Our shoes)*

*Two brothers we are,*

*Great burdens we bear,*

*On which we are bitterly pressed;*

*The truth is to say,*

*We are full all the day,*

*And empty when we go to rest (Shoes)*

*Flora and fauna* are widely represented in the English folk riddles:

*What do cats have that no other animals have? (A kitten)*

*What is as big as a horse but doesn't weigh anything? (The horse's shadow)*

*Which room has no doors, no windows? (A mushroom)*

Riddles which reflected *abstract, general, conditional and collective concepts* make an independent group:

*This thing all things devours:*

*Birds, trees, beasts, flowers;*

*Gnaws iron, bites steel;*

*Grinds hard stones to meal;*

*Slays king, ruins town,*

*And beats high mountain down (Time)*

Special place among riddles is occupied by the works of the *periods of time* (year, month, week, day, and hour):

*"I never was, am always to be,*

*No one ever saw me, nor ever will*

*And yet I am the confidence of all*

*To live and breathe on this terrestrial ball"*

(Tomorrow)

*What are the two strongest days of the week?*

*(They are Saturday and Sunday. All the others are weak (week) days)*

*What is always coming, but never arrives?*

(Tomorrow)

There is a considerable series of works by volume that combines the typical in shape and purpose riddles – puzzles, charades and different questions:

*Where can you never tell the truth? (When you are lying anywhere)*

*When will a net hold water? (When the water is frozen)*

*Why was Karl Marx buried at Highgate Cemetery in London? (Because he was dead)*

*What dog has no tail? (A hot-dog)*

*Why do birds fly south? (Because it's too far to walk)*

Among them there are examples of elementary arithmetic, quick wittedness problems and specially designed riddles for the development of attentiveness:

*How many 9's between 1 and 100? (20)*

*Why is the number six afraid? (Because seven ate nine (seven ate nine))*

*How many lions can enter an empty cage? (Only one, after the first one it's not empty)*

A special role in this series of works belongs to interesting and unique riddles in form and contents, based on the English alphabet:

*What word of only three syllables contains 26 letters? (Alphabet = (26 letters))*

*What letter of the alphabet is an insect? (B. (Bee))*

*What letter is a part of the head? (I. (Eye))*

*What letter is a drink? (T. (Tea))*

*What letter is a body of water? (C. (Sea))*

*What letter is a pronoun like "you"? (A letter "I")*

*What letter is a vegetable? (P. Pea)*

*What letter is an exclamation? (O. (Oh!))*

*What letter is a European bird? (J. (Jay))*

*What letter is looking for causes? (Y. (Why))*

*What four letters frighten a thief? (O.I.C.U. (Oh I see you!))*

*What is the end of everything? (A letter "G")*

*What begins with T, ends with T and has T in it? (A teapot)*

A separate group is made by riddles of geographical themes:

*This thing has got cities but no houses, forests, but no trees, rivers without water.*

*What's this? (A map)*

Riddles can be split into three groups by the type of logical tasks and nature of mental operation, which is needed for solving.

Riddles of the first level of complexity include: riddles based on enumeration of the object or phenomenon characteristics (size, shape, colour, taste, sounding, motion, material, purpose); riddles with a list of features in which solving word is rhymed.

Guessing of such riddles is based on elementary analysis (feature selection) and synthesis (combining them into one). Sufficient number of features helps to make necessary mental operations and successfully solve logical task.

Riddles of the second level of complexity include: riddles, in which a brief description of a subject is given, in which 1-2 features are need to restore a complete image of the object; riddles based on the denial or comparison of objects or on comparison of objects or phenomena.

Riddles of the third level of complexity are metaphorical one. Guessing these riddles, the recipient enters in the hidden meaning of metaphor, distinguishes similarity and common features in objects and phenomenon, at the first sight, distant from each other.

**Conclusions and perspectives of further research in this field.** A riddle is an aphoristic work which consists of brief poetic, often rhymed expression, in which a certain object or phenomenon is represented by its metaphorical equivalent. A riddle as a well-made metaphor was distinguished by Greek philosopher Aristotle. The thematics of English folk riddles includes natural phenomena, flora and fauna, which constantly surround human (spiritual life, labour, life items, tools for work, etc.).

The poetic genre of English folk riddles is characterized by general and folklore features. More often they are based on metaphors, metonymy and parallelism. In the language of riddles epithets, comparisons, hyperboles and tautological statements are used. Frequently, rhythmic of riddles is emphasized by alliteration and assonance.

Active social function of riddle comes to light in the genre of fairy tales. A lot of fairy tales depict the process of riddles solving as a kind of competition in quick wittedness, mental development between a simple man from the people and a master. It is important to note that in this competition a simple man always wins, asserting in such a way his superiority in the spiritual development.

Today riddles are almost completely developed into children's folklore. Containing an element of the game, which stimulates the imagination of those who are guessing, riddles impress children and perform cognitive and developmental functions. In many nations this genre has always been the means of formation and development of mental abilities of young people, development the analysis ability and comparison of phenomena.

The theoretical and practical value of the research is that riddles are analysed from the point of view of the linguistic picture of the world reflection in their text and distinguishing different types of riddles

based on their semantic interpretation. The English folk riddle is widely used as an axiomatic material and is the subject of theoretical studies. Nowadays, the interest to folk riddles is increasing because of systematic work.

The question of theory and history development of the genre of a riddle is highlighted in the article. Rich, diverse poetics of English folk riddles is still

insufficiently studied. That is why there is a great variety of unresolved issues. Meanwhile, careful, purposeful and detailed study of descriptive means and literary specificity of riddles can give a lot of interesting information for identifying the regularity of development of poetic thinking of a human, clarifying all essential issues related to the study of the theory and history of English folk poetry in general.

#### REFERENCES

1. Березовський І. П. Загадаю – відгадай! Київ : Дніпро, 1987. С. 5–15.
2. Дубенко О. Ю. Порівняльна стилістика англійської та української мов : посібник для студентів та викладачів вищих навчальних закладів. Вінниця : Нова книга, 2005. 224 с.
3. Приходько А., Мамедова А. Система концептів у когнітивно-семантичному просторі німецької народної загадки. *Наукові записки Кіровоградського державного педагогічного університету імені В. Винниченка. Серія : Філологічні науки (мовознавство)*. 2009. Вип. 81 (3). С. 17–22.
4. Green T. A., Pepicello W. J. The Folk Riddle: A Redefinition of Terms. *Western Folklore*. 1979. Vol. 38 (1). P. 3–20.
5. Taylor A. *English Riddles from Oral Tradition*. Berkeley, Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1951.
6. Peppicello W. J., Thomas A. Green. *The language of Riddles New Perspectives*. Ohio State University Press : Columbus, 1984. 169 p.
7. Just Riddles and More...! A free, fun collection of riddles, puzzles, games, illusions, quizzes, downloads and other activities to stimulate your brain! : веб-сайт. URL: <http://www.justriddlesandmore.com>.