

Linguocultural Features of Anthropomorphism in Uzbek Folk Riddles

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Abstract: The present study examines anthropomorphism in Uzbek folk riddles from a linguocultural perspective. Riddles are approached as a specific type of metaphorical construction through which speakers interpret non-human reality using human-centered conceptual patterns. The research focuses on the semantic organization and cultural grounding of anthropomorphic images in riddles referring to natural phenomena, plant life, and agricultural objects. The data were collected from published riddle sources and analyzed using semantic, descriptive, and linguocultural methods. The findings indicate that anthropomorphic representations in Uzbek riddles are structured around culturally significant models, especially kinship and social relations. These representations reflect national mentality and contribute to the formation of the linguistic worldview. The study argues that anthropomorphism in riddles functions as a cognitive and cultural mechanism rather than a purely stylistic device.

Keywords: Anthropomorphism, riddles, linguoculture, metaphor, conceptual model, linguistic worldview.

Introduction: Folk riddles are among the most concise yet semantically complex genres of oral folk literature. They represent reality not directly, but through metaphorical and associative cognition. This genre reflects human cognitive activity, national thinking, and cultural experience in linguistic form. In Uzbek folk riddles, the interpretation of the world is based on an anthropocentric principle, where all entities are understood through human experience. Therefore, anthropomorphism serves as one of the main conceptual mechanisms of riddles. Anthropomorphism refers to the attribution of human characteristics, actions, and social roles to inanimate objects, creating metaphorical models of interpretation¹. This phenomenon is closely connected with national mentality, especially with the conceptual domain of “family”.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Uzbek folklore studies, riddles were systematically analyzed by Z. Husainova, who described their genre features and classification system². Later studies focused on lexical-semantic and syntactic aspects of riddles. From a linguocultural perspective, Z.

Muqimova interprets riddles as units reflecting national consciousness, cultural experience, and linguistic codes³. In cognitive linguistics, metaphor is considered a fundamental mechanism of human thought. According to G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, metaphor is not merely a stylistic device but a cognitive system through which abstract concepts are understood via concrete experience⁴. Furthermore, G. Fauconnier and M. Turner’s Conceptual Blending Theory explains meaning construction as a result of interaction between different conceptual domains⁵. These theoretical approaches provide a strong foundation for analyzing anthropomorphism in Uzbek riddles.

METHODOLOGY

The material of the study is based on examples taken from the collection “Uzbek Folk Riddles” published by M. Abdurahimov in 2022⁶. The riddles were selected according to the presence of anthropomorphic representations. The material was grouped into the following thematic categories:

1. Natural phenomena
2. Plant world

3. Agricultural products

The study employs descriptive, semantic, conceptual, and linguocultural methods. The descriptive method identifies linguistic units, while the semantic analysis reveals their meaning structure. The linguocultural approach explains the connection between anthropomorphic expressions and national conceptual systems.

RESULTS

1. Anthropomorphism in Natural Phenomena: In riddles referring to natural phenomena, anthropomorphism emerges through the attribution of social identities and human-like actions to elements of the environment. Celestial bodies, for example, are frequently interpreted through relational categories. Instead of being described in physical terms, they are conceptualized as participants in social structures. Such representations often rely on kinship models. A celestial object may be portrayed as a female figure, while accompanying elements are interpreted as her dependents. This pattern indicates that relational knowledge derived from family structures is extended to the interpretation of natural systems. In addition to static roles, dynamic processes are also anthropomorphized. Phenomena such as wind or rain are described using verbs typically associated with human activity. Through this mechanism, natural forces are conceptualized as agents capable of intentional movement and interaction. This type of representation reflects a dynamic anthropomorphic model in which the environment is perceived as active and responsive. It also demonstrates the importance of verbal semantics in constructing anthropomorphic meaning.

2. Anthropomorphism in the Plant World: Riddles related to plants reveal a particularly strong connection between anthropomorphism and kinship structures. Plant life is frequently interpreted through family roles, including parent-child relationships and generational hierarchy. This pattern suggests that the family serves as a primary cognitive model for organizing knowledge about growth, reproduction, and continuity. The development of plants is conceptualized in terms of lineage, where production and renewal are associated with parental functions. Gender-based representations also play a significant role. Female images are typically used to convey aesthetic and developmental qualities, while male images are associated with stability and structural features. These patterns correspond to culturally embedded associations between gender and social roles. The use of such representations indicates that anthropomorphism is not a random stylistic choice but a structured system guided by cultural norms and

conceptual frameworks.

3. Anthropomorphism in Agricultural Objects: In riddles describing agricultural products, anthropomorphic representations reflect both physical characteristics and cultural significance. Objects are interpreted through socially meaningful categories, which allows speakers to connect material experience with symbolic meaning. Underground elements are often associated with age and authority, while visible or colorful features are linked to youth and aesthetic value. These associations are grounded in shared cultural perceptions and practical experience. The anthropomorphic depiction of agricultural objects also reflects their importance in everyday life. As essential components of subsistence and economic activity, these objects occupy a prominent place in collective consciousness. Their representation through human-centered models reinforces their cultural relevance. From a linguocultural perspective, this demonstrates how language integrates practical knowledge with symbolic interpretation, creating a unified system of meaning.

CONCLUSION

The analysis confirms that anthropomorphism in Uzbek folk riddles constitutes a systematic and culturally grounded phenomenon. It operates as a form of metaphorical modeling through which non-human entities are interpreted in human terms. The findings show that anthropomorphic structures are shaped by associative thinking and culturally significant conceptual models, particularly those related to kinship and social organization. These structures reflect national mentality and contribute to the formation of the linguistic worldview. The study highlights that riddles function not only as artistic expressions but also as carriers of cultural knowledge. Anthropomorphism, in this context, serves as a key mechanism linking language, cognition, and culture.

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