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LINGUOCULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RIDDLES FORMED ON THE BASIS OF THE LEXEME SNOW

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Abstract

This article explores the linguocultural characteristics of riddles formed on the basis of the lexeme *snow*. As one of the most significant natural phenomena in human experience, snow occupies a special place in folklore, mythology, and linguistic consciousness. Snow-related riddles reflect not only the physical properties of this meteorological phenomenon but also the cultural values, symbolic meanings, and cognitive perceptions associated with winter and nature. The study analyzes the semantic, symbolic, cognitive, and cultural aspects of snow-based riddles and reveals their role in preserving traditional knowledge and national worldviews.

Keywords: Linguoculturology, riddle, snow, lexeme, folklore, linguistic worldview, symbolism, culture.

Introduction

Language serves as a means of preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge accumulated by generations. Linguoculturology studies the interaction between language and culture and investigates how cultural concepts are encoded in linguistic units. One of the most valuable sources for such investigations is folklore, particularly riddles, which reflect the collective experience and worldview of a people.

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Natural phenomena often become the subject of riddles because they are familiar to everyone and play an essential role in daily life. Among them, snow occupies a unique position due to its visual beauty, seasonal significance, and symbolic associations. Snow is commonly connected with winter, purity, silence, renewal, and transformation. Therefore, riddles based on the lexeme *snow* possess rich linguocultural content and reveal important aspects of cultural cognition.

The purpose of this study is to examine the linguocultural characteristics of snow-based riddles and identify the cultural meanings embedded in their linguistic structure.

According to linguocultural theory, lexical units can function as cultural signs that convey specific knowledge about the world. The lexeme *snow* represents not only a meteorological phenomenon but also a cultural concept enriched with symbolic and emotional meanings.

Riddles are figurative texts in which an object or phenomenon is described indirectly through metaphor, comparison, and personification. Their interpretation requires both linguistic competence and cultural awareness. Consequently, riddles constitute an important mechanism for transmitting cultural values and traditional ecological knowledge.

The semantic structure of snow-related riddles is based on the distinctive physical properties of snow, such as its white color, coldness, softness, and ability to cover landscapes.

Consider the following example:

*White feathers from the sky,
Fall without a bird nearby.
They cover fields and trees below,
What is it?*

Answer: Snow

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In this riddle, snow is represented metaphorically as “white feathers.” The semantic focus is on appearance and movement, allowing the listener to recognize the phenomenon through analogy.

Another example:

*I am white but not milk,
Soft but not silk.
I fall from clouds above,
And cover the earth I love.*

Answer: Snow

This example emphasizes the visual and tactile characteristics of snow through comparison and contrast.

Snow possesses rich symbolic meaning in many cultures. It is often associated with purity, innocence, peace, and spiritual renewal. These symbolic meanings are frequently reflected in folklore and riddles.

Example:

*I paint the world in shining white,
Turning darkness into light.
Though I bring the winter cold,
My beauty never grows old.*

Answer: Snow

In this riddle, snow symbolizes purity and beauty. The image of a white-covered landscape reflects aesthetic and spiritual values shared by many cultures.

In some traditions, snow also symbolizes transformation and the cyclical nature of life. Its arrival marks seasonal change and the transition from one stage of the natural cycle to another.

From a cognitive perspective, riddles reveal how people conceptualize natural phenomena. Snow-based riddles frequently employ sensory experiences related to vision, touch, and movement.

Example:

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I have no voice, yet silence follows me.

I have no brush, yet I paint every tree.

I have no feet, yet I travel far and wide.

Answer: Snow

The riddle demonstrates how human cognition interprets snow through metaphorical thinking. Snow is personified as an artist capable of painting landscapes and creating beauty.

Such conceptualization reflects the human tendency to understand nature through anthropomorphic images and familiar experiences.

The cultural significance of snow differs according to geographical and climatic conditions. In northern regions, snow constitutes an integral part of everyday life and cultural identity. It influences architecture, clothing, transportation, folklore, and traditional celebrations.

Many snow-related riddles reflect admiration for winter landscapes and emphasize harmony between humans and nature. In English-speaking cultures, snow often evokes associations with Christmas, winter holidays, childhood memories, and festive traditions.

For example:

I arrive each winter night,

Making rooftops sparkling white.

Children welcome me with cheer,

Waiting for me every year.

Answer: Snow

This riddle illustrates the positive cultural perception of snow as a source of joy and seasonal celebration.

In folklore traditions, snow may also symbolize endurance, patience, and resilience, reflecting human adaptation to winter conditions.

The analysis demonstrates that the lexeme *snow* possesses considerable linguocultural potential. Snow-based riddles transform a natural phenomenon

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into a cultural symbol carrying aesthetic, emotional, and spiritual meanings. Through metaphorical language, they reveal how different societies perceive winter and its associated experiences.

Furthermore, similarities among snow riddles in different cultures indicate universal patterns of human cognition, while cultural differences reflect specific environmental and historical conditions. Thus, snow-related riddles serve as an important source for understanding the interaction between language, culture, and thought.

The study shows that riddles formed on the basis of the lexeme *snow* exhibit distinctive linguocultural characteristics. Their semantic content reflects the physical properties of snow, while their symbolic dimension conveys cultural meanings related to purity, beauty, renewal, and seasonal transformation. Through metaphorical and figurative language, these riddles preserve traditional knowledge and contribute to the formation of a cultural worldview.

Consequently, snow-based riddles represent a valuable object of linguocultural research, demonstrating how language encodes cultural perceptions of nature and transmits them across generations.

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