BG Pulse Journal USA
ISSN:1947-2536 http://www.bgpulseusa.com/index.php/bg
BG PULSE JOURNAL

VARIATIONAL ANALYSIS OF RIDDLE TEXTS ACROSS SOCIAL GROUP

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Annotation. This article examines the variational features of riddle texts across different social groups. The study analyzes the linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of riddles based on age and social factors. The findings reveal that riddles differ in form and function among children, adolescents, young adults, and older individuals, and their meaning and usage vary depending on the social context. The research highlights the sociolinguistic significance of riddles as dynamic units of communication.

Keywords: riddles, sociolinguistics, variational analysis, cultural linguistics, social groups, semantics, pragmatics.

Аннотация. В данной статье анализируются вариативные особенности текстов загадок в разрезе различных социальных групп. В ходе исследования рассматриваются лингвистические, семантические и прагматические аспекты загадок с учетом возрастных и социальных факторов. Результаты показывают, что загадки различаются по форме и функции среди детей, подростков, молодежи и взрослых, а их содержание и использование зависят от социального контекста. Исследование подчеркивает социолингвистическую значимость загадок.

Ключевые слова. загадки, социолингвистика, вариативный анализ, лингвокультурология, социальные группы, семантика, прагматика.

Introduction. Riddles are among the oldest and most widely распространённые forms of oral folklore found in many cultures around the world. They represent not only a form of entertainment but also a unique linguistic and cultural phenomenon through which people express their worldview, values, and collective experience. In traditional societies, riddles have long been used as tools for education, communication, and the transmission of cultural knowledge across generations.

In modern linguistics, riddles are increasingly studied from interdisciplinary perspectives, particularly within sociolinguistics and cultural linguistics. These approaches emphasize the idea that language is not a static system but a dynamic one that reflects social structures, cultural practices, and group identities. In this regard, riddles can be seen as flexible linguistic units that vary depending on the social context in which they are used.

One particularly important aspect of riddles is their variability across different social groups. Age, social status, cultural background, and communicative purpose all influence the way riddles are constructed, interpreted, and transmitted. For instance, riddles told to children tend to be simpler and more direct, while those used among adults often contain metaphorical meanings and require deeper interpretation.

The aim of this paper is to analyze the variation of riddle texts across different social groups, focusing on their linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic characteristics. By examining how riddles

function within specific age groups, this study seeks to highlight their role as socially and culturally embedded forms of communication.

Literature Review. The relationship between language and society has been widely explored in sociolinguistic research. Scholars have consistently emphasized that language varies according to social factors such as age, gender, education, and cultural background. From this perspective, folklore genres like riddles provide valuable material for understanding how language operates within different social contexts.

Cultural linguistics further contributes to this discussion by examining how language encodes cultural meanings. Riddles, in particular, are rich in cultural references, symbolic imagery, and shared knowledge. They often rely on culturally specific concepts that may not be immediately understandable to outsiders, which makes them an interesting subject for linguistic and cultural analysis.

Previous studies have shown that riddles serve multiple functions depending on the social group. Among children, they are commonly used as educational tools that develop logical thinking and language skills. Among adolescents and young adults, riddles often function as a form of social interaction, helping to establish group identity and maintain communication. In contrast, among older generations, riddles tend to carry cultural and historical significance, acting as a means of preserving traditional knowledge.

Despite the growing interest in riddles, relatively few studies have focused specifically on their variation across social groups. This gap highlights the need for further research into how riddles change depending on the speakers and the contexts in which they are used.

Methodology. This study adopts a qualitative approach to analyze riddle texts collected from different social groups. The data consists of riddles commonly used among children, adolescents, young adults, and older individuals. These riddles were selected based on their frequency of use and relevance to each group.

The analysis focuses on three main aspects:

1. **Linguistic features** – including vocabulary, sentence structure, and complexity.
2. **Semantic features** – including imagery, metaphor, and underlying meaning.
3. **Pragmatic functions** – including the purpose and context of use.

By comparing these aspects across different groups, the study aims to identify patterns of variation and explain how social factors influence the form and function of riddles.

Results. The analysis reveals clear differences in the structure and function of riddles across social groups.

Riddles for children. Riddles intended for children are generally simple in structure and easy to understand. They often use familiar vocabulary and refer to everyday objects such as animals, fruits, and household items. The primary function of these riddles is educational, as they help children develop cognitive and linguistic skills.

Riddles among adolescents. Among adolescents, riddles become more complex and often include elements of humor and creativity. They are frequently used in peer interactions and serve as a form of entertainment. These riddles may also reflect contemporary culture and social trends.

Riddles among young adults. Young adults tend to use riddles in a more flexible and creative way. In this group, riddles often serve as a tool for social bonding and communication. They may incorporate modern references and demonstrate a higher level of linguistic experimentation.

Riddles among older adults. Riddles used by older individuals are typically more symbolic and culturally rich. They often reflect traditional values, historical experiences, and collective memory. These riddles require deeper interpretation and are closely tied to cultural identity.

Graphical Analysis. The distribution of riddle functions across social groups shows a clear pattern. Educational functions dominate in children's riddles, while communicative and social functions are more prominent among adolescents and young adults. Cultural and preservative functions are most evident among older generations.

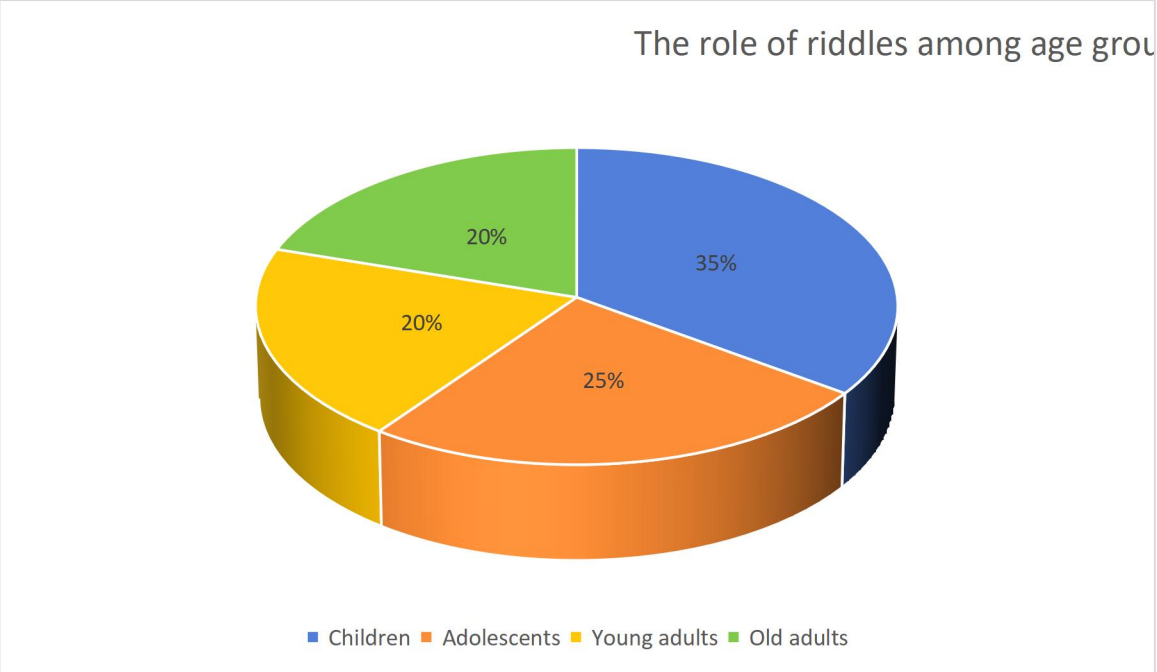
This shift in function demonstrates that riddles evolve alongside the social roles and communicative needs of different age groups.

The pie chart below illustrates the functional distribution of riddles across different social groups. According to the data, 35% of riddles serve an educational purpose, primarily among children, where they are used to develop logical thinking and language skills.

A further 25% of riddles function as a communicative tool among adolescents, helping them maintain social interaction and engage in peer communication.

Among young adults, 20% of riddles are used for social interaction, reflecting creativity and modern communication styles. Similarly, 20% of riddles among adults and older individuals serve the purpose of cultural preservation, transmitting traditional knowledge and values from one generation to another.

Overall, the diagram clearly demonstrates that the function of riddles shifts from educational to social and cultural roles as age increases, confirming their dynamic and socially dependent nature.



Discussion. The findings of this study confirm that riddles are highly variable linguistic forms influenced by social context. Their structure, meaning, and function change depending on the age and social environment of the speakers.

One key observation is that riddles become increasingly complex as the age of the speakers increases. This complexity is reflected not only in language but also in the depth of meaning and cultural references. While children's riddles focus on learning and recognition, adult riddles emphasize interpretation and cultural knowledge.

Another important point is the role of riddles in maintaining social interaction. In younger groups, riddles serve as a means of entertainment and communication, while in older groups, they act as a bridge between generations, preserving cultural traditions.

Overall, riddles can be seen as dynamic tools that adapt to the needs of different social groups, reflecting broader patterns of language use in society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that riddle texts exhibit significant variation across social groups. Their linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic characteristics are closely tied to the social and cultural context in which they are used.

Riddles for children primarily serve educational purposes, while those used by adolescents and young adults function as tools for communication and social interaction. Among older individuals, riddles play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and transmitting traditional knowledge.

These findings highlight the importance of studying riddles not only as linguistic artifacts but also as socially meaningful forms of communication. Future research could further explore cross-cultural comparisons and examine how riddles evolve in digital environments.

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