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LEXICAL-SEMANTIC FOUNDATIONS BEHIND THE FORMATION OF SOMATIC-COMPONENT RIDDLES IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK

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Abstract. The present paper looks into how body-part vocabulary supplies the lexical and semantic raw material out of which riddles are built in English and Uzbek. Working within a contrastive framework, the author gathers riddle texts whose key word names a part of the body, sorts those key words into meaning-based clusters, and traces the two transfer routes – one resting on resemblance, the other on adjacency – by which an organ name comes to stand for some everyday object. The comparison suggests a double picture: the underlying habit of describing the world by way of one's own body recurs in both traditions, yet which organ is chosen, what object it points to, and what emotional colouring it carries are settled differently in each language. These observations bear on contrastive lexicology, folklore scholarship, the theory of translation, and the teaching of foreign languages.

Keywords: riddle, somatism, body-part lexeme, lexical-semantic motivation, metaphor, metonymy, picture of the world, English, Uzbek.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada inson tana a'zolarini bildiruvchi so'zlar – somatizmlar – ingliz va o'zbek tillarida topishmoqlarning shakllanishi uchun qanday leksik-semantik asos berishi o'rganiladi. Qiyosiy yondashuv doirasida muallif kalit so'zi tana a'zosini ataydigan topishmoqlarni to'playdi, ularni ma'noviy guruhlarga ajratadi va organ nomining biror kundalik buyumga ko'chishini ta'minlovchi ikki yo'l – o'xshashlikka va yondoshlikka asoslangan ko'chimni – tahlil qiladi. Qiyos shuni ko'rsatadiki, olamni o'z tanasi orqali tasvirlash odati har ikki an'anada takrorlanadi, biroq qaysi a'zo tanlanishi, u qaysi buyumga ishora qilishi va qanday hissiy bo'yoq olishi har bir tilda turlicha hal etiladi. Natijalar chog'ishtirma leksikologiya, folklorshunoslik, tarjima nazariyasi va chet tilini o'qitish uchun ahamiyatlidir.

Kalit so'zlar: topishmoq, somatizm, tana a'zosi leksemasi, leksik-semantik asos, metafora, metonimiya, til manzarasi, ingliz tili, o'zbek tili.

Аннотация. В настоящей статье рассматривается, каким образом слова, обозначающие части человеческого тела – соматизмы, – служат лексико-семантической основой для образования загадок в английском и узбекском языках. В рамках сопоставительного подхода автор собирает загадки, ключевое слово которых называет часть тела, распределяет эти слова по смысловым группам и анализирует два пути переноса – основанный на сходстве и основанный на смежности, – благодаря которым название органа начинает обозначать тот или иной бытовой предмет. Сопоставление показывает двойственную картину: привычка описывать мир через собственное тело повторяется в обеих традициях, однако выбор органа, обозначаемый им предмет и его эмоциональная окраска решаются в каждом языке по-разному. Результаты значимы для сопоставительной лексикологии, фольклористики, теории перевода и преподавания иностранных языков.

Ключевые слова: загадка, соматизм, лексема части тела, лексико-семантическая основа, метафора, метонимия, языковая картина мира, английский язык, узбекский язык.

1. Introduction

A people's accumulated experience, its way of seeing things and the values it holds dear all leave traces in its vocabulary, and few corners of folklore record those traces as densely as the riddle. In this short oral form an object is never named outright; instead it is sketched sideways, through likeness, contradiction or a deliberate puzzle, and the hearer is left to supply the missing answer. The Uzbek term for the genre, topishmoq, literally invites 'finding', and the English label carries the same challenge to guess.

When a speaker assembles such a veiled description, the nearest measuring rod is usually the speaker's own body. That is why words for body parts – what linguists call somatisms, from Greek soma 'body' – turn up so often among the building blocks of riddles. This layer of the lexicon is also one of the most ancient and least changeable in any tongue, which makes it convenient ground for comparison. What this article sets out to clarify is the lexical-semantic motivation behind somatic riddles in English and Uzbek: which organ names are recruited, what they are made to stand for, and where the two languages agree or part ways.

2. Materials and Methods

The corpus assembled for the study consists of riddles whose central image is a body part, drawn from printed English and Uzbek folklore collections together with dictionary entries. Four procedures were combined. The descriptive procedure orders the somatic material; the contrastive-typological procedure sets the two languages side by side; componential analysis breaks the meaning of each organ name into smaller semantic features; and a linguocultural reading interprets the cultural weight that the imagery carries. Each text was first filed under the body-part word it contains, after which its semantic make-up and the figure of speech – whether resemblance-based or contiguity-based – were inspected in turn.

3. Results and Discussion

Sorting the collected somatisms by meaning yields three recurrent clusters. The widest takes in the head and the face: head (Uzb. bosh), eye (ko‘z), ear (quloq), mouth (og‘iz), nose (burun), tooth (tish) and tongue (til). A second cluster gathers the limbs: hand/arm (qo‘l), finger (barmoq) and foot/leg (oyoq). A third, narrower cluster holds the trunk and inner organs, among them heart (yurak), liver (jigar) and back/waist (bel). Counting occurrences across both traditions, the head-and-face items – eye, head and tooth above all – carry the heaviest functional load, a fact that follows naturally from how visible and how vital those organs are.

Two routes of meaning transfer do the actual work of turning an organ name into a riddle. Along the first route, resemblance of shape or task lets a body-part word migrate onto a lifeless thing. Uzbek tradition calls the opening of a needle a ko‘z (eye), the curved handle of a jug a quloq (ear), and a mountain's peak a bosh (head). English does exactly the same: a needle has its eye, a jug

or bottle its mouth, a clock its hands. The fact that two unrelated traditions land on identical images points to a shared, body-anchored way of thinking rather than to any borrowing between them.

The second route works through adjacency rather than likeness: an organ stands in for the whole person, or for the act it performs. When a riddle has 'one tongue speak for the entire village' and the answer is a bell, tongue/til is selected because it is the seat of sound, not because it looks like anything. Cases of this kind show that the lexical-semantic motivation of a riddle is not confined to outward likeness but draws just as readily on cause-and-effect and part-for-whole links.

Where the two languages clearly diverge is in the choice of source objects, in the manner of styling the image, and in cultural overtones. Uzbek somatic riddles lean heavily on the props of rural labour and the household – farming tools, kitchen vessels, domestic animals – and they are tightly knit by metre, rhyme and sound-play that ease memorisation and oral passing-on. English riddles, especially the literary ones, tend instead to lean on paradox and on the double sense of words; a familiar nursery piece such as 'Humpty Dumpty' assembles a more layered figure. Such gaps say more about the everyday realia and the aesthetic taste of each tradition than about the body-part stock itself, which is broadly shared.

Cultural overtone marks a final line of difference. The word for heart (yurak) names the seat of feeling, love and the inner person in both communities, so here the two converge. The word for liver, however, pulls them apart: in Uzbek – and across much of the East – jigar (also bag'ir) radiates warmth, tenderness and blood-kinship, whereas English liver awakens nothing of the sort. The mismatch makes plain that, even where the roster of organ names overlaps, the value and feeling fastened to each name are set by a community's own cultural code.

Read together, these results place the lexical-semantic motivation of somatic riddles on two layers that work at once. A universal, cognition-driven layer explains why so many images coincide; a nationally bound layer governs which lexeme is picked, how the figure is dressed, and what connotations cling to it. Seen this way, a somatic riddle becomes a miniature snapshot of the verbal picture of the world that each people carries.

4. Conclusion

Setting English and Uzbek somatic riddles against each other supports several conclusions. To begin with, riddles of this kind put anthropocentric thinking on open display, and in both languages eye, head and tooth rank among the busiest source words. Next, their formation rides on two largely universal mechanisms – transfer by resemblance and transfer by adjacency – which is why so many parallels surface across the pair. At the same time, the languages keep their distance in the objects they riddle about, in the craft of their imagery, and in the cultural feeling attached to particular somatisms, each tracing the contours of its own cultural code. The picture sketched here can serve contrastive lexicology, folklore and translation studies, and the day-to-day work of language teaching and intercultural training. A larger corpus paired with statistical counts would sharpen and broaden what has been observed.

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