

LINGUO-PRAGMATIC FEATURES AND SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF METAPHORICAL SUBTEXT IN RIDDLES

Muhammadsodiq Shodmonov

Student at Alfraganus University

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22295880>

Abstract. This article investigates the phenomenon of metaphorical subtext within folk riddles, highlighting their role as a foundational genre of oral folklore. It elucidates how metaphorical subtext functions as a primary mechanism for encoding hidden information and stimulating cognitive reasoning. Furthermore, the study examines the syntactic-semantic architecture of subjects, objects, and predicates carrying metaphorical subtext, illustrating their communicative roles and structural realizations through empirical textual analysis.

Key words: riddle, metaphorical meaning, hidden meaning, subject, object, predicate, predicative function, semantic component, oral folk literature.

Within folk riddles, the cognitive transformation of an unknown reality into a known one relies on a concealed semantic component embedded within the utterance. That is, the information intended by the speaker is not explicitly disclosed; rather, it is manifested through various configurations of implicit meaning.

Due to the diverse forms of expressing implicit content, M. Hakimov categorizes implicit meanings into two primary groups: general and specific. He writes: "General implicit meanings are those accessible to and comprehensible by the speaker, listener, and all discourse participants. These encompass idioms, conversational turns, proverbs, adages, riddles, and similar structures" [Hakimov, 2001, p. 35].

The explicit statement of information exists in every form of expression, representing the core proposition regarding the subject of speech. Implicit information, conversely, is strategically embedded within this overt structure. Information structure in riddles possesses precisely such an implicit character, which we deem appropriate to designate using the term metaphorical subtext (*metaforik tagma'no*, as conceptualized by M. Qahramonov).

"In such variations of subtext, the speaker signals the intended information by presenting a proposition grounded in metaphorical resemblance between specific objects" [Hakimov, 2001, p. 35]. Within folk riddles, metaphorical subtext manifests through the following structural realizations:

1. The subject—as a semantic-syntactic structural unit of the sentence, whether denoting a "personal" subject or "non-personal" subject [Abdullayeva, 2001, p. 6]—carries implicit meaning, wherein it occurs in a descriptive (phrasal) state together with its modifier.

2. Subject-based metaphorical subtext operates on the basis of both real and unreal propositional content. Such riddles "...possess two parallel semantic tiers (external vs. internal, overt vs. covert), wherein words exhibit dual relational properties, coexisting simultaneously across both semantic tiers" [Abdullayev, 1993, p. 14]. In other words, a riddle does not structurally differ from an ordinary declarative sentence. As Russian linguist A. I. Yefimov observes: "Typically, in artistic discourse, a word employed in a figurative or metaphorical sense attracts an entire chain of subordinate words that are semantically bound to it, participating in a similar figurative-metaphorical shift. This gives rise to a cohesive metaphorical text that demands a specific subtext for comprehension. At the core of a

metaphorical text lies a distinct semantic parallelism—a dual-tiered semantic architecture understood as the coexistence of two parallel semantic lines" [Yefimov, 1957, p. 123].

Ushbu bo'limni ilmiy-akademik va semantik-sintaktik tahlil talablariga to'liq mos ravishda ingliz tiliga tarjima qildim:

Fotima – Zuhra urishadi,

Merosini bo'lishadi.

(Qaychi)

(English translation:

"Fatima and Zuhra quarrel,

Dividing their inheritance."

Answer: *Scissors*)

Qo'shnimning arqoni devordan oshib tushdi.

(Oshqovoq)

(English translation:

"My neighbor's rope hung over the wall."

Answer: *Pumpkin vine*)

In these riddles, "Fatima and Zuhra" (traditionally representing twin figures) metaphorically signify the two blades of the scissors; "Fatima and Zuhra" function as the real denotat, while "scissors" represents the underlying metaphorical subtext. Similarly, "my neighbor's rope" serves as the real denotat, with the "pumpkin vine" acting as the metaphorical subtext.

Subject-based metaphorical subtexts can also be generated on the basis of unreal propositional content:

Bir yaproqda o'ttiz kelin soch taraydi.

(Oy, kunlar)

(English translation:

"Thirty brides comb their hair on a single leaf."

Answer: *Moon and days of the month*)

Katta oppoq dasturxon hamma yoqni qoplagan.

(Qor)

(English translation:

"A vast white tablecloth covers everywhere."

Answer: *Snow*)

In these instances, thirty brides combing their hair on a single leaf or a tablecloth covering the entire landscape represent physically unreal scenarios. In such subject-based metaphorical subtexts, the target concept to be deduced occupies the grammatical position of the subject within the sentence.

2. Object-Based Metaphorical Subtext

The object carries a general implicit meaning, which likewise manifests through two distinct structural forms:

a) Real Propositional Object Subtext:

Qizil buzoqimni og'ildan qaytarsam, chiqmaydi.

(Til)

(English translation:

"When I turn my red calf back from the barn, it refuses to come out."

Answer: *Tongue*)

Yurib, oq tovuqimni yo'qotdim.

(Tupuk)

(English translation:

"As I walked, I lost my white hen."

Answer: *Saliva*)

b) Unreal Propositional Object Subtext:

Esonboy akamning qissasini el yig'ilib tikolmas.

(Yer yorig'i)

(English translation:

"A gathering of people cannot sew back Brother Esonboy's torn robe."

Answer: *Fissure in the earth*)

Ajab bir gumbazlik uy ko'rdim, na eshigi bor, na teshigi.

(Yomg'ir ko'pigi)

(English translation:

"I saw a wondrous domed house with neither doors nor holes."

Answer: *Rain bubble*)

An object carrying metaphorical subtext functions as a constructive object constituent of the sentence. When subjects and objects possess general implicit meaning, they participate in the structural organization of the riddle as real denotata. Furthermore, there exists another structural manifestation of metaphorical subtext in riddles wherein the metaphorized entity itself is absent from the surface structure. When a listener receives and interprets the propositional content of an utterance delivered by the speaker in a specific communicative situation, they must deduce what the speaker intends to convey. To accomplish this, the listener is required to derive semantic conclusion "B" from expression "A" present in the speaker's discourse. We deem it appropriate to conditionally designate this variety as predicate-based metaphorical subtext.

Tutgan yerini uzar. (Ombir)

(Literal translation: *"It severs whatever it grips."* / Answer: *Pliers*)

Urmasdan yig'latadi. (Piyoz)

(Literal translation: *"It makes one cry without hitting."* / Answer: *Onion*)

Predicates—actions bearing a general implicit meaning—combine with the covert denotat (the answer to the riddle) to form a predicative expression (e.g., *Pliers sever*, *Onion causes tears*).

It should be noted that although the primary logical emphasis is borne by the action—that is, the predicate (severing being the primary property of pliers, and inducing tears being that of an onion)—the predicate also demands a descriptive state. During information processing, all argument constituents of the predicate function in equal measure. Verbal and nominal predicates serve as the semantic and organizing centers of predicate metaphorical subtexts.

Syntactic constructions that satisfy the valencies of verbal predicates play a crucial role in forming descriptive predicates. Accordingly, predicate metaphorical subtexts can be categorized into the following groups:

Subject-Linked Predicate Metaphorical Subtext:

Past osmondan qor yog'ar. (Elak)

(English: "Snow falls from a low sky." / Answer: Sieve)

Momom ketib boryapti, Kulchasi qolib boryapti. (Tuya oyog'ining izi)

(English: "My grandmother is walking away, leaving her flatbread behind." / Answer: Camel footprint)

Locative/Temporal-Linked Predicate Metaphorical Subtext:

Kunu tun yuradi, doim bir joyda turadi. (Soat)

(English: "It moves day and night, yet always stays in one place." / Answer: Clock)

Qishda yaxlamaydi, yozda yaxlaydi. (Sho'r yer)

(English: "It does not freeze in winter, it freezes in summer." / Answer: Saline soil / Solonchak)

Manner-Linked Predicate Metaphorical Subtext:

Uchib kelar g'oz kabi, O'rin solar muz kabi, G'ijirlar saxtiyon kabi, Achchiq bo'lar tuz kabi.

(Qor, ayoz)

(English: "Flies in like a goose, settles like ice, creaks like shagreen leather, stings like salt." / Answer: Snow, frost)

Condition-Linked Predicate Metaphorical Subtext:

Yotsa turmas, Tursa yotmas. (Qop)

(English: "If it lies down it won't stand, if it stands it won't lie down." / Answer: Sack)

Bir to'kilsa, qayta to'lmas. (Obro', nomus)

(English: "Once spilled, it cannot be refilled." / Answer: Reputation, honor)

Intended meanings in folk riddles are expressed concisely and implicitly. This provides broad opportunities for comparative cognition, perception, and analysis of real-world objects and phenomena, serving as an optimal and vital tool for the development of logical thinking.

Owing to the concise nature of expression in riddles, even when a subject is explicitly stated, it often cannot directly serve as the true bearer of the state or attribute in reality.

An explicitly expressed subject in riddles possesses both external and internal semantic tiers. For instance:

Sariboy akam ichkari, soqollari tashqari. (Sabzi)

(English: "Brother Sariboy is inside, his beard is outside." / Answer: Carrot)

In this riddle, the subject—*Brother Sariboy*—appears on the external semantic tier as if expressing a real denotat. On the internal semantic tier, however, *Brother Sariboy* points to a yellow object, namely a carrot. We conditionally term such subjects logical reference subjects (or *logical deictic subjects*). Linguists N. Mahmudov and A. Nurmonov [1995, p. 172] define the terms "reference constituent" and "reference unit" in connection with "deictic markers" in general linguistics, characterizing pronouns and relative words as deictic reference constituents in complex sentences. The subject frequently functions as a logical reference constituent. The essence of this mechanism is that such units do not directly denote meaning, events, attributes, or objects; rather, they point or refer to them, allowing them to be viewed as semantically weak or "empty" words [Weinreich, 1970, pp. 177–183].

In the aforementioned riddle, *Brother Sariboy* acts as a reference constituent occupying the syntactic position of the subject (grammatical subject). Because this subject refers to the answer of the riddle (carrot), it is semantically perceived in place of the true subject: *Carrot is*

inside, its tops are outside. Thus, across parallel semantic tiers, the subjects of this riddle are structured as follows:

Sariboy aka: External semantic tier — *logical reference constituent*.

Sabzi (Carrot): Internal semantic tier — *real denotat*.

Similarly:

Oltmish ikki aybni oq yopar. (Qatiq)

(English: "White covers sixty-two faults." / Answer: Yogurt)

Here:

Oq (White): External semantic tier — *logical reference constituent*.

Qatiq (Yogurt): Internal semantic tier — *real denotat*.

This sentence can be transformed into: *Yogurt covers sixty-two faults*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the communicative mechanism of folk riddles does not direct the listener's focus toward an explicit answer to a rhetorical prompt; rather, primary logical emphasis is placed upon the metaphorical counterpart of the target object. Consequently, the true solution emerges through cognitive deduction derived from this metaphorical interplay.

From a syntactic perspective, explicit subjects are realized through nouns and nominalized lexical units, occupying structural positions such as the grammatical subject, object, or possessive modifier. Conversely, folk riddles also exhibit implicit subjects—elements that remain grammatically unexpressed yet logically implied—which materialize only upon decoding the riddle's final answer. Ultimately, the cognitive transformation of an unknown reality into a known reality in folk riddles fundamentally depends on the presence of a hidden semantic component, namely metaphorical subtext (*metaforik tagma'no*), which acts as a vital catalyst for conceptual reasoning and linguistic agility.

Adabiyotlar, References, Литературы:

1. Abdullayev, J. K. (1993). *O'zbek xalq topishmoqlarining leksik-semantik xususiyatlari* [Lexico-semantic features of Uzbek folk riddles] (Doctoral dissertation / Candidate thesis, Tashkent).
2. Abdullayeva, D. T. (2001). *Mazmunij subyekt va uning o'zbek tilida ifodalanishi* [Semantic subject and its expression in the Uzbek language] (Author's abstract of doctoral dissertation / Candidate thesis, Tashkent).
3. Hakimov, M. K. (2001). *O'zbek tilida matnning pragmatik tasnifi* [Pragmatic classification of text in the Uzbek language] (Author's abstract of Doctor of Science dissertation, Tashkent).
4. Nurmonov, A., & Mahmudov, N. (1995). *O'zbek tilining nazariy grammatikasi* [Theoretical grammar of the Uzbek language]. O'qituvchi Publishing.
5. Weinreich, U. (1970). O semanticheskoy strukture yazyka [On the semantic structure of language]. In *Novoye v lingvistike* [New in Linguistics] (Vol. 5). Progress Publishing.
6. Yefimov, A. I. (1957). *Stilistika khudozhestvennoy rechi* [Stylistics of artistic speech]. Moscow State University Press.