

THE SPECIFICS OF THE ACTUALIZATION OF THE WORLDVIEW IN ENGLISH RIDDLES

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Abstract: The article examines the axiological nature of concepts within the framework of the linguistic picture of the world. Concepts are viewed as multidimensional structures that combine rational and emotional, abstract and concrete, universal and ethnic, as well as collective and individual dimensions. Following the ideas of V.A. Maslova and Yu.S. Stepanov, the study highlights the role of concepts as the core of the conceptual sphere that determines cultural dynamics and reflects historical experience. Particular attention is given to the close interrelation between language, culture, and history, as emphasized by N.I. Tolstoy and other scholars. The article demonstrates that linguistic forms preserve traces of social order, national identity, and cultural development, thus shaping the ethnic worldview. Within this perspective, the English riddle is analyzed as a folklore genre that functions as both a part of England's traditional verbal culture and a source of information about the archaic worldview of the English ethnos.

Keywords: concept; linguistic picture of the world; conceptual sphere; culture; values; national worldview; folklore; English riddle; ethnolinguistics; cultural knowledge

INTRODUCTION:

Modern linguistics is closely intertwined with other sciences within the anthropocentric paradigm, such as philosophy and logic, psychology, cultural studies, anthropology, and cognitive science all of which contribute to the study of the relationship between language on the one hand, and thought, cognition, history, and lifestyle of its speakers on the other. The body of representations of the world, shaped by language users, fixed in linguistic forms, and reflected in the linguistic worldview, remains one of the most relevant subjects of contemporary linguistic research. Many scholars investigating the correlation between language and thought emphasize that the worldview mirrored in human consciousness is a secondary reconstruction of the objective world. The worldview can be described as a global, integral image of reality that underlies a person's vision of the world, refracting its essential features through the perception of its speakers and representing the outcome of human intellectual and cultural activity. T.V. Tsiv'yan defines the worldview (referred to by the author as a "model of the world") as "a reduced and simplified representation of the entire set of ideas about the world in a given tradition, considered in their systemic and operational aspects" [Tsiv'yan 2006]. Perceptions of reality, received through the senses, undergo reinterpretation via semiotic systems; thus, the worldview does not function as a mere set of empirical data but as the result of the interplay of semiotic codes coordinated into a unified system.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Viewing the world as a "picture" reflects humankind's aspiration to categorize and systematize the universe—nature, history, and existence. At the same time, the deep interrelation between language and thought produces a unique human phenomenon: worldview perception [Vardzelashvili 2009, p. 64]. Moreover, the worldview inevitably carries a national-cultural imprint [Krasnykh 2001, p. 64], being enshrined in linguistic forms as the collective consciousness of an ethnos, including its pre-scientific knowledge [Vardzelashvili 2009, p. 64]. The precondition for correlating the

real world with its reflection in human cognition lies in the existence of a “secondary, ideal world embodied in linguistic matter,” that is, the linguistic worldview [Kolshansky 2006, p. 32]. V.A. Maslova defines the linguistic worldview as a complex of knowledge about the world encoded in the lexicon, phraseology, and grammar [Maslova 2001, p. 66].

Verbalized experience, cultural knowledge, and the accumulated heritage of an ethnolinguistic community form a distinct way of conceptualizing the world. The entire diversity of human cognitive activity and the sociocultural conditions in which it develops natural environment, social organization, history, and practical experience are reflected in language [Alefirenko 2005, p. 279]. Given the multidimensional nature of the worldview’s linguistic representation, it is studied from different perspectives. For instance, the structuring of the linguistic worldview through the analysis of semantic fields, lexical, and phraseological meanings have been explored in the works of V.G. Gak [Gak 2002], V.N. Telia [Telia 1988, 1996], and E.S. Yakovleva [Yakovleva 1994, 1998]. The study of the linguistic worldview in folklore, mythology, and culture has been carried out by N.I. Tolstoy [Tolstoy 1995], T.V. Tsiv’yan [Tsiv’yan 2006], E.I. Aleshchenko [Aleshchenko 2008], O.A. Plakhova [Plakhova 2013], and M.O. Abdrashitova [Abdrashitova 2014]. The close relationship between language and culture has also been discussed by V.I. Karasik [Karasik 1996, 2013], Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin [Popova, Sternin 2007], V.V. Katermina [Katermina 2006], V.A. Maslova [Maslova 2007], among others. The linguistic worldview comprises information about reality, consolidated and expressed through the means of linguistic nomination in national languages. As V.N. Telia explains, the linguistic worldview is an inevitable product of cognitive and linguistic activity, emerging from the interaction of thought, reality, and language as the medium for articulating ideas about the world within communicative acts. It fulfills two key functions: the nomination of essential elements of the conceptual worldview and their explication through linguistic means [Telia 1988, p. 179]. Language, in this sense, constitutes a unique form of cultural existence and a crucial factor in shaping the worldview: “the selection of images and their verbalization results from cultural interpretation of fragments of reality with the purpose of expressing an evaluative or emotionally significant attitude towards them” [Telia 1996, p. 82].

Z.D. Popova and I.A. Sternin emphasize that the worldview is historically determined—its content depends on the level of cognition achieved at a given historical stage; it undergoes change with evolving historical conditions, scientific progress, and the development of cognitive methods [Popova, Sternin 2007]. This position echoes F. de Saussure’s understanding of the historical nature of language: “At any given epoch, no matter how far back we trace, language always appears as the heritage of the preceding era. In fact, every society has always known language only as a product inherited from earlier generations and accepted as it stands. ... Any state of language is always the outcome of historical factors” [Saussure 1977, p. 105]. É. Benveniste also highlighted a distinctive feature of the verbal sign: its ability to substitute for human experience, which can be endlessly transmitted across time and space [Benveniste 1974, p. 101].

Representing a specific mode of perceiving reality, language mirrors the dynamics of shifting value priorities, cultural traditions, beliefs, and everyday practices of an ethnos. Humanity’s practical engagement with the surrounding world is consolidated in the form of natural language, which becomes a mediator of national characteristics within the worldview. Through the linguistic system, historical transformations in the development of human society, its material environment, and people’s attitudes toward reality are recorded. For instance, the evolution of various modes of thinking mythological, naïve, and religious can be traced within the traditional (folkloric) worldview, which, along with the representation of collective experience, conveys “an ancient perspective on the world embodied in numerous conventional patterns” [Aleshchenko 2008, p. 7]. Given the generic affiliation of riddles under study, we follow M.O. Abdrashitova in defining the traditional (folkloric) worldview as “a set of collective perceptions of the surrounding world, reflected in folklore texts” [Abdrashitova 2014, p. 13]. According to Abdrashitova, the folkloric worldview is marked by several distinctive features. Among them are semiotic oppositions, the primary one being the overarching contrast of “one’s own” versus “the other.” In this dichotomy, “one’s own” is positively evaluated, while “the other” carries negative connotations. Such oppositions are universal and occur in both early and later folklore texts. Another essential characteristic is symbolism, i.e., the presence of specific symbolic meanings that are particularly intrinsic to folklore.

The traditional folkloric worldview also reflects the system of social values through its axiological dimension, expressed in depictions of the ideal or “proper” world as it ought to be, according to accepted norms. Tradition, in this sense, is closely tied to repetition, manifested in the incorporation of contemporary meanings into traditional models as observed, for example, in riddles referring to modern realities. Thus, the language of folklore functions as a unique world-modeling system that captures a society’s particular perception of reality across different historical stages of its existence [Abdrashitova 2014, pp. 13–14]. S.E. Nikitina regards folklore texts as “complexly encoded messages” [Nikitina 1993, p. 66], which embody the distinctive features of national world perception. This perception operates within the parameters shaped by historically established value-semantic systems archaic, religious, every-day, scientific, and others. The foundation of such perception lies in what A.N. Alefirenko calls “categorical-semantic dominants,” which represent a special framework of worldviews built upon a set of rules, norms, beliefs, and values shared by a given ethnocultural community [Alefirenko 1993, pp. 3–11]. Within the traditional worldview, the human factor plays a central role. According to V.N. Telia, this manifests in the correlation of the universe with images and symbols accessible to human perception, including those that attain the status of value-laden stereotypes [Telia 1988, p. 177].

In archaic thought, folklore texts reflected an idealized worldview, unburdened by the requirement of correspondence to empirical reality. V.Ya. Propp explains this as follows: “In folklore, things happen not because they actually did so, but because they appeared so according to the logic of primitive thought” [Propp 2002, p. 27]. Such a mode of thinking was characterized by the absence of causal relationships and by a specific perception of categories such as space and time. For example, in the folkloric-linguistic worldview of English nursery rhymes, I.N. Zinovyeva highlights the profound symbolism of folkloric space. She notes that the very concept of space in these works—its representation and segmentation by members of the (English) folklore community—differs significantly from both scientific and everyday perceptions [Zinovyeva 2008, p. 136]. Riddles, in particular, preserved mythopoetic thinking reinforced by archaic rituals, which symbolically enacted the overcoming of cosmic chaos and the establishment of order, rendering the world meaningful and interconnected. In their figurative form, riddles encoded sacred events and objects [Sedakova, Tolstaya 1999, pp. 234–235].

Examining the axiological model of the world in folklore genres such as lyrical songs and chastushkas, Yu.A. Emmer emphasizes that the object of evaluation in traditional folklore is the external world. The mechanism of value modeling, in this case, rests on comparing worldly events and situations with an ethical-aesthetic ideal. The axiological model of the world thus emerges in folklore through its aesthetic embodiment, highlighting the most meaningful aspects of human existence [Emmer 2007, p. 32]. Similarly, V.G. Sibirtseva, in her study of the Russian riddle, argues that among the key parameters of the traditional worldview reflected in riddles, qualitative ones dominate, describing and structuring the world. Their distinctive features include a positive perception of reality and a focus shifted from objects themselves to their states and attributes [Sibirtseva 2003, p. 4].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The foundation of the worldview lies in information acquired through sensory perception and systematized into a structure of concepts, or the *conceptual sphere*. The conceptual sphere is understood as “the concentration of human knowledge about the world, characterized by variability both temporally and socially, which is connected to cognitive activity and the axiological interpretation of acquired experience” [Chesnokov 2009, p. 5]. It is inherently ordered, since “thinking presupposes the categorization of objects of thought, and categorization presupposes the structuring of its objects” [Popova&Sternin 2007, p. 51]. N.M. Lebedeva emphasizes that the composition of the conceptual sphere also depends on cognitive stereotypes shaped by national culture [Lebedeva 1999, p. 21]. The conceptual sphere is fixed through secondary sign systems, including language, and becomes materialized in the linguistic worldview. As V.N. Telia notes, the linguistic worldview is an inevitable product of cognitive-linguistic activity, emerging from the interaction of thought, reality, and language as the means of expressing ideas about the world in communicative acts. It performs two principal functions: naming the core elements of the conceptual worldview and explicating them through linguistic means [Telia 1996, p. 179]. Thus, the basis for the emergence of the linguistic worldview is the triad “thinking–reality–language.” Reality is reflected in consciousness, transformed through cognition, and represented in language. A.R. Luria argued that to explain the most complex forms of conscious life, one must look beyond the individual organism and seek the sources of conscious activity and “categorical” behavior not within the brain or the spirit, but in external living conditions—primarily in the socio-historical forms of human existence [Luria 1998, p. 23]. In modern conceptology, concepts are regarded as modes of representing reality in human consciousness, as clusters of meaning (*quanta*) that carry cultural information, actualized in the form of signs both within and beyond language. G.G. Slyshkin defines a concept as “a unit that unites scholarly inquiry in the domains of culture, consciousness, and language, since it belongs to consciousness, is determined by culture, and is objectified in language” [Slyshkin 2000, p. 9]. V.I. Karasik and S.G. Vorkachev stress the axiological dimension of concepts: cultural concepts embody societal notions of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, justice and injustice, thereby functioning as “value dominants” within a community [Vorkachev 2002, p. 16; Karasik 2002, p. 5].

The value of cultural concepts is manifested in their representation by a range of linguistic synonyms, thematic groups and fields, proverbs, sayings, as well as folklore and literary plots [Karasik 2006, p. 4]. According to V.I. Karasik, the semantic density of a lexical group, the degree of detail in naming, and the highlighting of semantic nuances signal the linguistic relevance of an extralinguistic object—whether it be an item, process, or notion [Karasik 1996, p. 4]. O.G. Chupryna argues that culturally significant words, which are most frequent and reflect ethnically, socially, historically, and religiously conditioned categories of worldview, form a cultural-linguistic paradigm through which the linguistic model of the world is structured [Chupryna 2001, p. 14].

Yu.D. Apresyan highlights the dual nature of linguistic conceptualization: universal on the one hand, and nationally specific on the other. Every natural language, he argues, reflects a particular way of perceiving and organizing the world. The meanings expressed in language form a coherent system of views—a kind of collective philosophy that is assimilated by all members of the linguistic community [Apresyan 1995, p. 39].

Ethno-cultural affiliation is identified by S.G. Vorkachev as a key feature of the concept. Following his view, we define a concept as a culturally marked verbalized meaning represented in multiple linguistic realizations, forming a corresponding lexico-semantic paradigm. It constitutes a unit of collective knowledge that has linguistic expression and carries ethnocultural specificity [Vorkachev 2004, p. 36].

The axiological nature of the concept presupposes not only its rational, but also its emotional and expressive dimension. The concept is a multidimensional structure which, as V.A. Maslova notes, includes both rational and

emotional, abstract and concrete, universal and ethnic, national and individual-personal aspects. According to the scholar, the concept may be regarded as a structure of cultural knowledge “compressed” into a frame and associated with a particular linguistic unit. In this sense, the concept is an element of the linguistic picture of the world [Maslova 2007, p. 229].

Yu.S. Stepanov emphasizes that concepts form the core of the linguistic picture of the world and accumulate the experience of perceiving reality by the community. The totality of concepts constitutes the conceptual sphere of a language, which to a great extent determines culture, understood by the scholar as “a set of concepts and the relations between them” [Stepanov 1997, p. 38]. At the same time, the structure of the concept, in Stepanov’s view, is dynamic and represents a conglomerate of “layers” that are the “sediment” of cultural life of different historical epochs [Stepanov 1997, p. 46].

As N.I. Tolstoy pointed out, language is a mirror of national culture, psychology, and philosophy, and in many cases also the only source of knowledge about the history and spirit of a people. The cultural and historical epoch, as well as national and ethnic affiliation, directly influence the perception of reality, which in turn is reflected in language [Tolstoy 1995, p. 15]. Linguistic forms express the diversity of conditions under which humanity acquired knowledge about the world: natural environment, social order, historical fate, and everyday practice [Mechkovskaya 2004, p. 118].

Since the history of a people is inseparable from the history of its language, each historical period leaves its trace in the ethnic worldview reflected in linguistic forms. In this context, the English riddle as a folklore genre appears not only as an entertaining verbal creation, but also as a significant component of England’s traditional verbal culture. It serves as a valuable source of information about the ancient worldview of the English ethnos, allowing the reconstruction of archaic models of thinking and perception of the world.

CONCLUSION:

The conducted analysis has shown that the concept, as an axiologically significant and multidimensional unit, occupies a central position in the linguistic picture of the world. It embodies the synthesis of rational and emotional, abstract and concrete, universal and ethnocultural aspects of human knowledge. Concepts form the core of the conceptual sphere and function as carriers of cultural memory, preserving traces of historical epochs, social structures, and national traditions. Language, therefore, serves not only as a means of communication but also as a mirror of the worldview, reflecting the cultural and spiritual life of a people. From this perspective, the English riddle emerges as an important component of folklore that reflects the archaic perception of the world and transmits collective values across generations. Its symbolic nature and cultural specificity make it a valuable source for reconstructing the worldview of the English ethnos. Thus, riddles, along with other folklore genres, can be regarded as a unique verbal form that encodes and preserves the cultural experience of the nation, ensuring continuity between past and present in the linguistic representation of reality.

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