The Analysis of Selected Riddles in English and Arabic : A Contrastive Cognitive- Semantic study.

Assistant Professor: Besma Khalid Ingeish
Department of English/College of Education/ University of Al Qadissiayah
email- besma.alumaishy@qu.edu.iq

Abstract

Riddles are a fixed formula of a question and answer molded in s metaphoric setting that requires the sharp attention, intention and calling up of intelligence on the part of the riddle's solver in order to provide the right solution. This paper aims at identifying the strategies of constructing meaning in a group of riddles in English and Arabic and discussing any mental processes that take place during their production.. To achieve the aim of this paper, 20 riddles and their answers in both languages (10 for each language) are collected from some internet websites. The answers to the riddles are then subjected to cognitive semantic reading. The approach adopted in this study is qualitative. The riddles are tested and described against the cognitive perception of the riddlees serving as clues for the analysis. In the analysis of meaning in any language, three types of context are required to be known: linguistic context, social context, and cognitive context. The first of these includes phonology, lexicon, and grammar, while the social one refers to culture, institutions, and group conditions in which a language is used. The cognitive context consists of the sum of the beliefs, reasoning norms and the know-how required in the production of utterances. The study is based on the Mental Spaces Theory proposed by Fauconnier (1997). Mental spaces are considered as packets of conception shaped by daily experiences. Analyzing of the riddles has demonstrated the key role of cultural differences between the two languages in terms of the answers to the riddles and the knowledge types of the riddle producers. In both languages, the answers to the riddles demand a conglomeration of linguistic, social, and cognitive nature as imposed upon the riddler and the riddlee.

Keywords: riddles, cognitive semantic analysis, knowledge types

تحليل مقارن معرفي دلالي لألغاز مختارة في اللغة الانجليزية و اللغة العربية

الاستاذ المساعد بسمة خالد انغيش
قسم اللغة الانجليزية/كلية التربية/ جامعة القادسية

يهدف هذا البحث تحديد استراتيجيات البناء الدلالي في ألغاز مختارة في اللغة الانجليزية واللغة العربية وتفسير العمليات الذهنية التي تجري اثناء انتاجها. لتحقيق هدف هذا البحث جُمعت 20 لغزا في كلا اللغتين(10 لكل لغة) من مواقع الكترونية متنوعة مع اجاباتها. المنهج المتبع في هذه الدراسة نوعي. ثم أُخضعت الاجابات على الالغاز لقراءة معرفية دلالية. تم فحص الاجابات و وصفها من جهة الادراك المعرفي للمجيبين على الالغاز المستخدمة كدلائل في التحليل. ان في التحليل الدلالي لأي لغة المطلوب معرفة ثلاث انواع من السياق هي السياق اللغوي, السياق الاجتماعي, و السياق المعرفي. يتضمن اول هذه الانواع

المصادر الصوتية والدلالية والنحوية بينما يشير السياق الاجتماعي الى الظروف الثقافية و المؤسساتية و الجمعية التي تستخدم فيها اللغة. يتألف السياق المعرفي من مجموع الاعتقادات و قواعد التفكير و المعرفة المطلوبة للإنتاج الالفاظ. اظهر تحليل الالغاز الدور المهم للفروق الثقافية بين اللغتين بخصوص الاجابات على الالغاز و انواع المعرفة لواضعي اللغز. في كلا اللغتين تتطلب الاجابة على الالغاز خليطا ذا طبيعة لغوية و اجتماعية ومعرفية مفروضة على واضع اللغز و مجيبه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الالغاز , تحليل دلالي معرفي, انواع المعرفة

1. Introduction

Meaning investigating is central to semantic research. What something means or denotes or more precisely what someone means or denotes by saying something has been the preoccupation of many scholars. They first began studying the meanings of linguistic forms used by speakers in their daily communication.(Trask, 2007:165). While formalist linguistics was concentrating on the arbitrary connection between a form and the non-linguistic object it refers to, that is reference, along came the emphasis of cognitive linguistics on its embodied and experiential construal.

2. Cognitive Semantics in English

Gärdenfors (1999, 21-3) points out six principles upon which the study of meaning in cognitive perspectives is based. Firstly, it looks at meaning as a mental phenomenon conceptualized in the communicators' mentalities. Semantics in this case should be regarded in terms of the projection of thoughts and beliefs onto linguistic utterances. Secondly, because the mental structures within speakers' minds are bound to their perceptual mechanisms, meanings in some measure, are perceptually grounded. Thirdly, in cognitive semantics, the semantic content is represented by means of a mental structure or conceptual scheme based on a geometric or spatial construction. Fourthly, Gärdenfors states that models of cognition are above all symbolic. The perceptual map is a central semantic structure for cognitive semantics having an inherent spatial structure. Linguistic phenomena such as metaphor and metonymy envisaged as an instance of deviancy are vital within cognitive semantics. Fifthly, syntax cannot operate without semantics. And lastly, concepts reflect prototype effects. Thus, cognitive semantics is concerned with the conceptualization of language.(Talmy, 2000:4). Evans et al.(2007:6-9), on the other the hand, recognize the following four principles guiding cognitive semantic research:

1. that a person's experiences of reality are embodied on account that they are partly structured by the nature of the human body and they influence cognition.

2. that mind is related to language so much as that what language signifies can make up but a part of the concepts.

3. the signifying function of language is strongly connected to a number of knowledge types and not based on lexical entries.

4. that meaning is conceptually constructed.

The attainment of meanings from language calls for three types of context: linguistic, social, and cognitive. According to Hussein and Abdullah (2019:11). The multi-faceted nature of context has brought it under the attention of various branches of linguistic investigation being essential in the interpretation of human communicative acts. Cognition-based context refers to the mental workings of the users of a language which they make use of in the interpretation of day-to-day utterances and when it is absent, speakers are misunderstood (ibid.)

3. Riddles in English: *definitions, types, and functions*

Riddles are classified as a type or genre of folklore. Georges and Dundes (1963:111) state that the earliest definition of the term riddle dates back to Aristotle who identified riddles with metaphor. A good riddle offer a gratifying metaphor. A metaphor serves as an implication of riddle and therefore, an exceptional riddle can provide an exceptional metaphor.(Kaivola-Bregenhøj,2018:4-5). Other features riddles of include being funny, short, and rhyming or not. Green and Pepicello (1984:3) maintain that defining the riddle has been founded on two types of studies. While a group of those studies have had their emphasis on the linguistic aspects of riddles, others have zeroed in on the aspects of psychology, sociology and the intellect. Researchers who have investigated the structure of riddles claim inadequacy of the studies that concentrate on what is beyond of the form of riddles (Kaivola-Bregenhøj, 2018:5). Drawing the attention to the metaphorical nature of riddles, Sherzer (2002: 61) states that riddles assume the shape of an inquiry whose two parts are a sort of a problem awaiting a solution lined with an element of surprise.

A riddle is typically formed of an undetermined theme with obscurity and metaphorical tasted added. (Blake, 2010:42-3). This points out the ambiguity-based nature of riddles where the image takes the form of a metaphor. This ambiguity comes from putting side by side of various objects that make a paradox or an unreal underlying image.(Kaivola-Bregenhøj, 2018:7). Green and Pepicello (1984:12) declare that the ambiguity in a riddle may be classified into two types: *contextual* and *linguistic*. With the contextually ambiguous riddles, the riddlee displays unawareness of the particular information forming the basis

for riddle metaphor. On the other hand, linguistically ambiguous riddles require a linguistic analysis in order to cater for the confusion since there is no metaphorical problem in this type of riddles.

Riddles are characterized by being divided into two parts which different individuals reproduce. These are the riddle content and its solution which exist in the receiver's mentality as an outcome of their mental activation. (Taranenko, 2016: 158). Riddles are known to imply an image set to misguide the riddlee plus some specific clues concerning what the right response might be. This motivates the riddlee's mental processes. Riddle sessions are held traditionally in the presence of an audience. As Kaivola-Bregenhøj (2018:10-11) asserts that the riddling was used partly for entertaining purposes, and partly for socializing ones. In order not to fall in the trap of boredom, the riddle needs something of a challenge, not easily guessed. It is a test for the riddlee's smartness. The audience also have their share of entertainment and excitement. The answer to any riddle can be achieved through various methods such as guessing, deliberation or knowing the answer beforehand.

In relation to the classification of riddles, authors have suggested more than one classification based on different aspects. Some riddles classified on the basis of their simplicity or complexity, and what objects there are in the riddle, or style and structure used in the riddle.

Other authors such as Abrahams and Dundes (1972) (cited in Kaivola-Bregenhøj (2018:56-75)have classified riddles into five types in terms of the connection between the problem and solution: *descriptive riddles*, *joking* **riddles**, *wisdom riddles*, *puzzles*, and *parody riddles*.

The descriptive riddles are alternatively termed by other scholars "true riddles", "enigma" or "proper riddles" as in the famous "Humpty Dumpty" riddle describing a man in the shape of an egg sitting on a wall. The joking riddles barely contain any metaphor and are formulated as questions starting with , what?, why?, how?, or what is the difference between? meant to release a chain of joking questions. An example of this type is the **elephant joke** popular among American youths:

1-"*Why are elephants grey*?"

"*To distinguish them from blueberries.*"

where the elephant signified the turn towards the granting coloured people civil rights due to an elephant's alienation of its large size (Bronner1988:125).

Wisdom riddles neither require a riddlee's intelligence nor awareness of specific cultural aspect but his competence in a day-to-day and familiar subjects(Abrahams and Dundes, 1972:137):

2. "*How many outs in an inning of baseball?*"

"*-Six.*"

3. "*What was the first operation in the Bible?*"

"*-The removal of Adam's rib to create Eve.*"

The fourth category, puzzles, demand "a performance and deduction" on the part of the riddlee. To solve a puzzle, one needs to be basically familiar with arithmetic and `have "a smart mind":

4. "If a chicken and a half could lay an egg and a half in a day and a half, how long would it take five chickens to lay five eggs?"

"-One day"

Some riddles are cast in the manner of a parody.(Abrahams and Dundes, 1972: 140). Parodied riddles are often inspired by the element of surprise presented by parody. As in the following riddle:

5. "*Why did the chicken cross the road*?"

"*-He wanted to get to the other side*."

The comic aspect of parody is so apparent in this riddle that it was applied in commercial business by a Kentucky Fried Chicken advertisement: "Chicken worth crossing the road for".

Literary riddles, by and large, are the most popular of types of riddles. They are different from the oral riddles in the following features as mentioned by Hart (1964:24): they are set in *briefer statements,* they eschew any thematic differences, they lack abstractness in their topics, they present generally accepted grounds among people, they reflect internationality as far as their recurrent appearance with different nations is concerned and they aren't publishable.

Riddles based on literature are sometimes termed learned or artistic simply for the fact that they come from elegant minds of philosophy and renowned writers. From the early times of medieval period, there sprang out the Sphinx riddle that goes:

 6. **Q:** "*What goes on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon, and on three legs in the eve*

A: *Man, who crawls on four legs as an infant, walks on two legs as an adult, and walks with a cane as an elderly citizen.*"

Riddles are typically used for entertainment, to enhance observation, to sharpen thinking, to train memory, to boost or spark creativity, for recreation, as a prelude to storytelling , to socialize children.

4. Cognitive Semantics in Arabic

For the semantic analysis of Arabic, in general terms, cognitive semantics is a recent addition considering the long linguistic tradition which Arabic has enjoyed for centuries. This doesn't mean that there was no treatment of the subject by traditional linguists of Arabic. Modern linguists of Arabic have been familiar with cognitive linguistics and have adopted it. However, there is an apparent shortage in studies in this field.

In her published paper, Diz Yeh (2014:51-66) investigates the principles and applications of cognitive semantics as far as Arabic is concerned. She subscribes to the fact that linguistic studies are in progress as any other field of knowledge. To achieve cognitive semantic analysis in Arabic, reinterpretation of some poetic and Quranic verses is carried out in the light of the methodology pursued in cognitive semantics. Al Aamery (2020:365) maintains that cognitive semantics is a significant turning point with a great impact on human sciences because knowledge has been a central issue that has preoccupied psychologists, philosophers, and linguisticians. One of the theories which cognitive semantics leans on in interpreting the cognitive mechanisms of meaning construction is the theory of Image Schemas. According to this theory, rhetorical images are metaphorical images based on images drawn by the human mind in accordance with the tangible material means to absorb them. For example, the concept of generosity or openhandedness, expressed in Arabic by means of the words الكرم and السخاء, in its finest and most eloquent representations is accomplished by likening the generous person to the sea in its vastness or a person famous for his distinguished generosity. A similar case is that of the notion of **bravery/الشجاعة** where the courageous person is conceptualized as a lion.

Fauconnier (1997:11) proposed Mental Spaces Theory in which mental spaces are incomplete formats multiplying as an individual engages in thinking and speaking and this permits the delicate division of stored discourse and experiences of the individual. The process of meaning construction has a

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conceptual nature. Participants in a discourse are free to move backwards and forwards in discourse via the connections between mental spaces. Fauconnier and Turner (2002:102) see mental spaces as preconceived thoughts that speakers create as a result of the acts of thinking and speaking. Meaning is constructed by moving out from actual life into the realm of the mind. This is clear in the renowned Arabic poetic verse:

7.   "فياليت الشباب يعود يوما   فأخبره بما فعل المشيب"

*(I wish that youth came back one day, **I would** tell it what old age (grey hair) did to me.)*

Because old age is taking its heavy toll on him, the poet mentally conceptualizes it with the impossible which will never come to be.

5 . Riddles in Arabic: *definition, types, and functions*

The origins of the riddle in Arabic are still unknown. It is one of the oldest genres as Al Hawraani confirms (cited in Al Sheikh ,1988:62). However, it is well-known that ancient philosophers used to spend their free time in doing riddles as a form of entertainment, recreation, and exercise to uncover hidden meanings. From a wider perspective, riddles have a lot to do with rhetorical expressions, metaphor, and truth. Al Raafi'i (1974:407) considers riddles as an instinct. or innate capacity bestowed upon all human beings as evidenced by the child who is naturally given to ask a lot of questions about everything he sees around him. The riddle in Arabic as Kamal (cited in Abdurrahman, 2014:10) states is a form of expression that depends on quick understanding and sagacity on the part of the riddler and riddlee. It is worth mentioning that the term riddle has many synonymous names such as المُعمى which literally means 'the blindfolded' or 'covered on purpose' alluding to the abstract concealment of the answer from the riddlee's awareness. It is also termed المرموس 'the buried' just as in a grave or التأويل 'interpretation or construction' as it aimed to get an explanation, or العويص 'the obscure' if it is hard to answer.

In short, there are as many names for riddles as the riddler's purpose(s) of the riddle. Some Arab scholars have questioned the creative value of riddles for some deem riddles as a scholarly composition or versification which shares with poetry only rhyme and meter. This creative nature of riddles stems from their use as conveyors of experience based on precise cognition of the covert connections of how best we realize things around us, exchange knowledge and experience, exercise the mental capacities and refine the human mind, and entertain ourselves and kill time. From an emotional perspective, humans find in

riddles their desire to defeat the unknown, unravel mysteries. Riddles play an important role in pedagogy for they were employed to train people, young and old, how to tackle a problem from different angles and how to maintain a high-minded sense of humor irrespective of the mental and cognitive efforts exerted in riddling.

According to Abdurrahman (2014:23-4), there is an aspect of the riddle that reveals the psychological state of the riddler to the effect that when he is inclined to humor, fun, and naturalness, the riddle structure and meaning are simpler, more pleasant, and more interesting to the riddlee. Other riddlers are given to obscurity, ambiguity, and oddities so their riddles are often loaded with meanings reflecting the stern and strict character of the riddler. Riddles are basically classified into two major types لفظي/ literal and معنوي non-literal. In the literal type, the target of the riddle is slightly referred to by including words that relate to it as in the following riddle:

8 . يا ايها العطار أعرب لنا   ما اسم شيء قلّ في سَومِك

تُبصِرهُ بالعين في يقظةٍ   كما يُرى بالقلبِ في نومِك

(O! Spice dealer! Tell us. What is the name of a thing you only sell a little of (but) you see it (with your own eyes) in wakefulness, just as seen (with the heart) in your sleep?

This riddle is about one of the items that spice dealer sells, namely cumin which is represented by the word نومِك when it is read from left to right. Another classification of riddles is provided by Belqassim (2021:201-3) where they are divided into juristic/**فقهية** and scientific/**علمية**, intellectual/**ذهنية,**, entertaining/**تسلية**, and **prosodic/ عروضية**. Scientific riddles include astronomical riddles/**فلكية**, linguistic riddles/**لغوية**, grammatical riddles/**نحوية**.

6- Methodology

This paper is a qualitative in nature and aims at identifying the semantic strategies in the chosen English riddles and Arabic riddles and account for the mental processes carried out in them. To accomplish this aim 10 riddles in English and 10 in Arabic are downloaded from some websites along with their answers. These riddles are subjected to a cognitive semantic reading. The answers to the riddlers are tested against the cognitive perception of the riddle's and linguistic experience. Riddles are a combination of chains of mental spaces on account that riddlers bind a group of knowledge sources when they produce them.

7- Analysis of the English riddles

1. **Riddle**: What has a big mouth but never speaks?

   Answer: Jar

In this riddle, the riddlee has to conjure up his experience of the world around him to reach the answer. A comparison is held between the mouth as part of the human face and the part of the jar where a liquid is poured out. The function of the mouth is to produce speech but that of the jar isn't.

2. **Riddle**: What always runs but never walks, often murmurs, never talks, has a bed but never sleeps, has a mouth but never eats.

   Answer: A river

The shared knowledge that both the riddler and the riddlee possess of the world fits in with the description provided of a physical body of water like the river. The properties of the river are easily accessible by the riddlee who can discern that it is a river. He resorts to his previous experience. What is described here is neither a human nor an animal and certainly not a plant although it shares some of the features such as the ability to run, produce sounds in a meaningful or meaningless way, or incapability to do things like sleeping or talking.

The riddlee is further assisted by the question word 'what' which is strictly applied to inanimate things. Humans and animals have mouths. The former can send verbal messages but the latter can non-verbal messages. They both can sleep. Plants can run but have no mouths, no sounds.

3. **Riddle**: I am hungry,

I must always be fed,

The finger I touch,

Will soon turn red.

Answer: Fire

This is a metaphorical riddle in that the features capabilities of animate creatures (humans or animals) are given to some inanimate natural elements. Fire is compared to a human that has to be given food in order to continue to exist. It is also capable of inflicting harm and damage (turn that finger it touches red) on others just as people do to each other.

4. **Riddle**: What is the longest word in the English language?

   Answer: Smiles-Because there is a 'mile' between the two S's.

It is clear from the answer to this question riddle that it is somewhat surprising or shocking to the riddlee who is tempted by the apparently deceiving look of the riddle to provide the longest word he happens to know from Guinness World Record. The linguistic meaning of the 'mile' as a unit of measure of very long distance along with bizarre application of the denotative meaning to the distance between the initial capital S and the final small s in the word smiles presents a hard task to the riddlee.

5. **Riddle**: Who works only one day in a year but never gets fired?

   Answer: Santa Claus

This imaginary figure in the western culture is associated with Christmas. He is especially loved by children who are told by their parents that Santa would come to their houses on Christmas Eve to give them pleasant presents and gifts.

Santa is not likely to lose his job if he fails to do his mission because he doesn't have a boss. He doesn't work for government, department, institute, or a company private or governmental. The answer here is imposed cognitively by the culture of the riddler. If the riddlee comes from a different cultural background, it might be difficult for him to work out the answer.

6. **Riddle**: When is an actor happy to become a thief?

   Answer: When he steals the show.

The answer to this riddle is an idiom that has been demretaphorized. To steal the show means to dominate a situation or gain an audience's attention and admiration at the expense of others'. There is a cognitive shift from the act of stealing concrete items or objects to the abstract by cancelling the idiomatic nature of stealing the show. The riddlee applies his cognitive knowledge and familiarity with the information that actors aspire to be famous by attempting to steal the show.

7. **Riddle**: Who has married many women but was never married.

   Answer: The priest

There is a naughty play with the verb 'marry' as far as its usage is concerned. This verb can be intransitive as in 'He married in October.', but when it is used

transitively, it gives two different sense for example 'Peter married Janet two years ago.' Which means that Peter and Janet are a husband and wife. The subject can be someone who performs by way of authority the act of marrying as a priest does or someone who gives his consent and blessings to the couple like the father. Priests, Roman Catholic in particular, are sworn to celibacy. They spend their whole lives as singles. So the riddlee can figure out the answer by searching his religious space. What motivates him to do that? Well, what else other than the contradiction that results from misinterpreting a situation where a person is said to have married many women and being unmarried at the same time. This contradiction will generate a contextual misfit if it is accepted as it is by the riddlee.

8. **Riddle**: If you break me, I'll not stop working. If you can touch me, my work is done. If you lose me, you must find me with a ring soon after. What am I?

   Answer: The heart

This is clearly a riddle with a literary tone. Most things stop functioning when they are broken but the thing intended can be broken in an abstract fashion, that is, emotionally. Breaking here means being hurt in feelings. From this point on, the riddlee moves forward to arriving at the right answer. Touching is not to be taken literally but metaphorically. When someone's heart which is the center of feelings and love is inclined to another person's heart, the quest for love partner ends for the searching heart (my work is done). When a person loses the one he loves and then begin looking for that love, he will probably discover, when it is too late, that that love is lost forever (you must find me with a ring soon after). The ring is a reference to engagement with another person.

9. **Riddle**: What starts with the letter T, is filled with T, and ends in T?

   Answer: Teapot

The riddle here looks much easier than the previous ones. The riddlee can access his cognitive knowledge of what the sound of the letter T reminds him of. Tea is a very popular day-and-night beverage that its name and any object associated with it is most likely to make the riddle easy to solve. The ringing repetition of the T gives musicality to the riddlee's ears which helps to pump more motivation and enthusiasm. The riddlee will find the solving process so amusing.

10. **Riddle**: What is this that has got a heart in its head?

Answer: A lettuce

The 'heart in its head' is ambiguous to the riddlee. Cognitively speaking, the riddle solver is well aware that the heart is in the chest not the head. He has to create contextual implications. The riddlee will work his way through the assumptions that it should be a lifeless thing that the riddler seeks.

Solving this riddle requires finding a fit between the target and the cognitive environment of the riddlee. His familiarity with lettuce as one of the main ingredients of a delicious salad helps him make the right choice.

8- Analysis of the Arabic Riddles

1. **Riddle**: ورقة على ورقة, ما هي؟ {Leaf upon leaf, what is it?}

   Answer: بصلة {an onion}

Here, the riddler bases his riddle on the polysemy of the word ورقة which in Arabic, as in English, has multiple meanings. The onion consists of multiple layers of leaves just like a book. The riddlee chooses the onion reading rather than that of the book by virtue of a grammatical clue within the riddle itself. The noun for a leaf in Arabic is feminine in gender, i.e., it is terminated with the ة- {تاء التأنيث}, while the noun for a book has masculine gender. The pronoun هي is feminine, so the riddlee's mind goes for the onion reading depending on the grammatical knowledge and experience of the riddlee.

2. **Riddle**: ما هو الشيء الذي ترميه كلما احتجته ؟ {What is the thing that you cast away when you need it?}

   Answer: شبكة الصيد {a fishing net}

The scope of research for the answer to this riddle is somewhat restricted to the riddlee because his cognitive knowledge of the world tells him that if he does not want something, he will throw it away. It is quite a logical behavior. It is illogical when someone chucks away an object or item he is in need of. The image of the fisherman casting away his net into the water to catch fish is summoned by the riddlee as part of his pre-stored experiences of similar situations.

3. **Riddle**: كلي ثقوب ومع ذلك احفظ الماء. فمن انا؟ {I am all holes yet I retain water. So who am I?}

   Answer: الإسفنج {sponge}

This is a literal riddle. Sponge is popular material used in many places such as houses, hospitals, sports, schools, and industries.

Therefore, it is not difficult for the riddlee to find out the answer. Having a lot of holes in some material automatically means not being able to keep any liquid there but the contradiction or irony that the riddle contains minimizes the number of options which the riddlee has to scan in his mind.

4. **Riddle**: في كل قرنٍ تجد مني واحدة, وفي كل دقيقة تجد مني اثنتين, وفي كل ساعة لا تجدني ابدا...فمن اكون؟

{In every century, you will find one of me, and in every minute, you will find two of me, and in every hour, you will never find me…so who am I?

Answer: "قاف" انا اكون حرف الهجاء {I'm the letter "qhaaf"}

The answer to the above riddle is actually lies within it. This is a linguistic riddle. In Arabic, the word for century is قرن begins with one 'ق', while the word for minute is 'دقيقة' which contains two instances of this letter one at the beginning and the other in the middle. But in the word for hour, 'ساعة', there is no qhaaf. The riddler repeats the phrase 'في كل.....'/in every…. at the beginning of each sentence that the riddle consists of. In each repetition, a word referring to a period of time is used: century, minute, and hour. This makes a balanced structure lacking any surprising contradiction or ambiguity that may confuse the riddlee. It requires a little effort and time from the riddlee to realize where the trick is.

5. **Riddle**: أسود ويضيء العالم. {It is pitch-black, yet it enlightens the world [people].

Answer: الحبر {The ink of pens}

This riddle takes advantage of the irony of concretely dark or black objects having the capacity of providing abstract light which is a connotation of spreading knowledge. The riddlee has to meditate on the intricate relation between these two clashing concepts. In Arabic tradition, the use of ink has been always connected to the profession of authoring means of passing down knowledge and experiences from one generation to the other. Books and tomes, newspapers and magazines are printed in ink.

6. **Riddle**: قوس بلا سهم ولا وتر. {A bow without an arrow and a bowstring.}

Answer: قوس المطر {Rainbow}

This riddle is based on the similarity in shape of the multi-color rainbow to the bow a weapon and hunting tool. The riddlee builds on this similarity to arrive at the intended response. He surveys his packets of knowledge and cognitive context for the image of a bow that lacks two essential things (arrows and string) characterizing a bow proper.

7. **Riddle**: ما هو الشيء الذي يدور حول البيت ولكن لا يتحرك. {What is the thing that goes around the house but does not move?

Answer: السياج {The fence}

To answer such a riddle, the riddlee can recourse to his immediate household context and life experiences. Imaging of a home is assumed as a quick reaction to reading this riddle. The fence is something that usually surrounds a house. Though the fence forms a kind of circle around the home and is expressed by the verb (يدور), yet it doesn't actually make any movement. It is as if the riddler wanted to cast some confusion or ambiguity on the riddle to complicate things for the riddlee and make him exert more effort and spend a longer time on arriving at the answer.

8. **Riddle**: رجليه تقفان على الارض ولكن رأسه فوق النجوم, فما هو؟ {His legs stand on the ground yet his head is above the stars, so what is he?}

Answer: الضابط {The officer}

The topic of this riddle is animate. The question 'فما هو؟/so what is he?' helps in limiting the options available for the riddlee and also minimizes his effort and search. The words 'رجليه' and 'رأسه'/ his legs and his head' both refer to the legs and the head of a male person. This also aids the riddlee in delineating the targeted personality in the riddle. An officer is often seen in standing position with the head sticking upwards above the stars that he is wearing on shoulders designating his official rank whether in the military or police force.

9. **Riddle**: من هو أغنى الناس. {Who is the wealthiest of people?}
    Answer: من قنع بما تيّسرله. {He who is content with what is available.}

This is a riddle of philosophical and religious nature. Wealth is a worldly thing which is transient. All kinds of possessions are apt to be lost any minute during our lives. Man must awake to the ultimate reality that he is only a temporary guardian on his possessions. The real wealth is in being happy with whatever few things that one has. The riddlee will have to rely on his religious knowledge domain arrive at an answer.

10. **Riddle**: من أضعف الناس؟ {Who is the weakest of people?}

Answer: من ضعُف عن كِتمان سِره. {He who fails to keep his secret(s).}

This is another philosophical riddle. The riddlee will work up the answer from his social domain to select the appropriate response. One's own secrets are the closest and most valuable things. If a person is not capable of even preserving information which may put him to a loss, defeat, hurt, punishment, etc.., then he is the most vulnerable person to suffer from unpleasant situations. Keeping secrets is one of the important social skills that helps man cope with different life events. The riddlee will find in solving this question riddle an educational lesson as an enriching addition to his cognitive, social, and personal experiences.

Concluding remarks

Scholars in both languages have given sufficient attention to the linguistic, social, and cultural contexts of riddles. The definitions, types, and functions of riddles discussed by scholars in both languages agree on the universal nature and utility of riddles as a tool used by old generations to hand down their experiences to their ancestors. The analysis of riddles in English and Arabic has revealed that sometimes the answer to a riddle requires a specific type of knowledge or prior experience from the riddlee which only a few individuals entertain. The riddles analyzed have also shown fluctuation between the literal and concrete interpretations and the nonliteral and abstract interpretations. The answers to the riddles pertain to concrete entities that the riddlees are accustomed to in their daily life. The cognitive processing of the riddles does not proceed necessarily in a direct fashion but can pass through several stages to attain the closest interpretation.

As a general observation, the riddles in English and Arabic came in an interrogative form either starting with a question word (who, where, when, ..etc.) or a statement with a question attached in the end (who am I). Almost all the riddles required short answers which reflect the tendency of human beings not to waste time and exert mental and physical efforts.

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