

## **A Comparative Study of Russian and Myanmar Riddles**

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### **Abstract**

When Studying Russian riddles, it is found that there are many similarities to these of Myanmar people. Among all the riddles from Russia, riddles related to utilities, fruits, animals, body and parts of humans are presented. On the other hand, Myanmar riddles related to utilities, fruits, animals and human body parts are presented. Therefore, this paper is aimed at making a comparative study of Russian and Myanmar riddles to find out to what extent the similarities are. Russian people created the riddles for learning and Myanmar people created the riddles for playing at the villages and improving the knowledge. The study is conducted with the aim of improving students' cognitive thinking skills, team work, general knowledge and vocabulary skills. The study is beneficial for teachers' curriculum development and can contribute to teaching strategies for Russian language.

**Keywords:** Riddles, Russian and Myanmar comparative study.

### **Introduction**

This paper is a comparative study of Russian and Myanmar Riddles. Many riddles can be studied according to their own countries and ethnics around the world. Apropos of riddles are also popular in European countries. In the age of Golden Greek, playing and creating riddles were widely spread. That riddle is related to Myanmar's natures, culture and Myanmar people's ways of lives, Myanmar's civilizations many years ago. In ancient time, when family met together, they played the riddles to get happiness, when bachelors met the virgin girls, they played the riddles to get meeting, and after we worked hard, we played the riddles to relax. Riddles encourage students to think critically and work as a team, where they must practice language together in order to communicate their ideas. Therefore, this paper collects certain riddles. It also provides similar and different riddles of Russian and Myanmar people. Among them, this paper will be compared the Russian riddles which are concerned with utilities, fruits, animals and body parts to those of Myanmar riddles. In addition, through these riddles, Russian's customs, ways of thinking and cultural aspects can be observed.

### **Aim**

This paper is aimed at helping the learners of Russian to know similarities and differences of customs, traditions, cultural aspects of Russians and Myanmar people, and their riddles. The study is conducted with the aim of improving students' cognitive thinking skills, team work, general knowledge and vocabulary skills. Unfortunately, some lovely Myanmar traits are disappearing. Therefore, the study was done with the intention of reviving them.

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### Data collection and Method used

The data required for the paper have been collected from *Встреча с Растениями* by Е.Г.Козловский, *Customs of Russian people* by Н.М. Александрова and *Myanmar Traditional Riddles* by Daw Kyi Oo . This study was institution based cross-sectional study which was conducted from September 2019 to January 2020 at Yangon University of Foreign Languages. In searching data for writing this paper, approximately 300 Russian riddles in various sectors such as utilities, crops and fruits, parts of body, animals and social affairs have been collected. Out of the riddles, approximately 100 riddles have been selected. We focused on comparing the similar data. In this paper, the 15 riddles from *Myanmar Traditional Riddles* by Daw Kyi Oo and the 15 Russian's riddles from *ВСТРЕЧА С РАСТЕНИЯМИ* by Е.Г.Козловский, О.К. Разумовская (2002). In addition, Websites on the Internet, the books from the library at Yangon University of Foreign Language are mostly used as references. Qualitative Approach is used to conduct this comparative study.

### Research Questions

This study was aimed to investigate on the following questions:

- Why it is important to study the Riddle?
- What kind of benefits do you get from learning the Riddle?
- What kind of situations are riddles used?

### Literature Review

Learning a foreign language gives a perfect opportunity to open up and learn about customs, traditions, cultural aspects. *Myanmar Traditional Riddles* by Daw Kyi Oo (2003:20) asserts that a riddle is a statement or question or phrase having a double or veiled meaning, put forth as a puzzle to be solved.

In Russian, Илья Старков (arzamas.academy.com) says that the riddle is a metaphorical expression in which one object is portrayed by another having something with it, at least distant similarity on the basis of this expression, a person must guess the conceived object. According to this definition, the riddle in every language is used an expression figuratively. Richards, et al. (1992) expressed foreign language as a language which is not a native language in a country. According to Lightbrown & Spada (1999), language learners are expected to be able to efficiently express themselves in the target language and successfully communicate in real-life situations.

Riddles encourage students to think critically and work as a team, where they must practice language together in order to communicate their ideas, theories and solutions.

Russian riddles have emerged from a variety of sectors, and they have been extensively

used nowadays. Riddle can also be useful for spelling, pronunciation, rhyming or even teaching Russian idioms. The riddles were first explored and recognized in a subject I was teaching and was delighted. No such thing has been found before. We studied books written in Myanmar's Riddles. Therefore, Russian and Myanmar riddles were compared and contrasted in this study.

### The role of riddle in language teaching

Riddles appeal to children because they offer an opportunity to experiment with language in unexpected or unusual ways. When presented with riddles, students carefully search for clues that help solve the mystery, and they feel a sense of accomplishment when the answer is acquired.

Although commonly viewed as a leisure-time activity, riddles actually have great potential in classroom for developing higher level thinking skills, and promoting in other cultures. Books on riddles vary in difficulty, format, and content and can be selected to meet the interests. Riddle books are not only pleasurable; they also assist in developing cognitive skills.

### Findings

When studying these riddles, some are found to be similar in meaning although they are a little different in being cited as examples, some as the same as those in Myanmar, and some similar, some hard to understand as riddles. In Myanmar, riddles are used to play to get happiness and to improve knowledge. In ancient time, riddles were used when children were playing under the moonlight. In Russian instruct riddles at elementary school. In this paper, the 15 riddles from *Myanmar Traditional Riddles* by Kyi Oo and the 15 Russian's riddles from *ВСТРЕЧА С РАСТЕНИЯМИ* by Е.Г.Козповский, О.К. Разумовская (2002) and internet. Riddles related to careers which only belong to Russians and Myanmar people do not. In order that students improve knowledge wealthily and critical thinking. Riddles for students are the best form of solutions that helps to enhance their vocabulary. These are easy and appropriate for the learners of Russian and they have been presented in sectors.

#### 1. Riddle related to utilities

1.1. (Russia) – И сияет, и блестит,

Никому оно не льстит,

А любому правду скажет-

Всё как есть ему покажет. (Зеркало)

It shines and shines,

It does not flatter anymore,

And he will tell the truth to anyone-

Everything will show him. (Mirror)

(<http://riddle-middle.ru>>Загадки)

(Myanmar) - လေးထောင့်စပ်စပ်၊ သူ့မျက်နှာ ငါ့မှာကပ်။ (မှန်)

Like a rectangle, and his face like me. (Mirror)

Kyi Oo (2017: 54)

The structure of mirror is quadrangle and when we look to the mirror, we can see our face. Russians have created riddles based on how a mirror functions, but Myanmar's people are riddling depend on the shapes and properties of mirror figuratively.

- 1.2. (Russia) – Маленька, светленька,  
 Больно кусаюсь. (Иголка)  
 Small, fair complexion,  
 I bite it hurts. (Needle)

(<http://riddle-middle.ru>>Загадки)

(Myanmar) - နတ်သမီးအိမ်တိုင် ပိုးမေဖက်နိုင်၊ ဖောက်ပြန်သော်လည်း တစ်ပေါက်တည်း။ (အပ်)  
 He has only one eye. But we can't see. (A needle)  
 Kyi Oo (2017: 53)

It means that the pillar of angel's house is very strong and can't be eaten by moths. So no one can hole their houses. As I see it, both Russians and Myanmar people are similar in creating riddles based on how a needles' form and movement.

- 1.3. (Russia) – Одной ручкой всех встречает,  
 Другой ручкой провожает. (Дверь)  
 One handle meets everyone,  
 The other handle resides (escorts). (Door)

(<http://zagadki-pro.ru>)

(Myanmar) - နှစ်ယောက်တစ်တွဲ နေ့မှာခွဲ၊ ညဘက်ကျရင် ပြန်ပေါင်းချင်။ (တံခါး)  
 The couple always breaks up in the morning.  
 But wants to marry again at night. (Door)

Kyi Oo (2017: 55)

It means that door is always opened at the day time and is closed at night. Both Russian and Myanmar people are similar in interpreting it.

## 2. Riddles related to crops and fruits

- 2.1(Russian) – В этих жёлтых и рамидках сотни зёрен аппетитных.  
 (Кукуруза)  
 In these yellow pyramids, hundreds of appetizing grains. (Corn)  
 Kozlovsky (2002: 21)

(Myanmar) - ပါဝါခြုံလုံပါပေ၊ ကျောက်တန်းစီညီပါပေ (ပြောင်းဖူး)  
 She wears safely a towel and she has beautiful little hairs.  
 Also line up equally like small rocks. (Corn)

Kyi Oo (2017: 55)

It means that the corn grains are in lines tidily and kernels of corn are covered by silk and husk. Both Russian and Myanmar people are similar in interpreting it.

- 2.2. (Russian) – Хотя чернил он не видал,  
 Фиолетовым вдруг стал,..... (Баклажан)

Thought he didn't see ink,  
Suddenly became purple..... (Eggplant)

(<http://www.moi-detki.ru>)

(Myanmar) - ငယ်ငယ်က စောင်ခြုံ၊ ကြီးမှဦးထုပ်ဆောင်း။ (ခရမ်းသီး)  
In my childhood I'm always stay under the blanket.  
But as I grow older, I wear a hat. (Eggplant)

Kyi Oo (2017: 56)

It means that the calyx of eggplant looks like a hat and the color is purple. Russian and Myanmar people are different in interpreting it. Myanmar people's riddle depend on the shape.

2.3. (Russian) - У кого шапка без головы, а нога без сапога? (Гриб)

Who has a headless hat, a leg without a boot. (Mushroom)

Kozlovsky (2002: 112)

(Myanmar) - တစ်နှစ်တစ်ခါ ပေါ်လို့လာ၊ ရာဇမင်းလောင်း ထီးဖြူဆောင်း။ (မုှိ)  
Appears just one in every year,

He wears white umbrella like a king. (Mushroom)

Kyi Oo (2017: 56)

It means that mushrooms grow only once in a year and grow in the thicket and grass. The shape of mushroom looks like a umbrella. Russians have created riddles based on place and shape and Myanmar riddles depend on the shape.

2.4. (Russian) – Сидит дед, во сто шуб одет,

Кто его раздевает, тот слезы проливает. (Лук)

Grandfather is sitting and wearing a fun coat,

Who uncovers him, a team rolls down. (Onion)

Kozlovsky (2002: 105)

(Russian) – Маленький и горький, луку брат. (Чеснок)

Small and spicy, onion's brother. (Garlic)

Kozlovsky (2002: 105)

(Myanmar) - အညာကဆင်ဖြူ၊ အမွှေးထူ။ (ကြက်သွန်ဖြူ)

He comes from the villages and the color is white.

At the bottom he has many hairs. (Garlic)

Kyi Oo (2017: 55)

It means that the color of elephant is white and bristliness. Both Russian and Myanmar people are similar in interpreting it.

2.5. (Russian) – Южное растение с ароматным и сочным плодом. ( Ананас )

Southern plant with fragrant and juicy fruit. (Pineapple)

Kozlovsky (2002: 127)

Жарким солнышком согрет,  
В шкурку, как в броню, одет.  
Удивит собою нас  
Толстокожий..... ( Ананас )  
He warmed by the hot sun,  
He is dressed in the skin, like in armor.  
He will surprise us. Thick.....skinned.... (Pineapple)

(<http://zagadki.info>>zag>lalon)

(Myanmar) - အသီးပေါ် အပင်ပေါက်၊ ခြေထောက်နှစ်ချောင်းထောက်။ (နာနတ်သီး)  
Its grows on the fruit by standing both legs. (Pineapple)

Kyi Oo (2017: 54)

It means that the tree grows on the top of the fruit. It looks like a sack that encloses with a drawstring. It is grown in the southern region. Both Russian and Myanmar people are similar in interpreting it.

2.6. (Russian) – Круглый, волосатый, внутри – белый,  
Снаружи - коричневый. (Кокос)  
Globular, hairy, inside-white and outside - brown. (Coconut)

(<http://www.m.lenta.ru>>brainbreak)

(Myanmar) - ဒိုက်ခတ်တော့အုတ်ပေါ်၊ အုတ်ခတ်တော့ကြွေပေါ်။  
ကြွေခတ်တော့ရေပေါ်၊ ဘာသီးလဲနော်။ (အုန်းသီး)

When peeling hairy outside, brown hard shell was found.  
When peeling brown hard shell, white soft shell was found.  
What is that fruit? (Coconut)

Kyi Oo (2017: 54)

It means that the upper fibrous husk of coconut looks like algae and there is a hard shell, we can see the white inner flesh. Both Russian and Myanmar people are similar in interpreting it.

2.7. (Russian) - Мы с ним добрые друзья - это дерево и я.  
Я – кокос красивый, сочный,  
Назовите друга срочно. (Пальма)  
We are good friends with him, this is a tree and I  
I'm coconut, beautiful, juicy  
Call a friend promptly..... (Palm)

(<http://www.allriddles.com>)

(Myanmar) - အပင်သန် တောင်ဝှေး၊ သူ့အသီးကသေး။ (ထန်းပင်)

What is the straightest tree  
which has small fruit? (Palm Tree)

Kyi Oo ( 2017: 58)

It means that toddy palm tree looks like a stick and the fruit are small. Generally palm germinate at tropical zone. Russians and Myanmar people have created riddles based on shape and taste.

**3. Riddles related to parts of body**

3.1. (Russian) – Ношу их много лет,  
А счёту им не знаю. (Волосы)

I have them for many years,  
I don't know the amount. (Hair)

(<http://www.allriddles.com>)

(Myanmar) - သူ့အပင်က တရုံးကြီး ၊ သူ့အသီးက တစ်လုံးတည်း။ (ဆံပင်)

A lot of plants are growing from one fruit. (Hair)

Kyi Oo (2017: 54)

It means that the hair is all together with our bodies since we are born and they are countless. But when we make hair knot, the hair seems one. Russian and Myanmar people are different in interpreting it. Russian riddles depend on the shape and size. Myanmar are riddling figuratively.

3.2 (Russian) - Один говорит и двое глядят, двое слушают. (Язык, глаза, уши)  
One says and two are looking, two are listening. (Tongue, eyes, ear)

(<http://www.allriddles.com>)

(Myanmar) - ကြည့်၍လေဝေးလေ၊ ဝေးလေကြည့်လေ။ (နားရွက်)

We look him but he stays away.  
Until he stays away we look him. (Ears)

Kyi Oo (2017:57)

It means that ears are located at the both sides of face and can't see them with eyes. Russian have created riddles based on function and Myanmar people are different.

3.3. (Russian) - У одной матери пять детей,  
Все дети разные, все к матери привязаны. ( Рука )

One mother has five children,  
All children are different, all are attached to the mother. (Hand)

(<http://www.allriddles.com>)

(Myanmar) - ညီအစ်ကိုငါးယောက်၊ သံခမောက် ကိုယ်စီ။ (လက်ချောင်း)

Five brothers, each wearing a helmet and together live.

(Hand)

Kyi Oo (2017: 62)

It means that five fingers are like brother and nails look like bamboo hats. Russian and Myanmar people are riddling depend on the shape and manner.

#### 4. Riddle related to animals

4.1. (Russian) – Кто на свете ходит в каменной рубахе? (Черепаха)

Who can walk by wearing, a stone shirt in the world? (Turtle)

(<http://www.logiclike.com>)

(Myanmar) - သွားရင်နှေးနှေး၊ သူ့ဥက ဖွေးဖွေး၊

ခေါင်းပေါ်မှာ သံခမောက်နဲ့ ဘာကောင်တဲ့လေး။ (လိပ်)

Goes slowly, his egg is white.

He brings his own heavy helmet at his shoulder. Who is he? (Turtle)

Kyi Oo (2017: 57)

It means that turtles are the slowest animals in the world. Their eggs are white and they have bony shells. Both Russian and Myanmar people are similar in interpreting it. They have created riddles based on function and shape figuratively hidden.

4.2. (Russian) - На стене в углу мохнач,

Он охотник, он и ткач. (Паук)

On the wall, in the corner shaggy,

He is a hunter, he is a weaver. (Spider)

(<http://riddle-middle.ru>>Загадки)

(Myanmar) - ချာချာလည်လို၊ ချားလည်းမဟုတ် ။

ကြိုးတန်းလျှောက်လို၊ မျောက်လည်း မဟုတ်။ (ပင့်ကူ)

Turn around but it is not a fan.

He walks on the string but he is not a monkey. (Spider)

Kyi Oo (2017: 63)

It means that spiders make their nest by using their fibers and they walk on the fibers. Both Russian and Myanmar people have created riddles based on it's function and shape.

### Discussion

Regarding the riddles related to utilities, both nations are common in opinions and the way they create the riddles. People create the riddle which are focused on talking about the daily utilities. Regarding the riddles related to crops and fruits, there are significant differences between Russian and Myanmar riddles. These differences are because of the difference in the nature and climate of the two countries. To talk about animals, both countries use many different kinds of animals in their riddles.



The importance of riddles gives us entertainment and our mind-set more sharper when it comes to thinking skills. If we observe riddles, it is also related sometimes to our lives and it is sometimes we see that answers in the riddles are the things that we may use or do usually. Riddle is not only for entertainment but it is a very good warm up exercise for our brain, also expand vocabulary. It is important that student's creativity and thinking ability develops as they grow. Students are the buds in which we can instill our hopes for a great future. Riddles for students are the best form of solutions that helps to enhance their vocabulary.

We need to study the riddles since they can improve our general knowledge. Moreover, solving riddles can bring you joy and laughter therefore reduces overall stress.

There are many benefits we got when we learned riddles. Firstly, we know how intelligent the ancient people are because they created the riddles. Secondly, we knew the characteristic of things because in riddles sometimes they created the characteristics of things and we should think the answers.

In ancient time riddles were used to play to get happiness and to improve our knowledge. When family met together, they played the riddles to get happiness, when bachelors met the virgin girls, they played the riddles to get great meeting and after we worked hard, we played to relax. Nowadays, when we want to create the secret, we speak in riddles. Sometimes, at the full moon night in villages people are playing with riddles and the loser should do anything as the winner asks by punishment. For example, the loser should dance between friends. That moments is very cute at villages. We used riddles to prank one another.

The common thing in two countries is that they create riddles by using the words of human body parts, especially upper body parts. Riddles related to careers which only belong to Russian and Myanmar people do not. In spite of similarities in basic structure, the custom of these two nations are different.

### **Conclusion**

It is good to learn that riddles were very popular in Western countries many years ago. Myanmar riddles are the ones that came into use many years ago and they matched with the nature of the country, the living standard of Myanmar people, the customs and culture of Myanmar. Nowadays, it is sad that, this adorable custom is disappearing gradually. For the language students who need to have clear understanding on customs, thoughts, cultures, social dealing and the standard of literature, the puzzles are presented in various points of view and we hope it will be a great help for the language students.

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