



NURSERY RHYMES AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY IN LINGUOCULTUROLOGY

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Abstract

Linguoculturology can be said to have arisen exactly at the intersection of cultural studies and linguistics. Cultural studies (culturology) examine a person's awareness of themselves in social and cultural life in relation to nature, society, history, art, and other fields, whereas linguistics studies a person's worldview as reflected and recorded in the mental models of the linguistic picture of the world.

Nursery rhymes can be interpreted as an object of study in linguoculturology precisely because they embody diverse types of cultural information. Nursery rhymes have been passed down for centuries, refined over time, enriching their artistic, linguistic, human, and cultural features. These samples reflect a people's ancient past, religious beliefs, daily life, and expectations for the future. Nursery rhymes reveals the fluency of children's speech, the richness of their imagination, their quick wit, and their affection toward their parents, loved ones, and life in general. In the following article discusses the formation of linguoculturology as a scientific discipline, its developmental stages, and the interpretation of nursery rhymes as an object of research.

Keywords: Linguoculturology, cultural studies, linguistic cultural units, non-linguistic cultural units, linguo-folkloristic units, cultural information, cultural code.

Introduction

Linguoculturology is considered a relatively new branch within linguistic sciences and is believed to have formed much later compared to other linguistic fields. According to linguists, the term "*linguoculturology*" derives from the Latin words *lingua* – "language," *cultus* – "to respect, to honor," and the Greek word meaning "science, knowledge." It emerged as a result of the linguistic research conducted by V. N. Teliya, the head of the Moscow phraseological school. According to him,



“Linguoculturology is a science that studies the human factor, specifically the cultural factor within a person. This means that the core of linguoculturology is a set of achievements characteristic of the anthropological paradigm concerning the human being as a cultural phenomenon”¹.

Research methods

This article utilizes descriptive, comparative, contextual, linguoculturological, and historical-analytical methods to reveal the views concerning the origin, development, and flourishing of the science of linguoculturology, and to investigate the linguoculturological significance and functions of children’s folklore songs. Based on samples of children’s folklore songs from different language systems—namely English, Russian, and Uzbek—the article demonstrates what kind of cultural information these songs preserve for each respective nation and how they function to transmit this information to future generations.

Literature review

Linguoculturology, in the true sense, is closely connected with ethnolinguistics and sociolinguistics. It studies the relationship between culture and language, their mutual influence, and the reflection of each nation's culture in its language. The interrelation between language and culture is one of the deeply rooted notions in human experience. These two concepts not only reflect one another but also mutually shape each other.

In essence, language is not merely a collection of words, but a cultural code that embodies the historical, social, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional layers of humanity and society. It should be emphasized that language serves as a medium for expressing culture.

Linguoculturology began to attract attention as an independent branch of linguistics in the 1890s. According to linguists, the ideas of Wilhelm von Humboldt played a progressive role in shaping linguoculturology as a distinct discipline. Von Humboldt is regarded as the first scholar who examined issues related to the connection between language and culture. Emphasizing the unique role of language in shaping a people's history, culture, and spiritual world, he referred to language

¹ Telia, V. Russian Phraseology: Semantic, Pragmatic, and Linguocultural Aspects. – Moscow: Languages of Russian Culture, 1996. – p. 286.

as “the spirit of the nation.” According to him, “Language is not merely an expression of the people’s ideas, but the integral spiritual force of the people; linguistic diversity does not mean naming the same thing differently, but perceiving and conceptualizing it differently. Language always reflects the uniqueness of a nation”².

The famous Russian linguist N. F. Alefirenko defines linguoculturology as follows:

- linguoculturology is closely connected with linguistics and cultural studies and possesses an integrative nature;
- its primary focus is on cultural facts explained through language;
- linguoculturology belongs to linguistic sciences, therefore its research results can be practically used in teaching native and foreign languages;
- the main research directions of linguoculturology include:
 - a) linguistic personality,
 - b) language as a semiotic system that embodies cultural values³.

Scholars such as B. L. Whorf, J. L. Weisgerber, A. Wierzbicka, Yu. S. Stepanov, V. V. Vorobyev, V. I. Karasik, A. D. Arutyunova, H. Gleason, H. Hall, D. Whitney, D. Powell, F. Boas, G. Brutyan, D. Hymes and others also contributed to the development of linguoculturology through their research. According to V. V. Vorobyev, today linguoculturology can be described as a new philological science that studies a system of culturally selected values, the living communicative processes involved in speech production and perception, the experience of linguistic personality, the national mentality, the linguistic representation of the world picture, and the fulfillment of educational, moral, and intellectual functions of learning.

Thus, linguoculturology is a complex discipline that reflects the interaction and interrelation between culture and language as an integrated structure of linguistic and non-linguistic (cultural) units.

V. A. Maslova also conducted research in this field and divides the formation of linguoculturology as an independent science into the following stages:

² Sh. T. Makhmarayimova. *Linguoculturology*. – Tashkent: Cholpon Publishing House, 2017. – p. 20.

³ Alefirenko, N. F. *Language and Culturology. The Value–Semantic Space of Language: A Textbook*. – Moscow: Flinta, Nauka, 2010. – p. 21.



1.The emergence of early research that laid the foundation for the discipline.

According to Maslova, at this stage the works of W. von Humboldt, E. Sapir, E. Benveniste, L. Weisgerber, and A. Potebnya played an important role. Their ideas and research served as the basis for the birth of linguoculturology. This early stage spans from the late 19th to the mid-20th century and is characterized by growing interest in the relationship between language and culture, though the discipline had not yet been fully distinguished and research was conducted at the intersection of philosophy, psychology, and ethnography.

2.The differentiation of linguoculturology as a separate field.

This stage corresponds to the late 19th century, when achievements in cognitive linguistics and ethnolinguistics led to the recognition of the phenomenon of cultural reflection in language. With the strengthening of the anthropocentric paradigm, the need to study language in connection with human consciousness and culture increased, leading to the formation of linguoculturology as a separate discipline. During this period, categories such as linguistic personality, concept, linguocultural space, and cultural connotation were formed. N. Teliya's research on cultural semantics in phraseological units gained particular significance.

3.The developmental stage of linguoculturology.

This stage extends from the early 21st century to the present and is characterized by comprehensive research on language units at all levels, theoretical refinement, and the emergence of new directions. In this period, linguoculturology developed both theoretically and practically, and the scope of research significantly expanded. While earlier studies mainly focused on lexical units, particularly words and phraseology, now grammatical, syntactic, textual, and behavioral (discourse) phenomena are also examined.

Today, linguoculturology, as an independent science, includes such branches as cultural relations linguoculturology, comparative linguoculturology, contrastive linguoculturology, linguocultural lexicography, and diachronic linguoculturology. Each language contains unique nuances, idiomatic expressions, and linguofolkloristic elements that transmit a society's values, beliefs, ancient traditions, and customs to future generations through language. Every concept that emerges in a language reflects the lifestyle and spiritual world of its speakers.



Language is a mirror of our identity. It clearly reveals the character and development of its speakers.

It is understood that the psychology of an entire society is reflected in language. Culture is not static; it is constantly moving, changing, and renewing. In this process, language becomes the center of human interaction, enabling the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Through language, not only new ideas emerge and new perspectives are accepted, but language itself also changes — meaning language and culture mutually shape one another. Moreover, language is one of the key elements of any culture. By studying and analyzing a language, one gains access to the culture of that society, its ideas, concepts, and values. Language is a treasure chest of culture - preserving cultural values in vocabulary, grammar, idioms, proverbs, folklore, literature, and both spoken and written discourse⁴.

Linguoculturology encompasses phenomena such as the interconnection, interrelation, mutual shaping, and reflection of language and culture, which are closely intertwined in society. According to E. Sapir, language cannot exist apart from culture, understood as a socially inherited set of practices and ideas that characterize our way of life. That is, every nation perceives the world through its native language⁵.

According to Professor Sh. Usmonova, who has conducted research in linguoculturology, the subject of this field comprises linguistic units that acquire symbolic, figurative, and metaphorical meanings in culture and whose results are reflected in myths, legends, folklore, religious discourse, poetic and prose works, phraseological expressions, metaphors, and symbols⁶.

One of the linguofolkloristic units that reflect a people's identity, national values, spiritual world, daily life, and religious beliefs is children's folklore songs. Children's folklore occupies a special place in our hearts due to its thematic diversity and its expression of children's pure hopes, dreams, and innocent worldview. Whether created by adults for children or recited by children themselves, all forms of children's folklore reflect the long history, lifestyle, social and moral values, and national traditions of the people. As the well-known linguist

⁴ Robins R.H. General Linguistics. An Introductory Survey. - London; Routledge, 1889. - P. 27

⁵ Sapir, E. Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech // Selected Works on Linguistics and Culturology. - Moscow: Progress, 1993. - p. 185.

⁶ Sh. T. Makhmarayimova. Linguoculturology. - Tashkent: Cholpon Publishing House, 2017. - p. 27.



L. Elmesov stated, “Language can open the way not only to the concept of personal style but also to the life events of our ancestors”⁷.

Discussion and results

Why children’s folklore songs are considered an object of study in linguoculturology:

First, children’s folklore songs serve as carriers of cultural information. These samples embody a nation’s spiritual world, traditions, historical realities, religious beliefs, and everyday lifestyle. For example, the classic English children’s song “*Christmas is Coming*” begins with the lines:

“Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat...”⁸

From this line we understand that as Christmas approaches, geese are fattened in preparation for cooking. It is known that the English traditionally serve turkey for Christmas today. However, this was not always the case:

- In 1588, Queen Elizabeth I held a feast with goose meat in honor of the victory over the Spanish Armada, and later this dish was recommended for Christmas as well.
- By the 17th–18th centuries, goose meat became common among ordinary people.
- In the 19th century, with the beginning of turkey imports to England, goose was gradually replaced by turkey.

Despite this, the word “*geese*” remains preserved in the classic children’s song as a reflection of the old tradition⁹. Thus, the song conveys historical cultural information to younger generations.

The same cultural-information-carrying function can be seen in Russian children's folklore songs, for example:

Живъ, живъ, да умеръ!

У нашего у Курилки

Ножки долгенька,

Душка коротенька.

(“Alive, alive — and dead again!”)

⁷ Elmesov, L. Prolegomena to the Theory of Language / New in Linguistics, Vol. I. – Moscow, 1960. – pp. 131–256.

⁸ Linda Alchin. The Secret History of Nursery Rhymes. London: Rhymes World Publications, 2014. – P. 56.

⁹ Christmas dinners through history. English Heritage official site. – URL: <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/christmas/christmas-dinners-through-history/> (accessed: 28.10.2025).

Our little Kurilka

Has long legs

And a short little soul.”¹⁰

This song, “Курилка” (“Little Fire”), is an action song in which children pass a burning stick to one another. Whoever holds it when the flame goes out loses the game. In the lyrics, children address the fire as if it were a person, telling it to “live.” This attitude reflects ancient Slavic pagan beliefs, which considered fire and the sun sacred. Various rituals associated with fire existed among the Slavs, and elements of these beliefs are reflected in the song. Thus, the song conveys religious and cultural information.

Children’s folklore songs also preserve information about the everyday lifestyle of ancestors. Consider the following Uzbek children’s song:

Charxim g‘uv-g‘uv etadi,
Tovushi Marg‘ilon yetadi...
Tor ko‘chasi tor ekan,
Yo‘lda bazzoz bor ekan.
Shu bazzozning qizlari
Shol ko‘ylakka zor ekan...¹¹

(My spinning wheel whirs and hums,
Its sound reaches all the way to Margilan...
The narrow street is truly narrow,
And a cloth merchant stands along the road.
The daughters of that merchant
Long for a shawl-like dress.)

This song conveys several layers of cultural information:

a) **Work and occupational culture** — the *bazzoz* (cloth seller). This profession was widespread and respected in the past. The reference shows the socio-economic landscape of the time, where trade and textiles were significant.

b) **Clothing culture** — the *shol ko‘ylak* (a thick woolen dress). The fact that a cloth seller’s daughters desired such a dress shows that it was a special garment worn on holidays and ceremonies, not daily.

¹⁰ Detskie pesni, ed. P. Bessonov. — Moscow: Vakhmetev Printing House, 1868, p. 57.

¹¹ Y. Sulonov, N. Rahmonov, Sh. Turdimov. Chittigul Collection. — Tashkent: O‘qituvchi Publishing House, 1992, p. 15.



c) **Geographical-cultural reference** — Marg‘ilon, historically famous for its silk and textile production.

d) **Daily tools** — the spinning wheel (*charx*), a common tool used by women in everyday life.

Thus, a single children’s song conveys four types of cultural information. Some folklore songs even reflect political events. For example:

Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full,
One for the master, one for the dame
And one for the little boy
Who lives down the lane.¹²

According to L. Alchin, who studied English nursery rhymes, this song is connected to the wool industry, a major economic sector in medieval England. During the reign of King Edward I, high-quality English wool was heavily taxed, and tax collection was enforced at all ports. The song reflects this political process through satire.

Conclusion

In conclusion, children’s folklore songs are invaluable linguo-folkloristic units that serve as carriers of cultural information. Regardless of the language in which they are performed, children’s folklore songs reflect the history, culture, lifestyle, and belief systems of the people who speak that language. This, in turn, enables the transmission of cultural knowledge between future generations and their ancestors. Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that children’s folklore songs convey the following types of cultural information:

- National and cultural traditions;
- Labor and occupational culture;
- Clothing and dress culture;
- Geographical and cultural characteristics;
- Everyday activities and work tools.

There remain many aspects of children’s folklore songs that have yet to be studied, as well as numerous unexplored linguo-cultural functions. Investigating them from

¹² Linda Alchin. *The Secret History of Nursery Rhymes*. London: Rhymes World Publications, 2014. – P. 15.



theoretical, practical, and comparative perspectives is among the important tasks facing modern linguoculturology.

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