

## **A Comparative Study of Riddles by Some Ethnic Groups in Myanmar and Koreans**

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### **Abstract**

As Riddles are related to the life style of a national race, its cultural standard and social system can be seen through the riddles. Through the long history and until now, Myanmar national races and Koreans have been practicing the habit of posing riddles. This paper is the comparative study of riddles with the same answers and their meanings by some ethnic groups of Myanmar and Koreans. In this research, the meanings of each riddle from the two countries are learned thoroughly through their similarities and differences. This study can make the readers see the similarities and differences on their thoughts and opinions from Koreans. Moreover, the basic characters, life styles and cultures can casually be observed through their traditional riddles.

**Keywords:** some ethnic groups in Myanmar, Koreans, Riddle.

### **Introduction**

A language represents its own country and is also a symbol of the country. Furthermore, language and culture are related to each other. In the book “Myanmar Traditional Riddles” by KyiOo (2017), some scholars define the word “riddle” as speech+ego= Sakatta and then, Sakattar (riddle). They describe “riddle” as the meaning of “speech” and it is also a speech with some hidden or embedded meanings. The book “Korean Language Dictionary” published by Yonsei University, a riddle is a speech that implies people’s events and also a game that solves out the problem of these events. As People’s thoughts, feelings and cultures are involved in riddles, they can also be seen in aesthetic literature and academic textbooks.

As the sentence construction is easy to understand, people are interested in posing riddles. In addition, posing riddles improves the interest and critical thinking skills of the international students who are studying Myanmar and Korean Language. Riddles are knowledgeable and they can also improve speaking skills. Thus, the students become familiar with the culture and custom of the two countries.

### **Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to improve the usage of Korean language and the fluency of speaking skills through riddles.

There are two main objectives in this paper: to understand the similarities and differences in meaning of riddles and the different thought and viewpoints of the people from the two countries through the comparative study and to widen the knowledge and to improve the interest in language learning through riddles.

### **Data and Method**

Seven riddles of Burma, two riddles of S’gaw Karen, two riddles of Shan, one from Mon and one from Dawei and altogether thirteen riddles out of Myanmar ethnic groups riddles(390) are compared with twenty-four Korean riddles out of (1580). The researcher compares only the meaning of the riddles as these riddles have the same answers. The descriptive research method is used in this paper.

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### **Research Questions**

- (1) How can Myanmar and Korean riddles be compared and contrasted?
- (2) How can knowledge be compared by means of learning riddles?

### **Literature Review**

Nowadays, riddles take an important role in language learning and the linguists do researches about riddles in their respective fields. Through these studies, the educational, social and cultural significances can be seen effectively.

In the research “A Study on the Functions and Meaning of Korean Riddles”, Chu Yong (1991) studied mainly on Korean legends.

Kim Kyung Seop (2004) conducted the research on promoting Korean language Speaking skill titled “The Relative Aspects between Riddles and Riddle – Tales”.

Kim Su Jin (2009) also conducted the research called “Functional Research for Compilation of Korean Riddle Dictionary”. The researcher thoroughly studied on the Korean riddles.

Kim Yoon Kyaung (2013) submitted a thesis for the degree of “Master of Arts” called “Creativity and impact of Posing Riddles”.

The research called “A Study of the Formation Process behind Modern Korean Riddle” submitted by KwakEun-hee (2013), is the practical study of Korean riddles and their significances.

The research “Application Program of Riddles for Korean Language Education” by Kyung Seap Kim (2014) is intended to help international students acquire Korean language as their foreign language.

This paper collected Myanmar and Korean riddles that have the same answers. However, some of the meanings are indirectly similar and some have different meaning. Doing this research clearly points out the fact that there are a few riddles with indirectly similar meanings. On the other hand, a large number of riddles with different meanings can be observed from this research.

**Findings and Discussion**

**1.A Comparative Study of Riddles related with people’s utensils**

**Table (1):**

Myanmar Riddle	Korean Riddle	Answer
<p>(1)The thief cannot climb the post of an angel’s house. နတ်သမီးအိမ်တိုင်သူ ခိုးမတက်နိုင်</p> <p>(2) A worm cannot break into the angel’s house. If it can, only one hole. နတ်သမီးအိမ်တိုင်-ပိုးမဖောက်နိုင် ဖောက်ပြန်သော်လည်း-တစ်ပေါက်တည်း</p>	<p>(1)귀에 실을 걸치고 일하는 것은? “working with sewing thread attached to the ear” နားရွက်မှာအပ်ချည်ကြိုးကိုချိတ်ပြီးအလုပ်လုပ်တဲ့အရာ</p> <p>(2)눈도 없고 코도 없고 입도 없고 귀만 하나 있는 것은? “an creature without eyes, noses, mouth but it has only ears” မျက်လုံးလည်းမရှိနားခေါင်းလည်းမရှိပါးစပ်လည်းမရှိနားရွက်တစ်ခုတည်းသာရှိတဲ့အရာ</p> <p>(3)뱀이 실을 달고 여러 고개를 넘는 것은? “the snake going across the hills attached the sewing thread”. မြေကအပ်ချည်ကြိုးကိုချိတ်ပြီးတောင်ကုန်းတွေကိုဖြတ်ကျော်တဲ့အရာ</p>	<p>needle အပ်</p>

In Myanmar riddles (1), it defines as “the angel’s post cannot be climbed by a thief”. In (2), a riddle is posed as “a worm cannot break into an angel’s house and if it can, only one hole”. In Korean riddles (1), 귀에 실을 걸치고 일하는 것은?, it defines as “working with sewing thread attached to the ear” and in (2), 눈도 없고 코도 없고 입도 없고 귀만 하나 있는 것은?, its meaning is “an creature without eyes, noses, mouth but it has only ears” and in(3), 뱀이 실을 달고 여러 고개를 넘는 것은?, it defines as “the snake going across the hills attached the sewing thread”.

It is observed that Korean and Myanmar riddles have the same answers but different meanings.

**Table (2):**

S’gaw Karen riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
<p>It is a wing when it flies and it rests at lips ပျံတော့အတောင်နားတော့နှုတ်ဦး</p>	<p>살은 살인데 날아다니는 살은? “an arrow that can fly” မြှားတောမြှားဖြစ်ပေမဲ့ ပျံတဲ့မြှားကတော့</p>	<p>arrow မြှားတံ</p>

In the language of S'gaw Karen, it can fly with its wings and it rests at lips and in Korean language, it can define as (1)살은 살인데 날아다니는 살은? It is “an arrow that can fly”. Both languages pose the riddle focused on “flying”.

**Table (3):**

S'gaw Karen and Shan riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
(1)When mum cries, the son flings out. (S'gaw Karen riddle) အမိကအော်-သားကလွင့်	(1)알 낳고 방귀 끼는 몽둥 이는? “amallet which lays eggs and furts”	gun ဆေနတ်
(2)An Indian with long nose who yells out and travels through the mountains(Shan riddle) တောင်ကြိုတောင်ကြားအော်လိုသွား ကုလားနှာခေါင်းရှည်	ဥပြီးလေလည်တဲ့လက်ရိုက် တုတ်	

In S'gaw Karen riddle, it means “when the mother cries, the son flings out” and in Shan riddle, it means “An Indian with long nose who yells out and travels across the mountains”. In Korean language, “알 낳고 방귀 끼는 몽둥이는?” is “a mallet which lays eggs and furts”. It is found that the riddles from the two countries are in opposite meanings in spite of being the same answer.

## 2. A Comparative Study of nature related riddles

**Table (4):**

Mon riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
(1)A scattering flower without being sown by people လူမကြဲဘဲပွင့်	(1)깜깜할 수록 잘 보이는 것은? “it can be clearly seen at night”. မှောင်လေလေကောင်းစွာမြင်ရတဲ့အရာ (2)낮에는 숨고 밤에만 나오는 것은? “it is hiding in the daytime and it appears at night”. နေ့ခင်းဘက်မှာပုန်းနေပြီးညဘက်မှာထွက်လာတဲ့ အရာ	star ကြယ်ပွင့်

Mon nationals pose the riddle as “stars are scattering on the sky without being sown by human beings” and in Korean language, the riddle (1) “깜깜할 수록 잘 보이는 것은?” states that “it can be clearly seen at night” and (2) “낮에는 숨고 밤에만 나오는 것은?” means “it is hiding in the daytime and it appears at night”. Therefore, the different meanings of the same riddle can be seen obviously.

**Table (5):**

Myanmar riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
(1)Two hens are kept under a mesh cover and one appears in daytime and the other at night  ကြက်မနှစ်ကောင်၊ ဆောင်းထဲလှောင်နေ့တစ်ကောင်ထွက်၊ ညတစ်ကောင်ထွက်	(1)다리가 없는데 ,날마다 세상 구경을 다니는 것은? “without legs, it travels around the world”  ခြေထောက်မရှိပေမဲ့ နေ့တိုင်းကမ္ဘာကို ပတ်နေတဲ့အရာ  (2)다리 없이 하늘에 오르는 것은? “the thing that can fly without legs”.  ခြေထောက်မရှိဘဲကောင်းကင်ပေါ်တက်နိုင်တဲ့အရာ	the sun and the moon  နေနှင့်လ

According to Myanmar riddle, one of the two hens under the mesh cover appears in the daytime and the other comes out at night. In Korean riddle (1)“다리가 없는데 ,날마다 세상 구경을 다니는 것은?”, it means “without legs, it travels around the world” and in (2) “다리 없이 하늘에 오르는 것은?”it is “the thing that can fly without legs”. So, the readers can see the opposite meanings from the two countries.

**Table (6):**

Myanmar riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
From up to down မြင့်ရာကနိမ့်ရာကိုရောက်	위로는 못가고 아래로 만 가는 것은? “it does not go up but go down”. အမြင့်ကိုမသွားဘဲအနိမ့်ကိုသွားတဲ့အရာ	river water မြစ်ရေ

In Myanmar, river water flows from the high place to the low one and in Korean riddle, “(1)위로는 못가고 아래로만 가는 것은?” “it does not go up but go down” . Therefore, the similarities of the viewpoints of the people from the two countries can be seen apparently.

**Table (7):**

Myanmar riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
It can't be cut off or killed. ခုတ်လို့မပြတ် - သတ်လို့မသေ	바깥에서 밝고 안에서는 어두운 것은? “the one that is dark inside and clear outside” အပြင်ဘက်မှာကြည်လင်ပြီးအတွင်းပိုင်းမှာမှောင်နေတဲ့အရာ	water ရေ

Myanmar people poses the riddle as the one that cannot be broken down or killed and the Korean defines the riddle “바깥에서 밝고 안에서는 어두운 것은?” as the one that is dark inside and clear outside. The opposite meaning can be seen evidently.

## 2.A Comparative Study of Crops Related Riddles

**Table (8):**

Myanmar riddles	Korean riddles	Answer
Yellow flowers in heaven but fruits hangs underground. အပွင့်ဝါဝါ-နတ်ပြည်မှာ အသီးတွဲလဲ-မြေထဲမှာ	머리는 둘인데 몸은 하나인 것은? “the one with two heads but only one body” ခေါင်းနှစ်လုံးရှိပေမဲ့ ခန္ဓာကိုယ်တစ်ခုတည်းရှိတဲ့အရာ	a peanut plant မြေပဲပင်

Myanmar people pose the riddle as “the yellow flowers at heaven and its fruits at ground”. The Koreans have the opposite viewpoints with Myanmar people that they define “머리는 둘인데 몸은 하나인 것은?” as “the one with two heads but only one body”.

**Table (9):**

Dawei riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
(1)The stone are lined up and wrapped by the blanket ကျောက်သားစီညီစောင်က လေးခြုံလို့	(1)가죽 속에 털난 것은? “the creature that has fury hairs on the skin” သားရေမှာအမွေးအမျှင် ရှိတဲ့အရာ (2)겉데기를 먼저 벗기고나서 털을 뜯는 것은? “first, uncover the outer layer and then remove the fury hairs,” အခွံကိုအရင်ဆုံးချွတ်ပြီးအမွေးတွေကိုခွာ လိုက်တဲ့ အရာ (3)늦가을에 누더기 입고 파마하는 것은? “in the late winter, wearing dirty clothes and curly hairs” ဆောင်းဦးရာသီရဲ့နှောင်းပိုင်းမှာ အဖာ အထေးတွေနဲ့ညစ်ပတ်နေတဲ့အဝတ်ကို ဝတ်ပြီးဆံပင်ကောက် ထား တဲ့အရာ (4)담옆에 아이 엮고 서 있는 것은?	maize ပြောင်းဖူး

Dawei riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
	<p>“the human being standing by the wall carried the child on the back”</p> <p>အုတ်တံတိုင်းဘေးမှာ ကလေးကို ကုန်းပိုးပြီးရပ်နေတဲ့အရာ</p> <p>(5)더운 여름철에 옷을 껴 입은 것은?</p> <p>“the one wearing the clothes strictly in summer”</p> <p>ပူအိုက်တဲ့နွေရာသီမှာအဝတ်ကိုကျစ်ကျစ်လျစ်လျစ် ဝတ်ဆင်တဲ့အရာ</p> <p>(6)밭에 머리 풀고 서 있는 것은?</p> <p>“the one with the long hair standing in the fields”</p> <p>စိုက်ခင်းထဲမှာဆံပင်ကို ဖြန့်ပြီးရပ်နေတဲ့အရာ</p> <p>(7)뼈 하나에 노란 이가 잔뜩 나 있는 것은?</p> <p>“the the bone with full yellow teeth”</p> <p>အရိုးတစ်ခုမှာ အဝါရောင် သွားတွေ အပြည့်ရှိနေတဲ့ အရာ</p> <p>(8)옷 벗기고, 털 뽑고, 살은 먹고, 뼈는 버리는것은?</p> <p>“the food that is taken off the clothes, removed the fury hairs, eaten the flesh and thrown away the bone”</p> <p>အဝတ်ကိုချွတ်ပြီးအမွှေး အမျှင်တွေကို နှုတ်အသားကိုစားပြီးအရိုးကိုပစ်လိုက်တဲ့အရာ</p> <p>(9)한 여름 더위에도 옷을 잔뜩 껴입고 엄마등에 업혀 있는것은?</p> <p>“the baby in the full attire is on the mum’s back even in hot summer weather”</p> <p>တစ်ခုသောနွေရာသီမှာပူအိုက်ပေမဲ့အဝတ်ကိုအပြည့်ဝတ်ပြီး အမေရဲ့ကျောကုန်းမှာ ကုန်းပိုးခဲ့တဲ့အရာ</p>	

The people in Dawei region pose the riddle as pieces of corns are arranged systematically like “the stones are arranged and wrapped with the blanket”. In Korean riddle (1), “가죽 속에 털난 것은?” is “the creature that has fury hairs on the skin” and (2) “껍데기를 먼저 벗기고 나서 털을 뜯는 것은?” is “the thing firstly being uncovered the outer layer and then removed the fury hairs,” (3) “늦가을에 누더기 입고 파마하는 것은?”, is defined as “the man wearing dirty clothes and curly hairs in the late winter” and (4) “담 옆에 아이 업고 서 있는 것은?” is “the human being standing by the wall carried the child on the back”, (5) “더운 여름철에 옷을 껌겨 입은 것은?” is “the one wearing the clothes strictly in summer”, (6) “밭에 머리 풀고 서 있는 것은?” is “the one with the long hair standing in the fields”, (7) “뼈 하나에 노란이가 잔뜩 나 있는 것은?” is “the the bone with full yellow teeth” (8) “옷 벗기고, 털 뽑고, 살은 먹고, 뼈는 버리는 것은?” is “the food that is taken off the clothes, removed the fury hairs, eaten the flesh and thrown away the bone” and (9) “한 여름 더위에 도 옷을 잔뜩 껌입고 엄마등에 업혀 있는 것은?” is “the baby in the full attire is on the mum’s back even in hot summer weather”. According to the above definitions, the Koreans pose the riddle for “maize” from different viewpoints compared to people in Dawei region.

**Table (10):**

Shan riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
yellow shaven head, no one hates it and it appears annually. တစ်နှစ်တစ်ခါပေါ်လို့လာဝါဝါ ခေါင်းတုံးလူမမုန်း	곁은 보름달이고 속은 반달 인것은? “the thing, its outer layer is like a full moon and the inner one is like a crescent moon” အပြင်ဘက်ကလပြည့်လ ဖြစ်ပြီးအတွင်းမှာတော့ လတစ်ခြမ်းသာရှိတဲ့အရာ	orange လိမ္မော်သီး

Shan nationals defines an orange as “the yellow shaven-head that appears annually” and people love it and in the Korean riddle, “곁은 보름달이고 속은 반달인 것은?” is “the thing, its outer layer is like a full moon and the inner one is like a crescent moon”.

**Table (11):**

Myanmar riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
(1) A green one in youth and a Brahmin duck in its adulthood ငယ်ကစိမ်းစိမ်းကြီး တော့ ဟင်္သာပြဒါးလိမ်း	(1) 빨간 주머니에 노란 금돈 든 것은? “the golden yellow money in the red pocket” အနီရောင်အိပ်ကပ်ထဲမှာအဝါရောင်ရွှေပိုက်ဆံကို ထည့်ထားတဲ့အရာ (2) 젊어서는 파란 옷, 늙어서는 빨간 옷 입는 것은?	chilly ငြုပ်သီး



Myanmar riddle	Korean riddle	Answer
	“the creature wearing green clothes in youth and in adulthood, wearing red color” ငယ်ရွယ်စဉ်ကအစိမ်းရောင်အဝတ် အသက်အရွယ်ကြီးလာတော့ အနီရောင် အဝတ်ကိုဝတ်တဲ့အရာ	

In Myanmar riddle, when it was young, its color is green and in the adulthood, it transforms the color as if the Brahmin duck was painted with mercury. In Korean riddle (1)“빨간 주머니에 노란 금돈 든 것은?” is “the golden yellow money in the red pocket”,(2)“젊어서는 파란 옷, 늙어서는 빨간 옷 입는 것은?” is “the creature wearing green clothes in youth and in adulthood, wearing red color”. Studying the above riddles, the readers can notice that Korean riddle (1) has the opposite meaning with Myanmar riddle and (2) is a little similar to the Myanmar riddle. Although the riddles from the two countries have the same answers, their meanings are quite different. Through this paper, it is noted that the riddles with different meanings are in greater number than that of indirectly similar meanings. Moreover, Korean riddles are in greater number than riddles of Myanmar ethnic groups. In the same way, the Dawei riddle with maize is only one and Koreans have nine riddles in total.

**Conclusion**

Among the riddles from two countries, the riddles with the same answers are collected and compared according to three criteria:

1. The riddles related with human utensils
2. The riddles related with nature and
3. The riddles related with fruits and vegetables

Moreover, the students who are studying the Korean language can easily understand the riddles of Myanmar ethnic groups: Myanmar, S’gaw Karen, Mon, Shan and Dawei and the Korean riddles. Furthermore, the researcher is planning to do further research on the comparison of the riddles related with machines by Myanmar people, the riddles of food, the riddles of human body parts, the riddles of the names of the towns and the Korean language. After that, the students who are studying Korean as the foreign language can widely understand the riddles of the two countries that have the same answers.

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