Comparative analysis of the concept of “child” in Mongolian and Korean expressions

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Abstract: This article presents a comparative analysis of the metaphorical expressions of “child” in Mongolian and Korean. Therefore, we used the methods and principles of comparative linguistics and language evidence as well as the cognitive metaphors of proverbs, riddles, intuitions, and dream interpretations in the two languages. In Mongolian, the word “child” is defined as “a person who starts a new life by bringing forth a mother’s body”. Likewise, it means “the beginning of something new” in Korean. Thus, the definitions of this word in both languages include “the beginning” and similar semantic meanings. A cognitive metaphor including this word in Mongolian is “a child is a blessing”; a similar metaphor in Korean is “a child is a job”. These metaphors demonstrate features of the languages, cultures, and mentalities of the two languages and the two cultures' similarities and differences using a human-centered approach. We consider conceptual metaphor as expressed in Lakoff and Johnson’s theory. Metaphor is one of the most important terms in cognitive linguistics and refers to the process of establishing cognitive links, or mappings, between several concepts (conceptual structures) pertaining to different domains. Metaphors help in the “understanding and experiencing of one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff, Johnson 2003).

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Keywords: Altai language; culture; mentality; metaphor; child

1. Introduction

Language is a means of representing humans’ conscious activity and accumulated historical and cultural experience. It also helps in acquiring, preserving, and transmitting knowledge, thus serving as
a powerful tool for understanding the universe. A nation’s experience is reflected in a language. This experience is based on cognition, imagination, and principles of religion, philosophy, behavior, ethics, social norms, and aesthetics. As a result, language is the main element of ethnocultural activities and serves to preserve, represent, and transmit social consciousness, traditions, and culture(Tsog-Ochir, 2016, p.17).

The theory of the conceptual metaphor is the focus of much research on cognitive linguistics. Cognitive metaphors are based on the human experience that is gained from contact with the outside world. They are considered both a mentality and an effect of our experience in our conceptual system. Cognitive metaphors appear in everyday expressions, revealing that our thoughts are metaphorical in many ways.

A comparative study shows the close connections among languages, mentalities, mindsets and concepts created by people from a nomadic and a settled culture. Such a study also demonstrates how such people think through their cognitive experiences as well as the characteristics and differences between their mindsets and cultures based on language facts. Hence, mentalities and mindsets must be considered when studying a language. This article is important as a research source on language and teaching methods.

The theoretical and practical significance of the research are the facts of the languages of people with different lifestyles. The Mongolian and Korean languages belong to the Altaic family group of languages by origin. These languages are one source of comparative language teaching and research. The Mongolian and Korean people have different languages, but they share a historical relationship between Asian countries that started in early times. Thus, it is important to examine whether there is mutual influence between the cultures, to compare the metaphorical meanings of a concept, and to determine the similarities and differences.

From the cognitive experience and meaning of the concept “child”, attitudes and actions toward children arise. The concept of “child” was chosen in this study. Not only is it an important concept for any nation, but it is also the main object that drives the future and development of that nation, so it needs to be studied from multiple perspectives. This approach serves as a basis for inclusion in child pedagogy, laws, and government policies.

Language teaching methods are suitable for the mentality of the people, education, and other sciences, which is the basis for determination. Consequently, defining the unique features of a nation’s language, culture, and mindset through the concept of “child” will become a source for the comparative research of the Altaic languages that express the indigenous knowledge of a nation from the linguistic perspective.

2. Methods
We used various research methods, such as analysis, synthesis, classification and observation, in this study. Instead of explaining the evidence of two languages in a direct way, we analyzed the concepts and linguistic evidence from the perspectives of language, culture, mentality, and cognitive metaphor.

We also compared the language-based evidence regarding the concept of “child” in both Mongolian and Korean, which belong to the Altaic language family. Furthermore, we defined the similarities and differences in the two languages using a comparative method.

Therefore, both the universal and unique language forms, cultural characteristics, and mentalities of the two cultures were studied using a human-centered approach and a variety of methods.

3. Discussion
In the cultural nations of the East, specifically among the Mongolian and Korean peoples, the concept “child” is defined based on linguistic facts, cognitive features, meanings, and metaphors at the
intersection of identity and ethnolinguistics. The Table 1 units of folk literature and language are the most deeply embedded in the traditional cognitive experience. Languages, cultures, mindsets, histories, and customs such as proverbs, dream interpretations, and riddles are used in this study.

Forms of folk literature and language include correct interpretations of dreams, proverbs, idioms, and “the three worlds”, which is a kind of triple-patterned poem. Since Korean does not have “the three worlds” poem, it was not used in this study, and the idiom examples were different, so these were omitted to compare the two languages in an equivalent way. Hence, the former three linguistic aspects were used. Language aspects, such as songs and poems, that express simple and popular concepts can best express the hidden meanings and unique features of the nations' traditional thoughts.

Dreams are revealed in the mysterious source of our consciousness and feelings, and they express their true appearance as a symbol of the adventure of the soul (Dulam, 2011, p. 36). A proverb is a true expression of a nation's mindset and worldview, while a riddle is a statement intentionally phrased to express metaphorically similarities and differences, requiring ingenuity in ascertaining its answer or meaning. Comparing national riddles can reveal characteristic expressions of traditional national thinking, the experience of knowing the world, and cultures and customs (Dambaasuren, 1959, p.5).

Additionally, the definitions of “child” were taken from the most important dictionaries in the countries to account for the common understanding of the people. The word origins were used to understand the primitive cognitions of the two nations.

We examined the most frequently used word “child” in both languages, but we did not consider cooperative, compound, generic, and similar words. In this way, words were selected that have most frequently expressed the concept of “child” until modern times. Comparing the word origin from a historical perspective and studying its usage in the context of the tense and the serial verb tense can act as a source for the study of Altaic languages.

4. Definition of the concept of the “Child"
The creation of a cognitive metaphor requires two domains of knowledge. The first is the source domain, which comprises the old or familiar knowledge that is acquired from experience. The latter is the target domain, which is defined by expressing concepts in a new form. When metaphors are created, the source domain is structured by the target domain. In this way, metaphorical mapping and cognitive expressions are created.

Lakoff and Johnson defined metaphors as follows: metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but also in thought and action (Lakoff. George & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). The way we think, what we experience, and the actions we take every day are very much a matter of metaphor.

Since the conscious conceptual understanding of humankind appears with the help of metaphors or physical experiences, metaphors become an issue of not only language but also thinking.

| Table 1. Words and definitions expressing the concept of “child” in Mongolian and Korean |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Language                          | Words expressing the concept of “child”          | Definitions of the concept of “child”          |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Mongolian                          | Чыгыг(Child), чыг(Son), өхөг (Daughter), өхөн(Boy), яр(Daughter), жан(Boy) |
|                                    | “Young boys and girls.”                        | (Short glossary of the Mongolian language, 1966, 2013) |
| Korean                           | 아이(Child1), 아기(Child2), 어린이(Child3), 아동(Child4), 아들(Son), 딸(Daughter), 자식(child; offspring) 새끼(Baby) |
|                                    | “A person of a young age”                      | (Dictionary of native language, 2004)           |
later becoming the basis of humans' understanding of the universe, themselves and the meaning of human life and experiences.

Metaphors are the basis for understanding the world and attempting to recognize ourselves and the meaning of life (Mark, 1987). They are the basis of cognition rather than a rhetorical tool, and everyday life and our thoughts are reflected in Metaphors. Therefore, the study of metaphors is the study of humans' mentality and their understanding of the process of thinking and recognizing their own cognitive scope. Metaphors are a way of understanding entities and phenomena we encounter in the world; they reflect various social and cultural characteristics. The human cognitive system, especially cognitive features such as experience, is essential for interpreting metaphors.

Lakoff and Johnson's studies (Lakoff. George & Johnson, 1980) produced a new concept of metaphor. As they argued, metaphor plays a vital role in language and mentality and in the conceptual system of everyday language (Kwon, 2017, p. 94). They believed that metaphors are a way of understanding one concept in terms of another. They are the accumulated experience of multiple humans rather than merely a device of poetic imagination.

However, it is worth noting that metaphors, as a common phenomenon of language and mentality, are human cognitive processes that give insights into a given concept. A metaphor is also the product of cognitive processes through which an abstract concept is understood as a real object or by comparing two familiar entities.

In other words, metaphor, a common phenomenon of language and thought, is a cognitive process of human beings seeking to understand a concept more deeply. It is the result of the process of understanding and recognizing an abstract concept as a specific thing through comparison or by comparing it with a single concept or known thing.

The cognitive experiences of the concept of “child” influence human attitudes and actions toward children. This notion provides a basis for informing methods of childrearing as well as related legislation and government policies. Globalization, Western culture, and education influence the cognitive features, meanings and comparisons in the Mongolian and Korean languages, which are defined in terms of cognition and ethnography based on linguistic facts.

Conventionalized representations such as dream interpretation, intuition, proverbs, and riddles, which both languages contain, have previously been studied in cognitive semantics and metaphor studies.

Studies have discussed significant words and definitions that demonstrate the most common meaning of the concept of “child” in both languages.

We used examples and definitions from the most widely used dictionaries of the Mongolian and Korean languages. These dictionaries share a common understanding of the people about the concept of “child”. For example, the concepts of “child” in the Mongolian language are “young boys and girls” (Short glossary of the Mongolian language, 1966, 2013); “a growing person or human child” (Dictionary of the Mongolian language, 1999); “young boys, girls, and babies” (Dictionary of the Mongolian Language, 2008); and “young boys, girls, babies”

The definitions of the concept of “child” in Korean are “a person of a young age” (Dictionary of native language, 2004), “a person of a young age” (Big dictionary of native language, 1997), “a person of [a] young age” (New Dictionary of Native Language, 2006), and a “young person” (Korean Language Dictionary of Korea University, 2009).
Table 2 compares the word origins of the concept “child” in Mongolian and Korean. The primary cognitive understandings of the two nations about children are the basis for reviewing the research results.

5. Representation Of The Concept Of “Child” In Mongolian

The concept “child” is often expressed positively, according to the above evidence in Mongolian.

5.1. Conceptual representation of children in intuition and dream interpretation

It has been noted that there is a tradition of interpreting concepts that cannot be solved by human wisdom and logic through intuition. This tradition exists in both cultures, which share aspects of their oriental culture. Intuition is revealed in dreams, from which it can be interpreted. A dream is a result of human mental activity and is interpreted with the help of the human mind to decipher symbols. As a result, the concept of “child” commonly has positive associations in both languages’ intuitions and dream interpretations.

Human consciousness and unconsciousness appear in images in dreams. The interpretation of dreams deeply preserves national customs, ancient history, cultural traditions, symbolism, and national traditional analogies and metaphors. Hence, dreams and intuitions are the manifestation of human consciousness and the life experience of knowing something.

The following facts about how Mongolians interpret dreams demonstrate how they have valued children since ancient times, the meanings behind this notion and what the interpretations symbolize (see, Table 3).

Dreams about children have been interpreted to mean that “you will meet a good person,” “your body and mind will feel relaxed,” “everything good will spread,” and “you will come into a great deal of money.”

Interpretations of “child” dreams indicate “meeting a good person”, “the body and mind will relax”, “good fortune”, “will have money”, and “successful work and good news”. Dreams about a child playing symbolize that “the body and mind will relax, and good fortune will spread”. Children are considered peaceful, delicate and important to human life. In addition, if you dream of a child, “you will have good fortune, obtain money, meet a good person”, etc. These are expressions of the fact that a child is a treasure, the most precious thing, and associated with good things.

In terms of cognitive semantics, “child” represents wealth, including goodness and benefits. As a result, the phrase “a child is a blessing” is a cognitive metaphor with an implicit meaning: “the
inner power to bring happiness” is rooted in life experience. Intuitions and dream interpretations indicate that Mongolians view children as a blessing; thus, seeing children is a good sign and a positive experience.

5.2. Conceptual representation of children in proverbs
Proverbs about children are metaphors with a positive message in Mongolian. For example, see, Table 4.

A Mongolian proverb describes children as gentle, smart, healthy, and precious and likens them to flowers, continuations of previous generations, and forms of support. A child is described as a flower, a new generation, and good support. The names of the offspring of
Table 4. Conceptual representations of children in Mongolian proverbs

| Proverbs                                                                 | Conceptual representation | Metaphor       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Бадам цэцгийн номд зөвлөн Бага хүүхдийн гар зөвлөн Бадам тсэцээг номхий зоолон Бага хүүхдийн гар зоолон ‘The shoots of the lotus are soft ‘The hands of a child are soft.’ | Loving, kind             | Flower         |
| Хүүхэд нээ эрдэнэ, хүүхэн ном нээ эрдэнэ Кхүүхэд нээ эрдэнэ, хүүхэн ном нээ эрдэнэ ‘The youngest one is smart ‘The youngest baby horse is fast.’ | smart, healthy           | Offspring of an animal |
| Төрөл оохонд нөгөө түшнэг Төрөл оохонд нөгөө түшнэг ‘Parents are supportive when a child is born and grows up. Children are supportive when old age comes.’ | Precious                 | Support        |
| Хүүхэд нээ эрдэнэ, хүүхэн ном нээ эрдэнэ Кхүүхэд нээ эрдэнэ, хүүхэн ном нээ эрдэнэ ‘A child is a treasure; good breeding is a thousand treasures.’ | Important                | Jewel          |
| Цэцгийн ном нээ эрдэнэ Цэцгийн ном нээ эрдэнэ ‘Flowers need water; children need education.’ | Crucial                  | Wisdom         |
| Сайн морь унаганаасаа, сайн хүн хүүхэдээ зөөлөн Сайн морь унаганаасаа, сайн хүн хүүхэдээ зөөлөн ‘A good horse comes from a foal; a good man comes from a child.’ | Good breeding            | Innocent       |

five types of domestic animals (sheep, goats, cows, horses, and camels) are widely found in Mongolian proverbs since these nomadic people have herded them since ancient times, with the animals becoming their primary source of livelihood. Significantly, Mongols are frequently associated with horses in proverbs, further demonstrating the nomadic history of this culture. Furthermore, children are compared with a pure mind and with flowers. Physical and bodily movements are expressed in a vivid and healthy way, and children are often compared to a cute little animal or a baby animal. Children are reared with the love, care, teaching, and support of their parents. In return, children are expected to care for their parents in their old age. There are many proverbs about child rearing and family upbringing, which are the main expressions of these oriental cultures.

One feature of Mongolian proverbs, for example, “a good horse comes from its foal, and a good man comes from its child”, shows the characteristics of raising children, a warning, and a cause to understand. The most prominent feature of Mongolian proverbs is related to livestock. Hence, proverbs are an important way of teaching that express the wisdom of the people in a few wise words. Proverbs help to preserve the features of a way of life, and they teach and educate by
simulating single, hidden, and double meanings. The general identity meaning of the Mongolian proverb is “a child is a treasure”.

5.3. Conceptual representation in riddles involving children

Riddles can be used as a research tool to compare similarities between various entities and phenomena. The comparison of one concept with another can reflect people’s lives and features of their culture and mentality. For example, see, Table 5.

Animal husbandry has been practiced by the Mongolian nation; the milk produced from it is a source of livelihood and food, and the most nutritious part of that production process is ghee. The statement about a child that “ghee is on the bed” demonstrates that—when people recognize something new, unknown or abstract—they relate it to what they already know and compare it to the characteristic language of familiar metaphors.

| Riddles | Metaphorical entity | Meaning of the metaphor |
|---------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Булгийн эхэнд бүүн шагай Bulgiin ekhend bugiin shagai “The anklebone of a deer lays at the beginning of spring.” | Anklebone | Small, cute |
| Мэдэхгүй газраас танихгүй айлчин Medekhgui gajraas tanikhgui ailchin irekh “An unfamiliar visitor comes from unknown places.” | Visitor, guest | Respected, honored |
| Орон дээр анхнээр эхээнд дэлбээ цэцэг Oron deer ankh i setseg, deren deer delbee tsetseg “A fresh flower is on the bed; a flower with petals is on the pillow.” | Flower | Beautiful, precious |
| Алт мөнгөн баян айлчлан айдаггүй баян Alt möngö baiyn avaggui bayan, ayslan bayn irevch aiddaggui baatar ‘A person is rich who does not take gold and silver; a brave hero is one who is not scared of the mammoth coming toward him.’ | Rich person, hero | Valuable, naive |
| Ухэг дотор айлчлан шагай ukheg dotor ailchlan shagai “A golden anklebone in a chest of drawers.” (nomadic chest—described as a container for carrying a baby during the migration) | Anklebone (golden) | Priceless, cute |
| Холоос ирсэн айлчлан 2 багц хашлалтай Kholaos isen ailchlin 2 bagts khooltoi “A guest from afar has 2 packages of food.” | Visitor, guest | Honorary |
| Орон дээр айлгай шар тос Oron deer algai shar tos “Ghee is on the bed.” (Ghee is Mongolian butter extracted from the large intestines of the five kinds of livestock) | Ghee | Extract |
In the Mongolian language, children are represented as honored, valuable and small. They have been compared with a rich person, hero, guest, flower, and anklebone. Both a rich person and a hero are respected since they have high positions. The riddle “a person is rich who does not take gold and silver” represents the pure heart of a child who does not know the value of gold and silver. The riddle “a brave hero is one who is not scared of the mammoth coming toward him” implies the inexperience of a child’s wisdom. The riddle “an unacquainted visitor comes from unknown places” expresses Mongolians’ mentality of highly honoring guests. The riddle also describes the Mongolian view that a child is a valuable person, like an honored guest.

The riddle “The anklebone of a deer lays at the beginning of a spring” alludes to a baby in a mother’s womb. This riddle originated from the Mongolian symbols of the Börte Chino (wolf) and Qo’ai-maral (deer). The totem of the “Qo’ai-maral” deer is compared with a mother, while the anklebone is compared with a fetus. The Mongolian language has some metaphors in which a child is compared with anklebones since a traditional Mongolian children’s game is played with sheep anklebones. The items used by Mongolian children, especially anklebones, are associated with a child being small and cute. These cultural and mental features originated from the nomadic lifestyle of the Mongols. This is an essential feature of culture in which the similarities between two things are compared.

6. REPRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPT OF “CHILD” IN KOREAN
The concept of “child” has positive and negative associations in Korean.

6.1. Representation of children in intuition and dream interpretation
Koreans believe that intuition and dreams are the expression of people’s experiences, including their cultural traditions and mentality. Within this in intuition and dream interpretation, children are portrayed as both good and bad signs. For example, see, Table 6.

Dream about children have been interpreted using the phrases, “your task will be accomplished,” “you will get a new job,” and “there will be changes in your job.” These interpretations indicate that it is not easy to raise children. Ensuring that the child is healthy and virtuous is a complicated task. These interpretations reveal that a child symbolizes a successful job and a good life in Korean.

Korean dream interpretations offer many examples of how children are most closely identified with “a job”. For example, “if you dream that you kill a child, you will achieve a goal you are working on with passion” demonstrates the life experience of the nation teaching the people to be realistic about things and to control one’s own actions, educational ideas, and “a job”. The interpretation shows that people should be very careful. This language reflects the basis of human livelihood and the pride of the traditional national identity.

6.2. Conceptual representation of children in proverbs
In Korean proverbs, children appear to have both positive and negative value. For example, see, Table 7.

Children are revealed to have negative associations, such as being “inexperienced and powerless”, in some Korean proverbs. Koreans view children as “healthy,” which has a positive association in terms of physical characteristics. Children are represented as “precious and dear” when associated with laughter, ddeok or jangdog. Children are also defined by their small size and naivety, which reveals the care and caution adults have toward them. Additionally, language-based evidence is widely found in Korean proverbs that compare children with ddeok, jangdog, cucumber and pickle containers. These expressions directly reveal the settled Korean culture based upon those engaged in crop farming. Children are also compared with joy and laughter based on their qualities of being “dear and precious.”
Table 6. Conceptual representations of the concept of “child” in Korean dream interpretations

| Dream interpretation                                                                 | Representations    | Metaphor          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 꿈에 갓난아기를 낳으면 작은 성취 를 이루거나 새로운 사업을 시작하게 된다.                    | Wishes, well-being | Children as jobs  |
| gguume gasnanagireur naheumyeon jageun seongcheuiruer irugeona soareun saebeur sijaghage doenda. | “If you dream that you are giving birth to a baby, your task will be accomplished or you will get a new job.” |
| 꿈에 딸나고난 아기의 성격이 좋을 때           | Obstacles          | Changes will come |
| gguume aalsaegi johji anheun aiga naamyeon an joheun in saenggar su issda.          | “If you dream about a child with a dark complexion, you will become involved in unpleasant activities that people do not like.” |
| 꿈에 아기와 함께 노래를 부르는 상황이 생긴다   | Passion and purpose |                   |
| gasnanagireur ddaerineun gguume ggumyeon irgeonir byeonhwagwa saengginda. | “If you dream that you are singing a child, there will be a change in your job.” |
| 꿈에 아기가 웃고 있는 상황이 나타난다        | Beneficence        |                   |
| aiga uneun gguumeun hoenguni ogo haneun ire daungwga ilg deungi saenggibnida.       | “If you see or meet a child who is crying in your dream, you may get lucky and some kind of help for what you are doing.” |
| 꿈에 아기가 웃고 있는 상황이 나타난다        | Care and awareness  |                   |
| agiga usneun gguumeun wihem, sago deunge jueuirer yohabnida.                       | “If you see or meet a child who is smiling at you in a dream, you should be cautious about a dangerous accident that might happen to you.” |

The most frequently repeated expressions are “children grow up to be adults” and “babies grow up like cucumbers”. This finding indicates that proverbs have an educational role in both language and pedagogy. It is one demonstration of maintaining customs and traditions through language.
Table 7. Conceptual representations of the concept of “child" in Korean proverbs

| Proverbs | Representations | Metaphors |
|----------|-----------------|-----------|
| 아이는장독은얼지않는다  
Aiwa jandogoeun eorji ahneunda.  
“Neither child nor jangdog ever freeze.” | Healthy | Pickle container |
| 아이들이아니면뜻을잃으린다  
Aideuri aniomyeon useur in eobsda.  
“Only children make you laugh.” | Dear, adorable | Laughter, joy |
| 아이가집먹  
Ai gajin ddeog.  
“A deog keeps a child.”  
(Ddeog—rice cake or traditional Korean rice cake) | Inexperienced, powerless | Ddeok |
| 아이자라어른된다.  
Ai jara eoreun doenda.  
“Children grow up to be adults.” | Grow up | Future |
| 아른아이는오이로도지한다  
Aeoreun aineun ai keudeus jaranda  
“Babies grow up like cucumbers.” | Healthy | Cucumbers |
| 술 취한 사람과 아이는 거짓말을 언 한다.  
Sul chwihan saramgwa aineun gejismareur an handa.  
“Neither drunken men nor children ever lie.” | Innocent, honest | Symbol of honesty and justice |

6.3. Conceptual representation in riddles involving children

In Korean, a riddle is a literary form that compares one concept with another in terms of their similarity; it is presented in the form of a question. The riddle is a representation of a mystery in life, highlighting the unique mentalities of Korean speakers, since it is based on similarities between the two objects being compared. For example, see, Table 8.

Children are revealed to have positive associations with Korean riddles. Language evidence suggests that it is common to compare children’s characteristics with positive attributes. Cultural differences are based on representations in which the unique features of the concept “child” are compared with specific qualities, such as being precious, small, inexperienced, naive, toothless and joyous. Other notable attributes of children are associated with the concepts of corn, age, god, ideal place, extract and teeth. The most repeated phrase within the Korean dialect refers to the child’s cute littleness. These words emphasize externalities, which are characteristic of the attitude of a settled culture associated with cultivating rice fields.

7. Conclusion

The comparative research on the concept of “child” demonstrates that the Mongolian and Korean ethnic groups, which have ancient historical relations and belong to the Altai language group, have similar features in terms of language structure and traditional national cognitive features as well as cultural differences and different metaphoric meanings.

When the concept of “child” was compared in both languages, the form and meaning of the word helped provide a primary cognitive understanding of the two nations. In this way, the explanation of the word origins compared in Table 2 suggests the interesting conclusion that other words expressing “child” are similar in form and meaning. The Mongolian word “ači-grandchild” refers to a son’s child, and it is similar in form and pronunciation to the Korean word for a child. Comparisons can be found below:

Mongolian: *at’ i ≥ MM. ači ≥ CM.”av” vs. Korean: *ač ≥ *ači ≥ *aži ≥ ayi/aki
Table 8. Conceptual representations in Korean riddles involving the concept of “child”

| Riddle | Metaphorical entity | Meaning of the metaphor |
|--------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 만발해아이없고들지아서있는것은? Mean bate ai eabgo jurjea seoissneun guseun? “What is a thing that carries a baby in a field?” | Corn | Small, cute |
| 농은이늘으면서먹고어린이얼것은? Neurseunneun urmyeonseon meoggo, eorineun usmyeoneun meoggo geoseun? “An older person eats by crying, but a child eats by laughing.” | Age | Food |
| 아추어런에도없고아주노인도없는 것은? Aju eorinaedo eabgo, aju noindo ebnoggo geoseun? “Neither a baby nor an older person has it?” | Teeth | A similar characteristic describes a baby and an older person |
| 한국아이들어가장좋아하는가름은? (오팔로일 5월 5일) Hangug aideuni gajang johahaneun gireumeun? Which oil is the favorite of children in Korea? Owul oil (oil means the 5th day of the month in Korean; May 5 is Children’s Day in Korea) | Extract | Supreme and nutritious |
| 아기기신을넣었다. Agiga sineur nahassda. “A newborn baby is a god” A baby that is just born. (sini means that a baby is just born) | God | Worthy |
| 아이들이어가장좋아하는동네이름은 무엇일까요? (방학동) Aideuni gajang johahaneun dongne ireumeun mueosirggayo? “What is the name of the town that the children like the most? Banghokddong (the name of a town in Korea).” | The main place | Ideal place |

When the concept of the “child” is compared from the point of view of dialect morphology, the Mongolian and Korean dialects have numerous likenesses. A few words have the same roots and beginnings. Hence, the research theory and practice are significant. Some of the Mongolian words related to human origin are interesting to compare not only in the Turkic and Manchu languages but also in Korean and Japanese.

Regarding the concept of “child” in the interpretation of dreams and intuition, in both Eastern cultures, people exhibit intuitive solutions to problems that cannot be explained by science and reason, and they express traditional customs and cultured symbolism. Mongolian dream interpretations state that “the child will bring good things, peace of mind, fortune and wealth” as well as “successful work and good news”. In this way, the Mongolian nation recognizes and expresses their beliefs by symbolizing and blessing them with good words. The language is a sign of the thinking characteristics. The “child” is considered the best thing in human life. Happiness, peace, treasure, and the most precious things show the meaning of a traditional national identity. In
Korean, children were identified most with “job” as “getting job, getting a new position, being free of physical and emotional pain, peace, and change in job”.

The hidden metaphors of proverbs related to “child” are manifested in the Mongolian language more positively and in the Korean language more negatively. In Mongolian proverbs, children are represented as “gentle, pleasant, smart, healthy, precious, beloved, and crucial”; “a child is a flower, a seed, a support, a treasure, and intelligence.” In Korean, children are valued and represented as “inexperienced, weak, healthy, positive, gentle, and innocent”, and the traditional metaphor of identity is “a child is happiness, ddeok (rice cake), cucumber, pickle container, and the future”. Regarding the language facts, proverbs are the most representative of the national culture, acting as ethnic, cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, and traditional identity metaphors. For instance, in Mongolian proverbs, children are compared to the offspring of five kinds of livestock, including horses (e.g., foals), which clearly shows the characteristics and differences of a nomadic culture. In Korean proverbs, a child is likened to ddeok and cucumbers, which is a characteristic of a nation with a sedentary lifestyle and culture. Hence, cultural differences can be seen by comparing the main source of life of mankind and the child, who is the future of their existence. The traditional way of thinking and folk customs are important.

In Mongolian, riddles describe a “child” as honorable, crucial, and small. Riddles also equate children to a rich person, a hero, a guest, a flower, ghee, and the anklebone. Korean riddles identify children’s characteristics in comparison with corn, god, oil, age, and teeth. In general, Eastern cultural traditions are the same in their representations in Mongolian and Korean languages, including proverbs, specifically in terms of raising and educating children, not revealing their love, treating them with “strict” and fair principles, and taking care of them. These representations are related to the similar moral bases for the families in both cultures and the fact that children are considered the moral value of the family. In both languages, children are indicated as the source of life, as happiness, as crucial and as important by highlighting their healthy, cute, and small features. Meanwhile, the Mongolian language makes children symbolic of all good things with a more symbolic and blessed nature and greater respect. The unique example of the connection with everything is repeated the most in Mongolian folk literature with the concept of the “child”.

Furthermore, the most often repeated expression compares the cuteness of a child to a “deer ankle” or a “golden ankle”. In particular, the child in the mother’s womb is said to be “the anklebone of a deer as it lays at the beginning of spring”. This statement reflects a characteristic of Mongolians. Who totem themselves as originating from the wolf Börte Chino and the deer Qo’ai-maral and is thus related to national behavioral characteristics. Mongolians frequently identify children with the offspring of five kinds of livestock, especially the foal, which is a characteristic of nomadic Mongolians, who respect the horse as a “jewel of to Paz” and historically rode horses. Within the Mongolian dialect, the illustration of children as “guests” appears foremost, as the most vital respectable custom for Mongolians of the steppes is “visiting a guest”, and the characteristics of nomadic culture and customs reveal that Mongolians respect their guests more than anything else.

The Korean people also compare children in expressions of goodness, but children need life encounters and control. Children are more critical of reality. Children are likened to the most delicious supplements for nourishment: “corn and ddeok”, and everything depends on how children are perceived. These meanings are not easily interpreted. Most of the metaphors equate children with food, which is characteristic of a settled culture that has farmed and processed food for a long time, so it is a reasonable and genuine way of considering the concept.

To summarize, the meaning of the concept of “child” in the Mongolian language is that a “child is a blessing, a child is a treasure, and a child is a guest”. Meanwhile, in the Korean language, a “child is a job,
a child is corn, and a child is the future”. The two dialects share the same root; the shape and structure are comparable; authentic relations and common social impacts carry over from early times; and similitudes obtain, such as their status as a single country with an Eastern culture. However, the Mongolian country symbolizes “children as a favoring”, and the Korean country sees children as a “job” in reality. Distinctive metaphors and personality implications emerge depending on national traditions, acknowledged characteristics, character encounters, and culture.

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