

ON “GETTING” THE THAI PRETENDED OBSCENE RIDDLE

Siriporn Phakdeephasook
University of Pennsylvania
Prapaipan Phingchim
Chulalongkorn University

0. Introduction

The Thai pretended obscene riddle wittily plays with the unspeakable issues in Thai society. In general, a riddle itself is a form of rhetoric. Involving a riddle with taboo issues of obscenity in playful way makes it more appealing. In addition to a content analysis, a pragmatic look at the performance of pretended obscene riddling is necessary for discovering the key factors of how this kind of riddle works.

This paper discusses two meanings of “getting” the Thai pretended obscene riddle in two aspects. First, “getting” is viewed as a mark of the accomplishment of the speech act. It is argued that it is not “answering” but “getting” a pretended obscene riddle that signifies the success of the riddling. “Getting” in this aspect means discovering and understanding the hidden logical connection between a riddle question and its solution. Our second meaning of “getting” the Thai pretended obscene riddle is understanding how it works. To reach this goal, the pragmatic strategies used in this kind of riddle shall be analyzed.

The paper consists of six sections. The first section deals with the definition and the nature of pretended obscene riddles. The second section explains the method of study and the results. The third section discusses the importance of getting a pretended obscene riddle as the mark of the accomplishment of the speech act. The forth section examines the pragmatic elements involving in playing the Thai pretended obscene riddle. The fifth section investigates risk, reward, and limitation in playing this kind

of riddle in the context of Thai society. The last section concludes the whole discussion.

1. The Thai pretended obscene riddle

1.1 Definition of the pretended obscene riddle

Brunvand (1968: 52) defines the pretended obscene riddle as "a special subtype, usually of the comparative or enumerative type. The description suggests something risqué, usually sexual, but the correct answer is quite tame." In a particular study of this kind of riddle, Brown (1973: 90) widens its scope by including riddles that allude obscenity in the answer.

Brown (1973) gives some examples of what he terms the pretended obscene riddle. The first example is a riddle that alludes obscenity in the question.

What goes in hard, but comes out soft?

--- chewing gum--- (Brown 1973: 93)

The second example is a riddle that alludes obscenity in the answer.

What is the difference between a skinny broad and a counterfeit dollar bill?

--- a counterfeit dollar bill is a phoney buck--- (Brown 1973: 96)

However, in line with Brunvand, Brown notes that a great majority of the pretended obscene riddles holds the obscene allusion within the body of the question, with the answer being non-obscene. Brown (1973: 90) further discusses the nature of this kind of riddle that in almost all cases the obscenity is non-existent; no obscenity is voiced at all, but rather so implied as to force the riddlee to imagine an obscene situation that is never evidenced in the answer.

This paper focuses on this type of riddle found in Thai society. In our opinion, this group of riddle better fits the meaning of "pretended obscene" because the real subject matter of the riddle is not obscenity. A riddle question only misleads the riddlee to think about obscenity by using some pragmatic strategies. When the riddle solution is revealed, it drives away the obscene concept, which is ostentatiously alluded in the riddle question.

1.2 Examples

The following are three examples of the Thai pretended obscene riddles.

1) When someone gets in, you hear a cry; when he gets out, you (can) also hear a cry; when he gets further inside, he finds some liquid. What is that?

---Seven-eleven stores---

2) What is a male innate item? Some are short, but some are long. Women have to use it after getting married.

---Last name---

3) What begins with “พ” and has “~” in its spelling that women use for urinating?

---ห้องน้ำสตรี / hǎwngnáamsàttri/ (lady's room)---

The examples above can be classified into two groups.

Riddle 1 and 2 play with the description of the answers while riddle 3 mainly plays with a linguistic unit, specifically the spelling of the answer. In other words, the former group plays with the signified whereas the latter group plays with the signifier. The first group can survive translation and can also be found in other cultures. On the contrary, the latter group is more culture-bounded and cannot survive translation. Therefore, it is unintelligible for non-Thai speakers.

2. Method and result

In the present study, we posed the three riddles above to 30 respondents without letting them know our purpose and observed their verbal and non-verbal response. After that we explained them our purpose and interviewed them their experience and opinion.

The riddles' first responses after being posed the riddles include laughing loudly, laughing shyly, smiling and pondering. In most cases, the riddlees could not answer the riddles and asked อะไรละ /ʔàray làʔ/ (what is that?) or said ไม่รู้ /mây rú / or ไม่รู้หรอก /mây rú lòok/ ((I) don't know) and

gave up by saying ขอม /yɔɔm/ (give up) or บอกมาเถอะ /bòɔk maa thəʔ/ (tell me the answer).

Only one riddlee could answer riddle 1. This is because she had ever read it from a web site. Four riddlees could give the correct solution to riddle 2. Two of them could figure out the solution themselves. The other two had ever heard the riddle and the solution. Only one riddlee could give the correct solution to riddle 3 because she had previously heard the riddle. For those who had heard the riddles and the solutions, we asked whether they could figure out the correct solutions themselves when they were first posed those riddles. All of them responded that they could not.

The immediate responses after each solution was revealed included exclaiming ออ /ʔɔɔ/ (Oh! Yes), ออหรือ /ʔɔɔ rǎ/ (really?) เออใช่ /ʔə chây/ (Oh...yes), เออว่า /ʔə wàʔ/ (Yes, right.) or เออจริง /ʔə ciŋ/ (Yes, right.) or saying คิดได้ยังไง /khít dáay yanŋay/ (How can you create it?) กระแล้ว /kàʔ lææw/ (That is what I thought) with a laughter, a smile, or a nod. However, a few riddlees said ไม่เข้าใจ /mây khâu cay/ (I don't get it) or asked ทำไมล่ะ /thammay làʔ/ (Why?). This occurred mostly with riddle 1. After we providing the further explanation, all of them responded by exclaiming ออ /ʔɔɔ/ (Oh! Yes).

3. Getting the pretended obscene riddle: the accomplishment of the speech act

3.1 The speech act of riddle

When talking about a riddle, people usually think of it as a kind of question. This is because they focus only on the first part, which mostly takes the form of a question. Many scholars also consider riddle in this way (i.e., Paris 1877; Taylor 1943, 1951; Georges and Dundes 1963; and Abrahams and Dundes 1972). For example, Abrahams and Dundes (1972: 130) define riddles as “questions that are framed with the purpose of confusing or testing the wits of those who do not know the answer.” Nonetheless, it is crucial

to state that although the first part of a riddle mostly appears in the form of a question, a riddle does not function as a question.

According to Pepicello (1987), a riddler does not want to elicit a piece of information from the riddlee, which is the task a speaker would like to accomplish in asking a question. Rather, the riddler possesses a special logic or reasoning and wants to display it to the riddlee in a rhetorical way, mostly by presenting it in the form of a question and posing it to the riddlee. In so doing, the riddler challenges and tests whether or not the riddlee can discover and understand (get) it himself. Pepicello (1987: 34), therefore, states that the illocutionary act of a riddle is neither a question, as generally understood, nor an inverted question, as proposed by McDowell (1979). Instead, a riddle functions as an exercise in informal logic.

As early argued by Kōngās Maranda (1971), to accurately analyze a riddle, we must take its both elements, namely a riddle question and a solution, into account. Accordingly, we consider a riddle as a pair of utterances, mostly in question-and-answer sequence, that are connected by a hidden special logic or reasoning. This hidden logical link is what a riddlee must attempt to discover in a riddling event in order to reach the solution and understand the whole riddle. If a riddlee can discover it after being posed a riddle, he then can give the solution to the riddle. If the riddlee cannot, which is most likely, the riddler will provide the solution to the riddlee. However, the riddler still leaves for the riddlee to try to discover the logical link between the riddle question and the riddle solution and understand it himself. It is the moment that the riddlee can discover and understand the logical link between the two parts of the riddle (or the moment that he 'gets' the riddle) that indicates the accomplishment of the riddler in his performance.

3.2 Getting the Thai pretended obscene riddle: the accomplishment of the speech act

Since the speech act of a riddle is not the same as a question, the accomplishment of the act should not be judged by whether the riddler can elicit the answer from the riddlee or by whether the riddlee can provide a correct answer to the

riddle. Rather, the speech act of the riddle is to exercise special reasoning in a rhetorical way by challenging the riddlee to discover and understand it himself. Therefore, what indicates the accomplishment of the act is whether the riddlee “gets” the reasoning in a riddle and further accepts it as feasible. Mostly, at the moment of getting the riddle, if the logic in the riddle is feasible, the riddlee will express a response of approval and agreement, which can be done in several ways such as the expressions *อ้อ /ʔǎw/* (Oh!Yes), *อ้อหรือ /ʔǎw rǎ/* (really?), *อ้อใช่ /ʔǎ chây/* (Oh...yes), *อ้อว่ะ /ʔǎ wàʔ/* (Yes, right.) or *อ้อจริง /ʔǎ cɪŋ/* (Yes, right.).

As the pretended obscene riddle is a subtype of riddle, the same discussion can be applied to this group of riddle. Moreover, in playing a pretended obscene riddle, getting the logic of the riddle is obviously the main task the riddlee has to do. This is because it is most likely that the riddlee cannot get the correct answer himself as shown in the present study. Toward the questions as whether our riddlees would pose such riddles to others and whether they expect correct solutions from their riddlees, almost all of our riddlees expected that their riddlees would give up and let them give the solutions. This supports the discussion that the main point in playing Thai pretended obscene riddles is not answering but “getting” the riddles.

Particularly, at the moment of getting a pretended obscene riddle, the riddlee realized that the obscenity he was misled to imagine does not exist at all. The logical fit between the riddle question and its solution that he discovered drove away the misconception. At that moment, the riddlee “got” that the seemingly obscene question was proved innocent. According to the present study, although the riddlee was misguided to imagine or think of obscenity, a riddle’s frame marker *อะไรที่ /ʔǎray ʔǎy/* (what is it that ?) signaled him not to expect a real obscene answer. When the riddlee got the riddle, he could also prove that his assumption was true. An evidence of this is the expression *นั่นแหละ /kàʔ lææw/* (That is

what I thought) that some riddlees responded after the solutions were revealed.

3.3 The elements for getting the Thai pretended obscene riddle: Competency and cooperation of the riddlee

Competency

In addition to the competency of the riddler to present the special logic of the riddle in a feasible way, the competency and cooperation of the riddlee are two significant factors for a riddling to be accomplished. The competency of the riddlee in order to get a Thai pretended obscene riddle includes possessing the ability to deduce the logic in the riddle, being a member of Thai speech community, and possessing background knowledge about obscenity.

Like other riddles in general, the riddlee of a pretended obscene riddle must have the ability to deduce the special logic or reasoning of a riddle. As stated above, if the riddlee can do this after being posed a riddle question, he will be able to provide a correct solution to the riddle. If he cannot and gives up, the riddler will provide him the solution. Then it is still the riddlee's task to try to discover and understand the logical link of the two parts of the riddle.

The next qualification, being a member of Thai speech community, guarantees the linguistic competency of the riddlee for doing an exercise of language usage in a riddle. This qualification is crucially necessary for the riddle that plays with the signifier such as riddle 3. This riddle plays with the ambiguity of the spellings in Thai language. The letters “น and “~” appear in both the spellings of “female sexual organ” and “lady's room”. This kind of riddle will not work with a non-Thai speaker. By providing some explanation, he may understand how the logic in the riddle works. However, he cannot “get” the riddle himself.

Last, for a pretended obscene riddle question to successfully mislead the riddlee, the riddlee must have background knowledge about the obscenity being pretentiously alluded in a riddle question. In the present study, when we posed riddle 1 to an eleven-year-old girl, she could give the

correct solution because she had ever read this riddle from a web site. However, after that she asked what the obscene and humorous point in this riddle was. This indicates that, in spite of the fact that she could answer the riddle, she could not get it because she did not have the background knowledge of the sexual act.

Cooperation

In addition to the competency of the riddler and the riddlee in playing a Thai pretended obscene riddle, the cooperation of the riddlee is of great importance for the accomplishment of this folk genre.

Green and Pepicello (1986) and Pepicello (1987) discuss the important role of the riddlee for the achievement of the riddling event. According to Pepicello (1987: 31), "The riddlee must attempt to deduce the vital logical connection necessary to reveal the special logic of a riddle, just as the riddler countenances the attempts. Such attempts need take no more forceful form than the riddlee giving up." If the riddlee refuses to seek the logical connection hidden in the riddle and consequently does not get the riddle, the riddling is doomed to failure.

The riddlee's expressions of approval and agreement are important signals of cooperation. In most cases in the present study, such expressions of cooperation were the exclamations ออ /ʔɔ́w/ (Oh!Yes), ออหรือ /ʔɔ́w rǎ/ (really?), เออใช่ /ʔə chá-y/ (Oh...yes), เออวะ /ʔə wà/ (Yes, right.) or เออจริง /ʔə cing/ (Yes, right.) with a laughter, a smile, or a nod. Among our respondents, one did not display the signal of cooperation, which, as a result, made us reluctant to pose the next riddles.

4. Getting the Thai pretended obscene riddle: understanding its pragmatic strategies

In this section, we will analyze the pragmatic strategies employed in the Thai pretended obscene riddle. Three pragmatic strategies, namely cognitive ambiguity, violation of salience, and violation of accessibility of hierarchy, are found in this kind of riddle.

4.1 Exploitation of cognitive ambiguity

Cognitive ambiguity occurs when two possible frames of reference co-exist (Brown 1973: 91). This is a significant strategies employed in the pretended obscene riddle. According to Brown (1973: 91), when the listener is aware of both frames of reference, the riddle can be answered with relative ease. When the listener does not have such cognitive data, answering the riddle becomes extremely difficult. From our examples of Thai pretended obscene riddles, wording in riddle questions and spelling of riddle solutions are two elements that create cognitive ambiguity. Both the wording and spelling mislead the riddlee to work on a seemingly implicit frame of reference wherein an obscene answer would seem most likely.

In riddle 1 and 2, the wording in the riddle questions leads the riddlee to imagine sexual act and male sexual organ respectively. However, when the non-obscene solutions are revealed, the riddlee realizes that he was misguided by the ambiguous wording.

In riddle 3, the letters “น” and “ม” are shared in both the spelling of “female sexual organ” and “lady’s room.” Since the spelling of “female sexual organ” is more obvious, the cognitive ambiguity leads the riddlee to think about this obscene answer.

4.2 Violation of salience

Ortony (1979: 162) defines salience as the “prominence of a particular attribute with respect to a concept to which it does or could apply.” Weiner (1996: 143) states that in riddling, salience appears to lead the hearer astray by causing him/her to focus on salient aspects of a concept’s description. The riddle then ignores or violates these aspects in some ways.

As discussed in the previous section, the pretended obscene riddle plays with the shared characteristics of two frames of reference; one is obscene, the other is not. What is described in the riddle question is the salient characteristics of an obscene thing or action, but it is the minor characteristics of the non-obscene answer. A riddler plays with these shared characteristics by ambiguously describing the feature of the

non-obscene thing or action in order to mislead the riddlee to think about the salient features of the obscene thing or action. For example, the description in riddle 1 is a salient attribute of sexual action while it is a minor attribute of 7-11 stores.

4.3 Violation of accessibility hierarchy

Barsalou (1982) recognizes a distinction between context-independent (CI) and context-dependent (CD) information. CI information always comes to mind when a particular category is invoked. (e.g. “smells” for the category of SKUNK), whereas only those aspect of CD information relevant within the current context (linguistic or extralinguistic) are assessed (e.g. “float” for the category of BASKETBALL in the context of “water”). The CI information is considered to be more accessible than the CD information. (Weiner and De Palma 1993:188; Weiner 1996: 145)

According to Weiner and De Palma (1993: 188), the effectiveness of the riddle rests on the use of a less accessible information. In the pretended obscene riddle, the obscene information is more accessible information than the non-obscene information. This is because what is selectively and ambiguously described in the riddle question is the salient feature of obscene thing or action while it is the minor feature of the non-obscene answer.

To illustrate, in riddle 3, the word “female sexual organ” is the context-independent information of the two letters “ห” and “ฃ” because it is the word deriving from the combination of these two letters. On the contrary, the word “lady’s room--ห้องน้ำสตรี” can be considered a context-dependent information because in order to get this word, other letters need be added to the combination of these two letters. When the riddlee is posed this riddle, the obscene word will then come to his mind rather than the non-obscene word.

The exploitation of these linguistic tools leads to an immediate deliberate surprise, which consequently creates humor in the climax of the riddling event. Moreover, since the pretended obscene riddle plays with the unspeakable in Thai

society, the fun of exploitation of sexual taboo adds up the degree of humor in this performance.

5. Risk, reward, and limitation in playing the Thai pretended obscene riddle

5.1 Risk in playing the Thai pretended obscene riddle

Playing the pretended obscene riddle in Thai society can be considered a risky activity. Before accomplishing the frame, both the riddler and riddlee are in vulnerable positions.

The riddler is vulnerable because, in playing the pretended obscene riddle, he is simultaneously violating both Thai social norm and communicative principle. In terms of the violation of social norm, the implied content in the riddle question is obscenity, which is highly private issue in Thai society. Posing such question to others is publicizing it. Consequently, playing this kind of riddle can be considered a transgression even though the frame of a riddle can help conveying the key for decoding that obscenity is not the real subject matter of the riddle.

In terms of the violation of communicative principle, as Green and Pepicello (1986: 41-42) point out, riddling violates the pragmatic principle governing utilitarian conversation defined by H. P. Grice (1975) as the Cooperative Principle. This principle consists of four maxims:

1. Quantity: give the right amount of information
2. Quality: try to make your contribution one that is true
3. Relation: be relevant
4. Manner: be perspicuous

Riddles violate maxim 1 by giving too much or too less information in order to create confusion (Abrahams and Dundes 1972). They also violate maxim 4 by presenting information in a covert manner in order to create ambiguity. Like riddles in general, the Thai pretended obscene riddle plays with ambiguity and confusion to display the wit. It violates the

two maxims as well as other pragmatic rules as discussed in the previous section.

In a riddling event, a riddler is licensed to violate social norm and communicative principles. However, if he does not accomplish his task in making the riddlee “get” the riddles and approve his hidden reasoning, the license he gained in his performance will become invalid. As a result, he may become embarrassed because of his failure and may be denounced for the violation and transgression. For example, we posed riddle 1 to an eleven-year-old girl, and she could answer the riddle question because she had ever read it from a web site. However, she later confessed that she did not understand how obscene and humorous the riddle was, and asked us to explain to her. This made us embarrassed to explain directly to her how the riddle worked.

In the aspect of the riddlee, after being posed a pretended obscene riddle, almost all the riddlees in the present study accepted that they were inevitably misguided to work on a wrong concept—the obscenity. The riddlees can feel offended because they are misled to imagine or think about obscenity which is highly private issue in public. This embarrassing situation most likely occurs when the riddlee is in a higher status than the riddler.

5.2 Reward in playing the Thai pretended obscene riddle

Although playing the pretended obscene riddle in Thai society can be considered risk taking, the reward of the accomplishment of the performance is worthwhile. Playing the pretended obscene riddle is a channel allowing for violating social norm and communicative principle, making fun with social taboo, and cultivating intimacy.

License to violate social norm and communicative principle

The pretended obscene riddling licenses the riddler to violate Thai social norm and communicative principle. This privilege cannot be obtained from everyday conversations. The ambiguity in the pretended obscene riddle enables the riddler

to pretentiously mention obscene issue in public, which is a transgression in Thai society. The non-obscene frame of reference, which is the correct answer of the riddle, guarantees his safety from social denouncement. He can argue that what seems obscene in the riddle question is actually something innocent.

The frame of the riddling allows the riddler to communicate ambiguously and to violate other pragmatic rules in order to achieve his goal as previously discussed. The frame marker อะไร요 /ʔàray ʔây/ (What is it that...?) signals the hearers that these violations are intentionally playful communication, not a failure. This key protects the riddlee from being misunderstood.

Humor deriving from exploitation of social taboo

At the moment of getting a pretended obscene riddle, the riddlee realizes that obscenity is exploited in the riddle in a witty way beyond his expectation. This sudden surprise brings in humor, which is expressed in a form of a smile or laughter. In the present study, the riddlees explained that their surprise was the reason of their laughter or smile. Their explanations are นี่ก็ไม่ถึง /nuík mây thúŋ/ (beyond expectation) and ถูกหลอกให้คิดแทบอยู่ที่เท้าของพี่น้า /thùuk lòok háy khít thăæp yăæ thií thăæ k'wí kh'wŏŋ phúuun phúuun / (I was duped to think so seriously. Actually, it is very simple.). It can be said that the witty manipulation of sexual taboo in the pretended obscene riddle provides a channel for releasing social and psychological stress caused by the oppression on this taboo.

Cultivating intimacy and solidarity

Obscenity is a highly private and unspeakable issue. If a riddler accomplishes his task in the performance of a pretended obscene riddling, he creates a moment allowing every participant in the frame to laugh together at the unspeakable issue. This can help cultivating intimacy. By getting the riddle and laughing together at the same taboo issues at the right moment, the participants in the riddling

demonstrate that they shared the same intimate knowledge. This is also a way to exhibit solidarity among a group's members.

5.3 Limitation of playing the pretended obscene riddle in Thai society

The content of the pretended obscene riddle can be considered aggressive toward the riddlee because one of the frames of reference, the one so implied in the question, is obscene. Moreover, the strategies used in pretended obscene riddling are aimed at deceiving the riddlee to think in an unsuitable way. This aggressive attribute leads to the limitation of the chance for playing pretended obscene riddles in Thai society. A competent riddler must be able to determine to whom, when, and where he can ask this kind of riddle.

The result of the present study reveals that social distance and social status are two significant factors for determining the person to whom a pretended obscene riddle can be posed. Most respondents said that they would pose the pretended obscene riddle to their close friends, their spouse, their siblings and cousins. Most respondents would not play this kind of riddle with their parents, their teachers, and strangers. Gender is another factor to be considered before posing a pretended obscene riddle to someone. Some riddlees said that they would feel offended if the riddler was in different gender. It can be concluded that knowing the right contexts for playing the obscene riddles is still crucial for the achievement of the performance.

6. Conclusion

This paper attempts to analyze the Thai pretended obscene riddle from a pragmatic approach. To reach this goal, we first analyze the speech act of the normal riddle and the pretended obscene riddle to demonstrate that those do not function as a question. We then argue that to judge the accomplishment of the speech act, we have to see whether the riddlee can "get" (understand and agree with) the special reasoning of the riddle rather than whether the riddlee can answer the riddle. The discussion also covers the issue of the

competency and cooperation of the riddlee—the two elements for getting the Thai pretended obscene riddle.

Then, we move to focus on the pragmatic strategies found in the Thai pretended obscene riddle. Three pragmatic strategies including exploitation of cognitive ambiguity, violation of salience, and violation of accessibility hierarchy are used to explain how the three examples of the Thai pretended obscene riddle work.

Next, we consider the issue of risk, reward, and limitation in playing a pretended obscene riddle in Thai society. The discussion in this section relates the Thai pretended obscene riddle with its enacted context in order to give a wider perception of this riddle.

References

- Abrahams, Roger D. and Alan Dundes. 1972. Riddles. *Folklore and folklife: An introduction*, edited by Richard Dorson, 134. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Barsalou, L. W. 1982. Context-independent and context-dependent information in concepts. *Memory and Cognition* 10: 82-93.
- Bergson, H. 1956. Laughter. *Comedy*, edited by W. Sypher, 61-190. Garden City, NJ.: Doubleday and Company.
- Brown, Waln K. 1973. Cognitive ambiguity and the Pretended obscene riddle. *Keystone Folklore* 18: 89-101.
- Brunvand, Jan Harold. 1968. *The study of American folklore*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Georges, Robert and Alan Dundes. 1963. Toward a structure definitions of the riddle. *Journal of American Folklore* 76: 111-118.
- Green, Thomas, and William Pepicello. 1986. The proverb and riddle as folk enthymemes. *Proverbium* 3:33-45.
- Grice, H.P. 1975. Logic and conversation. *Syntax and semantics*, vol. 3: *Speech acts*, edited by P. Cole and J. L. Morgan, 41-58. New York: Academic Press.
- Köngäs Maranda, Elli. 1971. The logic of riddles. *Structural analysis of oral tradition*, edited by P. Maranda and E.

- Köngäs Maranda, 189-232. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- McDowell, John H. 1979. Children's riddling. Bloomington: Indiana University.
- Ortony, Andrew. 1979. Beyond literal similarity. *Psychological Review* 86.3: 157-179.
- Paris, Gaston. 1877. Préface' to Eugène Rolland. In *Devinettes ou Knigmes Populaires de la Fance*. Paris: F. Vieweg.
- Pepicello, W.J. 1987. Pragmatics of humorous language. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 65:27-35.
- Taylor, Archer. 1943. The Riddle. *California Folklore Quarterly* 2: 129-47.
- Taylor, Archer. 1951. English riddles from oral tradition. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Weiner, E. Judith. 1996. The incongruity of jokes, riddles and humorous situations. Towards social science of language: Papers in honor of William Labov; vol. 2 (Social interaction and discourse structures), edited by Gregory R. Guy; Crawford Feagin; Deborah Schifffrin; and John Baugh, 139-151. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Weiner, Judith, and Paul De Palma, 1993. Some Pragmatic Features of Lexical Ambiguity and Simple Riddles. *Language and Communication* 13.3: 183-193.