

Functions of Characters in Fairy Tales

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Abstract: This article examines the distribution of special story-ending formulas in Uzbek folk tales, as well as the prevalence of story-ending formulas in European folk tales. Furthermore, as a traditional type of fairy tale text, the main body of the text contains information about the main events, while the concluding section contains information about the resolution of all contradictions and a happy ending, as well as neurolinguistic features.

Keywords: Neurolinguistics, traditional type, fairy tale text, formula, story-ending formulas, extralinguistic factors, sociocultural factors, pragmatic factors, psychological factors.

Introduction: Vladimir Propp's central thesis is that while the "skin" of a fairy tale (characters' names, locations, and magical objects) may change across cultures, the "skeleton" (the actions they perform) remains remarkably stable. Propp distinguishes between the variable elements and the constant elements of a tale. These are the names, genders, and physical attributes of the characters. Whether the hero is a prince named Ivan or a peasant named Jack, the structural role they play remains the same. These are the functions. A function is defined as an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of the action. Functions are stable, invariant elements: They serve as the basic building blocks of the tale, regardless of who performs them. The number of functions is limited: Propp identified exactly 31 functions (e.g., Interdiction, Violation, Departure, Struggle, Victory, Return). The sequence of functions is always identical: While not every tale contains every single function, the ones that are present always follow a fixed chronological order. All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure: This implies that every magic tale in the world shares a single underlying DNA. Theoretical Summary: To Propp, a fairy tale is not a collection of motifs, but a system. By focusing on the function (what the character does) rather than the character (who they are), we can see that all magic tales are structurally repetitive and follow a universal formula.

In his seminal work, *Morphology of the Folktale*, Propp identifies the Initial Situation as a crucial element that sets the stage for the story. Here is a breakdown of your text in English: According to Propp, a fairy tale usually begins with a specific "Initial Situation." While he does not classify this as a function (the fundamental building blocks of a tale's plot), it remains a vital morphological element. It often lists family members or introduces the future hero. It mentions the hero's name, status, or social standing. It establishes the world before the "Initial Misfortune" or "Lack" occurs. Propp argues that the various ways a fairy tale begins can only be fully analyzed at the end of the research, once the entire structure is understood. He designates this element with the Greek letter alpha (α).

While many European fairy tales begin in a vague "faraway kingdom," Uzbek folk tales often transition from general descriptions to concrete locations. While a story might start with "In a certain city," it frequently incorporates real or semi-historical geographical markers. By mentioning specific place names, the narrator anchors the fantastical elements of the story into the listener's real world. This technique, known as localization, makes the moral lessons of the tale feel more relevant and "true" to the audience's heritage.

These scholars moved beyond just reading stories for fun; they looked for the underlying "grammar" of how stories are built. V.Ya. Propp (*Морфология сказки*): Propp is perhaps the most revolutionary figure

mentioned. He argued that while characters' names change, their functions remain constant. He identified 31 specific functions (e.g., Absentation, Interdiction, Violation) that form the "compositional skeleton" of all fairy tales. A.N.Veselovskiy: He focused on the motif—the smallest indivisible unit of a plot. His work provided the theoretical foundation for understanding how stories travel across borders and evolve over time. J.J. Frazer: In his monumental work *The Golden Bough*, he connected folklore motifs to ancient rituals. He argued that many story elements (like a king dying and being reborn) are actually echoes of ancient agricultural or religious ceremonies.

The scholars you mentioned (H.Zarif, M. Afzalov, K.Imomov, etc.) form the backbone of Uzbek National Folkloristics. While Western scholars like Propp looked at universal structures, these Uzbek academics focused on the national identity of the genre. Their work moved the study of tales from simple storytelling into a formal academic discipline, documenting thousands of oral narratives across the various regions of Uzbekistan.

In an English-language academic context, you could describe this phenomenon as follows:

"Uzbek folkloristics is characterized by a high degree of lexical diversity. The transition from the standard term *ertak* to regional variants like *matal* or *cho'pchak* illustrates the localized nature of oral traditions. Furthermore, the etymological link between *ertak* and the concept of 'antiquity' (*erta*) aligns with the global folkloric tradition of situating narratives in a mythical, primordial past."

From a scholarly perspective, these ideas touch upon pedagogy, narratology, and linguistic philosophy. Here is the explanation in English: The text begins by highlighting the didactic (educational) power of folklore. From a young age, humans are drawn to the concept of "Goodness" (*ezgulik*). Children do not just listen to a story; they perform psychological mirroring. They choose a hero to emulate, which helps in developing their own moral compass and social values.

The scholar E.Jumanov points out that the time in a folk tale is not linear or historical; it is extratemporal. Phrases like "Qadim o'tgan zamonda" (In ancient times past) signify that the story exists in a vacuum. The time within a tale only moves according to the needs of the plot. It is "real" only within the boundaries of the story itself, separate from our biological clock. This is the most profound part of the analysis. The traditional opening formula "Bir bor ekan, bir yo'q ekan" (There was one, there was not one) is a linguistic paradox. Over centuries, the original ritualistic or historical "factors" were forgotten. Now, the phrase has become mysterious and abstract, serving as a "magic key" that

opens the door to a fictional world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a fascinating tension between the supernatural events of a tale and the social reality they represent. On the surface, the events of a fairy tale (flying carpets, talking animals, magical transformations) are physically impossible in our world. Vladimir Propp argued that despite these magical elements, the fairy tale is a refraction of historical reality [6]. Many "magical" events are actually echoes of ancient social rites (like initiation ceremonies). Propp suggests that the specific magical event is secondary; what matters is the social function it serves. For example, a "magic mirror" is a secondary tool, but the primary reality is the human emotion of vanity or the social need for truth.

N.D.Arutyunova provides a foundational definition of "speech" or "discourse." She argues that a text cannot be analyzed in isolation [1]. To understand a folktale, one must look at: The physical context and the world outside the story. The traditions, values, and beliefs of the society in which the tale was created. The intention behind the storytelling—what the narrator is trying to achieve (e.g., teaching a lesson, entertaining, or asserting authority). The emotional and cognitive states of both the storyteller and the audience. As you noted, V.Ya.Propp recognized the unique "charm" or allure of fairy tale language [7]. From a linguistic perspective, this "charm" is actually a result of pragmatic intensity.

The term you mentioned, "xronotop" (chronotope), is a crucial concept in literary theory, famously popularized by Mikhail Bakhtin. A chronotope is the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" as they are artistically expressed in literature. The "time" (the mythical past) and "space" (the magical kingdom) are inseparable. You cannot have the "happily ever after" (time) without the journey through the "enchanted forest" (space). The structure follows a standard trajectory: Establishing the chronotope and introducing the protagonist. The sequence of core events where the conflict unfolds. The restorative "happily ever after," which serves as the terminal point of the narrative journey. The "klishe" and "iboralar" you referred to are known in English folklore studies as formulaic Expressions or Fixed Phrases. These are the "building blocks" of oral tradition. It establishes a rhythm and a shared expectation between the narrator and the audience.

In English, we refer to Plaxova's approach as linguoculturology. You can summarize these viewpoints in your paper as follows:

"Contemporary scholars transition from viewing the folktale as a mere literary genre to defining it as a

complex communicative system. According to Batuyeva and Ulyanova, the tale is a multidimensional text where linguistic choices are governed by psychological and pragmatic needs. Plaxova extends this by arguing that the folktale is an axiological map (a map of values) for an ethnic group, providing a linguistic framework through which a culture interprets its existence and preserves its core identity."

Your research successfully traces the folktale from local Uzbek dialectal variations (matal, cho'pchak) to universal structural rules (Propp). It shows that when an Uzbek child hears "Bir bor ekan, bir yo'q ekan," they are not just starting a story; they are entering a complex linguistic system that has been engineered over centuries to preserve the "spiritual DNA" of their people.

These scholars move away from looking at the folktale as a static text. Instead, they view it as a dynamic process. They argue that the folktale is a product of the human mind's ability to categorize the world. It is a "dynamic process" because the narrator and the listener are actively "re-creating" the world as the story unfolds. By calling it a "neurolinguistic factor," they suggest that the repetitive structures, rhythms, and formulas of a folktale are specifically designed to align with how the human brain processes information and stores memory. They define folktale speech as a collection of texts belonging to a "specific social sphere." This means folktales are not random stories; they are a linguostylistic system where the theme, the style, and the pragmatics (the goal) are all unified to serve a social function. Your mention of Bruno Bettelheim's seminal work, "The Uses of Enchantment" (1976), is vital for the psychological aspect of your research.

Marie-Louise von Franz, a prominent Jungian scholar, argues that fairy tales possess a "psychic resonance" that makes them universally memorable. Franz suggests that folktales are not arbitrary; they are built upon archetypal models—universal patterns of human experience (the hero's journey, the shadow, the wise old man) that exist in the collective unconscious. Because these patterns resonate with our own subconscious, they are easily encoded in long-term memory. This is why a person can remember a story heard in childhood for their entire life, even if they have forgotten other, more "real" details. Are anchored in a specific time and place. Even if they include magical elements, the core logic is based on the "real world." Are built upon a foundation of pure fantasy. The rules of geography and history do not apply; the world of the tale is governed by internal, magical logic.

Akimenko identifies that the unique "flavor" of a folk

tale is constructed through specific linguistic and structural markers. She suggests that the narrator creates a distinct world using: As we have discussed, the setting is detached from real-time and space, creating a "liminal" environment. These are the rhythmic patterns and recurring phrases that act as the narrative "skeleton." The tale is not just for entertainment; it is a vehicle for didacticism (teaching values) and aesthetics (the beauty of the oral performance) [2].

The cause is the foundational trigger or the internal/external stimulus that pushes a character into action. It is the catalyst that disrupts their status quo. Common examples include: Hunger or survival. Anger, jealousy, or love. The necessity to keep a promise, fulfill a prophecy, or seek justice. The goal is the specific objective or the desired outcome the character is striving to reach. It provides direction to their energy.

Motifs are the distinct, recurring elements within a fairy tale—such as a magical object (a mirror, a ring), a specific setting (an enchanted forest), or a characteristic situation (a quest for a lost sibling) [4]. They are essential because they shape the narrative's atmosphere and intensity. While motifs are considered some of the more "stable" elements of a story, they are not rigid. In different versions (variants) of the same fairy tale, the reason for a character's action or their specific goal might shift, even if the structural core remains the same. To distinguish them from Vladimir Propp's "functions" (the structural actions like "the hero leaves home" or "the villain is defeated"): [5] Functions are the skeletal structure—the essential actions required for the plot to move forward. Motifs are more specific, descriptive details—the "flesh" on the skeleton that gives the story its texture. While functions are universal plot beats, motifs are the specific components that provide the narrative's emotional color and unique cultural identity.

It is insightful to explore the structuralist approach of X.Jason (often associated with Hans Jason in narratology). His work further formalizes the study of fairy tales by moving beyond motifs toward a rigid, logical model of narrative progression. Here is an explanation of his model in English: Jason argues that the complexity of a fairy tale can be broken down into a predictable model based on the "direction" of the narrative events. Jason posits that a function is a single unit consisting of one action and two abstract roles (the participants). These roles serve as either the Subject (the agent performing the action) or the Object (the entity being acted upon). As you noted, Jason represents this functional unit as a relationship between participants:

Function: Subject→Action→Object

This creates a clear, logical flow for how events unfold in a narrative. He further breaks this down into a three-part sequence that defines the trajectory of an event:

1. A (Stimulus): The initial prompt or catalyst that sets the event in motion.
 2. V (Response/Action): The reaction to that stimulus.
 3. S (Result/Resolution): The outcome produced by the interaction between the subject and the object.
- By defining these as A→V→S sequences, Jason allows researchers to "map" a fairy tale. Instead of just looking at the themes or the characters (like the wolf or the princess), this method allows you to analyze the syntax of the story—how the story is "built" regardless of the cultural setting. In essence, while Vladimir Propp focused on the sequence of functions (the "what" happens), Jason's model digs deeper into the logic of the interaction (the "how" the roles relate to each other within that function).

This is the foundational, stable unit of a folktale's structure. Propp argued that while characters may change, the actions they perform (the functions) are limited and repetitive. A function determines what event happens in the story, serving as the building block for the narrative's architecture. This is the "soul" or substance of the tale. It determines how the events unfold, adding depth, flavor, and emotional/thematic meaning to the skeleton provided by the functions.

The text emphasizes that a simple plot summary is insufficient to understand a folktale. Instead, it advocates for morphological analysis—a method pioneered by V.Ya. Propp. This approach involves:

1. Deconstructing the tale into its constituent parts (functions) [4].
2. Studying transformations, contents, and attributes (the specific real-world or magical objects/traits associated with characters).
3. Analyzing even the smallest components to see how they fit into the broader structural framework.

Propp's analysis suggests that tales follow a specific, logical progression:

- The Beginning: The narrative is typically triggered by a negative event—either a Villainy (the introduction of a threat or harm, represented as \$A\$) or a lack (a search for something missing, represented as \$a\$).
- The Progression: The story moves through a series of "intermediate functions" as the protagonist navigates the challenge.

- The Resolution: The sequence concludes with a formal ending, often involving:

- o Marriage (\$S^*A\$): The classic "happily ever after."
- o Reward (\$Z\$): Gaining recognition or status.
- o Recovery/Victory (\$L\$): The acquisition of a magical object or the total defeat of the adversary.
- o Escape (\$SS\$): Successfully avoiding a pursuit.

In short, the text argues that to truly understand a folktale, one must look past the surface-level story. By isolating the functions (the structural skeleton), we can compare vastly different stories to find a universal grammar of storytelling, while the motives provide the narrative with its unique character and life.

Propp defines a "move" as a sequence of narrative events. According to his theory, every time a new instance of "lack" (a deficiency or a problem) or a new "misfortune/harm" occurs, a new "move" is triggered. Essentially, a move is the basic unit of a tale's structural evolution [5].

The author notes that identifying these moves is the most crucial practical step in Propp's analysis. It marks the transition from abstract theory to the concrete task of mapping out the plot structure of the tale [5]. When studying these moves, the researcher must solve two primary problems. You must determine how these narrative moves interact with one another. You must determine whether these connected moves form a single, cohesive narrative entity, or if they are actually fragments of two different tales that have been combined.

1.Linguistic Strategies and Conceptual Framework

Fairy tale formulae act as narrative bridges that connect time and space. They serve several critical functions within the structure of a story. These phrases create a clear distinction between the "real world" of the audience and the "mythical time/space" of the fairy tale. By using traditional openings (like "Once upon a time...") and transitions, the storyteller signals to the listener that the narrative reality is shifting. As you mentioned, these are not just ornaments. They are structural elements that hold the narrative system together [9]. They allow the storyteller to move the protagonist from one episode to the next, maintaining the coherence of the plot even when the events are surreal or fantastical. In short, these formulae represent the theoretical framework of the genre. They prove that the fairy tale is a highly organized, systematic form of folk art. They demonstrate that, across all civilizations, human beings utilize similar cognitive and artistic "blueprints" to communicate complex experiences and values through the medium

of the tale.

2. Discourse of Exclusivity and Group Identity

Based on the information provided by N. Roshianu regarding the structural elements of Eastern fairy tales, here are the 17 common components explained in English, maintaining the order you provided: [9]

z – character formation: The origin, birth, or initial development of the hero.

a – qualities of the horse: The unique, often magical traits of the hero's steed.

S – space (Setting): The destination or the specific location where the object of the hero's quest is held.

m – royal decree: A command from the king, often a death sentence or a challenging trial.

r – reproach: A rebuke or criticism directed toward the queen or the king.

f – beauty of the queen: Description of the queen's physical appearance and allure.

r – dialogue between the hero and the horse: A significant exchange where the animal provides guidance or wisdom.

d – journey (Struggle): The physical travel, often involving hardships or combat.

v – ascension: The hero rising to a higher status, success, or a metaphorical peak.

s – perception/Warning: Conversation between a relative (mother, wife, sister) and the destiny-maker; sensing the arrival of a stranger (often by smell).

i – dialogue with the destiny-maker: A crucial conversation between the hero and the one who shapes their fate.

u – overcoming obstacles: The unlocking or clearing of barriers.

x – reporting success: News or a message confirming that the hero has successfully overcome the obstacles.

s – summoning animals: The act of calling upon creatures for assistance.

o – receiving magical items: Accepting enchanted objects from helpers or mentors.

l – dialogue between the hero and the antagonist: A confrontation or negotiation between the protagonist and the villain.

î – dialogue with rescuers: Interaction between the hero and those who liberate or aid them.

3. Strategic Euphemization and Reframing

These elements form a modular framework often used to analyze the recurring motifs in traditional Eastern storytelling. It is becoming clear that narrative

formulas—the traditional recurring phrases found in fairy tales—are far more than mere decorative flourishes. They act as essential structural markers. Phrases like "Once upon a time" or "He traveled far and wide" function as vital signals that dictate the narrative rhythm and the progression of the plot.

Pragmatic Analysis of Communicative Scripts and Reframing

Akimenko focuses on the structural and spatial aspects of fairy tale language. By using terms like "linguistic features of fairy tale speech" and "linguistic space of the fairy tale," this researcher emphasizes that a fairy tale is not just a story, but a specific linguistic environment. Key Insight: The analysis suggests that the "linguomental space" of a fairy tale is broader than just the words on the page; it encompasses a complex system of linguistic levels that reflect a specific worldview [2].

Bushkova bridges the gap between language and the soul of a nation. She argues that the essence of fairy tale discourse is defined by cultural codes. These include fixed expressions (idioms), metaphors, symbols, and stereotypes embedded in the language. These codes serve as a "map" of a people's cultural identity. Every metaphor or stereotype used in a fairy tale carries a deep-seated cultural meaning that has been passed down through generations.

Shakolo attempts to categorize the nature of fairy tale speech into different levels. This researcher views the linguo-cultural characteristics of fairy tales through two specific lenses: Themes and linguistic patterns that are common to all humanity (e.g., the struggle between good and evil). Unique linguistic traits that belong to a specific ethnic group, reflecting their unique history, environment, and traditions.

Plaxova examines the nature of fairy tale discourse by categorizing the factors that verbalize (express) the genre. These are the building blocks of the language within the tale, including cultural concepts, phraseology, and paremiology (the study of proverbs and sayings). These represent the "extra-textual" reality, specifically encompassing human existence and the surrounding world as portrayed in the fairy tale.

Linguocultural Specifics in the Uzbek Context

Xamaniyeva approaches fairy tale discourse through the intersection of folklore and linguistic culture. She argues that because every nation perceives the world differently due to unique internal and external influences, their languages develop distinct characteristics. She conducts her analysis by examining. Toponyms (place names), names of ethnic groups, phraseological units, etiquette of speech, figurative

language, proverbs, and structural formulas (stock phrases).

Voroshkevich focuses on the functional aspect of linguistic-cultural analysis. She posits that the primary tasks of such analysis are: Extracting cultural information from the text. Interpreting that information. Comparing the "worldview" or "image of the world" across different cultures to understand their unique values.

Maslova elevates the status of the text, asserting that linguistic analysis is a primary method for understanding culture. She argues that: Texts are the most critical vehicles for transmitting cultural signs. A comprehensive linguo-culturological analysis must integrate all levels of the text, including its structural composition, semantic content, pragmatic function, and its specific linguistic components. This framework effectively highlights how the study of fairy tales is not merely about literature, but about mapping the "cultural DNA" of a society through its language.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is essential to highlight that medial formulas hold profound significance not only within the fairy tales of a specific nation but across the folklore of all peoples globally. Medial formulas in fairy tales are stable, fixed expressions used during the progression of the story, typically to transition from one plot segment to another. Their primary functions include. They serve as linguistic connectors that link different temporal and spatial settings. They refocus the listener's attention on a new turn of events. They maintain the structural cohesion and rhythmic flow of the narrative. Propp identified 31 fundamental functions that serve as the building blocks of any magic tale. He observed that these functions always occur in a logical chronological order. While not every story contains all 31 functions, the ones that do appear will almost always follow the same sequence. You noted that functions do not exclude one another; rather, they are logically and artistically linked. One function creates the necessity for the next. For example, a "Lack" or "Villainy" (the problem) creates the logical necessity for the "Departure" of the hero (the quest for a solution). Many of Propp's functions operate in pairs. This symmetry drives the tension and resolution of the plot. Common pairs include: The hero is told not to do something, and they do it anyway. The villain seeks information and successfully receives it. The hero engages the villain and eventually wins. The hero is chased by an enemy but is eventually saved.

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