

Semantics of Anthroponyms As A Reflection of Folk Perceptions of a Character in Russian Fairy Tales

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Abstract: This article examines the semantics of anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales as a linguistic means of reflecting folk perceptions of a character. In folklore, personal names function not only as markers of identification but also as carriers of evaluative, symbolic, and culturally significant meanings. The aim of the study is to determine how anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales verbalize traditional notions of character, moral qualities, emotional state, and social role. The material of the study is drawn from Russian folk tales published in the collections of A. N. Afanasyev. The methodological framework combines semantic, contextual, descriptive, and linguocultural analysis. The findings show that anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales frequently display semantic transparency and are directly involved in the creation of a character image. Such names often convey emotional condition, ethical evaluation, typified social role, or symbolic meaning, thereby becoming an important component of fairy-tale poetics. The study concludes that anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales serve as a verbal form through which folk culture encodes its views on personality and human qualities.

Keywords: Anthroponyms, semantics, Russian fairy tales, folklore, proper names, character, linguocultural analysis.

Introduction: The study of proper names occupies an important place in modern linguistics and literary analysis. In onomastic theory, a proper name is treated not merely as a label but as a linguistic unit capable of participating in categorization, differentiation, and interpretation within discourse. In literary and folklore texts, this potential becomes especially visible because the name is often involved in characterization and in the transmission of cultural meanings [1]. Russian fairy tales provide particularly rich material for such analysis. As a genre, the fairy tale tends toward typification, concentration of meaning, stable narrative roles, and clear axiological contrasts between positive and negative characters. These structural features were classically described in folktale studies by V. Propp, while the corpus of Russian folk tales collected by A. N. Afanasyev remains one of the main textual foundations for research on the Russian fairy-tale tradition [2]. Within this genre system, anthroponyms are not always semantically neutral. On the contrary, many of them preserve an inner form or are connected with

recognizable associations that guide the reader's or listener's interpretation of a character. In this respect, the fairy-tale name may function similarly to what literary onomastics often describes as a "speaking name," that is, a name whose semantics contributes to imagery, evaluation, and characterization[3]. The relevance of this article lies in the need to examine anthroponyms not only as nominative units but also as a means of representing folk perceptions of a person in the world of the Russian fairy tale. The aim of the article is to analyze the semantics of anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales as a reflection of traditional folk views of a character. The objectives are:

- to identify the main semantic types of anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales;
- to determine how these names participate in characterization;
- to reveal their linguocultural and evaluative functions in the structure of the tale.

METHODS

The material for the present study consists of anthroponyms drawn from Russian folk tales published in the collections of A. N. Afanasyev. These collections are widely used in folklore scholarship and remain a canonical source for the study of Russian fairy-tale plots, images, and naming practices [4].

The research employs several complementary methods. First, semantic analysis is used to identify the lexical meaning or inner form of a name and to determine whether the anthroponym is semantically transparent. Second, contextual analysis is applied in order to examine how the meaning of the name is realized in narrative context and how it interacts with the character's actions, traits, and role in the plot. Third, descriptive analysis is used to classify anthroponyms according to dominant semantic features. Finally, linguocultural analysis makes it possible to interpret names as markers of folk consciousness and value-oriented cultural models.

From a terminological point of view, the study follows the traditional onomastic understanding of anthroponym as a proper name referring to a human being or a fictional human character. This approach is consistent with the framework presented in Russian onomastic scholarship, including the terminological system summarized by N. V. Podolskaya. The analysis is focused on names that demonstrate an observable relation between semantic motivation and characterization. This includes names expressing emotional state, evaluative meaning, idealized personal features, or culturally recognizable narrative roles. The study does not attempt an exhaustive statistical description of all names in the corpus; instead, it aims at a qualitative interpretation of the most representative semantic patterns.

RESULTS

The analysis shows that anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales often perform a dual function: they identify the character and simultaneously characterize him or her. In many cases, the name contains a semantic clue that helps the audience understand the figure before the plot fully unfolds. This confirms that fairy-tale anthroponyms are integrated into the broader poetic and evaluative system of folklore narrative.

One of the most expressive groups includes anthroponyms that reflect the emotional or psychological state of the character. A well-known example is Nesmeyana, whose inner form is linked to the idea of not laughing, sadness, or emotional detachment. Such a name is semantically transparent and immediately creates a specific expectation about the heroine. The anthroponym therefore functions not only as a designation but also as an interpretive key to

the character image. In this case, the semantics of the name condenses a dominant trait into a memorable folkloric form. Another group is formed by anthroponyms associated with positive value characteristics. In Russian fairy tales, names often interact with epithets and descriptive formulas to create idealized images of beauty, goodness, gentleness, wisdom, or moral integrity. Even when the anthroponym itself is not fully descriptive, it becomes part of a stable semantic complex that positions the hero or heroine within the positive pole of the fairy-tale value system. Such names participate in the construction of a culturally approved model of personality.

A third group includes names related to social or symbolic role. In these cases, the semantic force of the anthroponym is not always reduced to dictionary meaning; it emerges from repeated folklore use, conventional associations, and the place of the character within a recognizable narrative pattern. Russian fairy tales, like other folktale traditions classified in international folktale scholarship, tend to rely on stable role structures and recurrent character types. Therefore, a name may acquire symbolic weight through its participation in a familiar narrative model[5].

The material also suggests that semantically transparent anthroponyms intensify the expressiveness of the tale. They reduce the distance between naming and evaluation: the audience does not merely learn who the character is, but also receives an encoded hint about how that figure should be perceived. In this sense, anthroponyms act as a compressed form of characterization. Their semantic density is especially important in folklore, where narrative economy and typification are central artistic principles. Thus, the results indicate that anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales may be grouped according to several dominant semantic tendencies:

- names reflecting emotional or psychological condition;
- names carrying positive or negative evaluation;
- names connected with idealized or typified human qualities;
- names functioning through symbolic or role-based association.

DISCUSSION

The findings support the view that proper names in folklore should be studied not only within the framework of nomination, but also within the framework of textual semantics and cultural representation. This position corresponds to broader

onomastic theory, according to which proper names are linked to differentiation, social usage, and the interpretive practices of a speech community. In literary and folklore discourse, the semantic and stylistic potential of proper names becomes especially pronounced. From the point of view of folklore poetics, the semantic activity of anthroponyms is closely related to the typological nature of the fairy tale. Propp's classic description of the folktale emphasizes structural stability and recurring character roles. Within such a system, naming is naturally inclined toward concentration and recognizability. A semantically motivated anthroponym helps the tale organize character perception quickly and effectively, which is important in oral and formulaic narrative traditions.

The discussion also shows that the semantics of anthroponyms reflects the axiological orientation of folk culture. Through names, fairy tales verbalize communal views on desirable and undesirable human features. Positive naming tends to be associated with beauty, kindness, humility, fidelity, or moral strength, whereas marked or problematic names may foreground suffering, deficiency, emotional deviation, or social abnormality. In this way, anthroponyms participate in the transmission of ethical oppositions that structure the fairy-tale world.

At the same time, the semantics of a fairy-tale anthroponym should not be interpreted too narrowly. A name does not function in isolation: its meaning unfolds through interaction with plot, repetition, epithets, formulaic contexts, and the broader system of folklore imagery. Therefore, a productive analysis of anthroponyms requires a combined semantic, contextual, and linguocultural approach. This is why the study of fairy-tale naming benefits from integrating onomastic theory with literary and folklore analysis rather than treating names as purely lexical phenomena.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that anthroponyms in Russian fairy tales are an important means of representing folk perceptions of a character. They perform not only an identifying function but also a characterizing, evaluative, and culturally meaningful one. The semantics of fairy-tale anthroponyms is connected with emotional state, ethical evaluation, idealized personal qualities, and symbolic narrative role. Especially significant are semantically transparent names, which guide interpretation from the very moment the character appears in the tale. Through such names, folk culture encodes its ideas about the person, about acceptable and unacceptable qualities, and about the moral order of the world represented in folklore. Thus,

anthroponyms should be regarded as an essential component of Russian fairy-tale poetics and as a meaningful object of linguocultural study.

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