Educator Insights: A Journal of Teaching Theory and Practice
Volume 01, Issue 11, November 2025
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6964

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SPELLONYMS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK FAIRY TALES

Odilova Nozima Nizomiddinovna
Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies
Department of Western Languages, English Language Instructor

Abstract
Fairy tales, as highly artistic examples of folk oral creativity, also reflect the worldview, beliefs, values, and culture of a nation. In particular, the magical, mythical, and mystical beings that appear in fairy tales — known as spellonyms — play an important role in determining the dynamics of the plot and in shaping moral and aesthetic views. Studying spellonyms in fairy tales comparatively across two languages provides opportunities to understand the unique features of different nations, to comprehend universal ideas, and to become closely acquainted with a nation's values and moral norms.

Keywords: Values, magical, moral-aesthetic, spellonyms.

Introduction

In English folklore, the spellonym *boggart*, which belongs to the category of creatures dwelling around the household, is one of the most frequently encountered mythological figures. In folklore sources, boggarts are also referred to as *bogey*, *bogeyman*, *bogle*, or *bugbear*, and the term derives from the Welsh word *bwg*. They are goblin-like mythological beings who live in homes as guardian spirits yet often torment household members with various tricks and mischief. In English folk tales, boggarts are depicted as supernatural creatures—cunning, frightening, and sometimes dangerous to human life. It is believed that they are almost impossible to completely eradicate. Boggarts usually appear as a punishing force toward those who show them disrespect or injustice.

There are two main types of boggarts. **Domestic boggarts**, who live near or inside human dwellings, are known for causing harm to household chores—for example, making objects disappear, souring milk, or laming dogs. **Marsh boggarts**, who live in swamps or boggy areas, are often described as child-snatchers. According to legends, since boggarts were believed to have the

Educator Insights: A Journal of Teaching Theory and Practice
Volume 01, Issue 11, November 2025
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6964

potential to rise from the dead, their corpses were sometimes buried with stakes driven through them to prevent them from harming the living.[1]

In Lancashire, England, there are tales of a *boggart society*, whose leader was believed to be *Owd Hob*—a horned, hoofed creature in the form of a satyr (half-man, half-goat). This idea occupies an important place in English oral tradition. Boggarts' appearances vary greatly: in some tales, they are depicted as small, human-like figures, while in others, they take on a larger, horse-like form.

One of the most popular English folk tales featuring a boggart is **"The Farmer and the Devil,"** in which conflict, deceit, and cunning form the core of the plot. The tale conveys folk wisdom, moral lessons, and values related to land ownership. A farmer buys a new piece of land, unaware that it is inhabited by a boggart. When he begins to plough the field, the boggart resists, and they make a deal to work the land together and share the harvest.

According to the agreement, the boggart must choose either the part of the crop that grows above or below the ground as his share. After thinking for a while, the boggart chooses the part *below* the ground:

"The farmer, however, being greedy, began to ponder a way to cheat the boggart out of his share. When they were debating what to plant, he asked the boggart, 'Which half of the crop do you want for your share, the part below the ground or the part above it?' The boggart thought for a while before answering, 'The part below the ground.'" [2]

The cunning farmer plants barley, which yields its crop above the ground. When harvest time comes, the farmer gets the rich grain, while the boggart is left only with the useless roots and straw. Realizing he has been deceived, the angry boggart declares that next time he will take the part above the ground. The following season, the farmer plants potatoes. This time the crop grows underground, and once again the boggart is cheated—he is left only with the tops and leaves. Furious and humiliated, the boggart abandons the field forever.

This tale illustrates the conflict between labor and intellect, as well as the relationship between humans and supernatural beings. The farmer is portrayed as industrious but also sly and clever; through his intelligence, he deceives the boggart twice, embodying the archetypal belief that wisdom and cunning can overcome evil forces. Although boggarts usually appear as threatening or punitive figures, in this tale the boggart becomes the victim—tricked and powerless. This inversion reflects humanity's dominance not only over nature but also over

Educator Insights: A Journal of Teaching Theory and Practice
Volume 01, Issue 11, November 2025
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6964

mythological powers. The boggart here is not a purely terrifying symbol, but a comic and ironic one—demonstrating the humorous tendencies in English folklore.

Another notable English spellonym is *Gwyllion*, a female mountain-dwelling spirit frequently mentioned in Welsh tales and legends, and still popular in modern English fairy tales. Known as the *Welsh mountain fairy*, she inhabits the rocky regions of the Black Mountains. The Welsh word *gwyllion* (or *gwyllon*) literally means "twilight" or "darkness." It also carries semantic shades of "ghosts," "spirits," "evil wanderers in the night" (whether human or supernatural), and even "outlaws or criminals living in the wild." This etymology links the Gwyllion not only to the supernatural but also to socially marginalized or dangerous figures.

The association with *twilight*—the dim period between light and darkness—symbolically reflects the Gwyllion's uncertain and ambiguous nature. In English folklore, Gwyllion fairies are often portrayed as solitary creatures who avoid close contact with humans, dwelling in caves and mountains. While they rarely cause direct harm, people are advised not to provoke or attract their attention, for they can make travelers "fairy-led"—bewitched into losing their way. Only powerful charms or counter-spells can break this enchantment.

One of the Gwyllion's magical abilities is **invisibility**. They are never seen directly by humans; rather, travelers may glimpse their shadows or hear their eerie laughter echoing through the mountains. In some legends, they are described as old women wearing square hats and aprons, wandering desolate mountain paths at night. Folklorist Wirt Sikes described them as "old hags of the Welsh mountains, roaming lonely roads at dusk, misleading travelers with shrill laughter and ghostly cries."

Similar figures exist in Uzbek folklore, such as *wandering spirits*, *jinns of darkness*, or *poor yet dangerous nomads*. For instance, in tales like *"The Night Giant"* and *"The Mysterious Girl,"* beings that appear in darkness resemble the Gwyllion in their mysterious and disorienting qualities. In Uzbek stories such as *"The Magic Carpet"* or *"Beyond the Seventh Mountain,"* heroes are often led astray by supernatural forces—paralleling the Gwyllion's power to confuse travelers.[3] Furthermore, the Gwyllion's affinity with mountain goats—whom they protect and care for—emphasizes their harmony with nature. This aspect recalls mythological figures such as *Khizr* in Uzbek folklore, who also

Educator Insights: A Journal of Teaching Theory and Practice
Volume 01, Issue 11, November 2025
brightmindpublishing.com
ISSN (E): 3061-6964

symbolizes unity with natural forces. The Gwyllion's image as an **old woman** also parallels the recurring *old crone* figure in Uzbek tales like *"Zumrad and Qimmat"* or *"The Rich Man and the Poor Man."* [4] In these stories, the old woman often possesses magical powers and serves as a tester or guide—rewarding honesty and punishing deceit. Unlike the grotesque or fearsome Gwyllion, however, the Uzbek old woman figure is typically benevolent, exuding wisdom and light rather than terror.

The comparison between English and Uzbek spellonyms reveals that in both cultures, these supernatural beings embody deep symbolic meanings through their magical, mystical, and moral roles.

English spellonyms largely stem from Celtic and Anglo-Saxon mythological roots—featuring creatures like elves, boggarts, selkies, and banshees—whereas Uzbek spellonyms are shaped by Islamic, Turkic, and local folk traditions, represented by figures such as *devs*, *jinns*, *old women*, and *Khizr*. Moreover, English spellonyms are often associated with specific locations or individuals, while Uzbek spellonyms tend to serve moral and didactic purposes, guiding or testing humans.

Thus, in both traditions, spellonyms reflect the nations' worldviews, religious beliefs, and historical-cultural contexts, each forming a distinct yet comparable mythopoetic system.

References:

1. Ощепкова В. В., Соловьева Н. В. Спеллонимы в системе мифонимов британской народной сказки // Вестник Московского государственного областного университета. Серия «Лингвистика». 2018. № 2. С. 73-87.
2. Kingshill & Westwood. The Fabled Coast: Legends and Traditions from around the shores of Britain and Ireland, London. Random House. 2015. P. 323
3.https://www.northlinkferries.co.uk/orkney-blog/an-orkney-folk-tale-the-selkie-wife/
4. https://ziyouz.com/portal-haqida/xarita/uzbek-xalq-ogzaki-ijodi/uzbek-xalq-ertaklari/ilon-pari