



THE LINGUOPRAGMATIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE "STEPPARENT" CONCEPT IN FOLKLORE FAIRY TALES

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Abstract:

This article examines the linguopragmatic foundations of the "step-parent" concept in folklore fairy tales. The study focuses on how this concept is semantically, pragmatically, and culturally represented in oral tradition. Using examples from Uzbek folk tales, we explore the pragmatic functions of speech acts, implicatures, and presuppositions related to step-parents and step-children. The research highlights that while the "step-parent" concept is often portrayed negatively, there are cases where it takes on a more neutral or even positive connotation. The findings reveal that linguistic and cultural factors shape the perception of step-parental relationships in fairy tales, reinforcing social values and moral lessons.

Keywords: Linguopragmatic, step, step-parents, concept, fairy tales, aspect, cultural.

Introduction

Folklore fairy tales serve as a mirror of cultural and social norms, preserving collective wisdom and moral values. One of the recurring themes in fairy tales across different cultures is the concept of the "step-parent" or "step-child." This concept carries significant linguistic and pragmatic implications, influencing the way family relationships are depicted and understood. The aim of this study is to analyze the linguopragmatic features of the "step-parent" concept in folklore fairy tales, particularly in Uzbek oral tradition, and to investigate how linguistic expressions and pragmatic strategies shape its meaning and interpretation.

Methodology

This research follows the COMPARE structure and employs a qualitative approach, analyzing Uzbek folklore fairy tales through linguistic and pragmatic lenses. The study focuses on:

- Semantic features of the "step-parent" concept
- Pragmatic aspects such as speech acts, implicatures, and presuppositions
- Cultural and linguistic influences on the perception of step-parents in folk narratives

Data is drawn from traditional Uzbek fairy tales such as Zumrad and Qimmat, Malikai Husnobod, and other oral stories where the step-parent or step-child motif is central.

Results

1. Semantic Features of the "Step-Parent" Concept

The "step-parent" concept in folklore is often associated with negative attributes such as cruelty, jealousy, and injustice. However, some variations exist where step-parents display neutral or even positive characteristics. Key semantic findings include:

The dominant portrayal of the stepmother as an antagonist (e.g., "evil stepmother" trope).

The occasional presence of kind or just step-parents in rare cases.

The linguistic markers used to emphasize the distinction between biological and step-relations, such as "o'gay" (step), "yovuz" (evil), and "mehribon" (kind).

2. Pragmatic Aspects

2.1. Speech Acts

The "step-parent" concept manifests through various speech acts:

Directive speech acts: Stepparents often issue strict commands or threats to stepchildren.

Expressive speech acts: Characters express emotions such as envy or hatred through complaints, insults, or curses.

Commissive speech acts: In some cases, step-parents make promises (either false or true) to manipulate others.

2.2. Implicatures and Presuppositions

The negative connotation of "step-parent" is often implied rather than explicitly stated.

Listeners or readers presuppose that step-parents are likely to mistreat their stepchildren due to societal stereotypes reflected in fairy tales.

In some instances, step-parental figures are given the chance for redemption, hinting at the possibility of a more complex interpretation of family roles.

3. Cultural and Linguistic Influences

Traditional family values: Uzbek folk tales reinforce the idea of the biological family as the ideal family unit, which may explain the frequent negative depiction of step-parents.

Comparison with other cultures: Similar negative portrayals of step-parents are found in Western fairy tales (e.g., Cinderella and Snow White). However, in some Eastern traditions, step-parents may be seen in a more neutral light.

Metaphorical and stylistic elements: Step-parents are sometimes metaphorically compared to cruel figures like witches or beasts, strengthening their negative perception.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the “step-parent” concept in folklore is deeply rooted in cultural and moral frameworks. While the negative portrayal is dominant, its occasional neutral or positive representation indicates a more nuanced understanding of familial relationships. From a linguistic perspective, the frequent use of directive and expressive speech acts highlights the power dynamics between step-parents and step-children.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the “step-parent” concept in folklore fairy tales is shaped by linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural factors. The portrayal of step-parents as antagonists serves as a moral lesson, reinforcing traditional family values. However, variations in the representation of step-parents suggest that this concept is not entirely rigid and may evolve over time. Future research could explore how modern adaptations of folk tales alter the perception of step-parents in different cultural contexts.



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