

Linguocultural Construction of Archetypal Characters in English Fairy Tale Discourse: A Discourse-Analytic and Cognitive-Linguistic Perspective

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Abstract

While character archetypes in fairy-tale discourse have been extensively studied from folkloristic and psychological perspectives, limited attention has been paid to their linguocultural realization, the specific linguistic means through which these archetypal images are linguistically constructed in English fairy-tale discourse. This article addresses this gap by examining the linguocultural representation of recurrent character archetypes, namely the Mother/Stepmother, the Sage/Wise Old Man, and the Trickster, in English fairy-tale discourse through the analysis of folk tales. It analyzes the linguistic, behavioral, and communicative mechanisms that construct these characters. The empirical base is drawn from a 100-text corpus (189,467 tokens) of authoritative British folklore collections (Jacobs, Briggs), enabling the identification of recurrent lexical patterns associated with archetypal representation. Using a multidisciplinary methodological approach, the study applies discourse analysis, content analysis, and cognitive-linguistic methodologies to investigate the intricate relationship between narrative structures and cultural meanings. Integrating discourse analysis with cognitive linguistics, the research reveals that archetypes operate as cognitive-pragmatic constructs. They contribute to social integration and the transmission of cultural values by being systemically encoded through specific lexical, syntactic, and stylistic elements. Each character uses linguistic tools inherent to its status to achieve pragmatic purposes. Additionally, the research emphasizes the dual role of these characters as mediators between storytelling and pragmatics, since they participate in narrative by developing plot and creating characters, but also mediate social values, morals, and culture through pragmatics. Through their linguistic embodiment, archetypes function as mediators in the process of socialization, providing cultural models for listeners and readers. Ultimately, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how folklore discourse functions as a dynamic vehicle for preserving and transmitting cultural identity across generations.

Keywords: archetypal characters, pragmatic constructs, English folk tales, linguocultural studies, discourse analysis

1. Introduction

Throughout history, fairy tales have proven to be an important means of transmitting culture by imparting values, ethics, and psychological archetypes to individuals, thereby forming a system of how human society operates in certain times and places. Having emerged from the oral traditions of the ancient ages, fairy tales have long served not merely as entertainment but as vehicles for social and political commentary, encoding collective anxieties, moral judgements, and critiques of injustice within seemingly simple narrative forms. (Zipes, 2023). The main factor contributing to the effectiveness of using fairy tales as a means of conveying information lies in the use of archetypal characters that represent some basic aspects of collective consciousness (Jung, 2020; von Franz, 1996). In this regard, archetypes function as mental constructs used in the dissemination of the cultural and ethical legacy from one generation to another (Kravchenko & Shanaieva-Tsymbal, 2023; Vučković & Premović, 2024).

Whereas previous studies concentrated mostly on the mythological and literary aspects of archetypes, the contemporary approach to this topic pays particular attention to the role that discourse and language play in the creation and transmission of meanings encoded by archetypes (Fairclough, 1992; Kravchenko & Shanaieva-Tsymbal, 2023). Language, being the chief means of intercultural communication, encodes archetypes through the use of lexis, syntactic constructions, and stylistic means, thus linking general schematic knowledge and particular cultural representations (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Lau, 2024). The study of archetypes in the context of their linguistic representation in fairy tale discourse is, therefore, an important step towards comprehending cultural reproduction and the process of socialization.

However, while the discursive dimension of archetypes has been acknowledged, existing studies rarely offer a systematic linguistic account; they either remain confined to psychological or mythological interpretation, or address archetypal encoding in general terms without close

analysis of specific lexical, syntactic, and behavioural patterns within a defined corpus. The purpose of the present study is to perform the linguocultural analysis of the three archetypal characters in English fairy tales—the Trickster, Stepmother, and Wise Old Man. By exploring the linguistic means, behavioural tendencies, and communicative functions typical of the archetypes mentioned, this study tries to reveal the way language is used in order to construct cultural archetypes in the course of narration. Using the approach of discourse analysis, this study examines the role played by the archetypes as both elements of the plot and means of moral education (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 2008). The Trickster, Stepmother, and Wise Old Man were selected as they represent structurally and functionally distinct archetypal roles within the fairy-tale narrative: the Stepmother functions as initiator of narrative conflict, the Wise Old Man as a stabilizing agent of moral guidance, and the Trickster as a catalyst for transformation through cunning and reversal of expected behaviour. Moreover, all three archetypes are met recurrently across selected fairy tales, providing sufficient textual evidence for systematic discourse analysis while representing complementary dimensions of the archetypal system. This functional diversity allows for a systematic comparison of how contrasting narrative roles are linguistically encoded within a single discourse tradition.

The practical significance of the research consists of possible contributions to the development of some new trends in scientific knowledge, like cognitive linguistics and folklore studies, because of the necessity to conduct research on archetypes using an interdisciplinary approach and considering symbolic and discursive characteristics of the phenomenon (Jung, 2020; Lau, 2024). The following research questions will be discussed: How does the language act as a carrier of archetypes? Which values and norms of culture are transmitted by means of linguistic structures? And finally, what is the function of linguistic structure in the pragmatic aspect of fairy tales?

Combining the theoretical background of Jungian psychology, discourse analysis, and linguocultural theory, the current article attempts to make the topic of the dynamic relation between archetypal patterns and their language representation clearer in the framework of fairy tales. One could state that the general goal of the article is to prove how language plays the role of the carrier of cultural values, thus functioning as a creator and protector of archetypes for centuries (von Franz, 1996; Jung, 2020)

2. Literature Review

Within Jung's theoretical framework, archetypes are viewed as structural models that shape the formation of images within the collective unconscious, representing a condensed focus of psychic energy. Jung borrowed the concept of the collective unconscious from adherents of the French sociological school ("representations collectives" of Lévy-Bruhl) (Jung, 2020). Archetypes, according to Jung, organize the transmission of collective experience at the genetic level, create a connection between general historical emotional experience and individual consciousness, and therefore resemble unconscious settings and scenarios inscribed in human genes that determine not only our lives but also their entire range of possible manifestations. A prototype, or archetype, is a figure—whether of a demon, a person, or an event—repeated throughout history wherever creative imagination operates freely. Jung (2020) noted that archetypes emerge spontaneously at the individual level as manifestations of unconscious processes, the meaning of which is not obvious but must be interpreted.

The theoretical foundations of archetypal studies can be found in the earlier philosophical thought, where several ideas were developed. For example, G.W. Leibniz offered the notion of innate ideas, or the a priori forms of reason originated by I. Kant; certain aspects of this theory, considered from different points of view, were reflected in the works of A. Schopenhauer and F. Nietzsche. Numerous studies have explored archetypes in poetic and prose texts (e.g., Jung, 2020; Meletinsky, 1994; von Franz, 1996), as well as in mythology, religious studies, art, cultural studies, and management theory, gender studies, and other fields. Recent research has integrated archetypal analyses into modern educational and social contexts (Tursunovich et al., 2024; Vučković & Premović, 2024). However, in the field of studying archetypal patterns today, there is no unified approach to the methodology for studying the archetypal aspect in a cultural context.

Within his theory, Jung identified several key archetypes, among which the *Mother*, *Child*, *Shadow*, *Anima/Animus*, *Wise Old Man* (or *Wise Old Woman*), and *Trickster* occupy a special place. Each of these reflects certain aspects of the personality's psychic structure and its interaction with the unconscious. While the Mother archetype is linked to eternal and deep meaning, the Trickster, for example, functions to destroy established structures while simultaneously facilitating their transformation and renewal. The Anima and Animus archetypes embody the unconscious qualities of the opposite sex, while the image of the Wise Old Man embodies the idea of spiritual maturity and symbolizes knowledge and experience.

Analysis of fairy tales is one approach to working with archetypal ideas and characters of the collective unconscious. Psychological interpretation can be based on the fact that all fairy-tale characters, actions, animals, places, and symbols represent inner spiritual impulses, experiences, and aspirations. Representatives of analytical mythology apply the principles of myth analysis to fairy tales, as a result of which the images and episodes of fairy tales are symbols or allegories of various stages in the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious. For example, the fight against the dragon can be interpreted as a fight against the demonic "shadow"; witches in fairy tale can be interpreted as a transformed Great Mother; the tasks that a stepmother gives to her stepdaughter can be considered as a kind of "initiation" rite that will lead to success, etc. (Jung, 2020).

The archetype has a functional similarity to symbols, myths, images, or universals of culture, and general patterns or motives. However, these always act only as a manifestation of the archetype, its reflection in culture, life, and activity. "Implicitly, the intertextual cultural code relies on cultural archetypes" (Kravchenko & Shanaieva-Tsymbal, 2023). The direct expressions of archetypes encountered in dreams and visions tend to be highly individualistic, often appearing perplexing or simplistic compared with myths. A certain number of studies have focused on literary archetypes. Among the most influential contributions is Meletinsky's "On literary archetypes" (1994), which explores the origins of archetypes and archetypal patterns in Russian literature. According to Meletinsky: "Both Jung and the other theorists

mentioned above, when speaking about archetypes, do not primarily mean plots, but a set of key figures or symbolic objects that give rise to certain motives” (1994, p. 12). This position stands in productive tension with Propp’s (2015 [1928]) structural approach, discussed below, which identifies archetypal roles precisely through their narrative function. This suggests that while archetype and plot-based function are conceptually distinct, they remain deeply entangled in narrative practice

The study of archetypal patterns in fairy tales has a long tradition within psychology, literary studies, and cultural analysis. M.-L. von Franz emphasizes that fairy tale discourse of various nations possesses a typological unity across the world. Although the characters are similar and the compositional structure remains stable, the external form of the plot and specific scenarios described are determined by the ethnographic and cultural characteristics of the nation. All fairy tale characters are archetypal images that exist in the deepest layers of the psyche. Regardless of whether we are conscious of it or not, they affect us because they are a psychological reality. Fairy tales can be analyzed or understood by applying any of the four fundamental functions of consciousness (von Franz, 1996). Archetypes form the fundamental framework of the narrative plot, acting as prototypes of images. In literary works, in particular in fairy tales, they appear in several ways: the archetypal character (Trickster, Wise Old Man, Mother, etc.), an archetypal motif/pattern, and an archetypal plot. Like a dream, a fairy tale originates from the subconscious imagination. However, unlike a dream, it does not stem from the imagination of a single individual but arises from the collective creativity of numerous individuals, possibly even an entire society or culture (Birkhäuser-Oeri, 1988).

Studying fairy tales is particularly important because they represent the universal basis of human experience and serve as a significant source of archetypal reality. At the same time, a fairy tale is a unique carrier of the cultural and social experience of a certain group of people. From the perspective of sociologists, culture consists of values, beliefs, language, communication practices, and systems that characterize people and make up a group of them as one community (Zhetpisbay et al., 2025). In such a way, fairy tales include all these elements of culture. Therefore, they have both archetypes and specific meanings determined by cultural features. With the help of fairy tales, one can consider archetypes on an ethnic level. Fairy tales are connected to mythological motifs and possess archaic features of language that the culture has not modernized. The language of the narration is also very important, as the archetypal patterns are presented in language formulas.

Propp (2015 [1928]) fundamentally advanced the structural analysis of fairy tales by identifying recurrent narrative functions and roles within folklore. In contemporary research, these structural representations are increasingly analyzed as being embedded within the broader system of gender roles and traditions. For example, “Many heroes in fairy tales, especially folk tales, embody the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity – they fight monsters and dragons, surmount vast expanses, and subjugate everything in their way. Their princesses have traits of emphasized femininity – they are beautiful, quiet, vulnerable, require protection, etc.” (Vučković & Premović, 2024, p. 99). This gendered representation is considered by large-scale corpus studies: analyzing children’s fairy tales, Toro Isaza et al. (2023) found systematic gender bias in the narrative event chains associated with male and female characters, lending further empirical support to the culturally embedded gender roles observed in traditional fairy-tale discourse. This apparent tension between von Franz’s (1996) claims of universal cross-cultural unity and the culturally specific gender-role encoding identified by Vučković and Premović (2024) illustrates precisely the interplay between archetypal universality and culturally specific linguistic realization that the present study seeks to investigate.

Fairy tales have become an object of interdisciplinary analysis in contemporary research. Methodologies for analyzing fairy tales include discourse analysis, linguocultural analysis, and cognitive linguistics. Whereas Jung’s model locates the origin and transmission of archetypes within the individual and collective unconscious, discourse-analytic scholarship relocates meaning-making at the level of social and textual structures. Van Dijk (2008) and Fairclough (1992) reveal the encoding of social and cultural meanings through discursive structures, a process that is also observable in the field of narratives, where fairy tales occupy a prominent place. Similar linguocultural approaches have been applied cross-linguistically: Fayzulloyev and Komilova (2025) examine linguoculturemes, verbal representations of cultural ideas, in English and Uzbek fairy tales, demonstrating that their translation requires not only linguistic competence but also deep cultural knowledge, given the disparity between source and target cultural worldviews. Contemporary scientific literature reveals that fairy tales continue to be studied. For instance, according to J. Zipes (2023), fairy tales are not only entertaining stories but also a useful means of social manipulation, a means of shaping utopian ideas to combat social injustice. Some studies on fairy-tale discourse focus on the communicative strategies and tactics of characters, highlighting how linguistic choices drive narrative progression and affect reader perception (Zhetessova et al., 2025) Lau (2024), in turn, examines how race and imperial ideology are embedded within canonical European fairy-tale collections, revealing how these narratives have historically shaped and perpetuated racialized worldviews.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

In order to conduct this study, qualitative research of archetypes in the discourse of English fairy tales was undertaken. This type of research includes elements of discourse, linguocultural, and cognitive-semantic analyses that could provide a comprehensive approach for the study of archetypes as cognitive, linguistic, and cultural phenomena.

The current research may be considered exploratory and descriptive since its purpose is to identify recurring regularities in archetypal representation. Moreover, it is based on qualitative content analysis that attempts to reveal stable behavior and linguistic patterns in the discourse of archetypes. Such an approach will allow archetypes to be investigated as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, characterized by

linguistic and communicative characteristics of the discourse.

The difference between this research and other existing studies in this field is the interdisciplinary character of this investigation, since other studies focus only on the psychological or mythological aspect. The current study is centered around the linguocultural and communicative approach to archetypes in the discourse of English fairy tales. It emphasizes their realization through linguistic means and character interaction strategies. The scientific novelty lies in identifying stable behavioural and speech patterns associated with archetypes, systematizing these patterns, and elucidating their functioning within discourse. The study's multi-level methodology, combining cognitive, discursive, and linguocultural analyses, broadens the scope for understanding archetypes in both traditional and contemporary discourse contexts.

3.2 Methods

The methodological foundation of the study is based on the specific nature of its object, English fairy tale discourse, and the stated goals and objectives related to identifying archetypal models and the patterns of their linguocultural representation. The study was conducted within the framework of the anthropocentric paradigm of modern linguistics, utilizing principles from linguocultural studies, cognitive linguistics, and discourse analysis. The study draws on a corpus of 100 English fairy tales (189,467 tokens) compiled from authoritative folklore collections: *British Folk-Tales and Legends* by K. Briggs (2003), *English Fairy Tales* by J. Jacobs (2005b), *More English Fairy Tales* by J. Jacobs (2004), *Celtic Fairy Tales* by J. Jacobs (2005a), and *More Celtic Fairy Tales* by J. Jacobs (1895), representing British oral traditions. Texts were selected using the method of continuous sampling, encompassing the full range of tale types present in these collections. The theoretical basis is the concept of archetypes, originating from the work of Carl Gustav Jung, which views archetypes as universal cognitive structures reflected in language and discursive practices.

The inclusion of these specific compilations is grounded in three key selection criteria:

- 1) Folkloric Authenticity and Documentary Precision: Both Jacobs and Briggs are widely recognized for preserving oral storytelling traditions with minimal literary adaptation, ensuring that the textual material reflects genuine dialectal and discourse patterns.
- 2) Genre and Regional Representation: The corpus includes both wonder/magic and everyday/realistic tales, reflecting the genre diversity of the tradition. The majority of the material was drawn from Jacobs's collections (English and Celtic), which together constitute the bulk of the corpus, supplemented by a smaller number of tales from Briggs (2003) that extend the corpus's regional and stylistic range.
- 3) Sufficient Empirical Scale: The scope of 100 texts (189,467 tokens) provides an empirical foundation adequate to observe recurring lexical items, syntactic structures, and communicative strategies.

The study methodology combines general scientific and specialized methods. General scientific methods include analytical and comparative approaches that ensure systematic examination of the material and structural elements, as well as identifying similarities and differences in the implementation of archetypal models and determining their universal and culturally specific characteristics.

Special research methods are determined by the tasks of identifying, classifying, and interpreting archetypes in fairy-tale discourse. The method of continuous sampling ensures the formation of a representative research corpus based on the analysis of the complete array of texts. Content analysis is applied to identify the frequency of archetypal patterns, recurring motifs, and stable narrative structures. Component and contextual analyses are used to identify the semantic structure of lexical units and to determine the functional load of linguistic means in specific fragments of discourse. At the interpretive level, cognitive and linguocultural analyses are employed, aimed at reconstructing archetypes as mental models and as carriers of a cultural code, and identifying nationally specific features of the representation of archetypes. Discourse and pragmatic analyses are applied to examine communicative strategies, interaction, and types of speech behavior associated with certain archetypes. Finally, contextual-situational analysis is used to consider the conditions under which linguistic units function and their interpretation within specific communicative situations.

3.3 Procedure

The study was conducted in several stages. At the first stage, a corpus of folk tales was compiled using a continuous sampling method from reputable folklore collections. At the second stage, the texts were manually analyzed to identify recurring characters, plot elements, and possible archetypal images based on a predefined set of behavioral and lexical markers associated with each archetype; ambiguous or homonymic occurrences (for example, surface-level lexical matches unrelated to the archetype in question) were excluded through close contextual reading. At the third stage, the important task was to identify the main archetypes based on their behavior and function, for instance, Trickster, Mother/Stepmother, and Wise Old Man; character-to archetype assignment followed a single-assignment principle, whereby each character was coded as the primary bearer of one archetype only, determined by its dominant narrative function, with a kinship-based criterion applied to disambiguate related family roles (such as, distinguishing Mother from Stepmother). At the next stage, the linguistic peculiarities, including lexical, syntactic, and stylistic ones, used to indicate the archetypes were considered. The final stage involved the identification of the communication strategies and pragmatic roles of the character within the plot. To ensure the reliability of classification decisions, each case was re-checked against the established coding criteria on a second reading.

3.4 Research Material

The corpus is considered representative of English fairy-tale discourse on the grounds that Jacobs's and Briggs's collections are widely recognized in folklore studies as canonical, scholarly compilations of British oral traditions, valued for their documentary accuracy and

minimal literary editing.

The empirical basis of the study consists of fairy tales selected from the following authoritative collections: Katharine Briggs *British Folk-Tales and Legends* (2003), Joseph Jacobs' *Celtic Fairy Tales* (2005a), *English Fairy Tales* (2005b), *More Celtic Fairy Tales* (1895) and *More English Fairy Tales* (2004). The selection of these sources is determined by their representativeness, folkloric authenticity, and significance for the study of fairy tale discourse. These texts reflect stable models of the folk worldview and provide valuable material for linguistic, cognitive, and linguocultural analysis.

Joseph Jacobs's works are among the most authoritative collections of English folklore. His works are characterized by authenticity and minimal literary editing, ensuring a high degree of reliability in the texts, which is critical for linguistic analysis. The collection of Katharine Briggs likewise represents a documentary record of oral tradition, valued in folklore studies for its careful preservation of regional narrative variants and its contribution to the systematic classification of British folktale types, thus complementing Jacobs' collections within the corpus.

Due to the scope limitations of the article, only selected examples are presented to illustrate the identified archetypal structures and communicative patterns.

4. Results

The first archetype to discuss is the Trickster. Paul Radin was the first to discuss this archetype as a cultural phenomenon in his work "The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology," writing, "Disorder belongs to the totality of life, and the spirit of this disorder is the trickster" (Radin, 1988).

The Trickster can be viewed as a universal archetypal figure found in the folklore traditions of many cultures, such as Greek Hermes and Prometheus, Native American Raven and Coyote, and Loki in Norse mythology. Ivan the Fool in Russian folklore and Jack in English folk tales may be interpreted as Trickster-like figures because of their distinctive behavioural traits. Jung defines the trickster as "a primitive 'cosmic' being of divine-animal nature, on the one hand superior to man because of his superhuman qualities, and on the other hand inferior to him because of his unreason and unconsciousness" (Radin, 1988).

In modern literature, the Trickster has been preserved as an archetypal character, not necessarily divine or supernatural, appearing as a quick-witted or cunning person (anthropomorphic tricksters) or as a creature that confronts the dangers and problems of the surrounding world with various tricks (zoomorphic tricksters).

Based on the analysis of the corpus, we present the main features and behavior patterns of the Trickster in Table 1, along with examples from English folk tales.

Table 1. The main features and behavior patterns of a Trickster archetype

No.	Communicative-Pragmatic strategy\Narrative Pattern	Illustrative Textual Context
1	Simulation of Helplessness and Elicitation of Compassion	1) <i>Oh! please mum, do give me something to eat, mum .I've had nothing to eat since yesterday morning, really and truly, mum,</i> ," says Jack. "I may as well be broiled, as die of hunger." ("Jack and the Beanstalk" (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 42) 2) <i>"That's strange, mum,"</i> says Jack, <i>"I dare say I could tell you something about that but I'm so hungry I can't speak till I've had something to eat."</i> ("Jack and the Beanstalk" (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 43)
2	Provocation and Manipulative Control of the Opponent's Actions	1) <i>"Then, telling the giant he would show him a trick, taking a knife, Jack ripped open the bag, and out came all the hasty pudding. Whereupon, saying, "Odds splutters hur nails, hur can do that trick hursel," the monster took the knife, and ripping open his belly, fell down dead</i> ("Jack the Giant-Killer" (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 66) 2) After they were gone says Jack to the wicked housekeeper, <i>"Do these fellows ever make you a present ?"</i> <i>"Ah, catch them at it ! indeed, and they don't, purshuin to 'em."</i> <i>"Well, come along with me, and I'll make you a rich woman."</i> ("Jack the Cunning Thief" (Jacobs, 1895, p. 16)
3	Identity Disguise and Deceptive Acquisition of Valuable Objects	1) <i>"-Who is there?"</i> asked the wife. <i>- 'Jack Hannaford.'</i> <i>- 'Where do you come from?' - 'Paradise.'</i> <i>- 'Lord a' mercy! and maybe you've seen my old man there,' alluding to her former husband. - 'Yes, I have.'</i> ("Jack Hannaford" (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 30) 2) <i>"My name,"</i> says he (Jack), <i>"is Master Thief, and my business just now is to find apprentices and workmen. If I find you any good, maybe I'll give you a few lessons."</i> ("Jack the Cunning Thief" (Jacobs, 1895, p. 12)
4	Strategic Foolery and Goal-Oriented Cunning	1) <i>He loved to be setting snares for rabbits, and tracing hares in the snow, and inventing all sorts of funny tricks to annoy people at first and then set them laughing.</i> ("Jack the Cunning Thief" (Jacobs, 1895, p. 11) 3) <i>"Shade your eyes with your hand, and you'll soon see a man flying away from you."</i> Sure enough he did so, for Jack leaped on the horse, and rode away with it. The farmer walked home without his horse ("Jack Hannaford" (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 31)
5	Magical Mediation and Supernatural Assistance	1) <i>"And he said to himself: 'Well, well, I never was so near my death as I am now'; and then he felt in his pocket, and drew the little box out. And when he opened it, out there</i>

		hopped three little red men, and asked Jack: ‘What is your will with us?’ (“Jack and his Golden Snuff-box” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 54) 2) “This is what I’ll do,” says the little black thing, “ <i>I’ll come to your window every morning and take the flax and bring it spun at night.</i> ” (“Tom Tit Tot” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 11)
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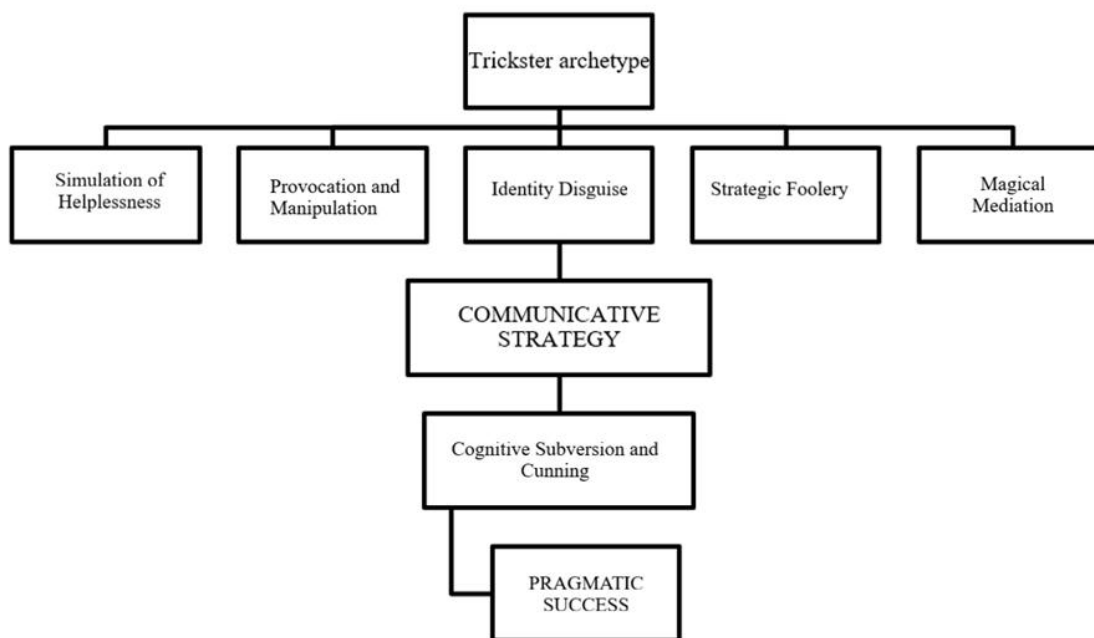


Figure 1. Trickster archetype's communicative strategy

Based on the analysis, the Trickster Archetype can be characterized by five recurrent behavioural and communicative patterns, as illustrated in Figure 1, including simulation of helplessness and elicitation of compassion, provocation and manipulative control of the opponent's actions, identity disguise and deceptive acquisition of valuable objects, strategic foolery and goal-oriented cunning and magical mediation and supernatural assistance. Despite their surface variety, these strategies converge on a shared underlying mechanism – cognitive subversion through cunning, where the Trickster destabilizes the interlocutor's expectations or moral judgement in order to reach pragmatic success (practical advantage).

The next archetype to be discussed is the Mother archetype, represented by images of the mother and stepmother.

Female archetypal characters occupy a prominent place in folklore. In literary studies, the understanding of female archetypes is not always clear or specific; there are several classifications for these archetypes. One of the most famous and ancient classifications is the triad: Young Woman-Woman (Mother)-Old Woman, based on the stages of a woman's life. As noted by Sibylle Birkhäuser-Oeri: “Fairy tales can be called portraits of the human soul; they capture the idea of the Earth Mother in the totality of her positive and negative images, in typical, repeating motifs.” (Birkhäuser-Oeri, 1988).

The Mother, along with other archetypes, has considerable diversity in its manifestations, including mother, grandmother, stepmother, and mother-in-law. It also encompasses any woman with whom the hero has a relationship (e.g., nanny, governess, distant ancestor), and women figuratively called mothers, such as goddesses in mythology. The main female archetypes in English fairy tales include: mother (e.g., a good mother, a poor widow, or an evil stepmother), daughter (e.g., a poor daughter of the main character, or the daughter of a king or duke who is given in marriage), witches, fairies, sorceresses, and the embodiment of mythological, mystical ideas of the people.

A female archetype of the mother in its dark, evil personification – the stepmother – will be represented in this article. Archetypal plots and characteristic behavioural features of this archetype are presented in Table 2, along with examples from fairy tales.

Table 2. The main features and behavior patterns of a Stepmother archetype

No.	Communicative-Pragmatic strategy\Narrative Pattern	Illustrative Textual Context
1	Destructive Task Assignment and Initiatory Trials	1) “Child,” said the stepmother one day, “ <i>go to the grocer’s shop and buy me a pound of candles.</i> ” (“The Rose-Tree” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 16) 2) At last, one day, the stepmother thought to get rid of her altogether; so she handed her a sieve and said to her: “ <i>Go, fill it at the Well of the World’s End and bring it home to me full, or woe betide you.</i> ” (“The Well of the World’s End” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 134) 3) So next morning early, the queen (stepmother) said to Anne, ‘ <i>Go, my dear, to the henwife in the glen, and ask her for some eggs.</i> ’ (“Kate Crackernuts” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 124)
2	Jealousy-Driven Emotional Aggression and Elimination of the Rival	1) And her stepmother <i>hated</i> her because she was more beautiful than herself, and she was very cruel to her (“The Well of the World’s End” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 134); 2) Her brother loved her dearly, but her wicked stepmother <i>hated</i> her (“The Rose-Tree” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 16); 3) The queen was <i>jealous</i> of the king’s daughter being bonnier than her own, and cast about to spoil her beauty (“Kate Crackernuts” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 124)
3	Association with Supernatural Power and Magical Harm	1) That same night the queen, <i>who was a noted witch</i> , stole down to a lonely dungeon wherein she did her magic and with spells three times three, and with passes nine times nine she cast Princess Margaret under her spell (“The Laidly Worm of Spindleston Heugh” (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 115); 2) Bad was our stepmother with us, <i>She played her magic on us,</i> <i>Sending us north on the sea</i> <i>In the shapes of magical swans</i> (“Fate of the Children of Lir” (Jacobs, 1895, p. 7).

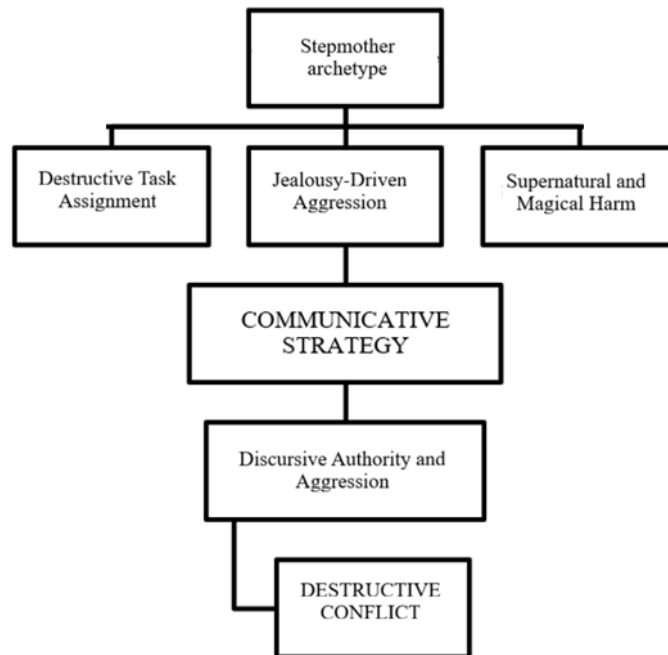


Figure 2. Stepmother archetype's communicative strategy

Figure 2 presents the characterization of the Stepmother archetype by three core behavioural patterns, destructive task assignment and initiatory trials, jealousy-driven emotional aggression towards the rival, and association with supernatural power and magical harm. Despite their distinct narrative realizations, these patterns, these models are unified by underlying mechanism of discursive power and aggression. The stepmother asserts her dominance over the heroine through directive speech acts, negatively evaluative vocabulary, and magical influence, which makes destructive conflict the key narrative function of this archetype.

Summing up the dynamic between stepmother and stepdaughter, the typical narrative pattern involving them can be presented as follows:

1. The initial state of harmony, where a girl lives with loving parents (father and mother), symbolizing psychological stability.
2. The disruption of this harmony due to the mother's death (can symbolize the end of an important period) and the appearance of the stepmother as an antagonist.
3. The period of tasks, hardships, barriers, and severities imposed by the stepmother (can symbolize the way to success and happiness through difficulties, personal growth).
4. The resolution of the conflict, the transformation of the heroine, a new happy life, new status (often a wedding).

Another archetype we introduce is the Wise Old Man.

According to Jung, this archetype is the psychic personification of spirit or Logos in all its many forms and manifestations, especially as embodied knowledge or wisdom. In addition, the Wise Old Man symbolizes calmness, reclusiveness, strength coming from within, and magical power that guides a person and supports him in his internal struggle. Sometimes, a Wise Old Woman can be encountered; in some fairy tales, such a character appears, but this is much less common. Most often, this archetype is embodied in the character of a man. As Meletinsky stated, "...and the 'Wise Old Man' ('Old Woman') is the highest spiritual synthesis, harmonizing the conscious and unconscious spheres of the soul in old age" (1994, p. 4).

When speaking about myths and folklore literature, archetypes can be represented through a mentor, teacher, magician, priest, or elder who acts as knowledge and wisdom embodied. Their function is not only to share knowledge with other people but also to help develop the hero's internal world by asking proper questions and creating obstacles, thus giving the hero presents that will enable him or her to tap into his or her hidden powers and break down barriers. In this way, an archetype transforms an individual into a superhuman by resolving different challenges and fostering personal growth.

In fairy tales, the Old Man often asks questions: Who? Why? Where? - to provoke self-reflection and summon up moral strength, sometimes he provides the necessary magical talisman, an unexpected and incredible means for achieving success, which (both good and bad traits) is one of the characteristics of a complete personality, or he gives good advice. Equally important, the wise old man appears in those moments when the hero needs to make a decision, achieve a goal, or face difficult periods in life. The Wise Old Man can assist by means of magic, sound counsel, and hope.

Besides being wise and perceptive, it should be pointed out that the Old Man is notable for his moral qualities, which have been discussed earlier. Moreover, he evaluates the moral qualities of others and rewards or punishes this accordingly. The Wise Old Man can appear not only in the guise of an encouraging and caring tutor but also in the image of a stern and demanding figure.

In Table 3, we present examples from fairy tales in which the character of a wise old man appears with confirmation of his behaviour and features.

Table 3. The main features and behavior patterns of a Wise Old Man archetype

No.	Communicative-Pragmatic strategy/Narrative Pattern	Illustrative Textual Context
1	Guidance, Assistance and Heroic Support	1) ... <i>old man sitting on a stone</i> With that the lady pulled out her provisions, and bade him eat and welcome. He did so, and gave her many thanks, and said: " <i>There is a thick thorny hedge before you, which you cannot get through, but take this wand in your hand, strike it three times, and say...</i> " ("The Three Heads of the Well" (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 138) 2) . Now there was soon to be a harvest of rye and oats, so the Wise Man said to her, " <i>When you are getting dinner for the reapers, clear out the shell of a hen's egg and boil some potage in it, and then take it to the door as if you meant it as a dinner for the reapers.</i> " ("Brewery of Eggshells" (Jacobs, 2005a, p. 148) 3) Well, my son," said the Warlock Merlin, "there are but two things, simple they may seem, but hard they are to do. <i>One thing to do, and one thing not to do. And the thing to do is this...</i> " ("Childe Rowland" (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 77)
2	Moral Instruction	"In thy wife's head," says she (Wise Woman). " <i>The only cure for a fool is a good wife to look after him, and that thou 'st got, so gode'en to thee!</i> " ("A Pottle o' Brains") (Jacobs, 2004)
3	Restorative Punishment	"Then," said he, "what have you in your bag and bottle?" She answered: "Good things, which you shall not be troubled with." "Won't you give me some?" said he. "No, not a bit, nor a drop, unless it would choke you." The old man frowned, saying: " <i>Evil fortune attend ye!</i> " ("The Three Heads of the Well" (Jacobs, 2005b, p. 138)

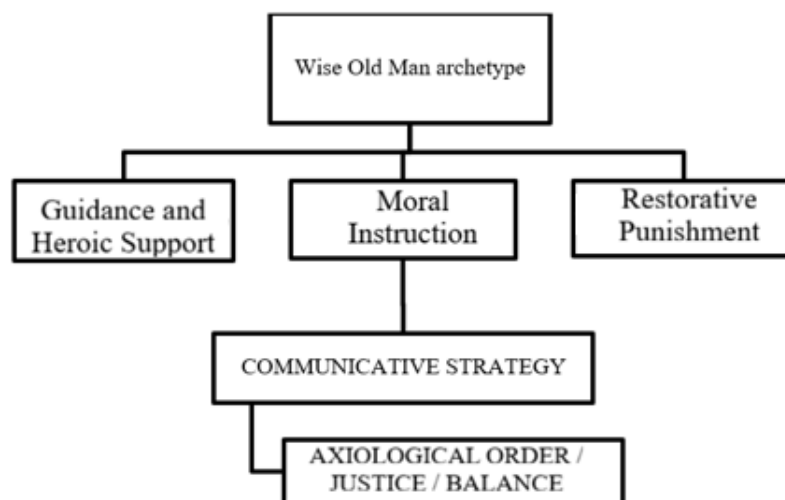


Figure 3. Wise Old Man archetype's communicative strategy

Figure 3 demonstrates features of the communicative strategy of the Wise Old Man archetype. It includes three interrelated functions: guidance and assistance and heroic support, moral instruction, and restorative punishment. Guidance, assistance and heroic support emerge as the most consistently represented function in the corpus, reflecting the archetype's basic narrative role as a helper who contributes to the hero's success. Moral instruction and restorative punishment, while less frequent, complete the picture by showing that the Wise Old Man can reward good deeds and correct bad ones. Together, these functions position the archetype as a mediator of moral and practical order within the narrative.

The results of this investigation demonstrate that archetypes in English fairy tale discourse function as structured communicative models rather than merely symbolic or narrative motifs. The figures analyzed, the Trickster, the Stepmother, and the Wise Old Man, are consistently manifested through specific communicative strategies, linguistic markers, and behavioural patterns that create stable narrative paradigms (Yeremeieva, 2020). These findings align with C. Jung's theoretical model, which defines archetypes as universal patterns within the collective unconscious; at the same time, it broadens this perspective by illustrating how these archetypes are manifested through linguistic and pragmatic elements in discourse.

The textual contexts presented above demonstrate distinct linguistic and pragmatic markers for each character archetype. As shown in Table 1, the Trickster's communication strategy is linguistically realized through imperative constructions ("do give me", "come along"), direct questions ("Where do you come from?"), and specific cunning-related lexical choices ("trick", "Master Thief"), which serve to manipulate the interlocutor. Linguistically, the Stepmother's antagonistic behavior (Table 2) is framed by imperative sentence structures used for task assignment ("Go", "buy", "fill"), accompanied by a high density of negative affective and evaluative lexicon ("hated", "cruel", "wicked", "jealous"). The didactics discourse of the Wise Old Man (Table 3) relies on modal verbs ("cannot", "shall") expressing necessity, capability or prohibition, which reinforce his authoritative yet guiding role in the narrative.

Our analysis reveals a systematic correlation between specific archetypal figures and their corresponding communicative strategies. The Trickster operates within a framework of strategic ambiguity and subversion. Linguistically, the Trickster utilizes Strategies of indirectness and deceit to demolish established social norms and plot trajectories. Manipulation is also a characteristic feature of the Trickster's behaviour. This aligns with the conceptual space of the English folk-fairy tale, which prioritizes individual agency and material improvement (Lau, 2024; Yeremeieva, 2020). The Stepmother archetype exhibits a multi-dimensional behavioural pattern rooted in conflict. Her communicative practices, domination, aggression, and linguistic repression serve as a "negative mother" image that catalyzes the hero's growth (Birkhäuser-Oeri, 1988). The Wise Old Man, conversely, functions primarily as a guide and corrective judge, with this dual role empirically realized in the corpus through three distinct communicative strategies: guidance, assistance and heroic support, moral instruction, and restorative punishment. His discourse is characterized by pedagogical stability and control, and he often appears at turning points or difficult moments in the plot to contribute to the hero's success. A critical synthesis of these figures highlights a systematic linguocultural continuum within the English folk-fairy tale. Unlike traditional symbolic or mythological frameworks, such as those developed by Marie-Louise von Franz, this study demonstrates that archetypes are systematically encoded through specific linguistic mechanisms, including recurring lexical choices, syntactic structures, and pragmatic strategies. Furthermore, the data reveal a systemic opposition between archetypes: while the Trickster disrupts order through strategic unpredictability and the Stepmother creates narrative tension, the Wise Old Man functions to restore balance, order, and facilitate the hero's transformation. The behavioural traits of these characters are not random but are meticulously constructed through specific lexicological, syntactical, and stylistic techniques. This suggests that behavioural traits serve as the foundation for intercharacter communication and provide a replicable model for character

development in storytelling (Yeremeieva, 2020). Despite their contrastive narrative functions, the three archetypes share a common underlying mechanism: in each case, archetypal meaning is constituted not through isolated lexical markers but through a stable, recurrent set of linguistic and pragmatic strategies operating across the narrative (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 2008). This confirms that archetypal patterns are not simply abstract conceptualizations but are systematically manifested in language, providing a unified basis for the cultural coding function discussed above.

This functional divergence suggests that archetypes represent a holistic, dynamic system that guides both narrative trajectory and meaning-making. Furthermore, this study highlights the role of archetypes in the process of cultural coding. The opposition between archetypal figures (e.g., the Wise Old Man's order vs. the Trickster's chaos) leads to the formation of new cultural paradigms and moral frameworks. These findings support the role of archetypes as a link connecting universal cognitive structures with culturally determined communication patterns. The integration of linguistic analysis into archetypal studies allows for a more granular understanding of how fairy tales operate as communicative acts that both reflect and shape the linguocultural identity of a people. In summary, a combination of linguistic research and archetypal theory helps comprehend the function of fairy tales as cultural texts through which the linguocultural identity of societies is shaped and reflected.

5. Discussion

The current study of archetypal characters in English fairy tales adopts an integrated approach that includes a range of aspects, such as cognitive, linguistic, and cultural. Consequently, the findings of this research add to the multidisciplinary study of archetypes in relation to folkloristics and discourse analysis. The main finding presented in the paper is that archetypes are not simply symbols or mythical creatures. Rather, they can be viewed in terms of their linguistic features, actions of characters, and communication patterns that reflect certain cultural values (Jung, 2020; von Franz, 1996). As demonstrated in the Results section (see Tables 1-3), each archetype is realized through a distinct configuration of linguistic markers: imperative structures, evaluative lexicon, and modal expressions that together substantiate the claim that archetypal distinction operates at the level of concrete linguistic choice rather than narrative content alone.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions and Paradigm Shift

By extending the theoretical framework of Jungian psychoanalysis, this study provides support for the idea that archetypes act as cognitive frameworks existing in discourse through repeated linguistic and stylistic patterns (Jung, 2020; Kravchenko & Shanaieva-Tsymbal, 2023). Unlike conventional approaches that rely on mythological and literary sources in isolation, this study highlights the significance of using discourse analysis as a methodology to show how archetypes operate pragmatically in narrative communication processes (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 2008). The new paradigm in archetypal studies emerges when shifting focus from considering archetypes as symbolic or psychological concepts toward treating them as pragmatic linguistic strategies existing in communication processes, which is consistent with the ideas of cognitive linguistics and linguocultural studies (Lau, 2024; Yeremeieva, 2020). While this confirms Jung's foundational premise that archetypes function as universal cognitive structures, it extends his framework by demonstrating that these structures are not merely inferred psychologically but can be empirically traced through specific, recurrent linguistic patterns. This represents a departure from von Franz's (1996) predominantly symbolic and interpretive approach: whereas von Franz treats archetypal meaning as residing primarily in narrative motifs and symbolic content, the present findings suggest that meaning is additionally and systematically, encoded at the level of linguistic form itself.

5.2 Cultural Specificity and Universality of Archetypes

Although the mentioned archetypes (Trickster, Stepmother, Wise Old Man) are generally known as universals that exist in different societies, the linguistic study of the particular cultural implementations of these archetypes reveals the presence of certain linguistic peculiarities that are specific to fairy tales only. First of all, Trickster, whose role is to deceive people and use cunning ways to reach his aims, is operationalized through the simulation of helplessness and manipulative control of the opponent's actions, utilizing specific lexical markers and indirect speech acts. Secondly, Stepmother can be identified as an evil character who is characterized by cruelty and envy. These characteristics are systemically manifested through destructive task assignments, jealousy-driven emotional aggression, and direct discursive association with supernatural power and magical harm. Thirdly, the Wise Old Man archetype includes such qualities as morality and wisdom, which are discursively constructed through strategies of guidance, heroic support, and moral instruction paired with restorative punishment, linguistically marked by modal verbs and evaluative adjectives.

Therefore, from the above description, it follows that the particular cultural implementation of archetypes should also be taken into account when conducting research in this field. This study contributes to the development of cross-cultural archetypal research.

5.3 Discourse and Pragmatic Functionality of Archetypes

The findings indicate that archetypes perform pragmatic roles in the context of fairy tale language, influencing the structure of the narration and moral reactions of readers or listeners (van Dijk, 2008; Fairclough, 1992). The Trickster's language relies on manipulation and ambiguity, purposefully confusing the audience in a unique manner that adds suspense and humor to the story (Radin, 1988). On the other hand, the discourse of the Stepmother is made up of domination and repression, which creates narrative tension (Birkhäuser-Oeri, 1988). Finally, the language use of the Wise Old Man is didactic in nature, promoting morality and internalizing wisdom (Jung, 2020; von Franz, 1996).

This dual functionality of archetypes, both as character types and pragmatic discourse practices, allows us to conclude that the roles of fairy

tale characters include not only their symbolic function but also participation in the process of meaning-making (Lau, 2024). Their pragmatic roles are not limited to their role in narration alone but can also be considered sociocultural, including the processes of socialization and identity building (Zhetpisbay et al., 2025).

5.4 Linguocultural Markers and Narrative Structuring

The analysis of the specific lexicon, syntax, and style that define each character reveals how language uses consistent patterns to represent universal cognitive and cultural schemas (Kravchenko & Shanaieva-Tsymbal, 2023). For example, the use of imperatives and interrogations, along with specific lexical choices related to cunning and trickery, makes the Trickster's communication pattern a tool of indirect influence and manipulation (Meletinsky, 1994). The lexicon used by the Stepmother in connection with violence and jealousy, as well as narrative techniques like obstacles and tasks, make her an antagonist (Jacobs, 1895). The lexicon with modal verbs such as *cannot* and *shall*, along with evaluative adjectives, defines the Wise Old Man as an authority figure (Jung, 2020).

They can be called “linguocultural clues” that allow the recognition of archetypes' roles in narrative discourse (Yeremeieva, 2020). At the same time, they reveal the intimate connection between the narrative structure of fairy tales and language-specific patterns.

5.5 Implications for Broader Discourse and Cultural Studies

In fact, as can be seen from the research results, the discourse of fairy tales becomes a kind of microcosm for socio-cultural phenomena as a whole, when archetypes become mediators between collective identity, moral values, and national identity (Zipes, 2023; Vučković & Premović, 2024). The dichotomy of archetypes in the form of chaos versus order, deception versus wisdom, and the like becomes the expression of the dichotomy of society and morality (Levi-Strauss, 1963). This type of dichotomy becomes a part of cultural studies, since it is based on the presence of binary opposites in cultural narration (Barthes, 1972). However, whereas Levi-Strauss (1963) and Barthes (1972) treat binary oppositions as abstract structural principles underlying myth and narrative in general, the present study demonstrates that such oppositions are realized through specific linguistic means in a particular discourse tradition, suggesting that structuralist binary logic can be empirically grounded in language rather than remaining a purely analytical construct.

Finally, the recognition of the linguistic character of archetypes enables us to apply the concept not only in literary criticism but also in various other communicative phenomena and practices, both traditional and contemporary (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). It means that this paper provides an example of how archetypal communication can be studied.

Taken together, the findings confirm that the Trickster, Stepmother, and Wise Old Man are not only symbolic figures but also linguistically and pragmatically constituted communicative models, each associated with a distinct, recurrent set of linguistic markers and discourse strategies. This linguistic patterning links universal cognitive structures, in the Jungian sense, to culturally determined communication patterns specific to English fairy-tale discourse.

5.6 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research has contributed significantly to the field of archetypal representation within the discourse of fairy tales; however, it is important to highlight some limitations of the present research. While the empirical corpus is primarily limited to English fairy tales, it strategically includes selected Celtic and Scottish narratives to observe broader regional insights. However, this sample size may have implications for wider generalization across other linguistic groups. In addition, qualitative analysis proves to be quite useful in this particular research, but the implementation of a quantitative methodology in corpus analysis can be applied to future research (Baker, 2006). Furthermore, as a qualitative and interpretive study, the analysis inherently involves a degree of researcher judgment in identifying and classifying archetypal figures and their associated linguistic markers, although this was mitigated through the application of consistent coding criteria (see Section 3.3), the subjectivity inherent in interpretive analysis cannot be fully eliminated and should be taken into account when evaluating the generalizability of the findings.

Future studies could, for instance, compare the linguistic encoding of the Trickster, Stepmother, and Wise Old Man across other European fairy-tale traditions (e.g., German) to determine which discourse strategies are culture-specific and which recur cross-linguistically. A particularly promising direction would involve applying quantitative corpus-linguistic software (e.g., AntConc) to a larger, more balanced corpus to statistically verify the frequency and distribution of the lexical and syntactic markers identified here, thereby empirically testing the reliability of the present qualitative findings. Longitudinal research on the evolution of archetypes in modern discourse can also prove beneficial. For that purpose, the utilization of multimodal analysis methods may prove helpful (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the archetypes of the Trickster, Stepmother, and Wise Old Man in English fairy tale discourse function at the intersection of cognition, language, and culture, extending Jung's (2020) and von Franz's (1996) psychoanalytic framework by showing that archetypal meaning is not merely inferred symbolically but is systematically constructed through identifiable linguistic and pragmatic means. Rather than being static universals, these archetypes are shown to be dynamic communicative models, each associated with a distinct set of lexical, syntactic, and discourse strategies that organize narrative structure while simultaneously transmitting cultural norms and moral values (Fairclough, 1992; Zipes, 2023; Zhetpisbay et al., 2025).

At the same time, the study reveals the relativity of archetypes with respect to culture alongside their universality: while the underlying psychological structures may be shared across societies, their specific linguistic realization is shaped by the particular discourse tradition in

which they occur (von Franz, 1996; Jung, 2020). This paper thus proposes a refined conceptual framework in which fairy-tale discourse serves as a microcosm of collective consciousness, positioning the folklore text as a productive site for studying how language transmits core cultural values through structured archetypal communication.

By demonstrating that archetypal meaning is empirically traceable through recurrent linguistic patterns, this study contributes a discourse-analytic methodology that can be extended to other folklore traditions and, more broadly, to the linguistic study of cultural cognition.

AI Use Statement

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Gemini (Gemini 1.5 Pro, Google) and Claude Sonnet 5 (Anthropic) for language polishing, improving grammar and phrasing, and structural formatting of the manuscript. After using this tool, the authors thoroughly reviewed, edited, and verified the content to ensure accuracy and scholarly integrity, and take full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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Author contributions

Author Xeniya Selezneva conceived the study, designed the research methodology, conducted the corpus analysis, interpreted the findings, and drafted the manuscript. **Author** Anara Zhumasheva supervised the research, provided methodological guidance, critically revised the manuscript, and served as the corresponding author. **Authors** Gulya Azylbekova, Zoya Klyushina, and Ainur Karipzhanova contributed to the literature review, participated in the analysis of the corpus and relevant scholarly sources, assisted in the interpretation of the findings, and reviewed the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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