

## Artículo de investigación

**Semantic groups of adjectives-epithets in russian folk tales**

Grupos semánticos de adjetivos-epítetos en cuentos populares rusos

Grupos semânticos de adjetivos-epítetos em contos folclóricos russos

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D. S. Samedov (Corresponding Author)<sup>225</sup>M. A. Gasanova<sup>226</sup>**Abstract**

The lexical-semantic groups of adjectives-epithets in Russian folk tales are considered in the article. This is an analytical-historical research used to obtain data from the documentary methodology. The results showed that the semantic groups of nouns, defined by adjectives, are marked; national cultural connotations, expressed by adjectival substantive combinations, are detected in Russian tales. Various codes of culture are defined, with which described adjectives-epithets, used in direct and figurative (metaphorical and metonymic) meanings, correlate and their linguocultural significance is actualized as fragments of the Russian language picture of the world. In some cases attention is applied to use specific for Russian language suffixes in adjectives, expressing positive or, on the contrary, negative connotations.

**Keywords:** Russian tales, epithets-adjectives, semantic groups, connotations, national cultural components, affixal means of expression of connotations.

**Resumen**

Los grupos léxico-semánticos de adjetivos-epítetos en los cuentos populares rusos se consideran en el artículo. Esta es una investigación histórico-analítica utilizada para obtener datos de la metodología documental. Los resultados mostraron que los grupos semánticos de sustantivos, definidos por adjetivos, están marcados; Las connotaciones culturales nacionales, expresadas por combinaciones sustantivas de adjetivo, se detectan en los cuentos rusos. Se definen varios códigos de cultura, con los cuales se describen los adjetivos-epítetos, utilizados en significados directos y figurativos (metafóricos y metonímicos), se correlacionan y su importancia lingüística se actualiza como fragmentos de la imagen del mundo en idioma ruso. En algunos casos, se aplica atención al uso específico de los sufijos del idioma ruso en los adjetivos, que expresan connotaciones positivas o, por el contrario, negativas.

**Palabras claves:** cuentos rusos, epítetos-adjetivos, grupos semánticos, connotaciones, componentes culturales nacionales, medios afijos de expresión de connotaciones.

**Resumo**

Os grupos léxico-semânticos de adjetivos-epítetos em contos folclóricos russos são considerados no artigo. Esta é uma pesquisa analítico-histórica usada para obter dados da metodologia documental. Os resultados mostraram que os grupos semânticos de substantivos, definidos por adjetivos, são marcados; conotações culturais nacionais, expressas por combinações substantivas adjetivas, são detectadas em contos russos. São definidos vários códigos de cultura, com os quais se descrevem os adjetivos-epítetos, utilizados em significados diretos e figurativos (metafóricos e metonímicos), correlacionados e seu significado linguocultural se atualiza como fragmentos da imagem de língua russa do mundo. Em alguns casos, aplica-se atenção ao uso específico de sufixos de língua russa em adjetivos, expressando conotações positivas ou, ao contrário, negativas.

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**Palabras-chave:** contos russos, epítetos-adjetivos, grupos semânticos, conotações, componentes culturais nacionais, meios afixais de expressão de conotações.

### Introduction

Adjectives-epithets in Russian folk tales perform important semantic-stylistic functions. At the same time the functionality of adjectives in Russian tales has not been studied enough. The urgency of the problem, raised in the article, is explained not only by this factor, but also by the linguocultural significance of adjective-epithets in Russian folk tales.

Material for the execution of the article was compiled by entire selection of tales, published in different collections (Anikin, 1987; Putilov, 1994; Afanas' ev, 1975; Afanas' ev, 1916). Analysis of the material suggests that adjectives-epithets in Russian tales are used in direct and figurative meanings.

### Methodology

The figurative meanings of adjectives represent the peculiarities of emotional-intellectual and image-evaluative comprehension by speakers of Russian language of the surrounding world and the place of person in this world. Many adjectives-epithets have an anthropocentric and gender character, what is connected not only with the definitive characteristic of a person in general, but also individuals of a particular gender (Araújo et al, 2018; Grudtsina et al., 2017). This is an analytical-historical research used to obtain data from the documentary methodology.

### Result

Research of epithets-adjectives from the point of view of their belonging to one or another lexical-semantic groups shows that in this respect the possibilities of adjective components in tales are rather wide. As result of the analysis, we have identified various semantic groups.

1. Adjectives, denoting dimensions, quantity: a big, such a big turnip ("The Turnip"), a small wooden house ("Teremok"/The Wooden House), a large mouth ("Teremok"), a large dish ("Masha and the Bear"), high mountains ("Cockerel the Golden scallop"), a wide yard ("Ivan the Cow's son"), a big vat ("The Wooden Eagle"), a high tower ("The Wooden Eagle"), a large/wide road ("The Prophetic Dream"), a large grief, big pearls ("Puss the Grey forehead, Goat

and Sheep"), tall trees, a wide glade, a high balcony ("The Magic Mirror"), a great stench ("The Kind Word"), a great mercy ("The Good Word"), a big lip ("Six brothers – all the Agathons"), a high head, big, very big chambers, a large estate ("The Temptation"), big eyes ("The Wooden Goat"), big buckets ("The fear has big eyes") and others.

These examples indicate that in most cases adjectives-epithets with meaning of size and quantity are used in the direct sense. In figurative meaning such adjectives are used unproductively (a great stench, a great mercy). In this case, mostly adjectives-epithets play an emotional-intensifying role. In some cases the using of one or another adjective is determined by the form of defined noun (a small wooden house, a large mouth). Emotional-intensifying role is also performed by adjectives-repetitions (a big, such a big turnip; big, very big chambers).

Adjectives-epithets of the characterized group are used in combination with nouns of certain semantic groups denoting: 1) parts of the human body (a big lip, a large mouth), 2) various rooms, buildings (a low wooden house, a high tower, big chambers), 3) tableware (a big vat, big buckets), 4) objects of plant world (a big turnip, tall trees). In almost all these cases, characterized adjectives-epithets are used in the direct meaning.

2. Adjectives, denoting color and light: a grey wolf ("Teremok"), a red fox ("The Tale about fox..."), black eyes, a grey hare ("Goat the Dereza"), blue sea ("Gingerbread House", "Ivan the Cow's son"), dark forests ("Cockerel the Golden scallop"), a red cock ("Ivanoushka the Simpleton"), green meadows, a grey soil, a black raven, a white towel ("Ivan the Cow's son"), a grey forehead, a little grey forehead ("Chivy, chivy, chivychok"), a dark night ("The Magic Mirror"), dark forests ("Bourenoushka"), black wool, grey geese ("How wolf became a bird"), a green lair ("The Kind Word"), a red hat, a blue caftan ("About one solder"), grey eyes ("The Wooden Goat") and others.

Some of the above adjective-substantive phrases, due to their regular using and national cultural

character, became symbolically stable (a grey wolf, dark forests, a black raven, green meadows, blue sea and others). Basically the above-named examples adjectives-epithets are used in figurative meanings, rarely they are used in combination with nouns in a figurative metonymic meaning (a grey forehead, a little grey forehead – about a cat). The adjectives of the characterized semantic group are used in combination with words denoting: 1) animals (a red cock, a grey hare), 2) human body parts (grey eyes), 3) clothing details (a red hat, a blue caftan), 4) land (green meadows), 5) specific items of national cultural character (a white towel).

3. The third group is formed by adjectives derived from the names of metals and materials: a golden egg (“The Speckled Hen”), golden leaves, silver twigs (“Wee Little Havroshechka”), a golden feather, iron clubs, iron doors, iron rods (“Ivan the Cow’s son”), a golden mountain (“The Golden Mountain”), iron noses [about raven], golden palace (“Ivan the Cow’s son”), a golden duck, silver fence (“The Wooden Eagle”), a stone bag, a golden beard, silver locks, a silver hair (“The Prophetic Dream”), a wooden eagle (“The Wooden Eagle”), earthen small hut (“The Old man and the Wolf”), iron lattices, a crystal coffin, a white stone palace, gold treasury (“The Magic Mirror”), carrot candles (“The Kind Word”), a glass pot (“The Hexed Water”), glass floors, silver ceilings (“The Temptation”), an ice mare (“About one soldier”) and others. Some of these adjectives-epithets are used in the direct meaning (a glass pot, iron rods), while others, together with the defined nouns, indicate surreal situations (silver ceilings, a golden beard, etc.), which leads to the formation of image-evaluative meanings for these adjectives.
4. The fourth semantic group is formed by adjectives-epithets, denoting the moral and ethical qualities of a person, his actions and manifestations, which testifies to their anthropocentric character: kind people (“The Tale about a fox...”), a kindly word (“Wee Little Havroshechka”), a good daughter (“Wee Little Havroshechka”), bad jokes, good people (“Ivan the Cow’s son”), a fine fellow (“The Golden Mountain”), an evil nanny, a cheeky fine fellow (“The Wooden Eagle”), a disobedient son, cunning Elena the Wise (“The Prophetic Dream”), good people, wicked people, honest knights, an angry crone (“The Magic Mirror”), a meager thought, a kind word (“The Kind Word”), honest brothers (“Phoma and Erema”), a bad wife (“The Temptation”), a good soldier, an angry queen (“The Soldier and the Tsarina”), a good tsarina, an unkind man (“The Soldier and the Tsarina”), an evil smile, a cheerful smile (“The Wooden Goat”), harmless Ivanoushka (“About Ivanoushka the Simpleton”), a smart little man (“The Healer”), etc. Many of the following examples are used as usual or contextual antonyms: a good tsarina - a bad tsarina, a cheerful smile - a wicked smile, good people - wicked people, an angry tsarina - a good tsarina, a meager thought - a good word, harmless Ivanoushka – a smart little man and etc (Vedernikova, 1975).
5. Part of the adjectives is used as a way of portrait characterization of fairy tale characters (men and women), description of details of clothing, in connection with which such gender adjectives are characterized by appropriate connotations: a noble collar, big-eyed Masha (“Masha and the Bear”), a wee princess (“Wee little Havroshechka”), an indescribable beauty, an expensive material (“The Wooden Eagle”), a wedding ring (“The Healer”), a brilliant dress, a beauty of maiden, a marvelous beauty, an unseen beauty (“The Magic Mirror”), a meager caftan (“The Big house, made by one brick”), a city hat (“The Temptation”), a torn overcoat (“About one soldier”), a burly woman (“The Soldier and the Tsarina”), kind, clear, frank eye, a blond hair, a clean, pleasant face (“The Wooden Eagle”), etc. A number of adjectives-epithets contains specific for Russian language suffixes of evaluative character (a meager caftan, a clean face, big-eyed Masha, a blond hair, etc.). In combination with the words of national cultural identity (caftan, Masha), they form national cultural components and express the corresponding cultural connotations.
6. The group of the analyzed adjectives expresses the conceptual meaning of “an attitude [to man, object, animal]”, therefore the appraisal of such adjectives-epithets is quite obvious: a darling duckling (“The Tale about a fox...”), a native city (“The Golden Mountain”), a

favorite sheep, a dear father, a darling sister, a treasured maid (“The Prophetic Dream”), a dear grandfather (“Bourenoushka”), a terrible hatred, a dear brother, a darling sister, a native land, a dear father, a dear mother, kind children, a dear father, a dear brother (“The Magic Mirror”), a glorious gun (“Six brothers – all the Agathons”) and others. Among the defined nouns by the adjectives of this group, first of all, there should be noted nouns denoting family relationships (father, brother, father, mother, sister, etc.), and animal names (usually such adjectives are used in tales about animals or in fairy tales): a favorite sheep, a darling duck). Abstract concepts are unproductively used (a terrible hatred, a terrible cry, a sweet dream) (Vedernikova, 1980).

7. Adjectives denoting the external qualities of animals, their various properties, are often used in fairy tales about animals: a clumsy bear, a fluffy tail (“Teremok”), a vagabond fox (“The Tale about a fox...”), sharp horns (“The Goat the Dereza”), a shaggy bear, a hulking bear (“The Fox and the Cat”), six-headed snake, old snake (“Ivan the Merchant's son”), alive duck, good horses (“The Wooden Eagle”), a hungry wolf (“The Old man and the Wolf”), different birdies, small birdies (“Bourenoushka”), a jaunty stallion, a quick bobcat (“The Big house, made by one brick”), a bald cat (“Six brothers – all the Agathons”), a scary wolf, a whiskered cat (“The Old woman has big eyes”), etc. As can be seen from the above examples, defined nouns designate both domestic (cat, goat, horses) and wild (bear, fox and wolf) animals. Most often, adjectives-epithets denote their typical external qualities and their inherent properties (bear – hulking, clumsy, shaggy; cat – whiskered; wolf – scary, hungry). In particular fairy tales elements of hyperbolization, characteristic for Russian epics, are used: three-headed, six-headed, ten-headed, twelve-headed serpent (Samedov & Musaeva, 2015; Savenkova, 2003; Rabbani et al, 2014).
8. In the group of Russian tales productively qualitative, relative and possessive adjectives, denoting the qualities of specific objects, the relation of these subjects to objects of animate and

inanimate world, are used: fresh grass, noble collar, a wolfish tail (“The Cock and bean seed”), a maple leaf, forest marge (“The Goat the Dereza”), narrow neck [of jug] (“The Fox and the Crane”), a rye patty, wheat patties, garden apples, milk rivers, honey shores, juicy apples, forest apples (“Geese-swans”), Siberian forests (“The Fox and the Cat”), forest raspberry (“Ivanoushka the Simpleton”), clean field, human bones, a guelder rose’s leaf, white-stone chambers, a cold key, a hewn bed, candent tongs, a downy bed (“Ivan the Cow’s son”), a trade square, a gilded carriage, sea coast, a horse belly (“The Golden Mountain”), a royal doorstep, pure gold, a winged bird, strong castles (“The Wooden Eagle”), a dense forest, expensive drinks, a sharp ax, semiprecious stones, a bird yard, simple cups, a magic book (“The Prophetic Dream”), a sheepskin coat, a shepherd's pipe (“The Shepherd's pipe”), a new peasant house, a full bowl (“Chivy, chivy, chivyochok”), a fox tail (“The Man, the Bear and the Fox”), clean field, sweet berries (“Bourenoushka”), various goods, a magic mirror, a dense forest, a wonderful coffin, overseas merchandise, father's house, sharp stones, a royal palace, wonderful flowers, cook clothes (“The Magic Mirror”), a full box (“The Moroka”), a wonderful harness (“A Big house, made by one brick”), a sharp sword, precious stones, palace windows, a chiseled knife (“The Kind Word”), master's gloves, an oak grove (“Six brothers, all the Agathons”), crooked hobnails, royal chambers (“The Soldier and the Tzarina”), a new hut (“Chivy, chivy, chivyochok”), a sweet wine, downy feather beds (“The Temptation”), a royal chamber, new tables, chairs, red-hot rods, carved wood, carved tables, a royal palace, a precious tree (“The Wooden goat”) and others.

Examples show that defined nouns are represented by words of different lexico-semantic groups, denoting a) parts of the body of a person and animals (tail, bones), b) objects of flora (leaf, apples), c) food (pie, drinks), d) clothing details (mittens, sheepskin coat, collar), e) various rooms (chambers, palace, house, hut), e) pieces of furniture (tables, chairs), g) dishes (full bowl), etc. Among the words of this group the group of possessive adjectives, expressing “belonging of something to a person or an animal”, stands out : a wolf tail, human bones, a

shepherd's pipe, a fox tail, peasant songs, a father's house, master's gloves, a royal chamber and others (Modern Russian language, 2017; Parvizian et al, 2015).

9. Part of gender adjectives, characterizing a person, correlates with the anthropic code of culture: the eldest brother ("Ivan the Cow's Son"), a royal daughter ("The Wooden Eagle"), a merchant son, an old grandfather, an young wife ("The Prophetic Dream"), poor, so much poor old man and woman ("The Shepherd's pipe"), a poor peasant ("The Man and the Hare"), a merchant's daughter, a dear brother, a dead girl, honest gentlemen ("The Magic Mirror"), a sleepy boy ("The Kind Word"), resembling with tzarina, a sleepy shoemaker-woman ("The Soldier and the Tzarina"), royal officials, a real craftsman, Russian masters, Russian craftsmen ("The Wooden Goat"), a dead beauty ("The Magic Mirror"), an young wife ("The Kind Word"), an important gentleman, young people ("The Temptation") and others.

### Conclusion

The noted above allows us to formulate several conclusions, concerning the peculiarities of the using of adjectives-epithets in Russian folk tales.

- 1) The adjectives, described in the article, form a series of lexical-semantic groups. Most of the adjectives, used in direct and figurative meanings, are characterized by anthropocentricity, orientation on a person.
- 2) Adjective-substantive combinations in Russian tales act as fragments of the linguistic picture of the world and means of expressing cultural connotations. A specific role in the expression of national-cultural connotations is played by specific for Russian language suffixes.
- 3) Adjectives-epithets in Russian folk tales have not only anthropocentric, but also gender character. An attribute of gender influences on the formation of national-cultural connotations.

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