



NUMERICAL SYMBOLISM IN UZBEK PROVERBS

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Abstract: *This article examines the numerical components of Uzbek proverbs as a linguo-semiotic means. The analysis demonstrates that numbers in proverbs function not only as quantitative indicators but also as symbolic, cultural, and cognitive elements. Particular attention is paid to their role in collective memory, social norms, gender representations, critical evaluation, and ritual traditions. Proverbs containing numbers serve as a channel for transmitting cultural codes, archaic knowledge, and social attitudes through linguistic expression.*

Keywords: *numerical component, linguo-semiotics, Uzbek proverbs, collective memory, cognitive structures, cultural codes, hyperbole, gender symbolism, ancient Turkic beliefs, folkloric semantics.*

The study of proverbs containing numerical components in a historical context encompasses not only their use in antiquity or within the Islamic tradition, but is also connected with mental and cognitive layers, cultural symbols, ethnic collective memory, and psycholinguistic foundations. In this context, numbers appear not merely as quantitative units but also as linguo-semiotic means that ensure the compactness of information in communication. Their study is of interest in the following directions:

1. Psychologically stable models of numerical components. Research shows that numbers in folk proverbs are used based on stable stereotypes. For example, numbers such as *one, three, seven, and forty* function as a cognitive “core of stability.” This core integrates historical and cultural experience, as well as sacred and mythological symbols, and is preserved as a memory model through proverbs across generations.

2. Numbers and collective memory. Through fixed expressions and numbers, each nation creates concise but semantically rich formulas that encode historical memory. On the one hand, this reflects the cognitive compactness of folk thinking; on the other hand, it functions as a semantic mechanism for storing information. For example, the number *forty* symbolizes purification, while the number *three* represents structural completeness.

3. Gender and social contexts of numerical components. In Uzbek proverbs, numbers participate not only in expressing quantity but also in defining social roles, gender images, and moral norms. For example:



“*Forty skills are not enough for one young man*” (*Bir yigitga qirq hunar oz*) – reflects the formation of the ideal image of a man. “*Forty children cannot support one father*” (*Qirq farzand bir otani boqolmas*) – expresses respect for parents through folk didactic wisdom.

Such proverbs codify social experience through numbers and transmit it as a cultural value.

4. The role of numbers in critical and ironic proverbs. Some numbers in Uzbek proverbs are used for ironic, critical, or hyperbolic purposes, giving speech emotional coloring and stylistic strength. For example: “*One thief, a thousand suspicions*” (*O‘g‘ri bitta, gumon mingta*) – the number *thousand* is used hyperbolically to express excessive distrust. “*A hundred eyes, a thousand ears*” (*Yuzta ko‘z bo‘lsa, mingta quloq*) – emphasizes excessive social surveillance through hyperbole.

Such proverbs reveal the hyperbolic and ironic possibilities of numbers as stylistic devices.

Numbers in Uzbek proverbs function not only as quantitative indicators but also as ethnolinguistic symbols – cultural codes of folk thinking. For instance, the numbers *seven* and *forty* possessed cosmological and ritual significance in ancient Turkic worldview. Therefore, they symbolize natural cycles, stages of human life, destiny, and the dualism of good and evil.

As noted by J. Khamidov: “In the folklore of the Uzbek people, numbers are often used with symbolic, ritual, and semantic load. They become stable semantic units within the logical structure of folk thinking.”

Some proverbs with numbers preserve traces of ancient tribal governance, interpersonal relations, and legal mentality. For example, numbers such as *forty* or *seventy* could denote councils of clans, assemblies, or contractual obligations.

Numbers – particularly *one, two, three, seven, and forty* – also played an important role in the structure of poetic formulas. They created rhythmic and syntactic stability, parallelism, comparison, and antithesis in oral folklore. In Uzbek proverbs, numbers serve not only as carriers of meaning but also as structural elements determining intonation, rhythm, and expressiveness. This aspect was examined in the proverb collection compiled by Sh. Shorakhmedov and M. Shomakhmudov.

Proverbs with numerical components, while preserving their archaic semantic layers, continue to function in new contexts. For example, proverbs such as “*one word – a thousand mouths*” (*bir so‘z – ming og‘iz*) or “*where there was war for one day, there will be no blessing for forty days*” (*bir kun urush bo‘lgan joydan qirq kun baraka ketadi*) reflect ancient social orders but are still used today, demonstrating the continuity and adaptability of their semantics.





Numbers, as elements of language, become fixed in folk consciousness as means of preserving cultural memory. Each number forms a specific archetypal semantic field, making them an important source for analyzing the structure of Uzbek proverbs.

Numerical components in proverbs also perform an important cognitive-organizational function, structuring folk knowledge in a compact and memorable form. Within the framework of cognitive linguistics, numbers may be viewed as conceptual markers that facilitate the categorization and systematization of experience. Through numerical expressions, complex social and ethical principles are condensed into short and easily reproducible linguistic formulas. This cognitive mechanism explains why numerical proverbs remain stable in oral tradition: the presence of numbers increases mnemonic efficiency, strengthens semantic focus, and enhances the didactic impact of the proverb. As a result, numbers operate not only as lexical units but also as cognitive anchors that help organize and transmit collective knowledge across generations.

In addition, numerical elements contribute to the discursive and pragmatic effectiveness of proverbs within everyday communication. The inclusion of numbers intensifies expressiveness, strengthens argumentative force, and provides rhetorical clarity in social interaction. In many cases, the numerical component functions as a persuasive device, reinforcing the authority of traditional wisdom by presenting statements in a seemingly precise and quantified form. Such linguistic strategies enable proverbs to function as normative tools that guide behavior, evaluate social actions, and articulate moral judgments. Consequently, the study of numerical components in proverbs reveals their multifaceted role as semantic, stylistic, and pragmatic instruments within the broader system of linguistic and cultural communication.

In conclusion, numbers in Uzbek folk proverbs function as ancient linguistic units with a rich semantic load. Their historical formation is closely connected with the religious, social, cultural, and economic thinking of the people. Numbers such as *three*, *seven*, *nine*, and *forty*, considered sacred in ancient Turkic beliefs, later acquired additional semantic layers within religious, ritual, and moral contexts.

Within proverbs, numbers serve as means of hyperbolization, generalization, evaluation, and the expression of time and rhythm. Their poetic and functional significance is especially important, as they contribute to the creation of syntactic harmony, stylistic power, and figurative imagery.

Moreover, some proverbs containing numbers preserve oral traces of the ancient social system of the Uzbek people, including traditions of clan relations, legal practices, and contractual norms. All these aspects require a comprehensive analysis of numerical proverbs as multifunctional linguocultural units that reflect not only aesthetic features but also the historical and social layers of folk thought.





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