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THE ROLE OF NUMBERS AND NUMERALS IN FRENCH AND UZBEK
LINGUISTIC CULTURES AND THE PRINCIPLES OF STUDYING UNITS WITH
A NUMERICAL COMPONENT

Hamdamova Muqaddas Khamidovna

Teacher of the Department of Languages,
Samarkand State Medical University

Annotation: *This article presents a linguocultural study of paremiological units related to numbers in the French and Uzbek languages. Numbers are among the most ancient and universal categories of human culture, serving not only as instruments of calculation but also as bearers of deep symbolic meaning in mythology, religion, and everyday life. As linguistic signs carrying ethnocultural semantics, numbers are an important object of linguocultural research. The article examines the theoretical foundations of number symbolism, the main scholarly approaches to its study, the linguistic nature of numerical paremiological units, and the methodological principles of their comparative analysis.*

Keywords: *Uzbek language, French language, national culture, paremiology, linguocultural code, proverb, idiomatic expression, number, numeral, corpus, symbolic meaning.*

The symbolism of numbers is an integral part of cultural history, rooted in archaic thought, where numbers modeled the structure of the universe (the four cardinal points, the seven heavens, the four seasons) and reinforced the idea of an orderly cosmos. This symbolism was systematized in antiquity by the Pythagorean school, which regarded number as the foundation of being: each digit carried its own philosophical meaning — unity, duality, harmony, justice — and the decade was considered a perfect number as the sum of the first four numbers. Through Neoplatonism, medieval theology, and Renaissance philosophy, this doctrine shaped the later European understanding of numbers such as three, seven, and twelve as symbols of perfection, while thirteen came to signify imperfection or danger.

Comparative and cross-cultural research, developed since the late nineteenth century, has shown that certain numbers — three, seven, twelve, forty — are consistently “marked” across cultures and acquire rich symbolic content, while others remain neutral and purely quantitative. This pattern can be traced across civilizations: in Babylon, Egypt, India, and China, numbers structured cosmological and religious thought; in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the seven days of creation, the twelve apostles, and the forty-day trial carried meaning that later shaped the paremiological fund of Romance languages, including French; in Turkic and Islamic culture, notions such as the seven heavens, the forty chillas, and the ninety-nine names of God performed a similar role, shaping the Uzbek paremiological fund.

Paremiias — proverbs, sayings, and other stable folk expressions — are the most concise form in which the collective wisdom and worldview of a people are preserved. When number symbolism becomes part of a paremia, it is reactivated as a cultural code with every use.



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Modern linguistics approaches number symbolism from several complementary angles: the cultural-historical approach, which traces the mythological and religious roots of numbers; the ethnolinguistic approach, which studies their place in folk rituals and customs; and the cognitive-semantic approach, which analyzes their functioning in phraseology and paremiology. These approaches draw on the theoretical foundations laid by W. von Humboldt's theory of the inner form of language, the linguistic relativity of Sapir and Whorf, and the linguoculturological concepts of V.V. Vorobyov (the "lingvokultureme," a unit combining linguistic meaning with a segment of culture) and V.N. Telia (cultural connotation as the marker of a linguistic sign's ethnocultural identity). Within this framework, a number can be described as a three-layered mental construct: a conceptual layer (its quantitative meaning), a figurative layer (its symbolic associations), and a value layer (its cultural evaluation) — together making it an active cultural symbol in paremiological units.

The comparative study of numerical paremiological units in French and Uzbek should follow five methodological principles: (1) distinguishing between the direct (quantitative) and figurative (symbolic-cultural) meaning of the number component; (2) determining whether the number functions as the central semantic element of the paremia or plays a secondary, rhythmic role; (3) tracing the ethnocultural origin of the number — religious, mythological, or folkloric — since French numerical paremias are typically rooted in the antique and Christian tradition, while Uzbek ones draw on the Turkic-Islamic and mystical tradition; (4) conducting a semiotic-cognitive analysis of the number's functions (quantitative, gradational, oppositional, symbolic, or purely formal); and (5) establishing the degree of interlingual equivalence, identifying paremias that are fully identical, partially identical, or nationally specific with no equivalent in the other language — the latter being of particular importance for translation studies.

The linguocultural study of Uzbek phraseology and paremiology owes much to the work of A.E. Mamatov, while the paremiological dictionary of Kh. Berdiyev and R. Rasulov remains the principal lexicographic source for Uzbek proverbs. The French material used here is drawn primarily from M. Maloux's dictionary of proverbs and A. Rey's dictionary of expressions and set phrases.

Conclusion: A reliable comparative analysis of numerical paremias requires a sufficiently large and representative corpus from both languages, classified by thematic group (time, labor, family, quantity-quality relations, etc.) and by type of number component (small, symbolic, exaggerated). Corpus-based analysis makes it possible to establish the frequency of use, contextual meaning, and historical dynamics of numerical paremias, and to support cross-linguistic comparison with quantitative evidence. Beyond its theoretical value, such research has practical significance: it can serve as the basis for bilingual comparative paremiological dictionaries indicating the symbolic content, national-cultural interpretation, and translation of numerical paremias — a resource valuable for foreign-language teaching, translation practice, and intercultural communication.

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