

Numbers in Turkish and Uzbek languages and their symbolic meanings

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Abstract: Numbers have always held deep symbolic significance across various cultures, and both Turkish and Uzbek languages vividly reflect this phenomenon. In these Turkic languages, numbers are not only mathematical tools but also carriers of profound cultural, historical, and spiritual meanings. This article explores the symbolic representations and cultural functions of numbers such as 3, 7, 9, and 40, which frequently appear in folklore, proverbs, literature, and traditional practices. It analyzes the historical roots of these associations, their evolution, and their shared features and differences in Turkish and Uzbek contexts. By examining these symbolic meanings, the article aims to shed light on the deeper cognitive and cultural layers of these two closely related linguistic traditions.

Keywords: Turkish language, Uzbek language, symbolic meaning, numbers, folklore, culture, tradition, linguistic comparison, ethnolinguistics

Introduction: Numbers have played a significant role in human civilization, not only as mathematical concepts but also as powerful symbols embedded in language, culture, and belief systems. In the Turkic world, particularly in Turkish and Uzbek societies, numbers transcend their quantitative function and acquire rich qualitative and symbolic meanings. They appear in everyday speech, traditional sayings, rituals, mythology, and even political and religious discourses.

The symbolic interpretation of numbers such as 3, 7, 9, and 40 has deep historical roots among Turkic peoples, reflecting a shared cultural heritage shaped by ancient nomadic traditions, Islamic influences, and local folklore. For instance, the number 7 often symbolizes completeness and spiritual perfection, while the number 40 is frequently associated with maturity, trial, and transformation.

In Turkish and Uzbek languages, these numbers are not merely linguistic elements but serve as cultural markers that encapsulate collective memory, values, and worldviews. Understanding the symbolic meanings of numbers in these languages allows for a deeper appreciation of their ethnolinguistic characteristics and the ways in which numerical symbolism shapes societal norms and expressions.

This article aims to explore and compare the symbolic meanings of numbers in Turkish and Uzbek languages, examining how they are used in folklore, literature, proverbs, and cultural practices. It also seeks to identify similarities and differences in

their symbolic use, offering insights into the shared cultural landscape and unique developments within each language community.

Relevance of Work:

The study of the symbolic meanings of numbers in Turkish and Uzbek languages holds great importance for understanding the cultural, historical, and linguistic bonds between these two Turkic peoples. Numbers, often overlooked in everyday communication, carry significant symbolic weight that reflects ancient belief systems, traditional knowledge, and collective psychology. Investigating these meanings provides valuable insights into the shared heritage, worldview, and values of Turkish and Uzbek societies.

Moreover, in an era of growing globalization, preserving and analyzing such cultural elements strengthens cultural identity and fosters deeper intercultural understanding. This research is relevant for fields such as ethnolinguistics, folklore studies, cultural anthropology, and comparative linguistics.

Purpose:

The main purpose of this article is to explore the symbolic meanings attributed to numbers in Turkish and Uzbek languages and to analyze their functions within folklore, literature, and everyday expressions. It seeks to identify both commonalities and differences in how numbers are used symbolically in these languages, shedding light on their historical origins and cultural significance.

Additionally, the study aims to contribute to the broader understanding of Turkic cultural traditions and to encourage further research into the symbolic dimensions of language in shaping collective identity.

Materials and Methods of Research:

This study employs a qualitative research methodology based on comparative linguistic and cultural analysis. The primary materials for the research include collections of Turkish and Uzbek proverbs, folk tales, epic literature (such as *Dede Korkut* and *Alpomish*), classical poetry, and modern literary works where the symbolic use of numbers is evident. Additionally, dictionaries of symbolism, ethnolinguistic studies, and academic papers focusing on Turkic folklore and cultural traditions serve as essential secondary sources.

The research methods used are:

- **Comparative Analysis:** Identifying similarities and differences in the symbolic meanings of numbers between Turkish and Uzbek languages through parallel examination of linguistic and cultural sources.

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- **Contextual Analysis:** Studying the usage of numbers in different contexts (mythology, literature, daily expressions) to reveal their deeper cultural significance.

- **Historical-Linguistic Method:** Tracing the origins and historical evolution of the symbolic meanings of key numbers to understand their transmission and transformation over time.

- **Descriptive Method:** Systematically describing the collected examples of symbolic usage to provide clear and illustrative explanations.

By combining these methods, the study aims to produce a comprehensive understanding of how numerical symbolism operates within and across Turkish and Uzbek linguistic and cultural systems.

Results and Discussion: Results and Discussion:

The analysis of Turkish and Uzbek linguistic and cultural materials reveals that numbers hold significant symbolic value in both traditions. Some numbers, especially 3, 7, 9, and 40, recur frequently and carry deep cultural and spiritual meanings.

The Symbolism of the Number 3: In both Turkish and Uzbek traditions, the number 3 often symbolizes completeness, strength, and unity. For example, in Turkic mythology and fairy tales, heroes often face three trials or three enemies before achieving success. Common expressions like "üç dilek" (three wishes) in Turkish and "uch sinov" (three trials) in Uzbek reflect this symbolic structure. The number three is often linked to the sacred triads found in ancient Turkic beliefs (sky, earth, water).

The Symbolism of the Number 7: The number 7 is considered sacred and associated with perfection and cosmic harmony. In Turkish culture, "Yedi kat gök" (Seven layers of heaven) and "Yedi gün" (seven days) are common phrases. Similarly, in Uzbek culture, "Yetti poytaxt" (seven capitals) and "yetti avlod" (seven generations) reflect reverence for the number. The number 7 often appears in rituals and ceremonies, symbolizing spiritual completeness.

The Symbolism of the Number 9: The number 9 carries connotations of greatness and completeness. Historically, Turkic peoples revered the number 9, associating it with power and celestial significance. In Turkish mythology, there are references to nine layers of the sky (*dokuz kat gök*), and in Uzbek folklore, nine often appears as a mystical number representing fullness before a great transition.

The Symbolism of the Number 40: The number 40 is deeply rooted in Turkish and Uzbek traditions, symbolizing a period of trial, transformation, and purification. In Turkish, expressions such as "kırk gün" (forty days) refer to critical periods of change (such as mourning). In Uzbek culture, "qirq kunlik to'y" (forty-day wedding) and "qirq kunlik chaqaloq" (forty-day-old infant celebration) signify important social and

spiritual transitions. The number 40 often marks the completion of a significant life cycle.

Comparison between Turkish and Uzbek Traditions:

- **Similarities:** Both cultures assign sacred and transformative meanings to numbers, especially 3, 7, 9, and 40. Their use in proverbs, myths, and daily expressions demonstrates a shared Turkic cultural heritage.

- **Differences:** While symbolic interpretations are generally aligned, slight variations exist in emphasis. For example, Uzbek folklore sometimes places stronger emphasis on the social and familial aspects of numbers (e.g., 40 relatives), while Turkish culture may emphasize spiritual or mythical aspects (e.g., the journey to the seventh sky).

These findings show that numbers are not simply abstract entities but are integral to the cultural fabric of Turkish and Uzbek societies, linking individuals to their historical, social, and spiritual realities.

Conclusion: The symbolic meanings of numbers in Turkish and Uzbek languages offer a fascinating glimpse into the shared cultural consciousness and historical experiences of Turkic peoples. Numbers such as 3, 7, 9, and 40 are not merely used for counting but carry rich symbolic values rooted in mythology, folklore, religious practices, and everyday life.

Through a comparative analysis, this study has shown that both languages attribute similar meanings to these numbers, reflecting common beliefs about life cycles, spiritual perfection, trials, and social customs. Despite some variations in usage and emphasis, the core symbolic functions remain remarkably consistent, highlighting the deep-rooted cultural and linguistic ties between Turkish and Uzbek societies.

Understanding the symbolic role of numbers enhances our appreciation of the profound ways language encodes cultural knowledge, values, and collective memory. This research also emphasizes the importance of preserving these cultural elements in the face of globalization and linguistic change. Future studies could further explore how these symbolic meanings continue to evolve in modern Turkish and Uzbek societies under the influence of contemporary culture and media.

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