

LINGUOCULTURAL STUDY OF NUMBERS

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Abstract

The article explores the linguistic and cultural significance of numbers. It analyzes the religious, mythological, and folkloric meanings of numbers in different cultures and their connection with customs and cultural traditions. The study demonstrates that numbers reflect a close relationship between language and culture and play an important role in shaping human cultural cognition.

Keywords

numbers, linguoculture, culture, folklore, mythology, folk traditions, “magical numbers”, ethnolinguistics.

Research on numerical symbolism shows that the understanding and interpretation of numbers differ across cultures. This is largely due to the mythological and religious foundations of European and Turkic cultures. It is known that Turkic culture was formed through the interaction of various religions and cultural traditions. Therefore, the symbolic meanings associated with numbers in this culture are much richer and more diverse compared to European culture.

In Western culture, the concept of numbers has mainly developed under the influence of Christianity and ancient Greek philosophy. As a result, interpretations related to numbers in this region tend to be more precise, logical, and partly based on scientific reasoning. Consequently, they are relatively easier to analyze and understand. Just as every nation has its own unique culture and worldview, their perceptions of numbers are also shaped differently. Some numbers are considered symbols of luck or goodness in certain cultures, while in others they may carry negative meanings.

Linguoculturology studies the close relationship between language and culture. Language is deeply connected with culture, as it expresses a nation's values, traditions, and worldview. At the same time, language is not only a means of communication but also an important tool for preserving and transmitting cultural knowledge. Language and culture are two interrelated systems, and linguoculturology emerges at their intersection. This field, which lies between linguistics and cultural studies, focuses on humans, their language, and their culture. Language is regarded as a means of expressing culture and transmitting it from generation to generation.

Therefore, language is considered one of the key markers of a nation. It reflects the spirit, values, and worldview of a people. In particular, stable linguistic units embody national characteristics, moral norms, and historical experience.

This study examines the linguocultural and national-mental characteristics of single-digit numbers, specifically 3, 4, and 7. The research primarily focuses on the symbolic meanings of numbers formed since ancient times and their connection with religious, mythological, and mystical beliefs. Using cultural-historical and comparative methods, the study analyzes and compares perspectives from different cultures. It has been found that the use of numbers in various cultures possesses distinct national features. In each culture, certain numbers are associated with specific traditions, customs, and psychological views, reflecting their cultural



identity. In this regard, numbers are not only mathematical concepts but also carriers of cultural meaning.

From a linguocultural perspective, language and culture are closely interconnected. Culture is expressed through language, while culture determines the meaning of linguistic units. As a result, the process of human cognition is also shaped through language and culture. This is especially evident in the use of numbers, as they acquire unique meanings in every culture.

In traditional cultures, numbers hold significant symbolic value, expressing worldview, values, and historical experience. Studying numerical perceptions across different cultures helps to better understand national thinking, psychological traits, and the level of language development. Moreover, numbers are part of a special symbolic system known as a numerical code. Through this code, ideas about humans, nature, and existence are expressed. In ancient times, numbers were regarded as sacred tools for organizing and explaining the universe. They served not only as a means of describing reality but also as a model for understanding and reconstructing it.

In essence, numbers are abstract mathematical concepts that indicate quantity or order. However, under the influence of language and culture, they acquire additional symbolic meanings. Therefore, while numbers serve as an important tool in intercultural communication, they can also sometimes lead to misunderstandings due to differing interpretations.

In everyday speech, expressions and concepts related to numbers are very common. Therefore, before studying this topic, it is useful to briefly consider the history of numbers. In ancient times, people were forced to create various signs due to their daily needs. Initially, numbers were expressed through simple words. Later, ancient Egyptians and Babylonians developed special systems of symbols to represent numbers. In earlier periods, Egyptians used pictorial signs, while later numbers began to be written using cuneiform script.

In the past, since people were not skilled in counting, they used practical methods. For example, to count livestock, they would place one stone for each animal into a bag; the number of stones represented the number of animals. Even the modern word “calculator” comes from the Latin “*calculus*,” meaning “stone,” which reflects this practice.

Over time, numbers became an integral part of human life. As a result, various expressions, proverbs, and riddles related to numbers emerged. For example, in everyday speech, expressions such as “to be anxious” (literally “to have four eyes”) or “all directions are favorable” are commonly used, as well as proverbs like “measure seven times, cut once.” This demonstrates that numbers play an important role not only in calculation but also in language and culture.

In addition, various superstitions related to numbers have developed among different peoples. Some European cultures even sacralized numbers and interpreted them in connection with life. According to researchers, such beliefs are linked to the human desire to control life. As a result, people began to classify certain numbers as “lucky” or “unlucky,” “magical” or “mysterious.”

For example, the number seven is considered a symbol of luck and happiness in many cultures, while the number 13 is regarded as unlucky in some European countries. In certain cases, this number is even deliberately avoided in everyday life, such as in transportation or service systems.¹

Almost every world religion has its own “lucky” and “unlucky” numbers. Concepts related to these numbers also vary from nation to nation. For instance, the number “forty” has held special significance in many cultures. In Babylonian tradition, heavy rains, storms, and floods lasted for forty days, which led people to consider this period dangerous. The Romans

¹ <https://ppza.ru/uz>



used to place ships in quarantine for forty days, and even the word “quarantine” is believed to originate from the number forty.

In Ancient Egypt, Osiris disappeared for forty days after his death, and this period was considered a time of fasting. The number “forty years” is also significant in many historical events: Elijah ruled Israel for forty years, while the prophets David and Solomon also ruled for forty years.

Today, among the Miao and Yao peoples living in China’s Yunnan province, there is an interesting tradition. After a child is born, the mother immediately begins doing household work, while the father rests for forty days. This custom is intended to protect the newborn and the mother from evil spirits. In the 20th century, some scholars noted that certain numbers receive special attention in folklore, rituals, and everyday customs. At the same time, the issue of “mysterious numbers” is still not fully explored in folklore studies.

Ethnographers who have studied the mythological views of various peoples and ancient ancestors of the world—such as E.R. Tylor, L. Lévy-Bruhl, and E. Leffler—argue that with the development of primitive counting systems, belief-based associations with certain numbers also emerged. Similarly, scholars such as A.V. Vasilyev, D.O. Shepping, and I.I. Chistyakov have analyzed superstitious beliefs related to “magical numbers.” Research by Yu.M. Lotman, A.Ya. Sirkin, and other scholars also provides interesting information about “extraordinary” numbers.

Researchers of the linguopoetic features of numbers have noted that certain numbers used in proverbs, folk songs, and epics carry special meanings. In particular, Bulgarian scholar Z.P. Ivanov analyzed “typical numbers” in Bulgarian folk songs in 1921, although his work did not provide sufficient information about the origin, types, and functions of “magical numbers.”²

Numbers are a complex phenomenon that is closely connected with human language and culture. They are not only a means of calculation but also carry religious, mythological, and folkloric meanings in different cultures. Research shows that numbers serve as important elements reflecting culture, traditions, and national mentality. Through “mysterious” or “auspicious” numbers, customs, beliefs, and moral norms of a people are expressed within the interaction of language and culture.

In addition, numbers perform specific semantic functions in linguopoetic contexts such as proverbs, riddles, folk songs, and epics. Therefore, the linguocultural study of numbers is significant not only from the perspective of linguistics but also from ethnography and folkloristics.

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