

ANALYZING CULTURAL VALUES OF NUMBERS IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK LANGUAGES

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Annotation: This article examines the linguistic and cultural functions of numbers in English and Uzbek, offering a comparative analysis of their syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic roles. It delves into the complexities of numerical expressions and their use in communication, with an emphasis on the unique features of each language. Through an extensive set of examples, the study highlights both the similarities and differences in number usage, providing a rich and detailed discussion of their impact on linguistic structures.

Keywords: Numbers, English, Uzbek, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, cultural significance, linguistic comparison.

Introduction

Numbers are fundamental to human communication, playing a central role in how we quantify, organize, and conceptualize the world around us. They transcend their mathematical function and serve as linguistic tools that structure meaning in complex ways. This article aims to analyze the function of numbers in two distinct languages: English and Uzbek. While English belongs to the Indo-European family and is largely analytical in structure, Uzbek is part of the Turkic language family and is agglutinative, meaning that it uses affixes to express grammatical relationships. These typological differences influence how numbers behave in each language, both syntactically and semantically.

In English, numbers primarily serve as quantifiers and modifiers, interacting minimally with the morphology of the language. By contrast, Uzbek numbers are subject to extensive morphological transformations due to the affixation process inherent in the language. This study explores these functions through a detailed analysis of cardinal, ordinal, fractional, and collective numbers, along with their cultural significance in both languages. A comprehensive set of examples will illustrate how numbers are integrated into linguistic structures, demonstrating both cross-linguistic similarities and differences.

Methods

The research for this article adopts a comparative linguistic methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. The data were collected from a range of sources, including language corpora, grammatical references, and authentic textual materials in both English and Uzbek. The study focuses on: collective numbers and cultural values of numbers in two compared languages.

Results:

Collective numbers are used to refer to a group or set of things or people as a single unit. They indicate a collective entity rather than focusing on individual members. These numbers are less commonly discussed than cardinal or ordinal numbers, but they play an essential role in expressing quantities that refer to groups. Collective numbers are particularly useful in contexts where grouping or joint action is emphasized, such as counting groups of people, animals, or objects.

1. Describing Groups as a Single Unit

Collective numbers are primarily used to indicate that a group of entities is being treated as a whole. Instead of counting individual members of the group, collective numbers refer to the entire group. This is particularly useful when the group acts as a single entity or unit.

- **English:** "A pair of shoes"
- **Uzbek:** "Bir juft poyabzal"

In both cases, the phrase refers to a set of two items (shoes), and the collective number "pair" or "juft" groups these two items as a single unit.

2. Expressing Grouping in Joint Actions

Collective numbers also describe groups that perform actions together or in unison. For instance, when people or animals are described acting together, a collective number may be used to refer to the entire group.[7;137]

- **English:** "A herd of cattle"
- **Uzbek:** "Bir to‘da mollar"

In this context, "herd" or "to‘da" refers to a group of cattle moving or acting together. The collective number emphasizes that the group is functioning as a singular unit, even though it consists of multiple members.

English Collective Numbers

In English, collective numbers often take the form of specific words or phrases that refer to groups. Some common collective numbers include:

- **Pair:** Refers to two items acting as a unit (e.g., a pair of shoes).
- **Dozen:** Refers to twelve items (e.g., a dozen eggs).
- **Score:** Refers to twenty items (e.g., four score and seven years).
- **Hundred:** Refers to a collective group of 100 items (e.g., a hundred people).
- **Thousand:** Refers to a group of 1,000 items (e.g., a thousand stars).

In English, these collective numbers often stand alone or are followed by a noun. They do not change form based on the noun they modify, and the pluralization of the noun depends on context. For example:

- **English:** "He bought a dozen apples."
- **English:** "There were a hundred students."

Uzbek Collective Numbers

In Uzbek, collective numbers are also used to refer to groups or sets of things, but they often follow a more regular morphological pattern. Some common collective numbers include:

- **Juft:** Refers to a pair or set of two (e.g., bir juft poyabzal – a pair of shoes).
- **O‘nlab:** Refers to tens (e.g., o‘nlab kitoblar – tens of books).
- **Yigirmatalik:** Refers to twenties (e.g., yigirmatalik guruh – a group of twenty).
- **Minglab:** Refers to thousands (e.g., minglab odamlar – thousands of people).

In Uzbek, collective numbers often take suffixes like "-lab" or "-talik" to indicate groupings of tens, hundreds, or thousands. These suffixes provide flexibility and allow for a variety of group sizes to be expressed. For example:

- **Uzbek:** "Minglab qushlar uchib ketdi."
(Thousands of birds flew away.)

Here, "minglab" refers to a large collective group of birds, and the noun "qushlar" (birds) remains in its plural form, as the collective number emphasizes the quantity of the group.

Use of Collective Numbers in Sentences

In English, collective numbers are usually placed before the noun they modify and do not change form. The noun following the collective number can be singular or plural, depending on the context:

- **English:** "A dozen eggs were cracked."
- **English:** "The pair of shoes is in the closet."

When a collective number refers to a group acting as a single entity, the verb agrees with the collective noun. However, if the individual members of the group are acting separately, the verb may be pluralized:

- **English:** "The team is winning" (team as a single unit).
- **English:** "The team are arguing among themselves" (focus on individuals within the team).

In Uzbek, collective numbers can either precede or follow the noun they modify, depending on the structure of the sentence. The collective number often takes on a suffix to indicate the size of the group. For example:

- **Uzbek:** "Yigirmatalik guruh mashg'ulotlarda qatnashdi."
(A group of twenty participated in the training.)

In this example, "yigirmatalik" refers to a group of twenty people, and "guruh" (group) is used as the noun. The suffix "-talik" indicates the number of participants in the group. Collective numbers are also commonly used with nouns like "to'da" (herd, group) or "kuchsizlar" (weak people) to express a collective entity.

Cultural Use of Collective Numbers

In both English and Uzbek, collective numbers are often tied to cultural practices or traditional ways of counting groups. For example, in English, the word "**dozen**" is frequently used in markets or trade, especially when buying or selling items in bulk. It is common to buy a "**dozen eggs**" or "**a dozen doughnuts**".[2;289]

In Uzbek, collective numbers are often used in the context of gatherings, families, or social structures. For example, "**to'da**" (a group or herd) is frequently used to refer to groups of animals in agricultural settings, such as a "**to'da qo'ylar**" (a herd of sheep).

Additionally, certain collective numbers have religious or cultural significance. For example, in both English and Uzbek cultures, the number "**forty**" may carry special meaning. In English, the phrase "**forty days and forty nights**" refers to a significant period of time in religious contexts, while in Uzbek, the number "**qirq**" is often associated with important cultural rituals, such as the "**qirq kun**" (forty days) of mourning.

Examples of Collective Numbers in Context

English: A Pair of: "I bought a pair of shoes." (The number refers to two items that make up a pair.). **A Dozen:** "We ordered a dozen doughnuts." (The number refers to twelve doughnuts as a collective unit.). **A Hundred:** "A hundred people attended the event." (The number refers to a group of 100 people, functioning as a collective entity.)

Uzbek: Juft: "U bir juft qo'lqop oldi." (He bought a pair of gloves.). **O'nlab:** "O'nlab kitoblar sotib olindi." (Tens of books were purchased.). **Minglab:** "Minglab odamlar yig'ilishga kelishdi." (Thousands of people came to the meeting.) In these examples, collective numbers in both languages emphasize groups or sets of items rather than focusing on individual units.

Numbers carry more than just mathematical or grammatical meaning in many languages; they also often have deep cultural significance. In both English and Uzbek, certain numbers are associated with traditions, beliefs, and symbolic meanings. These cultural associations affect how numbers are used in daily communication, rituals, and social customs, revealing the intricate relationship between language, culture, and society.

Cultural Significance of Numbers in English

In English-speaking cultures, many numbers carry symbolic or superstitious meanings that have evolved over time. Some of the most notable examples include:

The number **13** is considered unlucky in many English-speaking countries. This superstition, known as **triskaidekaphobia**, can be traced back to various historical and religious sources, including the Last Supper, where 13 people were present, and the belief that Judas, who betrayed Jesus, was the 13th person to arrive.

- **Example:** Many buildings in Western countries skip the 13th floor, labeling it as the 14th to avoid bad luck.

The fear of the number 13 is so ingrained in some cultures that people avoid scheduling important events like weddings or business meetings on the 13th day of the month, particularly if it falls on a Friday (Friday the 13th).

The number **7** is often considered lucky or magical in many cultures, including English-speaking ones. This belief likely stems from religious, mythological, and historical sources, such as the seven days of creation in the Bible, the seven wonders of the ancient world, and the seven heavens in Islamic tradition.

- **Example:** People might say that someone "lives on cloud nine" (another reference to a multiple of three) or that seven is their lucky number in games of chance, such as rolling dice.

In English, the number **40** has religious connotations, particularly within the Christian tradition. It is often associated with periods of testing or trial, such as the **40 days and 40 nights** that Noah spent on the ark or the 40 days Jesus fasted in the wilderness.[6;245]

- **Example:** The expression "40 days and 40 nights" is used metaphorically to describe any prolonged period of time or challenge.

Cultural Significance of Numbers in Uzbek

In Uzbek culture, numbers often have a deep connection to social customs, rituals, and religious practices. The influence of Islam, as well as traditional Central Asian customs, plays a significant role in how numbers are perceived and used in everyday life. Some of the most culturally significant numbers include:

The number **40** (qirq) holds profound cultural and religious meaning in Uzbek society. It is deeply intertwined with Islamic traditions, where the number 40 is significant in various religious contexts. For instance, it is believed that a soul spends 40 days on earth after death before ascending to the afterlife.

- **Example:** In Uzbek culture, **qirq kunlik** (40 days) refers to the traditional mourning period observed after a person's death. This period is marked by gatherings, prayers, and rituals to honor the deceased.

Additionally, the number 40 is important in other life stages and celebrations. For example, newborn babies are traditionally given their first bath on the **40th day** of life, a practice known as **qirqdan chiqarish**. This ritual is believed to protect the child and ensure a healthy and prosperous life.

Similar to English-speaking cultures, the number **7** is considered a lucky and sacred number in Uzbek culture, often associated with spiritual purity and perfection. In Islamic tradition, seven is significant due to the **seven heavens** mentioned in the Qur'an, as well as the belief that Muslims should perform the **Tawaf** (circumambulation) around the Kaaba seven times during the pilgrimage (Hajj).

- **Example:** In Uzbekistan, it is common to offer **seven types of bread** or **seven different dishes** at important life events such as weddings or memorial services, symbolizing abundance and blessings.

The number **3** also has cultural significance in Uzbek tradition. It is considered a balanced and harmonious number, often associated with social and religious practices. For example, **three rounds of prayers** may be performed during a traditional ceremony, or **three visits** might be required to formally end or conclude certain life rituals.

- **Example:** In some regions, people believe that offering food or gifts in multiples of three during memorial services brings blessings to both the giver and receiver.

In Uzbekistan, the number **9** is often viewed as a symbol of longevity and good fortune. This belief stems from ancient Turkic and Mongol traditions, where the number 9 was considered a sacred and imperial number. The khans of the Mongol empire would often present gifts or tributes in sets of nine as a sign of honor and prosperity.

- **Example:** The phrase "to‘qqiz do‘st" (nine friends) is used to symbolize a strong and enduring bond between friends, as the number nine represents completeness and lasting friendship.

Comparing Cultural Aspects of Numbers in English and Uzbek

While both English and Uzbek cultures attach symbolic meaning to numbers, there are some key differences:

1. **Religious Influence:** In both cultures, religious traditions play a significant role in shaping the cultural meanings of numbers. However, Uzbek culture is more deeply influenced by Islamic practices, where numbers like 40 and 7 carry religious connotations, particularly in rituals related to birth, death, and marriage. In English culture, Christian traditions influence the meanings of certain numbers, but superstition (such as with the number 13) also plays a significant role.
2. **Rituals and Customs:** Uzbek culture has many specific customs tied to numbers, particularly related to life stages and transitions. The 40-day mourning period, the 40th-day birth ceremony, and the use of numbers like 3 and 7 in religious rituals highlight how numbers are woven into the fabric of Uzbek life. In contrast, English-speaking cultures tend to use numbers more symbolically in phrases or beliefs (such as "Friday the 13th"), with fewer structured rituals surrounding numbers.
3. **Luck and Superstition:** The belief in lucky and unlucky numbers is present in both cultures. The number 7 is considered lucky in both English and Uzbek cultures, while the number 13 is seen as unlucky in English-speaking countries. Uzbek culture does not seem to have a similarly widespread unlucky number, although specific numbers may be avoided for cultural reasons.

Numbers are more than just tools for counting; they carry significant cultural and symbolic meanings that vary between languages and societies. In English, numbers like 13, 7, and 40 hold special cultural or superstitious meanings, affecting how they are used in daily communication. In Uzbek culture, numbers like 40, 7, 9, and 3 are deeply intertwined with religious and social practices, marking important life events and rituals.

The way numbers are perceived and used in both languages reveals the influence of religion, tradition, and superstition on language and communication. Understanding these cultural aspects of numbers enriches our understanding of how language operates within a cultural context, shaping the way we express and interpret meaning in everyday life. The number "5," for example, which falls outside the range of anyone's definition of subitization, may perhaps be so readily understood because it combines "3" and "2," both of which are subitizable and might act as memory chunks (e.g., Gobet et al. 2001).

Discussion

The analysis reveals significant differences in how English and Uzbek treat numbers at the grammatical and cultural levels. One of the key findings is the role of morphology in shaping the way numbers are used in Uzbek. The agglutinative structure of Uzbek allows for complex transformations of numerical expressions, with affixes that alter the syntactic and semantic functions of numbers.

Another important aspect is the cultural significance of numbers in both languages. While English cultural numbers are often associated with superstition (e.g., "13"), Uzbek numbers

are more closely tied to religious and social traditions (e.g., "40"). This cultural dimension affects how numbers are interpreted and used in daily communication, providing insight into the broader social and cultural context of each language.

Conclusion

This comparative study has demonstrated that while both English and Uzbek use numbers for similar purposes—quantification, ordering, and grouping—their grammatical treatment of numbers is significantly different. Uzbek, with its agglutinative structure, allows for greater morphological flexibility in number usage, while English relies on a more fixed and analytical approach.

Culturally, numbers in Uzbek carry more symbolic meaning, especially in social and religious contexts, whereas English numbers tend to serve more functional or superstitious roles. This cultural aspect underscores the importance of understanding not only the linguistic but also the sociocultural contexts in which numbers are used.

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