

Reflection of Anthropomorphic (Somatic) And Numerical Linguocultural Codes in The Concept of Quantity in The Uzbek Language

Egamberdiyeva Nilufar Latibjon qizi

Namangan State University, Doctoral Candidate, Uzbekistan

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Abstract: Although the concept of quantity is universal, its linguistic expression is closely tied to culture. This article examines how quantity is conceptualized in the Uzbek language through two types of linguocultural codes – anthropomorphic (somatic) and numerical. Based on phraseological units, it is revealed that body-based measures (e.g., *bir hovuch* ‘a handful’, *bir qadam* ‘a step’) as well as culturally significant numbers (3, 7, 40, 1001) encode quantity not only in numerical terms but also with qualitative meanings such as smallness, completeness, sacredness, and traditionality. These analyzed codes reflect the bodily experience and worldview of Uzbek speakers. The findings contribute to cross-cultural research on the concept of quantity and demonstrate the interaction of language, culture, and thought in Uzbek.

Keywords: Linguocultural code, concept of quantity, Uzbek language, anthropomorphic code, somatic code, numerical code, cognitive linguistics, linguoculturology.

Introduction: The perception of quantity is one of humans’ fundamental cognitive abilities. All languages possess grammatical, lexical, and phraseological means to express quantity. However, beyond universal numerals, each linguistic community has tools that conceptualize quantity on the basis of its own cultural perspectives. Such culturally specific expressions are grounded in what linguoculturologists call “linguocultural codes” – systems of signs drawn from basic experiential domains such as the human body, the animal world, nature, or mythology (Maslova, 2001; Karasik, 2002).

The Uzbek language, a Turkic language spoken by over 30 million people in Central Asia, has rich examples of such codes for expressing quantity. The two most productive are the anthropomorphic (or somatic) code and the numerical code. The anthropomorphic code uses body parts and body movements as natural measures, while the numerical code relies on the symbolic meanings of specific numbers.

METHODS

Local studies have examined traditional measurement

units or number symbolism in folklore (Jo’rayev, 1991; Jumayeva, 2010;), but a comprehensive cognitive-linguoculturological analysis that treats them as a unified system of linguocultural codes is still lacking.

In cognitive linguistics, quantity is viewed as a conceptual structure shaped by image schemas such as CONTAINER, MEASURE, and PART-WHOLE (Langacker, 1987). These schemas are often metaphorically mapped from concrete bodily and spatial experience. For example, the CONTAINER schema appears in the phrase *bir hovuch un* ‘a handful of flour’ – the palm serves as a container. Quantity is not merely objective measurement; it also incorporates cultural meanings: the same number may be interpreted differently across cultures. In Turkic and Islamic culture, the number 40 signifies trial, purification, or completeness.

The notion of “linguocultural code” is used in linguoculturology to denote a system of meanings that reflects a particular ethnos’s worldview (Maslova & Pimenova, 2016). Anthologies of concepts list several types of codes (Karasik & Sternin, 2005). Each code is

based on a specific source: the human body (anthropomorphic/somatic code), animals (zoonymic code), plants (phytomorphic code), food (gastronomic code), numbers (numerical code), etc. For the concept of quantity, these codes allow abstract numerical notions to be expressed through concrete, culturally familiar images.

“Cultural codes can appear in various material shells – as realities of daily life, representatives of flora and fauna, etc. In the human mind, they are reflected in the form of knowledge, images, and associations” (Kovshova, 2013, p. 174).

“One of the most universal, most ancient, and most widely represented codes in the linguistic picture of the world is the somatic code. Phraseologisms with somatic components occupy a central place in the phraseological system. The anthropocentricity of the linguistic picture of the world is expressed in the classification of the world through the human image – often with the help of somatic components such as head, eye, hand, foot” (Syritsa, 2022, p. 2).

The somatic (anthropomorphic) code is the most widespread because the human body is a universal measuring tool. The hand, mouth, foot, and fingers serve as natural units of measurement. In Uzbek, expressions such as *bir hovuch* ‘a handful’, *bir qadam* ‘a step’, *bir og‘iz* ‘a mouthful’ not only express quantity but also carry connotative meanings of smallness, scarcity, or sympathy.

The numerical code is based on numbers that have acquired symbolic meaning through religion, mythology, or tradition. In Uzbek culture, numbers 3, 7,

9, 40 appear frequently in proverbs, fairy tales, and everyday speech. Often they do not denote an exact quantity but rather meanings such as ‘many’, ‘complete’, ‘sacred’, or ‘transition period’.

“It is known that when a number is used freely, it indicates an exact quantity. However, within phraseological units, the number often loses its precise meaning, contributes to an overall phraseological meaning, and appears as a symbol of a number that is sacred for a particular culture, confirmed by cultural-historical and linguistic practice” (Syritsa, 2022, p. 3).

The analysis was conducted using a cognitive-linguoculturological approach based on semantic analysis, conceptual metaphor theory, and componential analysis. Each expression was analyzed in three stages: (1) semantic analysis – identifying the quantity meaning (little, much, short distance, brief time) and additional connotative meanings; (2) metaphor analysis – identifying the underlying conceptual metaphor (e.g., QUANTITY IS A BODY PART); (3) cultural interpretation – revealing the expression’s connection to Uzbek cultural practices, beliefs and historical context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the Uzbek language, the somatic code uses body parts and body movements as intuitive tools for measuring objects, liquids, distances, and even time. Table 1 presents the most common somatic quantity expressions, their literal meaning, quantity meaning, and cultural interpretation.

Table 1. Somatic quantity expressions in Uzbek

Expression	Literal meaning	Quantity meaning	Cultural interpretation
bir hovuch	one palm	small amount (grain, people)	Hand as natural container; often expresses sympathy or scarcity
bir qultum	one gulp	small amount of liquid	Related to drinking; minimal quantity
bir qadam	one step	short distance	Step as measure of proximity; metaphorically, a small achievement
bir og‘iz	one mouth	very little (speech, water)	Mouth as container for speech or liquid; <i>bir og‘iz gap</i> ‘a word or two’
bir	one pinch	very little (salt,	Amount taken with fingertips; used in

Expression	Literal meaning	Quantity meaning	Cultural interpretation
chimdim		spice)	cooking and traditional medicine
bir tutam	one handful (of long objects)	small amount (hair, thread, grass)	Quantity that fits between fingers
bir qarich	one span	short distance (~20 cm)	Between thumb and index finger; for small lengths
bir tomchi	one drop	very little liquid	Smallest natural measure of liquid; often symbol of scarcity
bir tilim	one slice	small piece (bread, melon)	Slice – a cut piece; widely used for bread and fruits

Most somatic expressions denote small or little quantity. The human body serves as a natural benchmark for quantities considered “normal” or “minimal” in everyday life. Expressions for large quantities through the somatic code are rare (bir qop ‘a sack’ – sack is not a body part but relates to carrying capacity). This asymmetry suggests that the anthropomorphic code mainly conceptualizes quantities that are limited by and manageable by the body’s capacity.

The main conceptual metaphor is QUANTITY IS A BODY PART OR BODY MOVEMENT. Body parts or movements provide structure for understanding a specific quantity. For example, in bir hovuch un ‘a handful of flour’, the hand acts as a container and its capacity determines the quantity. In bir qadam yo‘l ‘a step of road’, the step is a unit of movement mapped onto distance. These metaphors are grounded in bodily experience: humans first acquire notions of quantity through their own bodies (Piaget, 1952).

Many somatic measures reflect a traditional lifestyle. Bir chimdim ‘a pinch’ comes from times when precise measurements did not exist in cooking and medicine. Bir qarich ‘a span’ and bir qadam ‘a step’ were used before the metric system was introduced. Bir bosh ‘a head’ for counting livestock shows the nomadic heritage. Furthermore, these expressions carry emotional meanings: bir qarich tuproq ‘a span of soil’ expresses the value of one’s homeland, and bir tishlam non ‘a bite of bread’ may convey hospitality or scarcity. Thus, the somatic code encodes not only quantity but also social and affective meanings.

Beyond body-based measures, the Uzbek language also uses numbers that have acquired symbolic significance. The numbers 3, 7, 40, and 1001 stand out for their frequency and cultural importance.

Number

3 uch kun ‘three days’ Short but sufficient period; appears in traditional medicine and mourning rituals

3 uch marta aytmoq ‘to say three times’ Emphasis, validation; in Islam, repetition three times gives power

7 yetti o‘lchab, bir kes ‘measure seven times, cut once’ Caution; “seven” here means “many times”

7 yetti mahalla ‘seven neighbourhoods’ All surrounding neighbourhoods; “seven” = from all sides, complete

7 yetti osmon ‘seven skies’ Completeness of the universe; in Islamic cosmology, seven heavens = entire cosmos

7 yetti avlod ‘seven generations’ Long lineage; complete chain of ancestors

40 qirq kun ‘forty days’ Trial, purification, or transition period (postpartum, mourning, chilla)

40 qirq yil ‘forty years’ Very long time; hyperbole

40 qirq osh ‘forty meals’ Charity meal given on the fortieth day after death

1001 ming bir dard ‘a thousand and one sorrows’ Countless troubles; hyperbole

These numbers rarely denote exact quantities. They function as symbolic quantifiers. Three often means a small but sufficient amount, and through repetition it acquires power. Seven symbolizes completeness and perfection, rooted in Turkic cosmology and Islamic tradition. Forty represents a transition period, a trial duration, or a necessary length of time. Thousand and one means 'innumerable' through hyperbole.

The conceptual metaphor is QUANTITY IS A SYMBOLIC NUMBER. Numbers project their symbolic meanings onto quantity. For example, "seven" transfers the meaning of completeness to the concepts of 'many' or 'all'; "forty" transfers the idea of a trial period to a specific time span.

The symbolic meanings of these numbers have deep historical roots. In pre-Islamic Turkic culture, there were seven celestial bodies and seven directions (four cardinal directions, zenith, nadir, and center). With the arrival of Islam, these meanings merged with Islamic numerology: seven heavens, seven earths, circumambulating the Kaaba seven times. Forty is important in Islam as the age of Prophet Muhammad when he received his prophecy, and in Sufism as chilla (a forty-day retreat). In Uzbek folk traditions, forty days are the standard period for a newborn's vulnerability, a newlywed's chilla, and mourning. Thousand and one gained wide fame through the One Thousand and One Nights tales across the East. Thus, the numerical code loads quantity with cultural meanings by consolidating traditions, beliefs, and social practices around a few numbers.

CONCLUSION

In the Uzbek language, the concept of quantity is expressed through anthropomorphic (somatic) and numerical linguocultural codes. The analysis has shown that these codes are not merely alternative ways of expressing quantity but also reflect a culturally specific worldview. These expressions demonstrate the importance of the human body as a cognitive and cultural foundation. The numerical code, built around the numbers 3, 7, 40, and 1001, shows that quantity is often loaded with symbolic meanings. Both codes operate through conceptual metaphors, and these metaphors reveal how speakers understand and express quantity. The findings highlight the importance of integrating cognitive and linguoculturological approaches to understand how universal cognitive abilities are shaped in a specific cultural environment.

In conclusion, the linguocultural coding of quantity in the Uzbek language is a process that reveals the complex relationship between language, culture, and thought.

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