

NUMERICAL COMPONENT PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS IN KHOREZM DIALECTS OF UZBEK: SEMANTIC CLASSIFICATION AND STYLISTIC FUNCTIONS

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Abstract: Phraseological units constitute a vital component of language, reflecting a community's historical experience, customs, mentality, and worldview. The Uzbek language, particularly its regional dialects, possesses a rich phraseological inventory that remains insufficiently studied. This paper investigates phraseological units containing numerical components (numerical phraseologisms) in the Khorezm dialects of Uzbek. Drawing on fieldwork data and dialectological sources, the study identifies, classifies, and analyzes these expressions according to their semantic groups, stylistic functions, and formation patterns. The findings reveal that numerals in Khorezm dialectal phraseologisms predominantly function as symbolic or hyperbolic markers rather than as indicators of precise quantity. The study identifies several semantic categories—including hyperbole, contrast, and proverbial wisdom—and demonstrates that these units serve to enhance expressiveness, convey folk wisdom, and reinforce cultural identity. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the lexical-phraseological richness of the Khorezm dialect and the broader study of Turkic phraseology.

Keywords: Khorezm dialects, numerical phraseological units, phraseology, dialectology, semantic classification, Uzbek language, Turkic languages

1. Introduction

Phraseological units (phraseologisms or phrasemes) are stable, idiomatic expressions that carry figurative and transferred meanings. They serve as important carriers of a nation's historical experience, customs, mentality, and worldview, while significantly enhancing the expressiveness of speech (Cowie, 1998; Moon, 1998). In Uzbek linguistics, phraseological units have been studied from various perspectives by scholars such as Rahmatullayev (1966), Mamatov (1999), Yo'ldoshev (2007), and Shomaqsudov and Shorahmedov (2001). However, regional dialectal phraseologisms, particularly those containing numerical components, have not received adequate scholarly attention.

The Khorezm region, historically situated at the crossroads of diverse civilizations along the Silk Road, has produced a linguistically rich and culturally diverse dialectal system. The Khorezm dialects of Uzbek preserve numerous archaic lexical and phraseological features that have been lost in the literary standard. Among these are phraseological units in which numerals function as structural components, carrying symbolic, hyperbolic, or generalized meanings rather than precise quantitative values.

As Nurmonov et al. (2013) note, numerals in Uzbek are classified into cardinal, ordinal, collective, distributive, and approximate categories, and they denote precise quantitative features of objects. However, when numerals participate in phraseological units, they undergo a process of semantic abstraction: they cease to perform their primary counting function and instead serve to express extremely small or infinitely large quantities, or they may lose their numerical value entirely (Krasnykh, 2001). In many Turkic languages, numerals such as yetti (seven), qirq (forty),



and yuz (hundred) frequently function as symbolic markers of plurality (Doerfer, 1963).

The present study aims to: (1) document and describe numerical component phraseological units found in Khorezm dialects; (2) classify them according to semantic groups; (3) analyze their stylistic functions in discourse; and (4) examine their formation patterns. The research thus contributes to filling a gap in the dialectological study of Uzbek phraseology and adds to the broader comparative investigation of numerals in Turkic phraseological systems.

2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

Phraseology, as a branch of linguistics, investigates stable idiomatic expressions in language. The foundational work in Russian and Soviet phraseology by Vinogradov (1947) established a classification system for phraseological units based on degrees of semantic cohesion, distinguishing phraseological fusions, unities, and combinations. This framework has been widely adopted and adapted in Turkic linguistics.

In Uzbek linguistics, Rahmatullayev (1966) addressed fundamental issues of Uzbek phraseology, while Mamatov (1999) investigated the formation processes of Uzbek phraseologisms. Shomaqsudov and Shorahmedov (2001) compiled a comprehensive explanatory phraseological dictionary that remains a key reference. Yo'ldoshev (2007) further developed the theoretical foundations of Uzbek phraseology and phraseography. Despite this substantial body of work, the dialectal dimension of Uzbek phraseology, particularly the role of numerals, remains underexplored.

It is important to distinguish between phraseological units and proverbs. As Rahmatullayev (1970) observes, proverbs are always structurally equivalent to complete sentences, while phraseologisms may be equivalent to either phrases or sentences. This distinction is relevant because some expressions containing numerals exist simultaneously in both forms. For example, the expression *Besh panjasini og'ziga tiqmoq* ('to stuff all five fingers into one's mouth,' meaning 'to attempt everything at once in a greedy manner') functions as both an idiom and a proverb, with the numeral *besh* (five) symbolizing wholeness and excess rather than literal quantity.

Cross-linguistically, the symbolic role of numerals in phraseology has been examined in various Turkic and non-Turkic languages (Mokienko, 2007; Piirainen, 2012). Research has shown that certain numbers—particularly 3, 7, 40, and 100—recur across cultures as sacred or symbolic quantities, reflecting shared cognitive patterns and cultural archetypes.

3. Materials and Methods

The research material consists of numerical component phraseological units collected from the living speech of native speakers in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan. Data were gathered through fieldwork involving direct observation and structured interviews with speakers of Khorezm dialects. Additional material was drawn from published dialectological sources and phraseological dictionaries of Uzbek.

The analysis employs a combination of methods standard in phraseological research: (1) the descriptive method, for documenting and presenting dialectal phrasemes with their phonetic transcription and semantic explication; (2) componential analysis, for examining the role of numerical components in the semantic structure of each unit; (3) semantic classification, for grouping the collected units into thematic and functional categories; and (4) comparative-typological analysis, for relating Khorezm dialectal data to the literary standard and to other



Turkic languages where relevant. Dialectal forms are presented in a simplified phonetic transcription that preserves key Khorezm dialectal features.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Phraseological Units Containing the Numeral "One" (bir)

The numeral bir (one) is one of the most productive numerical components in Khorezm dialectal phraseology. In these expressions, the numeral typically conveys meanings of unity, minimal quantity, or singularity. The following examples illustrate the range:

Dialectal Form	Literal Translation	Figurative Meaning
Biri alıp, biri qojar	One praises, the other criticizes	Contradictory evaluations; mutual flattery
Bir qulaqınnan girip, ikkinčisinnän çıqadı	Goes in one ear, comes out the other	To disregard what is heard; inattentiveness
Bir-ikki ayız	One or two words	Very little; briefly
Bir ti:n	One coin (tiyin)	Worthless; insignificant
Dili bir qulač	Tongue one fathom (long)	An excessively talkative, impudent person
Iç ayırıqäm bir nešä	My stomach ache is one (excuse)	A person who constantly makes excuses
Kindiki bir	Same navel	Very close, like-minded; inseparable companions

In these expressions, bir functions variously as a marker of minimal quantity (bir ti:n, bir-ikki ayız), unity and identity (kindiki bir), or structural parallelism (biri alıp, biri qojar). The numeral has lost its literal counting function and serves instead as a semantic intensifier or marker of generalization.

4.2 Phraseological Units Containing the Numeral "Two" (ikki)

The numeral ikki (two) frequently appears in expressions denoting duality, contrast, or emphasis. The following phraseological units were documented:

Dialectal Form	Literal Translation	Figurative Meaning
Ikki ajaqını bir ädikä dıqdı	Stuffed both feet into one boot	In a state of panic or confusion



Dialectal Form	Literal Translation	Figurative Meaning
Ikki bükilip	Bending double	Bowing deeply; figuratively, obsequious servility
Ikki dünjadam	In both my worlds	Never; under no circumstances
Ikki doyip bir qayan	Two pots, one cauldron	To keep someone very close; favoritism
Ikki gäppini birindä	Two words into one	Constantly inserting a topic into every conversation
Källäsi ikkimas	His head is not two	Level-headed; prudent and rational

In these expressions, the numeral *ikki* predominantly functions to express contrast (*ikki dünjadam*), physical or metaphorical duality (*ikki bükilip*), and the juxtaposition of two elements to convey a figurative meaning (*ikki ajaqını bir ädikä dıqdı*).

4.3 Phraseological Units Containing Higher Numerals (4, 5, 7, 24, 40)

Higher numerals in Khorezm dialectal phraseologisms tend to carry hyperbolic, symbolic, or culturally laden meanings. The following units were identified:

Dialectal Form	Literal Translation	Figurative Meaning
Dört göz boldı / Gözzi dört boldı	Became four eyes / Eyes became four	Waiting with great anticipation
Beş barmaqını ayzına dıqtı	Stuffed five fingers into the mouth	Attempting everything at once; greediness
Beş ayeñi bir jerä gäldi	Five siblings gathered in one place	Unity; coming together in harmony
Jeddi bükilip	Bending seven times	Showing great respect or excessive deference
Jeddi jaşdan jetmiş jaşaçä	From age seven to age seventy	Everyone; young and old alike
Jeddi uxlap düşünä girmädi	Did not enter seven sleeps' dream	Something completely unexpected; beyond imagination



Dialectal Form	Literal Translation	Figurative Meaning
Qırq ādam bir jana, qınyır ādam bir jana	Forty people on one side, one stubborn person on the other	Extreme stubbornness outweighing collective will
Gun jirmā dōrt sāt	Day has twenty-four hours	Constantly; all day long

The numeral yetti (seven) holds particular cultural significance in Turkic traditions, where it is commonly associated with completeness, sacredness, and totality. In jeddi bükilip, the numeral intensifies the action of bowing, conveying maximal deference. Similarly, qırq (forty) carries deep symbolic weight in Central Asian culture, frequently appearing in rituals, folklore, and expressions of large quantity (Doerfer, 1963). The expression Qırq ādam bir jana, qınyır ādam bir jana employs this numeral to emphasize the overwhelming contrast between collective will and individual obstinacy.

4.4 Semantic Classification of Numerical Phraseological Units

Based on the collected data, numerical phraseological units in Khorezm dialects can be classified into the following semantic groups:

Hyperbolic phraseologisms: In these units, numerals do not express precise quantity but rather serve to intensify or exaggerate. Examples include jeddi bükilip (bending seven times) and jeddi uxlap dūšinā girmādi (did not enter seven sleeps' dream). The numeral amplifies the meaning beyond literal interpretation.

Contrastive phraseologisms: These expressions use numerals to highlight opposition or disparity. For instance, Qırq ādam bir jana, qınyır ādam bir jana contrasts the number forty with a single individual, while ikki ajaqını bir ādikā dıqdı juxtaposes two feet against one boot.

Proverbial wisdom phraseologisms: These units encode folk experience and practical knowledge. Expressions such as biri alıp, biri qojar (one praises, the other criticizes) and jeddi jaşdan jetmiş jaşačā (from seven to seventy) convey generalized wisdom drawn from communal experience.

4.5 Stylistic Functions

Numerical component phraseological units in Khorezm dialects fulfill several important stylistic functions in discourse. They enhance the figurative quality of speech by introducing vivid imagery. They intensify meaning, enabling speakers to express concepts more forcefully than literal language would allow. They convey a distinctly colloquial and folk register, anchoring speech in local cultural identity. Finally, they contribute to the economy of expression, allowing speakers to communicate complex ideas concisely. These phraseologisms are most frequently encountered in everyday conversation, oral folklore, proverbs, and traditional narratives. Their continued active use testifies to the vitality of the Khorezm dialectal tradition and the enduring cultural significance of numerical symbolism.

5. Conclusion

The Khorezm dialects of Uzbek preserve a rich inventory of phraseological units containing numerical components. This study has documented and classified these expressions, revealing



that numerals in dialectal phraseologisms predominantly serve symbolic, hyperbolic, and generalizing functions rather than expressing literal quantity. The semantic analysis identified three principal categories: hyperbolic, contrastive, and proverbial wisdom phraseologisms. Stylistically, these units enhance figurative expressiveness, encode folk wisdom, reinforce cultural identity, and contribute to communicative economy.

The findings underscore the importance of dialectal data in phraseological research, as many expressions documented here are absent from standard literary dictionaries. Future research should expand the corpus of Khorezm dialectal phraseologisms, pursue comparative studies with other Uzbek dialects and related Turkic languages, and investigate the sociolinguistic factors influencing the transmission and potential erosion of these expressions in the context of language standardization and urbanization.

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