



**Number symbolism in the russian and tatar linguistic world image**

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**Abstract**

The number as one of the constants of the global culture is a logical and cultural phenomenon, and the study of such phenomenon in each national language enables to define its conceptual features and particulars of interaction of the language and the culture.

Folklore works which contain names of numbers in their composition can show the features of the language pictures of the world of different nations clearly and vividly, in which the national features are combined in a peculiar way. It is known that numbers used in folk tales show different linguistic traditions. Linguistic-cultural analysis of numbers involves the study of numerical concepts, taking into account their linguistic, etymological and national cultural characteristics. This article aims to study the ethno-cultural symbols of the numbers in Tatar and Russian languages, found in the folk tales of these peoples. The relevance of this paper is conditioned with the fact that results of researches of the numerological code of the Tatar and Russian languages help to identify the common and the unique in the linguistic world image of ethnically different peoples that have contacted for a long time. The purpose of this paper is to describe lexical semantical properties of the number symbolism in the Tatar and Russian languages in the linguistic cultural aspect. Comparison of the philosophic understanding of the world image from the perspective of numbers, analysis of their symbolism with different peoples enables to analyse the specificity of their world outlook and to better understand common languages specific for the linguistic semantics, to establish the link between the language and the culture, to demonstrate the real significance of each of the components of the semantic structure of the world in the diachronous and synchronous perspectives.

**Keywords:** national world outlook, number symbolism, comparative analysis, sacral meaning, numerical model.



## **INTRODUCTION**

During the recent years, researches of the linguistic cultural nature have intensified in the linguistics. Problems of the interaction between the language and the culture, language and mythology, linguistic world outlook, national world image [Zamaletdinov R.R. et. al, 2014], linguistic cultural lexis [Yuisufuva Z. et. al, 2016] have been under study. The language in its various functions in combination with the folk mentality, spiritual and material culture, folk arts, mythology, the language as a verbal code and model of the culture have become subjects for studies by the linguistic culture that has revived within the global linguistics.

According to R.R.Zamaletdinov, the main components of the national world image are cultural values being fundamental categories for each particular people [Zamaletdinov R.R., 2004].

In the Tatar linguistics, the studies of the problem of the linguistic cultural nature are in the formative stage [Gabdrakhmanova F.H., 2011], [Zamaletdinov R.R. et. al, 2012], [Galieva N.F. et. al, 2015], [Salakhova R.R., 2017].

In the Tatar linguistics, valuable linguistic concepts of the spiritual and material culture, sacral terms, thematic groups of lexis are researched from the perspective of the linguistic culturology. Lexical and linguistic peculiarities of phraseological units, proverbs and sayings of the Tatar language are studied [Mugtasimova G.R., 2004]. However, the problem of identification and description of contents of ethnic lexical units with numerical components, where numbers contain a rich linguistic semantics, remain unsolved. Some works were dedicated to studies of secondary meanings of the number [Gizatullina L.R., 2004], [Muratova R.T., 2006], [Izbekova E.I., 2000].

Research of pragmatism of the number symbolism provides a valuable information on the mentality of the people, demonstrates opportunities of the culturological studies of the linguistic means that disclose the essence of the lexical meaning of numerical notions.

The purpose of our research is to identify and to interpret the symbolism of numbers in Russian and Tatar fairytales using the comparative analysis. For the purpose of the analysis, the numbers featuring sacral meanings both in the Russian and the Tatar language were chosen: – *ber* (one), *och* (three), and *jide* (seven).

## **METHODS**

To resolve the objectives set, the following linguistic analysis methods were applied for the paper: semantic analysis method as analysis of the culturological meaning of numbers;



descriptive method including observations and classification of the material under research; comparative analysis to identify universal and differential features of symbolic numbers, etc.

Using the generalization and systematization method, opinions of different researchers and the linguistic material were studied. The analytical method was used to analyze scientific and methodological literature of the subject of the research, scientific concepts in contemporary researches by national and foreign scholars. The descriptive method is a system of research approaches applied for characterization of phenomena of the language at the particular stage of its development; it is a synchronous analysis method.

The comparative method is used to establish common and unique features of the Russian and Tatar languages, in particular, in terms of application of symbolic numeral adjectives. The statistical method makes it possible to deeper understand the phenomenon under study, to identify the most frequent associates taking a certain place in the linguistic consciousness of Russians and Tatars.

## **RESULTS**

As proved by findings of the research, out of the whole set of the numerical complex that shapes numerical perceptions of the Tatar and Russian peoples as a part of the national world image, such numbers as *ber* (one), *och* (three), and *jide* (seven) are especially distinguished. The symbolism of these numbers is embodied in the material culture, beliefs, customs and rituals, charms, mythological and cosmological ideas, folklore and language of each of the peoples. Numerical components are more productive in the stock of idioms of the present-day Russian language [Cherneva N.P., 2003].

L.R.Gizatullina notes that “in different parts of the globe, people did not come to just similar, but to sometimes amazingly identical ideas, independently from each other” [Gizatullina L.R., 2004].

The number *ber* (one) in the Tatar and Russian languages has many similar meanings: all-alone, lonely; the best, perfection; the same, similar to each other, alike; some day, once; single, some of them, etc. [Ganiev F.A. et. al, 2001].

The number *ber* (one) in paroemiae is often used in conjunction with such numbers as two, five. In terms of frequency of application in paroemiae and width of coverage of the fields of application, the number *ber* (one) takes the leading position among numbers both in the Tatar and the Russian languages. Cf: *Ber bakcha jimeshe* – peas from the same pod. *Jide kat ylche, ber kat kis* – measure thrice and cut once.



In the Tatar language, the numerical adjective *ber* (one) can also be found bearing the following meanings: each, all, whole; joint; unified, settled; completely; same as, the same; some, certain; while it can also express the uncertainty of the time of the act, it enhances the meaning of “no”, it points to a negligible quantity, etc. [Ganiev F.A. et. al, 2001].

The number *och* (three) in the Tatar language has a very deep symbolic meaning. It is an integral part of the human’s perception of the most sacral things on the one hand, and has the meaning of “much, many” on the other hand. That is why the number *och* (three) is widely used in cultural traditions and folklore of the people. Thus, mythological characters of Tatar fairytales are three brothers that save three daughters of a king, they fight three-headed snakes, dragons, their travels take three months: “*Och aj digende taunyn argy yagyna toshep jitte*” [Velitova N., 1993]. The Tatar national mentality often makes people feel or see division by three everywhere. Such feature is embodied in a proverb: «*Elanny ochke kissen de, chikertkelek hele bar*» – lit.: The snake, even divided in three parts, will have the strength of a grasshopper.

Therefore, the number *och* (three) has a profound symbolic meaning in the Tatar language. This numerical adjective is a perfect number and a mystical number at the same time in its own right.

The number three in the Russian tradition, first of all, is the embodiment of the spirituality, it symbolizes the fulfillment and completeness. Worshiping of the Christian idea of the Trinity that represents a tripersonality, makes the three a designation of the perfection and spirituality.

A symbol of Russia is a team of three horses, or the “troika-bird” according to a Russian writer N.Gogol. The most famous Russian epic bogatyrs (knights), who were three, are Ilia of Murom, Dobrynia Nikitich and Alesha Popovich. Ivan the Tsar’s Son looked for the happiness in three kingdoms: Copper, Silver and Gold. It can be said that the number three appears in just about all Russian folk fairytales, cf.: “The Three Bears”, “The Three Kingdoms”, “The Birch-tree and Three Kalach”, etc.

Interestingly, in Russia, the number three was not only regarded as a lucky one (*The God likes the trinity*), but also as an unlucky one (*thrice-cursed*).

The number *jide* (seven) in the Tatar language, being borrowed for the common Turkic word *yete, yetti* – seven, is not only used in the meaning of a number, but also in the meaning of “much”, “many”, “multiple times”. V.Z.Panfilov thinks than the Turkic number *jude* (*seven*) was used to summarized the count, to actualize the value of an achievement. That is why it has a sacral meaning in the perception of the people [Panfilov V.Z., 1977].



According to cosmological beliefs of the Tatars, the earth and the heaven consist of seven layers. Thus comes the proverb: *Jide kat kyk, jide kat jir, chyalmyjcha jori bir* – lit.: seven levels of the heaven, seven levels of the earth make the way out hard to find; and phraseological units: *jide kyklerde meny* – lit.: to rise to the seventh heaven; (jump for joy); *jide kat jir astynda* – lit.: under seven levels of earth (under seven locks, on the edge of the world).

The number *jude* (seven) is widely applicable in Tatar proverbs and sayings: *Jitmesh jide yashlek kartnyn da ylgende jide atnalyk ehshe ehshlenmiche kalgan, di* – lit.: and oldman of seventy-seven years will have work / cares for seven weeks after death (i.e. however haed one tries, there will be enough care for the whole life and beyond); *Adem her jidesende ber almasha* – lit.: The man changes each seventh (meaning at the age of 7 years, 17, 27, 37, 70 years, etc.) [Isenbet N., 2010].

It is noteworthy that *jude* (seven) is referred to the category of time, such as the year: *ber eht, ygeznen ber kabym ite toshep kalmasmy dip, jide el jorgen, di* – lit.: A dog waited for seven years for a piece of bull's meat to fall out; *Jirennen aerylgan jide el jylar, yarynnan aerylgan gomer bue jylar* – lit.: A man deprived of his land will cry for seven years, they who lost their significant others – for the rest of their lives; month: *Jide ajlyk jitez bula* – lit.: A seven-month baby turns out to be a quick one (there is a belief existing till now, that a premature baby is more nimble than other children); day: *Bejrembajga atnaga jide kon bejrem* – lit.: For Bairambay, there seven holidays a week; a lazy one has a holiday every day; hour: *Jidede jide segat suga* – At seven o'clock, the clock strikes seven times [Isenbet N., 2010].

Seven is the most sacral number for all peoples.

In the Russian culture, number seven plays an important role, especially in the Russian mythology and folklore: there are seven gods of the ancient Russian pantheon, seven spheres of the heaven, seven good knights, seven baby-goats. Seven symbolized the integrity of the universe by referring to both Pagan and Orthodox Christian number symbolism. In general, the number seven often mans a certain entirety, the maximum number.

Most often, the components of “seven” and “seven people” are used in proverbs and sayings describing the man's attitude towards labor. Thus, in this thematic group, proverbs may be identified that are based on a contraposition: the minority are working and the majority are at rest: *One man has a plough, and seven men have spoons; Two are ploughing, and seven are flourishing their arms; Seven are loading, and one is to carry; Seven villages, but one horse;*



*One is chopping, and seven are trumpeting in their fists.* In this case, the numerical adjective seven serves as a symbolic meaning of the majority, an association of personas of no distinction.

Moreover, in Russian proverbs, the number *seven* often serves in the meaning of “many, much”: *Seven do not wait for one; Seven trouble but one response; Onion is a medicine for seven ailments.*

Seven is the number of the perfection of the nature, the number of the definitive solution. The Russian saying *Measure seven times but cut once* is exactly about the correctness of the final decision.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

Thus, the number as one of the constants of world culture is a logical and cultural phenomenon. Its study in each national language and in each ethnic culture makes it possible to reveal its conceptual characteristics, as well as the peculiarities of the language-culture relation. Traditionally, numbers refer to the most ancient vocabulary of any language. It can also be referred to the languages under the analysis, Russian and Tatar.

The category of numbers in Russian and Tatar is associated with the category of time (one day, three years). In addition, studied numbers are characterized by the symbolism of semantics. For example, in Russian and Tatar languages such numbers as *three* and *seven*, have a deep symbolic meaning. These are perfect numbers (triune unity in religions, three-stage in mythology, threefold and sevenfold repetitions in folklore, etc.) and sacred at the same time.

The uniqueness of the symbolization of numerals in Russian and Tatar national culture is determined by the peculiarity of the worldview and mentality, as well as by the desire of man to explain the structure of the world, society and himself through the traditional perception of numbers. Thus, the number *seven* had a special significance in obit symbolism of Tatars (example: «*Jidese*» is a commemoration on the seventh day of death").

It has been revealed that the numerical code plays an important role in the language and culture of the Russian and Tatar nations, where the numbers *three* and *seven* are singled out. Its symbolism is fixed in spiritual and material culture, beliefs, customs, rituals, folklore and language of ethnoses.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research undertaken proved that numerical units where the semantics is a complex aggregate of national and cultural ideas are objective reflection of phenomena of the material and spiritual in the human's consciousness; they take a certain stratum in the system of the language.



Linguistic cultural symbolism of numbers in the languages under study is reflected in mythological ideas, beliefs, folk medicine, charms, in rituals related to the birth, wedding, funerals and mourning, in epics, fairytales, riddles, proverbs and sayings, in phraseological units, etc. Thus, numbers are often used to define the number of fairytale characters, items, to describe their appearance, size, volume, magnitude, strength, might and other properties of the characters.

Therefore, numbers play an important part in the symbolism. Apart from their basic meanings, they express an ethnocultural meaning. The numeric model as a component of the linguistic world image comprises meanings of the numbers embedded in the mythology, folklore, language, and is an integral part of the spiritual culture of the people. In the cultural context, the number loses its numerical meaning and acquires sacral, symbolic, magical meanings. In the Tatar and the Russian languages, numerals as a part of attributive structures bear a linguistic cultural potential, thus characterizing the particulars of the national world image.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The search is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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