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LINGUOSEMIOTIC FEATURES OF PROVERBS WITH A NUMERICAL COMPONENT IN "ZARBULMASAL"

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Abstract

This study analyzes proverbs containing numerical components**,** which constitute important examples of Uzbek folk paremiology, particularly those found in Gulkhaniy's work "Zarbulmasal". The research reveals that numbers in proverbs function not only as quantitative elements but also convey symbolic, cognitive, cultural, and axiological (evaluative) meanings. It is established that through numbers such as "one", "two", "eight", "nine", "thirty", "forty", "thousand" proverbs express the people's worldview, life experience, moral and normative values, and social relations. Furthermore, the study scientifically substantiates that numbers, acting as linguosemiotic units, enhance the expressiveness of proverbial meaning and ensure imagery and conciseness. The research findings are of significant importance for Uzbek paremiology, linguoculturology, and cognitive linguistics.

Keywords

Uzbek proverbs, Zarbulmasal, Gulkhaniy, numerical proverbs, linguosemiotics, paremiology, cognitive semantics, symbolic meaning, axiological evaluation, national mentality.

Proverbs and sayings, which constitute one of the most ancient and stable layers of Uzbek oral folklore, represent unique linguistic units that embody national thinking, cultural memory, and the semiotic potential of language. Gulkhaniy's work *Zarbulmasal* occupies a special place as a major source offering an artistic and philosophical interpretation of proverbs and aphoristic expressions. The proverbs presented in this work are noteworthy not only for their moral and didactic content, but also for their linguosemiotic characteristics, namely the generation of meaning through signs, symbols, imagery, metaphor, metonymy, and irony.

From a linguosemiotic perspective, a proverb constitutes a compact yet multilayered system of signs in which words do not merely denote concrete objects but express symbolic concepts. In the proverbs found in *Zarbulmasal*, denotative meaning and symbolic (connotative) meaning function in close interaction and complement one another.

The proverb *"Ikki kema tutgan qoldi g'arqob ichinda, chiqmas ul dengizdan bir kema tutmaguncha"* ("He who holds two ships remains drowned in the whirlpool and will not escape the sea until he holds on to one ship") conveys the idea that a person who simultaneously chooses two opposing paths or undertakings is destined to fail. Here, *two ships* symbolize two goals, two choices, or two decisions, while *remaining in the whirlpool* represents helplessness, loss, and failure.

When a person strives in two directions at the same time, their strength and attention are divided, making it impossible to achieve either goal fully. The final part of the proverb, *"until he holds one ship"*, provides a solution: only by choosing a single, clear path and making a firm decision can one "escape the sea," that is, attain success. Indecision leads to defeat, whereas commitment to one chosen course brings stability and achievement. This proverb is particularly

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instructive in situations involving decision-making, career choice, and determining one's life path.

In this context, the numeral *two* symbolically represents instability and incorrect choice. The *ship* is interpreted as a metaphor for the life path, while *water* signifies danger and uncertainty. Such symbolic signification, frequently encountered in *Zarbulmasal*, demonstrates the people's tendency to express abstract concepts through concrete images.

Metaphor constitutes one of the primary semantic mechanisms of proverbs, and in many examples from *Zarbulmasal* it carries the core semantic load. For instance, in the proverb *"Ikki suyuklik bir ko'ngilga sig'mas"* ("Two beloved ones cannot fit into one heart"), the *heart* functions as a metaphor for a person's inner world, emotional and cultural center, and the locus of love and loyalty. *Beloved* symbolizes not merely a person, but a value that demands affection, devotion, and fidelity. The expression *cannot fit* does not denote physical impossibility, but rather psychological and moral incompatibility.

Through the numeral *two*, the meaning of contradiction and division is intensified. The number serves as a semantic tool expressing the indivisibility of emotions: the heart is conceptualized as a single, whole entity incapable of accommodating two objects of devotion simultaneously. The metaphorical-semantic function of this proverb lies in conceptualizing the heart as a container, thereby emphasizing the indivisible nature of love and the necessity of exclusive loyalty. The numerical component reinforces this idea as a powerful linguosemiotic device.

Metonymy in proverbs emerges through part–whole, cause–effect, or object–attribute relationships. The proverb *"Olurda hisobi to'qquz, berurda sanog'i o'ttuz"* ("When taking, the count is nine; when giving, the count is thirty") is constructed on metonymic semantics and reveals human stinginess and injustice through numerical expressions.

In this proverb, the numerals *nine* and *thirty* do not indicate exact quantities, but rather ways of counting and attitudes. *"Hisobi to'qquz"* implies meticulous calculation and excessive caution when taking something, while *"sanog'i o'ttuz"* suggests exaggeration and reluctance when giving. Here, numbers function not as quantitative units, but as measures of psychological attitude, which constitutes the essence of metonymy—expressing the whole through a part.

The numerals convey inner intention: narrow-mindedness in taking and heaviness in giving. Through counting practices, a moral quality—stinginess—is exposed, and numbers assume the role of evaluative units. Thus, in this proverb, quantity replaces attitude, enhancing its expressive power and didactic impact.

Therefore, within the semantic structure of proverbs, numbers do not possess fixed and immutable meanings; rather, they acquire new pragmatic meanings under the influence of context. The proverbs in *Zarbulmasal* exhibit complex and multilayered linguosemiotic structures. Through the interaction of denotative and symbolic meanings, and by means of metaphor, metonymy, and irony, the moral, social, and philosophical views of the people are articulated. Proverbs containing numerical components function less as expressions of quantity and more as semiotic units conveying quality, evaluation, and value judgments.

In this respect, the proverbs of *Zarbulmasal* represent an important source not only for literary and aesthetic analysis, but also for linguosemiotic research, enabling a deeper understanding of meaning-making mechanisms in Uzbek paremiological units.

"Ming qarg'aga bir kesak" ("One clod of earth for a thousand crows")

In this proverb, *thousand* functions not merely as a numeral but as a semantic indicator of excessive quantity and disproportion. From a linguosemiotic perspective, the numerical component symbolically conveys difficulty, inefficiency, and imbalance. The *crow* carries

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symbolic meaning associated with greed, insatiability, and an unproductive multitude. The combination *"a thousand crows"* and *"one clod"* creates a linguosemiotic contrast that highlights injustice and futility through the mismatch of quantity and volume. The proverb succinctly warns against unfair distribution of resources.

"Karnaychidan nima ketar – bir puf" ("What comes from a trumpeter? Only one puff"). This proverb indicates the limited nature of an individual's capacity or outcome. Regardless of the trumpeter's skill, the trumpet produces only a single puff, symbolizing limited results. Here, the trumpeter represents talent, the trumpet signifies means or resources, and *one puff* denotes minimal effect. Through a small event, the overall limitation of capability is conveyed, promoting realism and moderation while criticizing excessive expectations.

"Eshak o'yuni qirq yilda" ("A donkey's trick takes forty years"). This proverb emphasizes patience, perseverance, and the prolonged nature of achievement. The donkey symbolizes endurance and diligence; *its trick* represents acquired skill or result, and *forty years* signifies a long duration. The proverb conveys the life truth that meaningful results require time, effort, and persistence.

"Ema bilgan qo'zilar ikki onani emar, ema bilmas qo'zilar o'z onasin emolmas" ("Lambs that know how to suckle nurse from two mothers, while those that do not cannot nurse even from their own mother"). This proverb underscores the importance of knowledge, experience, and learning. Those who possess skills and experience can adapt and benefit from multiple sources, whereas the inexperienced fail even in familiar conditions. It highlights the decisive role of education and practice in successful action.

In Gulkhaniy's *Zarbulmasal*, proverbs containing numerical components function not as expressions of quantity, but as linguosemiotic units conveying moral evaluation, social relations, irony, and hyperbole. Numerals such as *one, two, eight, nine, thirty, forty,* and *thousand* operate as symbolic codes. Although rooted in folk language, the proverbs are artistically reworked in accordance with the author's satirical and didactic objectives, expressing social criticism, moral instruction, and philosophical generalization.

The present study demonstrates that proverbs containing numerical components in Gulkhaniy's *Zarbulmasal* constitute a complex and multifunctional linguosemiotic system in which numbers transcend their primary quantitative function and acquire symbolic, cognitive, and evaluative meanings. The analysis reveals that numerals operate as culturally encoded signs that reflect collective experience, ethical norms, social relations, and value orientations inherent in the Uzbek national worldview. Through metaphorical and metonymic mechanisms, numerical elements contribute to the condensation of meaning, enabling proverbs to express abstract ideas and moral judgments in a concise and imagistic form.

The findings confirm that numerical components play a decisive role in shaping proverbial semantics by intensifying expressiveness, reinforcing contrast, and structuring evaluative perspectives. Rather than serving as fixed semantic units, numbers in *Zarbulmasal* demonstrate contextual flexibility, allowing them to function as markers of irony, exaggeration, limitation, or moral assessment. This highlights the dynamic interaction between language, culture, and cognition within Uzbek paremiological discourse.

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