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## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PHRASEOLOGICAL UNITS WITH NUMERICAL COMPONENTS IN KAZAKH AND ENGLISH

The article examines phraseological units in Kazakh and English that contain numerical components from one to ten, with the aim of identifying their similarities and differences. At present, the comparative study of phraseological units across languages is becoming an increasingly relevant area of linguistic research. In any language, numbers, in addition to denoting the quantity of objects, also possess symbolic meanings; therefore, they may acquire magical or sacred connotations, enabling a deeper understanding of the surrounding world and of the human being. Numbers thus offer insight into the worldview and cultural specificities of language communities.

Phraseological units with numerical components constitute a particularly fruitful domain of investigation, as they directly reflect the mentality and worldview of native speakers. While numbers are abstract notions, in language they acquire concrete semantic shades, often linked to cultural codes and the historical experience of a people. In this study, a comparative analysis was conducted of Kazakh and English phraseological units containing numerals from one to ten, with a view to identifying their typological similarities and nationally specific features. Stable expressions with numerical components from one to ten occupy a special place among the phraseological units of each language, reflecting characteristic patterns of thinking and the linguistic worldview of each ethnic group.

The analysis revealed cultural features that are reflected and firmly embedded in each language in different ways and made it possible to determine the divergences in the perception of numerical values, their role in culture, and their interpretation by speakers of Kazakh and English. The results of the analysis can be used as background material for translators and may help to overcome extra-linguistic barriers in the translation process. The data considered in the study relate to cultural customs, traditions, religious ceremonies, phrasal verbs and proverbs. The paper concludes with recommendations for interpreting word combinations from Kazakh into English and from English into Kazakh.

**Keywords:** linguistics, phraseological units, fixed expressions, linguistic worldview, numerical components, comparative analysis, linguistic heritage.

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### Қазақ және ағылшын тілдеріндегі сандық компонентті фразеологиялық бірліктердің салыстырмалы талдауы

Мақалада қазақ және ағылшын тілдеріндегі құрамында бірден онға дейінгі сан есімдер кездесетін фразеологиялық бірліктер салыстырмалы тұрғыдан қарастырылады. Зерттеудің мақсаты – олардың ұқсастықтары мен айырмашылықтарын айқындау. Әртүрлі тілдердегі фразеологиялық бірліктерді салыстыра зерттеу тіл білімінің өзекті бағыттарының бірі болып отыр. Кез келген тілде сан есім заттардың санын білдірумен қатар, символдық жүк аркалап, кей жағдайда сиқырлы немесе сакралдық мәнге ие болып, қоршаған дүниені және адамның өзін тереңірек түсінуге мүмкіндік береді.

Сандық компоненті бар фразеологизмдер этностың дүниетанымы мен мәдени кодын тікелей бейнелейтін ерекше тілдік қабат болып саналады. Зерттеу барысында қазақ және ағылшын тілдеріндегі бірден онға дейінгі сан есімдер қатысқан фразеологиялық бірліктердің

ұқсастықтары мен ұлттық-ерекше белгілері анықталды. Сандық компоненті бар тұрақты тіркестер әр тілдің фразеологиялық жүйесінде ерекше орын алып, әр этностың ойлау ерекшелігі мен әлемнің тілдік бейнесін айқындайды.

Зерттеу нәтижелері аудармашыларға арналған фондық материал ретінде пайдалануға болады және аударма барысында туындайтын экстралингвистикалық кедергілерді еңсеруге жәрдемдеседі. Эмпириялық материалға мәдени әдет-ғұрыптар мен салт-дәстүрлерге, діни рәсімдерге, сондай-ақ фразалық етістіктер мен мақал-мәтелдерге негізделген фразеологиялық бірліктер енді. Мақаланың соңында сандық компоненті бар тұрақты сөз тіркестерін қазақ тілінен ағылшын тіліне және ағылшын тілінен қазақ тіліне аудару жолдары бойынша бірқатар ұсыныстар беріледі.

**Түйін сөздер:** тіл білімі, фразеологизмдер, тұрақты тіркестер, әлемнің тілдік бейнесі, сандық компоненттер, салыстырмалы талдау, тілдік мұра.

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### Сопоставительный анализ фразеологических единиц с числовыми компонентами в казахском и английском языках

Статья посвящена сопоставительному анализу фразеологических единиц казахского и английского языков, содержащих числовые компоненты от одного до десяти, с целью выявления их сходств и различий. В настоящее время сопоставительное изучение фразеологических единиц различных языков является одним из наиболее востребованных направлений лингвистических исследований. В любом языке числительное помимо обозначения количества предметов обладает символической нагрузкой, может приобретать магическое или сакральное значение, позволяя глубже осмыслить окружающий мир и самого человека.

Фразеологизмы с числовыми компонентами составляют особый пласт языка, непосредственно отражающий особенности менталитета и мировосприятия носителей языка. В ходе исследования проведён сопоставительный анализ фразеологических единиц казахского и английского языков с числительными от одного до десяти, выявлены их типологические сходства и национально-специфические черты. Устойчивые сочетания с числовым компонентом занимают особое место в фразеологической системе каждого языка, репрезентируя особенности мышления и языковую картину мира соответствующего этноса.

Результаты анализа обнаруживают культурные особенности, закрепившиеся в каждом языке собственными средствами, и позволяют установить различия в восприятии числовых значений, их роли в культуре и интерпретации носителями казахского и английского языков. Полученные данные могут быть использованы в переводческой практике как фоновый материал и способствовать преодолению экстралингвистических барьеров в процессе перевода. Эмпирическую базу исследования составили единицы, связанные с культурными обычаями и традициями, религиозными обрядами, а также фразовые глаголы и пословицы. В заключение предлагаются рекомендации по передаче словосочетаний с числовым компонентом при переводе с казахского на английский и с английского на казахский.

**Ключевые слова:** лингвистика, фразеологизмы, устойчивые выражения, языковая картина мира, числовые компоненты, сопоставительный анализ, языковое наследие.

## Introduction

Interest in the cultures and traditions of different peoples has deep historical roots. Humankind has long been curious about the ways of life and customs of other nations, and one of the most important means of accessing this knowledge is language. Language is a fundamental resource of every people and plays a crucial role in everyday life, while phraseological units, in turn, constitute one of the most valuable components of a nation's linguistic heritage. They reflect history, culture, unique aspects

of thinking and worldview, as well as the national colouring and originality of the language. Phraseological units make it possible to gain a deeper understanding of a people's mentality and values.

Phraseological units are an integral component of any language. They embody the distinctive perception of the world through the prism of language and national culture. Full mastery of a language is impossible without a deep understanding of its linguistic specificities, among which phraseological units hold a special place. According to the Russian linguist I. I. Chernysheva, phraseological units

are stable lexical-grammatical complexes of various structural types whose meaning arises from the complete or partial semantic transformation of their components (Chernysheva, 1970: 41). Phraseology as a branch of linguistics studies fixed word combinations and expressions that give the language expressiveness and imagery. It is no coincidence that phraseological units are often described as the true “treasure-house” of a language, since they make speech more vivid and engaging.

The ability to understand and use phraseological units not only facilitates comprehension of one’s interlocutor, but also enables speakers to formulate their thoughts more precisely, which is particularly important in interpersonal communication. Knowledge of phraseology is an integral component of linguistic competence: one cannot be regarded as a true expert in a language without at least a basic familiarity with its phraseological units. This underscores the importance of studying this domain, which opens up new perspectives for language learners. Both Kazakh and English abound in figurative expressions that not only enrich speech but also reflect the cultural specificities and traditions of the respective peoples. It is noteworthy that phraseological units in different languages may overlap to some extent yet also differ substantially.

The principal properties of phraseological expressions are their stability and semantic integrity. This means that the word order within a phraseological unit cannot be altered without affecting its meaning. For example, in Kazakh the fixed expression (“алқымынан алды”) cannot be transformed into (“алды алқымынан”) without destroying its idiomatic meaning. This requirement to preserve internal structure makes phraseological units particularly interesting for analysis. Moreover, mastery of phraseological units enriches speech by adding emotional coloring and depth. The use of phraseological expressions enables speakers not only to make their utterances more expressive, but also to convey mood, atmosphere, or even a specific cultural context. For instance, the Kazakh phrase (“суда жүзген балықтай”) (“like a fish in water”) conveys a sense of comfort and confidence that cannot be fully captured by a neutral description.

Thus, phraseology is a crucial aspect of language study that opens the way to a deeper understanding of a people’s culture and modes of thought. By mastering phraseological units, we not only learn the language, but also immerse ourselves in its rich history and traditions, which makes the learning process both engaging and intellectually rewarding.

Every language is not merely a means of communication; it also reflects the unique cultural characteristics of its speakers. In this context, comparative analysis of languages is particularly important, as it makes it possible to identify both differences and common features in cultural values, traditions, and mentality. These aspects are clearly manifested in phraseological constructions, which in turn are rooted in a deep historical and cultural background. Phraseological units, or fixed expressions, often reflect unique aspects of a people’s life and ways of thinking (Maltseva, 1991: 75-77).

### Materials and methods

Comparative phraseology investigates similarities and differences between phraseological systems and relates them to cultural and historical factors. In the present study we treat phraseological units broadly, including idioms, proverbial expressions and other fixed combinations in which the numerals from one to ten occur as independent lexical items.

The material consists of Kazakh and English phraseological units with a cardinal numeral from one to ten, drawn primarily from major phraseological dictionaries and collections of proverbs. For Kazakh, we relied on Kenesbayev’s phraseological dictionary (Kenesbayev, 2007), the Kazakh–Russian phraseological dictionary compiled by Kozhakhmetova, Zhaisakova and Kozhakhmetova (1988) and other lexicographic sources. For English, we used proverb and idiom dictionaries such as *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs* (Speake, 2006), *Mieder’s handbook of proverbs* (Mieder, 2004) and works on English phraseology by Kunin (1986, 1990), alongside general lexicographic sources.

All phraseological units containing the relevant numerals were extracted by means of continuous sampling. Multi-word expressions in which the numeral forms part of a proper name or a purely technical term were excluded. Each unit was coded for the following parameters: source language (Kazakh / English), numeral, literal gloss, idiomatic meaning, main semantic field (e.g. quantity, evaluation, interpersonal relations, sacredness, temporality) and, where necessary, brief cultural comments.

The analysis combines qualitative and quantitative procedures. Quantitatively, we identify the relative frequency and productivity of each numeral within the collected material. Qualitatively, we conduct a contrastive examination of semantic patterns and cultural connotations, with particular attention to cases where a Kazakh phraseological unit lacks

a direct structural equivalent in English but can be matched by a functional analogue. For expository purposes, the discussion is organised around the numerals from one to ten, which makes it possible to trace both shared motifs and language-specific extensions.

### Literature review

Phraseology in both Kazakh and English is exceptionally rich and diverse. The study of phraseological units offers access to the deep layers of national mentality, historical development and cultural values. A substantial contribution to the investigation of Kazakh phraseology has been made by V.P. Zhukov, E.A. Bystrova, G. Kosymova, T. Zhakanbaeva and many others, whose works form the basis of contemporary phraseological research and outline new promising directions. In recent years numerous articles, monographs and dissertations have appeared that focus on the comparative analysis of phraseological units.

Among the scholars who have examined the linguistic nature of proverbs and their common as well as specific features are A. Baitursynov, S. Kenesbayev, R. Sarsenbayev, B. Adambayev, A. Kaidar, S. Nuryshev, G. Musabayev, M. Gabdullin and G. Turbayeva. A comparative approach to proverbs has been developed in the works of A. Nurmakanov, E. Mukysheva, A. Donbayeva and D. Begalykyzy.

In the English-language tradition, the collection of proverbial heritage can be traced back to early periods. According to a number of studies, the first major collection of proverbs, sometimes referred to as the “Book of Proverbs in the Testament”, was compiled as early as the fifth century (The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs, 1992; Raidaut, 1997; Spears, 2007). Extensive research on proverbs and proverbial lore has been carried out by N. Barley, A. Dundes, A. Krickman, G. Milner, A. Taylor, G. L. Apperson, Linda and Rodger Flavelder, among others. Investigations devoted to the nature of fixed expressions in English are closely associated with the work of A. V. Kunin (Kunin, 1986; 1989).

English proverbs are widely represented in the Bible. Because of the authority and popularity of the biblical text, many of its lines entered everyday usage, and word combinations drawn from the Bible became fixed expressions over time. Proverbs are regarded as a highly content-rich form of linguistic heritage; writers frequently turn to them to make their ideas more concise, concrete and vivid.

English proverbs are widely used both in the Bible and in Shakespeare’s works, and a number of scholars therefore consider the Shakespearean era to be the “golden age” of proverbs in English. This list of researchers is not exhaustive, but it illustrates the continuity and breadth of scholarly interest in proverbs and other fixed expressions in both Kazakh and English traditions.

### Results and discussion

This section examines some common features and differences in the use of the numerals from 1 to 10 in phraseological expressions in Kazakh and English.

In Kazakh, the numeral *one* (*бір*) occupies a special place as a sacred number. In Kazakh phraseological units it is frequently associated with divine images: *бір Аллаға тәуекел* (‘trust in the One God, the Almighty’), *Бір Алла өзің жар бола көр!* (‘may the One God protect us’), *Бір құдайдың ұрғаны* (‘one punished by God’), *Бір құдайдан тілегенім* (‘the one thing I ask of God’). When *бір* functions as the basis of the numeral system and as the minimal quantitative value, it occurs in a number of fixed expressions with a more concrete, literal meaning: *бір ауыз сөз* (‘a word or two, a brief remark’), *бір жұтым* (‘a sip of water’), *бір тұтам* (‘a small piece of food’), *бір мүйіз* (‘a single item’), *бір үзім* (‘a piece, a fragment of something’) (Kenesbayev, 2007: 106-107).

In English phraseology, the numeral *one* participates in a large number of fixed combinations that cover a wide range of semantic domains: integrity, instantaneous action, the idea of a unified whole, uniqueness, quantitative and qualitative evaluation, temporal indeterminacy, patterns of interpersonal interaction, and others.

Thus, the expression *all in one piece* is used to denote the physical integrity and safety of a person or object after a potentially dangerous situation; it effectively encodes the meaning ‘safe and sound’. The idiom *at one blow* conveys the idea of an action carried out in a single decisive moment, ‘with one blow’, ‘by one decisive act’.

A number of expressions with *one* are related to the notions of totality and uniqueness. The phrase *one and all* means ‘everyone without exception’ and is often used in formal or public addresses to an audience. The construction *the one and only* is employed when introducing a well-known person and emphasises their exceptional, unique status. The expression *one and the same* serves to indicate the



complete identity of two persons or objects that may at first appear different.

A separate group comprises expressions denoting exceptionality and rarity. Combinations such as *one in a million*, *one in a thousand* and *one in a billion* characterise a person, phenomenon or situation as extremely rare and outstanding; in attributive position, the orthographically hyphenated form *one-in-a-million* is used (e.g. *a one-in-a-million chance*).

Several idioms reflect the distribution of roles and asymmetry in interaction. The expression *a one-man band* describes a situation in which one person performs all functions alone, without any assistance. The phrase *a one-way street* metaphorically designates a relationship or arrangement in which only one party derives benefit or exercises control. The structurally related expression *one way or another* means ‘by one means or another, somehow or other’, and underscores the inevitability of achieving a given goal.

The numeral *one* also contributes to meanings of temporal indeterminacy. The expression *one day* refers to an unspecified moment in the future and is often used in contexts of dreams, intentions or sudden decisions (‘some day, at some point in the future’). The phrase *one of these days* likewise points to an indeterminate future time, but frequently carries a nuance of warning or threat (‘it is bound to happen sooner or later’).

An important layer is formed by phraseological units linked to cognitive and discursive activity. The idiom *on the one hand ... (on the other hand ...)* is used to structure argumentation and to present contrasting viewpoints. A similar metaphorical pattern is found in *(the) other side of the coin*, which activates an alternative, often opposite aspect of a situation. The expression *one thing and another* denotes a combination of heterogeneous circumstances that together lead to a particular outcome (‘one thing and another’). The construction *a one-track mind / a single-track mind* characterises a person whose thinking is confined to a single topic or fixed interest, which may be interpreted either as narrow-mindedness or, conversely, as intense concentration.

A further set of expressions with *one* describes degrees of ease or skill. The idiom *with one hand tied behind one’s back* (sometimes intensified as *with both hands tied behind one’s back*) denotes performing an action with great ease, as if in spite of an obvious “handicap”. The phrase *to be light on one’s feet* is used primarily with reference to danc-

ers, athletes and, more generally, people who move in an agile, effortless and graceful manner.

Finally, a number of expressions encode hierarchy and the distribution of status. The phrase *number one* denotes ‘the most important, best, or leading’ person or entity and can be used both with reference to an individual (for example, a top salesperson) and to a phenomenon or object more generally. The idiom *to be one up on somebody* describes a situation of advantage over another person, when the speaker occupies a more favourable position or possesses greater experience or resources. Taken together, these and other phraseological units with the numeral *one* illustrate the high semantic and pragmatic density of this component, ranging from meanings of integrity and uniqueness to evaluation, temporal indeterminacy and the characterisation of interpersonal relations.

In the Kazakh linguistic tradition, which is marked by vivid imagery and deep historical roots, the numeral *two* (*eki*) plays an important role in the formation of idioms and fixed expressions. These units do not simply describe a situation but convey subtle shades of meaning that are not easily captured in literal translation. As in many other languages, *two* is fundamentally associated with binarity and duality: two halves, two sides, two entities. This semantic core is evident in expressions such as *eki жарты, бір бүтін болу* (‘to be two halves of a single whole’), which portrays mutual complementarity and the close connection between two people, often in the context of spouses or close friends, and their shared life and mutual support (Kenesbayev, 2007: 206). A related meaning appears in *eki жақты* (‘two-sided; bilateral’), which can refer both to agreements and to relationships based on mutual trust and cooperation.

At the same time, *eki* may signal separation, ambivalence or conflicting intentions. The expression *eki жүзді* (‘two-faced’) vividly highlights hypocrisy and insincerity, suggesting that one person presents two opposing “faces”. The idiom *eki кеме құйрығынан ұстау* (literally ‘to hold on to the tails of two ships’) metaphorically describes a situation of choice or dilemma, where a person is torn between two alternatives and must decide between them. Here the numeral *two* symbolises uncertainty and the difficulty of choosing a single course of action.

In a number of cases, *two* intensifies the meaning of an action or state. The expression *eki көз ішін-жеп барады* (literally ‘two eyes are devouring’) does not refer to physical eating, but serves as

a metaphor for a greedy, intent gaze that conveys strong desire or interest. The phrase *екі (аяғын) өкпесін қолына алып жүгіру* is used to describe running at great speed; the numeral *two* underscores the intensity and rapidity of movement (Kozhakhmetova, Zhaisakova, & Kozhakhmetova, 1988: 134-136).

The numeral *two* can also function as a straightforward quantitative indicator of state or situation. Thus, *екі ауыз сөз* ('two words') refers to a brief exchange or short conversation; *екі көз алдында* ('before two eyes') means 'in full view, openly'. The expression *екі көзі төрт болды* (literally 'his / her two eyes became four') provides a striking depiction of someone anxiously awaiting something, with eyes widened in expectation. By contrast, *екі қолын мұрнына тықты* ('he / she stuck both hands into his/her nose') metaphorically denotes returning empty-handed or failing in some endeavour (Kenesbayev, 2007, p. 389).

Many of these idioms rely on concrete images and associations rooted in the traditional Kazakh way of life, its value system and worldview. The influence of a nomadic lifestyle and close connection with nature can be traced in a considerable number of such expressions. The analysis of idioms with (*екі*) thus offers insight into the mentality of the Kazakh people, their cultural codes and value orientations transmitted from generation to generation.

In English phraseology, the numeral *two* likewise generates an extensive network of fixed expressions that realise meanings of duality, choice, reciprocity, contrast and various cognitive and evaluative nuances.

In many idioms with *two*, the focus falls on an unfavourable or precarious position of the subject. The expression *to have two strikes against one* refers to a situation in which a person already finds themselves at a clear disadvantage – metaphorically “with two strikes on the record” – and risks a final defeat after one more mistake. The idiom *(to be) between two fires* describes a state in which a person is simultaneously pressured by two opposing forces, and any choice between them is fraught with negative consequences. A closely related proverb, *to fall between two stools*, highlights a different aspect of duality: the object fails to fit into either of two categories and therefore achieves neither of the intended goals (for example, a textbook that is too difficult for beginners yet not sufficiently advanced for more experienced learners).

The numeral *two* is also central to the representation of joint action and reciprocity. The well-known

proverb *two heads are better than one* underlines the idea that combining the intellectual efforts of two people increases the effectiveness of problem-solving. The idiom *a game that two can play* appeals to behavioural symmetry: what one side does (often in the context of retaliation or strategic responding) is equally available to the other. The expression *a two-way street* metaphorically conveys the notion of mutuality and interdependence: the success of a relationship, cooperation or respect is possible only when both parties are actively involved.

A similar evaluative stance is found in the idiom *(to make) the best of two worlds / both worlds*, which describes a situation in which a person manages to combine the advantages of two different spheres or ways of life, benefiting from each without fully sacrificing either.

In a number of phraseological units with *two*, evaluative meanings are realised that reflect the speaker's attitude to the situation or to the interlocutor. Thus, the idiom *not (to) care two straws* denotes complete indifference, a total lack of interest or involvement (“not to care in the least, to set no store by something”). The expression *(as) cross as two sticks* characterises a person as extremely irritable or angry; the image is based on the polysemy of *cross* ('angry' and 'cross-shaped, intersecting'). The phrase *to take / knock somebody down a peg or two* describes the verbal or behavioural “bringing down to earth” of an over-confident person, a reduction of their self-esteem or status. The expression *to tell somebody a thing or two* serves as a euphemistic designation for a sharp, admonitory remark aimed at correcting someone's misconceptions or inappropriate behaviour.

The numeral *two* is also involved in stable characterisations of intellectual and motor abilities. The idiom *(as) thick as two short planks* is a strongly colloquial label for extreme stupidity or “mental clumsiness”. The expression *to have two left feet* is used of a person who moves awkwardly and has difficulty mastering dance moves; in effect, it is a metaphor for pronounced physical clumsiness.

A distinct group of expressions describes degrees of similarity or difference. The phraseological unit *(as) like as two peas (in a pod)* denotes almost complete external similarity between two people or objects, emphasising their “mirror-like” likeness, whereas the proverb *no two minds think alike* (in its original tradition) encodes the idea of cognitive uniqueness, namely that each person's thinking is individual. The numeral *two* also participates in the expression of temporal characteristics of an action.

The idiom *in two shakes (of a lamb's tail)* refers to a very short span of time and corresponds to Russian expressions such as «в два счёта», «мгновенно»: the speaker promises to perform an action “in no time at all”.

A number of phraseological units with *two* are connected with planning, rationality and behavioural strategy. The expression *to have two strings to one's bow* metaphorically designates the presence of alternative routes to success, a “backup option” in case the main plan fails. The idiom *to put two and two together* describes a basic logical operation – the drawing of an obvious conclusion from available facts (“to put two and two together”). The construction *there are no two ways about it / no two ways* underscores the absence of choice or alternative interpretation: the situation is unambiguous, however unpleasant that may be.

Another important cluster of meanings concerns the distribution of roles and status. The phrase *one's number two* denotes a person occupying the second most important position in a hierarchy (a deputy, the “right-hand” of a leader). In turn, the fixed expression *to kill two birds with one stone* presents the classic image of an effective strategy in which a single action achieves two goals at once.

Taken as a whole, English phraseological units with *two* form a complex system that reflects ideas of duality of choice, symmetry and reciprocity of relations, degrees of emotional response, intellectual and behavioural characteristics of the individual, as well as the rationality and efficiency of human action.

In Kazakh culture, the number *three* occupies a special place, which is reflected in a rich set of idioms. The blessing *ошақтың үш бұтына берсін*, whose more precise rendering would be “may the fire of your hearth always burn brightly” rather than simply “may your home always be prosperous”, is a striking example. This is not merely a wish for material well-being, but a deeply symbolic benediction associated with the household hearth – the heart of the Kazakh family and a symbol of its continuity and prosperity. The burning of the fire is directly associated with life, warmth, comfort and abundance. Its steady flame embodies the stability and well-being of the family, passed down from generation to generation. In this sense, the wish *ошақтың отына берсін* is not just a formula for prosperity, but a highly symbolic expression of the desire for familial welfare, flourishing and harmony, rooted in the depths of Kazakh culture and mythology (Kassymova, 2000: 68).

In many cultures, the number *three* is endowed with a special, sacred significance that goes back to ancient worldviews. Its connection with the outlook of early peoples is determined by its fundamental tripartite structure, which reflects a basic triad: heaven, earth and the underworld. This triad, which has found expression in the mythology of Indo-European peoples, functions as an archetypal image symbolising the wholeness and completeness of the cosmos.

Within English phraseology, the idiom *three cheers for ...* is particularly indicative of the semantics of *three*. It is a conventional formula of collective approval and encouragement, presupposing a triple shout of joy or gratitude in honour of a person, group or event, and is traditionally used in situations of public celebration of success, recognition of merit or expression of support. Depending on intonation and context, this expression may function as a sincere congratulation or as an ironic or sarcastic comment.

It is noteworthy that, by analogy, the expression *two cheers for ...* has developed, denoting not full but only partial, “qualified” approval – a restrained, limited endorsement without exuberant enthusiasm. Symptomatically, it appears in the title of E.M. Forster's book *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951), where the author's moderately critical, rather than unconditionally apologetic, attitude to democratic values is foregrounded. In these formulae, the numerals *three* and *two* perform an important pragmatic function: they mark the degree of intensity of approval, ranging from complete, maximal endorsement (*three cheers*) to attenuated, partial support (*two cheers*).

In Kazakh, the symbolic meaning of *four* is primarily associated with the four cardinal directions – north, south, east and west – which together construct the idea of a complete, structured world. Accordingly, in fixed expressions the numeral *four* encodes notions of wholeness, unity and stability. This is evident in idioms such as *төрт арыстың баласы* (‘the whole Kazakh people’), *төрт аяғы тең жорға* (‘a perfectly balanced, highly gifted improviser’), *төрт құбыласы сай / төрт құбыласы түгел / төрт жағы құбыла / төрт түлігі сай / төрт көзі түгел* (‘happy, fully provided for, with everything in its proper place’) and *төрт көзі түгел* in the more concrete sense ‘all present, everyone together’ (Kozhakhmetova, Zhaisakova, & Kozhakhmetova, 1988: 92).

In English phraseology, the numeral *four* appears in a range of set expressions that combine lit-



eral quantitative reference with symbolic and evaluative meanings. The idiom *on all fours* denotes the physical position of a person on hands and knees or of an animal on all four legs; figuratively, it evokes a “four-limbed” posture associated with searching for something, with helplessness or with physical strain (*I got down on all fours trying to find my ring in the sand*). The phrase *within (these) four walls* belongs to the sphere of communicative ethics and signals that the information shared is confidential: what is said “within these four walls” is not intended to go beyond the room and is meant only for those present. The expression *scatter to the (four) winds* conveys the idea of complete dispersal of people or objects to distant, widely separated places. The idiom *(to) hit / be / run on all (four, six, etc.) cylinders*, which goes back to a technical metaphor from internal-combustion engines, is used to characterise the activity of a person, group or system operating at maximum efficiency, when all resources are optimally engaged.

Traditionally, *four* is linked to stable, “basic” structures of the world and human experience: the four seasons, the four phases of the moon (new moon, first quarter, full moon, last quarter), the four classical elements (earth, air, water, fire), and the four bodily humours associated with temperaments – phlegmatic, sanguine, choleric and melancholic (Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, 2006). In socio-political discourse, the symbolism of *four* is firmly embedded, for example, in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s formula of the *Four Freedoms*, articulated in his 1941 address to the U.S. Congress: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear (ibid.).

In a number of phraseological units, *four* acquires an explicitly evaluative force. Symbolically, it can stand for ‘very many’ or ‘an excessive degree’, thereby activating the semantics of maximal intensity, as in *(to be) four-sheets to the wind*, which denotes a state of heavy drunkenness. In such expressions as *a four-letter word* (a swearword, taboo word) and *a four-letter man* (a thoroughly unpleasant person), the component *four* contributes to a strongly negative qualitative assessment.

At the same time, in phraseological constructions *four* realises not only quantitative and spatially oriented symbolic meanings – *within four walls*, *on all four sides*, *the four corners of the earth*, and so on – but also participates in the expression of diverse qualitative and evaluative nuances (compare dictionary descriptions of extreme states such as

drunkenness, e.g. *Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners* (Rundell, 2006). Colloquial usage also includes the derogatory address *four eyes*, directed at someone who wears glasses.

In popular belief, however, *four* may also carry positive connotations. According to English superstition, finding a *four-leaf clover* or, for instance, a button with four holes is a sign of good luck and an imminent favourable event. In this way, the symbolism of *four* is associated not only with stability and the structured nature of the world, but also with ideas of unity and harmony, which resonate with the ancient conception of the universe as a combination of four eternal “elements” or “roots of all things”: earth, water, air and fire.

In Kazakh, as in many other Turkic languages, the number *five* occupies a marked position in phraseology. Phraseological units containing *five* display a striking semantic duality. On the one hand, *five* may denote a limited quantity and indicate a boundary beyond which multiplicity begins. This reflects the perception of five as a threshold between the small and the large, a kind of “magical” number separating the finite from the indefinite. On the other hand, the same numeral can symbolise not just ‘many’, but rather the inception of multiplicity, the genesis of something extensive and potentially innumerable.

In Kazakh phraseology, a relatively small group of expressions with *five* refers to talent, excellent knowledge or the fleeting nature of time: *бес аспан адам* (‘a multi-talented person’), *бес биенің сабасындай* (‘huge, as large as a skin that holds the kumys of five mares’), *бес саусақтай білді* (‘to know something extremely well, to know it like one’s five fingers’), *бес қызық дәурен* (‘the brief, swiftly passing time of youth’), *бетінің кірі бес елі* (‘so dirty that the face can hardly be seen’), *бетінің суы бес төгілу* (‘to overcome one’s shame and resolve on a very delicate, risky step’) (Kenesbayev, 2007: 420).

The English idiom *to know how many beans make five* is semantically related to expressions such as *to know a thing or two* and *to know on which side one’s bread is buttered* in the sense of ‘to have a good understanding of something, to know what is what’. These expressions refer to a person who possesses a certain degree of awareness and practical wisdom, and who is marked by sound judgement and common sense. To say that someone *knows how many beans make five* is to emphasise their intelligence and ability to assess a situation soberly. The idiom is very old; it appears, for example, in



Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605), and is often thought to originate in a traditional folk riddle. An illustration of a semantically related usage would be: *I know a thing or two about art: I was an art history major in college, you know!* – that is, the speaker signals competent familiarity with the field.

The symbolic meaning of the numeral *six* is not prominently reflected in Kazakh phraseology. In most cases it retains its basic quantitative function and is associated with notions of number, hostility and far-reaching plans: *алты алаш* ('the entire people'), *алты айлық жол* ('a journey of six months', i.e. a very long road), *алты бақан ала ауыз* ('discord, enmity'), *алты қырдың астынан* ('from beyond six hills', i.e. long-term, far-reaching designs and intentions) (Kuanysbbaeva, 2016: 703-704).

In English, when speakers refer to intuitive insight in a particular situation, they often use the expression *sixth sense*. This idiom is highly productive in present-day English, although its precise origin remains unclear. For example: *A sixth sense warned me that something didn't feel right.*

The phrase *to be (all) at sixes and sevens* is used to denote confusion, disarray, lack of organisation or a complicated, chaotic situation – “complete disorder”. This fixed expression has existed in English for roughly nine centuries, though its meaning has shifted somewhat over time. *At sixes and sevens* can also refer to a state of disagreement or lack of accord between two or more people: *Government ministers have been at sixes and sevens over the refugees.* Another idiom, *to be six of one and half a dozen of the other*, is used where the differences between two options are minimal or irrelevant in practical terms, so that both alternatives are regarded as essentially equivalent (Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, 2006).

In global cultural tradition, the number *seven* is widely regarded as a magical, enchanted sign symbolising perfection, cosmic order and the completion of a cycle. It carries sacred and mystical connotations, particularly in the cultures of Western Asia, where it is associated with cosmic and spiritual harmony and with the closure of a natural cycle. Its sacral status appears to be linked to its geometric properties: three vertical lines and four horizontal lines combine to yield seven – a number that, as a kind of “magical constant”, manifests itself across diverse belief systems and cultural traditions (Maltseva, 1991: 148).

In Kazakh culture, the number *seven* plays an especially significant role, deeply rooted in folk beliefs, customs and rituals, and running through them

like a system of subtle but durable threads. The ceremony of placing a child in the cradle offers a vivid illustration. Above the baby's cradle, seven objects were traditionally hung, each of which arguably carried a particular sacred meaning intended to protect the child and ensure a prosperous life. The number seven is also linked to a crucial transition in a boy's life: from the age of seven, he was expected to display courage, responsibility and a degree of independence associated with adulthood.

Kinship in the Kazakh worldview is likewise closely associated with seven. The custom of tracing one's genealogy back to seven generations – *жеті ата*, 'seven ancestors' – emphasises the depth and continuity of family history, binding generations into a single, unbroken chain. Expressions such as *жеті ата* ('seven forefathers'), *жеті қазына* ('seven treasures'), *жердің жеті қабаты*, *көктің жеті қабаты* ('seven layers of earth and sky'), *жеті күн* ('seven days of the week'), *жеті жүйт* ('seven great calamities'), *жеті жетім* ('seven orphans'), *жеті жарғы* ('seven statutes') are all based on the generalisation of long collective experience and traditional beliefs. They have become deeply embedded in everyday usage as part of the Kazakh linguistic and cultural repertoire. These expressions do more than indicate a numerical value: they carry a dense symbolic load, often conveying ideas of completeness, wholeness, vastness or, conversely, loss, orphanhood and the weight of history (Kassymova, 2009: 20).

As phraseological units incorporating *seven*, such expressions acquire extended meanings. For instance, *жеті ата жау*, *жеті атасына бітпеген*, *жеті атасынан түк көрмеген*, *жеті атасын мал өлтірген* are built on the notion of “seven ancestors” and characterise a person's status or behaviour in terms of lineage and inherited reputation. Idioms such as *жеті дарияның ар жағы*, *жеті қабат тау үсті*, *жеті қабат жер асты*, *жеті қырдың асты* invoke the image of extreme remoteness – distant lands beyond ordinary reach, something unattainable or very difficult to attain, lying outside the sphere of everyday life.

In this way, *seven* in Kazakh culture functions not merely as a numeral, but as a powerful symbol reflecting deeply embedded conceptions of the world, of the human being and their place in the universe, of family and kin, and of time and space. Studying its role makes it possible to gain a more nuanced understanding of the mentality and spiritual values of the Kazakh people, as well as their history and traditions encoded in language and culture

over many centuries (Kassymova, 2009: 14). The sacred status of *seven* underscores the close connection between number and worldview, showing how abstract mathematical concepts acquire concrete meaning in cultural context.

Among all sacred numbers in Kazakh culture, *seven* occupies a particularly prominent place. The Turkologist S. Kenesbayev, writing about the sacral symbolism of seven among Turkic peoples, notes: “Among the Turkic peoples the number seven is a holy, sacred number that has sent its roots deep into the language. This number is found not only among Turkic peoples, but also in the traditions of the Manchu, Mongols, Arabs, Chinese and Indians. Such commonality is likely the result of historical and cultural contact and exchange” (Kenesbayev, 2007: 434).

In English, fewer phraseological units with *seven* are attested than in Kazakh. The idiom *at sixes and sevens* (already discussed above) has the meanings ‘unclear, confused, uncertain’. In this expression, the element *seven* points to an ultimate degree, an extreme point on a scale. In translation, it seems appropriate to render this idiom descriptively, through adjectives such as ‘vague’ or ‘uncertain’; in Kazakh, semantic equivalents include *кәмескі, күңгірт*.

The English proverb *Seven times down, eight times up* has numerous metaphorical counterparts in Kazakh that convey the same message. Since the phrase essentially exhorts one not to lose hope and always to believe in a brighter future, such Kazakh expressions as *еңсені түсірмеу, әр нәрседе қайыр бар, үмітсіз шайтан* may be selected as translation equivalents. Their literal renderings into English would be: ‘not to let one’s shoulders droop’, ‘there is blessing in everything’, ‘only Satan has no hope’.

The idiom *seven-league boots* refers to the legendary boots that allow their wearer to cover seven leagues in a single stride, that is, to move with extraordinary speed; more generally, it denotes anything that enables very rapid movement. This image is widespread in European folklore. For example: *We still want his speedy seven-league boots, his global reach and dazzling factual knowledge*. The expression *the seven deadly sins* designates those vices of human character that are traditionally regarded as the source of all evil deeds (Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, 2006). The “seven deadly sins” are covetousness, envy, gluttony, lust, pride, anger and sloth, a list first systematised by the Catholic Church (Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, 2006).

In Kazakh culture, the number *eight* symbolises an ideal of perfection and completeness. Traditional conceptions of the “perfect person” are captured in the fixed expression *сегіз қырлы, бір сырлы*, which in free translation means ‘a person of eight facets and a single inner essence’, that is, someone multifaceted and harmonious (Kassymova, 2000, p. 54).

In English phraseology, the numeral *eight* is far less frequent than *one* or *two*, yet it also appears in stable expressions where it loses its literal quantitative meaning and acquires a symbolic–evaluative function, primarily associated with the idea of a “limit” or “crossing the boundary of the norm”. The idiom *behind the eight ball* denotes a situation in which a person finds themselves at a manifest disadvantage, “boxed in” and with very little chance of success. The image goes back to a billiard scenario in which the ball numbered eight blocks a clear shot at the target ball. In contemporary usage, the expression is applied both to temporary financial hardship (“under financial pressure”) and to broader personal or professional difficulties.

Phraseological units with *eight* thus cluster around the concept of an extreme point: they indicate the highest degree of difficulty or constraint (*behind the eight ball*), allowing the numeral to function as a marker of a critical threshold in human experience.

In Kazakh, the numerals *nine* and *ten* are used primarily for their figurative potential. As they lack strong independent symbolic profiles, they tend to serve as means of exaggeration or understatement. At the same time, each has its own set of associations. The number *nine*, for example, is often linked to notions of calm, harmony and completeness. In Kazakh, certain phraseological units with *nine* convey the meaning ‘a great many’: *тоғыз жолдың торабы* (‘the junction of nine roads’, i.e. a major crossroads) and *тоғыз қабат торқа* (‘nine layers of brocade’). These examples underscore the way in which *nine* can be associated in different cultures with abundance and plenitude (Kassymova, 2009: 20).

In English phraseology, the numerals *nine* and *ten* likewise appear in a range of idioms in which they lose their strictly quantitative value and come to fulfil predominantly expressive and symbolic functions. The expression *a nine-day wonder* (alongside the variant *a one-day wonder*) refers to a phenomenon or person that attracts intense attention for only a very short time, quickly losing novelty and significance. In such idioms the numeral functions as a marker of brevity and ephemeral success.

The phrase *nine times out of ten* (and its intensified variant *ninety-nine times out of a hundred*) expresses a high degree of probability, an outcome that is almost guaranteed – ‘in nine cases out of ten’, ‘almost always’. Here the numerical component serves as a device of hyperbolic frequency (Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable, 2006).

A special case is the fixed expression *Number Ten / No. 10*, which metonymically denotes the official residence of the British Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street and, by extension, the Prime Minister himself or the current cabinet. In political and media discourse this unit functions as a concise label for central executive power. The expressions *to be ten a penny / two a penny* characterise phenomena or groups of people as overly common, ordinary and thus of little value: there are so many similar instances that they are not considered special.

The idiom *ten to one* is used to convey the speaker’s strong confidence in the near inevitability of a given event (‘almost certainly’, ‘in all likelihood’). A structure originating in the language of betting odds is thus transferred into everyday speech, where it performs a modal–evaluative function.

Taken together, these examples show that in English phraseology higher numerals serve as means of intensification and as markers of high probability, short duration, frequency or, conversely, redundancy, as well as elements of culturally entrenched metonymies (as in *Number Ten*).

## Conclusion

The comparison of Kazakh and English phraseological units with the numerals from one to ten shows that numerical components form a compact

yet culturally dense subdomain of the phraseological systems in both languages. The same numeral frequently activates different semantic networks in the two traditions: for example, three and seven are heavily mythologised and sacralised in Kazakh, whereas one and two display the highest phraseological productivity in English.

At the same time, a number of shared tendencies emerge. In both languages numerals are used not only for counting, but also as devices of intensification, evaluation, temporal and probabilistic characterisation and metaphorical description of interpersonal relations. Structural divergence between phraseological units often masks deeper conceptual overlaps, which creates possibilities for functional equivalence in translation.

The results underline the importance of taking cultural background into account when interpreting and translating phraseological units with numerals. Literal translation is not always possible or adequate; instead, translators frequently need to select contextually appropriate analogues that reproduce the pragmatic effect of the source expression. The inventory of examples and observations presented in this article can serve as reference material for translators and language teachers working with Kazakh and English.

More broadly, the study confirms that numerals are a sensitive indicator of the linguocultural worldview. Extending the analysis to other language pairs, as well as incorporating corpus-based frequency data and experimental techniques, would make it possible to refine the typology of numerical symbolism in phraseology and to explore its role in intercultural communication in greater depth.

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