

## NUMERALS IN LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS: STRUCTURE, FUNCTION, AND EVOLUTION

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This research explores the linguistic nature of numbers, emphasizing their structural and semantic roles in language. In both cultural and cognitive contexts, numbers are more than mere mathematical entities—they serve as symbols embedded in language and culture. Across all societies, numbers are central to everyday communication, appearing in speech, literature, and proverbs. The linguistic aspects of numbers have long attracted the interest of linguists, especially with their significance in cultural and spiritual practices. Numbers have deep-rooted meanings in various cultures, influencing how they are used symbolically in expressions, idioms, and proverbs [1].

A key element of this study is understanding how numbers transition from simple quantifiers to grammatical elements and later evolve into numerals. Numerals are distinct parts of speech that embody numerical meaning but also possess grammatical, morphological, and syntactic characteristics that differentiate them from other nouns and adjectives. Cardinal, ordinal, and collective numerals each fulfill specific linguistic functions, from expressing quantity and order to conveying collective grouping, while also displaying nuanced morphological features such as specific suffixes that indicate ordinal or distributive relations [2].

Numerals are unique in their ability to combine with counting words like “pair” or “meter” to express precise quantities. This reflects their deep connection to cognitive processes—not just as an external system of measurement, but as an integral part of cultural cognition. In this light, numerals play a central role in expressing abstract concepts such as sequence, groupings, and measurements. Over time, they lose their strict quantitative meaning when used metaphorically or in idiomatic expressions. This transformation highlights the evolution of language, where semantic shifts reflect broader shifts in cultural and cognitive systems.

The historical development of numerals, particularly in Turkic languages, illustrates how early numbering systems were influenced by cultural, spiritual, and practical needs. For example, the word for fifty (elli) in Turkish is derived from "el," meaning "hand," suggesting a cultural and symbolic connection between numbers and human experience [1]. The study further discusses how early counting systems

in Turkic languages reflect a combination of independent number words and structural shifts in the formation of higher tens [1].

Through examining the categorization of numerals, this research proposes a comprehensive framework for understanding how numerals fit into the broader structure of language systems. Unlike adjectives, numerals do not express qualitative features but instead serve a quantitative function that is both foundational and culturally significant [2]. Their role extends beyond mere counting to include the expression of abstract ideas, such as order, sequence, and collective meaning, which further underscores their complex relationship with culture and cognition.

#### **References:**

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