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METAPHORS OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND PROGRESS IN TURKISH DISCOURSE

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Abstract

This article analyzes the cognitive-linguistic and pragmatic nature of metaphorical expressions in Turkish political discourse. The role of metaphor as a conceptual model in political discourse, its ideological and persuasive functions, and the main metaphorical fields in Turkish political discourse are examined. The study takes the theory of conceptual metaphor as a methodological basis and reveals the semantic-structural features of political discourse. Political discourse is a discursive field that shapes social consciousness. Since politics is a complex and abstract field, it is often expressed through metaphorical constructions. Metaphor structures political thinking and allows us to interpret reality within a certain ideological framework.

Key words

political discourse, metaphor, conceptual model, ideology, linguopragmatics, Turkish political discourse.

Introduction: The term discourse is widely used in modern social sciences, and various works have been published on its interpretation; however, there is currently no unified view on understanding discourse or its research methodology. In particular, Ye.S.Kubryakova emphasizes that during the current period of development in linguistics, there is no universally accepted definition of discourse. In linguistics, discourse refers to a linguistic unit longer than a single sentence. The word discourse derives from the Latin prefix "dis-" meaning "apart" and the root "course" meaning "to run." Discourse studies examine the form and function of language in speech beyond its smaller grammatical units, such as phonemes and morphemes. According to E.S. Kubryakova and Aleksandrova, in understanding discourse, the cognitive process is a crucial element related to the production and creation of real speech, while the text is the final product of speech activity with a fixed form. Here the researcher distinguishes speech and text as interrelated yet non-identical concepts. E.F. Kirov considers text to be a sign of discourse, and discourse to be individually perceived text. M.L. Makarov holds that "Discourse is text and situation." According to M.B.Voroshilova, "Discourse" is not limited to its own text alone but also encompasses the social context of speech characteristics of its participants, as well as the processes of speech production and perception that consider background knowledge. Discourse is a text inextricably linked to the context of a given situation — it goes beyond the boundaries of the text and includes the various conditions necessary for its realization." From this it can be concluded that discourse is not confined to text but connects text with the communicative context and other factors.

The issue of metaphor was elevated to a new stage within cognitive linguistics through the Conceptual Metaphor Theory developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. According to them, metaphor is not merely a stylistic ornament but a fundamental mechanism of thought, through which abstract concepts are understood via concrete experience. Since political

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discourse is particularly rich in such abstract concepts, metaphor occupies a central place within it.

Main part: According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory, one domain (the source domain) is explained in the human mind through another domain (the target domain). For example, the model Politics = Struggle interprets political processes through the terminology of war.

Similarities can be identified between political discourse and other types of institutional discourse (advertising, academic, pedagogical, legal, religious, sports, military, etc.), as well as non-institutional forms of communication (literary and everyday speech). In the discourse studies of political linguistics, the discourses of specific political events and situations (war, elections, scandals, corruption, etc.), specific political parties and movements (right-wing, left-wing, ecologists, anti-globalists, nationalists, etc.), or the speeches of individual political leaders are taken into consideration. From this it can be concluded that, combining the general characteristics inherent to discourse and those unique to it alone, the speech of a head of state is studied as a distinct type of discourse.

In Turkish political discourse, metaphors serve as an important tool for enhancing the persuasive power of speech, expressing complex political processes in a simple and comprehensible manner, and conveying certain ideological messages to the audience. In particular, metaphors of political struggle and development (progress) are among the most actively used conceptual domains.

The analysis of political struggle and development metaphors in the speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has been further deepened, with each metaphor expanded based on cognitive model + linguistic form + pragmatic function + discursive outcome.

"Bu bir istiklal mücadelesidir". Cognitive model: Politics = National Liberation War. This metaphor elevates the political process from ordinary political competition to the level of a historical and sacred struggle. The word *"İstiklal"* directly evokes associations with the Turkish War of Independence.

Pragmatic function: Maximally enhances legitimation and portrays the opposition as "a force contrary to the national interest."

"Karşımızda bir cephe var". Political opponent = Enemy front

The lexeme *"Cephe"* belongs to war semantics and presents the political opposition not as an institutional rival, but as a dangerous force. It intensifies polarization and sharpens the *"Us–Them"* opposition.

"Türkiye'ye pranga vurmak istiyorlar". State = Free person Threat = Chain. In this model, the state acquires an anthropomorphic image. Through *"pranga"* (shackles), external or internal forces are interpreted as powers that restrict freedom.
It intensifies the sense of threat and awakens a reflex of national defense.

"Bu bir beka meselesidir". Politics = A matter of life and death. The concept of *"beka"* (survival) elevates political discourse to an existential level. Through this metaphor, every political decision is linked to the very existence of the nation. It reduces criticism and sanctifies decisions.

"Onların oyununu bozacağız". Model: Politics = A strategic game. The metaphor of *"oyun"* associates political processes with covert strategies and manipulations. It renders the opponent untrustworthy and presents the leader as a strategist.

"Milletimizle omuz omuza mücadele ettik". Politics = A collective battle. Expression *"Omuz omuza"* (shoulder to shoulder) conveys physical proximity and unity. Through this metaphor, genuine rather than artificial solidarity is created between the leader and the people. It produces a populist effect and increases trust.

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"Bu millet diz çökmeyecek". Defeat = Kneeling. Through this metaphor, surrender is expressed through physical action. As a result, the nation's resistance acquires a visual image. It enhances national pride and intensifies emotional mobilization.

"Türkiye şaha kalkıyor". State = Equine progress = A leap *"Şaha kalkmak"* (to rear up) denotes force, control, and rapid movement. Through this metaphor, the state is presented not as passive but as an aggressively developing subject. It conveys an optimistic mood and a strong leadership image.

"Yeni Türkiye'yi inşa ediyoruz". The verb *"inşa etmek"* (to build) conveys plannedness, step-by-step progression, and control. This metaphor presents politics not as a random process but as a designed and structured one. It emphasizes strategic thinking and creates the image of a long-term plan.

"Temelleri sağlam attık". Through this metaphor, the work accomplished is presented as a solid foundation for the future. It increases credibility and reduces criticism.

In the speech of a head of state, conceptual metaphors occupy a central position in cognitive linguistics, where the problem of categorizing the surrounding reality plays a key role – and in this, metaphor, as a manifestation of the mind's analogical capacities (the capacity for one linguistic unit to be assimilated into another in a certain sense), plays an important role. In modern cognitive science, metaphor is typically defined as a method of knowing, categorizing, conceptualizing, evaluating, and explaining the world – as a mental operation. In his work: *"The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor,"* J. Lakoff emphasized that: *"the locus of metaphor is not in language but in thought."* In Lakoff and Johnson's *"Metaphors We Live By," "conceptual metaphors"* are defined as stable correspondences between a source domain and a target domain that are embedded in the language and cultural traditions of a given society.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory was first applied to the language of politics by one of its founders. Lakoff's subject of research was the metaphors used by the American government in 1990–1991 to prepare public opinion in connection with the Gulf Crisis and plans for military intervention. The metaphors used during this period by President George Bush and his administration were reproduced with no significant changes by his son, President George W. Bush, already in the context of the second U.S. war in Iraq. The author identified the relevant conceptual metaphors, revealed the aspects of the war that were intended to be concealed, and demonstrated the inconsistency of the official arguments not only from a moral, but also from a military-political and economic standpoint.

The analyses show that the STATE–BUILDING model serves as an effective tool for expressing political stability and legitimacy. Through this model, the state is depicted through images such as "a solid foundation," "supporting pillars," or "the risk of collapse." This amplifies political influence by evoking a sense of security or anxiety in the audience.

The POLITICS–STRUGGLE model, meanwhile, dramatizes political competition and functions as a mobilization mechanism. Units such as *"Mücadele," "zafer," "direniş," "cephe"* interpret the political process as a field of conflict. This model serves to emotionally mobilize the audience, increase political activity, and reinforce ideological positions.

The ROAD–MOVEMENT metaphor presents political strategy as a dynamic process. Images such as "a new path," "movement toward a goal," and "not straying from the path" create a concept of the future and shape the image of the political leader as a guide. This model legitimizes the idea of prospects and progress in political speech.

The FAMILY–ORGANISM model is a conceptual framework that reinforces national unity and collective identity. By interpreting the state and the nation as *"a single body"* or *"one family,"* the sense of social solidarity and loyalty is strengthened.

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From a pragmatic standpoint, metaphorical expressions in Turkish political discourse perform the following functions: persuasive (convincing and directing); ideological (interpreting reality from a particular viewpoint); emotional-expressive (exerting emotional influence); simplifying (making complex political processes comprehensible to a mass audience); legitimizing (justifying and consolidating authority).

From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, metaphor manifests as a linking mechanism between power and ideology. Thus, metaphor in Turkish political discourse is not merely a stylistic device, but a fundamental cognitive-pragmatic mechanism for perceiving and interpreting political reality. The findings of this study once again confirm the central role of metaphor in the cognitive-linguistic and discursive analysis of political speech, and highlight the need for further, more in-depth research based on empirical corpus analysis.

Conclusion: Thus, metaphor in Turkish political discourse is not a stylistic device but a fundamental cognitive-pragmatic mechanism for perceiving and interpreting political reality. The results of this research once again confirm the central role of metaphor in the cognitive-linguistic and discursive study of political speech and demonstrate the necessity of conducting deeper investigations based on empirical corpus analyses in the future.

In general, metaphorical expressions in Turkish political discourse manifest as the conceptual foundation of political thinking. They explain abstract political processes through concrete images, exert emotional influence on the audience, and reinforce ideological constructs. Metaphor in political speech is not merely a stylistic ornament, but a cognitive-pragmatic mechanism that shapes power discourse.

Metaphorical expressions in Turkish political discourse are the primary mechanism for conceptualizing political thinking. They ideologically shape political reality, mobilize the audience, and legitimize power discourse. Metaphor here is not a stylistic ornament, but a cognitive model that governs political consciousness.

Metaphorical expressions in Turkish political discourse manifest not as an expressive means of language, but as a conceptual mechanism that structures political thinking. The research findings show that metaphor is the primary cognitive model for perceiving and interpreting political reality, explaining abstract political concepts through concrete experiential domains.

Thus, to deeply understand Turkish political discourse, the cognitive-linguistic and discursive study of metaphorical models is of significant scientific importance. From the above, it becomes clear that while the cognitive approach to analyzing political speech occupies a leading position in modern political linguistics, many aspects of cognitive analysis remain debatable. Metaphors of political struggle → danger, resistance, mobilization; metaphors of development → hope, dynamism, the future – together they create a highly effective model of political communication.

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