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METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS IN TURKISH POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND THEIR LINGUOPRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS (THE CASE OF RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN'S SPEECHES)

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Abstract: This article examines metaphorical expressions in Turkish political discourse, focusing on their linguopragmatic functions in the speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Drawing on conceptual metaphor theory and a discourse-pragmatic approach, the study explores how metaphor frames political issues, conveys ideological positions, and shapes the relationship between the speaker and the audience. Particular attention is paid to metaphors associated with struggle, journey, family, construction, and national revival, alongside their contextual meanings and persuasive potential. The analysis considers how metaphorical expressions contribute to political legitimation, collective identity construction, emotional engagement, and the representation of political allies and opponents. It also examines the interaction between metaphor, culturally embedded references, and communicative intention, emphasizing the importance of historical and sociopolitical context in interpreting political messages. The article approaches metaphor as both a cognitive mechanism for conceptualizing political reality and a pragmatic resource for directing interpretation and strengthening rhetorical persuasion.

Keywords: Turkish political discourse, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, metaphorical expressions, conceptual metaphor, linguopragmatics, political rhetoric, persuasion, ideological framing, collective identity, political legitimation.

Introduction: Political discourse constitutes an important site for examining the relationship between language, ideology, and social action. Political speeches communicate policy objectives and interpretations of public events while also constructing collective identities, legitimizing authority, and encouraging particular forms of audience response. Within this process, metaphor provides a means of representing abstract political issues through familiar experiences and culturally meaningful images. Its significance therefore extends beyond stylistic ornamentation: metaphor can influence how political situations are understood, which aspects of those situations receive attention, and what responses appear appropriate.

From a cognitive perspective, metaphor involves understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another. Political developments may consequently be represented as journeys, political competition as struggle, and the state as a family or a building. Such mappings make complex issues more accessible by connecting them with recognizable structures of experience. At the same time, they foreground certain interpretations and background others. Representing a political programme as a journey, for example, can emphasize direction, progress, and a shared destination, whereas representing it as a struggle can highlight opposition, sacrifice, and determination. These examples illustrate how metaphorical framing contributes to the organization of political meaning.

The pragmatic importance of metaphor emerges from its use in specific communicative contexts. A metaphorical expression acquires political significance through the interaction of its

linguistic form, the speaker's intention, the circumstances of delivery, and the audience's available cultural knowledge. The same expression may function differently in an election speech, a parliamentary address, or a statement delivered during a national crisis. A linguopragmatic approach therefore examines not only what a metaphor means but also what it enables a speaker to accomplish. Relevant functions include legitimizing decisions, strengthening solidarity, evaluating opponents, invoking shared values, and encouraging support for a proposed course of action.

Turkish political discourse offers a productive context for investigating these functions because political meanings can be articulated through references to national belonging, historical memory, cultural values, and collective aspirations. Metaphorical expressions connected with these references require attention to their immediate textual environment and broader sociopolitical setting. Their analysis should also distinguish between meanings explicitly expressed in a speech and interpretations inferred by the researcher. This distinction is particularly important when assessing the ideological implications of figurative language.

The speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan provide the focal material for the present study. The analysis approaches these speeches as situated instances of political communication in which metaphor may connect descriptions of public affairs with representations of leadership, community, and political purpose. Particular attention is directed to the relationship between metaphorical framing and audience positioning: how listeners are invited to understand their collective role, their relationship with political leadership, and the challenges presented within a speech. Rather than assuming that metaphor automatically produces persuasion, the study examines its persuasive potential as a feature of discourse. Claims about actual audience responses would require separate reception-based evidence.

A central analytical issue concerns the relationship between conceptual patterns and their contextual functions. Identifying a metaphor associated with journey, struggle, family, or construction does not, by itself, explain its communicative role. That role depends on how the metaphor interacts with pronouns, evaluative vocabulary, modality, repetition, and references to particular events or social actors. For instance, a journey metaphor combined with inclusive expressions may construct a sense of shared participation, while a struggle metaphor accompanied by negative descriptions of opponents may sharpen boundaries between political groups. Accordingly, metaphor needs to be examined as part of a wider rhetorical structure.

The aim of this article is to investigate metaphorical expressions in Erdoğan's speeches and explain their linguopragmatic functions within Turkish political discourse. The study addresses three interconnected questions: which source domains organize the metaphorical representation of political issues; how metaphorical expressions interact with contextual and linguistic resources; and what roles they perform in legitimation, identity construction, evaluation, and persuasion. To address these questions, the article combines conceptual metaphor analysis with close contextual interpretation, distinguishing metaphor identification from the subsequent explanation of pragmatic function.

The contribution of the study lies in connecting the cognitive organization of metaphor with its situated use in political communication. This approach allows metaphorical expressions to be examined as resources through which political actors make issues intelligible, communicate evaluations, and position audiences in relation to collective goals. By focusing on Erdoğan's speeches, the article seeks to clarify how figurative language participates in the construction of political meaning while maintaining a distinction between textual evidence, contextual interpretation, and demonstrable communicative effects.

Materials and methods: This study adopts a qualitative research design that combines conceptual metaphor analysis, discourse analysis, and linguopragmatic interpretation to examine metaphorical expressions in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's political speeches. The methodological framework distinguishes between the identification of metaphorical language, the reconstruction of conceptual mappings, and the interpretation of their communicative functions. This distinction allows the analysis to explain how particular expressions represent political issues and how they operate within specific rhetorical contexts.

The research material consists of publicly available speech transcripts and, where accessible, corresponding audiovisual recordings obtained from official institutional sources. Relevant speech genres include parliamentary addresses, election speeches, public statements, and speeches delivered at national commemorative events. These genres provide different communicative settings for examining the relationship between metaphor, political purpose, and audience positioning. For reproducibility, the final corpus description should specify the period covered, the number of speeches, their total word count, and the source of each text.

Corpus selection follows purposive sampling based on relevance to the research questions. The principal inclusion criteria are the availability of a complete Turkish-language text, identifiable information about the date and occasion, and substantive discussion of political or public affairs. Variation in speech genre and communicative occasion is considered during selection to avoid restricting the analysis to a single rhetorical setting. Texts are selected independently of whether they contain particularly striking metaphors, thereby reducing the risk of favouring examples that support predetermined interpretations. Duplicate transcripts, isolated quotations, and media summaries that do not reproduce a complete speech are excluded.

The analysis is conducted primarily on the original Turkish texts. English translations are used to present selected examples to an international readership rather than as the primary basis for metaphor identification. Each translated example is checked against the Turkish expression to preserve its conceptual structure, evaluative orientation, and contextual meaning. Where an expression contains culturally specific associations that cannot be conveyed adequately through direct translation, an explanatory note accompanies the example. This procedure helps distinguish metaphorical patterns present in the original discourse from figurative effects introduced through translation.

Metaphor identification follows a systematic comparison between contextual and more basic meanings. First, each speech is read in full to establish its main topic, communicative purpose, and argumentative organization. Potentially metaphorical lexical units are then examined within their immediate context. An expression is classified as metaphorical when its contextual meaning differs from a more basic contemporary meaning but can be understood through a comparison between the two. More basic meanings may involve bodily action, spatial movement, physical objects, or directly observable experiences. Dictionary consultation is used when the distinction between meanings is uncertain. Conventional expressions remain eligible for analysis because frequent use does not necessarily eliminate their metaphorical structure.

Following identification, metaphorical expressions are grouped according to their source and target domains. The source domain refers to the experiential field from which an expression draws its imagery, whereas the target domain refers to the political issue or relationship being represented. Potential source domains include journey, struggle, construction, family, and bodily experience. These categories serve as provisional analytical possibilities rather than predetermined findings. The coding scheme permits additional categories to emerge from the material and allows ambiguous instances to remain unclassified until sufficient contextual evidence is available.

Expressions associated with a similar source domain are also examined for differences in the political actors, actions, and values they represent.

The linguopragmatic analysis investigates the communicative work performed by each metaphorical expression. Coding considers functions such as legitimizing political action, constructing collective identity, encouraging solidarity, evaluating opponents, simplifying complex issues, and presenting future objectives. Functional assignments are supported by surrounding textual evidence, including inclusive and exclusive pronouns, evaluative vocabulary, modal expressions, repetition, contrasts, and calls to action. A single metaphor may receive more than one functional code when the context supports overlapping roles. However, persuasive intention is distinguished from persuasive effect: textual analysis can identify strategies that invite particular interpretations, but it cannot establish actual changes in audience attitudes without reception data.

Contextual interpretation operates at three levels. The immediate linguistic context establishes how the expression relates to nearby statements. The situational context identifies the speech occasion, intended audience, and relevant public issue. The broader sociopolitical context is considered where verified background information is necessary to explain a reference or conceptual association. Interpretations concerning ideology or historical memory are therefore grounded in identifiable evidence rather than inferred solely from the speaker's identity or the presence of emotionally expressive language.

A structured coding record is maintained for each identified instance. The record includes the original expression, its contextual meaning, the relevant basic meaning, source and target domains, proposed pragmatic function, and supporting textual evidence. Speech-level metadata include the date, genre, occasion, audience, and source. Particular attention is given to uncertain cases, alternative interpretations, and expressions that do not fit the dominant patterns. This creates an audit trail through which analytical decisions can be reviewed and revised.

Analytical consistency is strengthened through repeated examination of the coded material and explicit definitions of the coding categories. Where a second coder is available, an independently coded subset can be used to assess agreement separately for metaphor identification and pragmatic classification. Disagreements should be documented and resolved through comparison of contextual evidence. If the study is conducted by a single researcher, this limitation should be stated, and consistency should be supported through a coding manual, delayed recoding, and transparent reporting of ambiguous examples. Inter-coder reliability must not be reported unless independent coding has actually been conducted.

The findings are presented through contextualized examples and comparisons across speech genres. If descriptive frequencies are included, metaphor counts are normalized by text length to allow comparison between speeches of different sizes. Such counts indicate distribution within the selected corpus; they do not independently establish rhetorical importance, statistical significance, or audience impact. The methodological framework consequently supports a transparent account of how metaphorical expressions structure political meaning and perform contextual communicative functions within the material examined.

Results and discussion: Metaphorical expressions in political discourse can be examined through the relationship between conceptual framing and pragmatic function. Within the proposed analysis of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speeches, particular attention is directed to journey, struggle, construction, family, and revival metaphors. These categories offer a framework for investigating how political objectives become intelligible through familiar experiences and how audiences are positioned in relation to those objectives. Their analytical importance depends on their contextual use, rather than merely on the presence of figurative vocabulary.

Journey metaphors provide a means of conceptualizing political activity as movement towards a destination. Within this framework, leadership may be represented as guidance, policy objectives as destinations, and difficulties as obstacles along a route. Expressions involving roads, steps, direction, and movement become politically metaphorical when their contextual meanings concern governance or collective development rather than physical travel.

The principal pragmatic potential of this framing lies in establishing continuity between past achievements, present decisions, and future aspirations. Political measures can be presented as successive stages within a coherent programme, while difficulties can be interpreted as temporary interruptions to continued progress. When journey imagery occurs alongside inclusive pronouns, it may also invite listeners to understand themselves as participants in a shared undertaking.

However, journey metaphors do not carry a fixed ideological meaning. Depending on the surrounding discourse, they may emphasize collective participation, the authority of leadership, or the necessity of maintaining an established direction. Interpretation therefore requires attention to who determines the destination, who is represented as moving, and whether alternative political routes are acknowledged. These distinctions help explain how an apparently familiar metaphor can support different forms of audience positioning.

Struggle metaphors represent political activity through concepts associated with confrontation, resistance, defence, and victory. Their analysis requires a distinction between literal references to armed conflict and figurative descriptions of elections, economic problems, institutional reform, or competing political programmes. Without this distinction, the identification of conflict vocabulary may incorrectly inflate the number of metaphorical instances.

When used figuratively, struggle imagery can assign moral and emotional significance to political participation. Supporting a policy may be framed as defending a collective interest, while perseverance may be presented as a response to adversity. This creates opportunities for mobilization because political action is associated with commitment, responsibility, and solidarity.

The same framing can also contribute to the construction of boundaries between political groups. If opponents are represented through threatening or hostile imagery, disagreement may be interpreted as confrontation rather than legitimate competition. This possibility should be assessed through the explicit description of social actors and the surrounding argument. A struggle metaphor alone does not establish exclusionary intent; its pragmatic function depends on the identities, evaluations, and actions attached to it.

Construction metaphors conceptualize political institutions, national development, or social order as structures that can be built, strengthened, repaired, or renewed. They establish correspondences between physical construction and abstract political processes: principles may become foundations, institutions may become supporting structures, and reforms may become acts of reconstruction.

Such imagery can make political programmes appear purposeful and practically organized. A proposed reform may be represented as a necessary contribution to a larger structure, while previous achievements may be invoked as evidence of the capacity to continue building. The framing can therefore support legitimation by connecting political authority with competence, stability, and long-term planning.

Nevertheless, construction imagery can simplify contested political processes. Presenting a programme as a building project may foreground order and completion while backgrounding disagreement about its design, costs, or beneficiaries. A contextual discussion should consequently examine both what the metaphor makes visible and what it leaves less explicit. This approach

allows the analysis to address the persuasive organization of meaning without assuming that simplification necessarily constitutes manipulation.

Family metaphors represent political relationships through concepts associated with kinship, belonging, mutual care, and responsibility. Where the nation or political community is conceptualized as a family, social membership acquires an interpersonal dimension. The community may be presented as a source of attachment and protection rather than solely as an institutional arrangement.

The pragmatic significance of this framing concerns solidarity and relational closeness. Kinship imagery can reduce the perceived distance between a speaker and an audience, particularly when it interacts with inclusive forms of address. It may also portray cooperation as a moral obligation arising from shared membership.

At the same time, family metaphors can imply hierarchical relationships. A representation emphasizing care and reciprocity differs from one emphasizing obedience or paternal authority. The analysis should therefore identify the roles assigned within the metaphorical family rather than treating every kinship expression as evidence of the same political function. Family-related address terms must also be examined carefully, since conventional forms of address do not necessarily instantiate a developed conceptual metaphor.

Revival metaphors represent political change through images of awakening, recovery, rebirth, or renewed vitality. They can connect contemporary objectives with a narrative in which a community regains strength or realizes previously restricted potential. Their interpretation becomes particularly significant when the surrounding discourse refers explicitly to historical events, collective achievements, or national aspirations.

The pragmatic potential of revival imagery lies in linking policy with a broader sense of collective purpose. Political change can be represented as meaningful beyond its immediate administrative consequences. In this framing, participation may become an expression of historical continuity and shared identity.

However, claims about particular historical or religious associations require evidence from the speech and its context. An expression of renewal does not automatically establish a specific ideological reference. A rigorous interpretation should identify which past is invoked, how it is evaluated, and how the proposed future is connected to it.

Metaphorical framing operates alongside pronouns, modality, evaluation, repetition, and argument structure. Inclusive pronouns may expand a metaphor's collective orientation, while contrasts between "we" and "they" may establish boundaries between groups. Modal expressions indicating obligation can present metaphorically framed action as necessary; expressions of possibility can present it as an available future.

Repetition may increase the prominence of a metaphorical frame and connect separate parts of a speech. Nevertheless, prominence should not be equated with demonstrated audience influence. A recurring expression can be identified as a rhetorical resource, but its effects on attitudes, emotions, or behaviour require independent evidence.

This distinction is central to the linguopragmatic interpretation. The analysis can explain how a speech invites solidarity, legitimizes action, or encourages a particular understanding of political events. It cannot establish that listeners accepted those invitations merely because the relevant expressions occurred.

The proposed categories reveal different ways of organizing political meaning. Journey imagery foregrounds direction and continuity; struggle imagery foregrounds opposition and determination; construction imagery foregrounds purposeful development; family imagery

foregrounds belonging and relational obligation; and revival imagery foregrounds renewal and historical significance. These functions may overlap within a single passage.

Their interaction can strengthen rhetorical coherence when several metaphors support a common interpretation. It can also create tension: a discourse emphasizing shared familial belonging may simultaneously distinguish adversaries through struggle imagery. Such combinations are analytically valuable because they show how solidarity and differentiation can coexist within the same political argument.

The discussion therefore supports an approach in which metaphor is treated as a contextual resource for framing political reality and positioning audiences. For the final empirical section, these interpretations should be substantiated with dated Turkish excerpts, checked English translations, and documented coding decisions. The resulting claims should remain specific to the selected corpus, with any broader conclusions about Turkish political discourse supported by additional comparative evidence.

Conclusion: The linguopragmatic examination of metaphorical expressions offers a framework for understanding how political language connects the representation of public issues with persuasion, evaluation, and collective identity. In the analysis of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's speeches, metaphor should be approached as both a conceptual resource and a situated communicative strategy. Its significance emerges from the relationship between figurative meaning, linguistic context, the occasion of delivery, and the audience to whom a speech is addressed.

Journey, struggle, construction, family, and revival metaphors provide relevant analytical categories for investigating these relationships. They can frame political objectives through ideas of progress, determination, development, belonging, and renewal. However, their pragmatic functions cannot be determined from source domains alone. A metaphor's role depends on the actors it represents, the values it foregrounds, and its interaction with pronouns, modality, evaluative language, and argumentation. Consequently, similar metaphorical expressions may perform different functions across communicative settings.

The proposed approach also highlights the importance of distinguishing rhetorical potential from demonstrated audience effects. Metaphors may invite solidarity, support political legitimation, or encourage particular interpretations of events, but textual analysis alone cannot establish whether audiences accept these representations. Likewise, culturally or historically specific interpretations require explicit contextual support rather than assumptions based solely on the speaker's identity.

The methodological contribution of this study lies in connecting systematic metaphor identification with context-sensitive pragmatic interpretation. This combination enables a more precise account of how figurative language participates in political meaning-making while preserving the distinction between textual evidence and analytical inference. Final conclusions about the prevalence and distribution of particular metaphorical patterns must be grounded in a clearly documented speech corpus. Further research could extend this framework through comparisons across political speakers, speech genres, and periods, alongside reception studies examining how different audiences interpret metaphorical political messages.

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