



Family Metaphors in Turkish

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ABSTRACT: (The aim of this study is to examine family metaphors in Turkish within the framework of Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Theory of Metaphor. The theory argues that metaphors are not limited to linguistic expressions, and that metaphors are an effective conceptual tool for individuals to experience and perceive reality. In this study, a total of 1041 entries written between 1999 and 2023 under the title of family in the online dictionary platform Ekşi Sözlük were determined as a database, examples containing metaphors among all entries were identified by document analysis method and explained with examples under 21 conceptual metaphor categories. The findings of the study suggest that individuals used metaphors in defining the concept of family in order to explain the creation and maintenance of the family and the impact of the family on the individual's thoughts and life.

KEYWORDS: Family, Metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor

I. INTRODUCTION

It is possible to define conceptual metaphor as the expression of one concept or field of experience through another concept or field of experience. The Conceptual Theory of Metaphor, first proposed by Lakoff and Johnson in 1980, argues that the conceptual system in the mind is structured through metaphors and that the perception of objects and experiences in the external world is based on metaphor[1][2].

Lakoff and Johnson argue that conceptual metaphors and linguistic metaphors have different characteristics from each other within the scope of Conceptual Figurative Theory. According to the theory, while linguistic metaphors consist only of concrete linguistic expressions, conceptual metaphors are not only limited to language, but are also one of the factors that shape the concept string in the mind[3][1]. Family is the name given to human communities connected to each other through various processes and relationships such as blood ties, marriage and adoption[4]. Families differ from other communities due to factors such as having a common

history, adopting similar traditions and behaviors, and family members having responsibilities towards each other and the rest of the society [5]. The abstract relationship and emotional structure of the family and its strong and continuous effect on human life have caused individuals to attempt to concretize the concept of family through metaphors. This study aims to examine and exemplify family metaphors in Turkish in different contexts.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

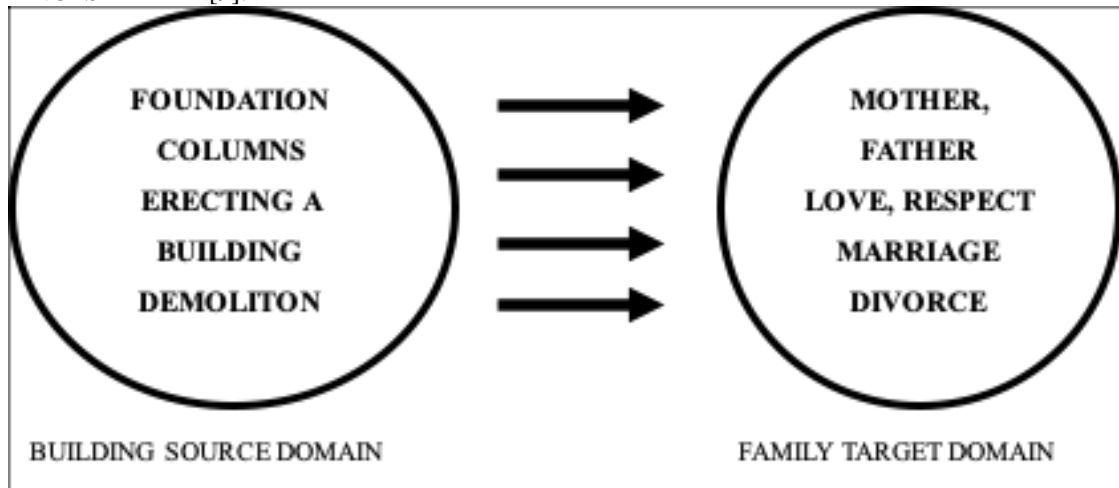
Conceptual Metaphor Theory was first introduced in 1980 in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*[6], and then the theory was expanded with various studies by Kövecses[7] and other scholars. Conceptual Metaphor Theory is based on the mapping of an abstract and complex concept to a concrete and perceptual field of experience. Metaphor is usually formed by mapping the source domain, where the concrete concept is located, with the target domain, where the abstract concept is located. Through this matching, the abstract concept becomes more understandable [8].

Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors are found not only in language, but also in the conceptual structure that underlies an individual's thoughts and actions. Metaphor structures contribute to the construction of the concept system in the mind; thus, the individual experiences objects and processes through conceptual metaphors [2].

For example, the *FAMILY IS BUILDING* metaphor, examples of which are presented in this study, is a conventional way of expressing the abstract concept of family through the concrete and sensory concept of structure. The family is a construction metaphor is a way of showing that the family, like a structure, requires a process to come into being and that just as there are building blocks that enable a structure to be formed and survive, there are certain attitudes and practices that must be demonstrated in order for the family to be established and sustained.



One of the things to be known about the process of metaphor is that metaphors work in one direction. For example, it is not possible to reconstruct the metaphor of FAMILY IS BUILDING as BUILDING IS FAMILY[9].



As can be seen in figure above, in the family target area, mother/father is referred to as the pillar of the house; attitudes that should be exhibited in the family such as love and respect are referred to as the foundation of the building; the process of creating a family is referred to as establishing a building; and the problems experienced in the family and the breakdown of the family are referred to as the demolition/collapse of the building.

III. MATERIAL AND METHOD

In this study, the entries written under the title of family in Ekşi Sözlük (www.eksisozluk.com), an online platform, between 1999 and 2023 were used as data sources. Ekşi Sözlük is a dictionary like microblogging platform, where users can login and enter information about diverse topics. A total of 1041 entries written by Ekşi Sözlük writers under the title of family were transferred to a Microsoft Word file using Python based scraper in accordance with the historical order of the entries. A total of 971 examples determined to contain metaphorical expressions among these entries constitute the sample of the study.

In order to obtain the data in the sample of the study, the document analysis method, which is a qualitative analysis method, was used to determine the metaphors among 1041 entries in the online dictionary platform Ekşi Sözlük. Document analysis method is defined as collecting research data from primary sources, from various documents and

analysing them in the context of the purpose of the research[10].

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In Ekşi Sözlük online dictionary platform, there are a total of 1041 entries written between 1999 and 2023 under the title of family. Among these entries, the entries containing metaphors were identified by document analysis method and a total of 971 examples of the use of metaphors were found. The expressions in the sample were analyzed holistically according to their contexts and classified under various conceptual categories.

The categories of metaphors in the study and the number of examples in each category are given in the table below:



FAMILY IS A BUILDING	340
FAMILY IS A CONTAINER	188
FAMILY IS AN ORGANIZATION	98
FAMILY IS AN EMOTION	94
FAMILY IS SPACE	52
FAMILY IS HUMAN	42
FAMILY IS WEIGHT	40
FAMILY IS A JOURNEY	15
FAMILY IS A SHIP	15
FAMILY IS A FLAVOR	14
FAMILY IS A FIELD	13
FAMILY IS MONEY	12
FAMILY IS A PLANT	10
FAMILY IS A DISEASE	8
FAMILY IS A REFUGE	7
FAMILY IS A PRISON	6
FAMILY IS ART	6
FAMILY IS WAR	4
FAMILY IS AN ANIMAL	3
FAMILY IS FOOD	3
FAMILY IS A COMPUTER	1
TOTAL	971

In general, it is possible to define the family as a group of people who are connected to each other through relationships and processes such as marriage, blood ties, adoption, and who share the same house or are in constant communication and interaction with each other[4]. Individuals spend most of their lives with their families from the moment they are born, and during this time, they are highly influenced by the behaviors of the family members with whom they share the same house and interact with, and they develop strong feelings towards family members in accordance with the effects aroused by these behaviors. The family is also the place where the individual receives his/her first education and where he/she acquires and begins to apply basic behavioral codes, so it should be taken into consideration that the family plays a major role in shaping the individual's world of thought[11]. The fact that the concept of family has such a big place in human life and its undeniable impact on shaping the world of thought and behavior of the individual brings about the use of metaphors in understanding and explaining the family, which is an abstract concept. In the metaphors used to describe the family, individuals generally felt the need to emphasize the inclusive structure of the family, the emotional effects of the family on individuals, or the processes involved in the formation and maintenance of the family.

The metaphors in the database of the study were conceptually categorized under 21 categories. Due to space limitations we will present the most frequent five conceptual metaphors below:

FAMILY IS A BUILDING

The conceptual metaphor FAMILY IS A BUILDING is the most frequently used structure in the database of our study with a total of 340 appearances. The use of expressions such as the building block of the family, the foundation of the family, the establishment of the family, the collapse of the family makes it match with the building field as it indicates that the family is thing that is built, established, and destroyed. The source domain of this metaphor can be considered as building and the target domain as family. Some examples of this metaphor in the database of the study are as follows:

- a. "the **foundation** of society, one should not skimp on **materials** when **building the foundation**"
- b. "it usually **collapses** over **the one who built it**"

In example A, the family is defined as the foundation of society and, just like a building, it is intuited that it will collapse if its foundation is not solid. In example B, the concept of family is paired with the



concept of building through situations specific to structures, such as its establishment and collapse.

FAMILY IS A CONTAINER

FAMILY IS A CONTAINER is the second most common metaphor in the study's database with a total of 188 appearances. Family was frequently paired with the container source domain since it is a concept in which individuals are found, entered, exited and which contains various individuals and concepts. For this reason, the target domain family can be paired with the source domain container in uses such as being in the family, being left out of the family, being sheltered in the family. Some examples of the family container metaphor in the database of the study are as follows:

- a. "it **harbors** disgusting secrets. there is always a reflex to **hide** and deny bad events."
- b. it is just like that, it is unique to those **inside** it.

In example a above, it can be seen that the concept of family is paired with the source domain of container in terms of its characteristics of harboring and hiding. In example b, the concept of family is similarly paired with the source domain of container in relation to the property of containing individuals.

FAMILY IS AN ORGANIZATION

The concept of family is defined through the concept of organization based on management, business, power and power relations. Examples such as family institution, management of the family, functioning system of the family, social organization of the family, family being a teacher are examples of the uses of the FAMILY IS AN ORGANIZATION metaphor. Some examples of the 98 uses of this metaphor in the study are as follows:

- a. "maybe this is a fascist understanding...family is a **factory**."
- b. an **organization** that tries to return the individual to **factory** settings after a certain age."

In the metaphor in example a above, the concept of organization is the source field and the family is the target field. The family is paired with the factory in the context of the task sharing of the individuals within it, power relations and the production made within the factory. In example b, the concept of family is paired with the concept of organization in terms of its influence on the individuals within it and

the relationship based on sharing between these individuals.

FAMILY IS AN EMOTION

The intense feelings that individuals have for their families have often led to the use of emotions as a source area in defining the concept of family. For this reason, the FAMILY IS AN EMOTION metaphor is the third most common metaphor in the database of the study with a total of 94 appearances. Emotions such as love, hatred, disappointment that individuals have towards their families or the lucky or unlucky situations that families evoke in individuals lead to the emergence of emotion metaphors. Examples of FAMILY IS AN EMOTION metaphors in the database of the study are as follows:

- a. "it is a **disappointment** that I can never be **angry** with."
- b. "family is **love**, **happiness**, family is everything"

In example a above, family is paired with the feeling of disappointment, an emotion about one's family. In example b, family is mapped with the target domain of love and happiness in relation to the emotions it evokes in the individual.

FAMILY IS SPACE

Examples where individuals define the concept of family based on the places where families are located or the places where they experience similar experiences to the experiences they have about the family can be given as examples of the FAMILY IS SPACE metaphor. Some of the 52 examples of the family is a place metaphor found in the study are as follows:

- a. "a warm **nest** heated from the outside that pretends to understand you but actually deceives you"
- b. "it is the **supreme court** board that I have been facing for a few days."

In example a, the concept of family is the target domain and warm home is the source domain. In this example, family is paired with the place where the members of the family live. In example b, the concept of family is mapped with the supreme court in the source domain. These two concepts are paired because of the similarity of the processes of judgment and accountability in the family and the court.



V. CONCLUSION

In this study, family metaphors in Turkish were analysed within the scope of Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory. For this purpose, 971 sample usages with metaphorical expressions were identified from 1041 entries in Ekşi Sözlük online dictionary platform. These sample expressions were analysed according to their contexts and conceptual features, and at the end of the analysis, they were grouped under 21 conceptual metaphor categories. Among the identified conceptual metaphors, the FAMILY IS A BUILDING metaphor was the most frequently used metaphor by dictionary users in defining family with a total of 340 example uses, while only one example use of the FAMILY IS A COMPUTER metaphor was found.

In line with the findings obtained from the database of the study, family metaphors in Turkish are as follows in terms of frequency of use: FAMILY IS A BUILDING, FAMILY IS A CONTAINER, FAMILY IS AN ORGANIZATION, FAMILY IS AN EMOTION, FAMILY IS SPACE, FAMILY IS HUMAN, FAMILY IS WEIGHT, FAMILY IS A JOURNEY, FAMILY IS A SHIP, FAMILY IS A FLAVOR, FAMILY IS SPACE, FAMILY IS MONEY, FAMILY IS A PLANT, FAMILY IS A DISEASE, FAMILY IS SHELTER, FAMILY IS A PRISON, FAMILY IS ART, FAMILY IS WAR, FAMILY IS AN ANIMAL, FAMILY IS FOOD, FAMILY IS A COMPUTER.

According to the analysis of the database of the study, it was observed that the majority of the dictionary users, when defining the family, based on their positive and negative feelings towards family members, the effect of family on the mindset and life of the person, the ways and difficulties of forming a family and maintaining a healthy family, and tried to concretize the mentioned abstract processes and characteristics of the family through metaphors.

Although the selection of the database of the study based on the entries of Ekşi Sözlük writers constitutes a good data pool to observe the change of family metaphors in Turkish over time and to observe the use of these metaphors by different people in various contexts, it should be kept in mind that the study was conducted with a very limited number of native speakers of Turkish and through an online platform and therefore cannot provide a general idea about all family metaphors in Turkish.

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