Chapter 10
It's High Time:
A Corpus and NLP-Based Investigation of the Time Metaphors in Turkish

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ABSTRACT

Time is understood through multiple metaphorical domains. However, languages are not uniform in their metaphorical conventions, making data-driven studies of understudied languages such as Turkish crucial. To this end, the present corpus-based study examines time metaphors in colloquial and poetic Turkish, extracted from a general-purpose corpus and a poetry corpus, developed as a part of the present study. I systematically classified the time metaphors into eight metaphorical domains and mapped their relationships to each other, and statistically analyzed their dominance based on frequencies along with qualitative interpretations. The results showed that "time is an object" is the most dominant metaphor in colloquial Turkish, while "time is a living organism" is the most dominant metaphor in poetic Turkish. The "organism" domain accounted for the largest difference between the corpora and the metaphoricity of time was stronger in the poetry corpus.

INTRODUCTION

Time is unquestionably a central part of the human experience. Perhaps because of its primacy, various fields, from physics to mathematics, philosophy to psychology, literature to linguistics, have explored our relationship to time from their own perspectives (McGrath & Kelly, 1986). In surprising contrast to the centrality of time to human existence, time is also as elusive, imperceptible, and intangible a concept as there is. Although we constantly need to measure and talk about time to regulate our daily lives, the abstract nature of time makes it extremely difficult to mentally visualize, let alone talk about. Perhaps for this reason, most people tend to understand time as an objectively real concept that exists in the physical world around us (Evans, 2004, p. 4), which essentially involves "perceiving" or "feeling" time in some way. Rather than time itself, we experience time as its effects on the world and by comparing the sequence of events around us (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999). These events can range from motional changes, such as the movement of a pendulum or the hands of a clock, to more physical changes, such as the rotting of

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an apple. In any case, the perception of time involves its projection onto the world around us, and thus involves a degree of embodiment and objectification. This is where language and metaphors come in.

LANGUAGE AND METAPHORS OF TIME

Language plays a vitally important role in our existential relationship with time, which can be best identified as bidirectional. On the one hand, linguistic elements such as tenses, temporal markers, and time-marking phrases (e.g., *soon*, *later*, *yesterday*) help to structure communication in a way that reflects the speaker's perception of time, thereby to regulate time in everyday communicative settings. On the other hand, how time is perceived, structured, and used in verbal and nonverbal communication, which is the central topic of "chronemics", is mostly shaped by the given language and culture.

Language users typically refer to embodied, sensorimotor experiences in order to talk metaphorically about abstract domains (Claudi & Heine, 1986; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a; Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987). Importantly, metaphors are not confined to the linguistic and/or literary sphere, but significantly shape the way we perceive, think and reason about abstract concepts and, ultimately, about the world as several experiments have demonstrated (see Boroditsky, 2000; Thibodeau et al., 2017 for reviews).

In the current study, I define metaphors in linguistic terms according to the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980a). In accordance with this, "a metaphor is a word or expression that is used to talk about an entity or quality other than that referred to by its core, or most basic meaning" (Deignan, 2005, p. 34). This non-primary usage reflects a perceived connection to the central meaning of the word and often a mapping between two different semantic domains, that is, between the target domain (i.e., the abstract or complex concept we are trying to understand) and the source domain (i.e., the more concrete, familiar, or experiential concept used to make sense of the target domain). As one of the fundamental abstract domains, time is talked about and, more importantly, understood through the prism of more concrete domains of metaphor. As in other metaphors, metaphors of time act as a bridge in the complex relationship between language and our perception of time. Like most abstract domains, time is described by more than one conceptual metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson (1980a) have introduced the most comprehensive treatment of time metaphors through the CMT. They discussed several concrete domains that serve as source domains and through which we understand time, the main target domain (see also Deignan, 2005; Kövecses, 2010b).

The fundamental space-time mapping framed in the "*time is space"* conceptual metaphor is probably the most widespread and prevalent metaphorical domain (Boroditsky, 2000; Grady, 1999; Haspelmath, 1997; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Moore, 2006). Space-time mapping is so embedded in human culture that it spans across several typologically and geographically diverse languages, from English (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999) to Aymara (Núñez & Sweetser, 2006), from Chinese (Yu, 1998) to Wolof (Moore, 2006), from Spanish (Pamies-Bertrán & Yuan, 2020) to Toba (Radden, 2011), a topic that has been explored in numerous comprehensive reviews (Bender & Beller, 2014; Núñez & Cooperrider, 2013) and books (Bybee, 1994; Filipović & Jaszczolt, 2012; Kövecses, 2005).

By Lakoff and Johnson's (1980a) criteria, "*time is space"* is an ontological metaphor because it conceptualizes time as a tangible entity or spatial dimension that can be traversed, experienced, or quantified, allowing us to understand abstract temporal experiences in terms of physical space. Thereby, this metaphor gives structure to our understanding of time by mapping concrete spatial properties (e.g., movement, distance, and location) onto temporal concepts, helping us to reason about time as though

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