Framing Fled People: An Analysis of Turkish Media's Use of Migration Metaphors on Twitter in Covering Fled People

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Metaphors play an important role in human cognition, helping us understand abstract concepts and filling lexical gaps. They are also highly persuasive and can create new connections between ideas. This is why they are significant for individuals in positions of influence, such as the media (Charteris-Black, 2004). This study focuses on the use of migration metaphors by Turkish media on Twitter in their coverage of fled people.

In Turkey, migration has been a heavily debated topic since 2011. Three labels used to refer to fled people in Turkish - *göçmen* (migrant/immigrant), *mülteci* (refugee), and *sığınmacı* (asylum-seeker) - were analyzed to investigate the potential discriminatory effects of their use in metaphorical expressions. The study examined the use of these labels by the three Turkish media outlets with the most followers on Twitter: Habertürk, Hürriyet, and Cumhuriyet. A sample of 450 tweets were collected and analyzed using critical metaphor analysis to understand the types of metaphorical conceptualizations used based on the label and how the political stance of the media outlet influenced the framing of refugees.

The results of the study indicate that while *göçmen* and *mülteci* overwhelmingly elicited negative sentiments and framings, *sığınmacı* evoked more positive metaphorical frames. The most common conceptual metaphors associated with these labels were CRIME (*göçmen*), VICTIM (*sığınmacı*), and PRESSURE/BURDEN (*mülteci*). This shows that conceptual metaphors are influenced by the labels chosen. Additionally, the study found that the frequency and spread of conceptual metaphors were affected by the political leaning of the media outlets. Media outlets aligned with the government primarily used the VICTIM metaphor, whereas those in opposition employed mainly the CRIME metaphor. This suggests that the metaphors used by media outlets in their coverage of refugees matched their political stances.

To conclude, this study highlights the importance of understanding how metaphorical language can shape public perception and the potential biases and discriminatory effects it may have. It also shows that the conceptual metaphors used in media discourse regarding migration in Turkey are influenced by the labels chosen and the political stance of the media outlet.

References

Charteris-Black, J. (2004). Corpus approaches to critical metaphor analysis. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.