



# THE WORDS OF COVID-19: Turkey

# corona democratic (Demokratik)

by Elcin Esmer

#### Abstract:

Bu girdi, Türk gazete ve dergi köşe yazılarında kullanılan Corona demokratik metaforunun kullanımını incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu incelemeler yoluyla çalışmada demokratik kelimesinin pandemi sürecinde farklı ötekilik biçimlerini (yeniden) üretmek için kullanılıp kullanılmadığı betimlenecektir.

The entry analyses the use of the Corona democratic metaphor used in Turkish newspaper and journal opnion articles. Through the analyses, the entry describes whether the word democratic is used to (re)produce different forms of otherness in the pandemic process.

# **Etymology:**

In the Online Etymology Dictionary, it is stated that the word "democratic" is derived circa 1600s from the French démocratique, the medieval Latin democraticus, the Greek demokratikos and demokratia words. The meaning of words is presented in the dictionary as the below:

Democratique and democraticus "the nature of or characterized by democracy" and "pertaining to democracy"

Demokratikos "of or for democracy and favoring democracy"

Demokratia "popular government".

The word democratic is defined in Turkish Language Institution Dictionary as appropriate for democracy (*demokrasiye uygun*).

#### **Problematization:**

Democracy is a form of government in which all individuals who make up society have an equal right to voice in shaping the state policy and in administration. The Greek word dimokratia is formed by the combination of the words dimos "people" and kratos "power". With its most general definition, the word democratic is expressed in many dictionaries as "suitable for democracy". Today, many countries adopt democracy as a form of government. Individuals and views that support equality among citizens as form of government are also defined as democratic.

As known, the Corona crisis emerged in late December 2019 and spread around the globe through the spring months of 2020. With the emergence and spread of the Corona how democratic were the various practices brought by governments to protect the health of their people have become an important agenda topic in many countries, especially in the written and visual media. Therefore, the concept of *democratic* has begun to be rediscussed in the world media and also Turkish media.

This entry analyzes the use of the Corona *democratic* metaphor in newspaper opinion articles and how the word *democratic* was used to (re)produce different forms of otherness.





# **Communication strategies:**

Metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain from the perspective of another conceptual domain (Lakoff & Johnson 1980, 1989; Kövecess 2010). According to this approach, the conceptual metaphor consists of a source field (more concrete or physical concepts such as journey) and a target field (more abstract concepts such as love).

The selection of source areas depends on human factors that reflect non-real and previously non-existent similarities between a source and a target area (Kövecess 2010). Also, the source-to-target mappings can change according to people's world views, background knowledge, and experiences (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecess 2010). For instance, in some cultures "love" can be seen as dance, lovers can be seen as performers and their goal is to act in aesthically and balanced way; on the other hand in some cultures "love" can be seen as a war, lovers are rival and their goal is to defeat each other.

Moreover, some researchers (e.g. Simon-Vandenbergen 2003; Martin and White 2005) focus on the interpersonal functions of metaphor. According to them, metaphors have a role in reflecting the stance of the text producer and also affecting the attitude of the text receiver. Hence the choice of metaphor involves the context in which the text is produced.

#### Subversion:

Twenty-two opinion articles published during December 2019 to October 2021 were selected from elite newspapers and journals in Turkey by means of random sampling. The selected articles focused on the topics related to the effects of Corona on governments' democratic stance all over the world. Data analysis was done based on Lakoff and Johnson's Event Structure Metaphor Theory (1999).

Since event structure metaphor theory is a subject that requires linguistic expertise, first of all, what this theory is will be explained below.

Event Structure Metaphor Theory characterizes the events including abstract notions like states, changes, processes, actions, causes, purposes, and means via metaphor in terms of space, motion, and force (Lakoff 1992). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999) event structure metaphor has two important metaphorical systems: The location event structure metaphor and the object event structure metaphor

The metaphorical systems will be explained below. The examples were taken from the internet site "https://metaphor.icsi.berkeley.edu/pub/en/index.php/Category:Metaphor"

1. The location event structure metaphor: Events are conceptualized in terms of locations

STATES ARE LOCATIONS- Ex: He has a lofty position.

CAUSES ARE FORCES-Ex: That experience pushed him over the edge

CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS-Ex: He went crazy.

CAUSATION IS FORCED MOVEMENT- Ex: "FDR's leadership brought the country out of the depression"

ACTIONS ARE SELF-PROPELLED MOVEMENTS-Ex: He drank himself out of the promotion

PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS Ex: We've reached the end.

MEANS ARE PATHS Ex. However you want to go about it is fine with me

DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS TO MOTION Ex: My life is going nowhere - I'm just spinning my wheels.





PROGRESS IS FORWARD MOTION Ex. I'm afraid I haven't gotten very far in grading the exams

2. The object event structure metaphor: Events are conceptualized in terms of objects

ATTRIBUTES ARE POSSESSIONS Ex: She has a sunny disposition

CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS OF POSSESSIONS Ex: I got a headache

CAUSATION IS TRANSFER OF POSSESSION Ex. "The noise gave me a headache

PURPOSES ARE DESIRED OBJECTS/ ACHIEVING A PURPOSE IS ACQUIRING A DESIRED OBJECT Ex. He finally managed to get a smile out of her.

Also, according to Lakoff and Johnson (1999) some metaphors occur in location-object pairs called duals such as causes are forces and changes are movements; states are possessions and attributes are possessions. In the location event structure metaphor, "changes are movements" metaphor denotes the motion of the event-changing from an old location to new location or vice versa; "causes are forces" metaphor shows causation is the forced movement of an affected entity to a new location. On the other hand, in the object event structure metaphor change is the thing changing and it is seen as acquisition or loss of the thing; causation is the transfer of an object to or from an affected entity. In other words, causation is considered as taking or giving an object. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) exemplify this situation as follows:

I got a headache. [Change is acquisition -- motion to]

My headache went away. [Change is loss -- motion from]

The noise gave me a headache. [Causation is giving -- motion to]

The aspirin took away my headache. [Causation is taking -- motion from] (p.225).

The findings obtained from the Turkish opinion articles related with the effects of Corona on governments' democratic stance will be given below.

Although Corona is a non-human being and inanimate, it has been used as a human being such as a coffin maker, an enemy/opponent, an actor and an animate/living organism such as a plant in data as seen in the examples (1) to (3) and the Table (1) below. Thus journalists try to make corona more understandable for their readers through the conceptual metaphors. Also these metaphors entail that with the spread of the Corona the "equal voice" has been broken by governments around the world with the excuse of the people health protection. Consequently the termbeing democratic government has undergone a change of meaning: being democratic means authority of government over public.

Example 1. Corona, bilinen liberalizmin tabutuna son çivileri mi çakıyor? (Is Corona putting the final nails in the coffin of known liberalism?) (Habertürk, April 2020)

Example 2. Bu virüs belki de etrafınıza hangi ulusal duvarları örerseniz örün, o duvarların virüsler tarafından şu ya da bu şekilde aşılabileceğini göstermesi anlamında demokratik olabilir..... Virüs içine girdiği insan bedenleriyle sınırlarda serbestçe hareket ederken, Avrupa politikası virüsü sadece arkadan kovalıyordu. ..... Bu eğer demokratik bir virüs olacaksa, belki de yaşadığımız topluma bakıp kral çıplak diyebilmemizi sağladığı için olacak. Bu salgını izleyecek bir başka varoluşsal kriz gelip çatana kadar. Virüs bize kendi aktörlüğümüzü hatırlatan bir aktör. (This virus may be democratic in the sense that it shows that no matter what national walls you build around you, those walls can be overcome in one way or another by viruses.... While the virus moved freely across the borders with the human bodies it had penetrated, European politics was merely chasing the virus from behind... If this is going to be a democratic virus, maybe it will be because it allows us to look at the society we live in and say the king is naked. Until another existential





crisis arrives that will follow this pandemic. The virus is an actor who reminds us of our own acting)(Birikim, March 2020)

Example 3. Herhangi bir salgın gelişip, serpilmek için bundan daha mümbit bir iklim bulabilir miydi ? (Could any epidemic find a more fertile climate to flourish?) (Duvar, March 2020)

Table 1. The conceptual metaphors in the example (1) to (3)

**Entailment** 

Conceptual Linguistics Mappings Metaphors metaphor

Corona is a person Is Corona puttingSource **Target** Governments are the final nails in the disrupting the equal coffin of known voice between Corona is a coffinliberalism? themselves and their with maker Corona the people Human-being various practicies qualities they have brought with the Corona as an Corona is an enemy excuse. While the virus Therefore moved freely being across the borders democratic has Corona is an actor human with the gained new а had bodies it meaning such as being democratic is to penetrated. European politics have an authority over was merely chasing the public. virus from the behind... The virus is an actor who reminds us of our own acting. Corona is an Source **Target** animate/living Could any epidemicThe whole plant organism Corona find a more fertile climate flourish? Corona is a plant A flourish of the plantThe development and gowth spread of Corona

From the point of view of event structure metaphor, it was seen that the metaphors "causes are forces" and "changes are movements of possessions" were heavily used in the data.

In the following examples (4) to (5) under the metaphors "changes are movements (loss/acquisition)" and "causes are forces", it was emphasized that with the spread of the Corona, governments increased their power on people, especially minorities and opponents and thus people lost their "equality" in respect to government. In other words, it was stated in the examples that the governments strengthened and expanded us/them dichotomy together with the pandemic. Thereby in these examples the submetaphors emerged: Corona is not democratic for people and Corona is the thing/device governments to make someone otherized. These metaphors show that the term being democratic has undergone a change of meaning during the pandemic: being a democratic government means having a heavierBye Democracy - Transparency and Accountability Initiative Photo power and authority over public.



credit: picture-alliance/dpa/J. Carstensen

In the following examples (4) to (5) under the metaphors "changes are movements (loss/acquisition)" and "causes are forces", it was emphasized that with the spread of the Corona, governments increased their power on people, especially minorities and opponents and thus people lost their "equality" in respect to government. In other words, it was stated in the examples that the governments strengthened and expanded us/them dichotomy together with the pandemic. Thereby in these examples the sub-metaphors emerged: Corona is not democratic for people and Corona is the thing/device for governments to make someone otherized. These metaphors show that the term being democratic has undergone a change of meaning during the pandemic: being a democratic government means having a heavier power and authority over public.

The metaphors in each examples were tabulated to become more clear.

Example 4. Freedom House, Ekim 2020 tarihinde COVID-19 salgınının demokrasi ve insan hakları üzerindeki etkisine ilişkin "Democracy under Lockdown" isimli araştırmasını yayınladı. 192 ülke üzerinde yaptığı araştırmaya, 398 gazeteci, sivil toplum çalışanı, aktivist ve diğer uzmanlar katıldı. Rapora göre, salgının yol açtığı demokrasi krizi 80 ülkede demokrasi ve insan haklarının durumunu daha da kötüleştirdi. Halk sağlığını koruma mazeretiyle yürütme organları sahip oldukları güçleri muhalifleri bastırmak ve kurumları zayıflatmak için kullandılar. (Freedom House published its research titled "Democracy under Lockdown" on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on democracy and human rights in October 2020. 398 journalists, civil society workers, activists and other experts participated in the research conducted on 192 countries. According to the report, the democracy crisis caused by the epidemic worsened the situation of democracy and human rights in 80 countries. Under the pretext of protecting public health, executive bodies used their powers to suppress opposition and weaken institutions.) (Doğrulukpayı, October 2020)

Table 2. The event structure metaphors in the example (4)

Events structure	Linguistics	Entailments	Sub-
metaphors	metaphor		metaphors





Causes are forces  Governments  [Causation is giving motion to]  Changes are	Under the pretext of Corona has caused Corona is the protecting public governments to thing/device for health, executive increase their governments to bodies used their pressure on themake someone powers to suppresspeople or institutions other sized opposition and against them.  weaken institutions Therefore the change is acquisition for them
movements	
[Change is acquisition motion to]	
People	Corona is not democratic for
Causes are forces	The democracy crisisCorona has causedpeople caused by thegovernments to epidemic worsenedincrease their the situation of pressure on their
[Causation is giving motion to]	democracy and people. Thus human rights in 80
motion toj	countries. Many rights of people have been
Changes are movements	reduced or taken away. The change is loss for them
[Change is loss motion from]	

Example 5. Kriz anlarında gücün kötüye kullanılması marjinal topluluklar üzerinde orantısız bir etki yarattı. Freedom House'un araştırmasına katılan uzmanların %29'u azınlıklar ve savunmasız nüfusların salgından en çok etkilenen olduğunun altını çizdi. Katılımcıların %25'i salgın nedeni ile etnik ve dini azınlıklara yeni veya artan kısıtlamalar getirildiğini ifade etti. Bazı durumlarda etnik ve dini azınlıklar orantısız bir şekilde daha fazla acıya maruz kaldı çünkü sahip oldukları statüleri onları daha büyük risk altına aldı. Zayıflamış bağımsız medya ve kabul gören yasama ve yargı organlarının neden olduğu hesap verilebilirliğin azaltılması hem devletlerin hem de devlet dışı faillerin ayrımcılık yapmasına imkân sağladı. Örneğin, Bulgaristan'da Roman mahallelerinde, romanların çoğunluk oluşturmadığı bölgelere göre daha sert kısıtlamalar uygulandı. Türkiye'den bir katılımcı ise, "COVID-19 denetimleri ve kontrolleri kapsamında polis şiddetinin orantısız bir şekilde azınlıkları hedef aldığını" iddia etti . (The abuse of power in times of crisis has had a disproportionate impact on marginalized communities. 29% of experts participating in Freedom House's survey highlighted that minorities and vulnerable populations are most affected by the epidemic. 25% of the participants stated that new or increased restrictions were imposed on ethnic and religious minorities due to the epidemic. In some cases, ethnic and religious minorities suffered disproportionately because their status placed them at greater risk. Reduced accountability caused by weakened independent media and recognized legislatures and courts has allowed both states and non-state perpetrators to discriminate. For example, tougher restrictions were imposed in Roma neighborhoods in Bulgaria than in areas where Roma did not form the majority. A participant from Turkey claimed that "police violence disproportionately targets minorities within the scope of COVID-19 inspections and controls") (Duvar, March 2020)





Table 3. The event structure metaphors in the example (5)

Events structure metaphors	Linguistics Entailments Submetaphor metaphors				
Causes are forces  [Causation is giving Governments	Reduced Corona has causedCorona is the accountability causedgovernments tothing/device for by weakenedincrease theirgovernments to independent mediapressure onmake someone and recognizedminorities. Thereforeothersized				
motion to]  Changes are movements	legislatures and the change is courts has allowed acquisition for them both states and non-state perpetrators to discriminate.				
[Change is acquisition motion to]					
People	Corona is not democratic for				
Causes are forces  [Causation is giving	29% of expertsCorona has causedminorities participating ingovernments to Freedom House'sincrease their survey highlightedpressure on that minorities andminorities.				
motion to]	vulnerable populations are <b>most</b> Many rights of				
Changes are movements	affected by theminorities have been epidemic. 25% of thereduced or taken participants statedaway. The change is that new orloss for them increased restrictions were				
[Change is loss motion from]	imposed on ethnic and religious minorities due to the epidemic. In some cases, ethnic and religious minorities suffered disproportionately because their status placed them at greater risk				





Example 6. Pandeminin yarattığı en büyük farklılık da bu noktada karşımıza çıkıyor. Bugün yaşanan pandemi korkusunun güvenlik endişesinden çok daha küresel bir boyutta olması iktidarların işini daha da kolaylaştıran bir etken olduğunu söyleyebiliriz. Çünkü, COVID-19 salgını topluma öylesine büyük, yaşamsal bir korku yaydı ki, iktidarların korku yaratmak gibi ekstra bir kurgu yapmalarına gerek kalmadığı gibi bireyler mevcut sosyal şartlar altında virüse yakalanma korkusu ile gözetlenmeye rıza gösterip, istekli oldular. Ne kadar kontrol altında olurlarsa o kadar güvende olacakları düşüncesi ile bireyler hükümetlerin istedikleri online uygulamaları indirdi, çalıştırdı ve bu gözetlenmeyi yaşamlarının güvence altında kalacağının garantisi olarak görmeye başladılar. (The biggest difference created by the pandemic is at this point. We can say that the fear of the pandemic experienced today is much more global than the security concern, which is a factor that makes the work of the governments easier. Because the COVID-19 epidemic spread such a great and vital fear to the society that the governments did not need to make an extra fiction such as creating fear, and individuals were willing and willing to be watched for fear of catching the virus under the current social conditions. With the thought that the more they are under control, the safer they will be, individuals downloaded and run the online applications that governments wanted, and they began to see this surveillance as a guarantee that their lives would be safe.) (Istanpol, July 2020)

Table 4. The event structure metaphors in the example (6)

Events structure metaphors	Linguistics metaphor	Entailments	Sub- metaphors
Causes are forces  [Causation is giving Governments motion to]	pandemic experienced today much more glob than the secur concern, which is factor that makes the	isgovernments to have palmore power on the itypeople therefore the achange is acquisition	nething/device for vegovernments to eirmake someone neothersized
Changes are movements  [Change is acquisition motion	governments easi	•	
to] People  Causes are forces	epidemic sprea such a great ar vital fear to th society that the	19The pandemic have decaused the fear of the society. Because the fear the hepeople have felt the tothay have to obey the	ondemocratic se ne at
[Causation is taking motion from]	need to make a extra fiction such a creating fear, a	anrules the asgovernments set and protect from the reCorona therefore the angle ave lost the	eir to ne ey eir





Changes are movements

[Change is loss -motion from] fear of catching thewords the change is virus under theloss for them social current conditions. With the thought that the more they are under control, the safer they will be, individuals downloaded and the online applications that governments wanted, and they began to see this surveillance as a quarantee that their

### **Discussion:**

In the dictionaries, the term democratic is defined as follows: "an attitude or a system that treats everyone equally". Moreover, the phrase democratic society means that a group of people make decisions together and vote equally. As for the term democratic government, it means that all its citizens have equal rights against the government; it is based on the principle of separation of powers and accordingly having legislative, executive and judicial organs. It is a state model based on the people. In democratic states, the people choose those who will rule the country and change them when the time comes. A democratic state takes into account the interests and preferences of all citizens equally. At the same time, it gives importance to the opinions of the people. Therefore, the people have an equal voice with the government.

lives would be safe

The results showed in this entry reveal that with Corona pandemic governments around the world have deviated from the principle of equal voice and they have been far away from their citizens. This way they create us/them dichotomy and produce otherness. The governments use the term democratic for their own benefit during the pandemic. Hence the term has gained the new meaning that being a democratic government means applying power to the citizens and creating otherness.

#### **References/Further Readings:**

Cammaerts, B. (2012). The strategic use of metaphors by political and media elites: The 2007–11 Belgian constitutional crisis. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 8(2&3),229-249

Fowler, R. (1991). Language in the news: Discourse and Ideology in the Press. London: Routledge

Kövecess, Z. (2010). Metaphor a practical introduction. Oxford University Press:New York

Kuhi, D., & Mojood, M. (2014). *Metadiscourse in Newspaper Genre: A Cross-linguistic Study of English and Persian Editorials*. Proce-dia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 98, 1046-1055

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). Metaphors we live by. University of Chicago Press: Chicago

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1989). More than cool reason: A field guide to poetic metaphor. University of Chicago



#### IN OTHER WORDS

# A Contextualized Dictionary to Problematize Otherness

Press: Chicago.

Lakoff, G.(1992). *The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor*. (http://terpconnect. umd.edu/~israel/lakoff-ConTheorMetaphor. pdf).

Martin, J. R., & White, P.R.R. (2005.) The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English. London: Palgrave

Simon-Vandenbergen, A.-M. (2003). Lexical metaphor and interpersonal meaning. *In Grammatical metaphor: Views from systemic functional linguistics*, ed. Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenbergen, Miriam Taverniers, and Louise Ravelli, 223–256. Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing

**How to cite this entry:** Esmer, E. (2022). Corona Democratic. *In Other Words. A Contextualized Dictionary to Problematize Otherness.* Published: 18 April 2022. [https://www.iowdictionary.org/word/, accessed: 30 November 2025]