

Gender Metaphors in Turkish Proverbs: Human Representation Through Nature, Animals, and Objects

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Abstract: This report is a gender metaphorical linguistic essay which examines the image of Turkish proverbs with nature-animal-object according to metaphor. Through African Proverbs, as single-formula expression of cultural understanding, we find the collective wisdom and record breaking value system of an entire society that are reflective of/ contribute to shaping social construction (notion) of masculine and feminine. Employing principles of the cognitive semantics and concept. metaphor, it analyses a large sample of proverbs to explore how symbolic stereotypes are employed in the formation of sexed subject positions. The results also appear to suggest that women are perceived more frequently metaphorically in forms such as flimsiness, nurturance and domesticity (plants, softness, vulnerability) and men are connected more often with strength, authority and rationality (animals tools natural forces). The ambiance of socially acceptable portrayals also suggest attitudes to values, in which men and women aren't the sole parties that may be located. Its proverbs in some cases allow for ambivalent or alternative interpretation, Earlier I have said that these proverbs were taking sides in the relations between male and female. The analysis suggests that proverbs are a powerful ideological and cognitive resource, replicating stereotypical constructs of femininity as well as legitimization of publicly discursively adopted standards for gender. The research emphasises that paremiology safeguards a component of cultural memory, which includes ideological constructions and social onto-genetic deposita. In general, the study suggests that such linguistic constructs are due to be re-examined in order to interrupt this process and foster a more balanced picture of relevant contemporary sociolinguistic debate.

Key words: Turkish proverbs, gender metaphors, cognitive linguistics, cultural values, paremiology, patriarchal discourse, linguistic stereotypes.



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Introduction. In this article, I analyze how Turkish proverbs metaphorize nature and animate beings and inanimate objects to (re-)construct and perpetuate ideas of gender within cultural constructs. These metaphorical mappings are not merely linguistic constructs; they represent a deep-seated cultural heritage propagating societal norms and values in oral tradition across generations (Hua & Zhao, 2024). A proverb is a concise and well-known saying that embodies traditional values, wisdom, and moral ideas with an eloquent style that usually appears metaphorical and memorable as well as reflects the socio-cultural background (Ghilzai et al., 2020).

These brief and snappy remarks often expose encoded social values or may even reflect sexist or gender-stereotypical views (Hua & Zhao, 2024). By focusing on the semantics of gendered metaphors, namely plant, animal, and inanimate-related figures of speech, we will determine the cognitive models that underlie Turkish ambisexuality. The above move accords with the Cognitive Metaphor Theory, which explains that abstract ideas such as gender are conceptualized and articulated through concrete, understandable source domains (Onchoke & Wen, 2017). Moreover, the exploration of these metaphorical bases affords us an insight into what cultural bases and values there are to metaphors in different social and political settings as well (Momani et al., 2009). The persistence of proverbs, which are passed down through generations, establishes these gendered concepts in people's collective long-term memory and culture that permeate language and cultural identity (Načisčione, 2022). Accordingly, in this study we examine how such conventionalized expressions themselves can reproduce or challenge through their metaphorical framing the gendered status quo and offer greater understanding of the sociolinguistic process by which gender norms are framed and maintained (Hua & Zhao, 2024).

This study thus adds to the literature on how proverbial wisdom serves as an archive of cultural information, especially in its articulation and reinforcement of gendered social orders (Singh 2019). **Ultimate Goal** The objective of this study is to identify and classify the idiomatic references that these proverbs draw on regarding nature, animals, and objects and analyze how they reflect the conceptualization of gender issues, particularly roles and characteristics in relation to Turkish culture.

Materials and methods. The study is qualitative in nature, and discursive texts of over 200 Turkish proverbs are analyzed to detect this pattern in sex representation (Bagdogan, 2021). This method permits a fine-grained investigation of how linguistic mechanisms in proverbs shape and maintain gendered meanings, as also demonstrated by research studying the construction of gender in other oral literatures (Shah et al., 2018). For example, a parallel approach has been used to study the portrayal of women in Balochi proverbs and feminine language use in Assamese proverbial expressions (Shah et al., 2018; Hua & Zhao, 2024).

The method also recognizes that how gender is constructed is culture-bound, however – hence the need for analyses and investigation in a culturally and linguistically specific context within Turkish society (Mazzuca et al., 2023). It requires a vigilant interpretative perspective to track both nuanced and highlighted instances of sexism present in such expressions, given that language is the mirror and medium of societal prejudice (Hua & Zhao, 2024). Such critical practices are necessary for grasping how the linguistic sexism found in proverbs can push women out to the periphery of social life (Hua & Zhao, 2024), or they bring about gender divisions (Ade et al., 2015). This study will thus identify and classify gender metaphors used in Turkish proverbs according to their source by distinguishing among metaphoric expressions attributed to nature, animals, or objects, showing deeper cultural assumptions about men and women.

Discussion. This classification will then be the basis of a more detailed analysis of Americans' socio-cultural representation and the connected metaphoring at this level, through which they can be related to more general discourses about gender discrimination and patriarchy in Turkish society (Hua & Zhao, 2024; Nwihia, 2005). This type of analysis could be the key point in

decoding how language (and particularly proverbs) shapes and underlines patriarchal attitudes, subjects them to oppression or complete subordination, and confines women into certain social positions (Subaşı, 2020). The continuance of such gender inequality reflection in language, especially in traditional sayings, may relegate women by denying them the status they deserve in society and legitimating derogatory views (Hua & Zhao 2024).

Also, continued use of these proverbs can hinder the emancipation of women, as it reminds them perpetually about their traditional idioms of shame and dishonor, with a resultant effect on their stories and existence (Mirdal, 2006). This is illustrative of how language, deeply rooted in the social construction of reality, can either counter patriarchal presuppositions or reinforce them on account of proverbs that have been widely accepted (Barua & Dutta, 2023). A closer look at these linguistic constructs will show that they not only result in a “gendered gap” between the two sexes in terms of mutual public and household obligations but also foster stereotypes regarding gender roles (Hua & Zhao, 2024). Just as proverbs can help to construct the glass ceiling in relation to work, keeping women bound under an invisible yet real professional barrier, so they (the proverbs) articulate and normalize those restrictions regarding gender that exist within collective life outside of wage slavery (Bagdogan, 2021; Randell & Yerbury, 2020). This is not a phenomenon that singularly occurs in Turkish proverbs, and other research uncovers how gendered language across languages/cultures leads to educational, economic, and political inequalities (Davis et al., 2024). These findings highlight the urgent need for more localized, trans-regional, and trans-national research to investigate how language always operates as a mechanism for female oppression and supports patriarchal systems (Hua & Zhao, 2024). Language analysis, especially in organizational settings, has been found to make gender norming explicit and audible in male-centered cultures that continue to be so through the discourse with which they are being made (Sperber et al., 2022). This is why the analysis of gender metaphors in Turkish proverbs offers a variety that has not been instrumentalized elsewhere and entails languages’ subtle deployment of violent semiotic chiseling in sociocultural formations around gender patterns, which are historically reflective, reflecting broader patterns (Bagdogan 2021) existing also cross-linguistically and on cultural lines. This linguistic embedding, within which proverbs often codify historical gender prejudices, helps to shape individual and societal attitudes and, by extension, maintain the subordination of women (Kinyua, 2020; Hua & Zhao, 2024). Accordingly, the present study examines the interaction of language/culture and gender in order to (a) reveal how conventional linguistic forms of address may represent or question current gender relations within Turkish society from a critical perspective and (b), akin to what is known about literature that mirrors and supports conventions regarding gender roles (Talle et al., 2025). It also intends to demonstrate how, despite such mammoth changes in modern societies, proverbs along these lines are used so much in people’s daily lives and public discourses, often further influencing gender-biased views (Hua & Zhao, 2024). The present study will accordingly investigate in what ways these traditional sayings reflect, promote, or challenge gender roles and provide an understanding of the dynamic relationship between linguistic tradition and contemporary constructions of (un)manliness. It will also address the semantic development and social perpetuation of such gendered metaphorical imagery throughout various historical epochs and modern socio-spatial settings, thus yielding a fuller picture of their sociolinguistic effects on thought in its multiform manifestations. The investigation will employ critical discourse analysis in order to examine the power relations that such linguistic structures harbor and how they could serve to either perpetuate or subvert established gender-based hierarchies (Muindi, 2021; Hua & Zhao, 2024). Moreover, this research will investigate whether Turkish proverbs help to reinforce social expectations of women's roles and attributes (directly or indirectly as a not-so-negative form of speaking) by their symbolic language or imaginations that lead them to focus on some virtues such as obedience, beauty, and purity in life (Hua & Zhao, 2024). This is consistent with evidence from the literature that proverbs in different cultures can be compressed storage of

societal norms and knowledge, which function as mnemonics for cultural reproduction through generations (Dickson & Mbosowo, 2014). This ubiquitous trait reflects their role in helping mold and reflect a community's cognitive universe, values, and beliefs (Toan, 2024) around gender roles.

Results. The study on Turkish proverbs has identified some universal patterns in the metaphorical representation of gender. These are sorted into nature, animal, and object domains. In particular, proverbs often rely on natural entities such as plants and animals to attribute certain qualities to men and women in expressing stereotypical gender roles (Ladzekpo et al., 2024). These symbolic roles utilize even the characteristics of these physical materials, but inflated and exaggerated to a human scale, by extension filling in expectations of everyday life for both genders. For example, the toughness of a tree might metaphorically convey male strength, and the fragile beauty of a flower could metaphorically represent female frailty, which reflects traditional underlying social attitudes (Hua & Zhao, 2024). These metaphorical maps are not just descriptive – they are prescriptive, shaping people into socially accepted actions and identities (Tursunova 2022).

This process of mapping gender roles through metaphorical links corresponds to the idea that language can be a medium of socialization, reflecting and even reinforcing stereotypes as in Gender Representation in Literary Descriptions (Silva et al., 2023). This form of symbolic representation seems particularly powerful because, as a genre, proverbs collect and transmit cultural values through generations, which is why the gender implications encoded in these deixical expressions are deeply rooted in the collective culture (Ardakani et al., 2015). The extensive nature metaphors used in proverbs, frequently with women linked to the natural world, also serve to illustrate the ubiquitous woman-nature link as found in various cultural portrayals (Reynolds & Haslam, 2011). Such proverbial ties linking women with nature have, in most cases, been operating as a confinement of female identity within given natural roles, which curbed their capacity to act and contribute to the society (Hua & Zhao, 2024). In contrast, men allude to more abstract ideas or powerful animal appellations, conveying society's perception of their dominance and intelligence.

Conclusion. This in-depth investigation of Turkish proverbs Apple sounds the question of how deeply rooted social gender roles are in language, where they perpetuate certain men's and women's qualities and endowments through metaphorical equivalence. In particular, I demonstrate those proverbs as cognitive linguistic tools systematically mapping source domains (nature, animals, and objects) to target domain (human gender), thus serving as the tool of constructing and maintaining stereotypical perceptions about masculinity/femininity in Turkish culture. This linguistic legitimization of gender stereotypes is consistent with studies indicating that language does not merely reflect but actually makes or constitutes social reality: diction can shape how people construe and internalize sex role characteristics.

This machination is particularly powerful, as proverbs function as cultural scripts and schemata and thus prescribe “social behavior and social expectations” and encode prototypical gender roles in easily used linguistic containers. Moreover, these linguistic patterns help shape gender schemas, which in turn unconsciously inform views and expectations about what it is for males to be male or females to be female, and may act as a justification that establishes the basis to maintain social norms regarding, for example, gender-based violence. Family tragedy reminded me that “What you put in the net will come out of it” is a tragic paronomasia; it stays in my Arabic Proverbs memory network (Dris 2014) and is an example of how linguistic gendering connects with social genders to make certain aspects of language more likely to appear or endure, thus reinforcing current society's biases. The persistence of gendered metaphors in this corpus of proverbs thus indicates a strong mechanism for the intergenerational perpetuation and naturalization of traditional gender roles and norms.

This perpetuation may then become a self-fulfilling prophecy in which these patterns of language narrow down the ways that people can see gender and influence people's choices and actions to align more closely with prescriptive norms for men or women if language not only reflects stereotypes but is also itself an alternative source of (pre)knowledge about them. Thus, knowledge of these linguistic variations is important for determining how gender norms are socialized and for planning interventions that foster more egalitarian societal attitudes. This study consequently highlights the value of critically analyzing proverbs as a site of both gendered discourses about women and where these stereotypes are perpetuated. Future studies might explore the ways in which the 'demetaphorization' of these proverbs as gendered metaphorical expressions can support social change and influence attitudes and behaviors towards more equal gender relations by challenging their taken-for-granted construction as a consequence of this linguistic structure. This kind of scrutiny in proverbs is of great importance in cultures where gender-distinguished language systems are dominant, since verbal and other psychological reality patterns may also immediately determine the way people perceive and justify their relations between the sexes. It is this sort of language manipulation that allows a glimpse into the complex interplay between ethnographic elements and linguistic structures, showing how language may fix in time-based gender divisions of labor and social roles. This illustrates the cognitive consequences of gendered language, in which the grammatical system reflects but also forms beliefs about gender roles, rather than simply mirroring their prior existence as cultural values. This cognitive impact is echoed in findings that gender-biased language actively reinforces bias by making gender more salient and encouraging stereotype-based reasoning. This biases' reinforcement language-wise does not only reflect but also propagates those existing in other communication and could even be reinforced, artificial intelligence models, for example, show gender bias being stronger than human perception or statistical reality. From them, then, intimate details of the interrelation between language and gender ideology can be seen: how seemingly innocuous forms of linguistic expression serve to reproduce an enduring social inequality.

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