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## CONCEPTUALIZATION OF 'HEAD' IN TURKISH PROVERBS

TÜRKÇE ATASÖZLERİNDE 'BAŞ' SÖZCÜĞÜNÜN KAVRAMSALLAŞMASI

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### Anahtar sözcükler

Türkçe, bilişsel dilbilim, atasözleri, metafor, metonimi

### Keywords

Turkish, cognitive linguistics, proverbs, metaphor, metonymy

### Öz

Atasözleri bir toplumun kültürünü yansıtmaya potansiyeline sahip kısa dilsel ifadeler olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Bilişsel Dilbilim bakış açısı ile Türkçe baş sözcüğünü içeren atasözlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın bulguları, Türkçede beş genel kavramsallaşmanın öne çıktığını göstermektedir: BAŞ KİŞİNİN TEMSİLCİSİDİR, BAŞ ZİHİNSEL YETİLERİN MERKEZİDİR, BAŞ DUYGULARIN MERKEZİDİR, BAŞ ÖNEM GÖSTERGESİDİR ve BAŞ GÜCÜN SİMGESİDİR. Sonuçlar, genel kategoriler altındaki belirli-düzey kavramsallaştırmaların atasözleri anlamlarında kültüre özgü yönler sergilediğini göstermektedir.

### Abstract

Proverbs are short sentential expressions that have the potential to express the culture of a society. This study aims to examine the proverbs including the word 'head' in Turkish within a Cognitive Linguistics perspective. The findings of the study show five general conceptualizations that are HEAD IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON, HEAD IS THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES, HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS, HEAD IS THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE and HEAD IS THE SIGN OF POWER. The results demonstrate that specific level conceptualizations under the general categories display culture-specific aspects in proverb meanings.

## 1 Introduction

Proverbs are traditional advisory short sayings that are produced after a long period of experience and observation, and play an important role on reflecting a community's culture (Bergrenn, 2018; Gibbs, 2001; Gibbs & Beitel, 1995; Norrick, 2015). These linguistic items are fixed sentential expressions that have rhetorical potential (Norrick 2015: 8). Therefore, various aspects of proverbs are being studied within different perspectives, such as semiotic, semantic, structural, pragmatic, stylistic, cognitive, etc.

Within a Cognitive Linguistics (hereafter CL) perspective, proverbs are accepted as linguistically and culturally coined expressions, as they are quite short. Their economised form helps memorability and recognisability (Lewandowska & Antos, 2015: 162). In the CL field, proverb studies have become prevalent with the model proposed by Lakoff (1993: 213) and Lakoff and Turner (1989: 162). Lakoff and Turner (1989: 170 – 175) highlight the GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor in proverb analysis. They argue that proverbs consist of schemas involving animals, objects, and situations. Specific-level concepts within proverbs are understood through more generic-level concepts, which can be explained by the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor. This metaphor maps a specific-level schema onto a more generic-level structure, as represented by the source-domain schema (Lakoff & Turner, 1989: 162). In essence, a conceptual metaphor derives its meaning from the specific-level schema, which is the proverb itself. Consequently, the situation described in a proverb reflects its metaphorical conceptualization. According to this view, proverbs exemplify generic-level knowledge through various specific-level schemas. Alternative to this view Kövecses (2024) proposes a multilevel approach to proverbs. Kövecses (2017) suggests that metaphors are conceptual structures that operate at different levels of schematicity: image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces. Although these levels are not strictly separate, there is a hierarchy of schematicity, with image schemas being the most schematic, followed by domains, frames, and mental spaces, which are the least schematic.

There are many studies grounded on the CL framework on various languages such as Belkhir (2014, 2021), Moreno (2005), Pourhossein (2016) and Sameer (2016). For example, Belkhir (2021: 599-601) discusses the role of CL in proverb studies by analysing the conceptualization in proverbs in English, French, Arabic and Kabyle with a cross-cultural approach in the light of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (hereafter CMT) (Lakoff, 1993) and Cultural Cognitive Theory (Kövecses, 2005). Moreno (2005:42) analyses the role of generic cognitive mechanisms in English and Spanish proverbs. Pourhossein (2016: 51) analyses the conceptualization in Turkish and Persian proverbs in the light of GREAT CHAIN OF BEING metaphor, putting forward the cultural similarities and differences. Lewandowska and Antos (2015: 81) focus on the stereotypic features of proverbs in the aim of describing the factors that play on their memorability. Within this aim, the researchers put forward the role of the proverbs in social knowledge transfer. Andersson (2013:30-31) analyses proverbs in terms of a proverb model based on conceptual blending. Buljan and Gradečak-Erdeljić (2013:63) introduce a perspective on proverbs grounded on various cognitive tools, such as conceptual metaphors, metonymies,

image schemas and conceptual integration. In their study, they propose a model based upon CMT, image schemas and conceptual blending.

Our study analyses proverbs including the body part word *head*. In CL literature, studies focusing on body parts ground on embodiment. For this reason, embodiment or embodied cognition become prominent issues in human cognition and CL perspective. In CL, embodiment emphasises the role of the body in grounding and framing cognition within the cultural context (Yu, 2014: 227). Thus, embodiment helps to explain universal features in conceptualization, because as humans we conceptualise the world through our bodily experiences (Gibbs, 2006, Kraska-Szlenk, 2019a; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999 ; Yu 2008, 2014). However, although human bodies all over the world have the same biological and physiological features, embodiment also covers the social and cultural aspects (Yu, 2014: 231). The linguistic and cross-cultural differences grounding in this view and CMT are researched by cognitive linguists (Gibbs, 2006; Kövecses, 2005; Maalej, 2014 ; Sharifian et. al., 2008). These studies focus on the relationship between the body and culture, as well as the variations in cultural meanings related to bodily experiences. Kövecses (2005) draws attention to the cross-cultural variations in conceptual metaphors, shows how distinct target domain concepts are used in distinct languages and how distinct source concepts are used to conceptualise the same target domain in distinct languages within a cross-cultural view. Studies on the conceptualization of the body parts help to depict cross-cultural variation. Hence, studies in various languages on body parts show that each language displays culture-specific cognitive models of the human body and body parts. Yu (2008: 244) discusses the relationship between body parts and culture by showing the metaphoric and metonymic extensions of *face*. Occhi (2011:175) investigates Japanese *eye* expressions within a cross-linguistic perspective. Maalej and Yu (2011) collect studies on individual body parts in the embodied conceptualization of emotions, mental faculties, character traits, cultural values in various cultures in a volume and demonstrates that body parts are clues for cross-cultural variations. Baş (2016, 2018) determines the conceptualization of Turkish *eye*, and in a later study investigates the conceptualizations of *lung* in Turkish figurative expressions. In a comparative study, Lee (2020: 53) analyses Turkish and Korean figurative expressions including the terms *hand* and *foot*.

Studies focusing on the word *head* has an important role in the literature among other body parts (Aksan, 2011; Baş, 2017; Kraska-Szlenk, 2019a ; Mutlu et al., 2019). For example, Aksan (2011) analyses the conceptualization of *head* and *foot* in Turkish and shows that *head* and *foot* are combined in some metaphoric and metonymic conceptualizations. Baş (2017) demonstrates the figurative uses of Turkish head-denoting terms *baş* and *kafa* in Turkish idioms and proposes a cultural model that explains the conceptualization of *head* in Turkish. Kraska-Szlenk (2019b) determines the metaphorical and metonymical extensions of *head* in various languages.

Since proverbs serve as figures of speech that reflect cultural conceptualizations through language, it is essential to consider the information discussed when analyzing conceptualizations in proverbs within a given

language. Ultimately, proverbs mirror the cultural world, offering insights into specific cultural contexts. Based on the framework outlined above, we can conclude that the human body plays a crucial role in experiencing and conceptualizing the abstract concepts we perceive.

This study adopts a cognitive approach to investigating proverbs using the tools of CL grounded in the commitments of CMT (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), Great Chain of Being Model (Lakoff & Turner, 1989) and embodied cognition (Gibbs, 2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Yu, 2014). The aim of the study is to demonstrate the conceptualization of Turkish proverbs that include the word *head* in the light of the conceptual framework given above.

To achieve this aim, a methodology incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data analysis tools was employed. The paper is organized into several sections. In the next section, the methodology adopted in the collection and analysis procedure is introduced. Then, we present findings gathered within the limitations of our study. Finally, we summarise the findings and discuss results of the study in the conclusion.

## 2 Method

### 2.1 Data collection

Our study is limited to the head denoting word *baş* for Turkish. The word *baş* is searched in Turkish Language Society Dictionary of Proverbs and Idioms (2019) and Dictionary of Proverbs and Idioms (Aksoy; 1984). Some proverbs in the dictionaries were given with more than one entry with a synonymous word. These examples were taken to the database as only one entry. The dictionaries gave 97 proverbs for Turkish.

There are head-denoting terms apart from *baş* in Turkish. For example, *kafa* is used in some figurative expressions instead of *baş*. However, when we analysed the proverb dictionaries, we only came across two examples for *kafa*. Therefore, we did not include this term in the database.

### 2.2 Data analysis

The data collected from the dictionaries are analysed within a CL framework adopting the commitments of CMT (Kövecses, 2024), embodiment and Lakoff & Turner's (1989) Great Chain of Being Metaphor model. For this, the following commitments of the given framework will be followed for data analysis.

In Lakoff & Turner's model, attributes and behavior are arranged in a hierarchy. Considering the limitations of our study, the GREAT CHAIN metaphor applies to the specific-level schema in the following way:

- The Great chain links the concept *baş* with *human beings*.
- Commonsense theory of the Nature of Things identifies attributes and causal relations to behavior at the level of *situations experienced* in the proverbs, *human beings, human behavior* and *human experience*.
- The Maxim of Quantity identifies the highest attributes and behavior *relevant at each level*.

- The GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor extracts specific-level knowledge about the corresponding structure and applies it to the target of human beings, identifying the highest level of human attributes and behavior.

Another consideration for the study is the fact that the conceptualizations of body parts are generally metonymically oriented since they are motivated by a PART-WHOLE relationship, and may lead to metaphonymic examples (Goosens, 1995). Previous studies on *head* show that this body part yields to metaphoric, metonymic and metaphonymic conceptualizations such as HEAD IS THE TOP, HEAD FOR PERSON, HEAD AS THE LOCUS OF THINKING AND REASONING (Baş, 2017; Kraska-Szlenk 2019b). In light of this insight, this study first needed to show general metaphorical conceptualizations and then identify the sub-mappings.

As a result of this, our first observation has been that general categories in the conceptualization of *head* depend on the CONTAINER and VERTICALITY schemas considering the schematicity hierarchy.

The CONTAINER schema yields conceptualizations such as THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON, THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES, THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS. VERTICALITY schema yields examples such as THE SIGN OF POWER and THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE.

Finally Turkish proverbs are analysed concerning the following schema presented in Table 1 by linking Great Chain Model, the metonymic nature of the metaphors and the schematicity hierarchy view for sub-mappings:

**Table 1.** Schema adopted for data analysis

### Procedure for analysis

#### The Great Chain

Humans: Higher order attributes and behavior links *head* with *human beings*

#### The Nature of Things

Commonsense theory and their causal relations: *human behavior, human experience, human beings*

#### The Maxim of Quantity

Attributes and behavior are relevant at each level

Metaphor (e.g. HEAD IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON)

Schema → *Container* or *Verticality*

Generic is specific

Generic-level schema

*More generic metaphors/metonymies*

Specific-level schema

*Mappings and sub-mappings of metaphors/metonymies*

Under each conceptualization, the Great Chain link between *head* and *human*, *human experience* or *human behavior*; commonsense theory and maxim of quantity are accepted. Then generic and specific level conceptualizations are discussed according to this scheme.

### 2.2.1. Procedure

Qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in data analysis. For this procedure, first, a distribution of the proverbs with the term *baş* were selected and copied to a spreadsheet. After that, figurative uses of the words were identified in terms of their metaphoric and metonymic conceptualizations.

The steps in our data analysis procedure are listed below:

1. First, Turkish proverbs with the word *baş* were drawn from the dictionaries and copied on separate spreadsheets.
2. Next, the frequencies of the figurative uses of the word *baş* were identified.
3. The schemas that derive from the PART-WHOLE relationship were depicted.
4. After that, source domains motivating the proverbs were determined.
5. Then, mappings were identified according to metaphoric and metonymic motivations of the source concepts.

6. General conceptualizations and sub-mappings were identified according to the metaphors and metonymies.

The findings are discussed below.

## 3 Findings

In this section, we present the findings on Turkish proverbs that include the word *baş*. The figurative use of *baş* in these proverbs leads to different conceptual metaphors and metonymies.

The dictionaries provided 97 Turkish proverbs, and all the metaphoric categories motivating these proverbs are derived from CONTAINER and VERTICALITY schemas. Five general conceptualizations arise from these schemas: THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON, THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES, THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS, THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE and THE SIGN OF POWER. Among these, the first three categories are related to the CONTAINER schema, while THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE and THE SIGN OF POWER are related to the VERTICALITY schema.

The most frequent conceptualization is REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON (47.4%), followed by THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS (22.7%), THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE (16.5%), THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES (7.2%) and THE SIGN OF POWER (6.2%) as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Conceptualizations for Turkish proverbs with *baş*

Source domains	Frequency	%
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON	46	47.4
THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS	22	22.7
THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE	16	16.5
THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES	7	7.2
THE SIGN OF POWER	6	6.2
TOTAL	97	100

The conceptualizations shown in Table 2, yield more specific conceptual mappings motivated by several metonymies and metaphors. The specific level conceptualizations of these more generic source domains are discussed in each sub-heading below.

### 3.1. THE REPRESENTATIVE OF PERSON

This category yields the most frequent conceptualization in the language. In 47.4 % of the proverbs in the data, HEAD is conceptualised as THE

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON at the generic-level depending on the PART-WHOLE metonymy. In these instances, *baş* stands for the whole person. Under this category, several metonymies occur. These more specific-level categories are HEAD FOR THE PERSON, HEAD FOR THE RULER and HEAD FOR LIFE as depicted in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Conceptualizations for HEAD IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON

General conceptualizations	Frequency	%
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON	46	47.4
FOR THE PERSON	17	
FOR LIFE	17	
FOR RULER	12	

The conceptualizations under this source domain are discussed successively below.

#### HEAD FOR THE PERSON

This metonymy is derived from the CONTAINER schema and proverbs under this conceptualization are motivated by HEAD STANDS FOR THE PERSON metonymy. These proverbs provide examples of more specific metaphorical mappings. This specific-level knowledge map its

structure onto the more specific domain of human behavior and experience such as THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR, and THE HEAD IS THE CENTRE OF EXPERIENCE.

The metaphorical structure of this conceptualization is outlined in Table 4 below in the the light of the conceptual framework adopted for this study

**Table 4.** Metaphorical structure of HEAD FOR THE PERSON

HEAD FOR THE PERSON

Schema → Container

Generic is specific

Generic-level schema

BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR BODY PARTS → HEAD IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON

Specific-level schema

HEAD FOR THE PERSON

THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

THE HEAD IS THE CENTRE OF EXPERIENCE

The proverbs in (1) exemplify the model outlined above.

- (1) a. *Ne dile-r-se-n eş-i-ne o gel-ir baş-t-na*  
 what wish-COND-2SG wife-2SG.POSS-DAT it comes head-2SG.POSS-DAT  
 Lit. 'What you wish for your partner comes to your head'  
 'Good wishes turn to you'
- b. *Akla gelmeyen başa gelir.*  
 mind-DAT come-NEG.GER head-DAT comes  
 Lit. 'What doesn't come to mind comes to head'  
 'A person can come across unexpected or unanticipated events'
- c. *Dertsiz baş olmaz.*  
 untroubled head become-NEG  
 Lit. 'There is not a head without trouble'

In the proverbs in (1), a metonymic relation is established between THE HEAD and THE PERSON. At the GENERIC IS SPECIFIC level the causal relationship is established through a PART-WHOLE relationship bringing together the following sub-mappings:

HEAD FOR THE PERSON

THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

THE HEAD IS THE CENTRE OF EXPERIENCE

(1a) and (1b) are proverbs that aim to give advice; that is, you experience what you wish for others. (1a) is motivated by the metaphor THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR, while (1b) is motivated by the metaphor THE HEAD IS THE CENTRE OF EXPERIENCE. In (1c) *head* directly refers to the person. As shown in these examples

*head* represents the person or the person's experience in Turkish proverbs, because in Turkish culture there is a tendency to refer to people as *head* (Baş 2017). This is possibly due to the prominence of this body part in our appearance. People recognise themselves through the parts of their heads such as face, hair style, eye colour.

HEAD FOR RULER

The next conceptualization HEAD FOR RULER is derived from the CONTAINER schema, as the head refers to a person via a PART-WHOLE relationship. Additionally, this conceptualization is cognitively related to the VERTICALITY schema since the head, being located at the top of the body, symbolizes the ruler of the body. In Turkish, there are 12 instances in this category that illustrate the HEAD IS THE RULER conceptual metaphor. These proverbs

provide examples of metaphorical conceptualizations such as THE HEAD IS THE RULER OF THE PERSON, THE HEAD IS THE RULER OF THE SOCIETY and THE RULER IS THE MIRROR (OF THE SOCIETY) as shown in Table 5 below. These proverbs are among the most productive in terms of metaphorical understanding and are generally used to offer advice in communication contexts.

The metaphorical structure of this conceptualization is detailed in Table 4 below.

**Table 5.** Metaphorical structure of HEAD FOR THE RULER  
HEAD FOR THE RULER

Schema → Container – Verticality

Generic is specific

Generic-level schema

BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR BODY PARTS → HEAD IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON

HEAD FOR THE PERSON → HEAD IS THE RULER OF THE BODY → HEAD FOR THE RULER

Specific-level schema

THE HEAD IS THE RULER OF THE PERSON

THE RULER OF THE HEAD IS THE RULER OF THE SOCIETY

THE RULER IS THE MIRROR (OF THE SOCIETY)

In the examples for this conceptualization, as shown in (2), the *head* represents a ruler who organises and rules the society.

(2) a. *Baş olan boş olmaz.*

head being empty become-NEG

Lit. ‘The head can not be empty of content’

‘The leader of a place owes this position to his/her value’

b. *Ayağı yürüten baştır.*

foot-ACC pushing head- COP

Lit. ‘The head walks the foot’

‘The rulers/leaders make their public work in an organised way’

c. *Baş nereye giderse ayak da oraya gider*

head where go-COND foot too there goes

Lit. ‘Wherever the head goes, the foot goes, too’

‘The younger people follow their elder, and take them as role models in all their life’

In the examples, the head is conceptualized as a ruler. At the specific level, the proverbs are conceptualized with the metaphors THE HEAD IS THE RULER OF THE PERSON, THE RULER OF THE HEAD IS THE RULER OF THE SOCIETY, THE RULER IS THE MIRROR (OF THE SOCIETY). In (2a), (2b) and (2c), the ruler is depicted as possessing good qualities and ensuring that society follow him or her. Aksan (2011: 249) emphasizes the importance of having a ruler or head in Turkish culture, noting that the ruler should ideally have good qualities. This cultural agreement is reflected in many Turkish idioms and proverbs (Aksan 2011; Baş 2017). Additionally, in some proverbs under this category, the *head* is used with the word *foot*, where the foot represents a group of people who are ruled. This reflects the collectivist nature of Turkish society (Aksan 2006b, 2011). In collectivist cultures, people act together; and Turkish idiomatic and proverbial expressions illustrate this by showing how people are ruled, laugh, get angry, and cry together (Aksan 2006a, 2006b; Mesquita & Kitayama, 2001).

The examples and metaphorical mappings presented in the examples and in Table 5 indicate that these proverbs highlight the significance of the *head* as a symbol of leadership and authority within a society or institution.

HEAD FOR LIFE

Another frequent conceptualization is HEAD FOR LIFE, which is also derived from the CONTAINER schema. Since the *head* is considered one of the most crucial body parts for housing vital organs, it stands for life through the PART-WHOLE relationship. In other words, in the Turkish proverbs, *head* is conceptualised as the container of the most vital organ of the body, and therefore, an indicator of life or vitality. In the HEAD FOR LIFE metonymy, the head is metaphorically understood as THE CENTRE OF LIVING, THE LOCUS OF HEALTH, THE LOCUS OF DESTINY and THE LOCUS OF GOOD FATE, and is typically used for the purpose of giving advice.

The metaphorical structure of this conceptualization is outlined in Table 6 below.

**Table 6.** Metaphorical structure of HEAD FOR LIFE

HEAD FOR LIFE

Schema → Container

Generic is specific

Generic-level schema

BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR BODY PARTS → HEAD IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON

Specific-level schema

HEAD FOR LIFE

HEAD IS THE CENTRE OF LIVING

HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF HEALTH

HEAD IS THE PLACE WHERE THE DESTINY IS WRITTEN

Examples illustrating this conceptualization are given in (3).

- (3) a. *İki el bir baş içindir.*  
two hand one head for-COP  
Lit. 'Two hands are for one head'  
'The people who can only earn their living, can not help other people'
- b. *Baş sağlığı, dünya varlığı.*  
Head health-3SG.POSS world wealth-3SG.POSS  
Lit. 'Health of head is wealth of the world'  
'The biggest wealth is the health of the body'
- c. *Başta yazılan gelir*  
head-DAT written comes  
Lit. 'What is written to the head occur'  
'One can only live his/her faith'

These examples establish a causal relationship between the *head* and human experience and behavior. In (3a) the *head* represents a person's life, suggesting that those who can only provide for themselves are unable to assist others. In (3b) *head* symbolizes health, implying that the true wealth is the health of the body. Here, the *head* is conceptualised as THE LOCUS OF HEALTH. This reflects a metonymic relationship where a person's health is linked to the health of their head. (3c) relates life to destiny, indicating that a person's life unfolds according to their fate. Thus, in similar proverbs, the head is conceptualised as THE LOCUS OF FATE. This conceptualization aligns with findings from Baş's (2017) study on Turkish idioms; although proverbs exhibit distinct elaborations in their conceptualizations.

### 3.2. THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 16 out of the 97 Turkish proverbs, *baş* is conceptualised as the sign of significance. In this metaphor, *head* is conceptualised as the most important and the valuable part of the body (Aksan 2011, Baş 2017). This conceptualization is derived from the VERTICALITY schema, which represents the head as the top and most significant part of the body. At generic level, this metaphor relies on the MORE IS UP, LESS IS DOWN metaphor, leading to the metaphors HEAD IS TOP, HEAD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART or HEAD IS THE STARTING POINT and STARTING POINT IS A PART OF A WHOLE.

The metaphorical structure of this conceptualization is outlined below in Table 7 below.

**Table 7.** Metaphorical structure of HEAD IS THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HEAD IS THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE

Schema → Verticality

Generic is specific

Generic-level schema

MORE IS UP → UP IS GOOD → HEAD IS THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE

HEAD IS UP, UP IS GOOD/SIGNIFICANT

Specific-level schema

HEAD IS TOP

HEAD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART

HEAD IS THE STARTING POINT

Examples to this conceptualization are presented in (4).

- (4) a. *Çerçi başındakini satar.*  
pedlar head-3SG.POSS-LOC-ADJ-ACC sells

Lit. 'The pedlar sells the goods on his/her head'

'The seller sells whatever he/she owns'

b.	<i>Ayağında</i>	<i>donu</i>	<i>yok</i>	<i>fesleğen</i>	<i>takar</i>	<i>başına</i>
	foot-3SG.POSS -LOC	pant- 3SG.POSS	there isn't	basil crown	puts on	head- 3SG.POSS- DAT

Lit. 'He/She doesn't have pants to wear but puts on a basil crown on his/her head'

'People want to show off without considering their poverty'

(4a) highlights the importance of the goods a seller offers, suggesting that the item on one's head is significant. (4b) refers to vanity or the act of showing off in an insulting way. These proverbs are motivated by the sub-mappings HEAD IS TOP and HEAD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART. In summary, the proverbs in this category emphasize the worth and significance of things.

### 3.3. THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS

This conceptualization, derived from the CONTAINER schema, appears in 22 examples in the Turkish data. As

previously mentioned, because the *head* is the most important part of the body and houses the brain, it is also conceptualized as the container of emotions. Thus, *head* is seen as a container for emotions (Baş 2017: 148). Additionally, it is the part of the body that experiences emotions. This conceptualization leads to the metaphorical understanding of the head as the *experiencer* of emotions. Proverbs illustrate this through metaphors such as BEING HEAD DOWN IS BEING DISTRESSED, THE HEAD IS LOCUS OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS.

**Table 8.** Metaphorical structure of HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS  
HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS

Schema → Container

Generic is specific

Generic-level schema

BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR BODY PARTS → HEAD AS A CONTAINER FOR EMOTIONS

Specific-level schema

HEAD IS THE EXPERIENCER OF EMOTIONS

BEING HEAD DOWN IS BEING DISTRESSED IS (ONLY TURKISH)

THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

The examples of this conceptualization are presented in (5). In these proverbs head is conceptualized as the locus of emotions.

- (5) a. *Ağrısız baş mezarda gerek.*  
painless Head grave-LOC necessary  
Lit. 'The head without ache is only possible in the grave'  
'Everybody lives with distress; it will only end when someone dies'
- b. *Acıklı başta akıl olmaz.*  
sorrowful head-LOC mind there isn't  
Lit. 'There is no mind in a sorrowful head'  
'Those who are in big trouble can do unreasonable things'

In (5a) and (5b), the head is depicted as the body part that experiences emotions. In (5a), the proverb suggests that 'stressful things only end when the person is dead'.

In (5b), the conceptualization expressed is that 'distressed people can act irrationally'.



### 3.4. THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES

As mentioned earlier, according to the embodiment thesis and the CONTAINER schema (Johnson 1980), the body is conceptualized as a container for emotions and thought. This schema metaphorically represents the head as a container that houses the brain, thoughts, mind, and emotions at a generic level. Proverbs under this category are motivated by the conceptualization of HEAD IS A CONTAINER FOR MIND/INTELLIGENCE. Metaphorical understandings of the proverbs are THE HEAD IS THE PART OF THE BODY WHICH CONTROLS REASONABLE DECISIONS, THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF MEMORY and THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS FOR GOOD TALK.

In seven of 97 Turkish proverbs head is conceptualised as the seat of mental faculties. For instance, in (6a) and (6b), the head is depicted as the container of mind and intelligence.

- (6) a. *Akil yaşta değil, baştadır*  
Mind age-LOC not head-LOC-COP  
Lit. 'The mind is in the head not in the age'

'There is no relationship between age and being wise, young people can be cleverer than their elders'

- b. *baş dille tartılır*  
head with Scale  
tongue  
Lit. 'Head is scaled with tongue'  
'The wisdom of a person can be scaled with what he/she says'

The figurative meaning of (6a) indicates that intelligence or wisdom is not necessarily related to age, as the mind is located in the head; therefore, a younger person can be wiser than an older one. In such examples, *akıl* (wisdom) is conceptualized as a concept located in the head that aids people in making reasonable decisions. Additionally, in (6b), the head is conceptualized as the *locus of wisdom*. This proverb suggests that discernments can be judged based on one's speech. The metaphorical understanding THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS FOR GOOD TALK motivates this proverb.

The conceptualizations at both the generic and specific levels are detailed in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Metaphorical structure of HEAD IS THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES  
HEAD IS THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES

Schema → Verticality

Generic is specific

Generic-level schema

BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR BODY PARTS → HEAD IS A CONTAINER FOR MENTAL FACULTIES

Specific-level schema

HEAD IS A CONTAINER FOR MIND/INTELLIGENCE/KNOWLEDGE

THE HEAD IS PART OF THE BODY THAT CONTROLS REASONABLE DECISIONS

THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF MEMORY

THE HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF GOOD TALK

As demonstrated by the examples, the head is conceptualized as the part of the body that controls reasonable decisions.

### 3.5. THE SIGN OF POWER

As previously noted, the head is positioned at the top of the body and serves as a starting point. It houses the brain, which controls our mind and thoughts. This conceptualization derives from the VERTICALITY schema and features examples with the conceptualization CONTROL IS UP in the proverbs. The notion of having control is represented by the upright position of the head, illustrated by the metaphor HAVING THE HEAD UPRIGHT IS HAVING POWER.

In six out of 97 Turkish proverbs, head is conceptualised AS THE SIGN OF POWER. For example, (7a) refers to an ignorant person who pretends to be superior, while (7b) indicates that agreeing with someone is harmless. Thus, there is a connection between the movement of the head and the metaphorical understanding in proverbs such as NODDING ONE'S HEAD

FOR OBEDIENCE, KEEPING ONE'S HEAD UP FOR SUPERIORITY and BOWING ONE'S HEAD FOR OBEDIENCE.

- (7) a. *Boş başağın başı dik olur.*  
Empty grain-LOC head- erect stays  
3SG.POSS  
Lit. 'The head of an empty grain stays erect'  
'Ignorant people swagger in order to be seen superior'
- b. *Baş sallamakla kavuk eskimez.*  
head by nodding hat doesn't get old  
Lit. 'One's hat doesn't get old by nodding head'  
'There is no harm in saying 'yes' or being nice to someone'

The conceptualizations at both the generic and specific levels are detailed in Table 10.

**Table 10.** Metaphorical structure of HEAD IS THE SIGN OF POWER

HEAD IS THE SIGN OF POWER

Schema → Verticality

Generic is specific

UP IS GOOD → HEAD IS THE SIGN OF POWER

CONTROL IS UP, HIGH STATUS IS

UP

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Specific-level schema

DOWNWARD HEAD FOR OBEDIENCE, UPRIGHT HEAD FOR POWER

NODDING ONE'S HEAD FOR OBEDIENCE

KEEPING ONE'S HEAD UP FOR SUPERIORITY

## 5 Conclusion

Our body plays a key role in the conceptualization of our experiences. The head, as one of the most crucial parts of our body, conveys significance, power, values, and emotions through figurative expressions such as idioms and proverbs. Proverbs, being short linguistic expressions that reveal the culture of a society, are useful tools for analyzing a culture's characteristics.

In this study, the conceptualization of the word *baş* in Turkish proverbs is analyzed. The result of the analysis demonstrated that *head* showed five general conceptualizations with specific-level sub-mappings. These conceptualizations are HEAD IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PERSON, HEAD IS THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES, HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS, HEAD IS THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE and HEAD IS THE SIGN OF POWER.

As a result of the findings gathered from the study, we can draw the following conclusions for Turkish:

Turkish database yielded 97 proverbs, which gave rise to five generic-level conceptualizations derived from image-schematic relationships; specifically CONTAINER and VERTICALITY schemas. We can see that the generic-level conceptualizations under these schemas map *baş* onto the *traits of humans, human experience, human behavior and some social norms* at the specific level. These conceptualizations show that *baş* is considered a prominent and significant part of our body in our appearance and thought in Turkish culture. Sub-mappings at the specific level show culture-specific aspects of Turkish.

The sub-mappings under CONTAINER schema give the following implications. The conceptualization HEAD FOR THE PERSON under HEAD IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF PERSON relates the *head* to human behavior or experience, as in the example “Ne dilersen eşine o gelir başına (*lit. What you wish for your partner comes to your head*)” means *good wishes turn back to you*. Here, the *head* is conceptualized as the locus of good behavior such as good wishes. The sub-mapping HEAD FOR LIFE relates the head to life, health and destiny. For example the proverb “Baş sağlığı dünya varlığı (*lit. Health of the head is the wealth of the world*)” meaning *the biggest wealth is the*

*health of the body* shows the importance of the body's health by referring to the head. The metaphor HEAD IS THE LOCUS OF EMOTIONS focuses on the importance of the *head* as the carrier of the most vital organ, the brain and thus emotions. Our emotional state and mental health are located in our head and we feel through our head. The examples in the database mostly show negative emotions as in the example “Acıklı başta akıl olmaz (*lit. There is no mind in a sorrowful head*)” meaning *those who are in big trouble can do unreasonable things*. When we are distressed or sorrowful we can not behave in a normal way. The last conceptualization under the CONTAINER schema is HEAD IS THE SEAT OF MENTAL FACULTIES. This metaphor relates *baş* with the *mind or intelligence* as in the proverb “Akıl yaşta değil baştadır (*lit. The mind is in the head not in the age*)” meaning *there is no relationship between being wise and the age of a person*. The head is conceptualized as the locus of reasonable decisions. As a result of the explanations above, we can conclude that the *head* is conceptualized as a CONTAINER for the person, life, emotions and mental faculties at the generic-level. At the specific-level it can work as a CONTAINER for *various human experiences or behaviors (such as good wishes), health, fate, destiny, negative emotions (such as sorrow, sadness), wisdom, mind or intelligence*.

The sub-mappings under VERTICALITY schema give the following implications. In the sub-mapping HEAD IS THE RULER, the *head* is conceptualized not only as the part of the body that rules the body but also as the ruler of the body since it is located at the top. In the examples, the head is conceptualized as the ruler of the society as in the proverb “Ayağı yürüten baştır (*lit. The head walks the foot*)” meaning *the rulers/leaders make their public work in an organized way*. These examples provide clues about the collectivist nature of the Turkish culture. Similar to the former conceptualization in the metaphor HEAD IS THE SIGN OF SIGNIFICANCE focuses on the importance and worthiness of the *head* in the culture since it is the starting point and top of the body. For instance, the proverb “Ayağında donu yok fesleğen takar başına (*lit. One doesn't have pants to wear but puts on a basil crown on his head*)” means *people want to show off without considering their poverty*. As the proverb shows *baş* is so important that you are impressive or flashy as far as your head is concerned.

The results of the study show similarity with the findings of previous studies that focus on the conceptualizations of *head* in the literature (Aksan, 2011; Baş, 2017; Kraska-Szlenk, 2019a; Mutlu et al., 2019). The head plays an important role in the conceptualization of human behavior, thoughts, importance and values. The findings of this study demonstrate that the *head* is conceptualised as the most important part of the body that controls and rules the person, human experience, emotions, and mind. Therefore, it is possible to say that findings consistent with the literature have been obtained in many respects.

Since the study is limited to a small number of proverbs, reaching a comprehensive cultural model from these culture-specific generalizations is not entirely possible. However, it does present some culture-specific features. For example we can conclude that there is a cultural belief that the head controls the society and the society follows the head. The use of the *head* together with the *foot* in some proverbs is another indicator of

this view; in society, the ruled follow the ruler. This is also discussed in Aksan (2011). We witness that the collectivist nature of the culture is reflected in proverbs. For example, the collectivist nature of Turkish culture shows itself in the society being ruled by a ruler and the loyalty of the ruled in following the ruler. Additionally, *head* is conceptualized as the locus of *destiny* and *faith*. This is another indicator of Turkish belief. Belief in fate and destiny is a notion brought by Islamic culture. It is defined as the predetermined and unchangeable course of events. There is even an expression called *alın yazısı* (*lit. forehead writing*) meaning *destiny*. Even destiny is written on our head.

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