

Phytomorphic Expressions Shaping the Human Image in the Turkish Language

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Abstract: This article explores phytomorphic expressions as a linguistic and cultural means of shaping the image of a human in the Turkish language. Phytomorphisms, which are metaphorical units derived from plant names and characteristics, play an important role in reflecting human appearance, character, emotions, and social qualities. The study is based on a linguocultural approach and focuses on the semantic, stylistic, and functional features of such expressions. The research analyzes how plant-based metaphors are used to describe human traits in Turkish and examines their cultural significance. Special attention is given to examples collected within the academic environment of the University of Oriental Studies, which serve as the empirical basis of the study. The findings reveal that phytomorphic expressions are widely used in everyday speech and literary discourse, enriching the language with vivid imagery and cultural meaning.

Keywords: phytomorphic expressions, Turkish language, human image, metaphor, linguocultural analysis, plant-based imagery, semantics, stylistics, intercultural communication

Introduction

In modern linguistics, the study of metaphorical language has gained increasing importance, particularly in the context of understanding how language reflects human cognition and cultural worldview. Among various types of metaphorical expressions, phytomorphic expressions—those derived from plant names and characteristics—occupy a special place due to their rich semantic and cultural associations. In the Turkish language, such expressions are widely used to describe human appearance, personality traits, emotional states, and social behavior, thereby contributing to the formation of a vivid and culturally grounded human image[1].

Phytomorphic expressions are not merely stylistic devices; they represent a complex interaction between language, culture, and perception. From a linguocultural perspective, these expressions reflect how speakers conceptualize human qualities through analogies with the plant world. For example, characteristics such as beauty, fragility, strength, or growth are often conveyed through references to flowers, trees, or fruits. This demonstrates that metaphorical thinking is deeply embedded in both language structure and cultural experience[2].

The relevance of this study is обусловлена the growing interest in cognitive linguistics and intercultural communication, where metaphor is seen as a key mechanism for structuring knowledge and meaning. Although metaphorical expressions in Turkish have been studied to some extent, phytomorphic units as a specific category remain insufficiently explored, especially in relation to their role in shaping the human image. The aim of this article is to analyze the semantic, stylistic, and functional features of phytomorphic expressions in the Turkish language and to determine their role in representing human qualities. The research is based on a linguocultural and semantic approach,



combining theoretical analysis with empirical data collected from the academic environment of the University of Oriental Studies[3].

Thus, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, culture, and cognition, as well as to highlight the expressive potential of phytomorphic imagery in Turkish[4].

Materials and Methods

This study adopts a comprehensive qualitative research design grounded in modern linguistic paradigms, particularly cognitive linguistics, linguocultural studies, and semantic analysis. The objective is to investigate phytomorphic expressions in the Turkish language as a means of constructing the human image and to reveal their semantic, stylistic, and cultural functions[5].

The research material consists of a systematically compiled corpus of phytomorphic expressions derived from multiple sources to ensure representativeness and reliability. These sources include: (1) contemporary and classical Turkish literary texts, (2) lexicographic materials such as explanatory and phraseological dictionaries, (3) examples from spoken Turkish, and (4) empirical data collected within the academic environment of the University of Oriental Studies. The latter includes both written and oral discourse produced by students and faculty members, allowing for the observation of naturally occurring language use in an educational setting. The data collection process was carried out through continuous sampling and targeted selection methods. Expressions containing plant-related lexical components (e.g., names of flowers, trees, fruits, and other botanical elements) were identified and extracted based on their metaphorical or figurative use in describing human characteristics. Particular attention was given to units that reflect culturally significant meanings and are actively used in communication. From a methodological perspective, the study employs an integrated analytical framework[6]. First, semantic analysis is applied to determine the denotative and connotative meanings of phytomorphic expressions, as well as their metaphorical extensions. Second, contextual analysis is used to examine the functioning of these expressions in different communicative contexts, including literary and everyday discourse. Third, comparative analysis allows for identifying patterns, variations, and degrees of conventionalization in the use of phytomorphisms[7].

In addition, the research incorporates a linguocultural approach, which focuses on the relationship between language and culture, revealing how phytomorphic expressions encode national worldview, aesthetic values, and cultural stereotypes. This approach is complemented by elements of cognitive analysis, through which metaphor is understood as a conceptual mechanism that structures human perception and categorization of reality[8]. In this framework, plant-based imagery is interpreted as a cognitive model used to conceptualize human appearance, personality traits, emotional states, and social roles. The collected data were further subjected to systematization and classification. Phytomorphic expressions were grouped into semantic categories, including: (1) physical appearance (e.g., beauty, fragility, growth), (2) character traits (e.g., kindness, resilience, stubbornness), (3) emotional states (e.g., tenderness, sadness, vitality), and (4) social and behavioral characteristics. This classification enabled a more structured analysis of their functional roles in discourse[9].

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the data were cross-checked across different sources, and only frequently attested and contextually relevant expressions were included in the final analysis. The use of multiple analytical methods allows for triangulation, thereby increasing the accuracy and depth of interpretation. The methodological framework of this study provides a solid foundation for examining phytomorphic expressions as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon and for understanding their role in shaping the human image in the Turkish language[10].

Results and Discussion: The analysis of the collected corpus demonstrates that phytomorphic expressions constitute a productive and culturally meaningful layer of the Turkish lexicon used to construct and represent the human image. The findings reveal that plant-based metaphors are systematically employed to describe various aspects of human identity, including physical appearance,



character traits, emotional states, and social behavior. These expressions are not random but are deeply rooted in shared cultural knowledge and cognitive models[11].

From a semantic perspective, the results show that phytomorphic expressions are predominantly based on associative similarities between plant characteristics and human qualities. For instance, flowers are frequently used to symbolize beauty, delicacy, and youth, while trees often represent strength, stability, and longevity. Fruits, on the other hand, are associated with maturity, attractiveness, or sometimes moral evaluation. This indicates that the semantic structure of phytomorphisms relies on culturally established metaphorical mappings between the natural and human domains[12].

The classification of the data into semantic groups confirms that the majority of phytomorphic expressions fall into four main categories:

Physical appearance – Expressions in this group emphasize external features such as beauty, freshness, and elegance. For example, comparisons with flowers (e.g., rose, tulip) highlight aesthetic qualities and are often used in both literary and colloquial discourse.

Character traits – Certain plants symbolize personality features. For instance, strong or deeply rooted trees may represent resilience and firmness, while more fragile plants may indicate sensitivity or vulnerability[13].

Emotional states – Phytomorphic expressions are also used to convey emotional experiences, such as joy, sadness, or tenderness. The blooming or withering of plants metaphorically reflects changes in emotional conditions.

Social and behavioral characteristics – Some expressions encode social roles, attitudes, and patterns of behavior, reflecting cultural norms and expectations within Turkish-speaking communities.

From a linguocultural perspective, the findings highlight that phytomorphic expressions serve as carriers of cultural values and aesthetic ideals. The frequent use of floral imagery, for example, reflects the importance of nature in Turkish cultural consciousness and its role in shaping perceptions of beauty and harmony. Moreover, these expressions often preserve traditional symbolic meanings that have been transmitted through generations[14].

The cognitive analysis further reveals that phytomorphisms function as conceptual metaphors that structure human understanding of abstract qualities through concrete natural images. This supports the view that metaphor is not only a stylistic device but also a fundamental mechanism of thought. The plant-human analogy provides an accessible and intuitive way of conceptualizing complex human characteristics.

The empirical data collected from the University of Oriental Studies confirm that phytomorphic expressions remain actively used in contemporary communication, particularly in informal speech and literary contexts. However, the frequency and variation of usage may depend on factors such as age, educational background, and familiarity with traditional cultural expressions.

In discussion, it can be argued that phytomorphic expressions play a dual role: they enhance the expressive richness of the language and simultaneously function as a means of preserving cultural identity. At the same time, globalization and modernization may influence their usage, leading either to transformation or partial loss of traditional metaphorical meanings[15].

Overall, the results indicate that phytomorphic expressions are an integral component of the Turkish linguistic worldview. Their study contributes not only to a better understanding of metaphorical language but also to broader insights into the interaction between language, culture, and cognition.

Conclusion

The present study has demonstrated that phytomorphic expressions play a significant role in shaping the human image in the Turkish language. These expressions, derived from plant-related imagery, function as an effective linguistic and cognitive tool for describing human appearance, character traits, emotional states, and social behavior. Their widespread use reflects not only the



richness of metaphorical language but also the deep connection between language and cultural worldview.

The findings confirm that phytomorphic units are systematically structured and semantically motivated, relying on culturally established associations between the plant world and human qualities. Through semantic, contextual, and linguocultural analysis, it has been shown that these expressions serve as carriers of cultural values, aesthetic norms, and traditional symbolism. At the same time, their cognitive function highlights the role of metaphor as a fundamental mechanism of human thought and conceptualization.

Furthermore, the study reveals that phytomorphic expressions remain active in modern Turkish usage, particularly in informal communication and literary discourse. However, their use may vary depending on social and contextual factors, indicating the dynamic nature of language under the influence of globalization and cultural change.

In conclusion, phytomorphic expressions represent an important component of the Turkish linguistic and cultural system. Their analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of metaphor, linguocultural processes, and intercultural communication. Future research may focus on comparative studies across different languages or explore the evolution of such expressions in contemporary discourse.

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