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## Analysis of Propaganda Speeches of 2014 Presidential Bids With Discourse Analysis of van Dijk<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

*The media has always been a tool of hegemony for political leaders in the arena of politics from the past until today. The formation of politics over media, its role in determining the social opinions, its having the potential of influencing social reliability attributed to institutions and similar other factors may be given among the reasons of the media holding this power in its hands. For this reason, political actors use the media effectively in forming the public opinion and try to impose their policies to the society by using it. In the election periods, which are extraordinary periods especially for democratic countries, politicians try to form their own public opinions. In this context, the political speeches are considered in the propaganda concept, and thus propaganda, as a one-way communication method, becomes important in terms of manipulating the masses. In this study, the discourse of the candidates' propaganda speeches was solved in the presidential election held in Turkey for the first time in 2014. As a conclusion, when the propaganda speeches of the candidates are examined (although the name is propaganda) it becomes obvious that the leaders did not use all of the propaganda methods completely.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Propaganda, political leader, discourse analysis,

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## Van Dijk'ın Söylem Çözümlemesi Yöntemiyle Cumhurbaşkanlığı Adaylarının Propaganda Konuşmalarının Analizi

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### Öz

Geçmişten bugüne medya, siyaset arenasında siyasi liderler için önemli bir hegemonya aracı olmuştur. Siyasetin medya üzerinden şekillenmesi, toplumsal kanaatlerin belirlenmesindeki rolü, kurumlara atfedilen toplumsal güvenilirliği etkileme potansiyeline sahip olması gibi faktörler, medyanın bu gücü elinde bulundurmasının nedenleri arasında gösterilebilir. Bu nedenle siyasi aktörler kamuoyu oluşturmada, medyayı etkili bir şekilde kullanmakta ve kendi politikalarını topluma empoze etmeye çalışmaktadırlar. Özellikle demokratik ülkeler için olağanüstü dönemler olan seçim dönemlerinde siyasiler, kendi kamuoylarını oluşturma çabası içine girmektedirler. Bu bağlamda yapılan politik konuşmalar propaganda kapsamına girmekte ve böylece propaganda, tek yönlü bir iletişim yöntemi olarak, kitleleri manipüle etmek açısından büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu çalışmada Türkiye'de 2014 yılında ilk defa gerçekleştirilen cumhurbaşkanlığı seçiminde adayların propaganda konuşmalarının söylem çözümü yapılmıştır. Sonuç olarak adayların propaganda konuşmaları incelendiğinde (her ne kadar adı propaganda da olsa) liderler konuşmalarında propaganda usullerini sonuna kadar kullanmamışlardır.

**Key words:** Propaganda, siyasi lider, söylem analizi

## Introduction

Today, the media and politics are in a dialectic relationship. Especially the media, which is the indispensable part of the political communication, plays an important role in building of the actors of the political world over the media.

Propaganda is one of the key concepts of this study, and has a great importance in terms of manipulating the masses as a one-way communication method.

Although there are various approaches for the definition of propaganda, almost all of them generally agree on the theme that "it is an actual activity towards influencing the society and public opinion in a certain direction, making a certain idea become adopted, and make the masses move towards this purpose". Propaganda is established on making the masses adopt a certain idea; and the defended idea carrying a *de facto* accuracy is not important in this context.

Propaganda's history is as old as human history. Those who hold power in many subjects such as war, migration, religion, politics, trade have used the propaganda method without persuading the target masses. Propaganda has gained a negative meaning since the 20th century. It can be said that the propaganda used in different fields is mostly used in the policy field today. The propaganda speeches to be resolved in this study will be examined within the context of propaganda tactics in the context of political communication and the themes used by the Dutch linguist van Dijk in the analysis of discourse.

## Conceptual Frame

Propaganda comes from the Latin word *propagare* and means "an effort to convince" and "cultivating the land in order to obtain new saplings". Its basic function is motivating and guiding the human behaviors in the framework of an idea, and its history is as old as the human history. It has been determined that the administrators in the antique world used the influential propaganda techniques generally for the purpose of war

support and religion (Jowett and O'donnel, 1999, p.49). In the context of political propaganda it is important for a propagandist to receive the price of his/her efforts in that the masses like the issues to be told in a simple and plain form, they want that their pride is flattered, and their desire for having an "enemy" to which their frustrations are directed is fulfilled. For this reason, a propagandist has to apply certain methods.

The first one of these methods is **(a) Creating certain "types"**: Classifying people under certain types is a widespread inclination. However, in time, this type which is created becomes so unchangeable that it becomes the obstacle in understanding the facts. Therefore, according to this method, Jew, capitalist, unionist, members of communist groups and all their behaviors are considered via these "types" that are placed in the minds rather than considering their real individual properties (Brown, 2000, p.24). **(b) Changing the Names**. In this method, the propagandist generally uses phrases that may be in favor or against someone to influence his/her interlocutors. These phrases has emotional associations. Therefore, the expressions like "red" instead of communist or Russian, "syndicate bosses" instead of the syndicate leaders are used (Özsoy, 1998, p.164). Another method is **(c) Selection**, and in this method, the propagandist selects the fact that is proper for his/her purpose among the complex accumulation of facts. For example, a politician does not want to confuse the electorate, and therefore rather than saying new things, s/he tries to say the things that the electorate wants to hear (Özsoy, 1998, p.165). In this context, censorship is a type of this "selection" and has the property of being a propaganda.

**(d) Lies**. Generally those who do not make propaganda of the good but those who want to deceive people refer frequently to the *lying method*. Lying is a frequent method also in official statements, and in countries where people are convinced that certain things are true, when these things come to the light and people understand that they were lies, lead to non-confidence in the masses in a very fast pace (Özsoy, 1998, p.165-167). Another method is **(e) Repetition**. The propagandist believes that if s/he repeats the ideas s/he defends in a necessary number, masses will accept them after some time. This method also led to the development of slogans. Like "Single Nation, Single State, Single Leader" (Brown, 2000, p.25). **(f)**

**Claiming.** In this method, the purpose of the propagandist is reinforcing the effects in a certain direction, and creating the belief that an important part of the society also adopts the idea and thus make the idea s/he defends become more effective (Bektaş, 1998, p.215). Avoiding arguments is one of the rules that has to be obeyed by the propagandist. **(g) Determining the Enemy.** In this method, if the proposals set forth by the propagandist are not in favor of only one thing but against an enemy (true or imaginary), the effect of the propaganda increases (Brown, 2000, p.25). The propagandist can activate the hatred for an enemy and the fear that stems from the chaos felt from the government policies (Bektaş, 1998, s.168). As the last item, there is the strategy of **(h) Taking Shelter under an Authority.** The suggestion creates the need and the status of taking shelter under an authority due to its nature. This authority may be religious, political, scientific or vocational. There is also a “*taking shelter under masses*” method which may be considered within this method. This may be explained as the “individual having a desire to do the things that everybody does, and thus freeing himself from being excluded from the society” (Brown, 2000, p.26). Briefly, politicians establish their political propagandas either on historical arguments or on daily practices within a fictional structure with discourses.

Propaganda, in terms of politics, is a part of political discourse. For this reason, it will be beneficial to mention the political discourse briefly. The *political discourse* term refers to at least two possibilities. The first one is a discourse that is political in itself; and the second one is the political discourse analysis that does not refer to political content or to political context in an open manner (Wilson, 2003, p.131). Van Dijk, on the other hand, states that political discourse is generally defined by actors, authors or politicians. According to Van Dijk (1997), most of the political discourse analyses are about the speeches or the statements of the political parties or politicians at local, national or international level, presidents of the assemblies or prime ministers, members of the governments or the ministers. Political discourse, especially in the form of speech or collective texts of the party programs, may express the ideologies of other belief systems and group ideologies (Van Dijk, 2002, p.17). However, many forms of political discourses, are produced via the “personification” of the

beliefs of some groups by individual speakers under the special properties of political discourses.

One of the main purposes of the political discourse is examining the methods in which the language selection is directed for certain economic effects. Political discourse functions in various levels of the linguistics from vocabulary to pragmatics as many examples of political discourses. There are studies at vocabulary level (semantically) as loaded vocabulary, technical dictionaries and euphemisms, references, metaphors and vocabulary formation in the literature (Wilson, 2003, p.152). In brief, when it is considered in plain meaning, the definition of the complicated political discourses, and semantic structures at macro level, and technical structures at micro level.

## Method

In this study, the Critical Discourse Analysis will be used as the study method. The Critical Discourse Analysis will be shaped over the strategies of Van Dijk. It emphasizes the power, resistance, policy (the fight, distribution and re-distribution of social benefits) and the role of the language in this structure (reason and results) (Gür, 2013, p.192). The Critical Discourse Analysis is an ideological analysis, and in this context, is based on the rhetorical and ideological elements set by Van Dijk with ideological analyses and the issues set by Brown which are given above in detail. According to Van Dijk, the discourses of political leaders are formed of ideological patterns rather than ideological political structure. Van Dijk handled the ways in which ideologies showed themselves in discourses and called this strategy as “ideological square”. This ideological square forms the basis of the discourse analysis of Van Dijk and consists of principles like; (a) emphasizing positive sides about us; (b) emphasizing negative sides about them; (c) do not emphasize negative sides about us; (d) do not emphasize positive sides about them (van Dijk, 2003, p.57). In the ideological discourse analysis of Van Dijk, there are about forty strategies that are categorized by him like *dramatizing, comparing, contingent presentation of oneself, negative presentation of the others,*

*number game, empathy, victimizing, humaneness, irony, abnegation* etc<sup>1</sup>. These factors will be explained in detail in proper sections during the study.

## Findings

Before the findings, mentioning the political conjuncture in Turkey will be beneficial. After the referendum in 2007, it was decided that the president would be elected by the people instead of the assembly. Therefore, three candidates raced for the presidency in the presidential elections on August 10, 2014. The first one of them was Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (the Leader of Justice and Development Party), who was the Prime Minister for three periods and who was elected as the president with 52% of the votes. The second candidate was Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu (the common candidate of the Republican Party (CHP), which is the main opposition party, and the Nationalist Party (MHP), which is the second opposition party) and he received 39% of the votes. The last candidate was Selahattin Demirtaş, the candidate of the Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP), which was the smallest party in the Assembly and which was in the political arena in the name of the Kurdish people, received about 10% of the votes. It must be reminded that the party of Selahattin Demirtaş was known with its being close to the PKK terrorist organization and acted like its political extension.

In the practice part of the study, firstly the discourses of the leaders will be analyzed according to the propaganda methods of Brown -which are given above. Then they will be analyzed according to the strategies categorized by Teun Van Dijk in the context of the ideologically-based discourses and racism in Europe. There are certain situations in which the strategies set by Van Dijk overlap with each other, in other words, the discourse of a speaker overlaps with more than one strategy.

## The Propaganda Practice of the Leaders

When the propaganda style of *Tayyip Erdoğan* is considered it is observed that he chose the "*selection*" method firstly. By doing so, he stated the importance of the peoples' electing the president for the first time, and emphasized that the voters would witness the writing of the history. Since Tayyip Erdoğan had been the Prime Minister for about eleven years, most



of his speeches were allocated for the activities he had performed during this process, from the area of education to health, from unemployment to economy, from transportation to legal system and to the activities to prevent terror. In his speech Erdoğan referred to the words of Yunus Emre, who was a Turkish poet of Sufism, “Love the created ones because of the Creator!”, and applied the “*take shelter in the authority*” method. Erdoğan used the “taking shelter under the masses” method (obey the one that is appreciated by the people-oppose the one they oppose), which may be the sub-title of the “*take shelter in the authority*” method, which we mentioned in the hypothetical part of the study. Another method used by Tayyip Erdoğan was the “repetition”. Generally he mentioned the statement like “enough, the word belongs to the nation” became a slogan and was in this context included in this method.

When the discourse of *Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu* is analyzed it is observed that he applied the *selection, determining the enemy* and more frequently than this *taking shelter in the authority* methods. While applying the “selection” method, İhsanoğlu mentioned his activities in the international arena and implied that he would use his experiences in his presidency thus making the discourse proper for his purpose. In the “*determination of the enemy*” method, İhsanoğlu stated that DEAŞ raped Turkmen girls (*emphasizing nationalism*), and added that this could no longer continue like this. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu used the “*taking shelter in authority*” method in three parts of his speech. The first part was about his peaceful times in the Palestine Issue (his ensuring the peace between Hamas and el-Fetih Groups, and making the Palestine become a member of the UN and UNESCO), and added that he received the Star of Jerusalem medal in the name of his nation. İhsanoğlu referred frequently to the words of Sufi, poet and philosopher Hacı Bektaşî Veli “Even if you are hurt, do not hurt!”, and to the words of the Islamic Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) “This world is the field to be cultivated for the Hereafter”, thus using the “*taking shelter in the authority*” strategy.

*Selahattin Demirtaş* applied the *selection, determining the enemy and claiming* methods in his propaganda speech. Demirtaş chose the parts of the society who were oppressed, unemployed, laborers, women as his target audience, and stated that he was the candidate for them. Demirtaş

was the candidate for his party which was based on Marxist paradigm, and addressed the oppressed, unemployed, laborers, women in many parts of his speech and thus used the “*selection*” method by using the words that they wanted to hear. Demirtaş used the *determining the enemy* method and saw the state as the enemy and defined the current state system as being *status quo* supporter. In this context, the state is not something to be captured, but something to be presented to the people once it is captured.

### **Ideological Categories that Come to the Front Line in the Speeches of the Leaders**

One of the categories that were referred by the leaders is the “*contingent presentation of oneself*” strategy. In contingent presentation of oneself strategy, the speaker emphasizes the positive properties of his group like his party or his country. Since positive presentation of oneself is based on positive self-scheme that defines the ideology of a group, it is ideological in its basis (van Dijk, 2003, p.103). In the speech of *Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*, his telling the activities in the period when he was the Prime Minister -as previously mentioned above- is considered under the “*positive presentation of oneself*”. *Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu*’s stating the services he made in his period in Islamic Countries Cooperation Organization is included in the “*contingent presentation of oneself*” strategy, *Selahattin Demirtaş*’s stating that he came from the Kurdish culture whose mother tongue and culture were banned to be the candidate for presidency is included in “*contingent presentation of oneself*”.

One of the categories that are referred commonly by the leaders is the “**humaneness**”. Humaneness is the defending of the human rights, criticizing those who violate or ignore these rights, and the formation of general rules and values in order to provide that those who are the victims of discrimination are treated humanely (van Dijk, 2003, p.92). In this context, *Tayyip Erdoğan*’s statement “I considered all the individuals of Turkey as the most honored of the created ones without discriminating them because of their religions, race and cults” is included in the “humaneness” category. *Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu*; also used the strategy of “humaneness” by stating that he did not discriminate between the Sunni-

Alawite, rightist-leftist; *Selahattin Demirtaş* chose the opposition on the pressure on different belief and culture groups and this is also included in this strategy.

“**Dramatization**” is not the same as “victimization” but is similar, and is a well-known method of exaggerating the truths in favor of a person (van Dijk, 2003, p.85). While the discourses that might be included in the dramatization category were used by Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu and Selahattin Demirtaş, Tayyip Erdoğan did not use this category. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu dramatized his experiences that he had after Egypt where he was born was left while it was once the territory of Ottoman State. Selahattin Demirtaş used discourses that were dramatized. The main issue of these discourses is the economy. Demirtaş claimed that those who held the political power in hand became richer in terms of economy, and the citizens, on the other hand, lost the value of their money day by day. Again, similarly, Demirtaş, dramatized the status of the Kurdish people, the employees and women, etc. who were excluded. Demirtaş’s discourse is included in “**empathy**” strategy. According to the “empathy” strategy, political actors has empathy or sympathy for the victimization of the others in various forms depending on their ideological or political views. The expression of empathy may be strategically in a great deal, and it ensures that the speaker impresses the audience (van Dijk, 2003, p.86).

In the “**Number Game**” strategy, a lot of hypotheses are guided by enterprises in order to increase reliability. By so doing, numbers and statistics become the tool of showing the unbiasedness in a convincing manner (van Dijk, 2003, p.100). Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu said “South Korea, which we overtook 30 years ago has caught Japan today, and while the Turkish economy was the 17<sup>th</sup> economy in the world in the past, it is the 18<sup>th</sup> in the world today” and used the “*number game*” strategy. This discourse may also be included in the “**Evidentiality**” strategy. Because according to evidentiality, the evidence set forth by the speaker is an important step in conveying the unbiasedness, reliability and credibility (van Dijk, 2003, p.88). A similar strategy was used by Erdoğan with “*explaining with examples*” strategy and stated that the respectability of the Turkish passport, Turkish flag, and money had increased thus referring historically to the Seljukian and Ottoman states. By doing so, it

is possible to give concrete examples and thus ensure that the imagination and being remembered becomes easier, and the compulsive empirical evidence forms are reminded (van Dijk, 2003, p.88).

While Tayyip Erdoğan stated the activities that he would do when he became the president, he said that the fight with those who threatened the national security would continue non-stop. This may be included in the “*Legality*” strategy.

Another strategy is the “*(pre) assumption*”. According to this strategy, the proposition which is a specific type of semantic intimation is an assumption accepted as true whether it is true or not (van Dijk, 2003, p.104). Tayyip Erdoğan stated that the people was in the best position to make the decision in August 10 elections and thus made an assumption. Selahattin Demirtaş assumed that being a country that would be taken seriously in foreign policy was based on having the understanding of a democratic state.

Another strategy used by Selahattin Demirtaş is the **irony**. In irony, accusations are not made clearly and thus they become more efficient and may be considered as *light irony* (van Dijk, 2003, p.96). When the fact that the Kurds and the Kurdish language is banned on TRT Television is considered, Demirtaş started his speech by saying that “a channel like TRT was extremely unbiased and approached in an equal way to all candidates, and showed the most wonderful example of courtesy for himself”.

Another strategy used by Selahattin Demirtaş, who uses strategies frequently, is the “*history as a lesson*”. This strategy is similar to “*comparison*” and used in a hypothesis to show that the present situation is comparable with the previous events in history (van Dijk, 2003, p.92). Selahattin Demirtaş criticized Tayyip Erdoğan by referring to his “single state, single nation, single country” discourse and said “single religion, single cult, single language strategy turned the Middle Eastern territories, the Gaza strip, Iraq and Syria into a blood bath and people watched it in bitter sadness”.

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## Result and Evaluation

For political leaders, the propaganda speeches on televisions are only one of the political communication arguments. The propaganda speeches of the leaders in this study has been evaluated in terms of the propaganda techniques and ideological patterns and strategies used in these speeches.

Firstly, it has been determined that the propaganda methods observed in the speeches of the candidates are in the form of selection, taking shelter under the authority, determining the enemy and claiming. Tayyip Erdoğan, who became the president by receiving the most votes, used the selection, taking shelter under the authority, and repetition techniques; Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu used the selection, determining the enemy and taking shelter under the authority methods; and Selahattin Demirtaş used the selection, determining the enemy and claiming techniques.

When the propaganda speeches of the candidates are analyzed according to the votes they received and evaluated in the light of the strategies of Van Dijk, the following conclusions are made:

In a previous study conducted on meeting speeches it was reported that political party leaders used almost all of the propaganda methods. However, in this study, the same findings have not been obtained. The reason for this may be the elections being for the presidency not for the parliament, and the candidates performing their propaganda methods over the television.

The only common method used by the candidates in their propagandas was the “*selection*” method. This method being the most proper one for their purposes was the reason for the leaders’ choosing this.

The strategies like abnegation, alienation, negation were not observed in the speeches of the candidates. Among the reasons for this, there is the reason of the presidency position being unbiased and its being in position to hug all parts of the society.

When the strategies of the leaders in the discourses are considered, it is observed that the candidates used similar strategies. For example, all of the candidates used the “contingent presentation of oneself” strategy and tried to form a trust on the target population. However, according to this strategy, candidates present themselves in a positive form and in different

manners. For example, Tayyip Erdoğan referred to his activities during his Prime Minister periods; Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu defined himself as conservative-nationalistic child of the people; Selahattin Demirtaş used the affirmation method over the oppressed ones by referring to his coming from difficult living conditions. Another strategy used by all the candidates is the “humaneness” strategy. In fact this strategy shows parallelism with the *contingent presentation of oneself* strategy, which has been mentioned above. When the strategies that were not common (i.e. different) are considered, it is observed that Tayyip Erdoğan used the “legality” strategy; Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu used the “number game” strategy; and Selahattin Demirtaş used the “history as a lesson” and “irony” strategy. Another common strategy used by Tayyip Erdoğan and Selahattin Demirtaş is the pre-assumption strategy.

As a conclusion, when the propaganda speeches of the candidates are examined (although the name is propaganda) it becomes obvious that the leaders did not use all of the propaganda methods completely. When the fact that propaganda includes negative discourses as well as the positive ones is considered, it is important in this context to draw a tolerant profile for the presidential candidacy.

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