

Discourse Analysis of the Turkish Local Elections on March 31, 2024, on National TV Channels

Dr. F. Senem Gungor ¹

¹Associate Professor, Baskent University, Ankara, Türkiye

Abstract:- Television programming is one of the most important actors in presenting to the public the mood of election night and the outcomes. Using live links, images, comments, and analysis from party headquarters and polling sites, the channels bring viewers' curiosity and excitement about the election results to life. A thorough source of analysis and information, election night and TV broadcasts feature comments from observers, political analysts, and journalists. The broadcasts discuss the election campaigns of the candidates and parties. These broadcasts also feature exclusive interviews and research. This study examined the discourse produced by national television channels in their news programs, evaluating the election results for the Turkey Local Election on the evening of March 31, 2024. Following the overturn of the election propaganda ban, the study limited its application to three national news stations airing between 9:00 p.m. and 1100 p.m. on election day. The study scrutinized the discourse that emerged during the election results presentation, drawing from the election evaluation news programs of Haberturk, CNN TURK, and TRT channels. According to the study's conclusions, two private and one state channel evaluated the circumstances rather than offering commentary when announcing the election results. During election night, all three channels presented their assessments of the situation, as well as remarks made by the guests they hosted. An additional finding from the analysis is that the guests' interpretations of the election outcomes are consistent in the arguments they make and the subjects they emphasize. For instance, nearly all the guests criticize the current state of the economy for the opposition's victory in the election. Furthermore, despite this being a local election, there is a consensus that the public expressed their disapproval of current policies during this local election, as opposed to the general election. Another conclusion is that rather than offering commentary, the program hosts instantly communicate and assess the results.

Keywords: Television News, Discourse, Ideology, Elections, Political Parties.

1. Introduction

The narrative of "the man [President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan] won" during Turkey's 2018 presidential election night exemplifies its lasting impact. The opposition sees "the man won" as a resignation to Erdoğan's authority, while supporters celebrate his invincibility. The narrative of the 2023 presidential election shifted from "the man did not win" to "the man won again" after Erdoğan won the run-off on May 28th. Linguistic communities formed around these election narratives have an enormous influence on individuals. Obama's campaign slogan, "Yes, we can," indicating the possibility of electing the first black president in American history, serves as a prime example. After Obama's election, it became "yes, we did" and took center stage in the personal stories of millions of his supporters. "Yes, we did" fosters the feeling of being part of a community that produced history (Ruacan, 2023).

While Wilks-Heeg and Andersen (2021) emphasize that academic research on election night broadcasts is insufficient, they also highlight the significance of the narratives that arose that night. The dominant narrative on election night can influence the political process in the run-up to the following election. Wilks-Heeg and Andersen (2021) believe that a more thorough investigation of election night broadcasts is necessary. This is the starting point of this research.

The outcome does not determine the future of a Macmillan, Atlee, Gaitskell, Alec Douglas-Home, Wilson, Heath, or Margaret Thatcher; it does not determine the fate of a shepherd in Scotland or a housewife in Islington. A once-exclusive privilege would now benefit many people (Higgins, 2015). That was how Goldie described her reason for creating the election night show concept. As Goldie stressed, the election night show will provide voters and elected officials with simultaneous access to the results (Ruacan, 2023).

Election night marks the end of the contentious language that has persisted throughout the campaign, as uncertainty reaches its peak and becomes evident. Political rituals are particularly useful in times of uncertainty and help society cope with it. In this sense, Ross and Joslyn (1988) view election night broadcasts as rituals, characterizing them as a form of assurance broadcast that upholds the system's positive attributes until the confirmation of the winner and the resolution of ambiguity. The election night broadcast informed viewers that "the system is honest; it helps people overcome doubt by conveying the message "You are in safe hands" (Ross and Joslyn, 1988, p. 308).

TV programs on election nights are meticulously planned and executed to provide viewers with comprehensive, real-time coverage of election results and analyses. These programs play a crucial role in informing the public, interpreting data, and offering expert commentary on the election outcomes. These programs assist in shaping public information and discourse during elections by combining live updates, expert analysis, on-the-ground reporting, interactive graphics, and viewer involvement. They even broadcast dedicated segments that focus on specific aspects of the election, such as historical context, key battlegrounds, and major issues, as well as in-depth reports on particular candidates, electoral districts, or significant voter trends that have emerged during the campaign. Effective election night coverage needs careful planning, skill, technological integration, and a dedication to fair and factual reporting.

Although the television journalistic tradition, which dates to the 1990s and TRT before that, when private television channels were on the rise in Turkey, is not a monolithic culture, it has produced professionals and reporting techniques with diverse perspectives. Local elections, which began in 1946 and continue to this day, have played a significant role in Turkey's history. Millions of people are sitting in front of televisions, following the results of their ballots through broadcasts that last till the morning, while the media serves as an eye and ear on the ground. Each network strives to attract the largest audience and provide the most compelling, informative, and engaging coverage. Networks compete to provide the most comprehensive and detailed coverage, including real-time vote counts, expert analysis, and field reports. They recruit high-profile political analysts, journalists, and commentators to provide credible and insightful analysis. This research focuses on three major news channels in Turkey on election night, March 31, 2024.

2. A Brief History of Local Elections in Turkey

Local elections are the process by which people in a specific area—such as a city, town, or municipality—vote for representatives to administer and make decisions on numerous local issues and services. The history of local elections in Turkey is rich and reflects the country's evolving political landscape. Local elections are held in Turkey to elect mayors, municipal council members, neighborhood (muhtar) heads, and provincial council members. These elections are critical to ensuring that local governance meets the needs and preferences of the community.

Following the founding of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, the new republican regime formed municipal governance. However, the Republican People's Party (CHP) led a single-party system in the early years, primarily using local elections as symbolic events. The first multi-party local elections took place in 1946. This marked a significant shift in Turkish politics as the Democrat Party (DP) began to challenge the CHP's dominance. The DP rose to prominence in the 1950s, a time when local governance underwent significant change. Local elections during this time were competitive, demonstrating the growing power of opposition parties. The construction of cities, roads, and buildings has accelerated. The 1960 coup resulted in a postponement of municipal elections and a reform of the political structure. After 1960, municipalities faced financial deterioration, and the influx of many immigrants significantly changed the urban landscape by transforming impoverished neighborhoods (Alkan, 1999).

In 1963, local elections resumed, and the political landscape became increasingly fragmented with the rise of various political parties. Local elections regularly took place in the 1970s, despite political instability, economic challenges, and frequent changes in government (Goymen, 1990; Arslan, 2007). Another military coup in 1980 resulted in the temporary suspension of local elections. The military government imposed new restrictions and improved municipal governance. In 1984, the new political system held local elections. The Motherland Party (ANAP) emerged as an influential force, mirroring broader national tendencies. During this period, the metropolitan municipality organization increased local revenues and provided economic assistance to municipalities (Duzenli, 2021).

The need for restructuring in the public sector, which became more evident in the 1990s, was neglected under the coalition structures, vicious conflicts, and economic difficulties of this period (Dincer ve Yilmaz, 2003:6). On the other hand, the social municipality approach originally emerged in Turkey throughout the 1990s. In 1994, local elections marked the rise of Islamist politics, with the Welfare Party (RP) winning significant victories, including the mayoralty of Istanbul with Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

In the 2000s, the restructuring process gained serious momentum. Depending on external factors, the European Union process has emerged as a fundamental element. In addition, the effects of globalization have been considerable (Yorukoglu, 2009). Cities play a growing role in the global economy, prompting the implementation of policies that foster trade and commerce while upholding the effectiveness, efficiency, and integrity of zoning plans. It is one of the most essential agenda concerns for governments, particularly in large cities. In this context, Turkey's scale enlargement and metropolitanization programs began in the 2000s (Ciner and Zengin, 2019). In 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won the general elections and subsequently dominated local elections. The AKP's focus on local governance and development projects helped it secure significant victories in subsequent local elections. Following elections in 2004, 2009, and 2014, the AKP maintained control over several municipalities, particularly in big cities such as Istanbul and Ankara.

The 2019 local election was marked a significant shift, with the opposition parties, particularly the CHP, winning major cities such as Istanbul and Ankara. The elections were notable for the high voter turnout and the re-run of the Istanbul mayoral election. The 2024 local elections in Turkey (scheduled for March 31, 2024) were poised to be a pivotal event with implications for both local governance and national politics. Voters' choices did not only shape their immediate communities but also signal broader political trends and priorities in the country. Economic issues, including inflation, unemployment, and economic growth, were likely to be major topics influencing voter decisions. For the first time in 22 years, the Republican People's Party (CHP) gained the top spot, an achievement not accomplished since 1977, and the AK Party lost control of 11 cities it had held since the 2019 elections.

Local elections in Turkey are not just about local governance; they also reflect broader national political tendencies. Local election success is frequently regarded as a prerequisite for victory in national elections. They act as a barometer of public opinion toward the ruling government and opposition parties. Political parties' performance in municipal elections can have a considerable impact on national strategy and programs.

3. The Role of Media in The Election Night Process

The scholarly research on the media-driven connection between politicians and voters has a long history in advanced democracies, with different viewpoints emerging throughout time. Early research supported the concept that the media had "minimal effects" on voters' election choices because electoral choice was formed by individuals related to wide social groupings with shared traits and because media availability was confined to only a few venues (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955; Klapper, 1960). After the 1960s, most of the academic research confirmed significant media effects on choices. The literature of this period attributed a considerable impact to political marketing on voter preferences, inferring a controlled and even rigged electoral competition, particularly because of the crucial influence of television on election results (Manin, 1997; Sartori, 1989; McCombs, Maxwell, and Shaw, 1972).

The media, once known as "the fourth estate," is believed to have power during electoral processes and is now viewed as equivalent to the executive and legislative branches (Schulz, 2006). The separation of three types of

media power—discourse, access, and means—highlights the media's ability to shape opinions, incorporate or exclude subjects or matters from the public sphere, and exert direct or indirect influence over politicians and stakeholders (Novak, 2010).

Traditional media determines what is important to recipients (themes), who will talk about it (people, parties, and stakeholders), and in what context specific issues should be expressed. These characteristics distinguish traditional media from social media. By presenting leaders to large audiences, inviting them to media debates, and soliciting their opinions, traditional media promotes leaders; however, social media allows politicians to exist independently of traditional media by amplifying the transmitted message to the environment (Piechota, 2011).

The mass media define a unique era in the history of political communication. They originated around the same time as universal suffrage and modern political parties. Mass-distributed newspapers and, later, broadcast media were not only necessary for large-scale representative democracy, but they also became an essential component of it. The initial studies of voting behavior and mass media in the 1950s are fascinating because they reflect a period when mass media was becoming increasingly important in election campaigns, supplanting meetings, rallies, and other prior techniques of political communication. It is a well-known fact that the media, particularly mass media, plays a crucial role in political campaigns all around the world.

Media consumption on election nights is a critical aspect of how voters, candidates, and political analysts engage with and interpret the election results. Voters and political enthusiasts turn to television news channels, online news platforms, and social media for real-time updates on election results. The demand for instant knowledge fuels increasing traffic to news websites and streaming services. Many people tune in to live coverage on television or online platforms to follow the unfolding results, debates, and commentary.

On the night of February 23, 1950, innovations that allowed for speedier data delivery, along with the imagination of BBC program producer Grace Wyndham Goldie, would pioneer the "election night broadcast" concept in television. Beginning in 1950, this approach's design aligned with technology, enabling faster data transfer and moving beyond the mere exchange of results to their interpretation. Channels would primarily compete on "speed" and "commentary quality" once they established the election broadcasting format. As a result, a furious race would break out among television networks to be the first to broadcast the election results and feature the experts who could best interpret them. This heated competition would result in a tragedy for American television during the 2000 election (Ruacan, 2023).

Academic research on broadcasts during election nights is relatively scarce. Wilks-Heeg and Andersen (2021, p. 436) assert that election night is a night that heavily utilizes academic data and prominently features academics themselves. However, it is still a topic that academics are not particularly engaged in examining.

Election night and morning narratives have a significant impact, not just on individuals and society, but also on the new government. According to Mendelsohn (1998), election night's dominant narrative influences the government's policy, which will begin to work. Wilks-Heeg and Andersen (2021) emphasize that the election-night narrative shapes the memory of the defeated government. The finest instance of this is the "youthquake¹ narrative, which arose when BBC Editor Laura Kuenssberg highlighted the votes of young voters in the early hours of the UK 2017 general election night broadcast. The evolution of this narrative explained the Labor Party's unexpectedly strong performance while attributing the Conservative Party's relative loss of votes to a decline among young voters.

In most nations, election night broadcasts continue to feature traditional media actors interacting with emerging digital media ecosystem players. Chadwick (2017) referred to the outcome of this interaction as "hybrid media." According to hybrid media studies, traditional media remains one step ahead in controlling election night

¹ The Oxford English Dictionary selected the word "youthquake" as the most popular word of 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-42361859>

coverage, but the new media language is infiltrating traditional media. In the Turkish media, broadcasting new media's posts acts as a hybridization, such as "reading tweets on the screen.".

Traditional TV channels remain a major source of election night coverage in Turkey, with viewers relying on networks like NOW, CNN TURK, TRT, Haberturk, and local stations for comprehensive updates. On election nights, viewers often multitask, following live coverage on multiple platforms simultaneously. For example, viewers might watch TV coverage while following live updates on social media or news websites. Moreover, viewers engage with interactive features like live maps, data visualizations, and real-time polls to better understand the results and trends.

On election nights, there is a major demand for real-time information, a variety of media sources, and active social media involvement. Understanding these trends contributes to a better understanding of how people interact with election coverage, as well as the media's impact on public perception and discussion during important election events. This study analyzed the television programs related to the local elections on March 31, 2024. The TV channels are selected according to their peak viewership during full day and prime time². TRT was watched live from 9:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. The other TV channels' shows were taped and then watched and analyzed the next day.

4. Discourse Analysis and News

Discourse analysis explores the use of language in texts and contexts. It includes a variety of theories and methodologies for understanding the social and cultural dimensions of communication. Discourse analysis, in this sense, is the study of language in use (Brown and Yule, 1983). Discourse analysts are responsible for analyzing the link between discourse and reality, not just describing textual aspects. Discourse analysis should consider not just the writings themselves but also their social and institutional surroundings. In this work, we take a critical view. This 'process' paradigm sees discourse as a social practice that includes production, distribution, and consumption and analyzes it as a dynamic process (Zhang, 2014: 2273).

Ferdinand de Saussure's work in structural linguistics, specifically, laid the foundation for early discourse analysis. His distinction between "langue" (the abstract structure of language) and "parole" (real speech) paved the way for subsequent advances. In the mid-twentieth century, John L. Austin and John Searle made important contributions to speech act theory. They examined how utterances can perform tasks (such as promising or ordering) and how context influences meaning (Mukhroji et al., 2019).

Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson established conversation analysis in the 1970s, focusing on the structure and organization of speaking in interaction. Dell Hymes introduced communication ethnography, emphasizing the importance of cultural and social circumstances in understanding language use. Norman Fairclough, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ruth Wodak created Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the 1980s and 1990s. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) explores the influence of power dynamics in society on discourse (Trappes, 2004; Neumann, 2008).

Foucault's work on discourse and power was hugely influential. He investigated how discourses shape knowledge and social activities, with a focus on historical settings and the function of institutions. Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach integrates discourse analysis and cognitive psychology to investigate how social knowledge and ideologies are reflected in discourse. Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL) approach sees language as a social semiotic system. SFL studies how language works to convey meaning in context.

With numerous techniques and theoretical frameworks, discourse analysis has a long and diverse history, widely applied to media and political discourse. It explores how language constructs identities, frames issues, and

² 2024 En Çok İzlenen TV Kanalları.

<https://toxmedia.net/blog/2024-en-cok-izlenen-tv-kanallari> Retrieved on 15.03.2024

influences public opinion. Examining how language, images, and other semiotic resources construct meanings, shape perceptions, and influence audiences is what discourse analysis on news coverages entails.

5. Research Aim

This study employs discourse analysis to examine the news coverage of the election results on national TV channels on March 31, 2024. Three news TV channels (Haberturk, CNN TURK, and TRT) have been chosen for their highest viewing rates in full-day and prime-time news watching [2]. TRT was spotted alive from 0900 p.m. to 1100 p.m. The other TV channels, Haberturk and CNN TURK's programs, were watched on YouTube and analyzed the next day.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the framework choice for this study. During their election night programs, the channels examine word choices, metaphors, and the use of passive or active voice for textual analysis. In the visual and multimodal analysis, the channels analyze the use of images, videos, and graphics by considering aspects such as camera angles, color schemes, and visual framing.

6. Haberturk News Analysis Between the 21.00-23.00 Time Zones on March 31, 2024

Haberturk was founded in 1999 as a news channel in Turkey. It is part of the Ciner Media Group, which also includes other media properties like newspapers and radio stations. Haberturk provides comprehensive news coverage, including national and international news, politics, economy, sports, and cultural events³. It is one of the main television channels, offering 24/7 news coverage. It is known for its live news broadcasts, talk shows, and in-depth analysis programs. Haberturk has a strong online presence with a website and mobile app that provide news articles, live streaming, videos, and interactive content. The channel is active on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, where it shares news updates, provides live coverage, and engages with the audience.

Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Fevzi Cakir (Haberturk Ankara Representative), Esra Topbas (Haberturk Announcer) and Hulya Hokenek (Haberturk Announcer) were the hosts of the program. Nasuhi Gungor (Haberturk writer), Can Ozcelik (OdaTv Editor-in-Chief, Writer), Osman Sert (PanoramaTR Research Center Director, Researcher), Sukru Kucuksahin (Journalist), Nevzat Cicek (Independent Turkish Editor-in-Chief), Prof. Dr. Yasar Haci Salihoglu, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Turgay Yerlikaya, Gukan Duman (Head of Betimar research center), Ihsan Aktas (Journalist)

Election night coverage on Haberturk is extensive and focuses on delivering timely, accurate, and detailed information. Here are the key features of Haberturk's election night coverage:

- a) Live Updates: Continuous updates on vote counts, projections, and results as they come in from various polling stations. Immediate coverage of major events, including speeches by political leaders, candidates, and the director of the Supreme Electoral Board, notable views from the ground, and key moments throughout the night.
- b) Expert Analysis: A panel of experts, including political scientists, journalists, and researchers, provides in-depth evaluation and insights into the election results.
- c) Data Interpretation: Detailed interpretation of voting trends, demographic influences, and regional variations in the election outcomes. Real-time data visualization tools that help viewers understand the election results and trends clearly.
- d) Field Reporting: Correspondents report live from key locations, including party headquarters, electoral commissions, and regions of high interest.

³ <https://www.haberturk.com/kurum/haberturk-tarihcesi#:~:text=Haberturk%20TV%20Ufuk%20G%C3%BCldemir%20taraf%C4%B1ndan,Ciner%20Yay%C4%B1n%C2%80Holding%20ailesine%20kat%C4%B1l%C4%B1m%C5%9Ft%C4%B1r.> Retrieved on 16.06.2024.

- e) Interactive Graphics: Use interactive maps, charts, and graphics to visually represent the distribution of votes, seat allocations, and regional differences.

Haberturk covers more pro-opposition stories and devotes greater space to the CHP's metropolitan mayoral candidates' speeches. During the period of the research (21.00–23.00, March 31, 2024), this broadcast channel did not make aggressive or offensive statements and was open to discussion with the guests they received.

The guest speakers on the program typically discuss the country's economic difficulties. From various perspectives, all the guest speakers concur that the economic distress accounts for the difference between the 2019 local elections and the current one. Most of the guest speakers thought that the reason for the lower participation rate compared to the previous one was that AKP (ruling party) voters on the government's side did not participate.

Moreover, all Haberturk 's guest speakers assert that the results against the AKP reflect the discontentment of retired seniors and the younger generations with the economic challenges. Haberturk reiterates the point by highlighting the significantly lower participation of AKP voters in this election compared to the previous year.

While commenting on the election results, guest speakers who support the ruling party assert that the AKP will thoroughly evaluate these results and emphasize the importance of heeding the voter message in the upcoming elections. As Aktaş mentioned, although the AKP is a missionary and mass party, this election shows that this has changed.

Although the program hosts were more in charge of conveying the election results and asking questions rather than commenting, at around 10:50 pm, one of the program presenters, Ersoy, said, "This evening is very interesting." This election is very interesting." Furthermore, another program host, Topbaş, asked Aktaş, "Is this a game-changing election?"

On March 31, 2024, at 6 p.m., the election propaganda restriction was lifted, limiting the study's scope to two national news stations broadcasting between 0900 and 1100 p.m. on election day. The study looked at the discourse used to report election results and was based on election review news programs on Haberturk and TRT channels.

Generally, the program narrative revolves around the AKP's loss of votes in provinces where it has held long-term elections. Reports indicate that the CHP has garnered a substantial number of new supporters, particularly among the youth. More than 200,000 young voters are present in Istanbul, according to reports. "Don't assume Turgut Altınok will win in Ankara; you're misreading the voter base and the city," a guest says, without further discussion. The guests also do not think that nominating Turgut Altınok as a candidate is a logical political move.

Sert, panorama research director, said that it would be a mistake to read these election results only as local election results. He stated that if one part decreases and one part rises, it indicates that the voters have a problem with the central government. The AKP has reportedly been losing votes in major cities since 2015, and the response to this election has sent a clear message to the government. The hosts and guests agreed on Sert's comment that the change was from local to general. It was 22.55 on Haberturk.

7. TRT News Analysis Between 21.00 and 23.00 Time Zones on March 31, 2024

TRT (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation) was founded on May 1, 1964, as Turkey's national public broadcaster. It started as a single radio station before expanding to television broadcasting. As a state broadcaster, TRT's mandate is to provide public service broadcasting, including news, education, culture, and entertainment, to the Turkish public. TRT operates multiple TV channels catering to different audiences and interests. TRT also operates several radio stations, each focusing on different genres, including news, music, and cultural programs⁴.

Election night coverage on TRT is comprehensive, focusing on providing accurate and timely information to the public. In the first part of the program, the hosts were Fatih Cimen and Canan Yener Recber. The guests were author Halime Kokce, Star Newspaper Ankara representative Fadime Ozkan, journalist Ercan Gurses, journalist

⁴ <https://www.trt.net.tr/kurumsal/tarihce> Retrieved on 16.06.2024.

Emin Pazarcı, writer Nuh Albayrak, journalist Hakan Celik, journalist Didem Ozel Tumer, and researcher Hilmi Daşdemir.

Here are the key features of TRT's local election night coverage:

- a. Live Updates: TRT provides real-time updates on vote counts, projections, and results from polling stations across the country. Instant coverage of significant developments, such as statements from candidates and the director of the Supreme Electoral Board and live updates from polling stations.
- b. Expert Analysis: Panels of political analysts and journalists provide in-depth analysis of the results, discussing implications for local and national politics. Experts interpret voting patterns, regional differences, and demographic impacts on the election outcomes.
- c. Field Reporting: Correspondents report live from key locations, including party headquarters, polling stations, and regions of interest.
- d. Interactive Graphics: Use interactive maps, charts, and graphics to display election results clearly and engagingly. Real-time data visualization tools help viewers understand the distribution of votes and seat allocations.

TRT remains a cornerstone of Turkey's media landscape, providing comprehensive coverage of national events, including elections. Its role as a public service broadcaster ensures that it serves a wide audience with diverse and informative content. The program's initial conclusion is that guests use similar arguments and focus on similar topics when assessing election outcomes. For example, nearly every guest speaker connects the opposition's election victory to the economic situation. Furthermore, despite this being a local election, there is a widespread assumption that the public expressed their dissatisfaction with current policies in this election instead of the general one. Guests Hilmi Daşdemir, Hilal Kokce, and Fadime Ozkan stressed that voters did not vote for "service" in this election but rather for the country's overall position. According to them, instead of analyzing municipalities' services in this election, individuals condemned current policies with reaction votes or by not voting at all.

The second finding is the program's emphasis on the voter's involvement rate. The local election on March 31, 2024, measured the participation rate at 78.7%, compared to 84.15% in the previous general election. According to the agreement, the explanation for this reduction is that AK Party supporters did not vote in response.

Pazarcı said, "When we look at the general picture, it is understood that the atmosphere of a general election and at least the general election psychology of the voters have been introduced to a certain extent. Because I believe that the populist politics that we know well from the nineties have started to gain ground again after a long time. When you look at it, yes, there is resentment among retirees; there is actually an economic problem. This is not a picture that can offer a solution in that sense after this process." The guest's word choices reflect a certain political perspective, especially with expressions such as "populist politics," "quality projects," "anti-Erdogan," and "secular voter." He also expressed his belief that many regions in Anatolia fail to fully consider the base's preferences when selecting candidates. I think this is reflected in the ballot box as a reaction vote, mostly in the form of not going to the polls, and in some places, in the form of voting for different parties." This statement has prompted criticism of the AK Party. He attributed this outcome to the AK Party's inability to fully consider the base's pulse during the candidate selection process.

Guests Hilmi Daşdemir, Hilal Kokce, and Fadime Ozkan emphasized that the people did not vote for "service" in this election but for the general situation of the country. According to them, the people criticized the current policies with reaction votes or by not going to the ballot box, rather than evaluating the services of the municipalities in this election.

Albayrak, like the other guests, said that this picture was the result of a general election, not a local election, and attributed the reason to the economy. He wanted to prove that the public agreed with his arguments by saying that the messages he received were in this direction, unlike others. In statements such as "I agree with this too," he emphasized that he agreed with those who thought this way. In his statements, he expresses criticism regarding

the government's decision to give raises to civil servants instead of retirees, but he does not delve into this issue, instead stating that the government will analyze the situation.

Celik said,

"If we look at the countries in our geography, such as Syria, Iran, and Iraq in our south, the ongoing wars in our south, and other instability factors, many countries go to the polls and to the ballot box, but there is not much change at the ballot box." The Republic of Turkey is one of the few countries where citizens can vote and collectively change things. In this regard, I firmly believe that the general elections, presidential elections, or local elections also mirror the will of our citizens. Paying attention to our citizens reveals that our participation rates are higher than those of many other countries. People place a tremendous deal of importance on voting. They go to the polls in the early hours and protect their votes. They follow the counting process very closely. This is not the case in many countries. Especially in western European countries, there is fatigue regarding going to the polls. There are instances of clumsiness and prejudice, such as the belief that our lives won't change significantly. It doesn't happen like that in Turkey."

In reference to geography, Celik asserted that neither the Middle East nor Europe exhibit this phenomenon. Since he did not make any statements about the government or the opposition, his remarks were free from any ideological bias. His narrative aims to raise awareness among the audience about the vitality of Turkish democracy. The choice of words emphasizes the democratic process, especially with expressions such as "the will of the people," "democracy," "participation rates," and "efforts to make their voices heard." It is appropriate because there is a narrative on the state channel, namely praising democracy and valuing the voters.

Another finding is that when reporting on election results, the hosts only mentioned the vote rates of the parties and candidates, without any bias or interpretation. On the program, host Kılıç's warning to Emin Pazarcı, who made a personal comment, "Let's make a more general comment," indicates that the channel is striving to stick to its broadcasting policies.

In addition, in the election results published on the screen, the order of the parties is not from those with the most votes to those with the least votes, but rather with the ruling party first, creating confusion. Finally, when the sentence structures and word choices were examined in general, it was determined that the guests avoided criticizing the government, and even if they did criticize, they did so very softly. For instance, the program did not broadcast the speech of the main opposition party, the CHP, which emerged as the first party in this local election.

8. CNN TURK News Analysis Between 21.00 and 23.00 Time Zones on March 31, 2024

CNN TURK was launched on October 11, 1999, as a collaboration between the American news network CNN and the Turkish media company Doğan Media Group (later acquired by Demiroren Group in 2018) [4]. CNN TURK provides a wide range of news coverage, including national and international news, politics, economics, sports, culture, and social issues. It is known for its in-depth reporting and analysis, like its American counterpart. The channel maintains a strong online presence with a website and mobile app providing news articles, live streaming, videos, and interactive content. Moreover, CNN TURK is active on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, where it shares news updates, provides live coverage, and engages with viewers⁵.

CNN TURK is known for its comprehensive and detailed coverage of election nights. Hande Firat and Deniz Bayramoglu were the hosts of the program. Milliyet newspaper editor-in-chief Ozay Sendir, Dicle Canova (CNN TURK Ankara Representative), journalists Abdulkadir Selvi, Zafer sahin, and Ahmet Hakan. Its election-night coverage has the following key features:

1. Live Updates: continuous updates on vote counts, projections, and results from various polling stations across the country by Bayramoglu. Immediate coverage of significant events (president's departure from his office

⁵ <https://www.linkedin.com/company/cnn-turk/> Retrieved on 16.06.2024.

in Istanbul), statements from political leaders, candidates, and the director of the supreme electoral board, and notable scenes (empty podium at one of the opposing party centers in Ankara)

2. Expert Analysis: Panels of journalists provide in-depth analysis and insights into the election results. The election outcomes are interpreted in detail, considering voting patterns, demographic influences, and regional variations.
3. Field Reporting: Correspondents from Ankara report live from the Ankara studio.
4. Interactive Graphics: To visually represent the distribution of votes and regional differences, use interactive maps, charts, and graphics.
5. Multiplatform Presence: Live streaming of election night coverage on CNN TURK's website and Facebook, enabling viewers to follow updates on various devices.

The program analysis immediately reveals that all guests are journalists working for government-friendly media outlets. During the two-hour period monitored, the program's digital maps mostly focused on district results rather than provinces.

Main host Firat's verbal and nonverbal language is mostly sarcastic and aggressive. She holds her cell phone all the time and reads the messages that she gets. According to her, she was reading the latest news from her own news sources. After opposite party CHP leader Ozgur Ozel's speech, Firat commented on Ozel's speech by quoting from it. He read Ozel's words, "Diversity is our wealth, the rule of law," twice and looked at the participants with eye rolling. Firat continued quoting Ozel's speech and said, "This is very important; our success will not be a defeat for anyone. Ozgur Ozel used an interesting sentence when wondering if he would make a harsh statement." She explained the meaning of this statement to the guests. According to Sendir and Sahin, Ozel's statement indicates that he is relieved and that he is the party leader. However, both journalists stated that such a sentence also demonstrates Ozel's own vision as a leader.

While the Ankara Mayor candidate was broadcasting his speech live on CNN TURK, where he evaluated the election results and was clearly ahead, the channel muted the sound in the middle of the speech. While it continued as an image in the middle of the screen, Firat and Şahin started to comment on Yavaş's speech. During the program, Firat occasionally connected with Ankara and asked Canova (the reporter) about party backstage discussions. While Firat was talking with the reporter, live images from the party centers were shown on the screen.

One of the guests, Hakan, mentioned that the election results went beyond the local balances and that blaming the citizens was not an option. He continued, "It is obvious that there is a problem in selecting candidates locally. However, it is necessary to read it not only through the candidates but also through the citizens. Politicians make policies; we observe and interpret."

Lastly, Bayramoglu asked a question about the election communication strategies to the guests. Firat claimed that she did not like the strategies from the beginning to the end. Finally, Bayramoglu asked the guests about the election communication strategies. Firat claimed that she did not like the strategies from the beginning to the end.

Finally, the following are the main findings from all three TV channels' coverage between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m. on election night:

- Content Analysis: In discussing the election results, all three channels focused heavily on economic issues and the performance of elder and youth voters.
- Framing Analysis: All three channels framed the election as a critical decision point for Turkey's future economic stability and voters' message for the ruling party.
- Tone and Sentiment: the coverage of the channels was generally neutral, but CNN TURK leaned slightly positive towards the ruling party.
- Source and actor analysis: All the experts and analysts agreed that the ruling party had chosen the wrong candidates. Most of them criticized the ruling party for not listening to the people. Moreover, most of them

agreed that economic distress was the main reason for the results favoring the opposite party. While TRT and Haberturk hosts asked questions about the election results to guest speakers and experts from various professions, CNN TURK hosts interpreted the election results in the form of questions and answers among themselves, and one of the main presenters even read the text messages received on her mobile phone on the air. She accessed her own news sources via her phone and conveyed them to the audience in a lively broadcast.

Furthermore, during the 2-hour programming period, Haberturk hosted a large group of experts, rotating four hosts, and periodically displayed the names of the experts on the screen. The hosts also occasionally introduced the guest speakers. Like Haberturk, TRT also periodically announced the names of the participants and coordinated the program with two presenters. Only **CNN TURK** employs a small number of journalists as experts, accompanied by two presenters.

<https://toxmedia.net/blog/2024-en-cok-izlenen-tv-kanallari>

9. Conclusion

The media's involvement on election evenings is critical for informing the public, offering analysis, maintaining transparency, and encouraging democratic engagement. By providing real-time updates, expert commentary, and interactive features, media organizations contribute to the public's comprehension of the political process and its consequences. Despite challenges such as bias and misinformation, the media remains a critical component of democratic engagement during elections.

On March 31, 2024, local elections took place in all 81 provinces of Turkey. There were 30 metropolitan and 1,363 district municipal mayors, 1,282 provincial and 21,001 municipal councilors, as well as various local nonpartisan offices, such as neighborhood representatives (muhtars) and senior people's councils⁶. The opposition party, CHP, won a "spectacular upset victory despite the lack of electoral pacts, retaining all but one of its urban mayoralties and winning four more."⁷ Many television channels began live broadcasting the election results to their audiences after the lifting of the broadcast restriction at 6 p.m. Media organizations provide real-time information, analysis, and a platform for public discourse, shaping how the electorate perceives and understands the results throughout the night.

On election night, this research focuses on three major channels' (two private and one state) election programs. This research takes an in-depth look at the channels' programs between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m., conducting a microsecond-by-microsecond count of the vote using discourse analysis, with the aim of investigating the narrative surrounding the results. The need to provide the most comprehensive, engaging, and informative coverage drives competition among TV programs on election nights. Networks employ various strategies, including expert analysis, advanced technology, real-time engagement, and exclusive content, to attract and retain viewers. The three news channels use strategies to attract and retain viewers. **CNN TURK** utilizes sophisticated data visualization tools to present election results clearly. On the other hand, Haberturk focuses on detailed political analysis and expert commentary. As a state broadcaster, TRT offers extensive coverage across the country, and it has a strong on-the-ground presence with reporters stationed at key locations.

References

- [1] Alkan, Mehmet O. (1999). Osmanli'dan gunumuze secimlerin kisa tarihi. *Gorus Dergisi*, 39, 48-61.
- [2] Arslan, A. (2007). 1963'ten gunumuze, yerel secim sonuclari temelinde Turkiye'nin siyasi yapisi. *Uluslararası İnsan Bilimleri Dergisi*, 4(01), 1-31.
- [3] Brown, G & Yule G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. London: Cambridge University Press

⁶ 2024 Kesin seçim sonucları.

<https://www.ysk.gov.tr/doc/dosyalar/docs/2024MahalliIdareler/2024KesinSecimSonuclar%C4%B1/belediyemeclisuyeligi.pdf> Retrieved on 05.04.2024.

⁷ An electoral bruising for Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Turkey, https://www.economist.com/europe/2024/03/31/turkeys-president-recep-tayyip-erdogan-suffers-an-electoral-disaster?utm_medium=cpc.adword.pd&utm_source=google&ppccampaignID=18151738051&ppcadID=&utm_campaign=a.22brand_pmax&utm_content=conversion.direct-response.anonymous&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiwZK1BhDuARIsAAy2VztGqrJqqGVcdikrRnLbzkdSLromS19kqXLzFsq51L9Ne7y1YVDYI28aAoLwEALw_wcB&gclid=aw.ds Retrieved on 05.04.2024

- [4] Ciner, C. U., and Zengin, O. (2019). Turkiye'de belediye sisteminin 2000'li yillarda yeniden yapılandırılması: demokrasi ve etkinlik açısından bir değerlendirme. Hacettepe Üniversitesi İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi. 37(3), 439-470. <https://doi.org/10.17065/huniibf.434293>
- [5] Duzenli, K. (2021). Tek parti idaresinden 12 eylül 1980'e yerel siyaseti belediyeler üzerinden okumak: merkeze yardımıcılıktan toplumcu belediyeciliğe. Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi. (45), 223-249. <https://doi.org/10.30794/pausbed.803374>
- [6] Dincer, O. and Yilmaz, C. (2003). Kamu Yonetiminde Yeniden Yapılanma 1: Degisimin Yonetimi İcin Yonetimde Degisim. T.C Basbakanlik: Ekim, Ankara.
- [7] Higgins, C. 12 Haziran 2015. Prejudice and a BBC pioneer-the amazing story of Grace Wyndham Goldie. *The Guardian*. Retrieved at 12.06.2024 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jun/12/grace-wyndham-goldie-bbc-producer-1940s-1950s-invented-tv-formats>
- [8] Katz, E. and Lazarsfeld, P. (1955). The Part Played by People in the Flow of Mass Communications. Glencoe: The Free Press.
- [9] Klapper, Joseph T. (1960). The Effects of Mass Communication. Glencoe: The Free Press
- [10] Manin, B. (1997). The Principles of Representative Government. Nueva York: Cambridge University Press.
- [11] McCombs, M. and Shaw, D. L. (1972). The agenda setting function of mass media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 36(2), 176-187.
- [12] Mendelsohn, M. (1998). The construction of electoral mandates: media coverage of election mandates in Canada. *Political Communication*, 15 (2): 239-253.
- [13] Mukhroji, M., Nurkamto, J., Subroto, H. E., and Tardjana, S. S. (2019). Pragmatic forces in the speech acts of efl speakers at Kampung Inggris, Indonesia. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*. 10(1), 38-60.
- [14] Neumann, I. B. (2008). Discourse Analysis. In: Klotz, A., Prakash, D. (eds) Qualitative Methods in International Relations. Research Methods Series. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230584129_5
- [15] Petersson, O., Djurf-Pierre, M., Holmberg, S., Strömbäck, J. and Weibull, L. (2006). Report from the Democratic Audit of Sweden 2006 Media and Elections in Sweden. SNS Förlag: Stockholm. ISBN 13: 978-91-85355-86-0
- [16] Piechota, G. (2011). Media in election processes. *Communication Today*. 2(2), 44-51.
- [17] Ross, M. H ve Joslyn, R. (1988). Election night news coverage as political ritual. *Polity*. 21(2): 301-319.
- [18] Ruacan, I. (2023). NewsLab Turkey araştırma raporu. <https://www.newslabturkey.org/isik-kamera-ve-acilan-sandik-sayisi-bir-sosyo-teknik-drama-olarak-secim-gecesi-yayinlari/> “Isık, kamera ve açılan sandık sayısı: bir sosyo-teknik drama olarak seçim gecesi yayınları”. Retrieved at 06.06.2024.
- [19] Sartori, G. (1989). Video-Power. *Government and Opposition*. 24(1), pp. 39-53.
- [20] Schulz, W. (2014). 4. Political communication in long-term perspective. In C. Reinemann (Ed.), *Political Communication* (pp. 63-86). Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110238174.63>
- [21] Trappes-Lomax H. (2004). Discourse analysis. In Davies, A. and Elder, C. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics* (pp. 133–164). Blackwell Publishing. 10.1002/9780470757000.ch5
- [22] Unlu, U. (2016). Integration of social municipality concepts in e-municipalities services. *Sayıstan Dergisi*.102(Temmuz – Eylül), 63-89.
- [23] Wilks-Heeg, S. and Peter Andersen, P. (2021). The (only) other poll that matters? exit polls and election night forecasts in BBC general election results broadcasts, 1955-2017. *Political Studies*. 69(2), 434-454.
- [24] Zhang, M. (2014). A critical discourse analysis of political news reports. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. 4(11), 2273-2277. <http://www.ojs.academypublisher.com/index.php/tpls/article/view/tpls041122732277/10404>