The Self-Identifications Through Pronominal Choice in Turkish Political Discourse

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Abstract *Political discourse studies have analyzed the context and the way that personal pronouns and possessive pronouns are used by politicians and how they maintain their stance through their conversations in different contexts (Van Dijk, 1997, 2002). This study attempts to examine self-identifications that Turkish political party leaders develop through their employment of pronominal choice. The data come from the period before 2011 elections in Turkey. By comparing their first person singular and plural possessive pronoun use in different contexts, this paper tries to find out the factors that affect the distribution of their pronominal choice in Turkish political discourse. Within the critical discourse analysis approach, the results indicate that the location, topic, purpose and venue influence the pronominal choice of the politicians.*

1. Introduction

Political discourse is one form of communication which has distinctive characteristics. Dedaic (as cited in Reyes-Rodriguez, 2008, pp. 133) describes political speech as "relatively autonomous discourse produced orally by a politician in front of an audience, the purpose of which is merely persuasion rather than information or entertainment."

Political speech is a genre between a literary text and a casual conversation, and it is delivered orally although politicians may read aloud their speeches from a written text. Nevertheless, it is different from other spoken language in that it is not the same as face-to-face conversation, and the audience reaction does not directly affect the content of the political speeches (Reyes-Rodriguez, 2008).

Political speeches have been examined by linguists and discourse analysts within the critical discourse analysis approach, and they have been analyzed by sociologists and political science scholars worldwide in order to enable the society to become aware of the discoursal strategies of politicians and to help politicians to produce more effective political speeches to persuade people into voting for them on the electoral road (Schaffner, 1996; Pardo 2001; Reyes-Rodriguez, 2008; Protoctor & Wen Su, 2011).

Examining political discourse with scientific methods is of vital importance because votes that may seem to be reactions towards the political speeches determine how a country will be governed for a specific time. By using personal pronouns, politicians can express their positioning and with which group and ideology to self-identify and achieve their rhetorical purposes to persuade people into voting for them (van, Dijk, 1997).

2. Literature Review

The use of personal pronouns reflects the way we interpret our relationships with others. The meaning of personal pronouns depends on the context. A single sentence may not be enough to give a specific meaning to a personal pronoun as the meaning can be derived from the contextual knowledge above the syntactic level. Therefore, it is vital to clarify the topic and venue of the political speeches since both of them can have a substantial impact on personal pronoun choice. Previous studies find out that pronominal choice discloses politicians' self-identifications, which, in turn, play a great role in voters' decisions (Bull &Fetzer, 2006; Protoctor & Wen Su, 2011). Moreover, as Cramer (2010) claims that through the pronominal choice, speakers create, recreate and make visible specific identities in real time.

The distribution of personal pronouns can depend on various factors. Van Dijk (2002) argues that overall domain, overall societal action, interaction, venue and topic can affect the political speeches and the pronominal choice. In addition, he claims that venue plays a more crucial role than that of the topic. However, he also states that interlocutors, time and the specific aims of political speeches may also be influential.

Bull and Fetzer (2006) focus on political interviews in their research and suggest that personal pronouns are employed by politicians to "accept, deny or distance themselves from responsibility for politician action; to encourage solidarity; to designate and identify both supporters and enemies" (p.5). They find out that the personal and political ideologies of politicians can be determined by their pronominal choice. However, as they did not give any quantitative results regarding the frequency or percentage of analyzed pronouns and related self-identifications, it is a little bit hard to come to a certain conclusion concerning the self-identifications and factors behind them.

In a very recent study, Proctor and Su (2011) analyzed the personal pronoun "we" and the possessive pronoun "our" used by four American politicians, who are Sarah Palin, Joe Biden, Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama in political interviews and in a debate. They conclude that self-identifications are disclosed by politicians' pronominal choice, and the use of pronouns suggests the relation strength between politicians and their parties. Moreover, they argue that the external context which is venue and purpose has a more considerable influence than the topic and other factors.

When Turkish political discourse studies are reviewed, few studies are conducted in terms of linguistic and discoursal analysis of Turkish politicians' speeches. The persuasive strategies of Turkish politicians before the elections of 2002 are examined (Büyükkantarcıoğlu & Yarar, 2004, 2006). Very similarly, the content analysis and persuasive strategies of four Turkish political party leaders are explored (Çubukçu, İlerten, Kafasıbüyük & Eşme, 2008). They found out that among four Turkish political party leaders, Recep Tayyip Erdogan's speech mainly focused on unity and inclusiveness to a greater extent than other politicians by using words with positive connotations. Also, they pointed out that he most frequently used the personal pronoun "we" ("biz" in Turkish) in his speeches. To the knowledge of the author, there has not been any study regarding the self-identifications of Turkish political party leaders so far. Therefore, to fill this research gap, this study aims to address these two research questions by taking Proctor and Su's study (2011) as a model:
1) What are the self-identifications of Turkish political party leaders in different contexts through pronominal choice?
2) What factors affect the distribution of their possessive pronouns?

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The data consist of corpora compiled from two political party leaders' speeches at election sites and in an interview on a state channel, TRT. The political party leaders are Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who is the leader of Justice and Development Party and the prime minister of Turkey at that time, and Kemal Kilicdaroglu, who is the new leader of Republican People's Party. Their two political speeches[1] that they delivered in Ankara and Istanbul were selected as it was thought that since Istanbul and Ankara are the most populous and cosmopolitan cities of Turkey, the leaders' speech may reflect their general discourse and self-identifications before the parliamentary elections of 2011. Their talks were found on You Tube, downloaded, imported to NVivo 9 and transcribed in this software for the purpose of practicality. The interviews were taken from TV archive website[2], downloaded and again transcribed in NVivo 9. In transcriptions, any fillers or pauses are ruled out. Both of the interviews were broadcast on TRT, a state channel in Turkey. The same four journalists asked similar questions to both of the leaders, which can increase the comparability of two corpora. In Table 1, the size of the corpus is shown. Although there is a difference in terms of the size between corpora of two political parties, the total word count in each corpus is not significantly different.

	Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Kemal Kilicdaroglu
Ankara	4, 542 words	2, 184 words
Istanbul	5, 248 words	2, 833 words
Interview	4, 000 words	6, 740 words
TOTAL	13, 790 words	11, 757 words

Table 1. Size of the corpus

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[1]Recep Tayyip Erdogan's speech in Ankara can be accessed on this website: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-SKhBmLyAs . His speech in Istanbul can be accessed on this website: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H684U8yvFa8   Kemal Kilicdaroglu's speech in Ankara can be accessed on this website: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBvNIQewv4I
Kemal Kilicdaroglu's speech in Istanbul can be accessed on this website: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1-9aFWw65M
[2]Recep Tayyip Erdogan's interview on TV can be accessed on this website: http://tvarsivi.com/secim-ozel-konuk-recep-tayyip-erdogan-01-06-2011-izle-e_12967.html. Kemal Kilicdaroglu's interview on TV can be on this website: http://tvarsivi.com/secim-ozel-chp-baskani-kemal-kilicdaroglu-04-06-2011-izle-e_13299.html.

3.2. Data Analysis

In analyzing data, I first read all the transcriptions to familiarize myself with the context, and then I searched for possessive pronouns "my" (benim in Turkish) , "our" (bizim in Turkish) and suffixes ("-ım/-im, -ımız/-imiz). By using the deictic mapping techniques developed by Wortham (1996) as a framework, I tried to explore the use of possessive pronouns in self-identifications in this study within the critical discourse analysis approach. In Wortham's (1996) framework, the context provides evidence for the connection between pronouns and identity alignment. I did all the analyses in NVivo 9. According to the context, I decided whether possessive pronouns were used to reveal the politician's self-identifications or not and coded the categories in the software. After I coded the categories, I checked and read the data for the second time to ensure that all the self-identifications through the use of possessive pronouns were coded. Only with the help of the context, it is possible to understand pronominal choice in the discourse (Van Dijk, 2009). Furthermore, my analysis is grounded in Fairclough's assumptions in critical discourse analysis, arguing that ideologies can be revealed in texts, but they are open to different interpretations (1995).

4. Results of the Political Speeches at Election Sites

4.1. The Speeches of the Leader of Development and Justice Party at Election Sites
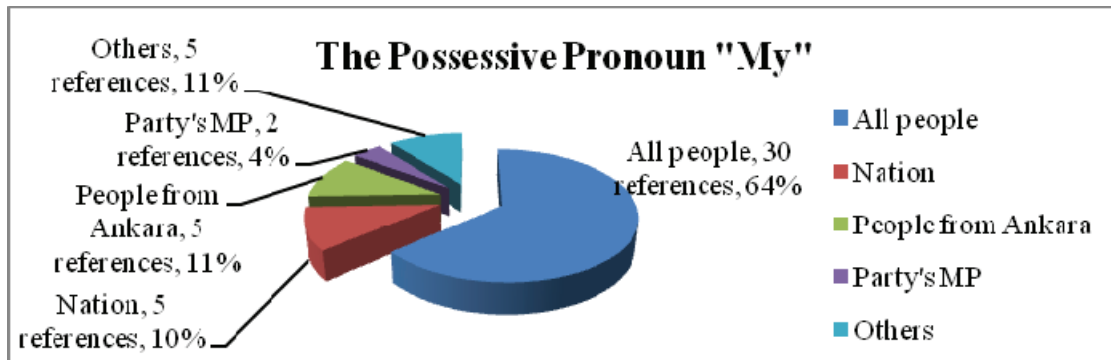
4.1.1. Ankara

Chart 1. Categories of the possessive pronoun "my" in the political speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the election site in Ankara

As it is seen in Chart 1, Recep Tayyip Erdogan used "my" (the word "benim or the suffix –"ım/im" in Turkish) to indicate his solidarity with mainly three groups: All people in Turkey 64%, people from Ankara 11% and the nation 10%. He rarely used "my" to identify himself with his party, party members or the members of parliament.
Example 1 shows how the possessive pronoun "my" is used to identify with all people:
"Sevgili Ankaralılar, **sevgili kardeşlerim** şunu unutmayın: Yeni CHP dedikleri sadece içi boş bir projedir."
*"Dear people from Ankara, dear **my siblings**, don't forget this: The so-called new CHP (Republican People's Party) is just a hollow project."(My translation)*
While he was identifying himself with all the people or people from Ankara, he strategically used the word "siblings" ("kardeşim") in Turkish to strengthen his solidarity with those people and emphasized his attachment to them. Moreover, he also used "dear" ("sevgili" in Turkish) as an affectionate or a friendly form of address to enhance solidarity.
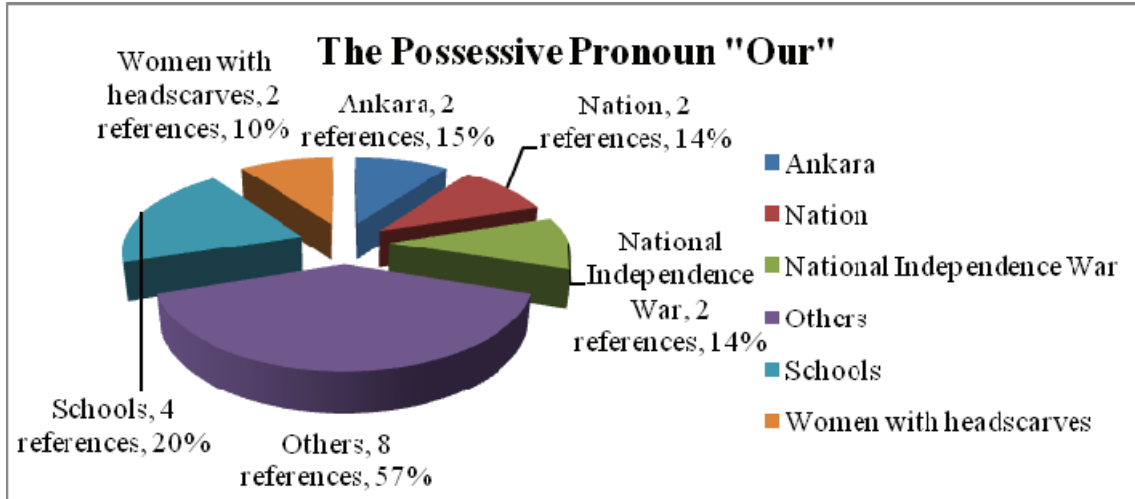
Chart 2. Categories of the possessive pronoun "our" in the political speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the election site in Ankara

As Chart 2 shows, Recep Tayyip Erdogan used "our" (the word "bizim" and/or the suffix -ımız/-imiz" 20 times to identify himself with groups/ideologies. I claim that he tended to reveal his ideological views through the use of possessive pronouns in these data as in the examples below.

Example 2 shows his identification with National Independence War:

"Ankara'yı **Kurtuluş Savaşımızın** karargahı haline getiren, buradan Kurtuluş Savaşını sevk ve idare eden Gazi Mustafa Kemal'i, onunla birlikte **Kurtuluş Savaşımızın** tüm şehit ve gazilerini de rahmet ve minnetle anıyorum."
"I gratefully and commemorate veteran Mustafa Kemal, who was at the forefront of the National Independence War and rendered Ankara the military quarter of **our National Independence war**, and all the veterans and casualties of **our National Independence War**." (My translation)
In example 2, I sense that he may evoke a little of bit nationalism though these subtle words may not carry an evident message.
    Another group that he identified himself with is "women with headscarves" as the example 3 shows:
"**Başörtülü kızlarımız** bu profesörü çok iyi tanır. Yıllarca başörtülü yavrularımıza zulmeden, onları ikna odalarını kurmak suretiyle sistematik, psikolojik işkence uygulayan bir profesör."
"Our girls with headscarves know this professor very well. She is a professor who have oppressed our girls with headscarves for years and tormented them systematically and psychologically in the rooms that she formed in order to persuade them." (My translation)
    Similar to example 2, it can be said that the example 3 also reflects his ideology and positioning with "women with headscarves" by the use of the possessive pronoun "our". He strategically identified himself with "our girls with headscarves" to promote his solidarity with this social group.
    In the bundled category of others, he focused on "students, country, Akyurt town, political campaign, power, cities and municipality" once, which may be attributed to the fact that he may have wanted to indicate his interest with a wide range of things, people and groups.
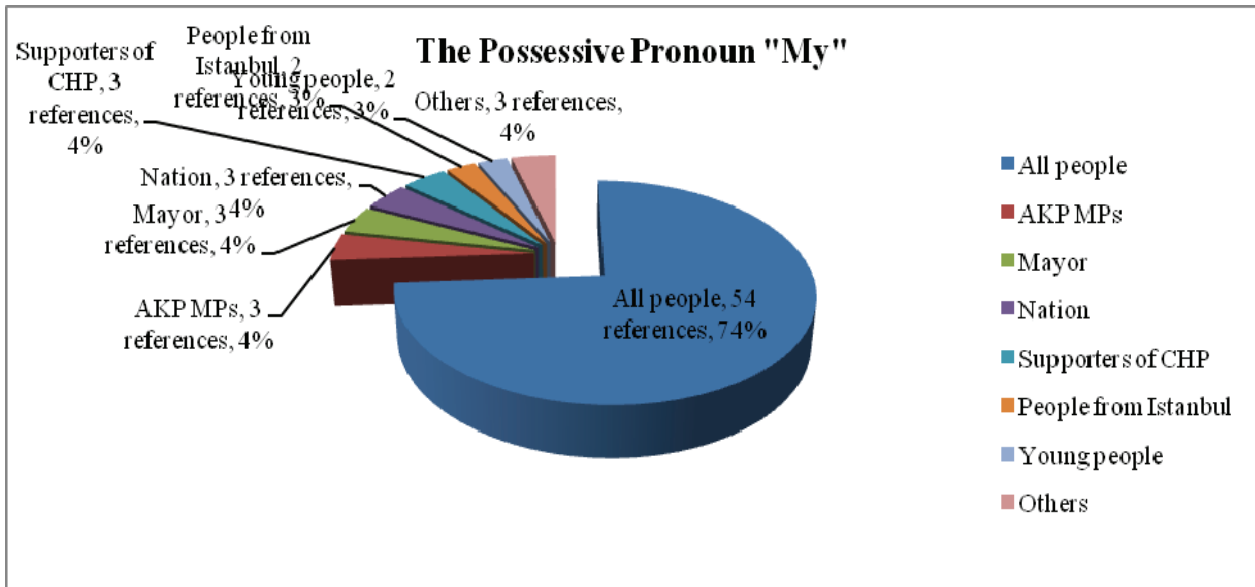
4.1.2. Istanbul

Chart 3. Categories of the possessive pronoun "my" in the political speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the election site in Istanbul

As Chart 3 illustrates, Erdogan had a more inclusive approach in terms of his self-identification since he most frequently associated himself with all people in Istanbul in comparison with his self-identifications in Ankara, which may stem from the fact that Istanbul is the most populous and cosmopolitan city which inhabits people from a wide variety of social positions. Therefore, by adhering to all people, he may have wanted to gain more supporters. Similar to his self-identifications with all people, he again used the word "my siblings" ("kardeşim" in Turkish) and "dear" ("sevgili" in Turkish) to foster solidarity, which is consistent in his speeches.

    Interestingly, he self-identified with supporters of Republican People's Party (CHP) three times, which may be attributed to the fact that he even aimed to win their hearts as the example 4 indicates:

"Bunu bütün **CHP'li kardeşlerime** anlatın, **CHP'ye gönül veren kardeşlerime** anlatın."

*"Tell this to all **my siblings of who support CHP** and set their hearts on CHP."* (My translation)

Another difference in political speech of Erdogan in Istanbul is that he made far more reference to people and groups than those of Ankara.
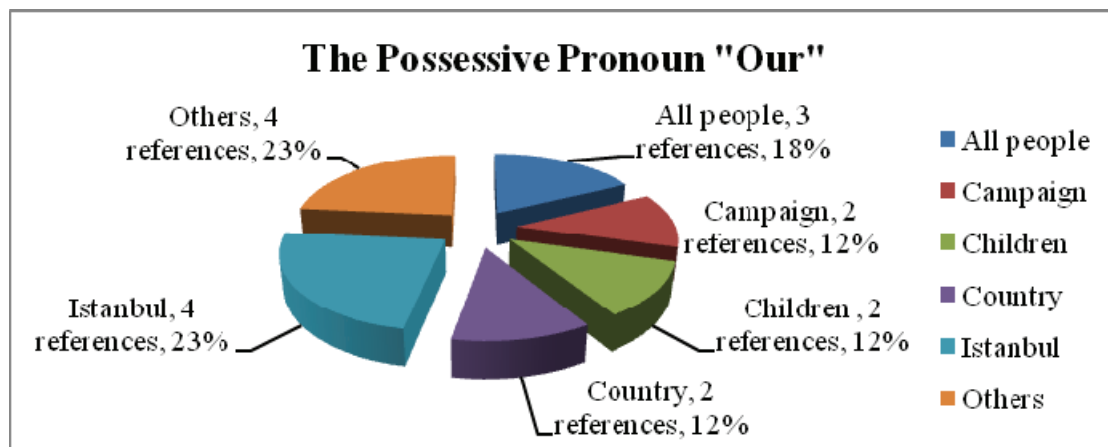

Chart 4. Categories of the possessive pronoun "our" in the political speeches of Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the election site in Istanbul

As Chart 4 illustrates, there is a more equal distribution of self-identifications of Erdogan through the employment of possessive pronoun "our". As he made his political speech in Istanbul, he predominantly identified himself with Istanbul as in the example 5:

"**İstanbul'umuzda** biz mazot, benzin, gazyağı bulabiliyor muyduk?"

*"Were we able to find diesel oil, gas and gas oil **in our Istanbul**?"* (My translation)

4.2. The Speeches of the Leader of the Republican People's Party at Election Sites

4.2.1. Ankara

Unlike Erdogan, Kilicdaroglu employed very few self-identifications through the use of pronominal choice. As Chart 5 demonstrates, he referred to certain groups and people just 13 times, which is far less than Erdogan's self-identifications.
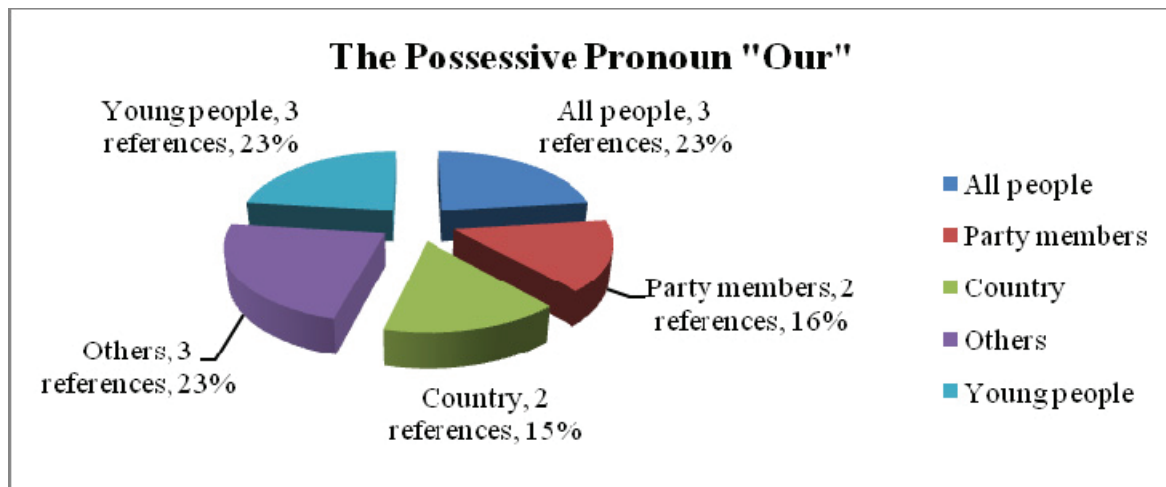

Chart 5. Categories of the possessive pronoun "our" in the political speeches of Kemal Kilicdaroglu at the election site in Ankara

Different from Erdogan, Kilicdaroglu self-identified with young people three times, which may stem from the fact that his main target audience was young people during 2011 elections.

Example 6 demonstrates his identification with young people:

"**Bizim gençlerimizi** cumhuriyetin, Mustafa Kemal'in gençleri olarak yetiştireceğiz."

*"We will bring up **our young people** as Mustafa Kemal's and republics' young people."* (My translation)

Kilicdaroglu did not create any self-identifications specifically with Ankara or people from Ankara although he delivered his speech in Ankara, which is different from Erdogan who self-identified with people and cities where he gave his speeches strategically.

　　Another important point is that he just employed "my" once to self-identify only with women as the example 7 shows:

"**Kadın kardeşlerime** sesleniyorum."

*"I am addressing **my sisters**."* (My translation)

While Erdogan mainly created his self-identifications with the pronoun "my", Kilicdaroglu used it only once. From this finding, it may be inferred that Erdogan regards himself as more independent rather than a member of a political party unlike Kilicdaroglu since Kilicdaroglu referred to his Party, Republican People's Party, 27 times while Erdogan made very few references to his own party in his own political speeches at election sites. Another reason behind this finding might be that Kilicdaroglu became a new leader of his party while Erdogan was the leader of his party for many years.

4.2.2. Istanbul

Kilicdaroglu is consistent in his self-identifications as he strongly associated himself with his party members, all people and young people, which has a similar trend with his identifications in Ankara.

As Chart 6 shows, the prominent difference is that he most frequently identified himself with his party members, which may be attributed to the fact that he wished to create a good impression about his party and party members in order to gain voters' recognition as in the example 8:

"Meraklanmayın bir değil iki değil üç bakanlar kurulu çıkaracak **kadrolarımız** var."

*"Don't worry. We can form three cabinets, let alone two cabinets out of **our party members**."* (My translation)
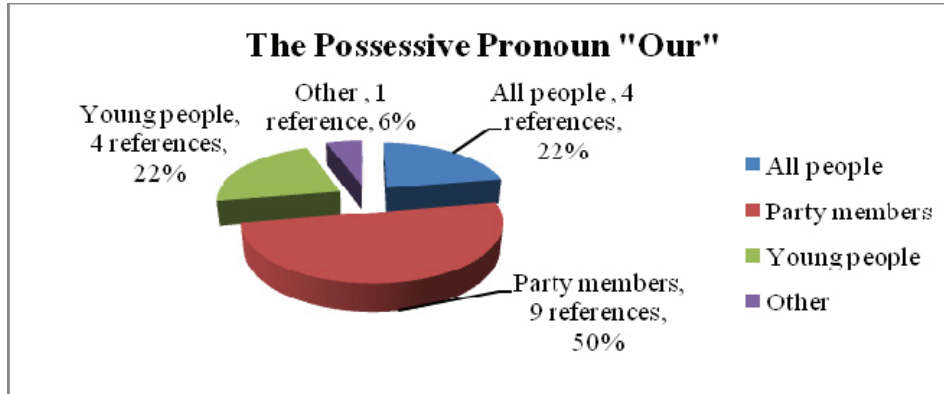

Chart 6. Categories of the possessive pronoun "our" in the political speeches of Kemal Kilicdaroglu at the election site in Istanbul

Similar to his speech in Ankara, he did not reveal any identifications through the use of personal pronoun "my" in Istanbul. He just referred to "all people" twice and party members once by employing the personal pronoun "my". Although, he created more self-identifications in Ankara in comparison with Istanbul, he did not identify with different groups or people as frequently or intently as Erdogan did during his speeches at election sites.

5. Results of the Interviews on TV

The interviews on TV can be regarded as a different genre from the election speeches of political party leaders as the interviews are based on turn-taking and the questions of interviewers, which suggests that TV interviews are conducted in a more formal setting that the speeches in election sites. Also, there is no direct audience in the studio of the interviews, which can affect the pronominal choice and self-identifications of the politicians.

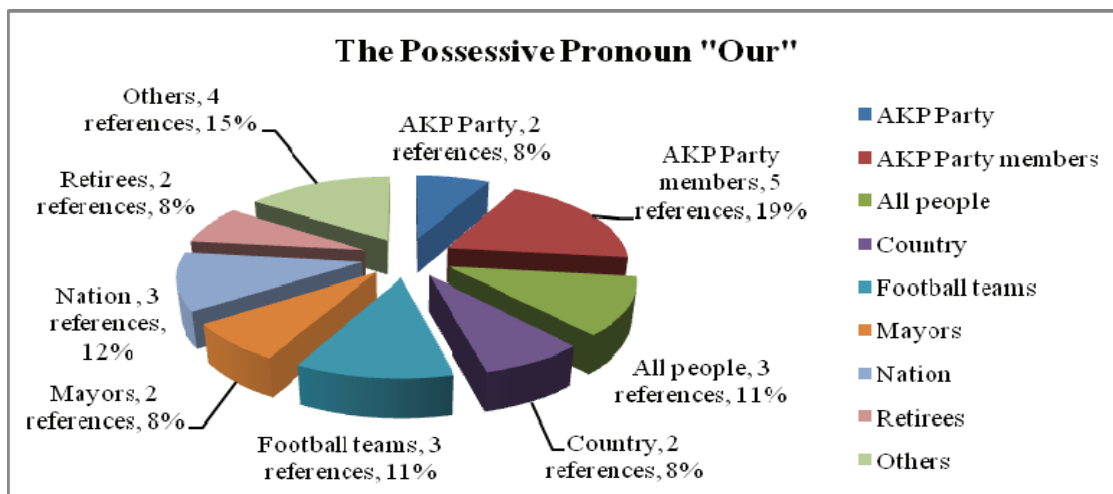*5.1. Erdogan's self-identifications in the interview on TV*

Chart 7. Categories of the possessive pronoun "our" in the political speech of Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the interview on the state channel, TRT

As it is shown in Chart 7, Erdogan most frequently self-identified with his party's members. Also, he employed the personal pronoun "our" to self-identify with his party twice. This finding differed from the findings that I generated from his speeches at election sites, wherein he self-identified most frequently with all people.

Example 6 highlights Erdogan's adherence to his party's members:

"Zaten Antalya'da biliyorsunuz **liste başındaki arkadaşımız** Avrupa Komisyonu parlamenter üyesi başkanı."

*"You know that **our friend**, who is on the top of the list, is the president of the delegation of European Commission."* (My translation)

    It appears that there is a substantial shift in Erdogan's self-identifications between his speeches at the election sites and his interview on TV because the interviews focused mainly on politics and his future projects. Also, it seems to me that venue and purpose may have influenced his pronominal choice, which, in turn, affects his self-identifications. Moreover, he chose to use the pronoun "our" rather than "my" in his pronominal choice since he made just 11 references to my whereas he used "our" 26 times to self-identify with groups and people. Overall, unlike his speeches at election sites, his self-identifications were a lot fewer, which may stem from the specific questions of the interview and turn-taking nature of it.

5.2. Kilicdaroglu's self-identifications in the interview on TV

In the interview on TV, Kilicdaroglu continued to identify himself with his party members and party as Chart 8 illustrates, which may indicate that his relation with his party and party members was very strong.

Example 7 shows his identification with his party members:

"Bizim 81 ilde de **milletvekili adaylarımız** var."

*"We have **our MP candidates** in 81 provinces."* (My translation)
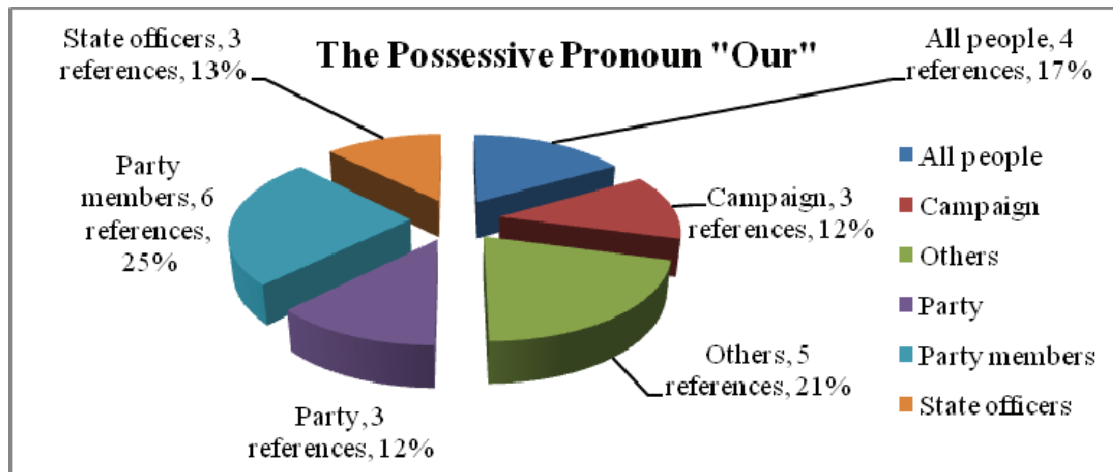

Chart 8. Categories of the possessive pronoun "our" in the political speech of Kemal Kilicdaroglu in the interview on the state channel, TRT

He also created self-identifications with all people four times in the interview on TV as in the example 8:

"Bayrak 73 milyon **yurttaşımızın** ortak paydasıdır."

"The flag is **our 73 million citizens'** common possession."

Parallel to his speeches at election sites, he referred to his self-identifications by using the pronoun "my", which may suggest that he regards himself as a member of Republican People's Party more than an independent politician. On the other hand, Erdogan created his self-identifications with the pronoun "my", which may be a result of the fact that he was already a Prime Minister of Turkey for nine years at that time.

Another significant difference between two political party leaders' discourse is that Kilicdaroglu seemed less interested in appealing to different social groups than Erdogan, which can be a weakness in Kilicdaroglu's speech to capture the attention of various people and groups. Additionally, contrary to Erdogan, Kilicdaroglu avoided inciting nationalism in his speech as he did not state nation (millet) /our nation/ my nation.

Although Kilicdaroglu did not identify himself with different social groups or people during his speeches, he was more consistent in his identification pattern than Erdogan. However, Erdogan's speeches were highly likely to be more

attractive to voters because of the abundance of his self-identifications in general and his-self-identifications with various people and social groups including young people, children, all people, women with headscarves, people from Ankara and Istanbul, which may be one of the causes of his third-term landslide victory in parliamentary elections in 2011.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, I tried to reveal the differences in pronominal distribution for two political party leaders on the electoral road in different settings. Those differences give an account for the argument that the venue has a great role in influencing the pronominal choice. For instance, both of the leaders mostly self-identified with their political party members in the interview on the state channel. The topics that they talked about and the interviewers' questions were similar to each other. Therefore, parallel to the findings of Proctor and Su (2011), this study can also confirm that venue is likely to be more effective in affecting political discourse than the topic. Also, it is in line with Van Dijk's (2002) argument that topic is less important than the external context in political discourse. However, the effect of topic cannot be denied. As Kilicdaroglu as a leader of the Main Opposition Party predominantly criticized Erdogan and his party in his speeches, the topic of his speeches was based on criticism, which might be one of the reasons why his associations with people and groups were far fewer than Erdogan's self-identifications.

The interview setting is more formal in comparison with the settings of election sites. This interview setting can be regarded as an informative interview. According to Bayyurt (1997), informative interview is nearer to the formal end of continuum on a cline of formality, and there is a predictable turn allocation, no live studio audience and less personal involvement in informative interviews, which might be one of the reasons that the two political party leaders did not create their self-identifications with the pronoun "my" and made less reference to all people in their speeches on TV than their speech at election sites.

Based on my analysis, I found out that the same politicians while speaking at election sites and in the interview on TV employed different possessive pronouns and created different self-identifications, especially in Erdogan's case. Therefore, this study indicates that how possessive pronouns can be used strategically different based on the purpose of the politician. Data in this study shows that the place, city, plays an important role in Erdogan's identifications as he strategically identified himself with Ankara and people from Ankara while he was giving his speech in Ankara. Likewise, he associated himself with Istanbul and people from Istanbul while he was delivering his speech in Istanbul. On the other hand, the place, city, has no effect in Kilicdaroglu's self-identifications. The results also show that Erdogan had inclusive perception of all people and identified himself with all Turkish people many times, which is in line with the findings of Çubukçu et. al.'s study (2008), which maybe a reason for directing the attention of audience through the use of direct addressing forms and his-self-identifications with them.

All in all, through their strategic pronominal choice, both of the leaders create and recreate their some part of their identity, which is a consistent finding with Cramer's study (2010). Both of the politicians' self-identifications through the use of personal pronouns are dynamic, which evoke different identities at different times. These data indicate the dynamicity of identity construction in real time.

7. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The generalizations that I made in this study are limited to the corpus of this study. The corpus of this study is very small to reflect the general discoursal features of two political party leaders' speeches if we take the fact that they delivered their speeches in about 80 provinces of Turkey and attended many interviews on TV before the elections into consideration. Although there has been an attempt to select their speeches from the biggest and the most cosmopolitan cities of Turkey, different results may have been found out if I had included their speeches that they gave in more diverse provinces of Turkey and other TV interviews. Secondly, I myself determined the politicians' self-identifications according to the context of the text. However, it would be better if the inter-rater reliability with another researcher had been established in determining the self-identifications.

Further research with larger corpora can shed more light on general discoursal features, the degree of their consistency in politicians' self-identifications and the factors affecting them. Also, in the future, if there are available data regarding political debates involving Turkish political leaders live on TV in the future, the same research may be conducted to compare the results in a debate, which is a different genre from an interview. Similarly, future research concerning political interviews that are in a controlled and uncontrolled environment can be useful to compare two conditions in terms of self-identifications. Additionally, this research might be conducted by adding data from other

political party leaders from Turkey to validate the factors affecting self-identifications. Also, cross-cultural studies can give deeper insights into the self-identification tactics of politicians and the factors behind them.

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