

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Mental Worlds in Kahramanmaraş Earthquake Memorates: An Analysis within the Framework of Text World Theory

Kahramanmaraş Depremi Memoratlarında Zihinsel Dünyalar: Metin Dünyası Kuramı Çerçevesinde bir Çözümleme

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Abstract

This article explores how survivors of a major earthquake cognitively and emotionally structure their experience when recounting it in narrative form. Drawing on Text World Theory, the study analyzes fifty-five first-person memorates drawn from the book “06 Şubat 2023 Kahramanmaraş Depremi Memoratları.” The aim is threefold: to identify the types of mental worlds constructed in these narratives, to examine how narrators shift between these worlds while recounting the earthquake experience, and to evaluate the usefulness of Text World Theory for the analysis of trauma narratives in disaster contexts. The memorates were qualitatively analyzed through close textual reading, focusing on linguistic cues of perception, cognition, modality, negation, and evaluation. The analysis identifies seven recurrent sub-world types: Perceptual Worlds, Internal Thought Worlds, Modal and Hypothetical Worlds, Negated Worlds, Counterfactual Worlds, Dream-like Worlds, and Symbolic or Spiritual Worlds. The analysis also shows that narrators frequently move between these worlds, producing layered narratives in which perception, interpretation, and imagined possibilities interact. The findings suggest that the earthquake is narrated not merely as a physical event but as a complex experience shaped by fear, responsibility, spirituality, and shared memory. This is particularly evident in references to family members and the possibility of harm to loved ones, which highlight the role of cultural values in shaping survivors’ mental worlds. In this respect, Text World Theory provides a useful theoretical framework for explaining how attention, emotion, and meaning are constructed in disaster and trauma narratives.

Keywords: Text World Theory, mental worlds, earthquake memorates, trauma narratives

Öz

Bu makale, büyük bir depremin ardından hayatta kalan bireylerin yaşantılarını anlatı biçiminde aktarırken bu deneyimi bilişsel ve duygusal olarak nasıl yapılandırdıklarını incelemektedir. Çalışma, Metin Dünyası Kuramından hareketle, “6 Şubat 2023 Kahramanmaraş Depremi Memoratları” adlı eserde yer alan elli beş birinci tekil anlatımlı memoratı çözümlemektedir. Çalışmanın üç temel amacı vardır: (i) bu anlatılarda kurulan zihinsel dünya türlerini belirlemek, (ii) anlatıcıların deprem deneyimini aktarırken bu dünyalar arasında nasıl geçiş yaptıklarını incelemek ve (iii) afet bağlamındaki travma anlatılarını çözümlemede Metin Dünyası Kuramının açıklayıcılığını değerlendirmek. Memoratlar, algı, biliş, kiplik, olumsuzlama ve değerlendirme gibi dilsel ipuçlarına odaklanan yakın okuma yöntemiyle nitel olarak çözümlenmiştir. Çözümleme sonucunda yedi yineleyen alt dünya türü saptanmıştır: Algısal Dünyalar, İçsel Düşünce Dünyaları, Kiplik ve Varsayımsal Dünyalar, Olumsuzlanan Dünyalar, Karşıtalgusal Dünyalar, Düş-benzeri Dünyalar ve Sembolik ya da Manevî Dünyalar. Çözümleme ayrıca anlatıcıların bu dünyalar arasında sık sık geçiş yaptığını ve algı, yorum ve hayal edilen

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olasılıkların iç içe geçtiği çok katmanlı anlatılar kurduklarını göstermektedir. Bulgular; depremin anlatılarda yalnızca fiziksel bir olay olarak değil, korku, sorumluluk, maneviyat ve ortak bellek tarafından şekillenen karmaşık bir deneyim olarak kurgulandığını göstermektedir. Bu durum özellikle aile bireylerine yapılan göndermelerde ve sevdiilere gelebilecek olası zarar düşüncelerinde açıkça görülmekte; bu da kültürel değerlerin depremzedelerin zihinsel dünyalarının oluşumundaki rolünü ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda Metin Dünyası Kuramı, afet ve travma anlatılarında dikkat, duygu ve anlamın nasıl yapılandırıldığını açıklamak için işlevsel bir kuramsal çerçeve sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Metin Dünyası Kuramı, zihinsel dünyalar, deprem memoratları, travma anlatıları

1. INTRODUCTION

Earthquakes do not only damage buildings and streets; they may also disrupt how people understand their lives. In the first moments of the shaking, survivors often describe their experiences in ways that reflect both perception and emotion. They recount what they saw, what they felt in their bodies, and what passed through their minds almost at the same time. These accounts show how meaning begins to form under pressure. As Bruner (1990) argues, narrative helps people restore a sense of order when their world is disturbed. In this respect, crisis narratives make visible the rapid meaning-making processes that usually remain in the background of everyday life (Herman, 2003).

Research in psychology and narrative studies suggests that traumatic events are often recalled through fragmented perceptions, intense emotional cues and rapid cognitive evaluation processes that emerge during moments of danger (van der Kolk & van der Hart, 1995; Caruth, 1996). First-person accounts of earthquakes, therefore, offer a valuable window into the cognitive and emotional processes that shape meaning under extreme conditions. This study approaches earthquake memorates as cognitively rich narratives in which survivors reconstruct the unfolding of a life-threatening event through language. Rather than treating these accounts merely as recollections of what happened, this study examines how narrators organize perception, emotion, and interpretation into a sequence of mental representations. Accordingly, it explores how moments of crisis give rise to multiple overlapping mental worlds that reflect both immediate experience and retrospective interpretation.

Although research on disasters has expanded across sociology, psychology and anthropology, many studies focus primarily on collective trauma, social response and long-term recovery (Alexander, 2012; Eyerman, 2019). These works demonstrate how communities remember disasters, how institutions respond, and how identities are reshaped. Recent research has also examined how disaster events trigger intense public discourse in digital environments and social media contexts (Kökpınar Kaya & Çınar, 2026). In this regard, less attention has been given to how survivors structure their experiences through language at the level of individual narrative. The linguistic and cognitive patterns in earthquake memorates, such as sudden inner thoughts, imagined dangers, fragmented perceptions or reflections on what might have happened, remain largely unstudied. Studies on trauma narratives indicate that individuals frequently reconstruct extreme events through narrative forms that combine perception, memory and interpretation, allowing them to organize chaotic experiences into meaningful sequences (Whitehead, 2004; Talmy, 2010). This creates a clear research gap: we know relatively little about the cognitive organization of first-person earthquake memories, even though the texts themselves clearly show that survivors are actively trying to interpret the experience as they recount it. Although disaster narratives have been widely studied in the social sciences, very few studies have examined how survivors cognitively structure such experiences through language. In particular, little attention has been paid to how narratives of natural disasters are organised through shifting mental representations of perception, fear, imagined danger and retrospective reflection. This study addresses this gap by analysing earthquake memorates through the framework of Text World Theory (TWT), focusing on how narrators move between different cognitive worlds while reconstructing the event.

A cognitively oriented analysis is needed because memorates are not simple reports of what happened. They reveal how individuals draw on perception, memory, imagination and emotion to make sense of danger while it unfolds. Cognitive stylistics starts from the assumption that linguistic choices offer a trace of the mental processes that guide interpretation (Semino & Culpeper, 2003; Stockwell, 2002). Work in cognitive linguistics and narrative theory also emphasises that language provides insight into how people organise attention and construct meaning during moments of uncertainty and threat (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002; Semino, 2014). In earthquake narratives, people must read their

surroundings, judge the seriousness of the threat, decide how to move and at the same time manage their own fear and the fear of others. The language they later use to describe these moments can therefore show how they organized attention and meaning when the normal stability of the environment could no longer be taken for granted. From this perspective, earthquake memorates can be seen as linguistic traces of rapid cognitive processing under conditions of threat. Narrators do not simply report events; they reconstruct a sequence of perceptions, internal thoughts, imagined consequences and later reflections that together reveal how the situation was interpreted at the time. In this study, I therefore analyze these narratives through a cognitive framework in order to examine how meaning is actively constructed during moments when the ordinary interpretive stability of everyday life collapses.

The significance of studying earthquake memorates from a cognitive perspective also lies in the way these narratives circulate beyond the individual. In many contexts, including Türkiye, earthquakes form part of a shared social history. Survivors often draw on memories of earlier earthquakes, common beliefs about risk or culturally shaped expectations about family responsibility and divine protection when they tell their stories. This suggests that individual cognition and cultural experience are closely intertwined. Understanding how mental processes and cultural frames work together in narrative can help explain why certain images, fears or interpretive patterns recur across different memorates, even when the storytellers come from different backgrounds or regions.

1.1. Text World Theory as a Cognitive Framework

TWT offers a precise way to examine how such narratives are mentally structured. Developed within cognitive linguistics and stylistics, it explains how speakers, writers and readers build mental representations, or “text worlds”, as they engage with discourse (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007). These worlds typically include information about time, place and participants, but they can also contain inner thoughts, imagined futures, hypothetical scenarios and reflections on events that did not occur. Within this framework, discourse is understood as a dynamic interaction between the communicative situation and the mental representations constructed during interpretation. Participants interpret discourse within a broader discourse-world that includes their knowledge, perceptions and the situational context of communication. From this cognitive background, readers construct one or more text-worlds representing the situations described in the narrative (Gibbons, 2016). Because earthquake narratives often move quickly between immediate perception and internal reasoning, TWT provides a useful framework for tracing how survivors process fear, uncertainty and the possibility of loss. While TWT has been widely applied to literary narratives, drama and other forms of fictional discourse, its application to experiential narratives of natural disasters remains limited. Earthquake memorates provide a particularly revealing context for such analysis because they often contain rapid shifts between immediate perception, imagined danger, hypothetical outcomes and retrospective evaluation. Examining these narratives through TWT therefore extends the framework beyond fictional discourse and demonstrates its potential for analysing real-life accounts of extreme events.

Research on cognitive processing under conditions of threat suggests that individuals rapidly construct mental scenarios in order to evaluate danger and anticipate possible actions (Kahneman, 2011; Klein, 1998). Such rapid interpretive processes are often reflected in narrative language, where speakers reconstruct the sequence of perceptions, emotions and decisions experienced during the event. Work in cognitive stylistics has shown that narratives involving crisis or instability frequently combine real, imagined and emotional scenes in a single flow of discourse (Semino & Culpeper, 2003). Readers and narrators move between what is actually happening, what they fear might happen and what they wish would happen. TWT allows these shifts to be described in a systematic way by distinguishing different kinds of worlds and sub worlds. Narratives frequently involve multiple text-worlds that reflect different temporal perspectives, imagined possibilities or alternative interpretations of events. Such shifts may arise through flashbacks, hypothetical constructions, modal expressions or imagined scenarios that invite readers to conceptualize alternative versions of events (McIntyre, 2008). This is particularly relevant for earthquake memorates, which often contain brief inner sentences such as “we will not survive”, visualizations of collapse, symbolic attention to doors, furniture or children, and later reflections on how the outcome might have been different. Studies of narrative and dramatic discourse suggest that these kinds of imagined or hypothetical representations play an important role in meaning-making, as individuals mentally simulate possible outcomes while interpreting events (Cruikshank &

Lahey, 2010). Such features are not accidental; they reflect the mental strategies survivors used to make sense of the event. Narrative scholars have similarly argued that storytelling plays a central role in helping individuals organise disruptive experiences and transform them into coherent accounts that can be communicated to others (McAdams, 2001; Riessman, 2008).

At the same time, text worlds do not develop in isolation from culture. As Wertsch (2002) argues, individual remembering is always shaped by socially mediated narratives and shared interpretive frames. In the case of earthquakes, these frames can include national memories of past disasters, public discourses on preparedness, and moral expectations regarding family and community. TWT can be combined with this insight by treating the mental worlds identified in memorates as sites where personal perception and collective memory meet. Recent applications of the framework have also emphasized that meaning construction often involves multiple semiotic cues and contextual signals that contribute to how individuals imagine narrative worlds and evaluate unfolding events (Gibbons, 2012, 2014). The present study adopts this perspective, but the main analytical focus remains on how text worlds are constructed and how they function within the narratives.

Against this background, applying TWT to earthquake memorates is both timely and necessary. It makes it possible to move beyond thematic description toward a closer account of how fear, perception and imagination are organized at the moment of crisis, and how this organization is later preserved in narrative form. By identifying the different mental worlds that emerge within these narratives, the analysis can reveal how survivors shift between perception, evaluation, imagination and retrospective reflection while reconstructing their experiences of the earthquake. This study makes three main contributions. First, it applies TWT to earthquake memorates, extending a framework that has largely been used in the analysis of fictional discourse to narratives of real-life disaster experience. Second, it demonstrates that earthquake memorates are structured through rapid shifts between multiple mental worlds, including perceptual worlds, imagined threat scenarios, hypothetical outcomes and counterfactual reflections. Finally, the study shows how these shifting worlds reflect the cognitive processes through which survivors interpret and make sense of a sudden and destabilizing event.

1.2. Aim of the Study

This study applies TWT to first-person memorates written by survivors of a major earthquake in Türkiye. It aims to identify the types of mental worlds constructed in these narratives, to examine how survivors move between these worlds while recounting the event, and to explain how such world-building contributes to meaning-making during and after the earthquake. Accordingly, the study extends TWT beyond its more common application to fictional and literary discourse and demonstrates its relevance for the analysis of trauma narratives rooted in lived disaster experience.

Rather than treating earthquake memorates as simple retrospective reports, the study approaches them as cognitively layered narratives in which perception, emotion, internal reflection, imagined danger and retrospective evaluation often emerge in rapid succession. Particular attention is therefore given not only to individual world types but also to the dynamic shifts between them and to moments in which a perceptual world appears to coexist with internally projected or imagined worlds. This perspective makes it possible to examine how survivors narratively reconstruct a destabilizing event through multiple interacting mental representations.

Accordingly, the analysis addresses the following questions:

1. What types of mental worlds are constructed in first-person earthquake memorates?
2. How do narrators shift between different mental worlds while recounting the earthquake experience, and how do these worlds interact within the narrative?
3. How do these mental worlds and their interaction shape survivors' meaning-making during and after the event?

2. METHOD

2.1. Dataset and Data Collection

The data for this study come from *6 Şubat 2023 Kahramanmaraş Depremi Memoratları [Memorates of the February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquake]* compiled by Ayşenur Özdal in 2025. The volume brings together fifty-five first-person memorates collected from survivors of the 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, one of the most destructive disasters in recent Turkish history. The book includes accounts from individuals of different ages, educational backgrounds and locations within the affected region. The dataset also reflects a broad geographical distribution across the earthquake-affected region. The narrators whose memorates appear in the compiled volume experienced the earthquake in different provinces and districts, including Hatay (Altınözü, Antakya, İskenderun, and Kırıkhan), Gaziantep (Nurdağı, İslahiye, and Şehitkamil), Kahramanmaraş (including Göksun), Adıyaman (including the city centre and Kahta), Diyarbakır, Malatya, and Şanlıurfa (including Harran). This distribution reflects the variety of local contexts in which the earthquake was experienced and later narrated. Because the memorates were recorded shortly after the event, they preserve linguistic traces of immediate perception, emotional intensity and fragmented cognition that are characteristic of crisis narratives.

The memorates are presented as short prose narratives, each accompanied by basic demographic information about the narrator such as age, gender and place of residence at the time of the earthquake. They typically focus on the moment of the shaking, the narrator's internal reactions and their interactions with family members or neighbours. This structure makes the dataset particularly well suited to a TWT analysis because the narratives frequently move between immediate sensory experience, inner thought, imagined consequences and retrospective evaluation.

The printed source was digitized manually for the purposes of close linguistic analysis. Each memorate was transcribed in full, with no alterations to wording, punctuation or sentence structure. The transcriptions were then anonymized, with narrators referenced only by memorate number (e.g. "Memorate 12"). This approach preserves the authenticity of the narratives while allowing the dataset to be handled systematically during analysis.

Because the memorates were selected and edited by the compiler (Özdal, 2025), they reflect both individual experiences and broader cultural patterns shaping how disaster memory is expressed in contemporary Türkiye. This dual nature of the dataset aligns with Wertsch's (2002) argument that personal recollections often draw on culturally shared narrative resources even when presented as individual memory.

2.2. Analytical Framework

This study adopts TWT (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007) as the analytical framework for examining how earthquake survivors cognitively construct and verbalise their experiences. TWT explains how discourse participants build mental representations, or *text-worlds*, while processing language. These worlds are constructed through linguistic cues that evoke perceptions, internal thoughts, imagined possibilities and evaluations of events (Gavins, 2007; Gibbons, 2016). The framework is particularly useful for analysing crisis narratives, where speakers frequently move between immediate perception and internal reasoning while recounting threatening situations.

TWT does not assume a fixed or exhaustive set of world types. Rather, the framework allows for the identification of different kinds of sub-worlds depending on the characteristics of the discourse being analyzed (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007). As Werth suggests, discourse participants may construct a range of mental representations that extend beyond the basic text-world, including imagined scenarios, evaluations and interpretive projections. For this reason, later studies have adapted the framework to different genres and communicative contexts, sometimes introducing additional analytical labels to capture recurring interpretive patterns within specific datasets (Cruickshank & Lahey, 2010; Gibbons, 2016). Following this approach, the present study uses the core categories of TWT while also identifying additional interpretive world types that emerge from the earthquake memorates themselves.

In analyzing the memorates, the study focuses on identifying both the types of mental worlds constructed and the shifts between them. The analysis distinguishes several world types, including the text world, which represents the narrator's immediate experience of the earthquake; internal thought worlds, where

fears and reflections emerge; modal and hypothetical worlds, which project possible outcomes; negated worlds, which refer to events that did not occur; and counterfactual worlds, which imagine alternative scenarios (Gavins, 2007). In addition, some narratives include dream-like or quasi-dream worlds that reflect blurred perception or disorientation during moments of shock.

In the analysis, the researcher pays particular attention to moments in which multiple worlds appear to operate simultaneously. In many memorates, narrators continue to describe the immediate physical situation while at the same time projecting imagined danger, such as collapse, injury, or loss. This layered structure suggests that earthquake memorates are organised through interacting mental worlds rather than a single linear narrative frame. Such patterns reflect how individuals interpret danger in real time and later reconstruct the experience through narrative (Semino & Culpeper, 2003). The analysis also considers culturally shaped interpretations that emerge in the narratives. Some memorates attribute symbolic or spiritual meaning to particular objects, places or signs encountered during the earthquake. In the present study, these instances are treated as symbolic object worlds, an analytical category used to capture moments in which ordinary objects acquire heightened interpretive significance within the narrator's meaning-making process.

Overall, TWT provides a systematic way to trace how the memorates move between perception, internal cognition and imagined possibilities. By identifying these shifts and interactions between mental worlds, the framework makes it possible to examine how survivors cognitively organize and interpret a sudden and destabilizing event.

2.3. Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis focuses on qualitative interpretation, as the aim is to understand how mental worlds function within individual narratives rather than to measure their distribution. The analysis proceeded in several stages in order to ensure a systematic application of TWT to the memorates.

In the first stage, I read the memorates repeatedly to gain familiarity with their narrative structure, emotional tone and overall thematic patterns. During this stage, I took preliminary notes on passages that appeared to involve shifts in perception, internal reflection, imagined scenarios or retrospective evaluation. This initial reading helped identify moments in which narrators appeared to shift between different cognitive perspectives.

In the second stage, I examined each memorate line by line to identify linguistic cues signalling the construction of mental worlds, by paying particular attention to verbs of perception and cognition, expressions of emotion, modal verbs, negation and conditional structures, which frequently indicate transitions between different text-world configurations (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007). In this stage, I focused particularly on these cues to identify the emergence of the text world, internal thought worlds, modal and hypothetical worlds, counterfactual constructions, and symbolic interpretations.

I carried out the coding manually in order to preserve sensitivity to narrative context and meaning, rather than applying categories mechanically. Because the study adopts a qualitative interpretive approach, the emphasis is placed not on statistical reliability but on interpretive consistency grounded in repeated close reading of the dataset. After the coding process, I grouped the identified segments according to the major world types observed across the data.

In the final stage, I analyzed the grouped data interpretively. The aim was not only to identify different mental worlds but also to examine how they contribute to meaning-making within the narratives. Internal thought worlds were interpreted in relation to expressions of fear, responsibility and emotional response, while hypothetical and counterfactual worlds were analyzed as signs of threat anticipation and retrospective re-evaluation of the event. Symbolic interpretations were considered in relation to broader cultural meanings and interpretive frameworks. This multi-stage procedure made it possible to examine each memorate in detail while also identifying shared cognitive patterns across the dataset. Through this approach, the analysis demonstrates how survivors cognitively reconstruct and narrativise an extreme event.

2.4. Ethics Committee Approval

All stages of this study including the development of the conceptual framework, the implementation of data collection instruments, the collection of data, and the analysis and interpretation of the data were conducted in accordance with ethical principles. In the event of any ethical violations, the Editorial Board of ANKAD bears no responsibility; all responsibility rests solely with the author. I hereby declare that this study has not been submitted to any other academic publication platform for evaluation. All rules specified within the “Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions” have been fully complied with. None of the actions defined under the second section of the directive, titled “Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics,” have been committed.

This study involves a qualitative document analysis of texts previously published and publicly accessible. No direct contact was established with participants, no new data were collected, and no intervention was conducted on human subjects. Therefore, ethics committee approval is not required for this study.

3. FINDINGS

This section addresses the research questions by examining how earthquake survivors constructed distinct mental worlds as they narrated their experiences. The analysis identifies several world types that recur across the dataset, each contributing to how participants made sense of the event. The following subsections present these mental worlds in sequence and illustrate them with examples selected from the memorates.

3.1. Mental Worlds Constructed in Earthquake Memorates

The analysis of the memorates shows that earthquake experiences are narrated through several interacting mental worlds. While narrators describe the physical environment in which the earthquake occurred, they also move between perception, internal thought, imagined possibilities and later reflection. From the perspective of TWT, these shifts suggest that the narratives are organized through multiple mental spaces rather than a single descriptive frame.

In examining the memorates, I observed that narrators frequently move between what they directly perceived and how they interpreted or imagined the situation. These narrative movements make it possible to identify several recurring types of mental worlds. In the data, these include Immediate Perceptual Worlds, Internal Thought Sub-worlds, Modal and Hypothetical Worlds, Negated Worlds, Counterfactual Worlds, Dream-like Worlds, and Symbolic or Spiritual Worlds. Each of these worlds contributes to survivors' reconstruction and interpretation of the earthquake experience.

Overall, the world types identified in the memorates form a layered cognitive structure through which survivors organize the earthquake experience. Although these worlds do not appear in every memorate in exactly the same order or with the same intensity, the narratives repeatedly move from immediate perception to interpretation, projection and later reflection. As Figure 1 shows, the memorates are grounded in an initial text-world of earthquake experience and then develop through a series of related sub-worlds. It does not imply a fixed chronological order; rather, these worlds interact dynamically within the narratives.



Figure 1. Mental worlds constructed in earthquake memorates

As shown in Figure 1, the memorates are grounded in an initial text-world of earthquake experience and then develop through a series of related sub-worlds. Internal Thought Sub-worlds emerge when narrators turn inward and interpret danger through fear, responsibility or concern for others. Modal and Hypothetical Worlds project possible futures, while Negated and Counterfactual Worlds reflect later reinterpretation and retrospective evaluation. Dream-like Worlds blur the boundary between perception and imagination, and Symbolic or Spiritual Worlds connect the event to broader cultural and religious meanings. The figure therefore offers a general map of the mental world structure that will be discussed in detail in the following subsections.

Perceptual Worlds

Many memorates begin with descriptions of the moment when the earthquake was first experienced. Narrators often recall what they saw, heard, or physically felt as the shaking started. In terms of TWT, these descriptions construct Immediate Perceptual Worlds in which the narrative is grounded in direct sensory experience.

In the memorates examined in this study, these perceptual scenes are typically built through several kinds of experiential elements. These include (i) the sudden movement of buildings or objects, (ii) the sound of collapsing structures, (iii) physical reactions such as waking up or running outside, (iv) observations of other people's actions, and (v) environmental changes such as darkness, dust, or noise. Through these elements, narrators anchor their stories in the immediate sensory reality of the disaster. The following examples illustrate how narrators construct perceptual worlds through references to time, movement, and physical action.

- (1) *04.17'de deprem başladı.* "The earthquake started at 04:17." (Memorate 4)
- (2) *Eşim ve ben bebeğimizi alarak evin yanındaki iki katlı binanın önüne sığındık.* "My spouse and I took our baby and took shelter in front of the two-storey building next to the house." (Memorate 4)
- (3) *Uyuduk ve depremle uyandık sarsıntı gittikçe çoğalıyordu.* "We slept and woke up to the earthquake; the tremors kept intensifying." (Memorate 7)
- (4) *Deprem başlayınca eşimi ve çocuklarımı uyandırıp dışarı çıktık.* "When the earthquake began, I woke my spouse and children and went outside." (Memorate 12)

These examples clearly demonstrate that the memorates initially focus on immediate perception, with descriptions of movement, sound, and bodily action dominating the opening moments of the narratives. In this way, the earthquake is first presented as a physical and sensory event before narrators begin to interpret or reflect upon what is happening.

Internal Thought Sub-worlds

Although the earthquake is first described through sensory perception, the memorates also reveal moments in which narrators briefly turn inward. In several accounts, participants recall a short moment when they mentally processed the situation before taking action. These moments form what TWT describes as Internal Thought Sub-worlds.

Across the memorates analyzed in this study, these internal scenes appear through several types of cognitive responses. These include (i) sudden realizations that death may be near, (ii) thoughts about children or family members, (iii) expressions of fear or helplessness, (iv) reflections about survival, and (v) attempts to mentally prepare for what might happen next. Through these internal reflections, narrators reveal how they interpreted the unfolding situation while the earthquake was still in progress. The following examples show how narrators move from external perception to internal cognition.

- (1) *Bazen onu da düşünüyordum acaba toplu ölüm mü olacak diye.* "At times, I kept wondering whether it would end in mass death." (Memorate 5)
- (2) *5 Şubat günü içimde sürekli bir sıkıntı, huzursuzluk vardı.* "On February 5, I had an overwhelming sense of distress and unease inside me." (Memorate 7)
- (3) *İçimi sıkıntı kaplamıştı.* "A feeling of distress had taken over me." (Memorate 6)

(4) *Kendimi kötü hissettiğimi belirttim.* “I told them that I was feeling awful.” (Memorate 9)

These statements illustrate how narrators briefly shift from the external environment of the earthquake to an internal cognitive space. Linguistic markers such as *düşündüm* (“I thought”) clearly signal this transition. Through these expressions, the memorates reveal the psychological dimension of the disaster experience and show how participants attempted to interpret the situation in moments of extreme uncertainty.

The memorates reveal Internal Thought Sub-worlds with notable clarity, as participants frequently recall the exact sentences that came to mind during the shaking. These thoughts were often short, urgent and emotionally intense. Their presence suggests that the creation of meaning in traumatic moments begins with inward attention. This aligns with Stockwell’s (2016) claim that cognition under stress becomes sharply focused on immediate survival and emotional priorities. The memorates show that such inner speech was not random. It was shaped by relational bonds, fear of death and spiritual orientation. These elements indicate that cultural and emotional frameworks strongly influence how meaning is constructed during crises.

Modal and Hypothetical Worlds

Besides describing what actually happened, the memorates also contain moments in which narrators imagine what might happen next. During the earthquake, participants often anticipated possible dangers such as the collapse of buildings, being trapped under rubble, or the loss of family members. These projections create what TWT describes as Modal or Hypothetical Worlds, where narrators mentally explore possible outcomes rather than describing events that have already occurred.

Within the memorates analysed in this study, these hypothetical scenes are typically expressed through several kinds of anticipatory thoughts. These include (i) expectations that buildings might collapse, (ii) fears of being trapped under rubble, (iii) imagined scenarios of death or injury, and (iv) possible escape actions considered during the event. Through these projections, narrators mentally simulate possible futures while the earthquake is still unfolding.

The following examples illustrate how narrators construct hypothetical worlds.

- (1) *Pencereden atlamayı düşündüm en fazla ayağım kırılır mantığıyla.* “I thought about jumping out of the window, thinking that at worst I’d only break my leg.” (Memorate 7)
- (2) *Bir büyük deprem olsa ne yaparsın, nasıl olur, evimiz dayanıklı mı gibi sorularla sürekli olarak aile içinde konuşuyorlarmış.* “They kept discussing within the family questions such as what would happen if there were a big earthquake, what it would be like, and whether the house was durable.” (Memorate 21)
- (3) *Sanki birkaç saat sonra olacakları hissetmiş gibiydim.* “It was as if I had sensed what would happen a few hours later.” (Memorate 23)

These examples demonstrate how narrators move from the immediate perception of danger to imagined future outcomes. In such passages, the earthquake is not only experienced as a present event but also as a situation in which multiple possible futures are mentally projected. This pattern illustrates how individuals cognitively process uncertainty in moments of extreme threat.

Modal Sub-worlds and Hypothetical Worlds further show that participants processed the event through possibilities rather than facts. The fear that a building might collapse or the hope that the shaking would stop illustrates how individuals create meaning by imagining near futures. Gavins (2007) notes that modal worlds help narrators project beyond the present moment and express uncertainty. In this study, these modal projections reveal both cultural patterns of family responsibility and individual strategies for emotional regulation. The frequent presence of imagined danger or imagined escape shows that mental simulation is central to how earthquake experiences are understood.

Negated Worlds

Another type of mental world observed in the memorates involves situations that narrators initially believed to be real but later realized were not. These moments occur when participants describe events that seemed to be happening at the time but were later understood differently. In TWT, such

constructions are referred to as Negated Worlds because they contrast an initial perception with a later correction.

In the memorates examined here, negated worlds usually emerge through several forms of misinterpretation. These include (i) physical sensations initially interpreted as something other than an earthquake, (ii) imagined voices or figures that later proved unreal, and (iii) objects or events that participants believed they saw but which did not actually exist. These moments reflect the confusion and sensory uncertainty experienced during the disaster.

The following examples illustrate this pattern.

- (1) *İlk başta başımın döndüğünü hissettim ardından büyük bir uğultu ile deprem olduğunu fark ettim.* “At first I felt dizzy; then, with a great roar, I realised that it was an earthquake.” (Memorate 1)
- (2) *Kapıda kimseyi göremeyince yatmaya çıkmış bakmış karısı uyuyor.* “When he could not see anyone at the door, he went back upstairs and saw that his wife was asleep.” (Memorate 16)
- (3) *Enkazda bir bebek, bir akrep ve Kur’an-ı Kerim gördüm ve benden önce onları çıkarmalarını istedim. Halbuki öyle bir şey de yokmuş.* “I saw a baby, a scorpion, and a copy of the Qur’an in the rubble, and I asked them to rescue them before me. But in reality, nothing like that had actually happened.” (Memorate 7)

Overall, these examples illustrate how narrators first construct an interpretation of the situation and later revise it. The initial perception forms a temporary mental world which is subsequently negated by later understanding. Such moments highlight the cognitive instability that often accompanies extreme stress and sensory confusion.

Counterfactual Worlds

Some memorates also contain reflections about how events might have unfolded differently under slightly different circumstances. These reflections do not describe the actual experience but instead imagine an alternative version of the past. In TWT, these constructions are referred to as Counterfactual Worlds.

Across the dataset, counterfactual reflections usually appear after the earthquake, when narrators reconsider the event from a distance. These reflections often include (i) thoughts about what might have happened if the narrator had been asleep, (ii) imagined outcomes if they had been in a different room, and (iii) reflections on how a small change in timing might have resulted in death or survival.

The following example illustrates this pattern.

- (1) *O gün namaza tekrar başlamasaydım belki de bugün hayatta olmazdım.* “If I hadn’t started praying again that day, I probably wouldn’t be alive today.” (Memorate 22)
- (2) *On saniye geç kalsaydım enkaz altında kalacaktım.* “If I had arrived ten seconds later, I would have ended up trapped under the rubble.” (Memorate 46)

These counterfactual reflections show that survivors reconstruct the earthquake not only through what happened but also through imagined alternatives that intensify the meaning of survival.

Negated Worlds and Counterfactual Worlds illustrate how participants made sense of the event after the danger had passed. These reflections show that meaning-making is not limited to the moment of the event but continues as individuals revisit the experience. Negated scenes express relief or confusion about what did not happen, while counterfactual reflections explore how small differences could have led to different outcomes. This supports Monteagudo’s (2011) view that narratives transform experience through reflection, not simple recall. In this study, such reflections express both vulnerability and resilience.

Dream-like Worlds

Another striking feature of the memorates is the presence of dream-like or quasi-dream experiences. Some participants recall dreams that occurred shortly before the earthquake, while others describe

altered states of perception during the disaster itself. These experiences create what can be described as Dream-like Worlds, where the boundary between perception and imagination becomes blurred.

In the narratives, dream-related scenes appear in several forms. These include (i) dreams interpreted as warnings before the earthquake, (ii) dream-like perceptions during moments of shock, and (iii) visions experienced while trapped under rubble. These episodes illustrate how traumatic events may disrupt ordinary perception and create experiences that resemble dreams. The following examples illustrate these dream-related worlds.

- (1) *Rüyamda çok kötü şeyler gördüm. Şeytan adeta yeryüzünde inmişti, kapkaranlıktı.* “I had a dream filled with terrible things. It was as if the devil had descended upon the earth; everything was pitch-dark.” (Memorate 4)
- (2) *Arada uyuyor, rüyalar görüyor ve uyanıyorduk.* “From time to time, we would fall asleep, dream, and wake up again.” (Memorate 7)
- (3) *Ben ve Songül aynı rüyayı gördük.* “Songül and I had the same dream.” (Memorate 7)
- (4) *Rüyamda evimin kapısının önünde yalınayak başına örtü almış bir adam gördüm.* “I dreamt of a barefoot man standing in front of my house with his head covered.” (Memorate 9)

These examples demonstrate how dream-like experiences become integrated into the narrative of the earthquake. Even when they occur before or during the disaster, narrators often interpret them retrospectively as meaningful elements of the overall experience.

Imagined Scenarios and Dream Worlds illustrate how traumatic experience can blur the boundary between perception and imagination. Many participants described the earthquake in ways that felt unreal, distant, or dream-like. As Werth (1999) suggests, extreme emotional states can weaken the boundary between real and imagined worlds, and the memorates analyzed in this study provide clear examples of this process. Participants frequently constructed mental images that did not correspond directly to the physical environment but nevertheless felt subjectively real. Such images suggest that, in moments of intense fear, individuals may reshape their perception of the situation into a form that can be cognitively and emotionally processed through narrative.

Symbolic and Spiritual Worlds

Finally, several memorates contain passages in which the earthquake is interpreted through symbolic or spiritual meanings. In these narratives, certain objects, animals, dreams, or religious references acquire a significance that goes beyond their ordinary function. These interpretations create what may be described as Symbolic or Spiritual Worlds.

Across the memorates examined in this study, such symbolic interpretations emerge through several recurring elements. These include (i) dreams interpreted as warnings, (ii) religious figures or sacred objects appearing in visions, (iii) unusual behaviour of animals interpreted as signs, and (iv) references to prayer or divine protection. Through these symbolic frames, narrators connect the earthquake to broader cultural and spiritual understandings. The following examples illustrate this pattern.

- (1) *Kendinize dikkat edin, ibadetinizi aksatmayın, dua edin gibi şeyler söyledi.* “He told us things like take care of yourselves, do not neglect your worship, and pray.” (Memorate 6)
- (2) *Bir yerde karga acı acı derse biri ölür demişlerdi.* “They used to say that if a crow cawed mournfully somewhere, someone would die.” (Memorate 5)
- (3) *Elinde Kur'an-ı Kerim tutan bir adam gelerek yakında bana bir felaketin olacağını söylüyordu.* “A man holding the Qur'an came and told me that a disaster would happen soon.” (Memorate 9)
- (4) *Asiye Abla gökyüzünde kırmızı bulutların içinde Allah'ın ismini gördüğünü söyledi.* “Asiye Abla said that she had seen the name of Allah among red clouds in the sky.” (Memorate 11)

These examples illustrate how narrators sometimes interpret the earthquake through spiritual or symbolic frameworks. In such cases, the disaster is not only described as a physical event but also as something that carries moral, religious, or cultural meaning.

A further way to understand these complex mental scenes is through Wertsch's concept of collective memory. Wertsch (2002) argues that remembering is a distributed process shaped not only by individual experience but also by cultural narratives and shared interpretive frames. The memorates in this study reflect this pattern. Participants often connected the present earthquake with earlier disasters, imagined harm to family members or interpreted the moment through familiar religious and cultural meanings. These details show that the mental worlds they constructed did not emerge in isolation. They were guided by collective narrative templates that are widely recognised in the Turkish context, where earthquakes form a recurring part of social memory. In this sense, the earthquake was processed through both personal cognition and collective memory, revealing how cultural experience shapes the structure of mental worlds.

Symbolic Object Worlds and Blended Worlds demonstrate how physical objects and memories take on new significance during trauma. Doors became symbols of hope, furniture became symbols of danger and personal belongings became emotional anchors. These symbolic associations suggest that meaning in traumatic contexts is built not only through thought but through sensory and material elements as well. Blended Worlds, where real perception merges with memory or imagination, further show how narrators constructed meaning through multiple cognitive layers at once. This blending reflects Gavins' (2012) argument that mental worlds are dynamic and interconnected rather than separate.

To sum up, these findings show that earthquake memorates construct meaning through a range of interacting mental worlds. Perceptual scenes, internal reflections, imagined possibilities and symbolic interpretations all contribute to how survivors narratively reconstruct the disaster. While the preceding sections have identified and illustrated the main types of mental worlds that emerge in the memorates, the following section examines how narrators move between these worlds while recounting the earthquake experience.

Shifting Between Worlds

When the memorates are examined more closely, it becomes clear that the narratives rarely remain within a single mental world. Instead, narrators tend to move back and forth between different layers of experience. They describe what they physically perceived, what they thought at that moment, and how they later interpreted the situation. As a result, the earthquake is not narrated as a simple sequence of events but as a cognitively layered experience.

From the perspective of TWT, these narrative movements can be understood as shifts between different mental worlds. In the memorates analysed here, such shifts occur quite naturally because the event itself unfolds under conditions of sudden danger and uncertainty. At one moment narrators describe what they see or hear, and almost immediately they begin to interpret what that might mean. In my reading of the data, two patterns appear particularly clearly: rapid switching between worlds and moments in which different worlds seem to overlap.

Rapid World Switching

One pattern that appears repeatedly in the memorates is the rapid movement from perception to thought. Narrators frequently begin with a brief description of what they physically experienced and then move almost immediately to an interpretation of that experience. In many cases, this shift occurs within the same sentence or across two short clauses. Rather than presenting perception and interpretation as separate stages, the narratives compress these processes into a single moment of cognitive activity.

In the memorates examined in this study, such transitions typically involve a movement from direct sensory perception to immediate evaluation. Descriptions of shaking buildings, loud sounds, or the reactions of people nearby are often followed by rapid interpretations of what these perceptions might mean. These moments reveal how survivors attempted to understand the unfolding situation while the earthquake was still in progress. The narratives therefore capture not only what happened during the disaster but also how participants cognitively processed the event in real time. The following examples illustrate this rapid movement between perceptual and internal worlds.

- (1) *İlk başta başımın döndüğünü hissettim ardından büyük bir uğultu ile deprem olduğunu fark ettim.* "At first I felt dizzy; then, with a great roar, I realised that it was an earthquake."
(Memorate 1)

- (2) *Deprem başlayınca eşimi ve çocuklarımı uyandırıp dışarı çıktık.* “When the earthquake began, I woke my spouse and children and we rushed outside.” (Memorate 12)

These examples show how narrators move quickly from describing the physical environment to evaluating its possible consequences. The earthquake is therefore narrated not only as a sensory experience but also as a moment of rapid cognitive interpretation. To illustrate this process more clearly, one short extract from Memorate 7 can be examined in greater detail.

- (3) *Uyuduk ve depremle uyandık sarsıntı gittikçe çoğalıyordu. Pencereden atlamayı düşündüm...* “We slept and woke up to the earthquake; the tremors kept intensifying. I considered jumping out of the window...” (Memorate 7)

In this extract, the first part constructs an immediate perceptual world grounded in direct sensory experience. The narrator first presents the earthquake as a physically experienced event through the description “Uyuduk ve depremle uyandık sarsıntı gittikçe çoğalıyordu” (“We slept and woke up to the earthquake; the tremors kept intensifying.” which foregrounds bodily awakening and the increasing force of the shaking. The second part then shifts into an internal thought sub-world, signalled by the mental process in “Pencereden atlamayı düşündüm” (“I considered jumping out of the window...”). At the same time, this thought activates a hypothetical world because it projects a possible survival action that is considered but not actually carried out. The extract therefore demonstrates a rapid transition from direct perception to internal cognition and then to a hypothetical projection of escape. This transition can be represented as follows:



Figure 2. Transition between perceptual, internal thought and hypothetical worlds

The figure illustrates how the narrative moves rapidly from immediate perception to interpretation and then to the projection of a possible action. Such compressed shifts between worlds occur frequently in the memorates and reflect the rapid cognitive processing that takes place during moments of extreme danger. The extract therefore demonstrates how perceptual experience, internal thought, and hypothetical projection can interact within a very short stretch of narrative.

Overlapping / Blended Worlds

At the same time, some memorates show moments in which different mental worlds appear to operate together rather than in sequence. In such passages, narrators describe what they observe while also attaching a meaning to that observation. The physical environment and the narrator’s interpretation become intertwined.

Across the memorates analyzed in this study, these overlapping moments often involve environmental signs or bodily sensations that are immediately interpreted. In some cases, narrators first describe what

they see and then explain how they understand it. In other cases, perception and interpretation appear almost simultaneously. The following examples illustrate these blended moments.

- (1) *Köpeğimiz Fındık'ın yerinde durmadığını havladığını gördüm.* "I saw that our dog Fındık could not stay still and was barking." (Memorate 1)
- (2) *Bir sürü karga ötüyordu işyerimin etrafında.* "A lot of crows were cawing around my workplace..." (Memorate 5)
- (3) *Gözlerimi kapattıkça acı içinde koşuşturan insan toplulukları görüyordum.* "Whenever I closed my eyes, I saw crowds of people running around in pain." (Memorate 34)

In my interpretation, these passages show how narrators attempt to understand what is happening even while they are still experiencing it. The narrative therefore combines observation with interpretation, creating a moment in which different mental worlds overlap.

Meaning-Making Through World Interaction

The findings show that earthquake memorates construct a wide range of interacting mental worlds activated during moments of crisis. These worlds include internal thoughts, imagined outcomes, dream-like perceptions and symbolic interpretations that help participants make sense of an event that disrupts both physical and psychological stability. Rather than presenting the earthquake as a simple physical occurrence, the narratives portray it as a layered cognitive and emotional process. This supports the central claim of TWT that meaning emerges from the interaction of mental spaces within discourse (Werth, 1999; Gavins, 2007).

Perceptual worlds usually provide the starting point of the narrative. However, as the story develops, other worlds begin to appear. Internal thoughts introduce emotional responses, hypothetical worlds express uncertainty about the future, and symbolic interpretations connect the event to broader cultural meanings. Through this process, the earthquake experience becomes more than a record of events; it becomes a narrative through which survivors interpret what they went through. From my perspective, these memorates can therefore be understood as attempts to organise a highly chaotic experience into a coherent story. Narrators move between different mental worlds to explain not only what happened but also how they understood and survived the event.

3.2. Contribution of Text World Theory

The findings of this study demonstrate that TWT provides a productive framework for analysing personal narratives of disaster. While the model has frequently been applied to literary texts, the present analysis shows that it can also illuminate how individuals narrate real-life traumatic experiences. By focusing on the mental worlds constructed in discourse, the framework makes it possible to trace how narrators move between perception, thought, imagination and later reflection. Through this perspective, the earthquake memorates analysed in this study reveal a layered narrative structure in which several mental worlds interact to represent both the physical and psychological dimensions of the disaster.

At the same time, the study highlights the importance of cultural context in shaping these mental worlds. The memorates repeatedly emphasise family responsibility, spiritual reflection and concern for loved ones, suggesting that cultural values influence how survivors interpret and narrate the event. In my view, these narratives show that meaning-making during extreme situations is not only a cognitive process but also a culturally embedded one. This observation supports the argument that cognitive stylistic analysis should be considered alongside social and cultural experience (Semino & Culpeper, 2003). In the Turkish context, where earthquakes form part of collective memory, such cultural frameworks appear to guide how survivors construct and interpret their experiences.

Finally, I argue that applying TWT to earthquake memorates expands the potential scope of the framework beyond literary discourse. The analysis presented here suggests that TWT can offer valuable insights for the study of trauma narratives, crisis communication and collective memory in disaster contexts. Future research could further explore how mental worlds are constructed in other types of crisis narratives, such as survivor interviews, media accounts or social media testimonies. Such studies would help clarify how individuals cognitively and culturally process extreme events through narrative.

4. CONCLUSION

This study used TWT to examine how individuals cognitively and emotionally experienced a major earthquake, drawing on fifty-five memorates that describe the event from a first-person perspective. The analysis revealed that participants constructed a complex set of mental worlds during and after the shaking. These worlds included urgent inner thoughts, imagined dangers, symbolic interpretations of ordinary objects, dream-like perceptions and reflections on alternative outcomes. In this regard, they show that the earthquake was understood not only through physical sensation but through a layered mental landscape that shaped how participants interpreted and remembered the moment.

The findings demonstrate that meaning-making in disaster settings begins at the level of cognition. Internal Thought Worlds and Modal Worlds show the immediacy of fear and the strong presence of relational responsibility. Hypothetical and Imagined Worlds reveal how the mind turns to visual and emotional projections when the environment becomes unstable. Dream Worlds and Blended Worlds illustrate the blurred boundary between perception and imagination in moments of shock. Negated and Counterfactual Worlds highlight how individuals continue to process the event after it ends, revisiting it through alternative possibilities and emotional reflections. As a result, these mental worlds demonstrate how discourse about extreme events emerges from dynamic cognitive processes that attempt to organise fear, uncertainty and memory.

The study also shows that cultural and emotional frameworks play a significant role in shaping these mental worlds. The strong presence of family-oriented thoughts, references to earlier earthquakes and moments of spiritual surrender suggest that the cognitive structure of the memorates is closely linked to collective memory and cultural values. In this sense, the memorates reveal how personal cognition draws on shared stories, moral expectations and collective experiences, showing that the mental worlds activated during the earthquake were not purely individual but formed within a broader cultural history.

From a methodological perspective, the study demonstrates that TWT provides an effective tool for analysing personal trauma narratives. It allows researchers to trace how narrators move between real, imagined and emotional worlds during crisis. The analysis is based on published memorates rather than primary interview data, which makes it possible to examine narratives recorded close to the time of the earthquake and preserved in written form. Although this study did not aim to measure frequency, the richness and variation of the mental worlds show how deeply individuals rely on cognitive structures to make sense of sudden fear and uncertainty.

Future research may extend this work in several directions. Comparative studies could examine memorates from different earthquake regions in order to determine whether similar mental worlds emerge across cultures. Longitudinal studies may also investigate how these mental worlds evolve over time as survivors reconstruct and reinterpret their experiences months or years after the disaster. In addition, future research could compare earthquake memorates with other forms of trauma narratives, such as war testimonies or accident narratives, to explore whether similar cognitive patterns appear in different types of extreme experiences.

Overall, the findings suggest that the mental worlds emerging in these memorates are shaped by an interaction between individual cognition and shared cultural memory. While the narrators describe highly personal experiences of fear and uncertainty, their interpretations frequently draw on culturally familiar themes such as family responsibility, collective memory of earlier earthquakes and spiritual reflection. This interaction indicates that the experience of disaster is not understood solely as an individual psychological event but as part of a broader cultural framework through which communities interpret and remember traumatic experiences. In this respect, the study also demonstrates the broader analytical potential of TWT for research on trauma narratives and disaster communication. By identifying how narrators move between perceptual, imagined and reflective worlds, the framework offers a systematic way to examine how individuals cognitively structure extreme experiences in language. The approach can therefore be applied not only to earthquake memorates but also to other forms of crisis narratives, such as war testimonies, accident narratives or pandemic accounts, where speakers attempt to organize fear, uncertainty and memory through narrative discourse.

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Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Mental Worlds in Kahramanmaraş Earthquake Memorates: An Analysis within the Framework of Text World Theory

Kahramanmaraş Depremi Memoratlarında Zihinsel Dünyalar: Metin Dünyası Kuramı Çerçevesinde bir Çözümleme

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş

Bu çalışma, 6 Şubat 2023 Kahramanmaraş merkezli depremleri yaşamış bireylerin birinci tekil anlatımlı memoratlarında deprem deneyimini bilişsel, duygusal ve anlamsal düzeyde nasıl yapılandırdıklarını incelemektedir. Depremler, ani ve yıkıcı doğaları nedeniyle yalnızca fiziksel çevrede değil, bireylerin zihinsel ve duygusal dünyalarında da derin kırılmalar yaratır; zaman, mekân ve benlik algısını sarsarak bireyi olağan bilişsel çerçevelerinin ötesine geçmeye zorlar.

Bu nedenle deprem deneyimi yalnızca olayların kronolojik aktarımı değildir. Anlatıcılar, yaşadıklarını aktarırken korku, belirsizlik, sorumluluk, umut ve şükür gibi duyguları anlatının merkezine yerleştirir; bir yandan yaşanan anın içinde kalırken diğer yandan o anı zihinsel olarak yeniden kurar. Bu süreç, algı, duygu, biliş ve hayal gücünün birlikte işlediği çok katmanlı bir zihinsel faaliyeti yansıtır. Birinci tekil deprem memoratları, bu çok katmanlı yapıyı görünür kılan önemli metinlerdir.

Çalışma, bu anlatıları Metin Dünyası Kuramı çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Bu kurama göre anlatılar, tek bir gerçeklik düzleminden ibaret değildir; iç düşünceler, varsayımlar, olasılıklar, karşıtolgusal senaryolar ve sonradan yapılan değerlendirmeler gibi çoklu zihinsel dünyalar içerir. Bu dünyalar, anlatıcının deneyimi nasıl algıladığını, yorumladığını ve anlamlandırdığını ortaya koyar.

Travmatik anlatılar bu açıdan özellikle verimlidir; çünkü birey, tehdit altındayken hem mevcut durumu algılar hem de olası senaryolar üretir. Deprem gibi ani afetlerde bu zihinsel geçişler hızlı, parçalı ve iç içedir. Deprem memoratları, “şu anda ne oluyor?” ile “ya sonra ne olacak?” sorularının eşzamanlı olarak işlediği bu bilişsel süreci açık biçimde yansıtır.

Bu bağlamda çalışma, elli beş birinci tekil memoratı inceleyerek (i) hangi zihinsel dünya türlerinin kurulduğunu, (ii) bu dünyalar arasında nasıl geçişler yapıldığını ve (iii) bu süreçlerin deprem deneyiminin anlatı içinde nasıl anlamlandırıldığını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Böylece, çoğunlukla edebî metinlere uygulanan bu kuramsal çerçevenin, gerçek yaşam deneyimine dayalı afet ve travma anlatılarının çözümlemesinde de açıklayıcı bir model sunduğu gösterilmektedir.

Bu amaç doğrultusunda çalışma aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına yanıt aramaktadır:

1. Birinci tekil anlatımlı deprem memoratlarında hangi tür zihinsel dünyalar kurulmaktadır?
2. Anlatıcılar deprem deneyimini aktarırken farklı zihinsel dünyalar arasında nasıl geçiş yapmakta ve bu dünyalar anlatı içinde nasıl etkileşim kurmaktadır?
3. Bu zihinsel dünyalar ve aralarındaki etkileşim, deprem deneyiminin anlatı içinde anlamlandırılmasını nasıl şekillendirmektedir?

Yöntem

Çalışmanın veri kaynağını, *06 Şubat 2023 Kahramanmaraş Depremi Memoratları* adlı eserde yer alan elli beş birinci tekil anlatımlı memorat oluşturmaktadır. Bu metinler, deprem bölgesinde farklı şehirlerde bulunan, farklı yaş ve toplumsal arka planlara sahip bireylerin tanıklıklarını içermekte; özellikle depremin ilk anlarına odaklanarak algısal karmaşa, bedensel tepkiler ve zihinsel değerlendirmeleri yansıtmaktadır. Bu yönüyle veri seti, deprem deneyiminin anlık zihinsel işleyişini incelemek için uygun bir zemin sunmaktadır.

Araştırma nitel bir yaklaşıma dayanmaktadır. Memoratlar eksiksiz biçimde dijital ortama aktarılmış ve metinlere herhangi bir dilsel müdahalede bulunulmamıştır. Metinler yakın okuma yöntemiyle satır satır incelenmiş; algı eylemleri, biliş ve duygu ifadeleri, kiplik yapıları, olumsuzlama ve koşulluluk gibi zihinsel dünya kurulumlarını işaret eden dilsel göstergeler belirlenmiştir. Bu göstergeler doğrultusunda zihinsel dünyalar, Metin Dünyası Kuramı çerçevesinde sınıflandırılmıştır.

Çözümleme süreci üç aşamada yürütülmüştür. İlk aşamada metinler tekrar tekrar okunarak anlatı yapısı ve tematik örüntüler belirlenmiştir. İkinci aşamada satır satır inceleme ile zihinsel dünya geçişlerini gösteren dilsel ipuçları tespit edilmiş ve kodlama manuel olarak gerçekleştirilerek bağlamsal duyarlılık korunmuştur. Son aşamada ise bulgular yorumlayıcı biçimde değerlendirilmiş; farklı zihinsel dünyaların anlatı içindeki işleyişi ve deprem deneyiminin anlamlandırılmasına katkısı ortaya konmuştur.

Bulgular

Çözümleme sonucunda deprem memoratlarında yedi temel zihinsel dünya türü belirlenmiştir: Algısal Dünyalar, İçsel Düşünce Dünyaları, Kiplik ve Varsayımsal Dünyalar, Olumsuzlanan Dünyalar, Karşıolgusal Dünyalar, Düş-benzeri Dünyalar ve Sembolik/Manevî Dünyalar. Bu sınıflandırma, deprem deneyiminin anlatılarda yalnızca fiziksel bir olay olarak değil, çok katmanlı bir zihinsel ve duygusal süreç olarak kurgulandığını göstermektedir.

Algısal dünyalar, depremin ilk anda nasıl duyumsandığını yansıtan sahneleri kapsamakta; sarsıntı, çevresel gürültü ve bedensel tepkiler bu düzlemde öne çıkmaktadır. İçsel düşünce dünyaları ise anlatıcıların dış dünyadan kısa süreliğine iç dünyalarına yöneldikleri, ölüm düşüncesi, aileye yönelik kaygılar ve hayatta kalma iç konuşmalarının belirginleştiği sahneleri içermektedir.

Kiplik ve varsayımsal dünyalar, anlatıcıların deprem sırasında olası gelecek senaryolarını zihinsel olarak kurduklarını ve belirsizlik altında hızlı değerlendirmeler yaptıklarını göstermektedir. Olumsuzlanan dünyalar, ilk algıların sonradan yanlış olduğunun fark edilmesiyle oluşan yeniden yorumlama süreçlerini yansıtırken; karşıolgusal dünyalar, olay sonrasında “eğer şöyle olsaydı” biçiminde kurulan alternatif geçmiş senaryolarını ortaya koymaktadır.

Düş-benzeri dünyalar, deprem deneyiminin bazı anlarda gerçek dışı, bulanık ya da rüya benzeri biçimde algılandığını gösterirken; sembolik/manevî dünyalar, bu deneyimin dinî, kültürel ve sembolik çerçeveler içinde anlamlandırıldığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Bulguların önemli bir yönü, bu zihinsel dünyaların anlatılarda birbirinden bağımsız değil, sürekli etkileşim hâlinde ortaya çıkmasıdır. Anlatıcılar çoğu zaman önce fiziksel durumu algılamakta, ardından bunu zihinsel olarak yorumlamakta ve eşzamanlı olarak olası sonuçları tahayyül etmektedir. Bu durum, deprem memoratlarının doğrusal bir olay aktarımından çok, algı, düşünce, duygu ve hayalin iç içe geçtiği çok katmanlı anlatılar olduğunu göstermektedir.

Genel olarak bulgular, deprem deneyiminin anlatılarda korku, aile sorumluluğu, maneviyat ve kültürel bellekle şekillenen karmaşık bir zihinsel süreç olarak temsil edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Sonuç

Bu çalışma, 6 Şubat 2023 Kahramanmaraş depremini konu alan birinci tekil anlatımlı memoratlarda deprem deneyiminin Metin Dünyası Kuramı çerçevesinde zihinsel dünyalar aracılığıyla nasıl yapılandırıldığını incelemektedir. Bulgular, anlatıcıların algısal, içsel düşünce, kiplik ve varsayımsal, olumsuzlanan, karşıolgusal, düş-benzeri ve sembolik/manevî dünyalar arasında sürekli geçiş yaptıklarını ortaya koymaktadır.

Sonuçlar, bu anlatıların yalnızca kronolojik aktarımlar olmadığını; algı, duygu, yorum ve hayalin iç içe geçtiği çok katmanlı yapılar sunduğunu göstermektedir. Anlatılar çoğunlukla algısal bir sahneyle başlayıp anlatıcının içsel değerlendirmelerine, olası gelecek senaryolarına ve sonradan yapılan yorumlara doğru ilerlemektedir. Bu durum, deprem deneyiminin hem yaşanan anın algılanması hem de zihinsel olarak anlamlandırılması süreçlerini birlikte yansıttığını göstermektedir.

Ayrıca zihinsel dünyalar arasındaki hızlı geçişler dikkat çekmektedir: anlatıcılar fiziksel çevredeki değişimleri betimledikten hemen sonra bu durumu zihinsel olarak yorumlamakta ve olası sonuçları tahayyül etmektedir. Bu nedenle memoratlar doğrusal bir anlatım yerine, birden fazla zihinsel dünyanın birbirini takip ettiği ve zaman zaman iç içe geçtiği anlatılar olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu bulgu, deprem gibi ani ve tehdit içeren durumlarda bilişsel süreçlerin nasıl hızla işlediğini ve anlatı dilinde nasıl görünür hâle geldiğini ortaya koymaktadır.