

## **Metaphoric Perceptions of Students in 8th Class in Secondary School Related to the Term “Child”**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this research is to reveal the perceptions of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students related to the concept of child through the metaphors. To reach this aim, 95 students in 8<sup>th</sup> grades have been asked to fill in the blanks in the sentence “A Child is like ....., because .....””. The answers by 8<sup>th</sup> class students in secondary school have been examined one by one and then the inappropriate metaphors have been eliminated to do a content analysis. Afterwards, simple data texts have been obtained by means of transferring the metaphors developed for the term “child” and the explanations which have been given as the reasons of these metaphors to computer environment. Then, these texts have been read a few times and evaluated and common themes have been created by gathering the metaphors having similarities. In the process of analysing the data, the content analysis method yere used. In consequence of the research, it has been found that while most of the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students (96,8 %) who participated in the research have developed positive metaphors on Turkish, 3,2% of those students have developed negative ones. Among the metaphors developed by the students, the ones that have the highest frequency range are aligned as follows: angel, happiness and flower. Positive metaphors in question can be brought under the categories of environment, dignification, emotion and creativity. On the other hand, the students who have developed negative metaphors have developed the metaphors like creature, devilkin and cigarette. These metaphors have been evaluated in negative attitude category.

**Keywords:** Child, 8th-grade students, metaphor

### **INTRODUCTION**

There are different definitions for the concept of “child” in dictionaries. In TDK Turkish Modern Dictionary, the concept of child is defined as follows: a. 1. Girl or boy of a young age. The child had a wet nurse. –R. H. Karay. 2. Son or daughter in terms of lineage, offspring: His/her so-called mother caught him/her in his/her shoulder. –B.R. Eyuboğlu. 3. Boy or girl between infancy and puberty, youth, When the child turned the corner, his/her mother went after him/her to drink water. –B.R. Eyuboğlu. 4. Young boy. 5. (metaphoric) the younger one among seniors. 6. (metaphoric) a person who behaves in a way that fits children rather than adults: He is thirty, but he is still a child. 7 (metaphorical) a person who is not capable enough in a certain job (URL-1 [www.tdk.gov.tr](http://www.tdk.gov.tr)).

Children are of the great importance in terms of continuity and development of human breeding for centuries. Therefore, it can be said children are very important in social development. With the definition of “Child has always been the carrier of hope and the symbol of human being’s irrepressible motive in the way to maintain their breed. It is the way of human beings to defeat extinction, survive and resist time”, it has been indicated how significant children are to people. (Tan, 1989: 72)

Today, it is highly difficult to find a definition of child that everyone agrees on. In addition to this, there is a universal definition of child in the Convention on the Rights of the Child today, which is agreed on by nearly all societies today. The 1<sup>st</sup> article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child defines child as a person under the age of 18. The Convention on the Rights of the Child approaches the concept of child as follows: Under the laws of a certain state, as long as the end of childhood is not determined at an earlier age, childhood ends at the age of 18. (URL- 2 UNICEF, Convention on the Rights of the Child). In this study, the focus is on the metaphoric perceptions of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade

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students about the concept of child. There are many definitions of the word ‘metaphor’. Considering these definitions, one can think about the quality and the use of metaphor:

Metaphor, which is used instead of different concepts such as simile, metaphor or figure of speech in Turkish, has recently been one of the most important methods of data collection of qualitative researches. Depending on the use of language for symbolic purposes, metaphor can be defined as a way of explaining a situation or concept with another concept or situation. A great number of researches on metaphor have been conducted in various disciplines of social sciences since 1980s (Aydın and Pehlivan, 2010).

The word metaphor derives from the Greek word *metapherein* (convey) and is formed with the combination of *meta* (between, among) and *pherein* (transport, carry) words. Metaphor is the transmission of meaning from one thing to another. (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2008: 194) According to Sönmez (1993), metaphor which means analogy, likening, resemblance and simile can briefly be defined as the expression of one thing as another thing. Metaphors help to establish connections by finding similarities between new data and previous data gained beforehand, thus enabling new data to be described concretely (Senemoğlu, 2005: 564). On the other hand, Mish defines metaphor as a similarity among words or word groups that explain an object, an idea or a speech figure used instead of a word or a word group (Conveyed by Groth and Bergner, 2005: 28). In addition, according to Richardson (1996), they are also of importance in that they show individual values directly. With these qualifications, metaphors turn into a strong modelling and mapping mechanism that enables individuals to conceive and configure their own nature (Arslan and Bayrakçı, 2006: 103). Metaphors may have positive and negative associations. The metaphor given by Nikitina and Furuoka (2008: 194) can be taken as an example for this case (Quote by Akkaya: 2011, 2).

As well as this, metaphors can reveal pre-experiences (Zhao, Coombs and Zhou, 2010) and tend to be affected by cultures lived (Alger, 2009). According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980) metaphors can be used as means of understanding how we define ourselves and others (Quote by Özbaş: 2012: 982). According to Goldstein since metaphors affect our conception of situations and events, they can be used to redefine the truths and to promote to re-conceptualise of problem cases (Conveyed by Cerit, 2008: 694).

These definitions make metaphors one of the strongest mental tools to form, direct and control our thoughts about how things happen and are performed (Saban, 2004: 131).

Metaphor, which has been drawing educators’ attention in recent years, has become the subject of various domestic and foreign studies. Hacıfazlıoğlu, Karadeniz, Dalgıç (2011), Semerci (2007), Aydın and Pehlivan (2010), Aydın and Eser Ünalı (2010), Saban (2009), Saban, Koçbeker and Saban (2006), Öztürk (2007) are some of these studies. The studies have revealed what metaphors have been used by the participant in the study group to express concepts or facts like “teacher”, “student”, “data”, “manager”, “leader”, “inspector”, “geography”, “school” and “culture” (Kuyucu, Şahin, Kapıcıoğlu, 2013: 44).

Some studies like teachers’ metaphors on the concept of child (Kuyucu, Şahin, Kapıcıoğlu, 2013: 43-53) have been conducted. However, the fact that no study about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students’ metaphors on the concept of child has been encountered increases the significance of this study. Therefore, metaphors which the 8<sup>th</sup> grade students have developed for the concept of child have been evaluated within the context of this study.

### **Aims and Scope of the Research**

The aim of this research is to examine the mental images that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students have about the concept of child through metaphors. In view of this general aim, answers have been searched to the questions below:

- 1) What are the metaphors that 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students have for the concept of child?
- 2) Under what conceptual categories can these metaphors be brought in terms of their common features?

### **METHOD**

#### **Pattern of the Research**

In this study that is essentially a qualitative research, the path of data collection by means of metaphors is pursued. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek, metaphors can be used for two aims in

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educational researches. The first aim is to determine the current condition. The other one is to enhance a process. In this research, Metaphor has been used on a section with the purpose of description. When metaphors are used for description, a situation, an event or a fact is described as the way they are (Yılmaz and Şimşek).

**Participants**

Participants of this research have consisted of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students who study in Seyhan District of Adana Province. The study has been conducted through a study group consisting of 95 people. Research data have been collected at the end of 2013-2014 academic year in spring.

**Collecting Data and Analysis**

To analyse the perception of 8th grade students on the concept of child through metaphors, each student has been asked to complete the sentence “A child is like a(n).....

Because...”. Then, metaphors have been determined, classified and coded. Main metaphors have been determined by means of compiling sample metaphors from the metaphors and the main metaphors have been classified among themselves.

Qualitative data which have been obtained from the research have initially been subjected to content analysis and made quantitative within the frame of conceptual categories. Following this, data which have been collected from the personal information form, have been coded again within the scope of conceptual categories. Thus, the number (f) and the percentage (%) of the participants who have represented each category have been calculated this way. Later, in terms of participants’ gender and variables, the number and the percentage of them have been calculated according to the conceptual categories.

**FINDINGS**

Both positive and negative perceptions, for the concept of child, of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students who participated in the research have been listed on Table-1.

**Table1.** Both positive and negative perceptions, for the concept of child, of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students

Categories	Codes	Name of the Metaphors	Students who represent Metaphors			
			(f)	(%)	Total Codes	
					(f)	(%)
Positive Metaphors	1	Romance	1	1,053	92	96,842
	2	Fire	1	1,053		
	3	Success	1	1,053		
	4	Flag	1	1,053		
	5	Flower	8	8,421		
	6	Fun	1	1,053		
	7	Sapling	3	3,158		
	8	Rose	4	4,211		
	9	Sun	3	3,158		
	10	Dream	1	1,053		
	11	Life	3	3,158		
	12	Tranquility	1	1,053		
	13	Light	1	1,053		
	14	Pearl	1	1,053		
	15	Fortress	1	1,053		
	16	Book	1	1,053		
	17	Innocence	2	2,105		
	18	Angel	12	12,632		
	19	Curious	1	1,053		
	20	Fruit	1	1,053		
	21	National Footballer	1	1,053		
	22	Miracle	1	1,053		

	23	Euphoria	8	8,421		
	24	Breath	1	1,053		
	25	Cheer	1	1,053		
	26	Joy	3	3,158		
	27	Game	3	3,158		
	28	Student	1	1,053		
	29	Brilliant	1	1,053		
	30	Record	1	1,053		
	31	Purity	2	2,105		
	32	Respectful	1	1,053		
	33	Love	3	3,158		
	34	Happiness	2	2,105		
	35	Water	3	3,158		
	36	Russia turnip	1	1,053		
	37	Sugar	5	5,263		
	38	Dessert	1	1,053		
	39	Seed	1	1,053		
	40	Lady Bird	1	1,053		
	41	Hope	2	2,105		
	42	Lifetime	1	1,053		
Negative Metaphors	43	Monster	1	1,053	3	3,157
	44	Imp	1	1,053		
	45	Cigarette	1	1,053		

According to Table-1, majority of the students whose rate is 96,842 % have produced positive metaphors for the concept of child. This result can be accepted as an indication of the fact that children have a positive attitude to the concept of child. Among the positive metaphors which the students prefer, those whose frequencies are the highest have been aligned as follows: 12% angel, 8% happiness, 8% flower, 5% sugar, 4% rose, and 3% sapling, sun, life, game, game, love and water. It is possible to bring the positive metaphors under the category of emotion and dignification category. According to this, children have had positive emotions to the concept of child. When the positive metaphors developed by the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students are examined, it can be said that children are portrayed as positive feelings, innocent and harmless things mostly like angel. This case can also be accepted as an indication of the belief and value of Turkish Society that the children are innocent. The fact that happiness and flower metaphors come after the angel metaphor could be accepted as a reflection of the fact that children are seen as a source of happiness and positive feelings and just like flowers they need to be loved, besides they make people happy as a symbol of love.

The fact that the concept of child is perceived with the rose metaphor can be considered as an indication of children’s value as a symbol of beauty, delicacy and neediness for care. That children are likened as sweet could also be considered as a reason for secondary school students to find them likeable and attractive creatures. That they are perceived as the life metaphor could be explained with their great importance for humanity. When they are perceived as the water metaphor, it can be understood how necessary they are for the continuity of life.

Negative metaphors produced for the concept of child have been at such a low rate as 3,157 %. This case has been observed only in small minority of students. Negative metaphors have been aligned as follows: monster, imp and cigarette.

**Table2.** Positive perceptions, for the concept of child, of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students

Categories	Codes	Metaphors	Example Explanations Student	Students who represents metaphors			
				(f)	(%)	Total Codes	
						f	(%)
Environment	20	Fruit	Children are like fruits. They yield how you grow them.	1	1,053	3	3,158
	4	Flag	They tell of their family just as a flag tells its country	1	1,053		

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	30	Record	They play whatever you put on it	1	1,053		
<b>Dignification</b>	21	National Footballer	They are favourites of people	1	1,053	32	33,696
	11	Life	Child has an important meaning like life	3	3,158		
	29	Brilliant	Immediately after their births, they are held in high esteem.	1	1,053		
	35	Water	People need children just as they need water.	3	3,158		
	8	Rose	They are as beautiful and sweet as a rose.	4	4,211		
	40	Lady Bird	They are little and lucky like a lady bird.	1	1,053		
	33	Love	They have pure feelings like love	3	3,158		
	34	Happiness	Childhood is the best period.	2	2,105		
	36	Russia turnip	They always give nice taste those who like them.	1	1,053		
	37	Sugar	They flavour our lives.	5	5,263		
	38	Sweetness	They are considerably beautiful with their sweetness.	1	1,053		
	41	Hope	Children have happiness and beauty within themselves like hope	2	2,105		
	1	Romance	It is the child who gives the romance and happiness to parents.	1	1,053		
	3	Success	They fill people with pride.	1	1,053		
	6	Fun	Child is a source of fun at homes.	1	1,053		
12	Peace	Child is the only thing which provides peace and happiness at home.	1	1,053			
14	Pearl	They are beautiful like pearls.	1	1,053			
<b>Emotion</b>	5	Flower	They are kind and fragile like flowers.	8	8,421	51	53,703
	7	Sapling	Children are so delicate like saplings. They can be hurt easily.	3	3,158		
	39	Seed	Just like seed, they grow over time.	1	1,053		
	9	Sun	When you approach, you feel warm; when you move away, you feel cold	3	3,158		
	13	Light	They lighten around.	1	1,053		
	15	Fortress	They hug life protecting it like fortress.	1	1,053		
	27	Game	Like a game, the more you play with them, the more you like them.	3	3,158		
	17	Innocence	They are the most innocent people in the world	2	2,105		
	18	Angel	Children are innocent like angels.	12	12,632		
	22	Miracle	Child is a miracle which is given to a family.	1	1,053		
	23	Euphoria	Child means being happy	8	8,421		
	25	Cheer	They are the cheer of home.	1	1,053		
	26	Joy	If there were no child, no one would smile and become happy.	3	3,158		
31	Purity	They do not think in a bad	2	2,105			

			way.				
	32	Respectful Person	They listen to people respectfully	1	1,053		
<b>Creativity</b>	10	Dream	There is no limit of children just as there is no limit of their dreams.	1	1,053	4	4,211
	16	Book	They can be read like a book.	1	1,053		
	19	Curiosity	They always ask questions to learn about the things.	1	1,053		
	28	Student	They always want to learn new things like a student.	1	1,053		

According to Table 2, the positive metaphors the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students have produced can be classified as environment, dignification, emotion and creativeness. Among these, the highest frequency with the rate of 53,703 % is the emotion category. It can be concluded from this result that more than half of the students have positive feelings about children such as love, innocence, purity, beauty and joy. On the other hand, with the rate of 33,396 %, dignification is in the second place in terms of intensity. In this category, it is apparent that metaphors created about children such as water, life, hope, success, rose and candy show how important children are to people and society. Such an extensive production of metaphors in dignification category can be accepted as an indication of the fact that children are still dignified today as they were in past. Creativeness category is in the third place with the rate of 4,211 %. In this category, the concept of child is met with such metaphors as curiosity, imagination and book. It can be thought that this result is the reflection of creative research and behaviours of curiosity in children. Environment category is in the last place with the rate of 3,158 %. In this category, various elements available in our environment like flag, fruit and disc are understood as metaphors.

**Table3.** Negative perceptions, for the concept of child, of 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students

Category	Code	Metaphor	Sample Student Explanations	Student representing the metaphor			
				(f)	(%)	The Total of Codes	
						(f)	(%)
<b>Negative Attitude</b>	43	Monster	It spoils everything and disturb the order	1	1,053	3	3,157
	44	Imp	It deceives elders with cunning thoughts.	1	1,053		
	45	Cigarette	It causes addiction on people like cigarette	1	1,053		

According to Table 3, the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade-students in secondary school have produced negative metaphors at the rate of 3,157 %. In these metaphors, the concept of child is connected with the aspects like spoiling others, cunning and causing negative addictions in people. It can be concluded from this result that students, though it is not of great amounts, have some negative feelings about children.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Children have been dignified throughout history, and because they are seen as the assurance of future and the continuity of generations, children have been dignified in many societies. In this research, 95 secondary school students in the study group have produced 45 metaphors in total. For the concept of child, secondary school students have used such metaphors as “flower”, “sapling”, “rose”, “happiness”, “and joy”, “love, candy”. According to Weade and Erns “The metaphors are selective and they represent a part of the total they try to explain, not the whole of it. In this respect, it can be stated that a part of the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students’ perceptions to the concept of children have been revealed with this study.

When literatures are scanned, it is clear that there are few studies on metaphoric perceptions for the concept of child. In a research conducted by Kuyucu, Şahin, and Kapıcıoğlu (2013), pre-school teachers’ perceptions for children have been determined by using mental metaphors that pre-school teachers have about the concept of child. In the conclusion part of this research, it is stated that metaphors can be used as a strong research tool of understanding, revealing and explaining

perceptions that pre-school teachers have about the concept of “Child” (Kuyucu, Şahin, and Kapıcıoğlu, 2013: 52). Through similar studies, children’s perceptions about themselves can be studied in detail. It can be stated that these results will firstly contribute children to understand the perceptions of themselves more clearly. According to the results obtained, solution proposals can be developed firstly for children’s education and their bringing up more accurately in many ways.

In this study, the focus is on the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students’ negative and positive perceptions of the concept of child. According to the results of the study, while 86,842 % of the students have produced positive metaphors for the concept of child, only such a small rate as 3,157 % of them have produced negative metaphors.

According to their rates, positive metaphors that the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students have produced are classified as emotion, dignification and creativeness category. The fact that a large majority of students have produced positive metaphors for the concept of child in terms of emotion and dignification can be accepted as an indication of the fact that children are perceived as the source of positive feelings like value, love, happiness and joy. As previously stated, it can be said that because the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students themselves are considered as children, these results are the indication of children’s wish to be dignified, be happy, live in places full of love and be present in places that increase creativeness.

The fact that too small amount of negative metaphor have been produced is the reflection of the fact that children are perceived positively by the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade students. However, it is important to focus on the negative metaphors to the concept of child in terms of disturbing the order, cunning, causing negative addiction on people. Through similar studies, the negative metaphors determined could be expected to contribute to the studies that figure out and correct the errors in social point of view about children.

#### **From the Data of the Study, Suggestions Below Could Be Done:**

- a) Similar studies on parents’ perception to the concept of child could be conducted. Through these studies, important steps could be taken for children’s being raised more efficiently.
- b) Through similar studies, about primary and secondary school teachers’ perception for the concept of child, various prior knowledge could be obtained for children’s being educated more qualified.
- c) Through similar studies on undergraduates’ perception for the concept of child, considering youngsters’ perspectives, scientific evaluations could be done, which contribute to the matter.
- d) Through similar studies on students’ conceptual perceptions such as adult, parent, teacher, student, book etc. some solution proposals could be developed on various fields, in particular on educational studies so that their mental images could be understood clearly.

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