



Research Article

Gifted Children Metaphor from the Perspective of Teachers and Parents¹

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Abstract

Metaphors help understand how the meanings investigated are perceived (Cerit, 2008; Rizvanoglu, 2007). As may be seen from these statements, metaphors may be regarded as an important tool for identifying the perceptions of teachers and parents of the gifted children. Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of teachers and parents of the gifted children by way of metaphors. The research participants were selected on voluntary basis from among the parents and teachers of primary and middle school students in Istanbul between the 2016-2017 academic year who are identified as gifted. A total of 150 parents and 50 teachers were included in the study group. Screening model was used in the present study entitled, “Gifted Children Metaphor from the Perspective of Teachers and Parents.” Data was collected by qualitative research method. The relevant information on the subject was collected using the interview technique. Teachers and parents were administered a semi-structured interview form. Both parents and teachers were asked to fill the form that includes the statement, “a gifted child is like because” Data was analyzed using the content analysis technique. The views expressed by the parents and teachers during the interviews were read and coded accordingly, and thereafter, themes were created according to the inter-related codes.

Keywords

gifted and talented, metaphor, teacher, parent

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Introduction

Metaphor, as a term, means explaining complex terms by “applying to something”, in other words by “transferring to something” in Greek. Several dictionaries describe it as comparing two things or using basic similarities, in other word, the likes of something (Dur, 2006). Metaphor is one of the tools used to identify human perceptions (Arnett, 1999). Metaphorical thinking involves using a similar case and object as a conceptual tool to elucidate the characteristics of a very complex phenomenon or case (Oxford et al. 1998). Metaphors are used to clarify or help clarify subjects that are hard to understand (Tamimi, 2005). Hence, various concepts in education have been analyzed using metaphors (Arikan and Unal, 2014; Cerit, 2008, Evcim, 2008; Saban, 2009; Tamimi, 2005, Dogan et al., 2008; Kadioğlu Ates, 2017; Cerit et al. 2016; Ozenc and Ozenc, 2018). It is important in terms of the originality of the present study that the gifted children are not among the subjects intended to be analyzed by metaphors.

Among the research in the field of education in the recent years in our country, the number of those focusing on gifted children has been on the rise. Along with the important changes in our educational philosophy, learner's place in education has changed from passive to active. Individual differences of the learners have been increasingly paid more attention. Awareness of the place of intelligence in learning has increased among both pedagogists and teachers as well as both parents and psychologists. Some statutory changes have also been introduced for the special education of gifted children in our country (Kadioglu Ates and Aktas, 2017). Superior intelligence occupies people's minds as a mysterious concept. For, intelligence is an incorporeal mental power that cannot be touched or seen but is believed to exist as in the mystical faiths. According to some, it is gifted by the creator while, to some, it is gifted by nature. Some believe that intelligence exists on a brain region. In fact, intelligence is an abstract name given to the observed effect of the harmonious, productive and effective functioning of all of the devices of the brain on behavior. Gifted people are extraordinary. Being extraordinary is an attribute that is uncommon, out of the ordinary, i.e. doesn't look like anything that is common (Sak, 2016).

Superior intelligence means having a natural potential that is at the top 10 percent at a minimum among the peers in at least one talent, is not educated and manifests itself automatically, and using such potential. Superior talent means being highly superior in talents developed systematically and knowledge at the top 10 percent level at a minimum among the peers in at least one area of human activity and being active in such area. According to these definitions, the two concepts have three things in common: a) they both refer to human skill: b) they both have a perception that aims at individuals that are different than the average or ordinary people; c) They both refer to people that are “not normal” in respect of their extraordinary

behaviors. These common points explain why, in addition to the daily language, most of the academia working in the subject field confuse these two concepts as well (Baltaci, 2013).

The development of humanity from the existence to today has been achieved by gifted individuals. Individuals with a highly developed mind, intelligence and talent are those that carry all the conditions necessary for life forward. Throughout the history of humanity, giftedness has attracted the attention of the societies. Feeding and educating the high genetic capacity by the right methods and stimulants in areas in which it is superior will greatly contribute to the societies. Therefore, the education of gifted individuals is crucial (Baykoc Donmez, 2012).

Gifted and talented students differ from their peers in terms of their characteristics and needs and must be supported by different educational programs that enhance their potentials (Feldhusen, 1997; Renzulli, 1999; Clark, 2002; Horn, 2002 as cited by Levent, 2011).

Gifted students are ahead of their peers in every domain of the development. They walk earlier, talk earlier and learn to read at an earlier age. They have original ideas. They are quite creative (Yildirim Dogru, 2013).

General qualities observed at children of superior intelligence can be listed as follows: They learn more quickly, are extraordinarily curious, work on their subjects of interest for long hours, have dominant leadership qualities, are interested in details, are capable of abstract comprehension and love problem solving (Aral, 2011). The time individuals of superior intelligence attract attention is the early childhood (Demirel Gurbuz and Ayas, 2014). Identifying children's interests, talents and skills at early childhood determines the direction of their education. In this respect, identifying gifted children at early ages allows arranging their home environment, preparing their educational program, informing and raising awareness in parents and teachers in early years (Baykoc Donmez, 2015). The ratio of gifted individuals in the world and our country is estimated to be 2% (Baykoc Donmez, 2012).

Most parents especially take their children's skills lightly if they are their first children. In fact, most parents (mostly fathers) tend to insist that their child may fall into the gifted group. Sometimes, even after their children are officially identified as gifted in the school system or by an independent psychologist, parents resort to thinking that their children are not actually gifted but only "hard working". Also, parents believe that test scores are not very effective for school life or life and may think that, "this is just a test; these scores do not actually mean anything.". Some parents simply do not want their children to be gifted; "I just want him/her to be normal." (Webb et al., 2016). Families of children of superior intelligence may feel both rewarded and punished. Being gifted requires strength to cope with various internal and external social emotional experiences for both the child and his/her

family. Having a child of superior intelligence can be both enjoyable and challenging for a family (Moon, 2004 as cited by Afat, 2013).

The education of children of superior intelligence in the academic sense is a matter that must be greatly focused on exclusively and specially in terms of both their special educational needs due to being gifted and the contribution their improved educational quality may make to the development of the country (Tortop, 2015).

Metaphor is a way of thinking and seeing that makes it easier to learn a new information as it carries a known case to a case that has an unknown meaning (Morgan, 1998). Metaphors have been used as a professional thinking, professional identity development and pedagogic tool, reflective tool, evaluation tool, research tool, program theory, cognitive model, and discovery tool in education and teacher education, as well as a tool for change in education (Saban, 2006). Metaphors help understand how the meanings investigated are perceived (Cerit, 2008; Rızvanoğlu, 2007). As may be seen from these statements, metaphors may be regarded as an important tool for identifying the perceptions of teachers and parents of the gifted children. Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of teachers and parents of the gifted children by way of metaphors. There are many studies in the literature that focus on the gifted (Kadioglu, 2017; Koc and Saranlı, 2017; Guçin and Oruc, 2015; Vatanserver Bayraktar, 2018; Orhan Karsak, 2014; Kadioglu Ates, 2018; Tortop and Nar, 2018; Afat and Kadioglu Ates, 2017; Ozenc and Ozenc, 2013; Kadioglu Ates and Mazi, 2017; Afat, 2017). The research was conducted with both teachers and parents as well as the gifted. The present study that is a metaphorical study conducted with teachers and parents in connection with giftedness is of value in terms of its contribution to the literature. The purpose of the research is to investigate the gifted child metaphor from the teacher and parent perspective. It was aimed to explore the metaphorical perception of both teachers and parents of the gifted child.

Method

In order to identify the gifted child metaphor, which is the research objective, the study group consisted of teachers teaching gifted children and parents of gifted children. Availability sampling was used to determine the stud group. The research participants were selected on voluntary basis from among the parents and teachers of primary and middle school students in Istanbul between the 2016-2017 academic year who are identified as gifted. A total of 150 parents and 50 teachers were included in the study group. Screening model was used in the present study entitled, "Gifted Children Metaphor from the Perspective of Teachers and Parents." Data was collected by qualitative research method. The relevant information on the subject was collected using the interview technique. Teachers and parents were administered a semi-structured interview form. Both parents and teachers were asked the fill the

form that includes the statement, “a gifted child is like because” Data was analyzed using the content analysis technique. The views expressed by the parents and teachers during the interviews were read to them and coded accordingly. Data was collected by interview technique. As a data collection tool, a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher was used. Interviews were conducted face to face by the researcher. Teachers were interviewed at their institutions which are their natural environment. No audio or video recording was made to avoid causing any negative feeling among the teachers. Interviews were recorded by the researcher by writing down on the forms. In order to ensure the validity of the research, the findings were presented objectively. Teachers’ responses were directly quoted. In order to ensure the reliability of the research, a reliability analysis was conducted by another researcher for each sub problem of the research. For this, Miles and Huberman's (1994) $P = \frac{Na(Agreement)}{Na(Agreement) + Nd(Disagreement)} \times 100$ formula was used. For the calculation, two academic instructors were given the codes and themes and asked to arrange them. The first academic instructor placed 78 codes in 3 different codes under 10 themes as disagreement. Calculations resulted in 0.96 reliability. The reliability percentage was above 70%, so the research was considered reliable. In the research, data was analyzed using a qualitative data analysis technique, namely content analysis. The basic purpose of the content analysis is to derive concepts and relationships that can explain the data collected. The procedure in the content analysis is to group similar data together within the framework of specific concepts and themes and organize and interpret them in such way as enables the reader to understand the data (Yildirim and Simsek, 2008). First, the similar and dissimilar aspects of the teacher responses to the questions were gathered, and themes were created by arranging the responses meaningfully according to the resulting concepts. The analyzed data was written down and hand delivered to the members of the study group for checking. Since the teachers were asked to express their honest and candid feelings, they were promised absolute anonymity. Therefore, the data relating to the participants were not e-mailed but hand delivered. Thus, the participants’ confirmation was obtained and both interview and written forms of the data were created. This way, it was attempted to overcome the limitations of a data collection method.

Table 1.
Metaphorical Perceptions Regarding Gifted Children

Themes / Sub-themes	Codes		
Equipment/Objects	Coal	Iron	A Golden Ball
Sports	Fertile soil	Mercury	Metal
Living-non-living being	Soil	Natural Stone	Ceramics
Precious metal	Ebb and flow	Lego	Property
Film	Glass vase	Precision scale	Sun
Vehicle/transport	Computer	A Film with an	Chess
Play/toy	Flower	Unpredictable	Film Character
Food	Chestnut	Finale	Flower
Animal	Treasure chest	Lahmacun	Atom Energy
Science	Dough	Cloud	Rainbow
	Sponge	A Fireball	Question Bank
	An Eye on the	A Mighty	Ocean/Sea
	Neck	Mountain	Fire
	Puzzle	Plane	Encyclopedia
	Brick	Grasshopper	Diamond
	Seed	World	Search Engine
	Sky	Paradox	USB
	Bomb	Numerical axis	Blessing
	Star	Chess	Mirror
	Nesting Doll	Gift	Concept
	Eagle	Garden	Brilliant
	Water	Sharp knife	Rubik's Cube
	Space	Doing Rodeo	Book
	Locomotive	Dream	Mountain
	Gold	Time Machine	Jet
	Being	Marble	
	Treasure	Super hero	

Equipment/Objects: Glass vase, computer, treasure chest, sponge, brick, precision scale, gift, sharp knife, time machine, property, question bank, encyclopedia, search engine, USB, mirror, book.

Sports: Chess, doing rodeo

Living-non-living being: fertile soil, soil, flower, an eye on the neck, water, being, a mighty mountain, garden, dream, ceramics, flower, blessing, concept, mountain.

Precious metal: Coal, gold, treasure, iron, mercury, metal, natural stone, marble, diamond, brilliant.

Film: A film with an unpredictable finale, super hero, film character.

Vehicle/transport: Locomotive, plane, jet.

Play/toy: Puzzle, nesting doll, lego, a fireball, a golden ball, chess, rubik's cube.

Food: Chestnut, dough, seed, lahmacun.

Animal: Eagle, grasshopper.

Science: Ebb and flow, sky, bomb, star, space, world, paradox, numerical axis, sun, atom energy, rainbow, ocean/sea, fire.

* A gifted child is like a super hero because they are not surprised by events, begin to seek solutions when faced with negativities, adjust the rules according to themselves and most of the time do not follow these rules.

* A gifted child is like a rainbow because they are sophisticated and colorful characters.

* A gifted child is like soil because if you cultivate it well, he/she becomes a sculpture, if you don't, he/she becomes mud.

* A gifted child is like a bomb because no one can know when, where and what he/she will do. He/she can explode anytime.

A gifted child is like water because if you place a set before him/her, he/she will gush out, if you make way, he/she will flow smoothly.

* A gifted child is like marble because he/she is very hard. It is hard to shape him/her. He/she must be shaped with love, respect and tolerance.

* A gifted child is like a surprise gift wrap because it is hard to predict when, where and how he/she will behave.

* A gifted child is like a secret treasure because they can surprise you anytime with their reaction to the events.

* A gifted child is like a diamond because if shaped well, he/she is very precious.

* A gifted child is like a diamond in the rough because when you keep the diamond to the light, you can see many colors; multiple colors are the quality of the diamond. A master goldsmith turns it into a priceless work.

* A gifted child is like a machine because he/she constantly works; the gifted's brain never stops. It constantly produces ideas.

A gifted child is like space because you can never know what you will see in the infinity.

* A gifted child is like a treasure because he/she is curious about everything. Nothing escapes their attention; they surprise you by asking different questions, as if their brain has a hidden treasure of knowledge.

* A gifted child is like atom because if he/she grows as fits his/her potential, then he/she is fine, but if he/she splits, he/she is like a bomb. He/she may bring a fall upon the entire humanity. Leaders that rule the world and do good to the society are one of them; those who establish terrorist organizations and spread terror and murderer doctors who become organ mafia are also one of them.

* A gifted child is like gem because, if processed skillfully, he/she will shine. If not processed as fits its structure, he/she will be shattered.

* A gifted child is like ocean because he/she is a vast and very deep unknown.

* A gifted child is like an encyclopedia because they can always ask anything about any subject.

* A gifted child is like an endless sea because they sometimes feel emotionally very wild and sometimes depressive.

* A gifted child is like iron because, if processed properly, he/she will shine, if not, he/she will rust.

* A gifted child is like a mighty mountain because it is really very hard to reach and understand him/her.

A gifted child is like a fireball because he/she may burn you if you try to touch him/her.

* A gifted child is like a diamond because it is very important to know how to shape it. His/her carat may drop. Or he/she can be made unique. What matters is the beautiful cut.

Results and Discussion

Below are the metaphors developed in the present study entitled “gifted child metaphor from the perspective of teachers and parents”: Coal, fertile soil, soil, ebb and flow, glass vase, computer, flower, chestnut, treasure chest, dough, sponge, an eye on the neck, puzzle, brick, seed, sky, bomb, star, nesting doll, eagle, water, space, locomotive, gold, being, treasure, iron, mercury, metal, natural stone, lego, precision scale, a film with an unpredictable finale, lahmacun, cloud, fireball, a mighty mountain, plane, grasshopper, world, paradox, numerical axis, chess, gift, garden, sharp knife, doing rodeo, dream, time machine, marble, super hero, a golden ball, metal, ceramics, property, sun, chess, film character, flower, atom energy, rainbow, question bank, ocean/sea, fire, encyclopedia, diamond, search engine, usb, blessing, mirror, concept, brilliant, rubik's cube, book, iron, mountain, and jet

A total of 78 metaphors were developed. The metaphors were coded with 78 codes. These codes were included under 10 themes. The themes are as follows: Equipment/objects, sports, living-non-living being, precious metal, film, vehicle/transport, play/toy, food, animal, science.

The metaphors used were generally positive. A comparison that particularly attracts attention is that they will be raised very well if they are educated as fits their special talents. The unpredictability of what they will do next, their excessive reactions or their never-ending questioning curiosity were also used to describe the metaphorical perceptions.

Çapan (2010) identified the most produced metaphors in a study conducted with teacher candidates as “precious metal, computer, fertile soil, diamond and bomb.” Olthouse (2014) stated in a study investigating the metaphors produced by teacher candidates about the concept of gifted children that the teacher candidates produced extremely positive metaphors. Also, in some descriptions, the importance of role of the teacher during the process of becoming gifted or supporting the gifted was expressed. Lee (1999) revealed in a phenomenological study that the teacher regarded gifted children as “perfect-having potential-rare-remarkable skill gifted by God-motivated and developing asynchronously.” The present study concluded that metaphorical descriptions used by the teacher candidates for gifted children emphasized that such children had different potentials than others.

The common point shared in the study where positive metaphors were used is that they have highly turbulent emotions.

The future research may investigate the perception of teaching the gifted with teachers teaching the gifted. Advantages and disadvantages of being a parent of the gifted may be investigated with the parents.

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