| Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi|

Examining Gifted Students' Perceptions about COVID-19 and Distance Education Through Metaphors

Özel Yetenekli Öğrencilerin COVİD-19 ve Uzaktan Eğitim Hakkındaki Algılarının Metaforlar Aracılığıyla İncelenmesi

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Abstract

Purpose: Places where people could contact the coronavirus, have been closed, and schools and universities are also included in this scope. In order to ensure the continuity of education, distance education practices were started immediately, and children were expected to adapt to this process in a short time in the home environment. Computer and television-based education at all levels were brought to the fore, and the educational needs of children were tried to be met. However, in this process, the issue of unique and free programs implemented at home for gifted children who need personalized learning and teaching methods rather than standardized education has not been on the agenda. In this context, the perceptions of gifted students aged 5-12 about COVID-19 and distance education metaphors were analyzed with content analysis within the scope of qualitative phenomenology study, and the effect of this process on children was tried to be revealed.

Design/Methodology/Approach: This study was carried out within the scope of phenomenology to evaluate the opinions of gifted primary and secondary school students on COVID-19 and distance education metaphors. The study group of the research consists of 84 primary and secondary school gifted students between the ages of 5-12 who attend Istanbul Aydin Children's University in the spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year.

Findings: Gifted students who were in a substantial period in terms of development answered the questions according to their perception of the questions, and it was seen that they mostly gave thought-value responses. The study was analyzed in five categories for how students perceive questions. It is seen that students perceive both concepts as behaviour, thought, emotion, knowledge and sensory and respond accordingly.

Highlights: The use of metaphors can provide easy-to-understand explanations for threatening and unexpected events and guide children's behaviour. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that there are no studies involving gifted students at the K-12 level to understand the metaphorical perceptions of distance education and COVID-19. For this reason, the research will be a source of relevant literature.

Öz

Çalışmanın amacı: Koronovirüsle beraber insanların temas halinde olabileceği yerler kapatılmış, okullar ve üniversiteler de bu kapsama dâhil edilmiştir. Eğitimin devamlılığını sağlamak üzere, uzaktan eğitim uygulamaları ivedilikle başlatılmış ve kısa sürede çocukların ev ortamında bu sürece adapte olmaları beklenmiştir. Her kademede bilgisayar ve televizyon merkezli eğitim ön plana çıkarılarak, çocukların eğitim ihtiyaçları giderilmeye çalışılmıştır. Ne var ki bu süreçte standardize edilmiş eğitimden ziyade kişiye özel öğrenim ve öğretim yollarına ihtiyaç duyan üstün potansiyelli çocuklar için evde uygulanan özgün ve özgür programlar konusu gündemde pek yer bulamamıştır. Bu kapsamda, 5-12 yaş arası özel yetenekli öğrencilerin COVİD-19 ve uzaktan eğitim metaforları hakkındaki algıları nitel olgu bilim (fenomenoloji) çalışması kapsamında içerik analiziyle incelenmiş ve bu sürecin çocuklar üzerindeki etkisi ortaya konulmaya çalışılmıştır.

Materyal ve Yöntem: Bu araştırma, özel yetenekli ilkokul ve ortaokul öğrencilerinin COVİD-19 ve uzaktan eğitim metaforlarına ilişkin görüşlerini değerlendirmek amacıyla fenomenoloji kapsamında gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 2019-2020 eğitim-öğretim yılı bahar döneminde İstanbul Aydın Çocuk Üniversitesi'ne devam eden 5-12 yaş arası 84 ilkokul ve ortaokul özel yetenekli öğrenci oluşturmaktadır.

Bulgular: Gelişimsel açıdan somut dönemde olan özel yetenekli çocuklar sorulara soruları algılayış biçimlerine göre cevaplarda bulunmuştur. Çalışma öğrencilerin soruları algılayış biçimi teması altında beş kategoriye ayrılarak çözümlenmiştir. Öğrencilerin her iki kavramı da davranış, düşünce, duygu, bilgi ve duyusal olarak algıladıkları ve ona göre cevap verdikleri görülmektedir.

Önemli Vurgular: Metaforların kullanımı, tehdit edici ve beklenmedik olaylar için kolay anlaşılır açıklamalar sağlayabilir ve çocukların davranışlarına rehberlik edebilir. İlgili literatür incelendiğinde K-12 düzeyindeki üstün yetenekli öğrencilerin uzaktan eğitim ve COVİD-19'a yönelik metaforik algılarını anlamaya yönelik çalışmalara yer verilmediği görülmektedir. Bu nedenle araştırma ilgili literatüre kaynak olacaktır.

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INTRODUCTION

The first death from the coronavirus occurred in Wuhan on January 9, 2020. Corona (COVID-19), which literally became an epidemic about three months after the first death, caused thousands of deaths around the world, and affected and continues to affect social and economic life. The education of 1.6 billion students, which corresponds to approximately half of the student population of all education levels, has been interrupted in the World due to the closure of educational institutions and the suspension of face-to-face education (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2020). In this period, children who have to receive their education from a distance try to develop naive theories about what is happening in the outside world by combining different sources of information. The media, the verbal messages (information, explanations) given by other adults and the emotional expressions of their parents greatly influence even children whose language comprehension skills are not fully developed (Bion, Benavides & Nespor, 2011). In particular, according to their structure, stress, self-perceptions, social development, and the dynamics of their own well-being can be different due to differences in perception of gifted students, who are different and more sensitive than us (Ogurlu & Yaman, 2010).

Today, children are surrounded by adults who wear masks and talk to each other about the infection, so they can easily perceive the problems experienced when they observe this situation. In this troubled process, children had to change some of their habits; for example, they adhere to strict hygiene standards and stay at home, reducing physical and social exchanges with their peers. Children may have lost an important person in their family for the first time. Unfortunately, currently, many parents also struggle to find verified and reliable information about their and their children's health safety during the pandemic (Shadmi et al., 2020).

Uncertainties can further fuel both adults' and children's fears and feelings of vulnerability. In this context, while the health policies adopted by different countries can help control and mitigate the spread of infection, they also represent severe restrictions on social relationships and habits for most families (Palamenghi, Barello, Boccia & Graffigna, 2020). Under constraints, especially gifted children's emotional development faced negative situations in many respects, and their parents' sought solutions that could improve this situation. Metaphors are one of the ways to reveal the emotions and social-psychological effects of children in the face of uncertain concepts such as COVID-19 and distance education. Metaphor is a good rhetorical tool that satisfies the need to make the unknown familiar, as it associates the new with an image of a familiar situation. In fact, metaphors are conceptual frameworks for interpreting reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 2015). Given that this perception of reality influences our responses to the pandemic, the priority of one framework over another is an important issue.

The use of metaphors can provide easy-to-understand explanations for threatening and unexpected events and can guide children's behavior (Sabucedo, Alzate & Hur, 2020). The use of metaphors can also be thought of as an interpretive tool. Thus, it allows the formation of a new perspective to be used to understand a complex situation and an analysis in the organizational context. The definition and coordination of new formations and the concrete expression of the new order explain the use of metaphors (Pipen, 2001).

When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that there are no studies involving gifted students at the K-12 level to understand the metaphorical perceptions of distance education and COVID-19.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to reveal the perceptions of gifted students attending primary and secondary school about distance education and COVID-19 through metaphors.

In this context, answers to the following research questions were sought:

1. What are the positive and negative metaphors that gifted students at the K-12 level attribute to distance education?
2. What are the positive and negative metaphors that gifted students at the K-12 level attribute to COVID-19?

METHOD

This study was carried out within the scope of phenomenology to evaluate the opinions of gifted primary and secondary school students on COVID-19 and distance education metaphors. Phenomenology is the model of this study. It is one of the qualitative research methods that examines the transformation of theoretical concepts in consciousness (Husserl, 1970), aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning or nature of our experiences (Van Manen, 1990), and examines the phenomena that we name with unchanging structure or reality (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano & Morales, 2007).

Study Group

The study group of the research consists of 84 primary and secondary school gifted students between the ages of 5-12 who attend Istanbul Aydin Children's University in the spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year. According to Table 1, 24 of the students participating in the study were girls and 60 were boys.

Table 1. Participant age and gender distribution

Age	Male	Female
5	4	1
6	1	3
7	14	5
8	14	6
9	9	3
10	7	3
11	7	2
12	4	1

The study group was selected with a criterion sample. A criterion sample is a sample that includes all children who meet certain criteria (Patton, 2014). Students who expressed their views on COVID-19 and the metaphors of distance education were deemed eligible to participate.

Data Collection

As a data collection method, two semi-structured questions prepared by the researchers were used to determine the metaphors developed by primary and secondary school students regarding Covid-19 and distance education. Although semi-structured questions have a standardized template, in-depth information can be obtained by obtaining open-ended answers (Merriam, 2013). From the students "Distance education ………………. similar. Because ………………./Coronavirus (COVID-19) ………………. similar. Because ………………." were asked to complete their sentences. Considering that the metaphor specified in these sentence structures will not be sufficient to reflect the meaning that the person attributes to the metaphor, it is considered important to ask the reason with the emphasis of "because".

The explanation with "because" provides the explanation of the causal relations that the metaphors are expressed. Thus, even if the metaphors likened to COVID-19 or distance education are the same, the reasons stated by different students in the explanation section will be separated from each other.

According to the template, students were given one class hour to express their thoughts by concentrating on only one metaphor. Since these metaphors created by the students constitute the main data source of the research, they were prevented from being affected by external factors. In addition, it was explained that they should not make any changes and that they should express their opinions appropriately.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was analyzed according to the content analysis within the scope of this case study, which was made as a result of obtaining the necessary permissions for the gifted students aged 5-12 at Istanbul Aydin Children's University. Content analysis is the categorization of many words obtained in the research under fewer words (Cosun, Altunısık, Bayraktaroglu & Yıldırım, 2015). The basic meanings found through content analysis are called categories and themes (Patton, 2014). While the category names the repetitions in the document; the theme categorizes these categories under a title. In the study, five categories were analyzed under the theme of students' perception of questions. The students' perception of the concepts as behavior, thought, emotion, knowledge and sensory and their answers accordingly shaped the content analysis categories.

Table 2. Content analysis themes and categories

	COVID-19 /Distance Education				
	THEMES	GENDER			
	Students' Perceptions of Questions	Frequency of female students	Frequency of male students	Percent	Metaphore
CATEGORIES	Experience and Behavior				
	Thought and Value				
	Emotion and Feeling				
	Knowledge				
	Sensory				

In order to start the analysis of the data, it was first checked whether the students answered both questions and those who filled in both the analogy of the metaphor and the reason for the metaphor were evaluated. Appropriate answers are numbered, starting from 1 to 84. A total of 84 papers were determined in accordance with the research. Metaphors were analyzed according

to the stages of examining the answers, examining the metaphors, developing a theme-category, distribution of metaphors to themes and categories, ensuring validity-reliability. (Corbin & Strauss, 2007).

Validity and Reliability

In order to ensure the validity of the research, the data categorization and data analysis processes are explained in detail (Merriam, 2013), the reasons for the formation of the themes are explained, and direct quotations are included as evidence. In order to ensure the reliability of the research, the themes given to the categories reached in the research were compared with the literature and checked (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013).

FINDINGS

In this section, the findings of gifted students between the ages of 5-12 regarding COVID-19 and distance education metaphors are included under the theme of "Students' Perception of Questions".

Views on COVID-19

Table 3. Metaphors developed by students for COVID-19

	COVID-19				
	THEMES	GENDER			
	Students' Perceptions of Questions	Female(f)	Male(f)	Percent(%)	Metaphore
CATEGORIES	Experience and Behavior	-	2	2	Stimulant, negative effect.
	Thought and Value	14	19	39	Angry star, monster, outer skin of the sun, king's crown, reverse hat, magic, cream milk, astronaut torn in space, thorn ball, cage, honey, braked car, sun, drinking cold milk, cactus, bridge, house arrest , rally, race car, small ball, beginning of the road, poisonous hedgehog, candy.
	Emotion and Feeling	3	8	13	Kind, worst thing in the world, silly, disturbing, danger, longing, trouble, evil, bad person, black death.
	Knowledge	6	28	40	Pneumonia, influenza, virus, flu, germ, disease, hand-foot disease, dirt, anxiety, electricity, round, allergy, oxygen, bacteria, sars.
	Sensory	1	3	4	Nightmare.

When Table 3 is examined, the category of "Thought and Value" with a rate of 39% ranks first with 23 types of metaphors. In this category, the small ball is the metaphor that comes to mind the most, expressed by 4 students. It is lined up one after the other as the beast and the outer layer of the Sun. The "Knowledge" category, with 40%, ranks second with 15 types of metaphors. In this category, the metaphor of virus is expressed by 7 students and is the metaphor that comes to mind the most. They are listed as flu, disease and microbe one after another. With 13%, the "Emotion and Feeling" category ranks third with 10 types of metaphors. In this category, the metaphor of bad person is the metaphor that comes to mind the most, expressed by 2 students. Each of the other metaphors was expressed once. The category of "Experience and Behavior" with a rate of 2% ranks fourth with 2 types of metaphors. In this category, each of the stimulant and negative effect metaphors was expressed by 1 student. With 4%, the "Sensory" category ranks fifth with 1 type of metaphor.

It is seen that COVID-19 is mostly compared to virus, flu and small ball as a metaphor. While information about COVID-19 is dominant in the first two metaphors, the impression of shape is dominant in the small ball metaphor. While metaphors such as monster, crown, thorn ball and car with a broken brake create concrete metaphors, metaphors such as devil, black death, magic and nightmare form abstract metaphors. Along with these, the metaphor of the beginning of the road is a metaphor that has concrete and abstract meanings.

When Table 3 is examined, while COVID-19 's metaphors such as king crown, sun, rally, racing car and small ball have positive connotations, metaphors such as pneumonia, flu, sars, anxiety, magic and nightmare have negative connotations. In addition, it was aimed to define the difficulty of COVID-19 by expressing difficult situations with metaphors such as an astronaut with a torn suit in space, a car with a broken brake and house arrest. In addition to Table 3, a sample metaphor for each category is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Sample metaphors for identified categories related to COVID-19

	COVID-19	
	THEMES	
	Students' Perceptions of Questions	**Sample Metaphors**
CATEGORIES	Experience and Behavior	Similar to a stimulant, it taught the importance of family.(S82)
	Thought and Value	It's like a monster. Because it imprisoned us in houses. (S2) Coronavirus is like drinking cold milk because both make you sick. (S37) It is similar to a racing car because it is very fast.(S47) It is like a king's crown because it has antennae.(S5)
	Emotion and Feeling	It's like the worst thing in the world- it kills people and they couldn't find their vaccine.(S10) It is like a bad person because he destroys everything. (S63)
	Knowledge	It is similar to Sars virus because both are deadly.(S25) Pneumonia is an upper respiratory tract infection.(S75)
	Sensory	It's like a nightmare. Because it spreads to everyone and kills people.(S18)

Views on Distance Education

Table 5. Metaphors developed by students regarding distance education

	Distance Education				
	THEMES		**GENDER**		
	Students' Perceptions of Questions	**Female(f)**	**Male(f)**	**Percent(%)**	**Metaphore**
CATEGORIES	Experience and Behavior	6	10	19	Computer game, entertainment, dance, video call, game, documentary, cinema, memorization, TV show.
	Thought and Value	8	15	27	Lonely flower in pot, evil, banana pancake, vacation, cartoon, movie I dislike, bottomless pit, foreign song, ship, border, nothingness, remote control car, glass, polka dot, puppet, savior, train-to-train transport, incomplete education, tree, alien.
	Emotion and Feeling	4	11	17	Something boring, Chinese torture, excitement, uneasiness, unhappiness, greed, freedom, bad boring thing, prison, apathy.
	Knowledge	7	22	34	School, private teacher, home school, e-school, state of emergency, lesson, Zoom, education, virtual environment, communication, e-education, e-teacher, program, educational video.
	Sensory	-	1	1	Touchless environment.

When Table 5 is examined, the "Thought and Value" category with a rate of 27% ranks first with 20 types of metaphors. In this category, the metaphors of remote-controlled car, glass, and punctuation are the most common metaphors, each of which is expressed by 2 students. Each of the other metaphors was expressed once. The "Knowledge" category, with a rate of 34%, ranks second with 14 types of metaphors. In this category, the metaphor of school is the metaphor that comes to mind the most, expressed by 9 students. They are listed as courses and e-learning, one after the other. With 17%, the "Emotion and Feeling" category ranks third with 10 types of metaphors. In this category, the metaphor of "bad boring thing" is the metaphor that comes to mind the most, expressed by 4 students. It is listed as something boring and unhappiness one after the other. "Experience and Behavior" category, with a rate of 19%, ranks fourth with 9 types of metaphors. In this category, the metaphor of video calling was expressed by 4 students. They are listed as computer games and entertainment one after another. Having a rate of 1%, the "Sensory" category ranks fifth with 1 type of metaphor.

It is seen that distance education is mostly compared to school as a metaphor. This analogy shows that the function of distance education is understood by the students. While metaphors such as school, private teacher, home school, e-school and lesson form concrete metaphors, metaphors such as fun, apathy, ambition, unhappiness, freedom and excitement also create abstract metaphors. Along with these, the metaphors of the lonely flower in the pot and the bottomless pit are metaphors that have concrete and abstract meanings. Since metaphors such as computer games, video calls, virtual environments, e-schools and Zoom are related to the internet, they show that the same relationship is established with distance education.

When Table 5 is examined, while the metaphors that have positive connotations such as entertainment, dance, holiday and savior as metaphors for distance education, the metaphors I dislike, such as movie, abyss, nothingness, incomplete education, Chinese torture, prison and state of emergency, also have negative connotations. In addition, the fact that it can have positive or negative meanings from person to person with metaphors such as banana pancakes, memorization, foreign songs and educational videos means that distance education gains meaning according to personal perception. In addition to Table 5, a sample metaphor for each category is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Sample metaphors for the categories identified for distance education

	Distance Education	
	THEMES	
CATEGORIES	**Students' Perceptions of Questions**	**Sample Metaphors**
	Experience and Behavior	It's like a video chat on the phone. Because it is no different than when we meet face to face (S59). Distance education is similar to online games. Because in my opinion it is, and we started very late in terms of online education in our country compared to other countries, so we have many shortcomings in terms of lessons.(S26)
	Thought and Value	It looks like a tree because my friends look like trees.(S73). It's like a lonely flower in a pot. It lives in pots but not like in nature. There are bees and insects in nature. It is the same in home education, it is not complementary like in school, it is complete with my teachers and friends.(S2).
	Emotion and Feeling	It is similar to an education system where I suffer 100 minutes of Chinese torture and get tired of it, because I cannot boil the lesson when distance education happens. I miss my school.(S22). Apathy, education should be versatile.(S74)
	Knowledge	It is similar to educational videos because it is digital and not very interactive, and it is difficult to add something to it.(S57)
	Sensory	It is like a non-touch environment because we listen to the teacher without touching it. (S52)

DISCUSSION

In this study, the images and perceptions of gifted students aged 5-12 regarding the COVID-19 pandemic process and the distance education experience they had in this process were examined within the scope of a phenomenology study. The study was analyzed by dividing into five categories under the theme of students' perception of questions. It is seen that students perceive both concepts as behavior, thought, emotion, knowledge and sensory and respond accordingly.

It has been determined that many of the metaphors developed by the students regarding the COVID-19 pandemic process are in the "Thought and Value" category. In this category, "little ball" and "outer layer of the sun" are among the metaphors that come to mind the most. In this context, when the students' explanations for these metaphors are examined, it is seen that the thoughts and values they have developed regarding the COVID-19 pandemic are mostly based on scientific data and observations. The fact that gifted students are easy and quick learners, and they like to learn information in depth and in detail is also prominent in this research (Akkanat, 2004; Ataman, 2009, 2007; Ataman, 2008; Çağlar, 2004; Levent, 2011; Özbay, 2013, Suveren, 2006). At the same time, their quick answers to questions also show their metaphorical thinking abilities.

When the existing explanations for the metaphors in the "Knowledge" category are examined, it is noticed that the students approach the pandemic process too realistically. While developing the metaphors, it is seen that they realistically transferred the process they experienced to their lives and produced realistic metaphors. In fact, the data obtained in the researchers conducted in this period; reveals that children commonly avoid asking questions about the epidemic as well as distraction and irritability (Chi et al., 2020). The fact that a social problem has affected children so much indicates that the epidemic should also be emphasized in terms of child psychology. The data obtained from this research show that the students involved in the research process can reach realistic information by asking too many questions. This situation can be interpreted as a behavior specific to gifted students.

When the metaphors in the category of "Emotion and Feeling" are examined, it is seen that the metaphor of bad person is the metaphor that comes to mind the most, expressed by 2 students. When such metaphors and the way students explain these metaphors are examined; It is noticed that the students perceive the process as threatening and dangerous, and they are very worried about the process. As in this study, when some children are exposed to unexplained and unpredictable behaviors, they may perceive the process as a threat and their anxiety may increase (Dalton, Rapa & Stein, 2020). As there is an aggressive tendency to a situation that is seen as a threat with harsh words, this situation can also bring anxiety disorder.

In the context of distance education, when the metaphors created in the "Thought and Value" category are examined, it is seen that they have developed a critical perspective on the concept of distance education. For example, while metaphors have positive or negative meanings, their explanations are critical of why these metaphors should be negative or positive. This kind of

approach is not a different situation that needs to be examined for gifted children. Because in the normal process; critical thinking skills are frequently encountered in gifted students (Özbay, 2013). Students evaluate and accept what they see, hear and read, not as they are, but by making them critical.

When the metaphors in the "Knowledge" category are examined, it is noticed that the students approach the process realistically and positively. It is noticed that students overlap distance education with the school and the actions taken at school. In the study by Bozkurt (2020), in which primary school students' images and perceptions of distance education were determined through metaphors, children often matched the concept of distance education with school.

When the metaphors in the "Emotion and Feeling" category were examined, it was determined that the metaphors in which negative emotions and feelings were dominant. It is thought that many of these metaphors are due to incomplete communication. Accordingly, it is concluded that educational communication in distance education and designing in this direction are of critical importance for the success of the applications. Compared to adults, children can be significantly affected by traumatic events such as pandemics and natural disasters and have negative thoughts, as they lack experience and skills in accessing resources where they can meet their own developmental, social, emotional, spiritual, and behavioral needs independently (Schonfeld & Demaria, 2015).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is seen that students have more metaphors regarding distance education compared to the " COVID-19 " pandemic. Since distance education is very different from traditional education, it has been determined that the explanations of the metaphors produced by the students about the subject are written with a critical point of view and are mostly positive. This shows that distance education is a viable learning model for young students as well as adult students. Similar results are found in studies conducted to determine the existing perception of distance education with metaphors (Bozkurt, 2020; Şahin İzmirli & Mısırlı, 2018; Yılmaz & Güven, 2015).

The suggestions given within the scope of the research findings can be evaluated within the scope of the action plans and distance education applications planned to be made during the pandemic. Firstly, alternative forms of service, such as mental health support, should be developed within ministries or directorates in order to close the emotional vacuum created by the COVID-19 pandemic on gifted students. It is recommended to switch to the blended learning model in order to keep the differences between students' independent learning flexibility, motivation and skills at a minimum level; because distance education at K-12 levels all over the world cannot go beyond live lectures and cannot be carried out very effectively. Professional development mechanisms should be established very quickly so that teachers and parents can support students in this new education method, which is also recommended. Parent academies to be established, such as teacher academies, can also enable families to be more systematically involved in the process.

It is thought that it would be beneficial to develop intervention strategies and/or approaches for gifted students in this period. It is suggested that instructional designs and methods used by teachers should be chosen in a way that will increase communication. Along with all these, it is necessary to analyze the social psychological area created by this period especially on disadvantaged children and, if necessary, measures should be taken on the basis of family and children.

Finally, it should be ensured that all students develop a positive perception towards distance education. It is thought that this perception will be developed more easily if the quality of the education given is increased and the teaching environment is supported with different learning outcomes.

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