The Metaphorical Perceptions of Prospective Turkish Teachers' Related to the Concept of "Language"

Serdar Derman

Correspondence: Serdar Derman, Necmettin Erbakan University, Ahmet Keleşoğlu Education Faculty, Department of Turkish Language Teaching, Turkey.

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to reveal the metaphorical perceptions of prospective Turkish teachers' related to the concept of "language". The study was carried out with 158 prospective Turkish teachers' ongoing Gaziantep University, Faculty of Education, Department of Turkish Language Teaching in 2014-2015 academic year. To reveal the perceptions of the prospective teachers related to "language" concepts   through metaphors they were asked to complete one of the following prompt "Language likes …..; because…." and "Language likes to ….; because…." within about a course period (45 minutes). Metaphor eliciation method was employed in the present study and content analysis was used for data analysis. Prospective Turkish Teachers produced seventy five different metaphors for the concept of "language". Seventy five metaphors were categorized according to the common features presented in the justifications. Six categories that were structured in this way are as follows "1.Multiple manners, Flexibility, Layering 2. Origin and oldness 3. Being alive, development, change 4. Culture Carrying, Cultural Transporter 5. Communication and Socialization Tool 6. Tool of Expressing Status and Accumulations". The findings were compared with related studies and suggestions were made for effective use of metaphors in language teaching.

Keywords: language concept, metaphor, Turkish language teaching, metaphor elicitation method, teacher training

1. Introduction

1.1 Metaphor and Using Metaphor in Education

The use of metaphor is not associated with just daily language, literature and poetry (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005). Beyond being the art of statement for decorating the daily language, metaphors have much more important functions (Saban, 2004). Although metaphors are often an important part of our daily life, we are not aware of them or we do not think deeply about the meaning of the noticed metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005). According to the Lakoff and Johnson's "metaphor theory" (Perry, 2011) metaphors are conceptual structures giving direction to realizing life and universe, to the ideas, to all behaviors and the style of finding way in the world. The terms occurring as a result of the physical, cultural and social experiences are in fact metaphorical and are among the most important understanding tools (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005). Metaphorical structured concepts penetrate our perceptions, thinking style, behavior style (Strenski, 1989), expressing style, communication style with people, briefly reading the universe (Morgan, 1980).

Metaphors are often seen as literary and descriptive tools that used to make expression ostentatious but in fact they are the creative forms reveals their effect as a result of displacing of images (mental frameworks). The comparison between the A and B images (frames) in the metaphorical relationship of A is B or A likes B plays role in producing new meaning to replacing and interaction (Morgan, 1980, p. 6). Metaphors provide convenience in understanding, description and configuration a new phenomenon by means of carrying the meaning of a well-known situation to an unknown situation (Morgan, 1980). Oxford and colleagues (1998) interpreted metaphor as a concept, phenomenon or explaining the situation by likening the situation to another concept, phenomenon or situation. *The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another* (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005, p. 27). Lakoff and Johnson explain this with metaphorical systematicity as: systematicity that allows us to comprehend one aspect of a concept (A) in terms of another (B) will compulsorily hide other aspect of the concept. While metaphorical concepts give us the opportunity to focus on an aspect of a concept, it abducts us standing on other aspects incompatible with this metaphor. In *Argument is War* metaphorical expression, while the properties of the argument similar to war taken over, the other properties have been pushed to the background. The other features of the argument pushed into the

background and *war* metaphor have not been ignored, a strong perspective presented by focusing on features similar to war tactically (Lakoff & Johnson, 2005). At this point the strength of the metaphors come out. A relationship established between two different concepts, understanding is facilitated, carried out or strengthened by reflecting of a certain mental scheme to another mental schema (Saban, 2009).

Metaphor attract attention by being a strong mental mapping and modeling mechanism for individuals to understand and configurate their worlds (Arslan & Bayrakçı, 2006, p. 103).

Since metaphors provide convenience in explanation and appreciation of abstract concepts, facts and events, this situation has attracted the attention of educators.

As well as being a good teaching technique for new information, metaphors also validated tools keeping in mind and permenancy of the information.

The determinative effect of mental models of the students acquired as a result of the physical, cultural and social experiences should not be ignored in performing these functions by metaphors. Metaphors facilitate the description of abstract principles, facts and events by supporting with concrete images. Yob (2003) suggests that metaphors are strong mental tools used to understand and explain a highly abstract, complex and theoretical phenomenon. The use of metaphor in education should not be considered as limiting teaching with that metaphor, in contrast it should be considered as enriching teaching methods by different perspectives and comparisons (Boostrom, 1998). Language is a natural means of communicating between people and playing a key role in all learning activities. Language acquisition and education develop in a certain period. The natural tendency of individuals to combine learning and learning can be improved when appropriate methods and techniques are used. The world of thought that people build while trying to understand the events in themselves and their surroundings is shaped by the concepts and the relationships between concepts. Human beings socialize together with the values they gain in a linguistic integrity, and they are involved in thinking and expressing such as learning through the language, applying what they learn, and interpreting. It is composed of learning areas of listening / watching, speaking, reading, writing, and language knowledge aimed at developing the skills of learning, understanding, interpreting and communicating Turkish. Since the mentioned learning areas are in interaction with each other, they should be considered in an integrated manner (MEB, 2006, p. 2). The training of individuals who correctly, beautifully, effectively speaking and interpreting what is said and understood in all areas of life depends on their success in all language skills (MEB, 2006, p. 6). In addition to practicing activities based on the language of Turkish to develop reading, speaking, writing and listening skills, the prospective Turkish teachers should also include information and practical applications for grammar teaching and language use in everyday life, as well as teaching activities in secondary school level. For this reason, it is important to analyze in detail what the perceptions of the prospective Turkish teachers about the language concept are. In recent years the studies aimed at revealing the metaphorical perceptions on different facts remarkably increased in educational researches. In the field of educational research the studies have been conducted on the use of metaphor dealing with the perceptions of the individuals about teacher (Cerit, 2006; Saban, 2004), school (Saban, 2008), student (Saban, 2009), inspectorship (Döş, 2010), environment (Ateş & Karatepe, 2013), mathematics (Bahadır & Özdemir, 2012; Oflaz, 2011), science (Derman & Derman, 2015) and chemistry (Derman, 2014). In the light of the perspective set forth above, the metaphorical perceptions of prospective Turkish teachers related to the concept of "language" were discussed in the present study.

2. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to reveal the perceptions of prospective Turkish teachers'(PTTs) related to the concept of "language" through metaphors.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The study was carried out with 158 PTTs ongoing Gaziantep University, Faculty of Education, Department of Turkish Language Teaching program in 2014-2015 academic year. 89 (56.33%) of the participants were female and 69 (43.67%) of the participants were male. Table 1 below provides information on participants' grade level and gender variation.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of participants according to grade level and gender variable

Grade level	*f*		Total
	Female	Male	
2	38	25	63
3	33	25	58
4	18	19	37
Total	89	69	158

3.2 Data Collection

To reveal the perceptions of the prospective teachers related to "language" concepts through metaphors it was asked to complete one of the following prompt "Language likes …..; because…." and "Language likes to ….; because…." within about a course period (45 minutes). Participants were asked to express their thoughts so as to focus on only a metaphor, using one of these sentences prompts in the formulation of their response. In addition, at the top of the paper given to the teacher candidates, a small explanatory small paragraph related to metaphors was provided in order to trigger the opinions of the prospective teachers. In studies of metaphors used as a research tool (Saban, 2008; 2009; Cerit, 2006), it is seen that the likening preposition "such as" generally demonstrates more clearly the link between the subject and the source of the metaphor. In this study the word "because" is used to obtain a more coherent description (Saban, 2008; 2009).

3.3 Data Analyses and Interpretation

Metaphor elicitation method (Seferoğlu at al., 2009) was employed in this study and content analysis was used for data analysis. The stages used in this study were constructed by investigating other relevant studies (Ateş & Karatepe, 2013; Cerit, 2006; Saban, 2004; 2008; 2009; 2011; Derman, 2014; Derman & Derman, 2015) and without skipping any of the stages by reporting all processes during the analysis elaborately. The analyses of the metaphors were carried out in the following stages:

3.3.1 Elimination Stage

At this stage, metaphor prompts developed by prospective teachers were transferred to the computer in the form of an Excel Table. We paid attention to the manuscripts of the prospective Turkish teachers whether or not they were focused on a certain metaphor image during the creation of excel table. The manuscripts without any metaphor, those containing more than one metaphor and those that were left empty, were eliminated during this stage. Forceville (2002) mentions to the three key components of a metaphor (Oflaz, 2011). These are the source of metaphor, the subject of metaphor and the features which will be transferred from the source of metaphor to the subject of metaphor.

For example there are two different metaphors (bread and air) in the following expression of metaphor: "*language is like bread and air, because these are the basic necessities for survival*" Although the reasons presented in this expression are valid, it was nonetheless eliminated due to the fact that it contained more than one metaphor.

The reason given in the expression "*Language is like water because the water cleans the dirt as well as the language cleans everything*" has not been found meaningful enough to contribute to the meaning of the metaphor (language). For this reason, this metaphor was excluded from the study.

3.3.2 Category Development Stage

At this stage, the metaphors about the concept of language were considered according to their common traits. In this consideration attention was paid to the features focused on by the PTTs, and the way in which develop a perspective about the concept of language. The metaphors developed by the PTTs were considered according to relationship between the subject and the source of the metaphor. Each metaphor was included in a category by considering the perspective of the metaphorical expression. Thus, six different conceptual categories were developed.

3.4 Validity and Reliability Stage

A detailed report of the collected data explaining how the researcher reach the results are among the important criteria in a qualitative study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005, p. 257). As indicated previously, in this study, data was reported upon elaborately.

The analysis involved qualitative methods. In this study, expert opinion was consulted. A consideration meeting was done with a language teaching expert familiar with the paradigm of qualitative research. The research process was transferred to the expert entirely verbally. All the papers included the expressions of 169 metaphors was given to the expert. As a result of the above mentioned reasons (stated in Elimination Stage subheading), 11 papers were excluded from the study. As a result of the above-mentioned reasons (see the Elimination Stage subheading), 8 of the 11 papers on which the researcher thought that he should be excluded from his study were reached a consensus among expert and researcher. With comparison of the opinion of the expert and the researcher, the reliability of the research was calculated using Miles and Huberman's reliability formula, namely: Reliability = (number of agreements/total number of agreements + disagreements)×100 (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 64). When the compliance between the opinions of expert and researcher reached 90% or above, the reliability is considered at a desired level (Saban, 2009). In this study, while there is a consensus in 158 of the 169 metaphor expressions between the researchers and expert, dissonance occurred in three metaphor expressions. The percentage ratio of the consensus was calculated. The compromision ratio between the expert and researchers was found as 98% (Reliability = 158/158+3 = 0.98).

4. Results

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of PTTs' Metaphors Related to Language Concept

Metaphore Name	Grade 2		Grade 3		Grade 4		Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Tree	3	1	-	1	1	1	7
Family	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Stream	2	2	1	1	1	2	9
Key	1	-	1	-	-	-	2
Atmosphere	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Moon	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mirror	-	-	1	2	-	3	6
Honeycomb	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Be acquitted	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Chameleon	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Living	1	4	2	2	1	-	10
Paradise	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Flower	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Nail	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Multi-storey house	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Taste	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Iron	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Backbone	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Nature	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Intimate friend	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
World	-	-	3	-	1	1	5
Bread	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Universe	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
Magic box	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Rainbow	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Sky	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Rose	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Sun	1	1	-	-	-	-	2
Dough	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Air	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Life	-	-	1	-	-	2	3
Knife	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Human	4	1	1	-	3	2	11
Pen	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Heart	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Blood	-	1	-	1	-	-	2
Door	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
Snowflake	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Snowball	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Tile	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Book	1	-	-	1	-	-	2
Cord (umbilical cord)	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Bridge	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Bird	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Culture	2	-	1	-	-	-	3
Elasticated	-	3	-	-	-	-	3
Pattern	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Matryoshka	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Letter	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Torch	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Magnet	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Ink	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Pomegranate	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Nasreddin Hodja	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Breath	2	-	-	2	1	1	6
Ocean	1	1	2	2	-	-	6
Money	-	2	-	1	-	-	3
Curtain	-	1	-	-	-	-	1

Soul	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Chewing gum	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Love	1	-	-	-	1	-	2
Water	4	2	2	3	1	3	15
Face	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Wine	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
Technology	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Tailor	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Seed	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Soil	1	-	1	1	-	-	3
Train	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
University	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Rain	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Meal	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Snake	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Star	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Rock	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
							158

(F: Female; M: Male)

As seen in Table 1, PTTs produced 75 different metaphors related to the language concept. The most frequent ones are water (15), human (11), living (10), stream (9), tree (7), mirror (6), breath (6), ocean (6), World (5), life (3), culture (3), elasticated (3), soil (3), money (3).

Table 3. The Categorical Distribution of PTTs' Metaphors Related to Language Concept

Categories	Metaphors	f
1. Multiple manners, Flexibility, Layering	Ocean (6), elasticated (3), world (3), universe (2), pomegranate, sky, multi-story house, tile, paradise, book, magic box, Rainbow, matruşka, chewing gum, love, train, pattern	27
2. Origin and oldness	Tree, rock, iron, cord (umbilical cord),	4
3. Being alive, development, change	Human (11), stream (3), technology, evolution, entity, living (8), bird, seed, snowball, rose, breath, tree (5), water, blood	37
4. Culture Carrying, Cultural Transporter	University, chameleon, flower, water (3), culture (4), snowflake, world, honeycomb, mirror (5), moon, soil, torch, tailor, meal, life (2), taste, blood, stream (6), sun (2), Dough, book	37
5. Communication and Socialization Tool	Love, heart, water (9), nail, breath (5), bread, soul, money, ink, letter, magnet, life, door (2), family, air, be acquitted, atmosphere, soil, backbone, bridge, living (2),	35
6. Tool of Expressing Status and Accumulations	Money (2), key (2), tree, fur, knife, face, snake, soil, water (2), pen, rain, world, nature, mirror, curtain	18

As seen in Table 3, when the PTTs metaphors related to the concept of "language" were analyzed according to the common features, six different categories were formed. In Table 3 it is seen that some metaphors (such as tree, stream, life, love, soil) were represented in more than one category. For example, the metaphor of "soil" was included in the category of "Cultural Carriage, Cultural Transmission" because of the justification revealed in the following expression "*Language is like soil because the soil is hosted by all living things, language is also included in all cultures*"; and it is included in the category of "Communication and Socialization Tool" because of the justification revealed in the following expression "*Language is like soil because it is the soul of mankind*" and also it is included in the category of "Status and Accumulation Expression Tool" because of the justification revealed in the following expression "*The language is like soil because how to use it when it is used correctly, but also to benefit humanity when used correctly*".

5. Discussion and Implication

In this study, the metaphors developed by the PTTs about the concept of "language" are classified into six different categories according to the justifications presented. These categories are as follows "1.Multiple manners, Flexibility, Layering 2. Origin and oldness 3. Being alive, development, change 4. Culture Carrying, Cultural Transporter 5. Communication and Socialization Tool 6. Tool of Expressing Status and Accumulations". The findings of the present study revealed that the perceptions of the PTTs about the language concept are predominantly took form in line with the categories of the "Multiple manners, Flexibility, Layering", "Being alive, development, change", "Culture Carrying, Cultural Transporter", "Communication and Socialization Tool".

The basic aim of language teaching is to provide students notions of the appearance of language in different contexts and enriching the world of emotions, thoughts and imaginations by reaching different sources of information and also expressing themselves through language (MEB, 2006, p. 2).

It is critical that language-related perceptions are comprehensive and holistic so that PTTs who will teach Turkish in secondary school (5th, 6th, 7th, 8th grade) in the future can achieve the above-mentioned language teaching objectives. Because the place of language is very important for students to develop their mental skills and communication skills, to express emotions and thoughts, and to obtain information. Healthy development of language and mental skills facilitates students' processes of inquiry, versatile thinking, evaluation, decision making, socialization and professional development. For this reason, it is important for students to improve their language and mental skills from an early ages (MEB, 2015, p. 3). Careful attention should be paid to the pre-service teacher training process in order to develop the perceptions of the PTTs who are expected to develop these skills in the students in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

In pre-service teacher training process, discussions with their friends can be provided by producing metaphors related to the concept of language from PTTs in related courses. Since metaphors are produced on the basis of experience, each metaphor produced by the students can be considered as an experience. The richer the experience of a person with a concept is, stronger the conceptual structure to be formed. Thus, students are presented with the opportunity to reveal their mental structures related to the concept of language, to compare their own concepts with the concepts of their peers, to correct or complete possible defective and incomplete conceptual structures (Saban, 2008). As a result, using metaphor in teaching should not be thought of as limiting learning to just that metaphor, but should be considered as methods enriching teaching by means of different perspectives (Boostrom, 1998).

Saban (2004; 2008; 2009), in his studies of metaphorical analysis of the views of the teacher, student, school, etc. emphasizes that alternate metaphors should be used to explain in a comprehensive way all these aspects of the phenomenon is not possible with a single metaphor.

In addition, texts reflecting different aspects of the language in the related courses during the pre-service teacher training process can be used in a systematic way to contribute to the development of the perceptions of the PTTs regarding the language concept. Generating metaphors for the basic concepts that PTTs use frequently can help them to structure and deepen their theoretical knowledge in their cognitive structure. One of the basic principles of constructivist learning is that the information is formed by the individual in the meaning world of the individual, that is, the information is structured in the individual specific and subjective mind. As asserted by Brooks (1999) "Each of us makes sense of our world by synthesizing new experiences into what we have previously come to understand. Often, we encounter an object, an idea, a relationship, or a phenomenon that doesn't quite make sense to us. When confronted with such initially discrepant data or perceptions, we either interpret what we see to conform to our present set of rules for explaining and ordering our world, or we generate a new set of rules that better accounts for what we perceive to be occurring". At this point, the metaphors produced by PTTs reflect the simplest and basic characteristics of concepts in the mind of that individual. Thus, the use of metaphors can present new tips for the explanations and understandings of the language concepts that teachers often use in different contexts and in different functions in Turkish lessons.

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