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PERCEPTION OF THE CONCEPT OF LOVE AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

PERCEPCIÓN DEL CONCEPTO DE AMOR ENTRE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE LA ESCUELA SECUNDARIA

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Abstract

Values are among the most important elements which ensure the sustainability of societies. It is a reality that nations which do not protect their values and transfer them to new generations suffer from serious problems. Love is one of the most important values which ensure that social life continues in unity and cohesion. The purpose of this paper is to display the perception of "love" value, which is one of the most important elements in social life, among 12th grade female and male high school students. Open-ended written opinion form was used in the study. The students who participated in the study were asked to fill in the spaces in the expression "Love is like.... Because...." with appropriate phrases. In this way, the metaphor and the reasons for which it was chosen were obtained. In the study, students produced 36 metaphors in total concerning the concept of love. Based on the results obtained from this research, it can be said that students see the concept of love as a sacred value and identify it with their parents or boyfriend-girlfriend whose loss they cannot imagine. Considering the age of students, boyfriend-girlfriend and mother-father are indispensable beings for them. In addition, mentioning metaphors such as animals, human and life when "love" is mentioned can be accepted as an indicator of positive meanings attached to the concept of love by students. It is believed that the education received by students and their general social structure play essential role in obtaining these results.

Keywords

Love - Student - Metaphor - Education - Society

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Introduction to the problem

Love is one of the indispensable emotions of human nature. Love also plays an essential role in continuation of social cohesion. "A loveless society lacks peace. And the individuals in that society are unhappy"¹. Although love is an important emotion which has a place in the life of every person, no one thinks too much on how it will be improved or protected. "Love is a virtue as much as it is a principle on which existence stands. No person is deprived of existence and unity; neither he/she is deprived of love. Love leads to order and perfection whereas hate leads to disorder and deficiency"². Love plays an essential role in human life and social structure; however, in today's social structure, it is observed that such concepts as money, fame and power take precedence over love. Societies which are not dominated by love cannot progress. Where love does not exist, grudge and enmity reveal themselves to eliminate peace and brotherhood.

Family, which is one of the smallest building blocks of social structure, is formed by love. Children in family are grown with love. "Although there are many definitions of the concept of family, most family theoreticians agree that it is an institution "where a person lives and shares the same place with an intimate person, consisting of two or more individuals; it is a place where emotional connections are established, social situations, roles and tasks related to each other are assumed, and feelings such as love and belonging are shared"³. Sometimes children who grow without love due to irresponsible behaviours of their parents can suffer from lack of self-confidence which is observed as the most fundamental problem. Therefore, in order to establish a healthy social structure and look to the future more confidently, the situations which prevent love should be identified by especially sociologists and psychologists and eliminated.

Metaphors help people to explain things which they have difficulty in expressing. Lakoff and Johnson defined metaphor as "a thinking material, the pattern of human comprehension and not only a figure of words but a figure of thinking as well."⁴

Since old times, metaphors have been used in several fields such as literature, art, education, and philosophy. When mankind tries to understand a concept in general, he makes analogies to another concept or displays its similarities with it. This method popularizes metaphors which are seen as an important element of reasoning today. "Metaphor is derived from the Greek word "Metapherein" (meta: over, beyond; pherein: carry) which means carrying a concept beyond itself and loading it with more than its own weight. Metaphor has been a subject which was examined by a variety of fields from rhetoric in ancient times to philosophy, linguistics, semantics, education and psychology today. Metaphor has an important place in today's postmodern discourses and is a concept open to interdisciplinary approach. In art and design metaphors are bearer elements on which the conceptual structure of the work is established and the content is constructed. As a means of understanding and making sense of the world, metaphors are

¹ M. İnan, "The Social Reflection of Love as a Value on Teenagers: Family", Erzincan University Journal of Graduate School of Social Sciences, Vol: 9 num 1 (2015): 125-130.

² M. Demirkol, "The Power of Love and Justice in Building Peace", International Journal of Science Culture and Sport, Special Issue num 4 (2015): 416-424 y E. N. Dmitriyeva & E. P. Nikiforova, "Intercultural Dimension in Teaching Language Courses in Higher School", International Electronic Journal of Mathematics Education, Vol: 11 num 10 (2016): 3387-3396.

³ S. Hallaç and F. A. Öz, "Theoretical View to the Concept of Family", Modern Approaches in Psychiatry, Vol: 6 num 2 (2014): 142-153.

⁴ G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, Metaphors: Life, Meaning and Language (İstanbul: Paradigm, 2005).

powerful instruments for mental mapping and modelling. Therefore, they have a rather essential place especially in learning of abstract concepts. Using metaphors has remarkable importance in terms of constructivist approach. While the student is studying curricula prepared with constructivist approach, they are using metaphoric thinking method consciously or subconsciously. It is also essential that using metaphors hasa positive impact on language and expression skills⁵.

The purpose of this study is to display the metaphors that twelfth grade female and male students develop concerning the concept of love which is among the basic values that education aims to provide. In the study students were asked to produce metaphors related to the concept of "love" and the categories under which these metaphors were grouped was examined. In the end, the perception of teenagers concerning metaphors was determined.

Method

Model of the Research

In the study, a qualitative research method was used in order to determine the metaphors created by students so as to express their opinions concerning the concept of love. The pattern of the study is organized in the form of phenomenology. The purpose of phenomenological research pattern is to reveal the experiences and perceptions of individuals as regards a certain phenomenon and the meanings they attach to it. Data analysis in phenomenological studies aims at revealing experiences and meanings. Content analysis which was conducted for this purpose attempts to reveal the themes that can conceptualize data and define the phenomenon. Results are presented in a descriptive narration and direct citations are included. The findings obtained within the framework of resulting themes are explained and interpreted.

Universe and Sample

The universe of the research consists of high school students at twelfth grade. The reason for choosing twelfth graders is that they are grown-up teenagers who are preparing to become undergraduate students. Assistance was received from voluntary teachers who offered education at the school. The sample of the study consisted of 100 students, 55 of whom are females and 45 of whom are males.

Collection of Data

Open-ended interview form was used as data collection tool. The measuring tool used in collecting data was prepared by the researcher after examining the literature. Expert opinion was sought on the tool and it was revised to its final form based on the opinions of the expert. The students who participated in the study were asked to fill in the blanks in the following expressions with appropriate phrases: "Love is like... Because..." With this method, metaphor and the reasons for choosing it were obtained.

⁵ R. Özkan and M. A. Taşkın, "Determination of the Perception of Elementary School Students Concerning the Phenomenon of Homeland", Journal of History School, Vol: 7 num XVII (2014): 889-906.

Analysis of Data

In this study the metaphors developed by twelfth grade students concerning the concept of "love" were studied, and content analysis, percentage and frequency values were used in order to interpret the obtained data. In addition, the metaphors displayed by participants as regards the concept of love were grouped into conceptual categories and analysed. In order to obtain reliability in this study, an expert in the field of Education Sciences was presented with the relevant written opinion forms, reasons and conceptual categories. After matching the metaphors and categories, these data were compared with the matching performed by the researcher. The obtained results were found adequate in terms of the reliability of the study.

The data obtained from the study were transferred to computer media and expressed in (f) frequency and (%) percentage. The forms which were filled in by students were numbered in order. The metaphors written by students to the section "like..." were put into alphabetical order and obtained concepts were categorised. An attempt was made to perform content analysis based on the expressions in "Because..." sections where students provided reasons.

| Metaphor | Frequency (f) | Percentage (%) | | | |
|----------|---------------|----------------|--|--|--|
| Mother | 12 | 12 | | | |
| Father | 10 | 10 | | | |
| Family | 6 | 6 | | | |
| Sibling | 5 | 5 | | | |
| Tree | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Stress | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Tale | 4 | 4 | | | |
| Child | 3 | 3 | | | |
| Friend | 3 | 3 | | | |
| Rain | 3 | 3 | | | |
| Rainbow | 3 | 3 | | | |
| Medicine | 3 | 3 | | | |
| Life | 3 | 3 | | | |

Table 1 Metaphors with the highest frequency value

Findings

In this study students provided 36 metaphors in total concerning the concept of love. When the table is carefully examined, it can be seen that the metaphors with the highest values are in the order of mother, father, family and sibling. It is seen that these four metaphors are related to each other and that children associate the concept of love with their family members. The most important and remarkable points in the table are stress and tale metaphors that students mostly explain with negative justifications. In the study it is observed that some students see love as a source of stress and some others do not believe in the concept of love which they labelas "tale".

| | | Total | | Female | | Male | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|----|-------------------|-------|-------------------|-----------|
| Category | Metaphor | Frequency | | Frequency (55) | % | Frequency (45) | % |
| Related to family | Mother | 12 | 12 | 7 | 12.72 | 5 | 11.11 |
| | Father | 10 | 10 | 6 | 10.90 | 4 | 8.88 |
| | Family | 6 | 6 | 2 | 3.63 | 4 | 8.88 |
| | Sibling | 5 | 5 | 4 | 7.27 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Child | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5.45 | - | 0 |
| | Grandm other | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3.63 | - | 0 |
| | Brother | 1 | 1 | - | 0 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Mother's bosom | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.81 | - | 0 |
| Related to inner circle | Friend | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3.63 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Lover | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1.81 | 1 | 2.22 |
| Related to sorts | Basketball | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3.63 | - | 0 |
| | Sports | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1.81 | 1 | 0 2.22 |
| | Football | 2 | 2 | - | 0 | 2 | 4.44 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Related to nature and natural events | Tree | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5.45 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Rain | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5.45 | - | 0 |
| | Rainbow | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3.63 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Flower | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3.63 | - | 0 |
| | Sea | 2 | 2 | - | 0 | 2 | 4.44 |
| | Sun | 1 | 1 | - | 0 | 1 | 2.22 |
| Related to things | Medicine | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3.63 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Chain | 2 | 2 | - | 0 | 2 | 4.44 |
| | Stove | 2 | 2 | - | 0 | 2 | 4.44 |
| | Iron | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.81 | - | 0 |

| | Book | 1 | 1 | - | 0 | 1 | 2.22 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|---|---|---|------|---|------|
| | Computer | 1 | 1 | - | 0 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Related to humane feelings | Stress | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3.63 | 2 | 4.44 |
| | Obsession | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1.81 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Smiling | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3.63 | - | 0 |
| Related to abstract concepts | Life | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3.63 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Existence | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1.81 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Health | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1.81 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Enemy | 2 | 2 | - | 0 | 2 | 4.44 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Related to vehicles | Plane | 1 | 1 | - | 0 | 1 | 2.22 |
| | Ship | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.81 | - | 0 |
| | | | | | | | |
| Related to folk literature genres | Tale | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1.81 | 3 | 6.66 |
| | Legend | 1 | 1 | - | 0 | 1 | 2.22 |

Table 2

General outlook of the metaphors developed concerning the concept of love

As can be seen in table 2, the metaphors displayed by students are classified under 9 titles, namely "related to family", "related to inner circle", "related to sports", "related to nature and natural events", "related to things", "related to humane feelings", "related to abstract concepts", "related to vehicles" and "related to folk literature genres". Considering that family is the category under which students produced the highest number of metaphors, it can be easily said that the concept of love is especially identified with their families. As regards inner circle, students emphasized the concept of friendship and stated that friendship could not be possible without love. It is observed that students who identified the concept of love with sports emphasized games such as football and basketball which make them happy while playing.

Some students mentioned the concept of love along with nature and natural events. Among the concepts related to nature and natural events, tree, rain and rainbow come to the forefront. Students who associated the value of love with such concepts as tree, rain and rainbow displayed remarkable reasons in explanation section. For example one student stated that love "brought benediction like rain and made people happy" whereas another student said that "it covered our world like rainbow and made our lives meaningful". It is witnessed that medicine, chain and stove come into prominence among the metaphors related to things as regards the concept of love. Students brought positive explanations to medicine and chain but provided a negative explanation to stove and emphasized that love is a burner like stove.

An examination of the category related to humane feelings shows that general negative concepts are produced by students. In this category students thought the concept of love together with stress and trouble and displayed negative explanations.

In the category related to abstract concepts students mostly produced the metaphor of life as regards love and labelled love as the meaning of life. In this category positive metaphors attract attention while two students attached negative meanings to love and produced the metaphor of enemy.

In the category related to vehicles, students associated the concept of love with plane and ship and brought positive explanations in their reasons; in the category related to folk literature, they identified love with such concepts as tale and legend indicating that love does not have much meaning today.

Conclusions and recommendations

Love has always portrayed itself asimportant as one of the most essential values which keep a society alive. As a social value, love is among the most important values that have to be transferred to new generations. It is also one of the most critical acquisitions which will ensure the freedom of living and sustainability of social life in a safe manner.

This study was conducted on 100 students, 55 of whom were females and 45 of whom were males. In the study 36 different metaphors related to the concept of love were produced which were classified under 9 titles.

Based on the metaphors produced in this study, it is witnessed that students generally had a positive view towards love and thought that a person who grows up without love cannot be successful and happy in the future. Some students even related the concept of love with life, existence and health and underlined the importance of the mentioned value in the life of people and society. "Love is life. As love is actually life itself.", "Love is existence. As existence without love cannot be imagined.", "Love is health. As living healthy is not possible without love." Nevertheless, it is seen in the study that there are students who have negative opinions about the concept of love. Some students imagined the concept of love with some negative metaphors such as tale, legend, enemy, trouble and stress. "Love is tale. As we see real love only in tales.", "Love is enemy. Because when you love too much you are hurt.", "Love is trouble. Excessive love shown to people returns to you as damage."

The concept of love has an essential place in values education and is one of the most important concepts which deserve emphasis while educating children; it will be necessary for them during their entire life. Like other feelings, love can be developed in time with education and environment. For this reason, first teachers, and then parents must pay effort to give their children the value of love. In addition, necessary importance must be given to the value of love in the society and panels and conferences must be organized, and programmes which will bring this value to the forefront must be given priority on television. In addition, wide coverage must be given to this topic in course books starting from elementary level. Contribution must be made to popularisation of these values such as love which are the chief pillars of societies through healthy efforts in the fields of inter-community communication and interaction.

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