

# Metaphors Regarding the Concept of Book (Near East University Case)

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## Abstract

The aim of this study is to describe the metaphors of the students, who are in the department of Psychological Counseling and Guidance in Near East University, about the concepts of a "book" and determine their perceptions. Qualitative method was used and 211 students were chosen according to the purposive and convenient case sampling. The data were analyzed through content analysis and 82 different metaphors were found. The most used metaphors were respectively "Human", "Teacher", "Life" and "Tree". According to content analysis, metaphors were classified in 7 groups and books are shown as "information source", "directive and guiding item", "relaxing and entertaining item", "item for personal improvement", "original and different item" and "item that causes stress". Firstly, the reflection of a book as an information source at the highest percentage (38,77%) might be considered positively but the further researches should be done in order to observe how this finding influences the individual's reading attitudes and habits.

## Key Words

A Book, Reading, Metaphors, Metaphors about a Book.

According to the results of several studies conducted in the world (Applegate & Applegate, 2004; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Hassell-Hughes & Lutz, 2006; Hopper, 2005; Strommen & Mates, 2004) and in Turkey (Arıcı, 2008a; Dökmen, 1994; Özçelebi & Cebecioğlu, 1990; Özen, 2001; Şirin, 2006), despite being literate, the attitudes, behaviors and interests of many people are not at sufficient levels and the number of people who read is lower than the number of people who do not read. In Turkey, the structure of education system, busy agenda imposed by courses, the examination systems and the fact that books other than text books are not used much are some of the obstacles to reading. Other obstacles are that parents do not set examples for their children in reading, and

their ineffectiveness in such areas as taking them to the libraries, helping them for choosing books and sparing money for buying books. It is also known that there are some problems attributable to the students themselves. For example, they prefer such activities as listening to music or doing sports, and they do not spare time for reading. To these problems one must add such issues as the insufficient development of printing business in Turkey, economic problems, low level of illiteracy in some regions, insufficient libraries and failure to pay enough attention to children's literature (Arıcı, 2008b; Sever, 2008; Urgan, 2008; Yağcı, 2007; Yılmaz, 2004). On the other hand, another important obstacle is the intense usage of tools of mass communication and computers (Balcı, 2003; Creel, 2007; Esgin & Karadağ, 2000; Mavi & Çetin, 2009; Mokhtari, Reichard, & Gardner, 2009; Semerci, 2002; Yılmaz, 2006; Yılmaz, Köse, & Korkut, 2009).

One of the most fundamental elements of reading education is the teacher. Teachers have essential influence on the reading skills and attitudes of

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students (Collins, 1996; Garrett, 2002; Tompkins, 2006; Ülper, 2011). The pupils in a class are as literate as their teacher (Hill & Beers, 1993); one must question how a teacher, who does not have the habit of reading, will gain his/her students the habit of reading during his/her entire life (Benvides, 2006). The studies conducted before starting the profession (Geçgel & Burgul, 2009; Gömleksiz, 2005; McNinch & Steelmon, 1990; Olson & Gillis, 1983; Sağlam, Suna, & Çengelci, 2008) it was founded that candidate teachers did not read enough or that their reading attitudes were negative.

Despite the fact that several studies under various titles were conducted in Turkey on reading skills (Arıcı, 2008b; Bozpolat, 2010; Ekici, Belli, & Gürbüz, 2009; Geçgel & Burgul, 2009; Gömleksiz, 2005; Kuş & Türkyılmaz, 2010; Özbay, 2009; Özbay, Bağcı, & Uyar, 2008; Yalınkılıç, 2007), it has been found out that these studies did not examine what “book” meant from the viewpoint of candidate teachers. Departing from this point, the purpose of this paper is to close this gap in the literature and reveal the perceptions about the conception of a “book” as a unique topic which had not been studied before. The method of obtaining data through metaphors has been adopted in order to describe the “books” perceptions of candidate teachers; thus, it was aimed to perform an in-depth and detailed analysis.

In this study it was aimed to obtain data from a group which was not studied before: students of Psychological Counseling and Guidance department. Psychological Counselors must read for both their own development and the development of their clients. In addition, such topics as bibliotherapy, Professional guidance and educative guidance reveal the relationship between Psychological Counseling and Guidance and books. Due to such reasons, evaluation of the perceptions of students at Psychological Counseling and Guidance department as regards the conception of a “book” is a topic worth studying (Corey, 2005; Darlene & Aspy, 1984; Egan, 2004; Hamamcı, Oskargil, & İnanç, 2004; Keen, 2006; Öner & Yeşilyaprak, 2006; Pala, 2008; Ültanır, 2005; Yeşilyaprak, 2003).

The general purpose of this study is to describe the metaphors used for books by students at Psychological Counseling and Guidance department in Education Faculty of Near East University; thus, to reveal their perceptions related to the conception of “books”. It is believed that the findings which will be obtained in this study will be important in terms of describing both positive and negative perceptions related to books and development of awareness for

books. The following sub-purposes have been developed around the general purpose of the study:

1. What are the metaphors used by students to explain their perceptions for the conception of “books”?
2. What are the categories under which the metaphors used by students related to the conception of “books” can be grouped according to their common features?
3. Which function of the conception of “books” is the most widely implied by the metaphors used by students related to the conception of “books”?

## Method

### Research Model

This is a qualitative study based on phenomenological model. From this point on, detailed analysis has been made for the meaning of a “book”, which is frequently used in daily life, from the viewpoint of Psychological Counseling and Guidance students. In addition, the metaphors and categories obtained from research data were presented in the form of frequency-distribution tables and described (based on the approach adopted in Kesici, 2007; Saban, 2011; Saban, Koçbeker, & Saban, 2006).

### Study Group

Study group of the study were determined based on the “purposive and convenient case sampling” was taken as the basis. As a result, the study group of this research is 211 students enrolled at Psychological Counseling and Guidance department of Near East University in 2010 spring semester.

### Data Collection

In this study, qualitative data were collected through metaphors and perception of a “book” of the study group was determined. Metaphor is the explanation of a concept, phenomenon or incident by analogy to another concept, phenomenon or incident. Thinking with metaphors requires usage of a routine, familiar object or incident as a conceptual tool for explaining the nature of one or more complex incidents (Aksan, 2000; Balcı, 1999; Engin-Demir, 2007; Goatly, 2000; Greene, 1994; Jensen, 2006; Lakoff & Johnson, 2005; Ortony, 1975; Ortony & Fain-silber, 1987; Oxford et al., 1998; Strenski, 1989).

Candidates of Psychological Counseling and Guidance were informed by researchers between

01.05.2010-31.05.2010 and in eight different sessions through a 20-minute presentation on the definition, content and usage areas of metaphor. Then, they were asked to write down their perceptions about the conception of a “book” by concentrating on only one metaphor and giving their reasons. The study group was asked to answer the question “if you were to make an analogy between a book and a living or non-living thing, what would that be? Why?”

### Analysis of Data

The following stages defined by Saban (2009) were taken as basis for data analysis:

**The Stage of Elimination:** It was determined as to which data would be used.

**The Stage of Compiling Sample Metaphors:** The metaphors defined by the study group were listed.

**Development of Categories:** the data analysis processes defined by Kuş (2006) such as “classification”, “correlation” and “establishing relations” were taken into consideration.

**Validity and Reliability:** Reliability formula proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) was taken as the basis. The data collected for validity were written down in detail and clear and understandable explanations were provided as to how the conclusions were reached.

### Findings

The findings obtained in the research are submitted based on the three sub-purposes of the study.

#### Sub-Problem One: Metaphors of Study Group as Regards a “Book”

The 211 Psychological Counseling and Guidance candidates who participated in the study used 82 different metaphors related to the concept of a “book”. The most frequently used metaphors were “human” (10.43%), “teacher (7.58%), “life” (6.63%) and “tree” (5.69%). Of the 82 metaphors, 70 (85.36%) were concrete and 12 (14.63%) were abstract. Of the 70 concrete metaphors, 44 were non-living whereas 26 were living things; hence, 53.66% of the metaphors were non-living and 31.71% were living things. Of the 26 living metaphors, 18 were humans, 4 were animals and 4 were plants. Therefore it can be said that 22.22% of the metaphors in total are humans, 4.94% are animals and 4.94% are plants.

#### Sub-Problem Two: Categories Related to the Concept of a “Book”

The metaphors used or developed by participants related to the concept of “books” were classified under 7 categories depending on their features in common.

##### The Book is a Source of Knowledge:

i. The reasons for which information is gathered from books is displayed. They stated that they could make use of the information in books for such purposes as learning the things that one wonders, does not know and understand, to meet his/her needs, to close gaps of knowledge, follow innovations, make life easier, develop his/her interests, be able to have a profession and find answers to all questions in his/her mind.

ii. Emphasis was put on the “qualification” of the knowledge in books. It was stated that there were “all kinds of”, “lots of”, “permanent”, “non-deletable”, “valuable”, “renewable”, “future-related”, “improvable”, “workable” and “highly accurate” pieces of information in books.

iii. Explanation was provided as to how the information in books was used. It was displayed that the information in books can be used “life-long/all the time”, “whenever desired” and “as much as desired”. It was also stated that information in books can be reached by every one without discrimination (at both individual and social level) and the information in books should be protected and stored.

The citation related to the most frequently repeated “teacher” metaphor is as follows:

“A book is like a teacher. As we learn a lot from books, we get nice and immense information from teachers. We can look up in books and obtain the information that we want about any subject that we are curious of. Likewise, we can learn information about subjects that we wonder and create question Marks in our minds from a teacher skilled in his/her field.”

##### The Book Being Directing and Guiding:

i. Emphasis was put on the fact that books are guiding in that they “*direct towards the good and the truth*”. It was stated that books were used in order to obtain free of charge help (support) and utilization.

ii. It was stated that books were guiding in that they were “*giving examples of the good and bad (right and wrong)*”.

Below is the citation related to the most frequently repeated “life” metaphor:

“A book is life. We live as long as we read. We place ourselves in the place of the characters. We are happy when they are happy; we are sad when they are sad. We laugh and cry. We live as we turn the pages and the book guides and directs us.”

#### **The Book Being Refreshing and Entertaining:**

i. Emphasis was put on the fact that a book was “warming, relaxing and refreshing”.

ii. It was stated that a book was “entertaining, satisfying and delighting”.

Below is the citation related to the most frequently repeated “friend” metaphor:

I can resemble a book to a friend of mine. It does not let me be alone at times when I do not expect the least and makes me smile.”

#### **The Book Being Supportive of Personal Development:**

i. It was stated that books allowed people the opportunity to know themselves.

ii. It was said that books developed the “perspective” of the individual to events, people, the world etc.

iii. Emphasis was put on the fact that books provided the experience of life.

The mental image used by one member of the study group is as follows:

“A book is like a brick. When you put bricks on one another a huge structure (house, school, building) comes into being. The more we read the more we develop ourselves and be useful to other as well as ourselves. For this reason I made an analogy between books and bricks. A single brick is meaningless, just like a book.”

#### **The Book Being a Unique and Different Element:**

Below is the citation related to the most frequently repeated “human” metaphor:

“A book is like a human being. Just like everyone has a separate world, so does every book. Every person is the hero of his/her world. Every book has a hero, too. One must know that just like people do not resemble one another, every book is different from another.”

#### **The Book Being Valuable and Vital:**

i. It was stated that books were of “vital importance”.

“A book is like water. People cannot live without books as they cannot live without water.”

ii. Emphasis was put on the fact that books were “invaluable”.

“A book is like a museum. All valuable things are stored in museums. Just like this, the most valuable poems, stories and pieces of information are stored in books. Books must be protected like museums.”

**The Book Being a Source of Pressure:** The views of two participants related to this category are given below:

“A book is like my father. I do not do the things that books and my father impose on me. I do not take them for serious.”

“A book is like a monster, as it upsets me and makes me nervous”.

#### **Sub-Problem Three: Frequency and Percentage of the Categories related to the Conception of a “Book”**

38.86% of the study group said that books were sources of information; 18.01% of the study group said that books were directing and guiding, 15.64% of the study group said that books were refreshing and entertaining, 13.27% of the study group said that books were supportive of personal development, 7.58% of the study group said that books were unique and different elements, 4.74% of the study group said that books were vital and valuable and 1.89% of the study group said that books created pressure.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Findings of some studies conducted in the world and in Turkey coincide with the findings of this study. In previous studies it was emphasized that books were sources of information (Aksaçoğlu & Yılmaz, 2007; Ayyıldız, Bozkurt, & Canlı, 2006; Blum, Koskinen, Bhartiya, & Hluboký, 2010; Brooks, 2007; Göğüş, 1978; Karasahin, 2009; Odabaş, Odabaş, & Polat, 2008; Tekin, 1980; Yılmaz, 1993), guiding and directing (Alver, 2005; Arıcı 2009), refreshing and entertaining (Aksaçoğlu & Yılmaz; Arıcı, 2009; Aytaç, 2005; Blum et al.; Brooks, 2007; Cremin, Mottram, Collins, Powell, & Safford, 2009; Dreher, 2002; Hassell-Hughes & Rodge, 2007; Özçelebi & Cebecioğlu, 1990), supportive of personal development (Arici, 2009; Brooks; İpşiroğlu, 2004; Ungan, 2008) and valuable-vital (Gönen, Çelebi-Öncü, & Işıtan, 2004; Özçelebi & Cebecioğlu; Saracaloğlu, Bozkurt, & Serin, 2003).

Research can be conducted on the factors that are effective on the formation of perceptions about

“books” and the differences between these perceptions “for some people a book is a source of information; for others it is entertaining). Evaluation must be made as to whether the environment in which an individual is raised and his/her personal characteristics affect the perceptions for books.

In this study, it was found that most (39%) of the Psychological Counseling and Guidance candidates see books as a source of information (or a course book); this conclusion deserves consideration and discussion. According to some language teachers (Krashen, 2004; Mokhtari et al., 2009), reading is classified as “voluntary reading” and “academic reading”. Voluntary reading is the activity performed by an individual to evaluate his/her spare time and entertain himself/herself. Academic reading is, on the other hand, usually conducted at school and for learning purposes. The Psychological Counseling and Guidance candidates in the study mostly defined books as a tool of academic reading. As stated in the introduction of this paper, there are several studies that display the insufficiency of reading in Turkey. The fact that participants draw a picture of books as source of information can give us some hints as to why people detach themselves from reading activities. According to Sever (2008), the situation of children’s literature in Turkey is not promising. In many children’s books, advices are given to children as to what to do and what to avoid. An escape way has to be considered for the children who are bored of and exhausted by books that are imposed on them at schools for memorizing and teaching purposes. Children, by nature, want to play, entertain and learn new things. Children must be turned into subjects that make contribution to the formation of meaning and mobilize their opinions during the activity of reading. Children’s books have to earn sensitivity to children instead of being didactic, as the purpose of children’s literature is different from didactic books that provide ethical and course-related information. In Turkey, most of the children’s books are didactic; the books other than course books are not used and sufficient time is not spared for voluntary reading neither during nor after school hours; as a result, people detach themselves from reading activities. In this study, the reflection of books as sources of information can be evaluated as a positive thing at the beginning; however, further research is needed to evaluate in more detail how this can affect the reading success, attitudes and behaviors of individuals. Difference can be seen between the reading attitudes and success of those individuals who see books as sources of information and a tool of teaching and people who

consider books as a tool of development, entertainment and refreshing.

One interesting finding of the study as regards Psychological Counseling and Guidance is that only 13% of the counselor candidates think that books contribute to personal development, which ranks fourth following source of information, directing and guiding, and refreshing-entertaining categories. In a department which is based on such courses as development psychology, principles and techniques of psychological counseling, it was expected that students would put the emphasis on such dimensions of “books” as being a tool for knowing oneself, realizing oneself, gaining a viewpoint for oneself and providing life experience; however, books were heavily defined as sources of information. In addition, none of the participants mentioned the remedial (therapeutical or curative) aspects of books. Today many Psychological Counseling and Guidance experts in education (Cook, Earles-Vollrath, & Ganz, 2006; Forgan, 2002; Öner, 2007; Pardeck, 1994) put forward that problems of individuals can be understood and solved by means of bibliotherapy, which is therapy by means of books using some literature works (stories, novels etc.). In this study, that participants do not believe that their problem-solving skills can be improved through books must be evaluated as a serious shortcoming. To put it a nutshell, when the conclusions of this study are evaluated in terms of Psychological Counseling and Guidance, it can be recommended that participants should read books on personal development during their university education. In addition, a new course can be planned in Psychological Counseling and Guidance undergraduate curriculum on the nature of bibliotherapy and the books to be used in this method.

As a result, when the meanings attached to books are considered, only 2% of the participants provided negative opinions in this study and stated that books were sources of pressure. Although it is believed that, in the face of the spread of mass communication tools and technology (Yağcınalp & Aşkar, 2003), books lost their value, one of the most important findings of this research is that the information provided in books is accepted as more accurate, valid and reliable. The finding that participants see books as important sources of knowledge and rely on the information provided in books showed the importance of preparing quality course books in education sciences. Then, it can be affirmed that the number of researches for examination of course books, completing their deficiencies and correcting their mistakes should be proliferated.

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